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Fictional worlds and characters in art-making: Fook Island as exemplar for art practice

by

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I hereby declare that the dissertation, which I herewith submit for the research qualification Master of Technology: Fine Art to the University of Johannesburg is, apart from recognised assistance, my own work and has not previously been submitted by me to another institution to obtain a research diploma or degree.

Allen Walter Laing ___________________________

Date  _____________________________
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Abstract

In this study I examine the functions and effects of incorporating fictional worlds and characters into my art practice, using Walter Battiss' *Fook Island* as an exemplar for this practice. The study is composed so as to blur certain lines between conventions of fictional and academic writing.

I present a biography of Battiss with a focus on moments in his life where, I argue, the lines between fantasy and reality become blurred, and show evidence of his childlikeness, which I term *ego fictus*. I argue that this approach to his art-making was key to his resistance to and protests against censorship, and his ability to navigate difficult moments in his life.

I discuss how fiction, narrative and autobiography can be applied to an art practice to make it more appealing, entertaining and accessible to viewers, and thus increase the reach and impact of an artist’s work and conceptual messages. I spend much time describing the practical components of this study, which include two fictional characters that form part of this study, an exhibition of works titled *N.’s Apparatus*, and a catalogue of the exhibition.

Key Words

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Most days I feel like hiding, but it is near impossible. It feels to me as though we have all become crude little gods. Omniscient, omnipercipient, omnipresent; and like the Olympians and Asgardians we are petty and squabbling; warring and violent; lascivious and treacherous. Our tedious godhood flows from our imminent and perpetual tethers to the world-wide web: it is tied to the talismans in our smart phones and at the altars of our laptop computers.

All day my mind is scoured by a rushing flood of white-hot information: I know everyone’s fears, everyone’s triumphs, everyone’s angers, the suffering of the world, and the tantalising but torturously unattainable promises of scientific discovery. I am exhausted from fighting down jealousy caused by others’ avatars on social media, from chewing on guilt from others’ accounts of their pain, from loathing my powerlessness against the poison of tyrants’ lies and deeds. The web is a trap in which I am suspended, and cursed to share in all the evil and unjustness of every human. We all are the sacrificial lambs and scapegoats, but none of us is pure enough to bear these burdens and rise again redeemed.

In the face of these feelings, what hope do I have, and where can I turn? Being part of capitalist ‘rational’ global Western society in general, and being a white South African in particular, I experience a lack of metaphysical, mystical and spiritual elements in my life and in my society. I feel as though the world has become so focussed on material progress, empirical discovery, luxury and quick entertainment (none of which are necessarily bad) that, taken together, these tendencies delineate a living that feels superficial and meaningless, and which seems to be lacking ‘something more’ that I feel humans have a desperate need for, and have lost.

I believe that it would be dishonest of me to adopt an existing belief-system or metaphysics (just to satisfy my need as described above) if I do not have a deep and genuine conviction of the particular truths contained in it. This is why I seek, instead, through art-making, to discover what I seem to once have had; especially as a child, when fantasy, hope and possibility were still alive.
The studio component of this study (culminating in the exhibition opening on 20 October 2018, entitled *N.'s Apparatus*) involves an inquiry into my own process of art making and the use of various characters, narratives and fictional elements to mediate between myself and the world around me. Through a parody of selected scientific practices within the fields of psychology and anthropology, I explore how playing characters and creating fictional *ritual machines*¹ (and subsequently analysing them in an ostensibly scientific manner) allows me to process the frustration and confusion I experience with events and people that upset me in reality.

The apparent difficulty and meaninglessness of modern life is disturbing, and leads me to develop a nihilistic view of existence. It also leaves me ill-equipped to make sense of the actions of other humans, since without a belief in some benevolent higher intelligence who/which is/are ensuring that justice will be done on planet earth, I cannot feel that evil will be punished or goodness rewarded, and this makes the world seem like a terrifying and out-of-control place in which to exist.

Although I have lost my capacity for traditional religious faith, I remain convinced that a general 'religiosity' is an integral part of a healthy human psyche,² and so I speculate that I might access the same mental 'benefits' that are found in religion via the creation of art. I call my sculptures *ritual machines* (whether or not they bear any resemblance to actual machines) to express the idea that they are all intended (at least ostensibly) to execute some sort of function, which is only possible when their employment is coupled with some ritual action and belief from the 'user'. Together with the supporting documentation and ephemera (such as fictional diaries, journals and illustrations) they constitute *N.'s Apparatus*

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¹ Ember, Ember & Peregrine (2002:439) present a two-fold reason for the apparent ubiquity of religious beliefs in human cultures and societies. Firstly, they argue that humans have an intrinsic need for an intellectual understanding of their world, and a system of religious beliefs is able to satisfy this need. Secondly, when humans are faced with seemingly insurmountable problems, obstacles, anxieties and uncertainties we may revert back to our childhood desire for figures that can solve our problems for us. Ember et al. (2002:450) also raise the possibility that religious beliefs exist as a manifestation of the almost universal human desire for a ‘better world’.

² Ember et al. (2002:441) go on to describe the apparent anxiolytic effect of religious beliefs in a group of New-England fisherman who observe certain taboos while at sea to ensure their own safety. The authors point out that those fishermen who work for longer periods of time in stormier and more unpredictable waters that are further from land, tend to observe a greater number of taboos than those whose daily expeditions are less risky. They also explain that, although the fishermen were often embarrassed to admit their ‘superstitious’ beliefs when ashore, they refused to abandon them while at sea. Ember et al. explain this behaviour by saying that the anxiety-reducing nature of these beliefs cause them to be effective, reinforcing the ‘truth’ of the magical effects that these taboos have.
did not arrive spontaneously at this conclusion – it evolved organically from a number of artworks that I had created for various exhibitions.

While completing my undergraduate studies, and in the year thereafter, I struggled to find a novel and personal artistic voice, and I experimented with a number of different conceptual and formal approaches to art-making, and although I was touching on interesting things, I was satisfied with none of them. I was interested in interpreting the sculptor’s studio as a heterotopia\(^3\) and I felt that there was a certain magical attraction within the space that was absent in other superficially similar spaces (such as homes, offices, shops or factories) which were not used for art-making. I was also interested in Willem Boshoff’s approach to art-making as a ‘shamanic’ or divinatory process. However, I was unable to articulate these interests into a clear and personal visual language.

Two 2014 exhibitions in which I participated laid the groundwork for my current interest in the role of fiction in art and my particular focus on creating ritual machines. Artists participating in the exhibition Joburg, Joburg (which I co-curated, and which took place at the Corner House in Johannesburg from the first to ninth of March) investigated the relationship of various native and non-native Johannesburgers to the city. Falling into the non-native category (as I had been living in Johannesburg for less than a year at the time that I began work on the exhibition)\(^4\) I felt that the city was an alien place, and also that many occurrences and habits that seemed to be endemic there (e.g. my frequent and seemingly unremarkable harassment by strangers) were confusing to me.

I imagined that the nonchalant way in which people on the streets of the city were able to pick pockets, perpetrate vehicular smash-and-grab robberies and generally harass my acquaintances and myself, must be underwritten by some sort of mythical or moral imperative that I was unaware of. To justify their behaviour towards me I imagined that

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\(^3\) For Michel Foucault (1986:24) heterotopias must be understood in contrast to utopias, as places that do exist and “are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which ... all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted”. These heterotopias “are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality”.

\(^4\) I grew up in Pretoria and lived in the same house from birth until moving to Johannesburg. I attended one primary school, one high school and one university, all of which were within 8km of my home.
there existed a different spirit for each type of perpetrator, and that their devotion to this
spirit and the benefits that they gained by serving it was what enabled them to act out their
harassment with such an apparent sense of normality.

In order to mitigate the shock and discomfort that I experienced from the realisation that
(as a middle-class person in Johannesburg) I was being targeted by people whose everyday
struggle was a result of the inequalities and oppressions of the apartheid system in South
Africa (SA), I chose to project a mythical reason for their actions onto them. I argue that this
allowed me to see the whole situation as inherently absurd, and somewhat comical, rather
than resulting from the actions of my white predecessors and me (thus presenting an
indictment of us). The fun of constructing the personality and characteristics of each spirit,
as well as creating a totem, fetish or mask for each, allowed me to re-imagine my negative
experiences in the city as an exciting and sensible part of some larger fantastical narrative.

This conscious and intentional mythical restructuring of my reality (which I attempted to
legitimise by accompanying my artworks with informative texts that mimicked museum
information plaques) was something that appealed to me aesthetically and conceptually.
However, I felt that it was inappropriate for me as a 21st-century westerner to simply
appropriate the earlier and non-western forms of fetishes, masks and totems.

Feeling as though my newest body of work was not something that I could develop further, I
became disillusioned and demotivated in my artistic career. In search of a novel and
meaningful form of artwork that I could consider as being truly my own, I discussed ideas
with my friends as to what I should make for an art competition. I liked the idea (formally) of
combining a linear inorganic machine designs with organic materials such as wood and
ceramics, and thought about making a machine-like work for the competition. I asked my
friends for ideas, but kept dismissing their suggestions, complaining that irrespective of
what I did, I would not win, since competitions are unfair and the only way to win is to
pander directly to the personal biases and tastes of the judges. One of those present then
quipped that if ‘sucking up’ to the judges is the way to win, I should, logically, make a device
which would allow me to ‘suck up’ more effectively than anyone else. It was then that I
invented the Apparatus adulatione (Figure 1).
The artwork, which looks like a hand-held speculum, ostensibly allows me to more effectively ‘brown-nose’ people in positions of authority or power. The speculum opens the buttocks gently and allows me easy access to ‘kiss-ass’, or ‘suck-up’ to the person I want to flatter. A second attachment allows me to cup the testicles of whoever I am pandering to. This part is detachable, because I do not assume that I will only be pandering to men, and I would not want to cause offense by implying that only men hold these positions of power. The work was obviously intended to be read as sarcastic, and meant to make fun of myself as well as (in this case) the judges of the competition.

Because the work presented a criticism of juried art competitions, I suspected that it would not achieve what it was ostensibly created for, which was to enable me to flatter the judges so that I would win the competition. However, what I really wanted from the work, the function that I was actually after, was an object that would allay my frustration with my lack of success as an artist, make me feel good about my off-handed insult of the judges and the competition, and would allow me to have fun in designing, making and exhibiting it. I also wanted other people to react favourably to what I made, so that later, collectors would want to buy it, critics would want to write about it and curators would want to exhibit it; all of which would facilitate my survival and advancement as a full-time artist. In fulfilling these two ‘functions’, the device that I made was both functional and magical.

From this realisation – that the creation of objects that I enjoy making, that appeal to me on a formal level and that allow me to reflect introspectively on things that bother me is a useful way for me to perpetuate and grow my artistic career – I entered into postgraduate studies.
INTRODUCTION

This study aims to investigate how fiction, play and humour are useful devices for communication between artists and their intended audience, their society at large, as well as within themselves.\(^5\) I set out to achieve this by a thorough analysis of certain aspects of the life and work of Walter Battiss as a reference point for what I do in my own practice, via what I term ego fictus (defined in Chapter 1). I argue that particular practices and beliefs employed by Battiss were instrumental in the appeal of his art to a wide following, and as a tool to resist the climate of injustice, especially with regards to censorship, during the apartheid era. Ego fictus may also have facilitated Battiss’ own personal happiness and his ability to offer continual resistance to a society that tried to suppress his beliefs and personality. I examine ways in which Ego Fictus can be applied to my own context and practice with regards to how my audience and I react to contemporary social injustices. A further objective of this study is to describe how fiction and play function as parts of a visual arts practice, and how the readings and critical reception of the work may be affected by including these elements.

Methods and approaches: Interlacing fiction with academic writing – a reader’s guide

This study is made up of multiple components, namely: this dissertation; a separate Volume II of the illustrations which are referred to in-text, including transcription and facsimile reproductions of two works of fictional prose (of 170 and 30 pages respectively) written under the guise of the characters discussed later; an exhibition at the Johannesburg Library; and a catalogue of the exhibition.

The practical component of this study thus includes the exhibition, the fictional prose and the catalogue. At the exhibition more than 40 sculptural works will be on display alongside hand-made tools and functional objects that I have created for use in my studio. These will

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\(^5\) I use the pronouns they, them, their and themself as singular and non-gendered third person pronouns. I find this to be more orthographically elegant than using her/him or s/he. The use of ‘they’ also acknowledges the agency of my readers and people to whom I refer to decide their own self description.
be accompanied by illustrations and explanations thereof which were ostensibly produced by one of the fictional characters that I invented. The point of this is to evoke in the viewer a sense that this might be a genuine anthropological exhibition of collected cultural products of a ‘primitive other’, rather than a contemporary art exhibition. Although viewers who are better acquainted with contemporary art practices may not be fooled, they may still be entertained by this; whereas lay people might be unsure how exactly to read what they see.

To heighten this sense of uncertainty and equivocation in the exhibition’s content, one character (Mr Nieandertaalensis) is presented as the maker of the objects (and is in essence just the same as me, Allen Laing) while the second character (Prof. Etterforsker) appears to be writing in the early 20th century about how he has discovered the writings and artworks of the first. The second character illustrates and annotates the artworks which he sees in visions, and thus the artworks are analysed from a fin de siècle point of view. This gives the present-day viewer a humorous, bigoted and false interpretation of the works. Throughout the process there is a layering of fiction on truth, to create an immersive fantasy backed up by ostensibly historical documents. This potentially confusing process is clearly delineated in Chapter 2 below.

In summary, the characters are employed to answer the aims of the study. Firstly, I attempt to evoke for myself and viewers of my work what Battiss managed with the fictions of Fook Island, i.e. that the employment of fictional worlds and characters in relation to my artworks will better enable me to navigate disturbing elements that I experience in the world around me, and that the characters will increase the appeal of my work to its audience. Secondly, I present an exemplar to other artists and critics of what may result from the inclusion of fictional elements into a visual arts exhibition, allowing them to draw their own conclusions pertaining to the potential value of this.

I employ a qualitative approach to research in this dissertation, drawing on a wide variety of seemingly disparate ideas to make my particular arguments about the role of fiction in the work of Battiss and myself. Discussions of autobiography, autoethnography, narrative and epitext are particularly useful in terms of how I approach writing by, or about, Battiss, and

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6 This term is explained in Chapter 2, but essentially refers to ‘documentary evidence’ that supports an historical object or event. Examples include newspaper articles, blogs or personal diaries.
what I write myself. Similarly, theoretical discussions of humour, satire and parody inform the analysis of my art and Fook Island works. Next I move outside of my field of expertise to discuss investigations by psychologists of play and fantasy in children, and of the ability to create fiction as an evolutionary adaptation in humans, to enable the introduction of a degree of fiction into this dissertation. In-depth discussions of these theories are presented in Chapters 1 and 2.

In fulfilment of my aim and objective as laid out above I begin including certain ‘less academic’ or ‘more fictional’ ideas into my writing in Chapter 1. I prepare the reader for how fiction and reality will become enmeshed in Chapter 2, when the slippage between the author of the study, the artist, and fictional documents and characters played by me will be heightened.

The intended effect of this, amongst other things, is to place the reader in a position where they become to some extent suspicious of certain arguments and citations that arise when I discuss my own work. An idea quoted with correct academic rigour may be rejected along with something that I have fabricated, whereas the reader may be tricked into accepting an appealing fiction as ‘true’, because I have presented them with enough false ‘evidence’. Each reader will arrange my arguments at some point along a spectrum from ‘truth’ to ‘falsehood’ that will be a unique result of their individual biases and preferences.

Throughout this dissertation I make use of Wikipedia as a reference. I do this because of various problems inherent in the medium of the wiki. By definition, wikis are comprised of user contributions, which may be made by prominent experts in the field, or by laypeople. Although checks and controls are built into a wiki, to allow a community of trusted contributors to police contributions and enforce certain principles regarding what gets published, these processes take time, and thus whenever one accesses a wiki one must be aware that the information being looked at may recently have been edited, and not yet verified. A particular characteristic of Wikipedia is that it has a high affinity for search engine

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7 I will, on occasion, use the very first references to a subject displayed on Wikipedia and Google, because I believe that this is precisely how many people today find information. In the event of an argument, resolution is found in the first Google hit. If I am sick, my prognosis is determined by the paragraph-long blurb from Wikipedia displayed in Google. Boet, Bould, Hladkowicz, Pigford, Postonogova, Shin & Ufholz (2014:[sp]) write that Wikipedia “is reported to be the most used online healthcare resource globally”.
optimisation. This means that the way in which information is laid out in the site (with a high number of cross-references to other websites and within Wikipedia itself; and the fact that images, audio and video clips are required to be named in a way that is given higher credence by search engines)\(^8\) leads to Wikipedia articles for a specific search phrase to be found amongst the top five results in most search engines (Gibbons 2012:[sp]). One effect of this may be that when someone performs a quick, superficial search to determine a fact about a particular topic, a Wikipedia result is likely to come up first. Google search engine also has a feature where a window containing an overview of the search item is displayed to the right of the usual list of ‘hits’ on a particular topic, and the abstract used in this overview is often taken directly from Wikipedia.

Thus, although most people with basic online literacy (such as students who have attended computer literacy classes at high school or university) may have been warned that Wikipedia is inherently fraught with problems regarding its academic and factual reliability, I argue that because of its ubiquity, accessibility and ease of use,\(^9\) more and more people today, especially younger people, rely heavily on Wikipedia to guide their understanding of science, history, biology, disease, culture, law and popular culture amongst many other subjects.

My reason for using Wikipedia as a reference in my dissertation, despite my awareness of its short-comings, is that it mimics the problematic ways in which people approach the pursuit of knowledge in our current society. I do not use Wikipedia to support arguments that are critical to the academic practices in this study, nor those that are necessary for me to make a convincing and credible argument. I do use it to add ‘flavour’ to arguments (i.e. to make an

\(^8\) Search engines give higher value to images saved with much descriptive information in the title (allen_laing_apparatus_adulatione_2014_sculpture.jpg) when compared with file names that are generated by digital cameras and scanners (e.g. _DSC_0685.jpg or IMG0001.bmp).

\(^9\) Gibbons (2012:[sp]), writes that “Wikipedia probably has the best set of [Search Engine Optimization] fundamentals on the web”. This is due to the large number of cross-referenced hyperlinks which allow one to quickly gain an overview of a topic without having to visit various sites and attempt to ascertain the relative safety of each site (from a cyber-security point of view) nor having to verify the credibility that one may attribute to each site. Wikipedia offers an all-in-one solution which allows one to believe that even if it is not entirely reliable, it is reliable enough for most day-to-day purposes. Boet et al (2014:[sp]) write “that the number of factual errors, omissions, or misleading statements in Wikipedia articles was comparable to the Encyclopaedia Britannica”. Gibbons (2012:[sp]) says that Wikipedia is likely to appear on the first page of a Google search “because Google seems to be a strong believer in ‘query deserves diversity’ and Wikipedia generally provides content that no other site can offer for a huge range of keywords”.


argument more compelling by appealing to the reader’s potential affinity for metaphysical and entertaining ideas). I am aware that the majority of readers who wish to check my statements for their own satisfaction (i.e. those who are not strongly resolved to disprove what I have said, but only wish to reassure themselves that they are not being misled) are likely to use the internet, and are thus likely to be directed to the same Wikipedia page that I used to produce my ‘fact’, and may thus receive sufficient confirmation that what I have said may be accepted. If my arguments do not significantly depart from what they already suspect to be historically or philosophically plausible, I have convinced them of my contentions.

The ubiquitous use of Wikipedia by all manner of people today reflects a certain sense of fictionality in the way that contemporary global society interacts with and understands the world at large. I insist on using it because my intention is to begin convincing a specialist, academic reader that a compelling and cohesive argument may be useful in discussing art, even if parts of that argument are fictional or drawn from dubious sources.

I argue that if my writing is enjoyable and fascinating because I have included meaningful passages that may have dubious origins, then I am guiding the readers at first hand through the process that Walter Battiss and I employ when we create artworks. The reader becomes a participant in the fiction, by choosing to entertain thoughts, even if they are not provable. I aim to guide the reader towards creating their own meaning from my collected arguments and sources. Although individual sources may lack gravity, enough ideas that “resonate” (Bochner & Ellis 2016:241) with one another suggest some sort of common value (precisely because it seems otherwise uncanny that similar threads may be found in completely unrelated fields of study).

The validity of this approach is defensible in light of the autoethnographic method, which is described by Adams, Bochner and Ellis (2011:1) as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)”.

Adams et al (2011:2) relate how

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10 In this dissertation I conflate the terms autoethnography, autobiography and narrative, because I do not find it useful to draw distinct lines between these terms. I am not an ethnographer attempting to present an analysis of a particular culture, but certain elements of the autoethnographic methods are useful to an analysis of my own work. I present a deeper discussion of these terms in Chapter 2.
scholars at the end of the 20th Century “realized that stories were complex, constitutive, meaningful phenomena that taught morals and ethics, introduced unique ways of thinking and feeling, and helped people make sense of themselves and others”, and are arguing for approaches to the Humanities that are “closer to literature than to physics”.

Autoethnographic researchers acknowledge that research in the Humanities is not objective, empirical or unbiased, and that the background of the researcher will colour their observations (Adams et al 2011:2). Autoethnography entails a researcher looking back at significant events from their own life, unpacking “epiphanies [that] reveal ways a person could negotiate ‘intense situations’ and ‘effects that linger—recollections, memories, images, feelings—long after a crucial incident is supposedly finished” (Arthur Bochner quoted in Adams et al 2011:2).

Adams et al (2011:5) admonish an autoethnographic researcher to produce “accessible texts, [by means of which] she or he may be able to reach wider and more diverse mass audiences that traditional research usually disregards, a move that can make personal and social change possible for more people”. Speaking of the narrative research text, Bochner and Ellis (2003:221) suggest that, in searching for meaning or value in their work, the researcher asks themself: “what are the consequences my story produces? What kind of person does it shape me into? What new possibilities does it introduce for living my life?” From this perspective, the researcher is freed from trying to adhere to some particular dogma or doctrine, and may value the meaning of a statement more than its ‘scientific truth’, as long as that meaning is useful to the writer/artist and their readers/viewers.

I argue that Battiss, to some extent, followed this approach in his writing.11 His subtitle for the artist’s book/newspaper *Fook Nooks (2)* (1978) is “Last with the News. First with the Truth” (Ginsberg 2016:320). Battiss remarked: “I am blessed with a very bad memory. I am not plagued by … too much knowledge … I can wake up in the morning … and I don’t know what happened before” (quoted in Skawran 1985:12). Frieda Haremse (1985:24) writes that “on occasion his writing was unabashedly lyrical, revealing a great deal of Battiss himself”. In

11 After his studies of Bushman art (see footnote 12 below regarding my use of this term), three major publications by Battiss (which are not artists’ books) are *Limpopo* (1965), *Art in a mixed up world* (1965), and *Battiss by Battiss* (1979). Although these books deal, in parts, with art theory, criticism and practice, they are not written in a typically academic style (*Art in a mixed up world* is the transcript of Battiss’ inaugural lecture on appointment to the professorship of Fine Art at UNISA) (Ginsberg 2016:317,322).
her introduction to the 1985 monograph on Battiss, Karin Skawran (1985:11) observes that “some of the contributions [to this book] are ‘academic’ only in a loose sense” and that Battiss’ art “defies the academic norms of stylistic categorization and development”. Speaking of Battiss’ style of teaching she says that “he drew his resources from within himself rather than from any dogma laid down by convention” (Skawran 1985:19). This points to Battiss (and the scholars who write about him) holding a similar ethos to writing as I have laid out above.

**Biography of Battiss limited to (proto-)Fookian moments: Childhood to retirement – to childlikeness**

Because some readers may already be familiar with the biography of Battiss, and because it disrupts my discussion of his work in Chapter 1, I include here a summary of his life up to the point where Fook Island becomes the prominent topic of his work, to explain how the various modes of creativity which were crystallised as Fook Island were nevertheless present in nascent forms from his earliest recollection.

I argue that my own heavy, pervasive sense of helpless despair, coupled with the desire for something better, is the point at which my own artistic practice intersects with the work of Battiss, and Fook Island in particular. From a study of his life and art-making I am convinced that he too was looking for a return to something sacred and special, to escape from a morally restrictive and hypocritical country into a world where he would not be hated for his expansive thinking and sense of wonder, his inclusive love, youthful vitality and dislike of the establishment.

Fook Island, as a defined and transferable fantasy, was officially launched at the Goodman-Wolman Gallery in Cape Town in 1974, but I argue that the proto-Fookian infrastructures

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12 Battiss reveals some of his own stress and frustration about the state of life in South Africa in a letter to Dacre Punt (Dearest Dacre #45, see footnote 23), saying “Bad currency news here. The Rand is devalued 17% & petrol goes up 20% too. And the art world here has the jitters but I’m not responsible, it’s not my crime”. This is one of many examples where Battiss reveals personal fears and petty frustrations to Punt in his letters (see also letters #25, #28, #34, #48, #51).

13 It remains challenging for me to discuss the history of Battiss before I have defined what I mean by proto-Fookian and *Ego Fictus*, but at the same time it remains difficult for me to discuss these terms before I have
and mechanisms that govern the fantasy were in place in Battiss' life from as early as he can remember. Using fantasy to actively reshape one's reality is something that most children have a degree of access to, and something that a few artists may continue to do into adulthood, but Battiss' life-long manifestation of Ego Fictus was unprecedented in South Africa at the time. Fantasy allowed Battiss to enjoy his present moment despite real and immediate censorship and challenges to his way of life; and also gave him a great capacity for empathy and visionary thought.

Battiss was born in Somerset East on the 6th of January 1906. The Battiss name was well respected and well established in the region, going back at least three generations before Walter to the 1820 settlers. His “father’s people were vigorous, hymn-singing Methodists” and his father was “sport-crazy”, he indicates (Battiss 1965:5). His mother was more supportive of Battiss as an artist and “wanted him to study at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, whilst [he] wished to stay in South Africa and become a landscape painter” (Schoonraad 1976:8). He enjoyed his early years and his first memories include an earthquake, sighting Halley’s comet14 at the age of four and the Glen Avon waterfall to which his father led tourist expeditions.

In 1917, at the age of 11, Walter Battiss moved with his family from his home town of Somerset East to Koffiefontein in the Orange Free State. Soon afterwards, in 1920, the Battisses relocated to Fauresmith, where Battiss completed his secondary education (Skawran 2005:[sp]). I agree with Murray Schoonraad’s (1979:5) contention that the seeds laid out his biography. Let it suffice for now to say that these terms refer to the fact that, although Battiss at particular points codified his fictional world, I argue that he has always employed fictions in his interactions with his society, even before he defined for himself what he was doing.

14 It is interesting to note that the arrival of Halley’s comet in 1910 was surrounded with speculations by doomsayers in tabloid newspapers, as the comet was coming close enough to earth that the planet would pass through its tail for six hours. Rumours of poisonous gasses wiping out all life on earth led to “the panicked buying of gas masks and quack ‘anti-comet’ pills” (Halley’s Comet 2016:[sp]). American author Mark Twain was born in 1835 when the comet passed by earth, and in his 1909 autobiography accurately predicted that he would die the following year when the comet returned to orbit the sun again. He died the day after its perihelion on 21 April (Halley’s Comet 2016:[sp]). I mention this because this memory of Battiss, which took place when he was four, is recalled by him in print when he is 59 years old (and children’s memories can be meaningfully altered by their own fantasy, see Principe & Smith 2008). The mysterious nature of the comet as an omen or harbinger makes a great plot device in the autobiography of someone who freely admits that he “invented himself”. Battiss also refers, in 1963, to his later-to-be-lover Dacre Punt as a “welcome comet coming into constellation (Dearest Dacre #1), in 1974 to himself as the “annual comet [arriving] from Pretoria” (Siebrits 2016a:129) and to his wild 18 year old lover Goo as a comet on a number of occasions.
which would later develop into Fook Island were planted in the Free State, for the following reasons. Firstly, the natural setting had a great impact on Battiss. Many commentators have written about Battiss' love of nature, which he inherited from his father, his friends, and from the South African wilderness itself. Battiss writes (1965:7) that for him “the stars existed on a flat plane and the sky on another flat plane beyond the stars and in between these two planes was a comfortable space for me to own. There I formed my thoughts and dreams. I was happy, eleven years old. I could bargain with the unreal”. He thus found an early insular fantasy space in the Karoo night sky.

Secondly Koffiefontein and Fauresmith are where Battiss was introduced to Bushman art along with all the imaginative possibilities linked to a peaceful people who lived at one with nature, in an animist world inhabited by all manner of magical and fantastical spirits, and whose art was unfamiliar and distinct from the representational imagery of the Western art canon. Because the Bushmen who created the art near western towns and areas of activity had long been driven northwards to the more isolated parts of the Karoo and Kalahari, or had been assimilated into western society, Battiss was able to use the art, lore, stories and mythologies as a raw material around which to shape his fantasies. Bushman art was not well known, nor accepted in the Western art canon and almost completely disregarded in South Africa, and thus the rock paintings represented another 'island' where Battiss could isolate himself and make his own rules.

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15 According to San (2018:sp) “the San peoples of South Africa and neighbouring Botswana, who live in the Kalahari, are part of the Khoisan group and are related to the Khoi. However, they have no collective name for themselves in any of their languages. They strongly object to being called San, a term applied to them by their ethnic relatives and historic rivals the Khoi ... They prefer to be called Bushmen, despite the fact that the term is considered politically incorrect by most Westerners”. In San, Bushmen or Basarwa... (2007:sp) the chair of the South African San Council, Andries Steenkamp, writes in a letter “that they don’t mind the word Bushmen, which he said underlines his people’s status as first nation. The alternative, San, means ‘rogues and murderers’ and was imposed by Europeans”. I will thus use the word ‘Bushman/men’ to refer to the artists of the rock art that Walter Battiss studied.

16 Battiss (in Siebrits 2016a:27) called them a “lost people” saying that “the little painters have gone but an immortal monument is in the work”. I am aware that Battiss is not granting any agency to the Bushmen, that he approaches their work with a standard colonial, Western gaze, and that he appropriates their imagery without asking for permission from any Bushman artists regarding this. My discussion here relates to how his adoption of these ‘outsiders’ via their artwork anticipates his creation of a fantasy island for all outsiders to live on, rather than any post-colonial discussion of power relations inherent in this appropriation.

17 Murray Schoonraad (in Siebrits 2016a:28) says that “Battiss' strong orientation towards an art and aesthetic influenced by Africa was not universally welcomed in the conservative environs of Pretoria”.
Lastly Koffiefontein and Fauresmith were mainly Afrikaner farming communities where rugby and a practical outlook on life were valued above an English boy’s fascination with art and fantasy. The sense of isolation that Battiss experienced from his peers may have motivated him to withdraw deeper into art and fantasy.

In his early adulthood Battiss worked first as a bank clerk in Fauresmith, and then at the Magistrate’s Office in Rustenburg, before obtaining a teacher’s diploma in 1932. I believe that his involvement with students at Pretoria Boys High School (PBHS) and at the University of South Africa (UNISA) is the next stepping stone towards inventing Fook Island, since Battiss was not only able to keep his childlike nature alive as an educator dealing with young artists, but was also able to become “a gentle anarchist” (Dubow 1985:93) by using his position within a state institutions to undermine the hegemonic power of contemporary governing and political structures.

Siebrits (2016b:[sp]) mentions the fact that Battiss was the youngest superintendent of the Wesleyan church in Rustenburg, and was a devout Christian in 1927. Siebrits argues that although “we know how Walter turned out” (i.e. as a self-proclaimed hedonist [Siebrits 2016a:130] interested in what, in apartheid South Africa, would have been considered ‘transgressive' sexuality) “he always was very spiritual” and that later “his emphasis of spirituality just shifted”. Battiss was serious about creating a philosophy for life and his interest in ritual transcends mere superstition to the extent that it has a meaningful impact in his life.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, as Battiss' international recognition as an artist was growing (his works made up four of the 25 South African submissions to the 25\textsuperscript{th} Venice biennale, and he was awarded a bronze medal for his woodcut print at the 1948 Olympics) he was also facing growing criticism and dismissal of his work, especially in cases where he was exploring and incorporating features of Bushman design and painting into his work, and researching Bushman art formally. \textit{Die Burger}\textsuperscript{19} wrote about his work at the Venice biennale.

\textsuperscript{18} Barry Davidow and Manie Eager (1979:[sp]) say “Walter had to hide the fact that he did art while at school in the Free State because it was very sissy”. He quotes Battiss, who says “you were supposed to play rugby. Even tennis wasn’t considered that good”.

\textsuperscript{19} An Afrikaans newspaper that “supported the nationalist cause and apartheid, and was the mouthpiece of the National Party of South Africa” (Die Burger 2017:[sp]).
Biennale, saying that “if this is art”, then masterpieces were being produced in nursery schools and kindergartens across South Africa (Siebrits 2016a:42). Battiss also had his applications to pursue a master's degree specialising in 'primitive art' repeatedly turned down, was refused recognition of his work by the British Council of Archaeologists and the “British Museum [had decided] not to republish Artists of the rocks in London” (Siebrits 2016a:44).

That Battiss (who was in many ways at the forefront of the South African avant-garde, who was pushing the boundaries of art in SA, who was exposed to international trends and was doing his best to create a genuinely South African style that could hold its own in an international market (Siebrits 2016b:[sp])) had to face so much criticism of the important pioneering work he was doing, must have weighed heavily on him. Even approaching middle age, in the capital city of South Africa, he was reliving the rejection that he had experienced in the smaller, provincial towns of the Eastern Cape and Free State. This second wave of isolation and rejection from academia and the establishment can be seen as inspiring his strong desire to travel abroad, his return to childlike fantasy worlds, and ultimately to imagine Fook Island.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, Battiss made a series of trips into Africa and abroad to Europe and the Middle East where he visited many islands including those off the coast of Mozambique and Tanzania, the Seychelles, the Comoros, Mauritius, islands in the South Pacific and many in the Aegean Sea (Schoonraad 1979:6). Battiss celebrates his view of the perpetually sunny and idyllic islands and the lifestyles of their inhabitants in a number of artworks and poems in books such as Limpopo (1965) and Nesos (1968) that he published himself. His description of Zanzibar in Limpopo is voluptuous, and Battiss draws attention to all of his senses, recalling “lying under the scent of a lai-lai tree with the flowers falling softly over me”, the warm sky, the “sturdy legs [of the] Arab coffee-boys” and their desire to “do anything for a bright new shirt”; and a boy Awaz, the “bestlooker … 18, completely unreliable yet sensitive to little things and with an understanding of rare desires, in love with an Arab girl of fifteen, ripe” (Battiss 1965:34). These ideas of a utopic island lifestyle focussed on pleasure and free from care are later mirrored in descriptions of Fook Island.
While travelling in Symi in the Greek archipelago Battiss met Daniel Spoerri, a conceptual artist working in a neo-Dada style, and who later became part of the Fluxus group. Battiss had a continuing friendship with Spoerri via letters, and was most clearly influenced by Spoerri’s Eat Art restaurant, as demonstrated by the inclusion of Fook food at his Johannesburg Fook Island launch at the Goodman Gallery in 1975 and at his Comprehensive (retrospective) exhibition at the Pretoria Art Museum in 1979.

From 1970 until his retirement in 1971 Battiss had a hand-painted notice on the door of his UNISA office which declared it as the headquarters of the International Secret Society of Invisible People (ISSIP).\(^{20}\) ISSIP was a one-line version of Fook Island: it was innocent enough to avoid censorship, but still bothered the authorities, because, according to Battiss “in South Africa everyone is scared of secret societies. The fact that it is invisible is also upsetting” (Davidow & Eager1979:[sp]). As a conceptual artwork ISSIP had a similar function to Fook Island: it was light-hearted, open to others, and allowed one an imagined escape from everyday situations.

Battiss’ frustrations with the state of censorship in SA prompted him to create a Miss South Africa of the future (discussed in Chapter 1): a doll that symbolised for Battiss what the National Party (NP)\(^ {21}\) government wanted: a body that would neither speak, hear nor see any evil; that was utterly undesirable and could only break down rather than create. Battiss carried the doll around with him, notably in April 1971 to a symposium on censorship at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) which was attended by 800 students. In this case the fantasy of the doll became part of the reality of Battiss’ convictions, but also made it easier for him to attract the attention of the press without presenting the censors with something provocative enough to actually censor.

Warren Siebrits (2015:[sp]) writes that in 1976 (the year after his wife’s death and five years after his retirement) Battiss spent time at “the Naropa Institute in Boulder Colorado where

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\(^{20}\) Later to become COSSIP, the Cosmic Secret Society for Invisible People, “because the word ‘international’ tacitly recognises nations, and nations go back to tribal warfare” (Davidow & Eager 1979:[sp])

\(^{21}\) In my view the NP was a totalitarian government which was in full control of the Dutch Reformed Church, and Afrikaner identity in general, and thus I use ‘NP Censorship’ to refer to all forms of South African censorship and conservatism between 1948 and 1994.
he was taught by poets William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg and Robert Creeley” and that he participated “in a weeklong hippy free love festival in the New Mexico desert the following year”. Siebrits (2015:[sp]) sees these trips and the new insights gained from them as “pivotal points in [Battiss’] own evolution”, which invigorated Battiss and allowed him to keep exploring new knowledge and experiences well past his retirement. Norman Catherine (2015) confirms the likelihood that Battiss’ overseas trips, and the contrasting ideological systems in place in South Africa would have caused Battiss to pursue the freedom and escape offered by Fook with renewed vigour.

Although 1976 also marks the Soweto student uprisings against the use of Afrikaans as the primary language of tuition in the ‘Bantu Education’ schools, which resulted in police opening fire on protestors, with estimates of students killed ranging from 176 to 700 (Soweto Uprising 2018:[sp]), Battiss was already out of South Africa for two months at this point, as part of his nine month trip eastwards around the globe to find the “Cosmic Man” (Siebrits 2016a:164). Battiss was seeing “what’s happening to South Africa on television 6pm & 10pm news [sic]” (Dearest Dacre #53), but there is no evidence as to whether he responds directly to this tragedy. Battiss seems, at times, to have been (like anyone else) self-absorbed and prone to turn a blind eye to some of the great tragedies in SA history, and to gloss over these with his fantasies. While this simply reflects his humanity, I do not dwell on these baser instances, since my arguments are linked specifically to his employment of fictional worlds and characters to respond to particular events in his society, and how I and others may draw on the techniques employed by him in subsequent artworks.22

Siebrits (2016a:14) writes that of the 700 Battiss works donated to Wits Art Museum in 2016, over half (more than 390) were created in the Fook Island period of 1972 to 1982. This may be due to the extra free time available to him as a result of his retirement from his full-time post at UNISA, but I would argue that, at a time when most people would slow down their affairs and move into a time of restfulness, Battiss lived in these 10 years more fully than he had in the preceding 65. This is also the period when Battiss travelled the most

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22 To be clear: I here acknowledge that while Battiss has employed many creative ways to attack the apartheid state, moral restrictions and censorship experienced in his lifetime, he has sometimes missed responding to certain heinous events taking place in South Africa. That he should respond with outrage to every crime is impossible, and his failure to be critical of all evils does not diminish the value of his other protests and artworks.
internationally, and was often away from home for more than half of the year at one time. He would be present at the “world’s art capitals, including London, New York, Basel and Kassel” (Siebrits 2016a:14) which would result in him becoming “more knowledgeable about the nature of contemporary and conceptual art practice than any other South African artist (Siebrits 2016a:14). In Chapter 1, after defining key terms related to my discussion of Fook Island, and giving an overview of Censorship in SA, I will focus on artworks produced in these last 10 years of Battiss’ life.

Outline of chapters

This study is presented as two weighty chapters: firstly I present an analysis of Walter Battiss’ life and work, and secondly an analysis of my own life and work, after which parallels are drawn between my works and those of Battiss’ Fook Island period.

I begin Chapter 1 with idiosyncratic definitions of the terms that I use in the discussions of the work of Battiss from my particular perspective, pre-empting the discussion of my own work. This is followed by a discussion of South Africa in the 1960s and ‘70s to give context to what sorts of frustrations Battiss was faced with during his lifetime that may have motivated him to create the fantasy world Fook Island. After giving a broad overview and explanation of Fook Island as a wide-spanning conceptual art project, I analyse selected works in order to demonstrate how my arguments apply to them.

Chapter 2 begins with a theoretical discussion of narrative, autoethnography and autobiography as they apply to art-making, followed by a discussion of my particular use of humour in my work. Next, I discuss my exhibition as a whole before moving on to a detailed description of how I create my artworks, and how I use fictional characters in my work to affect viewers’ perceptions and interpretations of my work. I conclude this chapter with analyses of selected works of mine, to illustrate, in particular, my processes and their results.
CHAPTER 1: Child’s play as protest and personal liberation – Effective fantasies, fantastic effects

The first purpose of this chapter is for me to present my working definitions of the terms and neologisms which I use throughout this study, as these will encapsulate the essence of my particular analysis of the life and work of Battiss, and pre-empt the discussion of my own work. I posit that the methods which Battiss used to achieve his desire for personal freedom from the dictates of society involve the employment of what I have termed the *ego fictus*, a pursuit of childlikeness, an immersion in fantasy, and a serious playfulness. Through a brief overview of censorship in South Africa during the 1970s and ‘80s I examine the context in which Battiss was creating his art, and explore how the Fook Island concept is linked to his experience of his place in, and relation to, his society. This provides a point of comparison for an analysis of my artwork in relation to the current socio-political situation.

Having presented examples in the Introduction to this study of how certain moments in the life of Battiss may be termed proto-Fookian, and how these culminated in the invention of Fook Island, I next present an in-depth description of the various elements that constitute the Fook concept. Through this I link Battiss’ reactions to his environment to his ability to cope with feelings of alienation and ostracisation, and how this approach informs my own practice. Finally, analyses of selected artworks by Battiss demonstrate what I have laid out above and how it may manifest in one’s art practice, leading to the next chapter where I discuss my own work.

**Working definitions**

In my analysis of Battiss’ work I use certain terms, such as proto-Fookian and *ego fictus*, that I have coined and thus need to define; and others, such as childlike and play, which have many well-established meanings, and my use of them necessitates that I clarify what exactly I mean by them. The most important term in this study is *ego fictus*, as its definition encapsulates those elements that I find exceptional and meaningful in the work of Battiss.
In 2016 I began using the term *fantasy-reality* to refer to a certain undefined quality in Battiss’ work. I contend that from his youth, and especially from the 1970s onwards, there is often no clear-cut distinction between Battiss and his art, inventions or fantasies; no delineation of the boundaries between Battiss and BATT155, Ferd the Third or any other character played by him.\(^{23}\)

The term *fantasy-reality* points to the fact that Battiss was often (to a greater or lesser degree) simultaneously an actual, practical, mundane person, and an invention and fantasy. In addition to his well-known slogan “I invented myself” Battiss (in Martin 1985:179) says that “reality is fantasy and fantasy is reality [...] art is more real than anything around us because we crystallise it [...] the metaphysical and physical all meet in art and the metaphysical is more real than the physical sometimes”. In a 1975 letter to Dacre Punt (Dearest Dacre #48)\(^{24}\) Battiss writes “sometimes there was another ‘being’ doing [my art] well & better for me”, and in 1980 (Dearest Dacre #91) he writes that “a very strange thing is happening to me: suddenly some other part of me takes over when I draw or paint & it JUST COMES & I’m amazed – like telepathy from a hidden inner part of myself”.

This term is important because it may help to explain how the Fook Island concept and Battiss himself were able to gain and maintain such a large and dedicated following. It also

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\(^{23}\) Battiss has given himself many names. The first he officially “invented in 1972 is] Admiral Ferdinand Fook III, who discovers [Fook Island] on [Battiss’] birthday 6 Jan 1723”. In a 1974 letter (Dearest Dacre #35) he declares that he will henceforth sign his works as “Batt155 or Batt155”. During his trip eastwards across the Pacific (from Sydney Australia to London) in which he was looking for the Cosmic Man, Battiss (in Siebrits 2016a:168) writes that “this is a true story. Goo and Gwa and Mountain alive [aliases for Battiss and two companions] are real people”. Siebrits (2016a:164) cites Battiss who says “I’m getting the idea that Fook is Cosmic Man”. In 1976 (Dearest Dacre #59) Battiss relates that “[I] have decided there are 6 people inhabiting my body”.

\(^{24}\) Dearest Dacre is the name given by Warren Siebrits to a collection of 103 letters sent by Walter Battiss to his close friend and lover Dacre Punt from 1963–1982, and is housed in the UNISA Archives in Pretoria. This archive which was acquired in 2013 provides fascinating and new insights into the life of Battiss as told by him, which hertofore could only be speculated on. The FADA Style and reference guide (FADA 2017:40) states that when citing documents from an archive “not all the possibilities can be mentioned here but always think logically what information you need to give in order for someone else to be able to locate the same source. In this regard I have followed the method of Ginsberg who writes (2016:324) that “the letters have been numbered 1-103 in the top right corner by [the] curator [of the archive]” and who refers to a particular letter by its number, preceded by a number sign (#).
helps to explain how Battiss’ self-invented nature helped him to maintain the playful childlikeness and the empowering ‘escape’ offered by his work throughout his career, despite the fact that he was well aware of, and upset by, issues in the world around him; and was actively engaging with them (Davidow & Eager 1979, Siebrits 2016a). Skawran (1985:12,16,17) writes that “reality and fantasy in Battiss’ work were not alternatives ... the two merged and became his own personalised reality” so he “transformed reality into an exquisite fantasy world ... there existed no boundaries between actuality and fantasy for [him]”. With the term fantasy-reality I intentionally used an oxymoron because this aspect of Battiss’ life and art seems to be wrought with coexisting contradictions. In order to move away from the awkwardness and ineloquence of the term fantasy-reality, and at the same time to situate my meaning in relation to ‘alter-ego’, I coin ego fictus.

I have opted to use Latin for my neologism since there is a long history of this being done by academics who wish to create a new meaning which is unencumbered by popular connotations and understandings of existing words.

Koos Kritzinger (2018) explains that fictus is the perfect participle of fingo which can mean to form, mould, fabricate; invent or imagine; to adapt to or transform into; to modify (one’s appearance, character, behaviour); to groom; to make up (a story or excuse); to pretend or pose; or to feign. I find it appropriate to my meaning that the verb points to an actor that is actively and continually making something, and also that the word has connotations of illusion and fiction. I interpret Battiss’ work as a continuous and active process of reworking the self, and I believe that the best way for any person to be a valuable contributor to society is for them to always be pruning the parts of themselves that appear to be undesirable and reinforcing parts that seem to be valuable to themselves and their society. The added possibility of the fictus being a pose or ruse reinforces Battiss’ artistic self-awareness and feeds into the cheekiness and tricksterism that I believe underlies his oeuvre.

Kritzinger (2018) adds that “the Latin term for ‘sculpture as a science’ is ‘ars fingendi’ – (the art of moulding)”. This further encourages my preference for fingo, for when I apply it to my own work later this highlights the sculptural nature of my practice.
To recapitulate: the *ego fictus* describes Battiss’ life according to his active and constant construction of his identity, both as displayed to the public and in private. Furthermore it points to him actually believing his own fantasies in their entirety at the same time that he is aware that they are fictions. It means that Battiss is aware that his personas are a ruse, and yet that they are the most genuine expressions of himself. It means that Battiss ceases to exist without Ferd and Fook, that Batt155 is not a bitterly ironic mockery or ridicule, but an actual person that lives on Fook Island and in Menlo Park. I want to stress the concomitant existence of fantasy and reality in his life, because if it is not there, then Fook Island is just an in-joke, and one may speculate that something as silly and frivolous could not become an international phenomenon, to which many people did and still do subscribe.

The *ego fictus* also feeds into my argument which is expanded on below, that Battiss’ work is, in many ways, a reaction to the frustrating and restrictive character of apartheid South Africa. Michael Drewett (2014:5-6) with reference to National Party (NP) censorship says that “censorship is about controlling spaces, both figurative and real … [and] censorship of these spaces [is] intertwined so that censorship spaces [are] often at the same time figurative and real”. To some extent Battiss might have been kicking against this ‘evil’ *ego fictus* of the NP and this could have added impetus to his decision to ‘invent himself’.

One of the most visible signs of Battiss’ *ego fictus* is his own appearance. In a 1971 letter to Punt (Dearest Dacre #25) he writes “I’m letting my hair grow long now that I don’t have to attend anymore University Senates. I hear a little girl of 5 saw me in town & told her mother ‘I was a beautiful GYPSY!’”. Norman Catherine (2015), Neville Dubow (1985) and Rose Korber (1982) all describe the image of Battiss as synecdochic to his life and work. When this is considered in the light of the post-modernly self-referential slogan on Battiss’ t-shirt (which reads “I invented myself” below a photograph of his face) Battiss’ choice of dress and personal grooming can be interpreted as important parts of his *ego fictus*. The fact that he looked like a character that would be more at home in Tolkein’s novels (Catherine 2015; Huntley 1989:22) than on planet earth is what drew many people to him. His dress was important to him, since Battiss commissioned a number of shirts and jerseys, including a jersey inscribed “WB REX | FOOKIS INSULAE” (Siebrits 2016a:182), a T-shirt printed with his face and FOOK ISLAND on the front, with FOOK IS FREE on the back (Siebrits 2016a:153), a

There are certainly many internationally popular ideas, many celebrities with cult followings and many utopias and fantasies that are dearly wished for, but in Battiss’ artwork there is something particular that I contend can be well described by what I have laid out above in the term *ego fictus*.

The *ego fictus* is also by definition quite contagious, as Battiss would often confer nicknames and characters onto his friends and lovers, and they would readily accept these (Ginsberg 2016:321). However, it would seem that only in his presence would such a friend’s *ego fictus* come alive. Battiss’ *ego fictus* was a key to him being a “gentle anarchist” (Dubow 1985:93), to his fight against censorship, to his personal life, to standing for gay rights and sexual liberation without losing his clout as a respected academic. Battiss regularly made use of Janus’ imagery and allusions in his art and writing, and this may also be seen as a nod towards the *ego fictus*.

An idea somewhat similar to that of the *ego fictus* for Alexius Meinong’s concept of *sosein* (being-so). According to Meinong’s Jungle (2018:sp) “Meinong … believed that since non-existent things could apparently be referred to, they must have some sort of being, which he termed *sosein*. A unicorn and a Pegasus are both non-being; yet it is true that unicorns have horns and Pegasi have wings”. Although Meinong’s argument is purely in the realm of semantics and the philosophy of logic, it does suggest that there is value in considering imagined things on the same level as real things within certain contexts. Alfred Jarry’s notion of ‘Pataphysics is another ‘science’ which acknowledges the value of imaginary things being equal to reality. Pataphysics (2018:sp) says that “‘Pataphysics is a branch of philosophy or science that examines imaginary phenomena that exist in a world beyond metaphysics; it is the science of imaginary solutions”.

Another observation on the nature of *ego fictus* in Battiss has to do with his stance regarding psychedelic drugs. In his letter to Dacre Punt (Dearest Dacre #29) Battiss explains

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25 A two-headed Roman god of duality, change, transitions (Janus 2018:sp).

26 The apostrophe and initial capital are correct as per Jarry’s original orthography.
that after trying cannabis once, he decides that drugs are not for him, which Catherine (2015:11) confirms. My speculation is that drugs caused a collapse in the *ego fictus* - collapsing fantasy and reality into a single trance state, which being clearly demarcated, must be the antithesis of the *ego fictus* and thus be unappealing to Battiss. Mind-altering substances would obviously put Battiss into another state of mind – one that is not his, not constantly and actively being created by him, but one that is merely a consequence of chemicals (Battiss says in the letter that he feels as though a record is being replayed in his mind, frustrating for someone as changeable and dynamic as he). Battiss’ lack of interest in psychedelic drugs can be further proof that he was living in the oxymoronic simultaneity (of fantasy and reality) of the *ego fictus*.

*Fook/Fookian/proto-Fookian*

I use Fook, Fookian and proto-Fookian interchangeably, and use the various orthographies for stylistic elegance. Battiss has used the word Fook as an adjective without the need to add ‘Island’. Fook also ends up being more than just an island: Battiss invents a Fook philosophy, Cosmic Fookism (C.F.) and often calls himself Fook. Fook is also Zook. In the delocalised whirlpool of ideas, identities and realities of the *ego fictus*, names become less important. Proto-Fookian is used to convey my contention that even before Battiss had named Fook Island, the way he was behaving in his life and making art foreshadows the more concrete ideas set out as part of the Fook Island concept proper. I consider Fook to be, to a large extent, synonymous with the *ego fictus* in Battiss, since, as I have laid out above, the coexistence of fantasy with reality sums up Battiss and his art as a whole, and is most clearly articulated by him in the creation of Fook Island. The existence of proto-Fookian moments suggests, that throughout his life, Battiss was grappling with ideas that were the intellectual ancestors of Fook, and although he did not quite yet know how to express them.

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27 Jack Ginsberg (2016:250,285) uses the word ‘Proto-Fook’ when referring to asemic writing (abstract calligraphy) which predates the final form of Fook script, and ‘Fookians’ to refer to people on whom Battiss conferred a Fook nickname (*ego fictus*). He also uses the word ‘Fookisms’ (Ginsberg 2016:285) in a similar way that one finds ‘anglicisms’ in Afrikaans. Fookisms are English words with a phoneme replaced with ‘Fook’ or a similar sound e.g. certifookit. I accept Ginsberg’s easy coining and use of Fookisms in his study of Fook as precedents for me to refer to things Fookian by various names.

28 This orthography for the abbreviation is given by Battiss, who uses the abbreviation regularly.
at the time, in retrospect, they fit neatly into a sequence of moments leading up to his later work.

**Childlike**

I mean the word childlike as a term of praise. It is a character trait that is to be desired and admired. It is in no way denigrating. It does not at all mean childish. Childlike does not mean ‘not adult’, ‘immature’, ‘underdeveloped’, ‘irresponsible’, ‘credulous’, ‘naïve’, ‘gullible’, or any word that may be seen as a negative aspect of childhood that needs to be outgrown. The term is not patronising, and is not linked to any potentially oppressive systems designed by colonial projects to subject certain groups to others.

I insist on using it because I mean it to encapsulate everything that is beautiful in the ways that children often perceive the world, and to exclude everything that is wicked in the ways adults think and act. I use the word to mean a state where one believes in an absolute Truth, purpose and fairness. It is a state in which the individual can believe in and hope for that which they deem most desirable and good. It is a state in which an individual trusts others because they believe that others will act justly, because justice is the natural state of the world. It is when an individual revels in fantasy not because they are unable to realise that it is ‘not real’, but because although they know it is not, it is more pleasing and useful to do so.

I contend that this particular definition is valid, since Childlike (2018:[sp]) defines the word as “Meaning 'like a child' in a good sense (distinguished from childish)” while Childlike Definition (2018:[sp]) says that a childlike adult has “the good qualities, such as innocence, associated with a child”. Skawran (1985:12) writes that Battiss’ art expresses “a childlike wonder and delight in the world that surrounded him”.

Neoteny is a phenomenon observed in biology, whereby an organism’s development into adulthood is actively delayed for a number of beneficial evolutionary reasons. Retaining certain juvenile traits may make it easier for an organism to obtain resources, conserve energy “and develop their capacity for emotional communication” (Neoteny 2018:[sp]). Dr. Bruce Charlton (in Neoteny in Humans 2018:[sp]) says that “what looks like immaturity — or in his terms, the ‘retention of youthful attitudes and behaviors into later adulthood” -
is actually a valuable developmental characteristic, which he calls psychological neoteny. In fact, the ability of an adult human to learn is considered a neotenous trait”.

While I am fully aware that these examples from biology do not add incontestable evidence to my contention that what I call childlikeness is valid, it is interesting to discover that there are observable benefits in a great number of species that purposely retain juvenile traits into adulthood, including humans. From my perspective Battiss’ necessary retention of certain traits from his childhood is precisely what allowed him to create Fook Island.

*Fiction from evolution*

Noah Harari (2014) presents an interesting theory that places fiction at the centre of the apparent domination of planet earth by humans as a species. Harari’s notion may be summarised by considering that, in general, earlier groups of humans tended to hold animist worldviews in conjunction with hunter-gatherer lifestyles, whereas once humans began practicing agriculture, forming larger communities and the first civilizations, their worldviews shifted towards theistic beliefs in one or more anthropomorphic beings which had power over much larger forces and phenomena than their animistic counterparts. Widely accepted religious and societal fictions allowed the emergence of grand empires, and subsequent legal fictions allowed these societies to grow ever more complex through cooperation.

Harari suggests that hunting-gathering humans had much less control of their food sources, and that what they used and consumed was available as a matter of chance. Foraging humans ate those things that were available in a certain place at a certain time, and when the supply became diminished, there was little that they could do, and so they moved on to a different place. Animist beliefs at the time also placed all life and many inanimate objects in equal (non-hierarchic) relationship to each other. There was little point in petitioning the spirit of a specific animal for anything besides the right to kill and eat it. And if a human was killed and eaten that was considered fair and inevitable.

Harari makes the contention that, in this state, humans have less need for story telling as a tool for survival, for humans were generally quite unable to affect their reality, and trying to explain it would not change anything. Stories were not necessary as a tool for mass social
cohesion, since societies were of necessity very small, and neighbouring societies had minimal interaction.

However, as humans became overly reliant on agriculture for their food, overly dependent on large harvests of a single cereal crop, and were cooperating in larger and larger societies, their need for story telling increased. When a great drought destroyed an entire harvest the people needed to make some sense of their shared disaster, and also needed to be able to petition some greater universal force to do something about the drought (for individual spirits would not suffice) and the community could not quickly or easily move and carry its agricultural way of life elsewhere.

In his book Harari (2014) argues that, as agricultural lifestyles become widespread, fiction really takes centre stage in human affairs and development. Grand and widespread fictions allow cooperation, which is essential in enabling science and technology to advance, because members of a cooperating society are able to specialise in directions other than food production. Grand religious and national fictions allow wars of conquest to be waged against other societies in pursuit of some transcendent goal or ideal, against the simple instinct for self-preservation. Humans are able to conceive of themselves as the divinely appointed overlords of the planet, and become taken by the notion that human progress is something to be pursued at all costs.

Harari points out that our entire modern global world is upheld by a variety of fictions, such as the communal belief of most humans in the sovereignty of states, the value and reliability of fiat currency and the existence of companies as unique and discrete entities that are able to own property and be involved in legal cases independent of the individuals that comprise them.

The point that I am making by mentioning this particular notion of Harari’s is that fiction is a potential source of great power. If, as he argues, fiction is, to some extent, biologically evolved in humans, then it would make sense for humans to learn to exploit this tendency towards fiction for their own purposes. I believe that Battiss had some (perhaps intuitive) understanding of this utility of fiction, and as such invested himself heavily in it.
Another definition of fiction which seems to be in line with what Battiss was doing through Fook is found in the school of philosophy known as Fictionalism. From this point of view, according to Fictionalism (2018:sp) “statements that appear to be descriptions of the world should not be construed as such, but should instead be understood as cases of ‘make believe’, of pretending to treat something as literally true (a ‘useful fiction’)”. This means that nothing is taken for granted to be true, but statements about the world are judged as true according to their usefulness. Gideon Rosen (Fictionalism 2018:sp) says that “possible worlds, regardless of whether they exist or not, may be a part of a useful discourse”, thus an idea or postulated situation that is useful to people is as real as the ‘useful fiction’ that the sun will definitely rise tomorrow morning; and in the same way that the ‘useful fiction’ of stating in abstract terms that $50 + 20 = 70$ is as valid as a person exchanging money for goods and change.

From this particular point of view the happiness and freedom provided by Fook Island are in fact more real than oppression and despotism, because there is more utility for a person in joy than in suffering. Once again, I understand that the philosophy of Fictionalism is not meant to be taken literally, but it is interesting to note that what Battiss does through Fook is validated by what other people have done at various times and in different fields of human endeavour.

A last indication of fiction having an application to real life is raised by Margreet De Lange (1997:84-85) who describes how South African author Nadine Gordimer was able to insert and, in doing so, widely distribute, political pamphlets that were strictly banned, by including them in the fictional exchanges taking place in her novels. De Lange (1997:85) says that “the author of the novel can hide behind the screen of fiction and say: “It’s not me, it’s the character who says that.” If the statements are not traced back to their source ... quotation becomes a clever subversive strategy because it made banned statements available inside South Africa”.

Play, and fantasy/reality differentiation in children

Until the turn of the 21st century, the majority of literature on children’s ability to distinguish between fantasies (such as imaginary friends, or Santa Claus) and reality was based on Piaget’s (cited in Sharon & Woolley 2004:293) contention that, until about the age
of 12, children are unable to effectively know the difference between imagined and actual events (Cook & Sobel 2011:1). Building on this, Richard Dawkins (cited in Sharon & Woolley 2004:293) hypothesises that extreme credulity in children is an evolutionary adaptation which makes it possible for children to learn and accept so much new information in their first years.

However, a number of articles written in the last ten years, which are based off experimental clinical studies, have shown that children are often more sceptical of new information than adults. However, Weisberg (2013:75) also notes that children are experts at navigating realms of fantasy and that their love of pretence and play is not an indication of their inability to distinguish fantasy from reality, but a tool that they use to explore new possibilities and entertain themselves (Weisberg 2013:87). Weisberg (2013:87) goes on to say that when confronted with a silly or impossible scenario “it is [the children’s] noticing of the difference between this [playful] action and typical, serious actions that leads to their enjoyment of play”. This ability to abandon themselves to fantasy while knowing that it is not real points towards ego fictus.

Christopher Bonovitz, (2010:629) writing about child’s play, also suggests something of ego fictus when he says that:

It is possible to find “real frogs in imaginary gardens”. Tapping into the creative flow of fantasy ... requires the capacity to play, being able to tolerate an “as if” space where an object is both itself and represents something else at the same time. The capacity to play allows for fantasy and reality to remain intertwined.

Therefore, when I refer to Battiss’ childlikeness and enjoyment of play I am not denigrating or making light of his work, which is highly sophisticated and intelligent. I mean, rather, that Battiss is able to create spaces, characters and events in his mind that set him free to test and explore ideas and experiences that are inaccessible to him at a given moment or place.

Sanja Metličar (2014:159-160) describes an experiment where children had to classify events, which were designed to appear positive (the likelihood of an unseen fairy in a box) or negative (a monster in the box), as more or less likely. Children tend to give preference to the possibility of positive events while they are more likely to classify negative events as
impossible. Battiss shows a similar optimism in his work, despite the fact that he is aware of many problems in the world around him.

Maliki Ghossainy and Jacqueline Woolley (2013:1496) have examined the tendency of children to believe in characters and events as given through religious texts and cultural convention, and discovered that especially younger children are often more sceptical of these stories than adults. Children’s belief in ‘given’ fantasies (such as the tooth fairy or Santa Claus) starts to increase with age, as trusted adults continue to insist that they are real, and perform rituals associated with the fantasies (such as leaving a tooth under a pillow in exchange for a gift, and erecting a Christmas tree). These fantasies have limited scope for flexibility and authority from the children, and when they are eventually shown to be unreal can cause distress for children. However, in fantasies created during play, of which the children are authors and have creative freedom, the children are less likely to confuse these fantasies with reality, but at the same time able to explore more truly novel possibilities. The fact that Battiss allowed any participant in the Fook Island fantasy to add to it, and become (for example) a king or a queen as they desired, is in line with a childlike approach rather than an institutional approach to fantasy.

Nearly 40 years before these new studies were carried out, Battiss wrote down the tenets of his philosophy called Cosmic Fookism (C.F.). He says that “most philosophies and religions exist outside oneself and one can come to them, receive them & be changed by them. Cosmic Fookism works another way: you already exist inside yourself rich with plenitude and it is you that brings something extra to cosmic Fookism so that C.F. is changed by you and the qualities of yourself” (Siebrits 2016a:190). Battiss has intuitively grasped and mirrored what researchers would later confirm with clinical experiments: that a fantasy which is centred around an individual enriches them, whereas a given or dogmatic fantasy can only change the individual according to the prescriptions and proscriptions of existing power structures and societal norms. In Siebrits (2016a:178) Battiss writes “I became more mature in America discovering the adolescent ways of mature people – all playing games with enormous energy & anything goes”.

Kathryn Smith (2005b:[sp]) writes that “we see parallels between Battiss’ increasing interest in performance and his growing older, a kind of reverse process of playfulness. Battiss says
that ‘happiness belongs to youth but I’m finding it as I get older’”. This is echoed by Siebrits (2016b:[sp]) who points out that right after completing high school Battiss made a strong effort to fit into a ‘normal’ way of life for white South Africans at the time. He was the youngest superintendent of the Wesleyan Sunday School in the Transvaal, was employed as a government clerk, and married young. He resigned from his clerical work to become an art teacher, first at Turffontein, where he dealt with poor and unmotivated jockeys. When this grew vexing he had the opportunity to move to Pretoria Boys High School (PBHS, a prestigious middleclass school) where he started to manifest some Fookian foolery in his classes, for example, sitting at a self-made throne while teaching his students. When he was granted the first ever Fine Arts professorship at the University of South Africa (UNISA) (more prestige and respectability!), he ensconced himself in an office that was proclaimed to be the headquarters of ISSIP. From his retirement (now a dignified old man) onwards he codified and totally embraced the full fantastic possibilities of Fook Island.

Thus, instead of progressing from a childish state into greater maturity (inflexible, unexcited) as one would expect from an aging person, Battiss started out with attempts to be serious and sombre, and as his social standing and position became more respectable, he became equally more childlike, until at last, rather than being a timid and sober-minded senior citizen and bureau-bound ex-professor, Battiss was travelling to hippie youth festivals across the world and revelling in unrestrained living. In a letter to Dacre Punt (Dearest Dacre #45) Battiss says “strange, I’m not getting older inside but getting younger within”. Dubow (1985:94) reiterates this idea, arguing that “the normal pattern of those who hold authority is to entrench attitudes and, with age, to become more conservative, to resist change. With Battiss this was the opposite”.

Before discussing Fook Island and analysing selected Fook artworks, here follows a brief overview of censorship practices under the National Party dominated apartheid South Africa to set the context in which Battiss was making art.

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29 Battiss spent 6 months at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, which had a negative impact on his financial situation with regards to his pension fund. This episode is described in a very negative light by Battiss and seems to have had very little impact in his life, besides the fact that he became more reliant on art making as a source of pension income (Siebrits 2016a: 48).
Censorship in South Africa

For my discussion of censorship in South Africa I am heavily indebted to Margreet de Lange (1997). Her thorough overview and examination of the subject includes extensive case studies and examples from history that other writers on the subject only cite or engage with in part. De Lange focuses on the censorship of South African authored literature, which I have found to be the best point from which to discuss National Party censorship in general and as a whole (as opposed to a focus on film or visual arts). Firstly: I have found the greater number of publications that focus on literary censorship, which may be because there is an extensive and detailed record of bans and appeals to the Publications Appeal Board (PAB) and other state and paralegal bodies (De Lange 1997:25,48,51,77,82,140-141), which include the given (purported) reasons for the censorship of each particular text.

Secondly: literature faced less auto-censorship than film (which, due to high production costs, and government subsidy schemes, would either be highly edited or simply not be made if the studio suspected an outright ban beforehand (Tomaselli 1989:33,139-140,220)) but faced more censorship than visual arts. Film generally reaches a wider audience than literature (it has a specific and relatively short playing time, and literacy is not required from the viewer) whereas visual arts typically have a much narrower audience reach compared to novels (viewers have to visit the gallery or access limited editions of catalogues or photographic reproductions), so novels occupy a ‘balanced’ centre for analysis. From 1979 to 1989, under Kobus van Rooyen (the last director of the PAB) the idea of a “likely reader” of a text, as opposed to the “average man” was introduced as a way to ‘soften’ censorship laws (De Lange 1997:9). This meant that ‘high literature’ with great “literary value” could be unbanned, since it was deemed unlikely to foment discord, or because “the negative publicity produced by bans on well-known authors did more harm than the works themselves” (De Lange 1997:9). The records of the PAB in this regard represent a valuable historical resource.

30 In Art at the end of apartheid by John Peffer (2009) the word ‘censor’ appears only twice in the book’s 350 pages: once in a chapter heading and once in that chapter’s text, where it refers to the censorship not of a visual artwork, but a newspaper which censored its own articles as a form of protest.
De Lange (1997:xii) marks the period 1963 to 1985 as the most significant with regards to a study of censorship in South Africa, beginning with the *Publications and Entertainments Act* (which saw the first bannings of white Afrikaans authors) up to the state of emergency which signalled the swansong of the National Party and minority rule. Although I find this to be a very useful focus for censorship in South Africa, especially for my focus on Battiss, the censorship and banning of foreign films brought to South Africa begins as early as 1910, when a United States picture about race was banned (Tomaselli 1989:13-14). Restrictions were heightened in 1913, 1916 and 1917 and culminated in the Entertainment Act of 1931 which required all films to receive “clearance before public screening” (Tomaselli 1989:13-14). The Act was amended in 1934 to prevent “film societies, particularly those with ‘native members,’ from screening ‘communist propaganda’” (Tomaselli 1989:13-14).

*The NP’s ‘average citizen’*

To illustrate the attitude of the ruling National Party to the role of censorship De Lange (1997:15) quotes “one of the architects of apartheid, Hendrik Verwoerd” who describes “the traditional Afrikaner conception of a writer’s role” by saying that “what is required of the writer is not a question but an affirmation [of Afrikaner morals and norms]”. De Lange next quotes Andries Treurnicht, author of *The Creed of an Afrikaner* (1975) who says that “an Afrikaner author should portray the Afrikaner, emphasizing his Christian religion, his respect for the Immorality Act and his desire for chastity”.

For a description of what kind of citizen the NP government imagined it was protecting through censorship De Lange (1997:19) quotes the PAB director Kobus van Rooyen who believes that “the standards [for censorship] are that of the community at large as represented by the average decent-minded, law-abiding, modern and enlightened citizen with Christian principles”. De Lange (1997:16) sums up the attitudes of the NP as “inflexibility, anti-individualism, idealism, and obsession with purity”. I argue below that Fook Island is self-evidently a reaction, at least in part, to this sort of thinking; to the fact that anyone outside of the NP’s narrow definition of the “average citizen” is somehow faulty or abnormal, as well as to the state’s audacity in limiting and defining what constitutes ‘normality’.
Although censorship was presented as a form of moral protection of the people by the state, it can be argued that in South Africa under the NP its true and main function was political control over the minds and lives of all South Africans in order to naturalise and cement the untenable control which the NP hoped to enforce into perpetuity (De Lange 1997:48). De Lange (1997:xii) links censorship to colonisation, for all South Africans, enforced “from within by those who had engineered political structures for the maintenance of rule by a minority” and goes on to say that “censorship is not only the control of … forms of art: it is the offspring of political control”. Battiss reacted to this ‘colonisation’ by establishing a colony on the Island of Fook.

_Censorship and Battiss_

In a letter to the Sunday Times of 9 June 1968 Battiss (in Siebrits 2016a:82) writes that “it is deplorable that [meritorious art] should be removed … because a few people objected to several nudes in the paintings … the time has come for a public outcry”. Battiss (in Siebrits 2016a:82) argues that artwork should not be censored by “people who know nothing about the rudiments of art” as this “could kill all the creative art” in South Africa.

Much of Battiss’ work entails a criticism of South African censorship laws (either implicitly or explicitly). In 1971 Battiss was made the vice-chairperson of the Pasquino Society, a “watchdog organisation opposing acts of censorship in South Africa” (Siebrits 2016a:126); and the joint president of the African Council for Art. Battiss’ dislike of censorship and restrictions on the freedoms of people in general is exemplified in Fook Island, a “free” place where anyone can “become a king or a queen” (Catherine 2015:3,9). In addition to this I agree with De Lange (1997:1) who suggests that “in a country such as South Africa, or any country with repressive censorship laws, to ignore the role of censorship in the creation of a literary [or other creative] work is to overlook a critical element in that work”. Siebrits (2016a:82) echoes this, saying that “Battiss pursued erotica as a political gesture. It expresses his opposition to the rampant and damaging effects of state censorship”.

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31 Battiss was responding to the Saambou National Building Society’s decision to cancel an exhibition by Chris van den Berg because “the main theme of all the paintings is sex and drugs” (Siebrits 2016a:82)

Drewett (2014:8) writes that because of NP censorship “power exercised in favour of the dominant discourse was no longer centralised but ... was everywhere, in this instance expressed through self-policing” through an “awareness that one’s creative products would in all likelihood be scrutinised by a board of censors. For the state, this surreptitious transference of responsibility to the personal level, in a sense allowing the state to occupy and control personal space, was certainly ideal”. This invasion by the state of the personal space of citizens may have contributed unconsciously to Battiss’ desire to create an island state that would always be separated from this state and instantly accessible – a space that would be intertwined with the personal lives of those who participated in Fook Island as well as those who simply viewed and enjoyed Fook artworks or hung them in their homes.

A significant contrast between NP censorship and Fook Island can be found in Van Rooyen’s statement that the censor is not so concerned with how the “average citizen himself acts but how he believes, after serious reflection, the average citizen should act in society” (cited in De Lange 1997:19, emphasis added). Along with De Lange’s (1997:20) observations that “just as the average citizen focussed on how he should act, the censor, in publications, preferred to see reality depicted as it should be rather than as it was” and that “this Afrikaner utopia still seemed an attainable goal in the seventies. Literature was therefore called upon to comply in large measure with the vision of Afrikaner utopian society” (De Lange 1997:29). It can be argued that the NP was engaging in the creation of its own ‘evil’ utopia or ego fictus (perhaps to be called an ego diabolis?): and therefore that Fook Island and Battiss’ ego fictus entail a strong and direct counterpoint to NP censorship.

Speaking about the censorship of music in South Africa, Drewett (2014:5-6) describes how censorship is about controlling spaces, both figurative and real: geographic spaces such as the borders between countries and between segregated ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ areas and venues; physical spaces such as on vinyl records and record covers or newspaper stories; metaphorical spaces such as the literal and figurative meaning of lyrics; sonic spaces such as songs heard or not heard on the airwaves; discursive spaces, where ideological battles are fought over what can and cannot be uttered, and social space, dependent on the various forms of capital possessed by those involved in struggles over positions within fields relating to popular music. Censorship of these spaces was intertwined so that censorship spaces were often at the same time figurative and real.
This link between the differing manifestations of space and censorship as a tool of exclusion and separation is pertinent to Battiss’ decision to define Fook Island as a discrete place. Whether consciously or unconsciously in reaction to the abovementioned policing of space, he creates a place that is wholly inclusive and removed from the politics of NP South Africa. Fook Island and ego fictus are at the same time figurative and real such as the censorship spaces, thus entailing a fight-fire-with-fire reaction from Battiss.

_Battiss’ particular approach to censorship_

Margreet De Lange (1997) analyses the strategies of three groups of South African authors with regards to avoiding or subverting censorship. ³³ Although Battiss is not an author of novels, he is an author of fantasies and narratives, and does employ some of the strategies mentioned by De Lange. It is noteworthy, however, that although Battiss uses many of the below strategies on occasion, in general, he tends to employ a unique holistic/total strategy to bypass censorship in many artworks and especially in the form of Fook Island (According to Catherine (2015) even the name ‘Fook’ was deliberately close to ‘Fuck’, so that although it sounded dirty, it wasn’t provably so, yet the “censorship people they must have frowned upon it but they didn’t quite know how to deal with it I’m sure or they were too scared to say the word Fook in case”). Below I compare De Lange’s discussions of these strategies with what Battiss did.

For De Lange (1997:2) censorship causes an author to be constantly aware of writing for two readers: the censor and the literary reader; and she argues that it is in response to this discrepancy that the author devises various strategies for bypassing the one yet reaching the other. De Lange (1997:2) posits that, as possible responses, “the extremes are silence and martyrdom (ignore the censor)” but she observes that “these have the same result: no communication with the intended readership”. A third option is “masking ways of telling [which] in Russian literature … has been called Aesopian language … a special literary system, one whose structure allows interaction between author and reader at the same

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³³ De Lange analyses white authors writing in Afrikaans, white authors writing in English, and black authors writing in English, and suggests that each group has different motivations for using a certain number of censorship-avoidance strategies. Examples include André Brink, Karel Schoeman and Louis Krüger; Nadine Gordimer, Christopher Hope and JM Coetzee; Miriam Tlali and Mtutulezi Matshoba (from each category respectively)
time that it conceals inadmissible content from the censor” (Loseff, quoted in de Lange 1997:2).

Because NP censors tended to be government bureaucrats rather than literary scholars or specialists they were likely to read work literally, unable to pick up on “allegorical and the symbolic imagery” (De Lange 1997:2). De Lange (1997:2) argues that “authors who use evasive strategies that remove a text from a political frame of reference that is considered dangerous by the censor” stand a better chance of reaching the intended readership. For De Lange (1997:2) “an author committed to change the status quo through his work, has to believe that his work does more than present a fictional world in which references to the extraliterary reality are irrelevant. Yet, authors whose work has been banned often defend themselves by referring to the fictional nature of their work”. The above approaches are sometimes employed by Battiss when, at the superficial level of analysis, his work seems innocuous and disconnected from politics, but upon delving deeper his work reveals its political nature and social relevance.

Devices that Battiss used in common with authors Christopher Hope and JM Coetzee include “indeterminacy of time and place (a form of dislocation)” and “allegory and utopia … to move a story to a different level of abstraction” (De Lange 1997:4). Battiss made particularly strong use of dislocation, in that the sheer confusion and disorientation introduced through the Fook Island fantasy could render censors ineffective against him, as they are unable to effectively pigeon-hole his work or separate fiction from reality, joke from attack or characters and places from their possible real-world referents. In a 1970 letter to Punt (Dearest Dacre #19) Battiss writes that in South Africa there are “no real films except ‘IF’ badly cut. But I guessed the missing parts or pretend I guessed”. Battiss here refutes censorship by simply imagining what has been removed. Based on his views regarding erotica and sexuality it is not unreasonable to assume that what Battiss imagined would have been far more shocking to the NP censors than what they had removed in the first place.

When De Lange (1997:90) compares two works by Nadine Gordimer she says that “although each work is politically inspirational on its own terms, A Sport of Nature, the more

34 Burger’s Daughter (1979) and A Sport of Nature (1987)
utopian of the two, was the less susceptible to banning and therefore, more likely to reach its intended audience”. Utopianism is a very strong element in Fook Island, and likely introduced, in part, for the same reason as Gordimer used it. Speaking of satire in literature, De Lange (1997:100-101) says that it is a “dangerous technique” whose object “is to make a person or an object look ridiculous without exposing the writer to too much danger”. She cites exaggeration as a key technique for satire, saying that “to blow certain aspects of a subject out of proportion exposes the absurdity already present”. This was employed by Battiss in the creation of Dumb Dolly (1971 discussed below). De Lange goes on to warn that “exaggeration can at the same time ... be taken with so large a pinch of salt that it reduces the serious foundation of the satire to a joke” which is one way in which Fook Island could have missed overt political impact in South Africa, if it was perceived as being too idyllic.

Referring to the use of satire in A Separate Development by Christopher Hope (1980) De Lange (1997:95) notes that “the satiric tone focuses attention on the absurdity of the [apartheid] system under attack but also serves as an excuse to deny the seriousness of the book and reduce it to a comic entertainment”. Battiss misses falling under this same criticism for two reasons. Firstly, he was not directly satirising or deriding the state of NP South Africa, but rather presents a completely new and idealised alternative that supersedes reality, and secondly Battiss’ work is already so richly and intentionally suffused with humour, and thus cannot be “reduce[d] to a comic entertainment”, as that is what Battiss already made it to be.

Raymond van Niekerk (1985:102) writes that “Battiss used laughter as a weapon”, and his approach to overcoming censorship often entails using humour to unsettle the censor to the extent that they leave Battiss alone for fear of embarrassing themself. Siebrits (2016a:126) cites an anecdote told him about Battiss: when a customs official tried to confiscate his sketchbook of erotica Battiss replied “that’s nothing, I can draw you much dirtier ones if you like” which so unbalanced and embarrassed the official that he ended up taking nothing. In a similar way, when some staff at Pretoria Boys High School anonymously removed one of Battiss’ paintings from the staff room walls, Battiss mentioned at the next staff meeting that if the painting was not returned, he would simply paint another. The painting was promptly returned (Harrop-Allin 1971:29). It is because of Battiss’ employment of these techniques
that Dubow (1985:94) writes that “among the several figures in the arts speaking out against censorship, it was Battiss who commanded the major part of the headlines.”

Regarding subtle protest and resistance to censorship De Lange (1997:116) explains that “the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) was more a psychological movement than a pragmatic political movement directed toward the white world. It believed that psychological liberation through conscientisation should precede the struggle for political liberation”. One may draw a tentative parallel from this strategy of BCM to Battiss’ Cosmic Fookism (discussed below) which was also a movement for psychological liberation through conscientisation, albeit without the same terrible history and context of oppression that underpins the emergence of BCM.

Close to the end of his life Battiss was embroiled in a heated debate around the Republic Day Festival\textsuperscript{35} in which he had been invited to participate. The Durban press told Battiss that the exhibition was politically motivated and participant artists are aiding and abetting apartheid. Battiss, planning on withdrawing, writes to Murray Schoonraad (in Siebrits 2016a:219) that “FOR THE FIRST TIME my art seems to be involved in politics ... I always keep out of such things & place art far above politics”. Hans Fransen urgently tried to convince Battiss not to withdraw, writing (in Siebrits 2016a:219-220) that the exhibition “is not a political event” and that “Art ... is an enlightening factor in any country badly needing its horizons broadened”. In a second letter Battiss (in Siebrits 2016a:220) agreed to participate under the disclaimer that “for my conscience and beliefs, everything will be alright if the following two statements can be added to my work: My art celebrates Life, Love, Freedom. In art there is no apartheid, no censorship”. At the end, however, Battiss withdrew completely, writing that “I want to come out clean and my art is more precious to me than anything else ... & NOW even my 2 statements look in retrospect like politics”.

Battiss’ wish to distance his art from overt, main-stream political contexts echoes De Lange’s (1997:125) quoting Judge Albie Sachs, who says that artists in Democratic South Africa

\textsuperscript{35} Battiss was under the impression he was participating in the Republic Arts Festival. I acknowledge that I have neglected to mention the 1979 State of the Art in South Africa Conference, at which artists undertook to boycott all state-funded arts initiatives, including the Republic Day Festival. Battiss withdrew from the Festival for his own reasons, as I have described above.
‘should be banned from saying that culture is a weapon of struggle’ … [because] ‘our artists are not pushed to improve the quality of their work[;] it is enough that it be politically correct. The more fists and spears and guns, the better. The range of themes is narrowed down so much that all that is funny or curious or genuinely tragic in the world is extruded. Ambiguity and contradiction are completely shut out, and the only conflict permitted is that between the old and the new, as if there were only bad in the past and only good in the future’.

A final strategy that Battiss used against censorship was to censor Fook itself. For his 1979 retrospective in Pretoria Battiss intentionally changes FOOK to ZOOK, in protest of the Pretoria Art Museum (PAM) curatorship’s decision to include no erotic works in the exhibition. Zook entails a subtle insult of PAM in light of Siebrits’s (2016a:206) suggestion that Battiss made his decision due to Pretoria not being ready for the experience of Fook.

Challenges particular to black authors

De Lange (1997:4) explains that black authors in the 1960s to 1980s seldom attempted to sidestep censorship by disguising the content of their work, since they often had little more to lose by this than by making a direct attack on the establishment. Black authors would struggle to have their work published widely, and if a publisher was found they would struggle to find ways to be able to distribute the works at prices that could be afforded by the majority of black South Africans: “a drastically cut price not exceeding R3” (Mutloatse, quoted in De Lange 1997:127). For black authors the risk of banning was just another part of the black struggle at large. I conjecture that for white authors intentionally risking censorship was (amongst many other reasons) a way to feel a sense of purpose, and of feeling that they were taking an active stand against apartheid (without straying too far from their comfort zone); and that for them the alternative (self censorship) constituted a slow death. For black authors being censored was one amongst many injustices that plagued every part of their lives under the NP’s apartheid laws.

De Lange (1997:4) also notes that

the function of black literature was primarily political. That function would have been jeopardized if black experience had not been conveyed in a direct way. A masking way of telling also masks the political message. Moreover, the devices used in white literature assume a cultural framework on the part of the reader without which the reader cannot decode the message. That framework was not the same as that of black readers. The
primary option for a black writer was to ignore censorship even if this meant that his work would be banned.

Gordimer (quoted in De Lange 1997:132) asks “why may white writers deal with inflammables? It is because the new censorship dispensation has understood something important to censorship as an arm of repression — while white writings are predominant critical and protestant in mood, black writings are inspirational, and that is why the Government fears them”. In light of this statement I venture to say that, although Battiss’ work was not “critical and protestant” but “inspirational”, he bypassed the censorship that “inspirational” art would usually be subject to through the unique strategies discussed above.

Absurdity of NP censorship

Battiss (in Siebrits 2016a:104) says that “we should develop a sense of humour about the ridiculous things in our country”, which is exactly what he does. Christopher Merrett (1982:5) recalls one of “the ridiculous things” perpetrated by the NP, remarking that when “Nadine Gordimer refused to appeal against the ban on Burger’s Daughter as this would legitimize the system … South Africa was treated to the bizarre spectacle of the Directorate of Publications appealing against its own ban to itself”. Drewett (2014:3) notes the absurd law banning empty spaces in a publication which was enforced in response to the Weekly Mail intentionally leaving open spaces and redacting lines of text to draw attention to a number of unpublishable words and stories in their 20 June 1986 edition.

The censors strike back

The PAB was in certain cases able to ridicule a work by uncensoring it and then patronising the author through the reasons given for this decision. Referring to Hope’s novel, De Lange (1997:95) notes that “because A Separate Development is a satire and the narrator an outcast, the PAB decided that the work should not be taken too seriously and could therefore not be subversive”. In the words of the PAB (quoted in De Lange 1997:95) it is this that makes the willing suspension of disbelief, so necessary in all convincing fiction, difficult for the reader and makes the story unfunny and rather silly at times. To read incitement to disorder and subversion into all this is to bring a kind of seriousness into the reading of the novel that the novel itself does not warrant or to ascribe to it an effect that it simply does not achieve.
The picture of South Africa painted by the above discussion of censorship sets the stage for Battiss ‘discovering’ Fook Island.

**Fook Island**

Siebrits (2016a:109) says that Battiss invented Fook Island one day in 1972, after a trip to London where he encountered much conceptual art which, to him, was “a selfish thing that an artist makes up and pins to a wall” (Battiss in Davidow 1979:sp). From the outset Battiss decided that Fook had to be for others, inclusive of others, and require the collaboration of others, as this would make the concept into something real. Norman Catherine was called upon in 1972 to produce the first Fook stamps. In 1974 the first official Fook exhibition/happening took place at the Goodman-Wolman Gallery in Cape Town, and the following year in Johannesburg a grand launch exhibition took place.

Battiss, needing a name for the fake island he was to create, says that he opened up a London telephone directory and looked at names listed under the letter ‘F’. He discovered the name ‘Fook’ and decided that it was the right name for his Island (Davidow 1979:sp). Catherine (2015) feels that the name is perfect because it avoided censorship, since the censors were afraid to say it out loud, being unsure whether it was meant to be lascivious or not. In his letter to Dacre Punt on 9 February 1974 (Dearest Dacre #33) Battiss writes that “my Fook Island idea is developing very well. Will make coronation stamps with my co-printer (Norman Catherine) as a king with a crown & he will do one of me with a crown. For sheer low-class vulgarity and philatelic kitsch it should be a success”. This indicates how lightly Battiss took the concept at first, when compared with his description in *Fook Book 2* (1979) of Cosmic Fookism(C.F.).

I have identified three main themes within the Fook Island concept which may have contributed to its successful and long-lived nature that was eagerly adopted by many people. Firstly, Fook was a natural extension of Battiss’ personal *ego fictus*: a well-fitting

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36 A description of the tenets of C.F. can be found in the archives of the Walter Battiss Museum in Somerset East, and is reprinted in Siebrits (2016a:190).
consolidation of the preceding proto-Fookian moments and a project vast enough to last beyond his own lifespan. Secondly, Fook Island was a way to make conceptual art tangible and accessible to the layperson. This accessibility was achieved by presenting Fook as a form of entertainment, and was an important way to thrust contemporary art into the consciousness of a South African public that was not only generally conservative and resistant to change, but also facing censorship and international sanctions. Thirdly in Fook Battiss made use of parody to manifest the *ego fictus*: by satirising real-world ephemera such as passports and money, and creating Fookian alternatives Battiss cemented Fook into reality. These three main points are all expressions of playfulness and childlikeness and are means to escape to a parallel and alternate reality.

**Accessibility of Fook**

When asked what Fook Island is, Catherine (2015) without hesitating responds that he “always saw it as a another reality, a reality of the mind” and says that, although the intent was not for it to function only as a mental escape, it was nevertheless “a form of escapism ... from the harsh reality of the world we live [in], especially South Africa”. Catherine, who has no formal tertiary arts education, stresses the fact that from the outset Fook was presented as accessible and uncomplicated, and could appeal to any demographic. The fact that he saw Fook as entertainment helped Catherine (2015) to become part of it without the apprehension or self-doubt that he experienced when making his personal art works.

The liveliness and atmosphere of a participatory, slightly chaotic carnival (Hubrig 1979; Huntley 1989; Smith 2005a) is what set Fook exhibitions apart from others in South Africa at the time. Battiss’ playful and indignant dismissal of gallery conventions, and his understanding of the *happenings* that were taking place in the international art world, set Fook exhibitions simultaneously within the realm of the educated artistic avant-garde and within reach of the layperson. In his 1 December 1977 letter to Dacre Punt (Dearest Dacre #73) Battiss writes that the Progressive Federal Party “hauled me out of my sick bed to take a political photograph. Fook even in SA Politics ... SA Politics is Fookian!! Quite unreal”. This is evidence of the respect that certain South Africans had for Battiss, probably because of, rather than in spite of his eccentric lifestyle.
In the same letter to Punt, Battiss (referring to some previous conversation or correspondence with Dacre) says that:

Apropos Norman’s article: it’s Norman Catherine’s Fook, not mine. Fookianity is like Christianity – everyone makes it his own way. So I don’t mind because Fook is getting internationally known – the idea that I got walking up Alymer Road, London a year or so ago [sic]. And now there’s Dennis’ Fook. He’s gotten to Hawaii and will publish the Fooksie Wooksie Fook Cook Book which the publishers will call EATING LIGHT & I think this is a marvellous title. So Fook is spreading.

_Ego fictus and ritual_

As mentioned above, his _ego fictus_, his appearance and personality were all key parts of the success of Fook Island. Catherine (2015) recalls that Battiss “could change his skin like a chameleon [...] he could change and get into the spirit of whatever he thought of with ease” and that at any particular moment he was fully immersed in what he was doing. Kathryn Smith (2005a:60) says that “Battiss was always performing Battiss”. Catherine (2015) relates that he and Battiss never specifically entered into a Fook Island ‘mode’ when creating art work, but would seamlessly slip into and out of the Fook mindset.

Battiss often acted out Fookian ceremonies in secret, without a specific audience in mind, and was often discovered by friends, by chance. At an evening event that entailed the reading of the Fook language by Walter Saunders, Battiss sneaked out of the auditorium, disrobed, and ran naked amongst the trees, performing a rain dance. Catherine (2015) relates how he came to notice a white figure darting in and out of the shadows underneath the trees, and realised that it must be Battiss. On another occasion “Karin Skawran describes calling on Battiss at home one day, to find him naked in a cardboard box in his garden, with only his head sticking out the top. When asked what he was doing, he replied that he was trying to feel what it was like to be a battery chicken (Smith 2005a:66). The series of photographs by MC Botha entitled Battiss and Sue doing Thai-Chi records a ritual carried out by Battiss in his home garden with the hitch-hiker known only as Canadian Su (who he had picked up on his way back to Pretoria from his retreat at Leisure Bay, KwaZulu, spent time with at the Kassel Dokumenta, and at a hippie festival in the US, whereafter he never saw her again, although she continued to send him letters).
These rituals were carried out whether Battiss was alone or in a group, being somehow recorded, or not (although it will be impossible for a researcher to do more than guess at the latter) indicates that Battiss was always in his *ego fictus*, in the sense that learning what it feels like to be a battery chicken, naked in a box, is as logical or normal to Battiss as brushing his teeth. Smith (2005b:[sp]) says that “these documented public events were ‘public’ in the sense that they didn’t happen in the privacy of his studio, but they may not have been produced necessarily with an audience in mind”. For Smith (2005b:[sp]) any photographs, illustrations or recollections of the ritual/performance/happening “become sites in themselves”.

*Parody in Fook*[^1]

In 1971 Battiss (in Macnamara 1971:41) says that he “think[s] satire should become an important part of the South African life”, with reference to his *Dumb Dolly*. The *ego fictus* must contain some degree of parody (imitation with critical distance), since fantasy always entails some degree of imitation of reality. In Fook the clearest example of this is in the creation of objects such as stamps, passports, maps and currencies, which (being linked to bureaucracy and control) may seem an odd choice for a fantasy island that celebrates freedom, fluidity and no central control. When every citizen is able to be king or queen and issue their own form of official bureaucratic ephemera, then these titles and objects lose their capacity to cause anxiety by limiting and restricting citizens, and become the vehicle of new exchanges and expressions.

Catherine (2015) says that one of the reasons that Battiss invented Fook Island was that “the art world [had become] quite serious and compartmentalised”. By presenting a new ‘movement’ or ‘moment’ or ‘conceptual style’ to the art world (one that by definition has no clear stylistic requirements or restrictions) Battiss parodies the structured study and presentation of art. Catherine says that he never really took his Fook art very seriously, yet it is now the subject of much serious study, another “ironic inversion” (Hutcheon 1985:6), or parody.

[^1]: I present an in-depth discussion in Chapter 2 where I define what I mean by, and how I use, the terms ‘satire’, ‘parody’, ‘humour’, and ‘play’, and there I refer specifically to Battiss playful ‘copies’ of real-world objects like money and passports.
Parody also enhanced Fook Island’s accessibility to the layperson, who might have been unsure of how to approach something so unfamiliar and unstructured. Catherine (2015:9) describes how Battiss dug up a Fook artefact before an audience, with all of the pomp that would accompany the discovery of an ancient and valuable archaeological find. Battiss naturally planted the object there in the first place, but by parodying the ‘moment of discovery’ the audience in attendance was able to understand the significance of the object.

**Playful childlikeness and escape**

The use of parody, *ego fictus* and an entertaining style to create Fook Island are all tools to evoke the desired mindset within the artists making Fookian art, and to draw the desired response out of the participating public or audience. The desired response of Fook is for people to access the childlike part of themselves (or to escape the reality of their adult situation) not as mere distraction or denial, but as an energising or empowering act. Catherine (2015:14) says “It was good therapy just to think [the Fookian way]. You don’t have to read books about it, you could read just one page and see a couple of things and it would stimulate you to see how you could have something unique to say or have something special in this world to offer”.

This playfulness offered by Fook may have helped Battiss to bear being an artistic English boy isolated within an Afrikaans community. The escape offered by Fook may be what allowed many schoolboys at PBHS to cope through their difficult adolescent years. The invigorating possibilities of childlikeness may be what allowed a 70 year old Battiss to take part in a free love gathering of young hippies, and what made journalists, art collectors and academics become so enamoured with Battiss. The escape to a simple world could be what helped Norman Catherine to stay hopeful through difficult times in his life.

**International sexual revolution, or, Hippies**

Battiss was involved in the international Hippie movement, a group known for “creating their own communities, listening to psychedelic music, embracing the sexual revolution, and many used drugs such as marijuana, LSD, peyote and psilocybin mushrooms to explore altered states of consciousness” (Hippie 2018:[sp]). Of the list of characteristics described above, Battiss was most interested in exploring unlimited and unrestricted
sexuality. He attended hippie festivals (such as the Rainbow Family Gathering in New Mexico) in the United States and attended the Naropa Institute of art where he was able to attend lectures by William Borroughs and Allen Ginsberg (Siebrits 2016a:166), but did not indulge in the use of psychedelic and mind-altering substances. In a similar vein to his friendship with Picasso and his familiarity with international conceptual art, on the issue of sexual liberation, Battiss’ travels put him in a position far advanced beyond what many South Africans were exposed to and aware of.

Problems with paradise

One might easily become seduced by Battiss’ proposed paradise: his utopia is presented in a unique and nuanced way, with so many layers of complexity, and is by virtue of ego fictus, so interlaced with reality that one may fail to notice some of its darker aspects. I acknowledge some potential social issues linked to Fook Island to show that a cohesive and well thought-out and executed paradise cannot be perfect. All of the problems that I mention below are associated with Battiss’ status as a white male in various positions of power. At the same time, most of the problems are based on circumstantial evidence, and thus do not constitute undeniable condemnations of Battiss.

As a tourist on islands Battiss regularly engaged in sexual intercourse with the islanders, and on certain occasions it was clear that the islanders wanted, and received gifts of substantial value as a result of their interactions with Battiss. His accounts of these occasions to Punt make it sound as though the islanders couldn’t wait to give themselves to this old man, and although this might be the case, one must suspect his foreign exchange played a role in certain of these encounters. Battiss also appears to have had a sexual relationship with his cook ‘boy’, and although it sounds reciprocal and would have been a very liberal relationship at the time, his position as ‘boss’, and his habit of describing the cook as his ‘boy’ point to the problematic nature of these exchanges.

In an event discussed below, Battiss manages to hire a car by presenting his Fook driver’s licence to the rental agent. This alone is not a problem, until one realises that Battiss was accompanied by a female American citizen of Navaho descent who possessed a valid driver’s licence, and that hers was rejected by the white agent in favour of Battiss’. This suggests that the agent was more willing to validate an obviously invalid document in the
hands of a white man than a genuinely valid document from a non-European woman. Issues such as these, concerning the power relations between white men, women and people of colour, are discussed in my analysis of my own work.

**Analysis of the *ego fictus* in Fook and selected artworks by Battiss**

*Mini Mobile Monument to You* (1971, Figure 2)

From 1970 to 1971 Battiss had a collapsible (Russian doll style) *Mini Mobile Monument to You (MMMTY)* in the boot of his car, which he would take out and photograph in various locations around South Africa as he travelled. The *MMMTY* is a squat and inelegant stack of coloured rectangular boxes with four small disks for wheels and a plaque (which was apparently commissioned from the type of company that makes vehicular number plates and signs for factories, etc. in the 1970s) inscribed “MOBILE MONUMENT TO YOU| COPYRIGHT: BATTISS”. The construction is an outstanding example of Battiss’ eloquence as a parodist, since, despite one’s awareness of Battiss’ anti-state/anti-monument position, he has combined simple elements into something convincingly monumental in a National Party (NP) mode, while the whole is simultaneously infused with his obvious contempt for “the costly new political monuments going up around South Africa” (Battiss in Siebrits 2016a:102).

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38 When naming my own artworks I often deliberately give them long, pompous, technical names, and then proceed to only refer to them by acronyms. I enjoy doing this because, for me, highly commercialised consumer products usually have well-chosen, appealing and catchy names, whereas functional specialist machines that may seem boring to a layperson are referred to by long names that detail their function. Similarly I imagine that most bureaucracies make heavy use of unwieldy names that are shortened to acronyms. I thus, for the sake of humour and fun, intentionally align myself and my artworks with the tedious designs of engineer and state and reject the polished nature of names normally given to consumer products, and likewise reject the witty and intellectual titles given to contemporary artworks. I believe that Battiss might have done something similar with his MMMTY, and in his letter #21 to Punt he uses the acronym himself.

39 In 1963 the South African Airforce memorial was unveiled in Pretoria and in 1969 the Voortrekker Monument at Winburg was inaugurated. Post-dating the writing of Battiss’ letter, the Afrikaanse Taalmonument was unveiled in 1975 in Paarl, and in 1975 the Irish volunteer monument was unveiled in Johannesburg.
In a 1971 letter to Dacre Punt (Dearest Dacre #21) Battiss says that he intends to dedicate the next monument he makes (after the MMMTY) to itself, demonstrating his familiarity with global post-modern discourses regarding self-reflexivity in art – a result of his frequent international travels. The statement is also a playful mockery of the absurdity of political monuments (which may as well be dedicated to themselves) – since a new government installs monuments to its heroes, and dismantles the monuments of its predecessor, and the process is repeated by the next government when power is wrested from the current one.\(^{40}\) However, the monument that Battiss did make is not dedicated to itself but to you (the viewer, everyone). This is an affirmation of what Battiss later describes in his philosophy of Cosmic Fookism (C.F.) (and what is reiterated by Catherine (2015)) – that the focus of Fook is on love of others (through the love of self).

Battiss had the monument photographed in carefully staged scenes, not as historical records, but as independent artworks (see Smith 2005b:sp). One photograph was reproduced as an ‘advertisement’ in the London art periodical Studio International\(^{41}\) while the rest were discovered in his personal archive. In one photograph Battiss and his Monument are both covered in white linen, ready to be unveiled, and their hidden forms bear striking similarities, causing one to question whether Battiss himself (i.e. Ferd III or Batt155) may be the monument to you. This makes sense if one recalls that Battiss-as-person did function as an anti-monument, and counterpoint to the NP erections (pun intended) through his important, gentle anti-censorship activism.

Battiss also photographed the MMMTY on the beach, and this, combined with the white cloth and spare, monumental plinth strongly recalls surrealist paintings by Giorgio de

\(^{40}\) According to National Party (2017) “immediately after the 1948 election, the government began to remove any remaining symbols of the historic British ascendancy” and “it scrapped God Save the Queen as one of the national anthems [and] removed the Union Jack as one of the national ensigns”. In 2016 the #feesmustfall and #rhodesmustfall popular movements led to the removal or defacement of a number of statues from the British colonial and National Party apartheid regimes.

\(^{41}\) Battiss placed five such ‘ads’ in Studio International, which, “juxtaposed with standard gallery announcements, function[ed] as camouflaged but strategically site-specific interventions” (Smith 2005b:sp).
Battiss’ reference to de Chirico (conscious or unconscious), and the accompanying absurdity and fantasy within the photograph, positions the MMMTY as firmly proto-Fookian: it is a precursor to Fook Island official stamps which feature monumental depictions of King Ferd. Battiss’ decision to use an embossed and enamelled aluminium sign, from a company that would possibly also be producing ‘FOR USE BY WHITE PERSONS’ signs (instead of a monumental brass or bronze plaque) entails a parody of the South African government under the NP. He takes the absurdity and arrogance of the white supremacism inherent in NP monuments, places it on a pedestal of which it is undeserving, and then inverts the message of hatred and exclusion, in his characteristically gentle manner.

_Miss South Africa of the Future (Dumb Dolly/Mal Moenie) (1971, Figure 3)_

Dubow (1985:94) describes how in 1971, as a continuation of his general anti-NP sentiments, and as a specific reaction to Jannie Kruger’s (the head of the Publications Control Board) recent intensification of censorship measures, Battiss created “his favourite girlfriend of the year: ‘Miss South Africa of the Future’”. This artwork and performance was based around a doll made by Battiss and called _Dumb Dolly_, alias _Mal Moenie (Mad/Crazy Don’t in Afrikaans)_. “[The doll] is beautiful (in spite of the fact that she has no eyes, ears or mouth) with her lime green body, dark green belly button (a REAL button), golden hair and vividly coloured skirt”. Battiss says _Dumb Dolly_ “has nothing left really, not even legs. Just scissors (look at her hands) to snip away with. She’s breastless, but leaves me breathless. She is inane. She has the arrogance of ignorance. ... I intend to take her for a walk. After all, Mr Jannie Kruger has taken us for a walk” (Macnamara 1971:41).

What is Fookian about the artwork is the matter-of-fact way that Battiss summoned the doll from his fantasy and brought it into reality and into the popular imagination too, after his earlier (and more ‘normal’ or ‘correct’) attempts to reason with Jannie Kruger had proved fruitless.

Battiss is serious when he takes _Dolly_ around South Africa, garnering as much media interest and attention as possible, and advancing his cause in the best way that he knows. His

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42 Many of De Chirico’s landscapes are vast, empty plazas or desert scenes, with a scattering of Tuscan or classic buildings, often with a single sculpture on a plinth, obelisk, tower or fountain in the centre. To me this is strongly reminiscent of dream landscapes and the monument feels un-monumental or transient.
understanding of, and expertise in employing *ego fictus* not only allows him to make Dolly an integral part of a real protest, but also allows him to convince the audience to buy into the narrative which he constructed around her. Battiss accentuates the impact of censorship on artists to his audience by evoking a visceral and empathic response to his character. *Dolly* is Fookian in the way that her seemingly childlike appearance allows her to bypass censorship, when in reality, she is a mutilated, butchered, breastless, claw-handed and senseless female body. Not only is she presented as an impressive and graphic demonstration of the effects of censorship on the arts, but at the same time her “inanity” and “arrogant ignorance” position her as an avatar of Jannie Kruger, the vile, emotionless snipper-away of freedom, enjoyment and stimulation. Thus, as Battiss travels with the mangled corpse of South Africa’s freedom of expression and the ‘monster’ who is perpetrating the attack, the South African press, public and government clamour to get a picture and a quote from the ‘funny old man’ with the silly doll. As Rose Korber put it (1982) *Dumb Dolly* “was a concept that the newspaper reporters could easily latch onto and describe vividly” and thus more effective than an image that would be censored right away.

_Fook Literature: Fooks Nookspaaker and FOOF, the Fook Bible* (both 1975, figures 4, 5 and 7)

The *Fooks Nookspaaker* is made up of four pages of the British newspaper the *Financial Times* onto which Battiss has silk-screened a number of photographic images and text in muted colours. Interesting interactions and juxtapositions emerge between the original text and images and Battiss’ additions. The tagline of the *Nookspaaker* is: “laast with the neews/ fiirst with the truuth”. Battiss has included a number of ostensible ‘advertisements’ in the *Nookspaaker*, and a number of context-less images of attractive men and women, and historical figures with rainbow-like arcs and drooping glandular, speech-bubble-like forms emerging from their mouths. The compositions seem to be charged with some sexual undertones, but the main feeling evoked is one of playfulness and irreverence for authority.

The text of the tagline bears the repeated vowels characteristic of the pidgin-esque Fook language (see Ginsberg 2016), but in the context of a newspaper headline (which one imagines being bellowed out) the long vowel sounds evoke the feeling of a goat bleating out the words. This absurd image of a talking goat (an anti-Judeo-Christian symbol) and the
initially confusing separation of ‘news’ and ‘truth’ (the words should be synonymous) suggests to the viewer that this artwork is meant to be read as a parody of conventional newspapers, which are expected to be straight-forward, serious and unequivocal.

The Fookian advertisements are parodies of the adverts typically placed in the Financial Times. At first glance the “Uninhibited Island For Sale” reads almost as unexceptionally as “one of Britain’s most progressive & profitable engineering companies”, until one notices that it is “uninhibited” and not “uninhabited”, and that the island, in addition to “fresh drinking water” also has “fifteen musical flowers”. The sensible decision to invest in some land on an island, which could be developed for profit, becomes subsumed by the fantastic possibility of the “uninhibited”. Similarly the propagandistic appeal to be a king or queen like Ferd the Third seems to fit into the standard narrative of climbing higher up the corporate ladder, until one realises that Battiss embraces being king or queen himself (in the sense of queen referring to a homosexual), and thus this represents another subversive but subtle attack on the mainstream.

By printing over an already printed page Battiss is working with the forms and associations of a palimpsest, which may imply a form of political statement, as the word originates from the Greek for ‘rubbing again’, and refers (amongst others) to the practice wherein an engraved brass plaque was turned over and engraved on the reverse. This would typically accompany some sort of change of regime, where the originally celebrated entity is made defunct and replaced by another. The intentional over-writing of the Financial Times can thus be considered meaning-bearing, as Battiss was always wary of institutional control (while participating strategically yet reluctantly in institutional roles in pursuit of his own agendas – see Dubow 1985:94-95). The pink paper could have been another motivating factor in Battiss’ choice to print over the Financial Times. The Financial Times switched to pink paper in order to distinguish itself from its competitors the Financial News (which they later absorbed), but for Battiss the pink could likely refer to flesh, especially genital flesh and thus sexuality (e.g. in Orgy 4 (1973, Figure 6) in which pink features prominently).

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Battiss also advertises “sandy white beaches” in which he may be making reference to Sandy Bay, which is a nudist beach; or to the ubiquity of ‘whites only’ signs posted at the best beaches in South Africa. The pertinent fact here is that Battiss exploits this sense of ambiguity in the work.
FOOF, the Fook Bible is a found book (The Soul of a People44) which has been altered with watercolour and card on the outside hard cover, inside front cover, pages i-viii and 1-19 while the rest of the book is left as is (Paton 2012:[sp]). FOOF is an elegant and unillustrated book, and it would appear that it was made to canonise an official background mythology for Fook (Battiss likely also wanted a Fook Bible for the same reasons that he wanted Fook passports and stamps, as discussed below). Important parts of the creation myth are the numerous references to the hermaphroditic and Janus (dual) nature of GOOB (God) and humans (which is echoed in the Fook flag, coinage and even script) and the loving nature of GOOB and everything connected to Fook Island.

An interesting connection exists between lines from FOOF (“from the dust and grime (earth) of Goob’s body | ran down | the land and hills | and great volcanoes | from Goob’s fingers | ran down | male-and-female | all things of creation”) and Battiss’ letter to Dacre Punt of 26 September 1976 (Dearest Dacre #58) from New York, where he says “I am learning to do my own washing ... I actually enjoy squeezing my sweat & muck out of my garments, like a Christian being cleansed with Redemption as a reward”. Battiss recalls his earlier creation myth in describing his own experience, thus, in the same way that he photographed himself covered with a white cloth to link himself to his MMMTY, he is now linked to GOOB the creator. This is not particularly surprising, since Battiss is the creator of Fook, is King Ferd III and Admiral Fook and Batt155 the artist, but it is pleasant to discover yet another layer of ego fictus in the thick, complex and well-considered tapestry that Battiss wove around and through his work.

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*Fook legal and administrative documents: Fook Island certificate of immunity*(1975, Figure 8), *Fook driver’s licence* (1976), *Zizi-Oosi certificate* (1978, Figure 9) and various others.

The Fook Island Certificate of Immunity (FICI), like a number of other conceptually important works by Battiss, was painted on his birthday (his 70th). The FICI is a colourful watercolour with text that is mostly formed by the negative spaces not coloured in (a technique that is characteristic of Battiss), and includes a lithographed Fook Island sticker and Ferd III’s

signature in black ink (an elaborate and unintelligible scribble, what Ginsberg (2016:250) calls “asemic writing”). The certificate is made out to “Fannyozzi Fook alias Wickle Doff”, and certifies that

having satisfactorily performed the
SECRET RITES appertaining thereto
is now IMMUNE from gold & silver lightning, blue, red and yellow disasters of LAND SEA & AIR, and all Cosmic Disturbances & Diseases of the BRAIN, HEART & BODY, sensual & physical, this IMMUNITY being for the continued enjoyment & celebration of Life and Love.

(Siebrits 2016:140; all orthography, capitalization, layout per Battiss).

Siebrits and Ginsberg, despite their expertise in, and knowledge of Battiss’ work and history, are uncertain who “Fannyozzi Fook alias Wickle Doff” is. However, Siebrits (2016:140) is certain that “it has to be someone very dear to Battiss” and that “the certificate suggests that Battiss was starting to have intimations of mortality ... especially as [his wife’s] illness had become advanced”.

I have an alternative suggestion of what Fannyozzi Fook alias Wickle Doff may refer to. Ginsberg (2016:280) points out that the phoneme “oozi”, or just “zi” often refers to the male version of a word, and Fook often refers directly to Battiss. Thus I argue that Fannyozzi stands for a dual gender person (since ‘fanny’ is used in polite, childish or euphemistic speech in referring to female genitals; or to an inspecific or generic female). Battiss often refers to himself as Fook, and thus Fannyozzi Fook may refer to Battiss’ hermaphroditism or bisexuality. In Afrikaans dof means dull, and can be used in the same way that it is in English to refer to a person who is ‘not sharp’, ‘not bright’ or ‘dull’. Artist Guy du Toit has often used the word in front of me (although English is his first language) and he too attended Pretoria Boys High where Battiss taught, so it is arguably not unusual for English speakers to know and use the word, especially if they live in Pretoria. “Wickle” can, arguably, represent a portmanteau of ‘wicked’ and ‘fickle’. Thus Wickle Doff may be ‘wicked, fickle and dull’. Besides the fact that this might merely be a silly name that Battiss invented for the sheer pleasure of its absurdity, it may also be his subtle acknowledgement of his humanity and flawed nature, and his attempt to rise above the less admirable parts of himself. Thus, to
this dishonourable part of himself, he presents a certificate of immunity to acknowledge his faults, and attempt to protect himself from them, in order to better himself.

According to Battiss’ personal beliefs in, and practice of various Fook rituals, which he also called MADgik, the FICI is really able to affect reality. Battiss describes MADgik (a facet of Cosmic Fookism) as “a powerful awareness that can make what seems impossible become possible. Fook MADgik is euphoric and fantastic situations will occur as if normal” (Siebrits 2016a:191). Battiss recovered from a broken arm at 70, from cancer at 72, remained sexually active and travelled every year until his death at 76. It was probably not because he had written a FICI for himself, but inadvertently the philosophy of C.F. that guided his life, his sense of adventure and his will to love life and others (all connected to his belief in MADgik) may be what, he believed, kept him vital to the end.

Other Fook artefacts also occupied a strange liminal space in between fiction and what is actual. Battiss’ irreverent attitude towards bureaucratic systems of control and his insistence on a better (Fookian) way of going about one’s life allowed him to use Fook objects in lieu of their standard counterparts. In Siebrits (2016a:162) Battiss tells how “at Rome International Airport a Canadian cashed one of my 10AK banknotes, paid the airport departure tax out of it & got a lot of Lira change!”. I am unsure of what the Canadian paid for the bank note, and what the net gain was on the original cost, but I am sure that Fook MADgik ensured a general increase for the Fooker.

What is the value of one Fook AK, in Rands? (Calculated using abductive reasoning)
Two bits of information are given:
  i.  an uninhibited island in 1975 was worth 12,000AKS (Siebrits 2016:144)
  ii.  a return air plane ticket from Johannesburg to London at that time cost R577.70 (Dearest Dacre #69)
The website Islands (2016:[sp]) has a list of “Top 10 Private Islands for Sale from $200K and Up”. If one assumes that the value of the uninhibited island was comparable to the cheapest island on the list, it might cost R2,858,000.00 today.
A British Airways flight from Johannesburg to London and back (based on a search of random departure and return times), costs R12,206.00 today.

With these two present-day comparisons we can establish that the value of one small pacific island is equal to 234.15 return flights from Johannesburg to London. If this relative value remained constant from the 1970s to the present, then we can establish that the small pacific island was worth R135,266.80 in the 1970s. Thus 1AK in the 1970s would be exchanged for about R11.27. One dollar, on June 15 1975 (the day that the FT used for the Fooks Nookspaaker displaying the ‘uninhibited island’ advertisement was issued) cost R0.67. One dollar today (27 July 2016) costs R14.29. If the value of the AK has remained stable (I’m guessing that it would have grown, but I assume stability for argument’s sake) 1 AK today could be
On a different occasion, while touring through the US, Battiss, a young South African named Gregory Press (alias Goo alias Coo alias Zip Code 55) and a Navaho Indian (named Mountain Alive by Battiss) “needed to rent a car to travel into the desert and although Mountain Alive was 21 and had a driver’s license, the rental agency preferred Battiss’ handmade and painted Fook driver’s license, and immediately rented a little Datsun to him and Goo. As Battiss wrote – “So Fook Island got us the car!” (Siebrits 2016:168). A person with the responsibility of issuing an expensive asset, which also has the capacity to injure a number of people, was willing to issue a car to Battiss on authority of his Fook license. Battiss’ understanding of the human desire for play and fun was so keen that it made “what seems impossible become possible”.

Battiss certainly had a fascination with creating Fookian alternatives for the various ephemera of bureaucratic control. The Zizi-Oosi certificate (Figure 9) is a wedding certificate which he painted for the wedding of his friends. In addition to the things described above he created coins, passports, postage stamps, cancellation stamps and flags. I argue that these are all an outpouring of the ego fictus: since for Battiss (and to some of his audience) Fook, Ferd, Gwa are all real, and thus Battiss has produced real evidence of the existence of the Fookian society, king, and its citizens.

**Conclusion**

In the chapter I set out to argue for a specific quality, attitude, philosophy and manner of being employed by Battiss that I have termed the ego fictus. My particular approach to his biography and scholarship on him has been via the ego fictus, which, I argue, accounts for much of what makes Battiss unique as a human, artist, philosopher and anti-censorship activist. The ego fictus explains why Battiss was fascinated with Bushman art at a time when very few in South Africa showed any interest in the subject; why students at PBHS and UNISA have recorded and related numerous fond anecdotes, tributes and praises to him; why he travelled widely and was sought after internationally at a time when South Africa exchanged for R240.37 (an increase of over 2000%). This shows the value of having invested in Fook Island from its discovery, since the AK is by far the strongest currency today, and Fook Island has by far the strongest economy in our crazy world.
was the pariah of the global community; and is what enabled Battiss to stay joyful, active, ambitious and optimistic through many troubling and difficult times, up to the end of his life.

This chapter has also served to introduce the reader to a style of writing by which I am guiding them at first hand through the process that Walter Battiss and I employ when we create artworks. The reader has become a participant in the fiction, creating their own meaning from my collected arguments and sources. I continue to apply this method in Chapter 2 as I discuss my own artistic practice. After discussions of theories of autobiography, autoethnography, narrative, epitext and humour, I explain my approach to creating the artworks and stories that form part of *N.'s Apparatus*, including two fictional characters that I have invented as part of the process, whereafter I present an in-depth analysis of a selection of my artworks.
CHAPTER 2: *N.’s Apparatus* – Allen Laing, Mr. A. Nieandertaalensis and Professor W.R. Etterforsker tell the same story

In this chapter I discuss, in detail, what the studio-based component of this study entails, with specific focus on my sculptures’ formal appearance and how they were made. I also discuss how and why I have chosen to use fictional characters and narratives within my project. I further examine the ways in which the *Ego Fictus*, as defined in the previous chapter, may be applied to me and my work, thus drawing certain parallels between the works of Walter Battiss and my own.

I argue that, by incorporating humour and narrative into my art practice, I am able to make the creative process more enriching for me, and to allow my work to be memorable to my audience, since they need to invest time in uncovering and understanding the story which I present before they can truly appreciate the work. In this sense humour is a useful tool with which to entice the audience to engage with my work, and may help my work to make a greater impact, as some studies show that humour has a positive effect on memory.\(^\text{46}\) Ruba Katrib (2015:117), writing about the Surrealists, remarks that they “wanted to induce wonder in their audiences by creating funny obstacles and other devices that confounded physical logic”. Brian Droitcour (2015:102) postulates that “people looking at art these days tend to breeze through museums, and humor is one of the most efficient ways to make a viewer pause”. Based on conversations with viewers of my work, it seems that the humorous treatment of my personal experiences becomes a starting point for conversations about commonalities between the viewer, society and myself; and allows viewers to reflect on their own experiences in a potentially fresh and optimistic way.

Fairleigh Gilmour and Laura Vitis (2017:344) argue that “humour can be used as a form of activism to reveal the absurdities underpinning stereotypes of minorities”, and this is key in

\(^{46}\) The literature which I consulted (Badli *et al* 2013; Chakravarti & Krishnan 2003; Holland *et al* 2012; Hyman *et al* 2010) does not claim that humour has a one-dimensional or absolute effect on memory, but acknowledges that humour is one of many factors that may contribute to better memory of an object or event, in for example an advertisement or a school classroom. Humorous devices such as puns help to create word associations, ironies or incongruences that surprise the viewer, and help to evoke an emotional state which is more memorable to the viewer. The authors of the above studies also point out that humour lowers an audience’s resistance to being influenced.
my work, where I, as a white male, reveal the absurdity of my position within history.

Gilmour and Vitis (2017:347) continue, saying that “as with political comedy in general, humour is used as a tool to make the audience comfortable in examining a social issue and challenging a stereotype while enjoying the process”.

This chapter thus begins by unpacking theories and discussions of the role of humour in art-making, as well as other relevant literature about fiction, narrative, performance, autobiography and autoethnography which has relevance to my art-making. From here I move on to an in-depth discussion of my particular use of humour, since I feel that what I have read about humour, parody and satire does not offer a complete or precise explanation of what I do. Satire tends to be defined according to its underlying moral message and parody as a criticism of a particular discourse. I argue that what I do is more in line with childlikeness (as discussed in Chapter 1), and I would prefer to call my use of humour ‘comedy’ or ‘pretend-play’.

These discussions are followed by an explanation of my exhibition in broad overview, and of the purpose of the two characters that I have invented as a complement to the exhibition and this dissertation. Lastly, I provide in-depth discussions of selected artworks that are part of my exhibition.

This chapter also features two parallel streams of text (in Volume II). These resemble typewritten, hand-written and computer-written texts, as well as illustrations produced by hand and in MS Paint. These additional texts are what I have produced under the guises of my two characters. These are employed to deepen the elements of fiction, humour and play in my analyses of my own work.

The rationale behind why I have included these parallel texts, and how I have created them is described below, but to summarise: one presents the events and thought processes that surround the creation of my artworks (Mr. A. Nieandertaalensis’ text), whereas the other (Professor W.R. Etterforsker’s) presents a wholly fabricated and humorous narrative account of these same artworks.
Narrative, autobiography, performing self and auto-ethnography

Later in this chapter I discuss the criteria that I use to determine what issues or problems I choose to address in my art-making, but the one essential factor is that the issues must be my own, and linked to my experience, race, gender, beliefs and worldview. This is important to me, because a large part of hurtful and offensive statements and actions which rob people of their human dignity (e.g. racism) come into being when those who have been historically privileged (e.g. white heterosexual males such as me) assume that they can speak with authority for others.

Thus, since the content of my work is focussed on my own subjective experiences, autoethnography and autobiography are useful frameworks through which I can discuss my own art. I have chosen to group the discussions of autobiography and autoethnography together with narrative and humour, because I argue that these ways of conveying information from an artist to a viewer are not wholly discrete fields of study. Elisabeth El Rafaie (2012:12) sums up this idea when she writes that “many commentators conclude it is impossible to draw strict boundaries between factual and fictional accounts of someone’s life, since memory is always incomplete and the act of telling one’s life story necessarily involves selection and artful construction”. This recalls De Man’s argument (in El Rafaie 2012:12) that “it is impossible to distinguish between fiction and autobiography” because “a writer is necessarily implicated in his or her work”. These ideas are subtly echoed by Peter Bürger (quoted in Leighten 2017:52) who writes that “fiction is the medium of a reflection about the relationship between individual and society”. This links back to my definition in Chapter 1 of the ego fictus as a phenomenon that is intertwined with ‘actual’ reality, and which is, at all times, present in one’s life.

El Rafaie (2012:16) says that “the act of remembering is sometimes conceptualised by means of the analogy of an archaeological dig” but notes that certain contemporary theorists refute the archaeological analogy in favour of describing “memory as a continuous process of reinterpreting, or re-remembering, the events of a life in the light of current interests and concerns”. I believe that both of these ways of remembering are present in my practical work: I create sculptural objects and performances, and later I analyse my own
work via fictional characters. In this process I firstly re-remember the events of my life in the light of current interests and concerns as a fictional artist and then ‘uncover’ them later as an ethnographer.47

My decision to use fictional characters in my work is aligned with El Rafaie's (2012:16) contention that “imagination may sometimes provide a more adequate expression of subjective truths than can be achieved by sticking to the literal facts”. By presenting the exhibition of my artworks in a faux-museum setting (as though it is a genuine ethnographic exhibit) I position my work in line with what Timothy Adams (2000:20) calls the “borderland between fiction and nonfiction”.

In a way that recalls certain psychological theories which suggest that the self is made up of various parts, El Rafaie (2012:17) says that “it has now become virtually impossible to establish with any certainty whether or not someone’s autobiographical account is ‘true’, as there are multiple selves to be described and several different truths to be told”. She also explains that “many scholars now stress [that] identity is constructed in and through the stories we tell ourselves and others” (El Rafaie 2012:17). She (El Rafaie 2012:17) goes on to say that “the way we understand our experiences and how we convey them to others is always at least partly influenced by our own and other people’s accounts of events in our lives”. Thus, my fictional characters’ accounts of events in my life (via their analyses of my artworks, which are based on historic events that I experienced), could potentially influence my understanding and how I convey my own life experiences. By obfuscating, complicating and aestheticising the way that I re-remember facts from my past, I create the potential to actively affect the way I look at life and society.

El Rafaie (2012:17) calls contemporary autobiography “dialogic”. In explaining what is meant by dialogism, Michael Holquist (2002:22) relates an analogy made by the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, describing how two people facing one

47 The characters that I use are discussed in detail below, but in essence after making my sculptures, I write about each using first one voice with specific personality, and then ironically re-analyse the writing and artwork from a second perspective. These characters serve multiple purposes: to bring elements of humour into my work, to allow me to be frank about issues that might otherwise be difficult to discuss candidly, to increase the immersive potential of my work by making the viewer a complicit partner in discovering the meaning of my work for themselves.
another in a room can never have a complete understanding of the whole room without engaging in dialogue. Although both occupy the same time, they occupy different spaces, and thus their perspective is always incomplete. Similarly, without dialogue, the self always appears to be timeless, while the unfolding lives of all other people appear to be linear. Because, for example, one cannot remember one’s own birth and death, these concepts can only be understood through an exchange with others. In light of such concepts, I apply the notion of dialogism onto writing about my art by using different characters to analyse my work from different spatial and temporal locations. Through this, I try to come to a fuller understanding of my own practice, and also reveal to the audience some part of my thoughts and working processes.

Echoing the contention that ‘truth’ is found via the audience’s response to a particular, subjective retelling of history, Bochner and Ellis (2003:219) define the autoethnographic research text as

the story, complete (but open) in itself, largely free of academic jargon and abstracted theory. The authors privilege stories over analysis, allowing and encouraging alternative readings and multiple interpretations. They ask their readers to feel the truth of their stories and to become co-participants, engaging the story line morally, emotionally, aesthetically and intellectually.

This description can be tied to El Rafaie’s (2012:138) argument that “being authentic is not about being as true as possible to a coherent and stable inner self; rather, it is something that is performed more or less convincingly and either accepted or rejected by an audience”. This way of thinking accepts that, irrespective of the author’s intentions or methods, a significant part of the final message lies in the audience’s interpretations of it, and, in the case of N.’s Apparatus, this frees me to focus on telling a particular story about myself in which an audience can discover something that they might find edifying, interesting, entertaining or useful (or something that they despise and react to poorly, if at all).

Bochner and Ellis (2003:216) also point out that the social sciences are often self-reflexive, since the person doing the study of other persons is often part of the same group. When it becomes clumsy or unrealistic to draw a line between the objective view of a group, or what is useful from the perspective of an insider, (since, as Bochner and Ellis (2003:222) point out,
it is impossible to distinguish between what is in our minds and what is in the world) it can be more economical to choose to tell a specific story from which the audience can learn something (or nothing), without being restricted by the semantics of objectivity.

El Rafaie (2012:173-177) gives examples of three prominent contemporary cartoonists (Campbell 2006; Gallant [a.k.a. Seth] 2007; Forest 2009) who explicitly set out to blur the lines between ‘authentic’ or ‘truthful’ autobiography and fiction. All three artists employ what Gérard Genette (in El Rafaie 2012:17) terms “epitext”, which includes “the various public and private communications about [their respective lives and creative outputs], such as interviews, press releases, reviews, letters, and diaries”. In the cases listed above, the artists have created their epitexts either as photographic scans of ‘actual’ documents that have been reproduced within their published books, or by distributing falsified information to the press under the guise of fictional persons.48

I am making use of a similar technique to convey a sense of authenticity in the characters that I invent. They produce a body of written documents in the form of personal diaries and letters, newspaper stories, and illustrations, all of which are presented, along with the art objects, as ‘genuine’ historic artefacts. My use of a falsified epitext raises questions around what information someone is willing to accept as true merely because they have been told that this particular information has been published in a newspaper or discovered in a

48 El Rafaie (2012:174) writes of Campbell’s work that “the task of sifting through all the different levels of fact and fiction becomes so intractable that the issue of authenticity seems to evaporate. Instead of worrying about whether or not the author is being truthful and sincere, readers can simply sit back and enjoy the world being created for them with such extravagant virtuosity in this mock autobiographical comic.

Of Gallant’s work El Rafaie (2012:175) writes that the protagonist’s fictional journey in the book “can thus be read if not as a ‘truthful’ then at least as an intriguingly ‘authentic’ story about a cartoonist trying to find meaning in his own life and work”.

Writing about the work of Forest (who may be fictional, invented by the three editors of the publishing company La Cinquième Couche) El Rafaie (2012:176) says that “as more and more doubts about the authenticity of the first book are raised, the autobiographical narrator starts to suspect she has been used by her three editors as a way of attracting publicity for La Cinquième Couche. She becomes increasingly unsure of her own identity: ‘Things are slipping away from me. I am no longer myself. Even my name seems too beautiful to be true. Judith, like [the editor’s] partner in real life. Forest, like Jean-Claude Forest, one of the inventors of the modern comic book . . .’”
leather-bound diary with yellowed pages. To some extent I am mocking the gullibility of the audience of my work, but also inviting them to laugh at the sensationalised nature of contemporary documentaries that appear on platforms such as the Discovery Channel, History Channel and many websites (such as YouTube) that can claim to present truth without feeling any need to qualify their claims. Despite my sometimes facetious statements, I chiefly aim to achieve what Bochner and Ellis (2016:248) describe as using the “techniques of fiction writing to bring the emotional and subjective meanings of fact-based stories to life, encouraging readers to use their experiencing of your experience to reflect critically on their own”.

**Humour, satire and parody – funny pretend-play**

Writing of “weaponizing ridicule” Michael aller (2017:50) suggests that “ridicule can work when philosophy, theology, or reason fails”. Waller (2017:50) quotes Martin Luther saying that “the best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn”. This is what draws me to use humour in my work. It appears to be an inextricable part of being human, and it is what one turns to precisely when everything else fails. Humour does not need to be witty, intelligent, complex or difficult, although it may be all of these things at once. I argue that humour must simply allow one a different view of life, an escape from ‘normal’ ways of thought.\(^49\) I briefly discuss the genres of satire and parody below, arguing that, although my work contains elements of both (especially satire), I prefer to call the device that I employ ‘pretend-play’ rather than define it rigidly according to a pre-existing definition or category.

Jessica Ratcliff (2012:341) writes that

\(^{49}\) My philosophy of life is that however it came to exist, who/whatever created it (or not), whether it is an illusion or simulation, it is tragically unfair. If evolution and chance created life then it is unfair, because the notion of fairness is alien to random chance and evolution. If life is created by (a) higher being(s), then their intentional design of the world is cruel and unfair: the mechanisms and structures that they put in place are twisted and wrong. If life is some sort of simulation or illusion, then this too is either an experiment or joke that will be revealed as such when we wake up (via death?) or revealed as being pointless torture. Irrespective of what might be true, the only apparent response to any of this way of thinking about reality is to regard it as a joke, because, to me, this seems the surest way to have some sort of agency or defence against the absurdity of life, and draw some sort of enjoyment from it. Humour is the weapon that lets me wrest control from, and defeat the plans of, whatever caused my consciousness.
there are signature elements of satire—for example, a derisive attitude toward the subject, a mocking or belittling tone, heavy application of sarcasm and irony—but there is little in the way of conventional plots or forms, or even the situation of the audience with respect to the [particular satirical] work. Satire also openly plays out the biases of the satirist. ‘In satire,’ writes Michael Seidel, ‘the object of an action is identified primarily by the stance taken against it. The satirist depicts things as absurd, disreputable, or hypocritical because he deems them so’.

Nicholas Diehl (2013:311), quoting Ruben Quintero presents satire “as a literary mode with a moral purpose; the satirist writes with a sense of moral vocation and with a concern for the public interest”. Diehl (2013:311) goes on to say that “it is clear that satires often employ arguments and are intended to persuade either their readers or even the targets of their criticism”. Diehl (2013:312) quotes Northrop Frye, writing that two things “are essential to satire: ‘[O]ne is wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack’.”

Ratcliff’s and Diehl’s descriptions of satire above are partly applicable to what I do, in the sense that I am mocking, derisive, biased, and make use of fantasy and absurdity in my work. However, in both of their descriptions they assume a strong moral purpose and concern for public interest, which I do not believe is the purpose of my humour. Dustin Griffin (quoted in Diehl 2013:312) says that “satire does not forsake the ‘real world’ entirely. Its victims come from that world, and it is this fact (together with a darker or sharper tone) that separates satire from pure comedy”. Diehl (2013:313) reflects that “these real-world targets may be as specific as particular individuals or as general as characteristic foibles of humanity, and it is clear that some satires may be enjoyed as fictions without any great understanding of the real-world target”. I certainly respond to specific real-world targets in my work, and in this way, my practice may be considered satirical.

It is pertinent to the discussion of my use of humour in my art-making to consider the writing of Peter Marzio (1972) who has made a specific connection between humour/satire and the ubiquity of machines in modern life, since I also make use of machines in the pretend-play solutions that my artworks ostensibly provide for my problems. Marzio (1972:315) writes that

the technological revolution of the twentieth century ... has jarred both the artist and the comic. The comic can no longer spoof the ‘impossible’ in an age of limitless achievements and the artist has inherited a whole new range of subject matter that refuses to lend itself to the aesthetic rules of the past. The result has been a curious meld of art and humor.
Marzio (1972:316) continues, saying that “real machines have given birth to a light-hearted art of fantasy”.

Some critics have offered resistance to the presence of humour in art. This is clear, for example, in their negative responses to some of Paul Klee’s imagery. Marzio (1972:316) relates that “after Harold Rosenberg analyzed the works of Paul Klee in 1969, he too echoed the words of the stone-faces by concluding that Klee’s profundities were occasionally marred by lapses into ‘comic pictures, caricatures, fantasies, and romances’”. This suggests that certain critics have drawn a line around what kinds of humour may exist in art. ‘High art’ may only contain ‘high humour’ via the canonical and much-theorised genres of satire or parody, whereas Marzio argues for a higher re-valuation of comic pictures, caricatures, fantasies and romances. It seems fair to say that, since most humans experience humour intuitively, it would not make sense to discard (or even create a distinction between) ‘low humour’ in favour of ‘high humour’ in art.

Marzio (1972:316) notes Herbert Read in his Concise History of Modern Painting criticized the painter-innovator, Picabia, because his pictures of machines ‘had no function except to mock science and efficiency’. In analyzing Jean Arp, one of the pioneers of modern art, Duchamp hailed the injection of satire into the ancient corpus of painting: ‘The important element introduced by Arp was “humor” in its subtlest form; the kind of whimsical conceptions that gave to the Dada Movement such an exuberant liveliness as opposed to the purely intellectual tendencies of Cubism and Expressionism’. 50

Because Dada was in large part a reaction to the rational, scientific, mechanical slaughter of the First World War, whimsical conceptions and exuberant liveliness become part of a powerful counterattack against the rigidly empirical worldviews at the turn of the century, which the Dadaists believed were the cause of global, mechanised slaughter.

My survey of literature on parody reveals that authors have focussed on how a specific existing text or genre is imitated; or emphasises the power of parody to critique authorities and power structures by imitating them. As an example of the latter employment of parody

50 Marzio does not give a reference for the quote by Duchamp.
Kate Kenny (2009:222) quotes Hariman who says that “once a dominant discourse is ‘set beside itself’, the excessive, laughing imitations can destabilize the ‘original’ and highlight its tenuous nature”. Although the conceptual themes of my artworks may be linked to certain discourses, my method of making them tends to be intuitive, personal and reactive, and it seems that an insistence on identifying a particular discourse as the target for the humour in my work would limit its interpretation and application. I often leave the target vague, stressing the fact that I have not ‘chosen a side’, pointing out certain comic elements in a situation or ideology to the viewers without telling them where I stand. Drawing attention to the comedy within everyday situations may create space for a viewer of my work to decide whether or not to be critical and to what extent, without me having to present a specific stance.

I argue that the humour in my work originates from, amongst other things, imitating various sciences and fields in which I am not an expert, in the same way that a child might imitate other children, animals, fictional characters and adults as a form of entertaining play. Like a child, I also try to ‘experience’ and understand what it might be like to be the thing that I imitate (Ahn & Filipenko 2007). What I am doing may lie somewhere between “imitation with critical distance” as Hutcheon (1985:37) describes parody, and what Frederick Jameson (in Attardo 2014:556) terms blank parody or pastiche (imitation without criticism). Although each of these descriptions has some influence upon my thinking and practice, I emphasize that humour is an escape from, or alternative to, one’s normal ways of life and thought; and I argue that this appears to encompass the ways in which both Battiss and I use humour in our works.

For the purpose of N.’s Apparatus, humour is sometimes present in the way in which I pretend-play at being a professor, ethnologist, Neanderthal, or contemporary straight white man, amongst other personas. It can be found in how I mock the assumptions that underlie ethnology and anthropology, fin de siècle (western) ideologies, museums, psychology and history by imitating some of their methods and jargon to highlight elements in them that are problematic (e.g. the racist and patriarchal practice of classifying non-Western ‘others’). But my humour is often presented in mockeries of myself and my own assumptions, my self-centredness, pettiness and arrogance. The viewers of my work may also chuckle at
themselves if they are fooled, for a moment, into thinking that *N.’s Apparatus* is a genuine ethnographic exhibit.

A useful and pertinent study for understanding my particular use of humour in *N.’s Apparatus* is Mary Kelly’s (2014) analysis of the *Wipers Times*,\(^{51}\) a newspaper which was published by British soldiers stationed in Ypres during the First World War from 1916 to 1918. The newspaper was printed by soldiers (none of whom were trained in typesetting, layout, journalism or editing) in “an old printing-house just off the Square at Wipers [Ypres]” (Kelly 2014:123). A soldier writes in the *Wipers Times*: “… there were parts of the building remaining, the rest was on top of the press. The type was all over the country-side, in fact the most perfect picture of the effects of Kultur as interpreted by a 5.9 [inch artillery shell] ever seen”.

The *Wipers Times*, is filled with falsified epitexts in the form of “poems, literary parodies, mock advertisements and editorials, absurd plays and fake war journalism” which “mimicked [the form] of the newspapers the soldiers read in the trenches” albeit with an unsettling proximity “between horrifying events and the jokes lampooning them” (Kelly 2014:120). Humour is also employed to create a dissonance between “the vocabulary and idiomatic trappings of peacetime concerns (advertisement, property rights, insurance, self-improvement, fashion) into the theater of war—a well-worn metaphor that the editors loved literalizing” (Kelly 2014:122). Kelly’s description of the authors of the *Wiper’s Times’* tendency to use “well-worn metaphor[s]” and “literalizing” is not a condemnation of their writing ability or the sophistication of their sense of humour, it is precisely what creates the humour. The stoicism of a soldier to repeat a comic formula as bombs are repeatedly fired at him is funny in itself (as a defence against its truly grave nature), and the target of the humour is the soldier, his commanders, his country, enemies, times of peace, and war. Its un-intellectualised execution and layperson’s appeal makes the humour effective.

The *Wipers Times* mocks the attitude of “stiff upper lip” or “British Phlegm” which is a form of “extreme understatement” used “to dramatize the growing chasm between soldiers and

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\(^{51}\) ‘Wipers’ is an intentional mispronunciation of the French name of the Belgian town Ypres, which should be pronounced as ‘EE-pra’, but the final sound, which I have indicated with an ‘a’ is merely an un-voiced exhalation.
the fictional ‘audience’ addressed by many of the paper’s articles” (Kelly 2014:124). An advertisement in the paper informs readers that “This Week That Stupendous Film Play GAS Will be Released” and admonishes them to “book ahead to avoid disappointment”. It seems likely that the soldiers are using wit and humour to reduce the anxiety and distress that they experience as a result of the ongoing war.

The soldier-authors deliberately choose to create advertisements for fictional objects such as the Patent tip duck boards (boards used to ‘floor’ the trenches, to keep soldiers’ feet out of water, which can in this case be made to flip up and smack one’s superior in the face), Combination respirator and mouth organ (to brighten even the worst gas attack) and Improved Patent Combination Umbrella and Wire Cutter. It appears that the contributors to the Wipers Times had a similar notion to mine (although nothing I have experienced in my life is like what they had to live through), that if one is faced by overwhelming or insurmountable problems, it is a good idea to make up an entertaining solution to them. Furthermore, Kelly (2014:124) describes how the contributors included a “blizzard of military acronyms” in the Times, which “helped establish a context of meaning for the arcana, superstitions and rituals that soldiers lived by.” I too incorporate acronyms and a degree of ‘arcane’ knowledge, symbols and histories into my work.

N.’s Apparatus

The practical component of my study (the full title of which is N.’s Apparatus: Researches into the technologic and cultural development of the primitive subject Mr. A. Nieandertaalensis, an Afrikaner man. By Professor Walter Roald Etterforsker, Royal Frederick University, Kristiania) consists of an exhibition at the Johannesburg Library of approximately 40 ritual machines, each accompanied by a variety of explanatory ephemera in the form of brochures, information plaques and catalogues; journals, diaries, clippings, etc.; and a catalogue of the exhibition in its entirety.

Kelly (2014:123) describes this as “an assisted readymade of sorts ... which came in gold, silver and ‘ordinary’ versions, promising ‘no more colds caught cutting the wire’”. 52
A key part of my practical work, in the context of this study, is connected to my use of two particular characters through which I present my work to the public. The works discussed below were all made between 2014 and 2018, and while all were made with this study in mind, they have already been exhibited at a number of unrelated contemporary visual art exhibitions. Thus, although I have certain themes, styles and modes that define my work, and give it a degree of uniformity, each work was made with a slightly different audience or context in mind.

To help tie together works that may have seemed somewhat disparate, but mostly to change the way that I analyse and understand my own work, and the ways that the audience reads my work, I introduce two fictional characters who ostensibly produce a record of written memoirs, diaries and other texts via which I re-analyse my own work. Detailed descriptions of the characters (their background and personalities) are presented in a section below where I detail the practical component of my work, with references to particular artworks. The proceeding discussion serves to explain why I have included the characters, and what their function is, in this study.

The intentional fictionalisation of my own memory and art practice via the use of characters is intended to blur the lines around fantasy and historical/current social reality, in order to put viewers of my work in a state of uncertainty as to what elements in the work stem from my real experiences and beliefs, and what parts are fabricated. I aim to have the viewers of my work suspend their disbelief of fantasies in certain instances, and to laugh at the apparent absurdity surrounding real events in others. As indicated, my creation of epitexts by these characters for the purposes of this study has helped me gain a different understanding of my own artwork and thinking, in the same way that hearing a recording of my own voice makes it sound unfamiliar and new to me and causes me to rethink how I present myself to others.

In his 2016 autobiography, *Born a crime, and other stories*, comedian and television host, Trevor Noah would seem to have employed similar devices to what I describe below, and it may thus be helpful to outline these. Firstly, his autobiography is not presented as an unbroken chronology from birth to the present, but, instead, employs a timeline that jumps forward and backward in time as the author tells his story. The reader is warned from the
outset that he or she will be reading stories but is nevertheless encouraged by the ‘autobiographical’ label on the book to take every story as historical fact. The stories seem intended to interrupt one’s understanding of history, because the narrative skips from post-apartheid times to apartheid times - when vastly different laws were in place - in such a way that one is led to think that certain critical decisions taken by him or his mother were mandated by law, when in fact they were not. Noah may have used this device to subtly convey to his readers that the effects of apartheid were not instantly dispelled by the abolition of certain laws, that the effects of the laws on people of colour remained actual and present in their lives. Noah - aware that his readers may, in large part, be white South Africans and foreigners who cannot necessarily empathise with his history (because theirs is so different) - employs devices similar to those that I am describing, blurring reality with fiction and disrupting narratives in order to create a more ‘digestible’ story, which may make it more relatable and thus better convey his meaning and intentions to his readers.

Noah creates subtly different ‘Trevors’ for each story, each of whom is shaped by a geographical place and the particular society around him at a particular time. Thus, in a ‘coloured’ community, in a ‘township’ and in a private school there exists a different ‘Trevor’ best suited to survive in each setting. These techniques of fictionalised truth, in tandem with a strong sense of humour, complicate one’s reading of this autobiography. One wants to trust the author’s telling of history, and enjoy his comedy, but one is forced to examine and unpack the work in order to fully appreciate it. This allows the subjective life of the author to become relatable to the audience in a way that a direct and accurate history may not be. I aim to achieve something similar by using different characters, time-periods and humour in my work.

I begin writing the thoughts and memoirs of the first character at the point where I have over 40 sculptural pieces that may have been exhibited more than once, may have been sold and been borrowed back from the owners, some of which I now no longer consider to be particularly good sculptures and others which I still believe to be outstanding works. These works were produced in at least 3 different settings based on where I have lived in the past five years, and are, to some extent, records of my mental, emotional, spiritual and financial state during this time. In response to this body of work I present the first character and actor: Mr Nieandertaalensis, a.k.a. N., the supposed maker of the artworks.
Under the guise of N. I compose diary entries and memoirs (Vol. II 198-226) that describe my thoughts as if they were recorded at the time when each artwork was created. My intention here has been to present my recollections accurately, but inevitably some details have been forgotten or misremembered. Additionally, I have tried to indulge a mindset of emotional abandon as I write N.’s thoughts, so that his words are less restrained by academic and cultural mores and niceties than mine might have otherwise been; knowing an academic readership to be my intended audience. N.’s words become the intimate confidences shared with a friend over late night wine rather than what a professional artist allows to be published about his work.

This process involves my recollection of parts of an event that come to mind with ease, and writing them down in a style not unlike a stream-of-consciousness. I leave much of the grammar (missing punctuation, no capitalisation, poorly constructed and over-long sentences, and jarring parentheses) as is. Once I have recorded the majority of the events directly from memory, I may refer to the incomplete archive which I have in the form of Instagram posts, WhatsApp messages (‘voice notes’, pictures sent and received) and other digital images or traces stored on my computers or in social media, to supplement my memory. I write N.’s memoirs directly into MS Word, because N. is me, and this is how I record my thoughts. If I consider it to be appropriate or necessary I include photographs or illustrations made in MS Paint in the text.

At this point I have described two locations or layers of meaning within my practical work: the art objects as I (Allen Laing) made them (with potential inherent meaning for the viewer), and the partially fictionalised reflections on the work by N. (which may be written up to five years after the specific work, to which these reflections refer, was made). At this second level (of N.’s recollections) the viewer has access to my personal thoughts about my own work. This is not exceptional: it is common practice for artists to provide statements or rationales with their works on exhibition. Although I have added a degree of fiction and uncertainty of facts into the process (which potentially complicates the work and increases its humorous impact), I believe that a further level of abstraction and distance from facts might deepen the audience’s response to my work, as Adams, Bochner and Ellis (2011:6) write that “layered accounts use vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection to invoke readers to enter into the emergent experience of doing and writing research,
conceive of identity as an emergent process, and consider evocative, concrete texts to be as important as abstract analyses.  

This third layer of meaning in my work is formed by the introduction of a character named Walter Roald Etterforsker, a professor of ethnology born in Norway on 16 February 1862, to a Norwegian father and an English mother. Etterforsker first comes to South Africa in 1914 where he discovers the objects and writings of N. exactly 100 years before each is first exhibited by Allen Laing in actuality. Thus, the first works included in this study (which were exhibited in Johannesburg at the historic Corner House at an exhibition that opened on 1 March 2014) are discovered by Etterforsker on 1 March 1914. All subsequent artworks and writings that I exhibited from 2014 onwards are ‘discovered’ in the physical place and sequential order that they were made in actuality, as Etterforsker (by chance, and for his own unique reasons) follows the path that I take a century later.

Through intentional exaggeration this character allows me to write about my work in a way that mocks mindsets, norms and social practices of which I am critical. Etterforsker also enables the introduction of dramatic irony, since many of his beliefs and opinions will be known by the contemporary reader to be false or discredited at present. Another function served by this character is to allow me the enjoyment of taking an imaginary journey Southwards down the globe. I found pleasure in creating this fantasy, which required me to read about particular countries, historical figures and technologies.

I wrote down N.’s thoughts rapidly and without much editorial intervention, and much time passed between this initial re-recording of my creative life and the later ‘discovery’ of N.’s writings by Etterforsker. As a result, I have experienced a sense of ‘re-discovering’ my own thoughts and history. I spent hundreds of hours constructing and researching the narrative context for Etterforsker’s journey to South Africa, developing a ‘voice’ for him and

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54 This is 100 years before my father’s date of birth. I have given Etterforsker an English mother to account for his preference for writing in English, and his proficiency in the language. I am not really fond of celebrating birthdays, and I usually do not remember my own birthday, or want any attention on that day. However, if one has to choose a ‘significant’ day for an event, the day of one’s birth is useful as a ‘zero reference point’. Many of the important events in Battiss’ life were made to coincide with his birthday (such as the ‘discovery’ of Fook Island, and the creation of the FICI, both mentioned above). I performed with the STRACH and Takkies 2.0.1. on my birthday, as discussed below.
meditating on his Edwardian life. Thus, when Etterforsker finally ‘catches up’ with N. and sees his artworks and diaries, they seem a little strange to me who wrote them months ago. My aim has been to preserve this distance from my own history and to react to it as though it were truly alien, and as though I do not understand various references to modern phenomena (such as social media). By endeavouring to entrench myself in the mindset of a particular character I aim to practice the *ego fictus* that I describe in Chapter 1.

This apparently recursive and self-referential approach to writing about my own work creates ample scope for me to ridicule myself and my society, thus allowing me to engage with serious issues in a light-hearted way, similar to how Battiss addresses weighty issues playfully through Fook Island. At the same time the thorough fabrication of various documents to validate my fiction and give it legitimacy and believability, echo Battiss’ creation of actual Fook artefacts, documents, symbols and rituals. At the same time this circular self-referentiality situates my work within contemporary post-modern tendencies, such as they are described by Jean Baudrillard’s simulacrum.

The fact that it remains unclear what is true and what is false throughout my fictional prose, as well as where lines may be drawn around the real Allen Laing and the fictional characters, (and the fact that I am not certain myself) is instrumental to my *ego fictus*, and the manifestations of this within my work. There are certain elements included in the story, for example the names *Allen* and *Walter* (my first names) being given to the characters, and the fact that Etterforsker is born on the same date a century before my father. One could

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55 I use the terms Victorian and Edwardian to refer loosely to the period from the mid-1800s to the end of my story. My intention is to evoke an image of sombre, restrained people in dark, impractical clothing who place social protocol and reservation above a freer type of human interaction and frank approach to life. The Victorian/Edwardian era also seems to have created the conditions for its own downfall, as the heights of colonial greed and cruelties, as well as technological and industrial expansion of the ‘great powers’ of Europe culminated in the Great War of 1914–1918 which caused the same ‘great powers’ to lose their global domination to the United States and other countries. As mentioned, Etterforsker has a British mother, yet I intend for the Victorian/Edwardian descriptor to encompass more than nationality; to express his values as a member of western society at that time.

56 My work could be categorised under Baudrillard’s third stage (of four) of simulacra: namely that it “pretends to be a faithful copy, but it is a copy with no original”. Baudrillard calls this kind of simulacrum “the order of sorcery” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 2018:[sp]). He also identifies five phenomena specific to postmodern life that give rise to Simulacra. These phenomena are all part of the issues with which I struggle in my art making, namely: the ubiquity and intrusiveness of modern media into every aspect of contemporary life; the commodification of all aspects of life; capitalism which separates manufactured goods from the context of their origin and method of production; urbanization; and language and ideology. 
analyse these inclusions from a psychoanalytic point of view, asking whether there is oedipal, or self-loathing thinking behind these choices; or one could accept my assertion that these choices were made purely on the basis of familiarity and convenience. I have not tried to uncover my own motivations for these choices, and as a result the symbolic values of my descriptions of the characters are unclear to me, and the viewers of my work. I invent the characters to talk about my work, but in doing so I allow them to change and develop beyond my initial expectations.

Ritual machines

*Ritual machines* are what I have called all of the artworks that form part of *N.’s Apparatus*, because they appear to have some sort of function, particularly because they are often made to be worn or used by me (and/or other persons); and their scale makes it apparent that they fall into a category of ‘appliances to be used by an operator’. The function is often to solve a problem in an absurd way. There is an implication that I need to perform some sort of action or hold some belief in the utility of the artworks for this function to be achieved, and thus my artworks become *ritual* in addition to being *machines.\(^5^7\)

The objects that I create constitute a blend of the visual and formal language of mechanical systems combined with the aesthetics of modern and pre-industrial societies’ ritual objects. However, I have not actively drawn on, researched, or combined a particular set of cultural

\(^5^7\) An investigation of the machine aesthetic in art is undertaken by Marzio (1972) in which he analyses the work of various canonical fine artists from the Dada, Surrealist and Futurist schools among others, and draws a link from their work to the cartoons of Rube Goldberg. The following quotation helps explain why machines are a suitable subject for humorous art in particular: “Revolutionary inventions such as radios, automobiles, airplanes and telephones gave the ‘astonished world fresher and louder gasps of incredulity’, wrote Goldberg in 1928, but they failed to solve the little problems besetting mankind. Goldberg saw this glaring deficiency and dedicated his humour to ‘solving’ commonplace problems: ‘while large groups of inventors were toying with great forces of the universe I looked around me in anguish’. He saw gravy spots on freshly cleaned vests and cigarette butts burning cruel holes in deep pile rugs. Good natured boobs suffered through afternoon teas juggling cups and saucers and plates and napkins and cake only to prove that the force of gravity was still triumphant. How could inventors ignore these people? ... As Goldberg looked for help he discovered a shocking truth. By the second decade of the twentieth century, inventing new things had become a corporate activity. The lone inventor was extinct; ‘with few exceptions’, insisted Goldberg, ‘no single person can stand out as the inventor of any great mechanical appliance’. The industrial research laboratories monopolized the nation’s inventive talent, and, according to the Goldberg theory, the results of modern science seemed to outgrow any individual” (Marzio 1972:321).
artefacts or influences in my work. Images and objects that I have seen, and been interested in throughout my life, have naturally affected the form of my work, but ultimately the ‘practical’ needs that I imagine for my work have the biggest influence on their form, while I also encourage a somewhat surrealist or automatic\textsuperscript{58} process between myself and the materials that I use, allowing a specific form found in a piece of wood or found object to influence the overall form of my machine. Katrib (2015:115) relates that “philosopher Henri Bergson wrote in 1900 that humor is inherent to the mechanical”. Droitcour (2015:103) describes how Freud, in his essay \textit{Jokes and their relation to the unconscious} (1905), repeatedly refers to jokes as “mechanisms”. Thus, calling my art objects \textit{machines} situates them within these discourses of machines being inherently linked to humour, and the human psyche.

As an example of my process it is useful to discuss my \textit{Wordpower Accumulator} (Figure 10) which supposedly captures and stores all of the energy that I waste on swearing quietly at other drivers while in my car. I decided that, since I swear too quietly and discretely for others to notice my displeasure (as I do not want to provoke physical road rage attacks) and since I see no way that I will stop swearing while driving, I need a device to help me gather the energy I waste on cursing. Thus, the form of a face-fitting ‘gas mask’ is not decided by aesthetic designs or compositional elegance, but by a practical design need as the device needs to be employed hands-free, sealed onto my face (Figure 11).

The materials (jacaranda wood from the road side, Zimbabwean teak from floorboards, reclaimed table legs, glass bottles found in an old uncovered garbage dump, plastic fittings from a mass-produced respirator, copper, brass and leather) are all chosen based on their availability and my enjoyment of their visual, tactile and practical qualities, as well as the story connected to my gathering of them.

\textsuperscript{58} I have a great number of pieces of wood lying around my studio, from a large variety of different species, whose shapes are determined by various physical factors. Whenever I process a piece for use in my artworks I get a number of off-cuts whose shapes are not consciously determined by me. I discuss this process in more depth below, but the implication is that there are forms available to me which I often include in my artworks without editing them. Thus, the ‘accidental’ shapes of the wood, and how they fit together, and are suitable for certain purposes influence the form of my artwork, and this is what I mean by automatic.
These two elements (the particular ‘need’ that I choose to address in the design, and the chosen materials) are combined to form the artwork. In my research on swearing (purposefully conducted on Wikipedia), I discovered that, in most societies, swearing tends to invoke things considered taboo, things that are greater than the one invoking them, or things that make one feel uncomfortable. Thus swearing tends to fall under the categories of all things godly, all things sexual, and all things bodily (including disability and disease) and any combination of these categories. I thought that, since these categories are so apparently universal, it must mean that each has its own inherent type of power or use. I ran through a quick mental list of swearwords, and, realising that godly-sexual-bodily combinations are easy to utter, I felt that an additional element was needed to interconnect the three streams. I used copper and brass to create a channel that not only allows each tube to be connected with the others, but also acts, on a structural level, as a reinforcing element.

The found bottles (which I decided must ultimately collect and store the energy) had to be able to couple and uncouple effectively and ergonomically with their tubes, and I designed a unique element for each. This was initially done to enhance the functionality of my ‘machine’ but also to enhance the overall aesthetic appeal of the work (since each is unique, and atypical of mass-produced fittings). Lastly, as this is a magical and ritual machine, I felt that low-relief illustrations of my three categories of cuss-words were necessary to ensure that the right word ends up in the right bottle. I particularly enjoyed carving buttocks, an anus and testicles; an erect penis, a crude vulva, an extended middle finger; and contentious political cartoons of Jesus Christ, Mohammed and a Rabbi from well-known sources onto the three tubes.59

I never used the Wordpower Accumulator in the way that it was ostensibly designed to be used, and I thus never stored any swearwords in the bottles, nor put that stored energy to any use. For me, the important part of a ritual machine is the process of conceptualising and making it, and once this is accomplished the machine gets exhibitied, and either sold, or put

59 The specific sources are a 5th-century graffito depicting Jesus with a donkey’s head, which is believed to be the earliest surviving Christian blasphemy (Alexamenos graffito), the drawing of Mohammed that triggered the terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo and a sharp-toothed, grimacing Rabbi puppeteer (with a smiling Barak Obama on his right hand and a John McCain on his left) from an article published in The Guardian 16 November 2012).
into storage. Part of the character of ritual machines is that they do not actually work. This is reflected in the narratives about Etterforsker and N., whose stories end abruptly and without them having achieved that which they set out to do. Etterforsker does not publish any of the experiences of N.’s work, and is not reunited with his family at the end of his story.

As in the above example, my works can often be worn and used by me. What I often intentionally do is treat the artworks as one would treat any other functional tool, such as a rake or picnic basket. That is to say, I put their use ahead of any perceived ‘preciousness’ or ‘aura’ that is usually connected with the treatment of artworks. I make a point of treating them this way because it proves to me that they are robustly constructed, actually ‘work’ (although the ‘work’ they do is absurd) and are not merely aesthetic objects. I also like the idea that many of my artworks have particles of my sweat, skin and blood ingrained in them, as well as dirt from my hands, rainwater and dust. This imbues them with a patina which could otherwise look false or unconvincing.

Imperato, Kahan and Page (2009:16) write that

Western art was created with the understanding that it would be an integral part of architectural decoration or would be housed in spaces defined by architecture [... and that] it was intended to be preserved in as quasi-pristine a condition as possible and not be handled [... while] in Africa, sculptures are often conceived as punctuations in a continuum ... thus the physical form is only a provisional or transient carrier which can be replaced in a few years or generations when necessary. Rarely produced to last ‘forever’ ... African sculptures, whether figures or masks, serve a cultural need that is as easily served by a replacement.

Imperato, et al (2009:22) furthermore describe an ‘African’ approach to an artist’s role as to “perform the initial imaginative, creative, and technical steps for what is, in the final analysis, a communal product that continues to evolve once leaving the hands of the carver”. I am aware of the problems inherent in a book edited by three Westerners about

60 I use the word “aura” in a different sense to Walter Benjamin’s, who uses it to mean “the nimbus of ‘uniqueness and permanence’ surrounding the most powerful works and their makers” (Schwabsky 2017:92). I refer to a materialist tendency that I notice in western, global art markets, which tend to regard artworks as objects that are separate from everyday life and must be preserved at all costs. Art objects in this sense may only be touched by gloved experts in climate-controlled settings. I contrast this tendency with the observation that art objects from cultures where they are employed in rituals and ceremonies (such as a mask used in a dance) may be handled in a very practical manner by a variety of people and is publicly displayed. The ‘functional’ role of the art object in such societies is more important than preserving it.
‘African’ art, but the treatment of the subject matter by Imperato, *et al* appears to be insightful and sensitive in its praise of the excellence of ‘African’ sculpture, and I refer to their writing here because it exactly sums up my own approach to, and philosophy of, art making.

**Explanatory ephemera**

I often accompany a sculpture, performance or installation with some form of extra-sculptural information to give context to or information about the piece. This may take the form of a fabricated museum information plaque, a supposed ‘user’s manual’, a video, or me (when I can be physically present) telling the viewer what the work is intended to do. I have often noticed that even a slight clue as to what the work is about will improve the viewer’s perception and reception of it. In the case of my artworks that are wearable objects, I receive a much better response to images of the work that I publish on social media if a person is seen in the image wearing the work, than when the work is merely displayed by itself (compare Figure 10 with Figure 11). Because my work is based on my own fantasy and invented narratives the viewer will be missing a large part of the context and content of the work if the narrative is not made available to them.

In this sense the employment of fictional characters in my work provides a context and vehicle by which I may present additional information to the viewer, in a manner that seems necessary and fitting. Because the initial fantasy underpinning the conception of the artwork requires explanation, I produce more fantasy via the characters to provide deeper explanations. In other words: who can better explain the purpose behind a fantasy machine than a fantasy character? I notice that certain conceptual artists intentionally refuse to explain what their work is about, in order that their work continues to be seen as appropriately ‘difficult’ and ‘clever’, while others provide long artist’s statements that unpack every hidden detail, cross-reference and witticism that they have included in their work, leaving no process of discovery for the viewer. I feel that my ‘explanatory ephemera’ provide a happy medium between over-explaining subtle elements of my work and alienating the viewer by being obtuse. The explanatory ephemera are also compatible with my pretence that my artworks are machines and inventions (i.e. the ‘user manual’ or
‘original instructions’ that I include with my sculptures are based on similar documents that one might find in the box with a mass-produced toaster or power drill, see Figure 15).

Writing about cartoonist Rube Goldberg (whose comic illustrations of absurd machines that accomplish simple tasks have a certain resonance with my own work) Marzio (1972:323) contends that:

> the effectiveness of the ... contraptions comes from a simple theory of opposites. No matter how crazy the inventions may appear, the instructions explaining how the parts interact are deadly serious. Goldberg, in short, followed all the requirements for a real mechanical drawing, only the subject changed. This ‘serious’ approach dramatized the earnestness and the folly of our aggressive pursuit of automation. As Goldberg wrote years later, his inventions were symbols of ‘man’s capacity for exerting maximum effort to accomplish minimal result’.

This description could, within certain limits, be applied to my own work and use of explanatory ephemera. I, too, earnestly assert that the purposes of my machines are deadly serious, and I too mock humanity’s (and especially my own) capacity for exerting maximum effort to accomplish minimal result. Writing on the satire of Jonathan Swift, Paddy Bullard (2013:613) notes that: “In each of these works an elaborate instructional format is the pretext for satire on corrupted habits and absurd social conventions”.

The instruction manuals and explanatory texts are often the primary site for me to express my humour. As an example, the Apparatus Adulatione (Figure 1) only becomes truly funny when the viewer discovers what its ostensible function is, especially because, on first analysis, one may be led to think that it has some serious, scientific purpose.

**Other objects**

In addition to ritual machines that I have intended, from the outset, to be artworks that function in all the ways that I have described above, I am also including objects on my exhibition which are not ritual machines. These other objects are things that I made in my studio to fulfil actual needs, but which have inadvertently turned out to be visually appealing and have an interesting story behind how I created them. The example in Figure 12 is of a pair of secondary, slip-on soles that I made while working from a studio in the Cradle of Humankind. The floor of the studio would get so cold in winter that, despite me wearing two pairs of thermal hiking socks and army boots, my feet would become so painful
from the cold that I was unable to work. This problem was exacerbated by my tendency to
sleep until midday and do the majority of my sculptural work between sunset and 4am.

To solve this problem, I made soles from a ceramic fibre blanket, which is a great insulator,
but is very fragile. To overcome the fragility of the ceramic fibre I encased each sole in
leather, and then used rubber from a bicycle inner-tube to create a sandal-like system of
straps that would allow the soles to be worn in conjunction with my army boots. Working
quickly, and exclusively with materials that were to hand, the whole sole is made from odd
scraps, held together by contact adhesive and aluminium rivets. I used these soles daily for
four months and, as a result, they have a truly worn appearance. The soles now become
part of the story of N. and Etterforsker, both of whom lived under challenging conditions in
a cold barn in the Cradle of Humankind. The apparently crude and brutally functional
construction also echoes certain tendencies in the way that I create ritual machines and
thus I argue that the inclusion of these other objects (which are, in a sense, also epitexts of
my biography) deepens the sense of narrative in my exhibition, and further complicate the
analysis of what is actual and fictional on the exhibition, and what is made by which
character.

*How I choose which issues to address in my works*

The problems that I choose to develop into ritual machines are chosen based on what
disturbs me in some way (regardless of whether it is a passing irritation or a lasting concern)
seem impossible to solve with any practical steps, and which I can imagine as some
interesting sculptural form.61

An example of something that would not inspire me to create a ritual machine is the
problem of smash-and-grab attacks. Although I had made a fetish for smash-and-grabbers
to worship in 2014, I would not make a ritual machine to try and address this particular
problem because, although there is not much that I can do to stop the attackers from

61 I also make certain ritual machines which do not reflect a particular desire to change something in the
world around me, but simply celebrate something that I enjoyed. These take the forms of monuments,
temples, altars or maps, and tend to commemorate a memory or a history through the topography or
cartographic information of a place.
perpetrating their crimes (short of massive socio-political reform), there are some very simple steps that I can follow in my daily life to avoid becoming a victim (locking my doors, having valuables out of view, being visibly attentive to my surroundings). I also do not focus on issues that are already in the process of being addressed by science, that are too general, or that fall out of my personal experience. I am especially careful to address issues solely from my personal experience because I believe that it is impossible for me to speak for anyone else outside of myself, especially people who are not white, male and heterosexual.

How I make my ritual machines

A Pretoria sculptor told me that she loves collecting antique hammers in Europe because, in some cases, the hammers have been in continuous use for hundreds of years, and have necessarily beaten a great number of objects, in many contexts, by professionals or amateurs. For her, it becomes satisfying to imagine that some sort of meaningful significance has been soaked up by the hammer, and it therefore becomes a better tool than any precision-engineered and high-tech, purpose-built hammer head could ever be. It is irrelevant whether this story has any valid scientific truth, for as long as one can be fascinated by it, accept its subjective value and allow the ‘placebo effect’ conveyed by the belief to improve one’s employment of such a tool, then its imagined history is really useful to one. I will henceforth call this significance-soaked state of matter historical residue, which may be considered a form of ego fictus of an object or material.

Part of my love of sculpture, the sculptor’s lifestyle and the importance that I attribute to the sculpture studio, involves the accumulation of interesting and useful objects, tools and raw materials. Some of the tools and materials that I use to make my sculptures have travelled with me to and from Europe, while others have been in transit with me for five years before finally becoming an artwork. I also often combine materials into proto-artworks which are never finished in their own right, but allowed to stand around my studio for some time before being partly dismantled and reassembled into a more resolved artwork at a later time. Similarly, certain artworks that I have exhibited successfully may lose their appeal and be dismantled later, or may be broken during storage or transit, and then interesting fragments (which have in the meantime gained meaning and historical residue) can be reinvigorated and incorporated into another artwork.
I typically allow a link to form between my emotional state at the moment of finding the material, the available information about the material’s history and the affordability of the material (I love finding useful things that are free) to imbue it with historical residue which will compel me to keep the material in my studio for later use. The material’s history refers to where I found it, who gifted it to me, what they had used it for and where it came from, although it can often be just as useful for me to fabricate all of this information in a fantasy as to hear a true account of it.

The techniques I use are based on a variety of factors, starting with traditional techniques which exist for the material that I am using and seeing what unexpected and exciting imposition I can make on the material. This is often done by deciding what possibilities are inherent in the natural shape of the material, or by investigating new techniques that are made possible by new tools that I have acquired, or a technique that I have read about that I would like to try out.

I do very little planning for a ritual machine in terms of its final form and structure. Drawing on necessity I will decide on the ‘function’ and a key material, then typically dive right into the thick of cutting and joining and adding and removing. I tend to focus on details before focussing on the whole, and almost always base measurements and ergonomic considerations on my own proportions. I prefer to work without an assistant, and thus certain formal idiosyncrasies that arise from carrying out a two-person technique (such as making moulds of my own body parts) by myself becomes integral to the look and feel of the object. In a similar vein I enjoy not having access to the best, newest and most expensive tools and materials (as these will typically make it possible to execute an obviously ‘correct’ solution, whereas trying to execute a challenging technique with incorrect or insufficient means will inspire one to think laterally and generate something new).

*Shift to wood*

From the start of 2016 wood had become the main medium of all my sculptures. I was using other media (such as cast plaster or metals) to accent key parts of my work, to add figurative elements, or simply to join parts (using screws, bolts and hinges). By the end of that year, however, wood had become the only medium in which I work. Wood is so
important to my sculptural practice, conceptually and formally, that I present an in-depth
discussion of why this is the case.

During my undergraduate studies, my earliest sculptural experiments were executed in fired
ceramics as I was in the unusually fortunate position of having unlimited access to a medium
sized pottery kiln. Ceramics could be used to create both figurative and abstract, as well as
organic or geometric shapes; it was easy to teach myself the necessary techniques and was
relatively cheap. When I left the university, and no longer had access to cost-free firing,
ceramics quickly lost its appeal. Ceramics are fragile, and thus require a pedantic approach
to making, which limits possibilities of size and form, especially on a small budget.

In the year after graduating I worked at a foundry, and produced some works in bronze, but
this medium, too, held little appeal for me. Bronze sculpture is essentially produced in a
factory setting by a large cohort of semi-skilled labourers and, in each stage of the process,
the artist’s possible input is reduced. In other words, if I present the foundry with a plaster
artwork that I want to have cast, my artistic input becomes limited to achieving slight colour
and textural variations on the final object.

For an emerging artist bronze can be prohibitively expensive, so in most cases, if one does
not have a large fund at one’s disposal for research and development, one is compelled to
make economically ‘safe’ sculptures that give one a higher chance of recovering one’s outlay
via a sale of the work. This may encourage less wealthy artists to make predictable work.
Bronze is furthermore associated with public art that is funded by wealthy and powerful
patrons, and I am uncomfortable with the implication that my sculpture might become
associated with the perspectives of a monied class of individuals.

Lastly, bronze artworks are typically produced as editions to offset costs, and although this
makes sense from a business perspective, I am less inclined (at this moment) to reproduce
my own work. Bronze is also a pure alloy, meaning that it is possible that, irrespective of
when or where a sculpture was cast, it could be chemically and physically identical to bronze
cast in a completely different context and situation. This sameness is not something that I find inspirational.\textsuperscript{62}

When I left the foundry and became a full-time artist I was faced with making art with a limited number of hand and machine tools. I could mechanically join metals, plaster, found objects and wood into assemblages, so this was what I did. I found that metals were particularly harsh and uninspiring to manipulate, while plaster and found objects tended to be far too fragile, and often disconcerting when juxtaposed with one another. Found objects also have the potential to be kitsch or sentimental, too beautiful or loaded with meanings and symbolisms to be successfully tamed to become one’s own artwork.

Wood, on the other hand, was available in a plethora of shapes, sizes, textures and colours, and had a great variety of physical and mechanical attributes including strength, hardness, weight and flexibility. Furthermore, wood could often be acquired free of cost in the form of discarded processed lumber (e.g. from discarded, damaged furniture) or natural tree limbs. Unlike the other free or discarded materials that I had access to, wood could be joined in exceptionally strong configurations using only a handsaw, drill, sandpaper and chisels.

\textit{The deep possibilities of wood}

The preceding paragraphs establish why I have specifically chosen not to use certain media and provide a practical and economic reason for why I use wood, but this only explains why I began using it. Once I became better acquainted with different types of wood and started challenging myself to use more advanced joinery techniques, new fields of possibility opened up to me. I am discovering that every bit of wood is unique. Branches from the same tree were exposed to slightly different amounts of sunlight, wind, weight of leaves and animals and thus carry embedded in their xylem and cellulose a different story to every other branch.

\textsuperscript{62} The one artist working in bronze who seems to avoid most of my criticisms above is Guy du Toit. Du Toit runs his own foundry with a small rotating staff of highly skilled artists, but he is deeply involved in every step of making his work and is thus able to implement creative changes at all the stages involved. Du Toit seldom creates editions and direct replicas of his own work: each tends to be unique in some respect, and is thoughtfully site specific. Because he casts his own work Du Toit is able to experiment freely. However, Du Toit’s exceptional way of working places great strain on his body, and I am not willing to pay this price to work with a medium that does not thrill me the way it thrills him.
The potential for variations within a single tree is exponentially multiplied across a single biome, and again increases when one compares wood from various parts of the globe. Every disaster, drought, fire, disease, war, storm, rockslide, parasitic invasion; and every year of plenty, good rain, peace and tranquillity influences the way in which the living tree grows. The accumulated biomass of decaying bodies, fertile ash, river runoff and a plethora of other factors are recorded in the shape and form of the tree. Furthermore, in a single forest, every species of tree will react differently to the stimuli it receives, to the point where any enthusiast of dendrology is overwhelmed by the limitless discoveries to be beheld on and beneath the surface of every tree.

This has a number of implications for the conceptual content of my work. As mentioned above, my work partly entails a present-day search for elements of divinity, magic, the unknown and, by extension, for objects that are not mass-produced or predictable (as modern machine objects tend to be). Wood provides all these factors for me. I am genuinely excited when I see a tree which has branches that have been trimmed or broken off in the wind, or when I hear that someone wants to get rid of an old piece of furniture indicating that I will have an opportunity to cut open the timber and see what lies beneath the old distressed and dusty varnish or the dull grey-brown bark.

The ‘primitive’ and ‘mediaeval’ elements of the functional and aesthetic designs which I create in my work are reinforced by my use of wood, since this echoes what would have been used by people following a hunter-gatherer or a village-based agricultural lifestyle. Along with stone and clay, wood is the basis for all human technology. If a craftsperson obtains some wood, twine and stone, and applies enough diligence and patience to it, they are able to produce an adze: something far more useful and complex than what they had to start with. The adze may be used to form planks which can be assembled into a table, on which more sophisticated tools can be made. For me, this adds more magic to wood: it is the medium that manifests fantasy and imagination into the real world. Wood has become a medicine, bringer of pleasure and motivation for me and certainly within the frameworks of why I make art, the *ego fictus* and my *ritual machines*, wood’s magic and capacity to induce wonder is at the core of what I do.
What are the characters, why do I use them, how do they work?

Within my project I have chosen to make use of two fictional characters who differ from one another in terms of their historical epoch, temperament, occupation and context, allowing me to make statements that I would otherwise not feel confident or comfortable to make. I am also able to effectively mock and parody certain ideas about white South African men and western rationalism. Having two characters who come from such different contexts means that I can offer multiple perspectives on the issues that I want to address.

Furthermore, the process of writing fiction, and reviewing my own history through a fictional lens, has given me a new way in which to consider my work.

The first character is called Mr. Nieandertaalensis (or N.) by the second character (Professor Etterforsker, described below). N. has an identical history and background to mine: he grew up in Pretoria, studied art at the University of Pretoria, moved to Johannesburg, then to Kromdraai, and finally back to Pretoria. N. is me, writing about my own art in an abandoned and emotional way, unrestrained by what I want other people to think or know about me. I argue that it is necessary for me to create this character in order to delineate a specific ‘target’ apart from myself for the second character to study. I feel unworthy of being the subject of study for a fictional professor, so N. takes my place, and I may edit his life without being untruthful. The only way that N. is able to deal with the various confusing and upsetting actions of society around him is to imagine that he is able to create machines that will solve his problems. Based on his observations of society, these fantastical solutions seem more tenable than any appeal to human nature or reason, which appear to be the original cause of all the evil he experiences.

N.’s name links him to Homo Neanderthalensis, a presently extinct type of human (genus Homo, but not species Sapiens) whose remains were first found in Germany. The link to Neanderthal man does not suggest that N. is ‘primitive’, but that he feels that he does not

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63 The name is intended to conflate the taxonomic classification of the species Homo Neanderthalensis with the Afrikaans phrase ‘nieandertaal’+ensis. ‘Nieandertaal’ may loosely translated as no(t) other language. This fortuitously sounds like the species’ name, and also points towards a tendency that I have observed in Afrikaners to become emotional regarding the status of their language, and their insistence to speak it, even to people who do not understand it. This element of the naming ties in to what is discussed below regarding the character of N. and his function in my study.
belong to or understand the humans around him (who are all *H. Sapiens*). Physiologically, Neanderthals had large brow ridges and noses, fairer skin and a higher likelihood of having red hair (Harris & Nielson 2016:881), as do I. By interbreeding with the Neanderthals these mutations allowed modern humans from Africa (with dark skin) to survive in colder, less sunny Europe. In fossil samples of Neanderthal skulls, hollows corresponding to parts of the brain dedicated to numerical and spatial reasoning are larger than in *Sapiens*, while the parts dedicated to empathy, speech and social interaction are reduced. This implies that Neanderthals might have been adept tool users but were unable to form into large social bands (Green, et al. 2006:330; Harris & Nielson 2016:881; Neves & Serva 2012:1). I am not extroverted and do not find particular pleasure in being around other people, and as I enjoy working with tools, I can imagine that I am more ‘Neanderthal’ than others around me.

According to Harris & Nielson (2016:881) individual non-Africans may have from two to four percent Neanderthal DNA, while the sum of all the possible inclusions in individuals constitutes up to 30% of all non-Africans’ DNA. In the most recent study that I have read since beginning my research, Harris and Nielson (2017:2) write that Neanderthals were probably highly inbred (thus showing a great number of genetic defects) and that although they interbred with modern humans, “natural selection has been slowly purging Neanderthal DNA from our gene pool”. Neanderthals were thus, in relation to modern humans, at a disadvantage, relatively disabled, and (by virtue of their now being extinct) potentially more vulnerable and less ‘supreme’ than many Europeans have historically considered themselves to be. I like what this adds to the character, since he is a tragic underdog who is destined to lose, and as he progresses, he needs to purge himself of an undesirable (and unshakable) genetic (and, metaphorically, moral) deformity and baggage.

Neanderthal remains were first discovered in Austria (a Germanic country). My grandmother is German, and I imagine that certain aspects of my personality are aligned

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64 To clarify: if the various elements that constitute human DNA are represented by the Latin Alphabet (A-Z) and the parts that come from Neanderthal DNA are represented by Greek letters, then a single human may have their ‘S’ replaced with ‘Σ’, while a different human may have their ‘Z’ replaced by ‘Ω’ whereas a third may have their ‘X’ replaced with ‘Ξ’. In each of these cases the part of the individual DNA that is replaced with Neanderthal DNA is equal to 2-4%. However, for all non-African humans the possible replacements may be any of the following 8 Greek letters: Ω, Φ, Σ, Ξ, θ, Δ, Ψ, Γ. Thus, although an individual has 2-4% Neanderthal DNA, all the possible inclusions across all non-Africans amount to 30% of all their possible DNA elements.
with my understanding of a stereotypical German, namely someone who is overly analytical, cold and avoids social intercourse under the excuse of being excessively hard-working and socially inflexible. I like to identify with this stereotype, as well as the description of the Neanderthal above, because I tend to be a loner and am at my happiest when I am working on art. Germany also has a rich history of craftsmanship (especially carpentry) and tool making, and the wooden objects that N. makes have connotations of being tools or scientific instruments.

My decision to refer to N. by a single capital ‘En’ followed by a full-stop mark is an homage to Franz Kafka’s novels. *The Castle* (Kafka 1926:[sp], translation from German by the author) begins with the line “It was late in the evening when K. arrived.” K. is the protagonist who is trapped in a nonsensical world where ridiculous bureaucratic systems cripple individual citizens, and all are frustrated, despondent and lost. K. is introduced with the single letter, and his identity is never elaborated on beyond the two impersonal symbols. By calling my character N. I am situating him in the same sense of frustration and feeling of being lost and alone as Kafka’s K. I also speculate that it is not coincidence that K. and Kafka share the same initial, i.e. that K. is an autobiographical reference (just as N. is actually Allen). Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* (1915:[sp], translation from German by the author) begins with “When Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from his disturbing dreams, he found that he had been transformed in his bed into a monstrous vermin.” I want N.’s sense of existence to have the same feeling of abrupt interruption, absurdity and dark improbability.

My particular spelling of *Nieandertaalensis* is intended to give the name an Afrikaans orthography. Although I generally do not support the notion that people should be patriotic or even particularly proud of their culture or heritage, I want the character that Etterforsker studies to be Afrikaans: not only because I speak the language and have Afrikaans-speaking family and friends, but also because I want to address certain aspects of Afrikaner culture and history that I believe to be problematic. N., being Afrikaans (a novel cultural group that originates in South Africa and which is in the process of becoming a more

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65 I believe that any peoples’ tendency to idolise their culture and slavishly adhere to the various tenets of their cultural beliefs has a general effect of making them falsely proud of achievements recorded in (questionable) histories, and using this same history as a basis to hate or denigrate other cultures and people.
cohesive group specifically around the time that Etterforsker visits)\(^{66}\) also gives pretext for Etterforsker (an ethnologist) to come to South Africa to look for and study Afrikaners.

The second character, Professor Walter Roald Etterforsker, bears my second name as his first. The name Walter also connects him to Walter Battiss, who is central to my study, and other Walters that I admire.\(^{67}\) Roald is the name of the well-known and accomplished Norwegian story-teller, humourist and writer, Roald Dahl, and of the famous Norwegian explorer and scientist, Roald Amundsen, who led the first successful expedition to the South Pole. The surname Etterforsker is the Norwegian word for detective or investigator. This is a direct description of the role that Prof. E. has in the project, and recalls a generic *fin de siècle* Sherlock Holmes investigator character, who is possessed of a supernatural genius, and is inclined to over-explain the improbable and fantastic circumstances that are drawn together by his extraordinary deductive ability. The name also links Prof. E. to Scandinavian states, which I perceive as rational and scientifically advanced places (thus he embodies the part of me that is entrenched in the Western way of life that I am simultaneously invested in, and disillusioned with). Lastly, the onomatopoeic quality of the name makes it sound to me at once pompous and grand, as well as somewhat silly. I really enjoy saying it out loud.\(^{68}\)

Professor Etterforsker is studying N., despite the fact that he is living and working at the turn of the twentieth century. Etterforsker always discovers any artefacts linked to N. exactly 100 years before I in fact exhibited them.\(^{69}\) This sets Etterforsker’s first encounter

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\(^{66}\) Only as late as 1961 was Afrikaans made an official language of South Africa, although the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (the Society for Real Afrikaners) was established in 1875. At that time, however, Afrikaans was still seen as a dialect or subsection of Dutch (Afrikaans Language 2018:[sp]). The beginning of a truly unique Afrikaner identity may be regarded as originating around the time of the Great Trek in the 1830s and 40s, with the establishment of the Boer republics, and certainly by the time of the South African (Boer) war, although many Afrikaners trace their heritage back to the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in the Cape in 1652.

\(^{67}\) Walter Oltmann – a German South African artist whose practice is deeply rooted in craftsmanship; Walter Gropius – German Bauhaus architect; Walter Raleigh – British explorer.

\(^{68}\) I believe this was also a significant part of Battiss’ motivation for choosing Fook as a name.

\(^{69}\) I have appropriated, to some extent, this narrative device from the novels of Kurt Vonnegut who writes himself into his books alongside his alter ego and other characters who bounce back and forth through time. Although the temporal continuity is interrupted, the narrative is continuous. Vonnegut includes certain historical and autobiographical facts into his novels, but the reader is never given a clear indication of which parts of the books are fact and which fiction, especially since Vonnegut questions the reliability of his own perceptions.
with N.’s work in 1914: the centenary celebration of the writing of Norway’s constitution, which was commemorated by a World’s Fair that included amongst the exhibitions a Kongo Village – a human zoo featuring real Africans. This motivates Etterforsker to travel to Africa and discover a novel population to show off at the fair, and as I am Afrikaans speaking, it makes sense that Etterforsker should study Afrikaners.

Etterforsker bases his judgements and explanations of the functions and purposes of N.’s objects as insular phenomena, being unable to understand them from a different perspective or context other than his own. Etterforsker is not worried about allowing his personal biases to colour his interpretations, as he is too arrogant to see them as such.

Because he is the only person able to see the works, no impartial observer is able to dis/prove any of his claims, or offer any alternative readings to his. Every vision of Etterforsker is preceded by some manner of seizure, fit, dream, accident or stressful situation (e.g. Vol. II 59, 85, 104, 131, 150, 168, 180, 188) and so the reader can never be sure whether the professor is genuinely being transported to N.’s time, or psychologically disturbed and imagining all of these events. Etterforsker’s journey in Africa is fraught with much difficulty, and his life does tend towards falling apart, especially as the events of World War I (WWI) separate him from his family and country, and he finds himself unable to produce any credible research for nearly five years, causing his financial and professional standing to steadily decline. Thus his visions may be good fortune, and something for which he will one day be acclaimed; or they may be a strange coping mechanism for a man who is losing everything to which he was accustomed.70

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70 For example: Etterforsker realises early in his expedition that the Afrikaners are unlikely to accompany him to Norway as cultural curiosities. He meets, by chance, Niklaas van Rensburg, a South African ‘prophet’ who was alive around that time, and is today still considered by many to be a true clairvoyant or prophet of God. After this meeting he has his first experience of N.’s work, and his whole initial project, which has cost the Norwegian Government and University much money, is derailed. He returns to Norway disgraced, and feels compelled to return to South Africa to redeem his reputation. As he is en route to SA the events which started WWI occur, and shortly after he arrives in Pretoria, Great Britain has entered the war, and sea voyages become nearly impossibly dangerous. He joins an Afrikaner revolutionary group, hoping that he will be able to meet Van Rensburg through this connection, but he will never meet the man again. He continues to have experiences of N.’s work, but because they are so absurd, and because N.’s writing and lifestyle is so outrageous by fin de siècle standards, Etterforsker remains unable to produce publishable research from his discoveries. When he returns to Johannesburg, after having left the Afrikaner group, he is worried that his Norwegian accent might associate him with Germany, and he spends much time alone,
The year 1914 is historically important for Afrikaners, who saw the outbreak of WWI as an opportunity to throw off the chains of British dominion, and which resulted in the third (very brief) South African (Boer) War. This was also the year in which the Afrikaners’ folk prophet Siener van Rensburg accurately predicted the death of his disciple Boer General Koos De La Rey on the 15\textsuperscript{th} of September (Words of a prophet 2015:[sp]). Etterforsker becomes interested and somewhat obsessed with Van Rensburg as a white shaman (as Etterforsker’s interest in ethnology originates in the study of Sami\textsuperscript{71} shamanic objects). Etterforsker’s semi-religious reverence of the prophet also casts aspersions on his professionalism and academic rigour and further complicates the question of whether he is imagining his visions of N., or really seeing the future.

By 1914, Corner House, (where I lived, and exhibited my fetishes/totems/masks in 2014) had been completed (in 1903, it was the first modern ‘skyscraper’ to be built in Africa, and the tallest modern building on the continent), and when Etterforsker enters the same geographical space as where I exhibited my works, he is able to see visions of N.’s work. Because Etterforsker is only ever able to briefly encounter the works, his interpretations of them are, of necessity, based on superficial analyses, partial remembrances and conjecture.

The temporal inconsistencies are never directly addressed in my project, but I have included them in the fiction to add to the general sense of uncertainty and absurdity which underpins much of my project. Prof. E.’s fin de siècle reality means that he writes from a strictly patriarchal, colonialist, absolutist and empiricist point of view.\textsuperscript{72} I believe that most 21\textsuperscript{st} century readers would question and dispute much of what fin de siècle writers hold to be true. My decision to review my past from the position of a non-South African who sees what I do from the perspective of exactly 100 years prior to the event, highlights the

\textsuperscript{71}Natives of the Arctic circle around Scandinavia (archaically called Lappish) following lifestyles superficially similar to Siberian natives and Inuit living in Greenland and Alaska.

\textsuperscript{72}What I mean by these terms is that Etterforsker has an arrogant, non-debatable stance on issues. He does not often consider it possible that he can be wrong, nor that anyone may have a different view to his, as for him there is only one Truth. From a contemporary post-modern perspective this way of thinking can be amusing, since feminist and queer, post-colonial theories have thoroughly deconstructed the position of the white male.
fictional and contrived nature of my autobiographical project. Although I feel uncomfortable writing some of his thoughts which are, for example, racist (e.g. Vol II 33-34) and offensive, this forces me to take greater responsibility for the issues by which I claim to be upset, requiring me to be certain of my stance.

A great amount of research has gone into the events and conditions that Etterforsker describes in his journeys. I want a knowledgeable reader to be surprised by the degree of accuracy portrayed and I want a lay reader who quickly Googles a fact that sounds dubious to be surprised to find that it is corroborated online. But most of all, I want to immerse myself in the sorts of challenges and limitations that Etterforsker would have faced, so that I can accurately write in his voice. I, for example, make sure that Etterforsker fares down on a Norwegian steamship that really exists when he needs it, and is available to make a journey to South Africa. I make sure that the ship’s actual speed determines in which countries he stops and at what time. This also allows me to ‘discover’ places due to being ‘constrained’ in this way. The ship he takes was used in 1900 to transport British soldiers to South Africa and thus foreshadows what he later learns of Boer ex-soldiers. In the same way the facts about railways that are available to him; where he can find fuel for a car with a range of 180km and no electric headlamps, on a dirt road, all guide me on a process, not of simply creating a fiction, but discovering what fictions are possible in the context of Etterforsker’s specific reality.

I like to imagine, that because I use events, things and locations that have a scarcity of existing historical information recorded about them, that my additions to those histories may accidentally be accepted as genuine and even displace the actual truth. In an era where people are becoming more reliant on quick internet searches to verify ‘facts’, this may be a possibility (if key words cause my dissertation, or someone who has quoted my dissertation, to ‘answer’ someone’s online query).

I write Etterforsker’s voice in a contrived imagining of a fin de siècle, highly educated, second language speaker. I make an effort to use longer and more elaborate terms, and include comic misuses of words (Malapropisms). Furthermore, when he writes diary entries there may be errors that occur in this highly personal genre, and I preserve some of this awkwardness in my writing.
A final technique which I used to heighten the different personalities and attitudes of the characters was to listen to specific sorts of music when writing as each of them. For N. I listened to electronic music (such as minimal techno, house, club, electro); or various kinds of metal music (heavy, death, black, extreme, folk, sludge amongst others). These musics (metal and techno) are, for me, a form of ‘white noise’, in the sense that when vocals or lyrics are present they are often hard to decipher, highly repetitive or simplistic. These genres are defined primarily by drum beats with repetitive melodies, thick with electronic fuzz and generally not challenging to listen to. The tempos in these genres of music tend to be very high. The result of listening to this music is that I feel as though I become slightly dissociated from the world around me and an urgent, driving haze surrounds me. Thus, when writing as N. I may feel more anxious, excited, emotional or on edge due to the particular styles of music to which I am listening.

When writing as Etterforsker, however, I have listened to symphonic and choral compositions, written mostly from the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries, with an emphasis on music composed from 1850-1910. This period would be contemporary from the time of Etterforsker’s early adulthood up to him leaving for Africa. I made sure to listen to Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), a well-known and acclaimed Norwegian composer. These symphonies (to my layperson’s ear) tend to be either slow and relaxing or dramatic and tense in a grandiose manner. There is certainly much more complexity in these symphonies than in the electro or metal music, with narrative themes running through melodies, complex counterpoints and harmonies. I have found that this music requires a more active form of listening and evokes a cerebral rather than emotional response from me.

I postulate that my subjective state of mind while writing as the two characters might be slightly influenced by these two broad (and typically quite opposite) classes of music. One is contemporary to my lifetime, and considered to be ‘popular culture’, whereas the other is contemporary to Victorian/Edwardian times and considered to be ‘high culture’. I enjoy all the music I listened to, and I do listen to it to evoke certain feelings even when I am not working on my academic writing.
Analyses of selected artworks and exhibitions

The first set of artworks analysed below come from a cohesive two-person exhibition that took place in March 2016 and, in many ways, entailed a ‘practice round’ for my final Master’s exhibition. Seven other artworks are included in the writings of N. and Etterforsker. I have chose to focus on these seven because I had to limit what I discuss, due to constraints of time and the scope of this project, and have thus focussed on works that best exemplify the points and techniques that are pertinent to this study. In other words, I have chosen works that are centred around specific issues for which I have invented a magical solution, using fictional designs reinforced by fabricated epitexts and are works that involve strong elements of performance art, and the ego fictus.

I have firstly written an account of the seven latter works by N., and then by Etterforsker, which makes reference to the first. The final analysis of a single work, Caucasian Concilliation Contraption (CCC) is written by me, and makes reference to both others. The two fictional analyses are made with an individual focus on each artwork at a time and include descriptions of the artworks. The third analysis, undertaken by me, is limited to a single work, because I argue that an in-depth discussion of a single work will elucidate the meaning and methods employed in the whole of N.’s apparatus.

Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees

In preparation for my Master’s exhibition I showed six sculptures and six diagrams at a two-person show at the 2016 Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK; Little Karoo National Arts Festival, Oudtshoorn). I was involved as a curator and participant alongside Heidi Fourie who was my co-curator and who exhibited paintings in the exhibition. We responded to an open call for proposals to the KKNK with the theme Blank Spaces. Fourie and I were both exploring themes in our separate practices which we felt were in line with this curatorial brief, and which were compatible with each other’s work. Fourie was intent on exploring the painterly possibilities of geographical depictions (making reference to the various cross-section diagrams found in geography textbooks) and I was already developing work for N.’s Apparatus. We responded to the given theme by presenting an exhibition, that we titled Fragments, Imagined (Figure 13), which drew on notions of the mysteries that may lie underground (via Fourie’s mock-geographical analysis and my mock-archaeological
analysis). Our imagined fragments constitute a blank space for the imagination to become active, and a blank space for new formal possibilities within our chosen media of painting and sculpture.

The Visual Arts component of the 2016 KKNK entailed 14 curated exhibitions held in a single venue, with each exhibition comprised of at least 20 artworks. The Prince Vincent building in which we exhibited was built in 1914, and it was important for us to show our work in the part of it which still had the original wooden floors, ceilings and vertically sliding windows. Within the space of our exhibition, and in addition to the 20 paintings, six diagrams and six sculptures, we included an antique table and chairs, as well as rocks collected from the town of Oudtshoorn. Our intention was to create an immersive experience within the gallery space that extended beyond our artworks to evoke the atmosphere of a natural history museum. This anticipated the way in which I curate the exhibition space for N.’s Apparatus.

From my personal experience and feedback from other curators and members of the public, I understood that my work was particularly popular and well received in the space (relative to other occasions on which I had shown my work). I had set up a camera and recorded people’s physical reaction to my work (via their facial expressions), as well the amount of time they spent looking at my sculptures and the accompanying diagrams. These records reinforced my perception that visitors to the Prince Vincent building enjoyed looking at my work. Visitors were especially entertained when I demonstrated that all of the sculptures fit onto my body (shown in Figures 13 & 14) and I explained the concept behind the making of each ritual machine.

I hypothesise that my work was especially well received because of its humorous content; the fantasy behind the ‘function’ of each work and the overall form and use of materials in the construction of each. In a setting where a viewer is exposed to a great amount of musical, theatrical, dramatic, culinary and visual art I think the idiosyncratic presentation of my work allowed it to stand out. The fantasy and narrative quality of the work also required the viewer to spend time interacting with and understanding the diagrammatic representation of the sculptures, the textual information accompanying this, and the sculptures themselves.
I also hypothesise, based on observations of previous exhibitions of my work, that *Fragments, Imagined* was my best-received exhibition up to that point, because it was presented as a large body of work rather than as isolated sculptures on a larger group exhibition. A nominal amount of attention needs to be given to the work, so that the viewer is enticed to engage with it on a more complex level. I assume that, in a space filled with more than 300 artworks, mine stood out because of the alternative, immersive presentation and the combination of textual, diagrammatic, sculptural and performative elements contained in each work.

*Analysis of one of the seven artworks included in this study*

Formal and content analytical descriptions of seven artworks, which I have selected for discussion in this study, are given in detail in the two fictional characters’ accounts thereof, and are depicted in the figures in Volume II of this study. These artworks explore themes such as self-discovery, toxic masculinity, white supremacy, capitalism, the destruction of nature, the healing power of art, and the problematic elements of social media amongst other things. In each artwork I either performed in front of an audience using the artwork, or by proxy via explanatory ephemera such as videos or booklets. Humour is a key part of the works and, to some extent, I am the target of the jokes or satire in each case. This is not because I despise myself, but because I criticise the actions of groups of people who may, in some respects, be like me.

In each case there are, in addition to the directly critical aims of the works, secondary meanings which may be more esoteric, frivolous or completely tangential; emerging via the long process of ideation, making and developing the artworks during conversations with other people. For example, although a performance with the *Coffee Machine* (Figure 24) was meant to present a critique of Global Capitalism (of the way in which a foreign café franchise exploits farmers from Third World countries, drives local retailers out of business, while increasing the cost of coffee for local consumers, to enrich a small group of shareholders in another country), the artwork also entails an investigation of the awkwardness of meeting a stranger and subverting their expectations of what a business interview, or blind date, might be like.
Readers of this chapter may look at the descriptions by N. and Etterforsker in Volume II to discover and uncover for themselves how I have spoken about my own works, and how the different voices contribute to a complex understanding of the art and performances.\textsuperscript{73} However, because similar processes underpin the creation of all of these works, it will be more valuable to the aims of this study to discuss a single work in great depth and with much consideration, instead of superficially repeating separate analyses of all seven works. I thus discuss only *Caucasian Concilliation Contraption*\textsuperscript{74} (*CCC*, 2016, figures 16,17), relating the various aspects of its construction and conceptual content to what I have written on Fook Island, and my discussions of fiction and humour in this chapter.

In the following analysis I firstly describe the formal characteristics of *CCC* and, as I do this, I explain the processes and materials that I use in constructing each element of the artwork. These factors contribute to the conceptual message that I intend to convey and the possible influences on how a viewer might understand the work. After this description of the form I discuss what I intended the work to mean when I set out to create it, after which I present selections of N.’s and Etterforsker’s writing about it, and finally unpack the content of the work in relation to this study, including its relationship to Fook Island.

*CCC* is made to fit a human head, and an opening in a central ‘helmet’ form is based on the size of my own head. It is made primarily of wood, but plaster of Paris and steel nuts and screws are incorporated into the construction as pragmatic solutions to structural concerns that I encountered during construction. This work was made in the period just before I began working exclusively in wood and, in retrospect, I could have made a better object if I had used only wood. At the time, however, my studio was poorly equipped for woodwork and I approached my art-making with a do-it-yourself, make-do attitude. I will explain later how this enhances the meaning of this artwork.

\textsuperscript{73} The seven works that I have discussed via N. and Etterforsker are given below. The numbers in square brackets indicate which sections of the narrative by N. and Etterforsker are relevant to which particular artwork. *Stombok Ritual Action Camera Headpiece* (*STRACH*, 2015, Figure 14) [Vol. II 84-100, 199-202,203,205]; *Paraphernalia for Relaying Outwardly the Unmistakeable Dignity of Micturation as Natural* (*PROUDMAN*, 2016, Figure 15) [Vol. II 103-126, 206-208]; *Caucasian Concilliation Contraption* (*CCC*, 2016, figures 16,17) [Vol. II 129-147, 202-203]; *Coffee Machine* (2016, Figure 24) [Vol. II 150-164, 209-212]; *Advocate of Nature* (2017, Figure 25) [Vol. II 168-176, 213-217]; *Takkies 2.0.1* (2017, Figure 26) [Vol. II 180-188, 218-222]; *Rat City Designed by a Committee* (2018, Figure 27) [Vol. II 188-196, 222-226].

\textsuperscript{74} I misspelled ‘Concilliation’ when I created and named the artwork, and I have chosen to retain this misspelling as part of the work.
CCC is based around a central ‘helmet’ form which is made from White Oak wood and plaster. The White Oak was given to me by a senior South African artist, who was given off-cuts by an Egyptian artist-in-residence, who acquired the White Oak from milling a tree which had fallen over at the farm near the NIROX sculpture park in the Cradle of Humankind, where I was living in a barn at the time. Thus, the main part of CCC is constructed from the scraps of the scraps of a naturally fallen tree. The White Oak was rough-sawn into thin strips while wet, and thus has a rough surface, warped geometry and variable width, length and thickness. My reason for using the White Oak to construct the ‘helmet’ is that it seemed the most flexible wood that I had, by chance, at the time.

To bend wood effectively one needs a well-constructed steam tube. When I wanted to bend the Oak, I lined a rectangle of loosely-packed bricks on the floor with a black plastic bag, filled the resulting space with water, and left the Oak strips submerged to soak for a few days. I then tried to bend the strips into a contiguous oval shape that would fit a human head, but the wood kept snapping. I know now that I was approaching the wood-bending in a completely incorrect manner for many reasons, but at the time I merely changed my objective to something that seemed achievable. I decided to create an oblong shape with tapering ends, a shape, it seemed, that the wood was prepared to take. Not knowing a more correct way to keep the wood strips in place, I used a nail gun to pin them together, resulting in a flimsy connection and split wood. This approach also meant that the inner surface of the ‘helmet’ would be bristling with steel nails and would surely cut my head. To help hold the entire assembly together, and to smooth over the protruding nail stubs, I lined the inside of the ‘helmet’ with plaster. Thus, the primary, core element of CCC is comprised of an oblong, Oaken headgear which is impractically heavy and uncomfortable.

To the left and right of this central shape extend slim Zimbabwean Teak planklets, which are joined in a way that I supposed would increase their strength and rigidity. These elements resemble structural trusses, gantries or scaffolding. I initially acquired this Teak from the Corner House where I stayed from 2013 to 2014 in the centre of Johannesburg. The wood had lain in the apartment when we moved in, and we (my flatmate and I) were instructed by the landlord to keep it. It stood in an ugly, haphazard pile in one corner of the apartment for more than a year. When, one day, I was convinced that I urgently needed a shelf in my studio before I could do any more useful work, I used some of the Teak planks to build one.
had no idea whether the wood was of ‘good’ or poor quality (nor what species it was), but it was flat and straight enough to serve my purposes. I systematically incorporated planks of this Teak into various constructions until the ugly pile had been used up. Later, when I moved to the barn (from 2015-2016, in the Cradle of Humankind), the Teak furniture moved with me, and subsequently, as I needed wood for artworks, I would cannibalise my self-made furniture. As I became better acquainted with types of wood, I realised that the Zimbabwean Teak is an exceptional and attractive species with a fine, silky grain, high degree of hardness and great strength. This is why I used it to create the two extensions that flank the ‘helmet’ of CCC.

At the end of each lateral extension I fixed an eight-sided trumpet-shape. As in the former cases, the tools that were at my disposal at the time influenced my selection of this particular shape. The trumpets are made from thin sheets of marine-grade plywood and the seams where the flat sections join at 45-degree angles have been filled with wood filler. Each trumpet has a small hole at the wider end (which diminishes its ostensible functionality) but I did not want to expose the inside of the trumpet which is unattractive and the maximum size of hole that I could neatly cut was limited by the size of hole-saw that I had. The narrow ends of the trumpets (meant to be the ear-holes of a listening trumpet) are tapered and turn inward towards the ‘helmet’, terminating in line with its sides, and slightly lower than its edges.

The last significant element of the artwork, clearly visible in figures 16 and 17, is a system of pushrods that connect a mouthpiece, or bit, at the front end (‘forward’, i.e. toward the face of the wearer) to a horse-shoe shaped ‘yoke’ at the opposite end (‘aft’). Although not ergonomic or comfortable, when the two parts of the mouthpiece are brought together by the clenching of one’s teeth, this action causes the yoke at the opposite end to move downwards. The intention is that if the yoke rests on one’s shoulders, around one’s neck, then the closing of one’s mouth should simultaneously force one’s head into a bowed posture.

To recapitulate, CCC entails a flat-bottomed-boat-shaped central element the size of the crown of an adult human head. This central element is made from strips of a light-coloured wood with a prominent straight grain, with a rough surface. From the ‘port’ and ‘starboard’
sides of the ‘boat’ protrude trusses made from a smooth, dark brown wood with little visible grain. This wood has a square section, and is pinned together by thin, light-coloured dowels. At the end of each of the pair of trusses are octagonal trumpet shapes made from a light coloured wood, whose wider sides point to ‘forward’ and whose narrow sides curve to point inwards towards the centre of the entire assembly. Running from ‘forward’ to ‘aft’ of the central element are a series of square-sectioned, dark brown wood shafts which connect a pair of plates ‘forward’ to a crescent-form ‘aft’.

This assembly, as depicted in Figure 17, is presented on a stand made from a brass loop attached to the top of a wooden leg reclaimed from a piece of furniture, which is mounted atop a pyramidal frame constructed from square-sectioned steel that has been painted black. Besides this stand is a standard corrugated cardboard box with a black silhouette-shape depicting the CCC on its side, along with a motif in red made from three interlaced Cs and the words “Caucasian Concilliation Contraption”. In a clear, A4-sized plastic sleeve, taped to one of the flaps of the box, is a single A3 page, folded to produce a 4-sided booklet, containing texts and diagrams, as shown in Figure 18. The box is intended to appear as though it originates from a factory or production line, suggesting that CCC is a mass-produced product available for global export and affordable to a broad market.

The cover page of the booklet accompanying the work bears a triple-C motif and the words “Caucasian Concilliation Contraption”. Beneath this appear the words: “What every white person needs!”, and at the bottom of the page “Instruction Manual”. A profile silhouette of the CCC appears in the centre of the cover page. The two inner pages resemble the design of a ‘user manual’ (such as those that are usually provided with household appliances or power tools), but the language used is intended to echo that often employed in infomercials. The reference to infomercial-style writing is meant to indicate my self-deprecation through the work, to amuse the viewer, and to present a sarcastic criticism of people who, I believe, need to use a Caucasian Concilliation Contraption to correct the ways

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75 Also known as “paid programming”, usually shown as filler content “outside peak prime time hours”, such as between midnight and 6 a.m., infomercials “carry an implication that the party making the communication is exaggerating truths or hiding important facts” (Infomercial 2018:[sp]). I associate infomercials with ‘cheesy’, sentimental, sensational language, in which professional and technical terms are conflated with emotive, informal and subjective claims.
in which they interact with people of colour. The inner pages also contain an “Explanatory Diagram with Labelled Features”. The rear cover of the ‘manual’ bears a different triple C motif to that on the front cover (ostensibly another trademark of the fictional ‘CCC co.’) and the words “Copyright CCC Co. 2016”, which is intended to reinforce the style of a typical ‘user manual’. As mentioned above, many of the elements and the constituent materials that make up CCC were chosen due to being, by chance at hand, but this does not mean that CCC was made without a premeditated message in mind, and that it does not communicate a particular message.

I made CCC in response to a number of troubling statements made by the singer, songwriter and right-wing political activist Steve Hofmeyer which prompted me to visit Facebook pages, created by his supporters, which were full of even more disturbing opinions and statements made by people who see him as a figurehead of a ‘white cause’. I refer to a group of people who are convinced that white people world-wide are victims of an impending white genocide and of ‘reverse racism’.76 They also seem to believe that the Afrikaans language is being systematically and deviously eradicated by an ‘anti-white agenda’ (see Footnote 65 about the orthography of N.’s name). At the same time that I saw these messages, a black Zimbabwean friend was posting articles and news stories on Facebook which were highlighting ways in which white privilege, the legacy of colonialism and continual racism were negatively affecting black people across the globe, by making it more difficult for them to succeed in a westernised global context. The sense of personal attack that I perceived from my Zimbabwean friend’s Facebook posts along with the sense of disgust that I experienced at the comments made by the followers of Steve Hofmeyer prompted me to question my relation to, and understanding of, people of colour.

I met with another friend to discuss my feelings of confusion that I experienced as a result of my being white and I was soon convinced that, for me to understand what I must do to improve the way that I relate to people of colour, and the way in which I can counter the opinions of Steve Hofmeyer’s adherents, would be for me to take time to listen to the

76 I mean that people claim structures such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) are racist and comparable with apartheid laws. I find statements such as these to be absurd and beyond my comprehension because, unlike BEE (an attempt to correct past injustices), racism is the origin of the injustices which BEE seeks to remedy.
opinions and stories of people of colour, without seeking to justify my point of view or to becoming defensive. I condensed and paraphrased this advice in saying that, essentially, I believe that white people need to keep their mouths closed and listen to people of colour. This is what determines the overall shape of CCC: a wearable device that simultaneously forces a user to be humble, silent and attentive.

I employed elements that suggest CCC might be a mass-produced object with the intention of being humorously parodic: by creating a sense of disjunction in the mind of the viewer who can see that it is evidently hand-produced. On a deeper level, however, the references to a contemporary packaging design are meant to imply that, if it did work and could be mass-produced, it would, in fact, be wise for CCC to be disseminated cheaply across the world, so that as many westerners as possible could have access to it. I also try to suggest that a tool which challenges its user to change the way they relate to and empathise with others, is something that might be commercialised. For me this idea is inherently absurd, since commercialism, to my understanding, seeks to hide difficult and challenging aspects of life from the consumer.

The effects of the automatic processes which I refer to at the start of the section labelled ritual machines above, and which are further explained in Footnote 57, can be seen in various elements of CCC. The shape of the central helmet element was not initially meant to look like a ship, but this shape, which resulted from practical rather than aesthetic concerns, strengthens the conceptual message, as it links CCC to colonial expeditions that were carried out via ships, such as those used by Etterforsker. The two trumpet shapes beside the boat have visual similarities to a number of fantasy illustrations of airships, including designs rooted in pure fantasy (Figure 19), in an imagined year 2000 from 1915 (Figure 20) and a contemporary design for a ‘floating house’ (Figure 21). This resemblance may strengthen the viewers’ fictional associations with the artwork. For me the fantastic/futurist airship imagery suggests that CCC is a vessel that might transport its user from a current state of hatred, fear, hostility and ignorance to a future of understanding, peace, acceptance and joy. Thus, the image of an Oaken colonial ship is inverted and becomes a flying ship of a potentially brighter future.
The unplanned selection of White Oak and Zimbabwe Teak as materials also draws the viewer’s attention to the relationship between a ‘white oke’\(^\text{77}\) and a black Zimbabwean that instigated my interest in the subject of Caucasian conciliation. The fact that the central ‘helmet’ of CCC needed to be lined with plaster to hold it together means that the artwork is heavy and does not sit stably or comfortably on a user’s head. This adds to the message that conciliation is a difficult, uncomfortable process which must constantly be attended to, rather than something which may be solved by a ‘quick-fix’. This speaks to the apparent failure of the ‘rainbow nation’\(^\text{78}\) that South Africa was meant to become after the first democratic elections in 1994, and to the great number of controversial racial debates taking place over social media since 2016.

N.’s writing about CCC is similar to what I have already said in the preceding paragraphs of this section. I think he and I have differed so little in our description of the thoughts leading up to the creation of this artwork because this is something that neither of us finds in any way funny: we consider it a serious issue that needs serious consideration to prevent our country from being torn apart by hatred. Unlike with some of the other artworks, N. does not write a denouement to the story of CCC or give any thoughts about it after it is exhibited, as he does in great detail with the \textit{STRACH} (Vol. II p. 201,203,204), \textit{Advocate of Nature} (Vol. II p. 217,218) and \textit{Takkies 2.0.1.} (Vol. II p. 223). CCC is one of the few artworks that N. does not publicly perform with, and it is also the artwork about which he writes the least. This all seems to suggest that the issues which N. tries to address through CCC are highly sensitive, and he does not feel capable of unpacking them delicately as he does with other works. He writes on page 203:

\(^{77}\) In my understanding, both English and Afrikaans white South Africans use the slang word ‘oke’ to refer to other people, normally other white men. ‘Oke’, which is pronounced like ‘Oak’, is probably derived from the Afrikaans slang word ‘ou’ which is also used to refer to another person in the same way. My 2016 work, seen in Figure 22, is entitled \textit{White Oke Mask}, and a photographic print featuring the same mask, seen in Figure 23, is called \textit{White Oke’s Burden}. The mask is made from the same found White Oak strips as those used in CCC.

\(^{78}\) The ‘Rainbow Nation’ refers to the idea that after the end of apartheid, and the first democratic elections in SA, “South Africans formed a ‘natural’ community whose interests transcended individual differences and social constraints’ (Booth, in Fletcher 2012:56). Fletcher (2012:64) continues that the ‘Rainbow Nation’ “suppresses the inequalities between and within various racial groups”, later (2012:97) saying that “Rainbowism’ allows some to avoid confronting the advantages that being white has afforded them, instead claiming a broader, national identity”. Fletcher (2012:98) ends by quoting Gqola, who writes that the ‘Rainbow Nation’ is “a spectacular visual illusion [and] fantasy”. 
Now I realise: I don’t have answers, I don’t have solutions, I scarcely have formulated an opinion that I agree with or can make sense of, but I realise that what I’ve never done, and what I need to do, in order to start learning, in order to approach a place where I can begin moving in a meaningful direction, I need to shut up and listen.

Etterforsker’s earlier writings tend to reveal the fact that he is arrogant and bigoted, easily uttering condemnations of others. Towards the end of his writing, as his social, financial and professional standing steadily diminishes, Etterforsker begins to show some compassion for people who are different to him. However, at the time of his discovery of CCC, he is still as arrogant as ever, and he is almost unable to write analyses of N.’s objects because he is disgusted by what they stand for. Writing, (Vol. II 140-141), about CCC Etterforsker states:

I must assume, based on the accompanying “instructions” and his personal diary, that white people should heed the instructions of blacks, heed their grievances, fears, concerns; and in addition to this bear various forms of abuse from them, with gladness! I must protest that this is patently absurd. Man heeds God; Woman, Man; Child, Woman; Servant, Child. Any reversal of this leads to chaos! We have in the course of the last 15 years been allowing women greater suffrage, beginning with voting at local elections in 1901, while as of 1913 Norwegian woman have been voting at a national level. But note: this was not rushed, and not permitted without sensible checks and restrictions in place! A wife of a pauper or of a convicted criminal may still not vote! A child will never vote, nor an insane or hysterical person.

So how then, even in the most empathic and caring person, is it sensible to give so much freedom to non-Europeans? I communed with the Brits bound for East Africa, the Portos going to Moçambique, I witnessed the state of things in Nigeria, and without cruelty I can say that it is fitting for Europe to be the custodian of this globe, for her children are supreme. Why then, should (an Afrikaner, white) artist produce a Contraption for Caucasian Concilliation? If it were to reconcile the Englishman and the Boer, I should say yes, reconcile those Caucasians, one with the other. But this N. clearly suggests that the White Man must offer conciliation towards his charges. The schoolteacher should “shut up & listen” to the students! So how do I continue with this analysis?

Despite his disgust, Etterforsker (Vol. II 142) says that he must attempt to “separate my moral or personal consciousness from my scientific analysis and attempt to uncover possible meanings of the work I saw before me”. As CCC is the fourth artwork by N. which he encounters, he attempts to find a “golden thread” (Etterforsker Vol. II 142) running through the work he has seen thus far, and decides that “this man has an obsession with fabricating falsenesses”, deriving this conclusion from the obviously fake “instruction manual” and N.’s writing about earlier works.
Secondly Etterforsker realises that the “space which I was in just five days ago [the ABSA gallery in Johannesburg], must certainly have cost money to erect, despite its vulgar and naked interior. The glass alone... Thus, I must deduce that in the 21st Century, these works are being seen by some audience”. He cannot decide whether the 21st century audience believes the false documents created by N. to be genuine or whether they know them to be a ruse. Etterforsker suspects that the explanatory ephemera might be ironic, but because, to him, white supremacy is such a self-evident and inalienable fact, he cannot imagine why N. would be speak ironically of it. Etterforsker imagines that “apartheid” must refer to the enmity between English and Afrikaans South Africans, and thus cannot understand why black suffering should have anything to do with it.

Etterforsker (Vol. II 145) says “it saddens me that these experiences of mine, so rare and peculiar, should relate to such a man [as N.], rather than a nobler one. But, considering the difficult nature of the seer [Van Rensburg]’s prophecies, I console myself by thinking I am being sent portents and warnings which I may make clear to my contemporaries, so that we may avoid the future where a man such as N. is considered the normal citizen”. Etterforsker concludes his analysis of CCC by saying that he pities N. for his perverted mind, and himself for still having nothing to publish.

In writing Etterforsker’s voice I have needed to revel in the very state of mind which distressed me enough to create CCC. While I could not bring N. to make light of CCC, I had to make Etterforsker belittle the issues with which it is concerned. I have thus needed, so to speak, to walk in the shoes of someone such as Steve Hofmeyer. I cannot say what sort of effect this has had on me personally, besides calling up feelings with which I have already struggled. However, for a viewer of CCC who has also read the stories of N. and Etterforsker, I postulate that this intense contradiction will either be read as humorous (if my art-making is seen in that light), or it will serve to heighten the suspicion and uncertainty of the viewer and force them to continually review my work to understand what my true position is relative to the topics with which my work is concerned. The intended effect of having such contradictory analyses written by me about my work is to deepen the presence of the ego fictus in my own work.
Battiss creates much room for ambiguity in his Fook Island works as, for example, in *Fook Island Certificate of Immunity* (Figure 8), where the viewer is uncertain of what many of the fabricated terms and absurd phrases might mean. The viewer, looking at *FICI*, may ask whether Battiss truly believes that the certificate will grant him or his friends immunity from the “silver lightning” and “yellow disasters” (text from *FICI*, by Battiss 1975, seen in Figure 8); whether Battiss is coming to terms with his mortality; whether he is reflecting on his death as though it were a joke, and of many other questions. The general tone of *FICI* seems to be optimistic and uplifting, but the secondary layer of uncertainty is what makes the work interesting, instead of simply being a kitsch and sentimental note for a friend. As I suggest above, the addressee of the *FICI* (Wickle Doff) may be Battiss’ reference to himself. 

My creation of *CCC* may also recall Battiss’ *Mini Mobile Monument to You*, which I discuss in Chapter 1. Battiss reacts to the apparently pointless and wasteful decisions of the National Party to construct many new monuments by making his own monument and taking it to various locations in his car. His monument, however, celebrates something that he considers meaningful and good. He similarly creates the *Miss South Africa of the Future* who accompanies him to various press conferences. Battiss thus takes the issues that frustrate him and turns them into visible, humorous parodies, which can be seen, discussed and potentially irritate or unsettle the very people whom they are meant to criticise.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued (building on discussions around fantasy, childlikeness and play in Chapter 1) that fiction, autobiography, autoethnography and humour can be conflated into an approach to art that I have called *ego fictus*, that entails making art that may positively affect me, as the maker, and my audience. This approach favours colourful descriptions, enjoyment, and emotional resonance between an audience and my artwork, above grave or weighty discussions of supposedly ‘serious’ issues. I tell, and retell stories about my life and experiences in a way that aims to be accessible and valuable to others. I argue that, although the artworks of Battiss look different to mine on a formal level (in regards to media, colours, presentation and context), on the level of our approaches to art-making, we seek to communicate through similar means.
Batiss’ fluid identity, love for theatrical expression, flights of fancy and absurdist approach to life can be compared with my use of the characters Nieandertaalensis and Etterforsker to re-investigate, re-tell and re-imagine my own biography. I have argued that the ways in which I work, the materials I use, and the narratives and fictional characters which I have included into my practice all contribute to the meaning of my work, and the ways in which the audience may respond to it. My collection of materials are attributed historical residue, i.e. a significance that is based on the story I tell about where I find them, as well as what I imagine the growing conditions of a particular tree may have been. These stories guide how I use the particular materials to express a specific desire that I want to address through the creation of a ritual machine.

I have suggested that my work tends to be better appreciated and understood by an audience when I present them with a performance of my ritual object: whether by directly performing with it in front of them, or via various explanatory ephemera in the forms of ‘manuals’, ‘instructions’, via social media, or through videos. It also appears as though my process is often unconscious, and my use of stories, ego fictus, and other devices entails an opportunity for me to discover as many new things about myself as the audience may discover about themselves. The following, final section of this dissertation presents a conclusion of my study as a whole.
CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have presented my arguments concerning, and my discussion of, fictional worlds and characters in art-making, using Walter Battiss and his artworks, particularly those of 1972-1982 (Fook Island), as a point of comparison from which to discuss my own practice. In the introduction to this study I explain how I interweave fiction and subjectivities into my academic writing, and how equal credence is given to meaningful stories alongside traditionally ‘credible’ sources in my research. I coin the term *Ego Fictus* in order to encapsulate what I see as the exceptional and valuable elements of Battiss’ Fook Island period, and describe how this phenomenon aided Battiss in his struggle against censorship in South Africa. After analysing selected works of Battiss, a discussion of narrative, autobiography, autoethnography and humour foregrounds the description of the practical component of this study. I explain how I have employed the *ego fictus* in my own work, in the form of *ritual machines*, *explanatory ephemera*, and two fictional characters who write about my work, and conclude by analysing a selection of my own works, and describing their relationship to Battiss’ work.

Speaking about Fook Island, Norman Catherine (2015) summarises its key elements, saying you invent yourself, it’s not somebody else inventing what you do. I think that’s it: he continuously invents himself, rather than focussing on all his own problems, he rather kept reinventing himself, and hoping other people would reinvent themselves through an idea like that, which it did. ... Most people really did take that on from just a brief introduction to it: whether it be an art show, or they were told about it, they really took it on even more so than I did: in the way that it was a release. ... It’s saying “change yourself” It’s not criticising. It’s saying “reinvent yourself and things around you”. You can do it in your bathroom if you want to. It is a concept of the mind. Fook Island was never in one place, it moved around, it is a floating island in one’s mind. ... Battiss was like a therapist. It was good therapy just to think that way; you don’t have to read books about it, you could read just one page and see a couple of things and it would stimulate you to see how you could be have something unique to say, or have something special in this world to offer.

This informal description by Catherine encapsulates what I have written about *ego fictus*, which I have described as the active and constant construction of one’s identity, both as displayed to the public and in private. The *ego fictus* is an oxymoronic term, based on the simultaneity of contradictions being held in a person. It is the childlike acknowledgement of fantasy and reality being relevant to one’s life at all times. It describes a tendency not to
allow oneself to be limited by what is considered ‘possible’, ‘normal’ or ‘realistic’, but to create a mental space where contradiction and absurdity may be tested and entertained relative to one’s situation in reality. It is the employment of fiction and enjoyment to battle negative ideologies – in the realm of ideas: the imagination.

Catherine (2015) goes on to describe Battiss’ work as having “an almost innocent, primitive and childlike feel to it, and I think that’s what came into it, aside from his knowledge and sophistication”. This childlikeness is key to Battiss’ protests against censorship. Like a child, he says what is on his mind, but in a way that is gentle and strange enough that he will not be silenced.

In my analysis of Fook, besides looking at it as an expression of the *ego fictus*, I have focussed on its particular accessibility for laypeople, and its highly entertaining nature. I have also considered ways in which Battiss employs parody in Fookian artefacts to criticise authority, or to affect a sense of what he calls *MADgik* in his life, and the lives of his friends. I consider a work such as the *Fook Island Certificate of Immunity* to entail an example of *MADgik*, and a strong link to my own work, as Battiss plays with the idea that a fiction and artwork may be designed to affect his reality.

I next present a conflation of theories around narrative, autobiography, auto-ethnography, humour and ‘pretend-play’ (as an extension of ideas related to the *Ego Fictus*) as a prelude to the discussion of my own work. I explain the relevance of calling my works *machines* in the links that Freud and others have made between humour, the subconscious and mechanisms, and the fact that my works appear to have some sort of function, and must be utilised by an operator. I have described how I employ *explanatory ephemera* and *other objects* to further deepen the viewers’ experiences of my exhibition *N.’s Apparatus*. Before presenting an analysis of my work *Caucasian Conciliatio Contraption* I discuss the relevance of various materials, technical processes and conceptual approaches that I employ in my art-making, and how they affect the final forms and meanings of my artworks.

The aim of all of my research has been to create a new framework through which to understand the life and work of Walter Battiss, and how this understanding may be applied to art-making in a broader sense. I have also laid out, in detail, how I produce my own work: namely in ways that allow for much ‘automatic’ process to take place in my work. I bring
together a certain frustration or desire, coupled with materials in my studio that have gained historical residue, and allow the materials to dictate to me how I might assemble them to express my aim. The artworks that I create are well received by my audience because I incorporate humour and lightness into the descriptions of the work that are communicated to the audience via explanatory ephemera.

As a last step I have created two fictional accounts of what my work means, to enable me and my audience to access deeper levels of meaning in my work. These characters have been created in a similar way to my artworks, in that I assemble a certain aim or desire (what I want to write) with certain available materials (the historical facts pertinent to the characters) and then allow myself to follow a somewhat automatic process as I bring these elements together.

Further research could be performed by other visual arts practitioners, as to whether my description of the ego fictus could be applied to their practice, i.e. to establish its transferability. Other researchers and historians might investigate whether the concept of ego fictus is applicable to artists other than Battiss. Although researchers are developing the autoethnographic approach as applied to the social sciences, it may be helpful if a more accepted narrative approach, such as I have attempted in this document, could be developed for the visual arts.
APPENDIX A: Facsimile of Informed consent for interview: Norman Catherine

FACULTY OF ART, DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ART
POSTGRADUATE DEGREE MTECH: FINE ART

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research Topic: Fictional worlds and characters in art-making: Fook Island as exemplar for practice
Primary Investigator: Allen Laing, MTech candidate, Department of Visual Art, University of Johannesburg
Research Purpose: MTech (Fine Art)
Supervisor: David Paton
Co. Supervisor: Prof Brenda Schmahmann

Dear Mr. Catherine

You are invited to participate in a research study that forms part of my formal MTech studies. This consent form will assist you in determining if you would be willing to participate, and will inform your understanding of the purpose of your participation.

This study is concerned with artists' use of fictional characters, realms and narratives as part of their practice, especially pertaining to their relation to the society within which their creators live. The major focus of my dissertation is on Fook Island as a case study of artists' use of fiction in their work. I am interested in how and why you and Walter Battiss delved so deeply into the fictions of Fook, and how this part of your practice affected your other art-making, and your life in South Africa in general. As such, your participation in this study will be invaluable and this consent form serves as a request for a semi-formal interview where I may ask you questions concerning the research topic.

For any additional information regarding the study, please feel free to contact David Paton (011 559 1118) or Prof Brenda Schmahmann (011 559 1111) in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Johannesburg during office hours.

Your co-operation and participation in the study will be greatly appreciated. Please sign the informed consent below if you agree to participate in the study.

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

SIGNATURE: N. Catherine
DATE: 27 Nov 2015
PLACE: Hartbeespoort
1. How would you describe Fook Island? What is it, how did it come to be discovered, and why is it here?

N: ‘What is it?’ was the first question?

A: Ja

N: Well I always saw it as another reality, a reality of the mind, somewhere where you could go without having to catch busses or aeroplanes or walk there. It was something that was conceived by Battiss as being, a kind of mental, not escape, but it was. For me it was a bit of a form of escapism, I thought, from the harsh reality of the world we live, especially South Africa. It exists in the mind, I mean that’s what Battiss had always said. But it communicates to everybody on a basic level it’s not something that was over-intellectualised and made difficult for anyone to get to grasp and participate in. So you had old people, young people, everybody enjoyed it. To me it was also a form of entertainment.

I could entertain myself by thinking about it or imagining it and I suppose it was sort of like a fun way of playing God again, of playing God. In that you’re creating it (or I was one of the people creating something) that was both functional in some way, in the sense that some of them were objects or stamps, for instance, or banknotes, were useful things. And you know all aspects of art came into it which was nice. From functions which could be a little bit like happenings, which they had prior in America, art happenings, whereas exhibitions and things like that were more of a happening than just an art exhibition. There was always some form of being entertaining. We always had foods, Battiss would give his speech or crown new members, new Fookians would be brought into the fold, it sounds a bit like a cult? It is like a cult I think. Sorry what were the other questions?

A: Why is it here

N: I think also you know the art world has got very, quite serious in and compartmentalised, especially internationally. You had pop art, or conceptual art, everything in art was in a particular slot you always had to say “I’m this” or “I’m that”. If you said you were surrealist it wasn’t really right, because surrealism had already been. I never really planned or thought what type of artist I should be in the sense that there were so many things I wanted to try out or explore, and I wanted art to be fun for me especially, not just a
well done something, it must be entertaining. That’s why I enjoyed Fook Island: it was open. When Battiss approached me he said would I design… He came to one of my exhibitions, I’d met him once before in Pretoria, once or twice, and he once wrote prior to meeting me. I saw there was a newspaper article, it might have been in Pretoria, where he was talking about how boring South African stamps are, and in it he mentioned “oh they should get someone like Norman Catherine to design the South African stamps”. Nobody did come to me about that, but then a year later or whatever he approached me and said “won’t you design the first Fook stamp?”.

It was based on a little scribble of his where it was a shadow of Fook cast onto a wall and there’s a currency called twix and it must have the currency and there’s a name and the hieroglyphics and I jumped at that opportunity because he’s my favourite artist. And I sort of saw myself as it progressed from little drawings he did, little rough things or a concept and he wanted me to do it in my way. I was using a lot of airbrush then, and I’m not quite sure why, because I think there was a certain fantasy in my work as well that’s one of the reasons, but also maybe my technique that I was using. But I sort of acted or performed whatever I was doing with Fook Island: not as trying to be a great conceptual artist in a sense of a serious artist. I mean Battiss was the one that invented, I saw myself more as I’m the illustrator of Fook: you need someone to illustrate it for people to see the animals, it’s no good if you doing something, if you’re intellectual, you know which might have been ‘better’ art. There’s not a lot of the Fook art I did myself that I really think is great art, but it’s quite nice: it suits Fook Island in the sense it needed somebody to show work that other people could understand that weren’t art educated necessarily. I suppose I was the Fook Island illustrator. I did animals. I invented my own as well. I didn’t only do what he [told me], I mean it went from being a few little sketches of his to whatever I felt like doing as far as inventing my own animals and doing descriptions of them. Because I wrote a lot of stuff describing characters or plants what they could do and there was no restrictions as far as him saying “you gotta do this or do that” we kind of just collaborated. From doing foods: I had a friend write recipes for Fook trout and other we did a whole food thing at one of the openings.

A: Jellies with Viennas inside?

N: Yes. [Laughs] so I’d say compared to the normal, doing that was much more fun
than everything else I seemed to do. Everything else I do seems so serious compared to that, because if you wanted to design a new Fook Island, you know it was open to design everything a world would need.

2. Why do you think that Walter Battiss only invented/found it when he did?

A: I don’t know whether this is right, but Grace died, then he travelled for two years and then Fook appeared.

N: I think it could have been he was free to visit all these islands and travelled overseas. He did say that, I think he felt the conceptual art that he saw internationally a lot was very serious. It might be ‘good’, but it was so serious and for such a limited audience. And I think with his interest in Greek art and bushman art all those sort of things combined into the idea of inventing a world, an imaginary world, whatever, that wasn’t as imaginary; it might be imaginary in one way but on the other hand it was real, because you invented real objects or real things that drew people into it, it’s almost like a Lord of the Rings thing in art idea, but even much more free than limited to one story. If you wanted to become a king or queen you could become one and act it out. I think his work had a childlike [character]. The work I like, especially like his prints, had an almost innocent, primitive and child-like feel to it, and I think that’s what came into it aside from his knowledge and sophistication. It all melted to bring something that had all those elements that everybody could participate if you chose to. One guy I remember spoke Fook language. I forget his name.

A: It wasn’t Saunders?

N: I don’t know if it was.

A: Wasn’t he a linguist.

N: Yes he was a linguist. Was it Walter Saunders? I was at that event where he spoke the Fook words, the language the beauty of it is that it was an art or a concept that you didn’t need to be art educated to participate in and to enjoy. He would ask people that didn’t have any art knowledge which of the sketches of the Fook flag which one, like Janet’s brother, and asked them which one they liked and he would sort of see what somebody else felt, rather than his own. Janet made all of the Fook flags and did a lot of Fook embroidery
for Walter. She did embroideries of animals that I designed, so he wasn’t stuck up and arrogant about his way of thinking, which a lot of artists are, so they’re very intolerant of a lot of people who don’t know much about art.

3. Why do you think that people from around the world were so eager to become Fookians?

N: Firstly the image of Walter if they had met him or seen photographs, he was like some kind of wizard. I mean his long hair: he looked like something out of an animation, he looks like he was, what was that guy in *Star Wars* with the long silver hair, or the *Lord of the Rings* or one of these kind of, he had a lot of charisma, firstly, and charm, and I think that it was so new an idea like that, from the usual art, that I think people were curious. And also South Africa was kind of a long way away, kinda strange idea coming from quite an interesting guy living in the middle of somewhere in Africa. You know might as well have been living in Timbuktu or somewhere. It was kind of mysterious and mystical feel. The whole thing had a mystical feel, and I think people just wanted to know more, they wanted to know where did it begin and where is it going, where is Fook island some people felt, a lot of people did ask “is this real or not, where is Fook island”

A: What could the island offer them which other places could not?

N: Maybe they saw some of his drawings and thought its free sex [laughs] looked at his erotic works and thought this is a nice place [laughs], Walter’s the king and this is a nice place. I dunno I was so involved in it so I never thought or questioned much. I dunno he would just respond with letters and drawings on his envelopes, I’ve got some of those, and it just seemed, it think it just brought something childlike out of people, [who] felt that in this world everything is so exact and compartmentalised, and all that. You could feel like a child in a way, mentally at least, and not be embarrassed about it. For children everything is fresh and new, and all that, and escape their rigid formal lives and jobs, whatever. Most people are not artists. As an artist you think a bit of freedom is nice but for most people who are not artists at all life must be quite boring; even if you make lots of money. I mean this bureaucracy. Even how you get to the front in your job or whatever, driving to work every day, listening to the same, you know. But Battiss was one of a kind, I mean Fook Island suited
him, his whole personality, he was the right actor for the job if you had to choose one [laughs].

4. Why did you create real, actual Fook artefacts?

N: Some things were part of the whole concept. He had a little post office that he set up at the one show at Goodman Gallery where it was a portable thing that he had made and he stood [in it] and it became functional. A lot of the things were really to do with having things that you could use in a real way, in a real sense: like stamps and coins. It just made it more real. I think to me those are the sort of things that I enjoyed a lot. The passport, it was an object that wasn’t supposed to be something that necessarily sold for lots of money. Aside from that, inventing the animals, and writing all about them, like being an illustrator recording the nature: the fauna and the flora and stuff like that. I’ve got some things here I’ll show you. I think you could invent everything. I wasn’t as tense about the work that I was doing as I am over the years, I’m very critical of my own work, whereas with Fook island I didn’t need to apply those sort of same principles to the reasoning. I could see myself just as an illustrator doing drawings of plants on Fook Island. You could just be less contrived in a way of what is serious art and all this shit. Which is one of the biggest problems with art I think a lot of it’s very ‘good’ nowadays, you get a lot of talented very clever people, but the stuff is boring to look at and very minimal like you were saying. Boring and calculated by whoever down the line comes from this curator and that artist and this is what’s supposed to be good and it’s like art isn’t supposed to be! And that’s why I always liked Battiss, like you said he invented himself.

5. Do you think that the island was born in response to societal frustrations that Battiss experienced in the ’70s in South Africa, and globally?

N: I think so. I think partly it was because for a person like Walter Battiss especially, even though he wasn’t... He did do sort of protest things, he had a doll, but for him in conservative South Africa he was quite out of place, you know, there weren’t enough people that could really appreciate; or there wasn’t enough going on here, and with the politics he must have felt the need to do something. I suppose it’s escapism, but it’s not really because
it’s not just for yourself, it’s for others. And look he travelled: obviously it was much more open and that in the States and Europe and that, than in South Africa. So because he was living here he felt the need, what could he do here? And that played a big part in that, and it was something that wasn’t just about South Africa at all: it was something that was universal in concept, but he could be here and maybe have more people participate in it; not just artists. There might be musicians or artists or people who write or do poetry, or I mean even if it was somebody who was baking cakes he would consider them as important.

A: I remember in one of the books that I read he grew up in Beaufort-West and Fauresmith and the one writer said that he grew up in a very Afrikaans town and all of the boys were playing rugby and he was isolated in a sense as this English artist boy and that same isolation that you just described of the way in South Africa he was kind of out of place, he had to make an island for himself

N: Yes, much more so than like, me or you. I mean, I was young, but I was still naïve and all that. I hadn’t got to understand the difference of what was happening here to elsewhere in the world. I hadn’t travelled or anything. I mean he needed it far more than I did at the time. It definitely a brilliant concept. I wish, I’d be happy if I’d come up with an idea like that, even if it’s with the political situation in the world nowadays with ISIS and everything in the world’s becoming really serious financial thing. Everything’s on a knife’s edge: the currency, the people. It certainly could have worked very well now too. But then definitely the whole apartheid and government. And because he was a lecturer, he taught at UNISA, he lectured. The bureaucracy: he experienced all of that kind of stuff first hand, much more that I had even realised how things were controlled in this country. I was naïve. But I think same as probably he felt at school he felt later on: even though he was respected by people he certainly was looked at as being weird. I think his respect only gained more momentum after he died. It was still a small amount of people. I think the bureaucracy and everything still looked at him as being not quite right. I’m not really saying much more than you already know and have read.

A: I think it’s nice to hear, it’s different information.

N: For me it helped me a lot in a sense of I never studied at varsity, so I didn’t really understand conceptual art, I just did my own thing, which I still do. But it did open my mind to a different way of thinking that was more real to who you are, and that you can get a lot
of enjoyment out of art and the experience of art, and how other people see art, or how can art get itself across to other people and change them. Not change them, but educate them. I mean he would have a lot of fun out of for instance going into a post office in the middle of the Transkei. I once drove him up from East London in my bakkie: he went to open a past student’s show at my old tech, and he had a cottage in Natal, and we drove up, and I’ve got photographs of him going into the post office in the middle of Umtata with his Fook Island wooden piece of driftwood with a stamp on it and addressed to somebody and asking to post this [laughs] so I think he had a lot of fun out of seeing how people responded to something totally unique, and took them out of their, you know, boring repetitive life: even if it was just for a minute or two. There were people that at least got some experience out of it.

6. What do you think you and Battiss gained from the act of making Fook objects and carrying out Fook rituals? Did you ever do Fook rituals?

N: I never organised or performed. Unlike Walter I’m not the sort of person who ever wants to be the centre of attraction. Walter didn’t want to be, he was. He didn’t try and be: he was. I was always more... didn’t like to be there promoting or being the main character. So I liked to help create certain events, but not to be the main attraction. So I avoided that. I was coerced by the gallery once or twice into dressing up a bit but I realised: that’s not me. It’s in my head, I didn’t want to make it look like corny people trying to masquerade as something else that wasn’t natural. It was natural for other people who liked doing that to dress up, but not for me. My part was always to be behind the scenes just creating.

A: The private rituals that Walter Battiss did at his house, there was this Canadian lady - part Native American?

N: Su was her name. Battiss I met her in Kassel in the one Documenta in the 70s. We had met and she was like his groupie I suppose [laughs] so she was hanging around. But funny enough we were just talking about how people were attracted to him, even at Kassel Documenta, even the way he normally dressed here, and he dressed there, people sort of followed him around. They thought he was maybe a performance artist or something. What was the question again?
A: Just what did you gain from the rituals. And you said that you didn’t really take part in them.

N: I didn’t, not in that way.

A: I was just wondering to what extent the rituals, because they are less documented and sometimes more private.

N: The only ones I really remembered or went to were the awards ceremonies of giving people like Esme Berman or whoever a hand painted watercolour with the award for whatever they were. And then there was a Fook thing at Cullinan farm where he had the Fook by Walter Saunders giving the Fook language, and he did a rain dance in the nude round the place. Nobody knew: they were all listening to the music inside, and he was running around outside in the dark, or it was semi lit in between the trees. It was like an animation movie: nobody knew. Well a few people sort of started seeing him: he was running in and out the trees, doing his Fook rain dance I think. The others were just events where like the foods and those sorts of things. I was involved, but just with helping put them together or helping get music made for those events.

7. What is the relationship of yourself and Battiss to Norman King Norman and Ferd III?

Were they alter egos or were they just titles that you thought up?

N: I would never have thought of myself as a king, he gave me that title. I would never have called myself king. Like he gave queen Asteroa Linda Givon. But I was quite happy that he called me that: it’s an honour, actually, for me that he’d given me that name, which kindof solidified the idea of Fook Island with kings and queens, and you could all apply to become a king or a queen: so my ego didn’t get too big about it. I still felt like, you know, still quite young and naïve actually at the time. It was an honour for me.

A: But do you think that he called himself Ferd III. Like when he was doing the rain dance, was he actually playing Ferd or was he just actually always Walter.

N: I think he would always just (I don’t know what was going through his mind) but I think he could change his skin like a chameleon, Walter. And I would imagine doing the rain dance, he probably wasn’t necessarily king Ferd, he was the rain dancer at the time. And I
think that’s what the beauty of it is: he could change and get into the spirit of whatever he thought of with ease. He was like the perfect actor in a way, naturally though. He never discussed Fook Island with me in a really heavy, deep meanings to it; it was kind of quite normal in a way that when we talked about it in a way it was fun, because one could think of what one could do: how one could would make it more real for people.

6. Can you describe any rituals and practices connected with Fook, and explain why Fookians would carry out these rituals and practices in the 'real' world?

N: I mean there might have been some. I don’t know of all of the things that he did. I know (and I don’t know if he ever did it, or I was away at the time) there was another ritual that he wanted to perform, or he did: it was the digging up of a Fook artefact [laughs] obviously it would have been planted there in the first place but it would have been like something just for the fun of it that is like finding a 3000 year old human somewhere.

7. What would you suppose that you and Battiss would have done without Fook? Would your lives have taken a drastically different turn from the '70s onwards? What was or is still the legacy of Fook?

N: When the first Fook exhibitions were happening, like Jo’burg, wherever, Cape Town, I don’t think it got a lot of real support from the serious art world. I think they thought it was a joke, or they thought it was corny, or whatever, I think initially. But you did have people like Esme Berman who followed it. There were some intellectuals, but generally I think it was looked at as being a bit corny. I think there were some comments that I was just jumping on Battiss’ bandwagon, which wasn’t true. I didn’t need to, but enjoyed it. I was happy to be on his bandwagon anyway [laughs] but I wasn’t doing it to try and make a name or anything. I was just trying to do it because I admired him, and it was fun to do. I think a lot of people now or since those days, or since Battiss died, really appreciated it a lot more in retrospect; or realised in retrospect how unique and how important it maybe was at that time in South Africa: that without it the art scene would have been quite dull and predictable.

A lot more people enjoyed it than I even knew of, actually. After years you get people who
say “I studied it at this and that” and everybody, a lot of people, seem to know about it from those days. And I think it must’ve encouraged a lot of young artists, in a way, to be more individual because of it, than have to follow such strict art disciplines. It was like the hippies were here sort of thing, without the hippies. In America that whole period was …and the concerts they had, and all that, were one of the most fun times in the world. For me it was even in South Africa, I mean we were a little bit after them, but the bellbottoms, and the Beatles, and all that; it was like peace and the floral patterns. That was probably the most fun time: and the world will never be like that again. I think Fook Island almost had that freedom for a small time within an art world, within South Africa, that people will remember with that feeling about it, with the spirit about it, even if they don’t know all the details. The spirit about it, and especially because after that things got worse here, and that’s why I think that it’s quite nice if it sort of could be reintroduced again for education: because I think a lot of schools would want to use it more if they had a bit more to go on with.

A: I think in that Barry Davidow book Walter Battiss said Fook is a philosophy.

N: Yes I think it is like Zen or Buddhist or you know, it is like a philosophy and definitely, because it was a place where violence and this sort of thing, it wasn’t for that. It was totally against that. So it might have been… Obviously it was a philosophy; to a certain extent it was like Zen.

8. Please describe how you and Battiss would go about making a Fook artwork. What would happen before, during and after the fact? How would he and you feel, what would be on your mind, etc.?

N: What do you mean like smoke a lot of grass or something?

A: No no, I know that Walter was against drugs!

N. There was, he would start with a rough sketch, and I would do a bit of work on it, and he would then comment on it, or say “what about if it had zebra stripes and it’s not a zebra it’s a different animal”. But he liked mixing things up. It was collaborative in the extent that I did a bit, then he would comment. He liked taking, if it was a leopard, or say a leopard on the ground, I don’t know if it was before Fook, I had to do some work of the patterns of a leopard in the cloud and the leopard without spots on the ground. So he liked switching or
cross pollinating ideas and things. Once you start talking you do go into a kind of, I suppose, you talk yourselves into a state, a type of, a bit of a trance-like thing, where you start seeing everything in context with the Fook philosophy. Your mind does wonder everywhere, we must have invented a thousand things that were never done [laughs] but it is the type of thing: one idea bounced off another person, when it’s bounced back a few times, an idea without restrictions of any sort, it does develop into something much more fun and unique.

9. What is the significance for Fook as a fictional realm and its relation to the politics and society of apartheid South Africa?

N: It was the complete opposite, complete contrast and opposite. I don’t think if anybody looked at it, in those times, these sort of censorship people: they must have frowned upon it. But they didn’t quite know how to deal with it, I’m sure, or they were too scared to say the word Fook [laughs] in case.

10. What is the meaning and implication of fiction in Battiss’ practice?

A: Diane victor and William Kentridge don’t use fiction in that same powerful way they use a bit of myth and narrative but not in the same way that you and Walter’s work is much more of an immersive, full fictional...

N: I suppose in a way Walter’s work and mine to a certain extent: the fictional side of it is less personal, in a sense of one’s own ego, as opposed to Diane Victor and William Kentridge it’s very much coming from the self, and about the self: a particular message about mining or miners; or realistic: about something harsh, about a harsh reality. I think ours is, in a way, I’m not saying it’s not personal, but it’s more about doing, performing something or inventing something that is much more in tune with everybody else than oneself. Which means it’s more, I don’t know, it’s just more inviting, and it’s a philosophy that people would want to be connected with, rather than something that might be good, but it’s horrible, it’s ugly. It might be a great work of art, William’s stuff isn’t necessarily, or some of it’s different, but it’s not inviting. Diane especially: uninviting, but strong. It’s very personal traumatic stuff, and anything that I do that might be traumatic, I try and make it into something more in my own work. I think Fook and Battiss it was really taking you away
from those same problems rather than focussing on them. Definitely.

11. What would you say is the function of parody in Fookian art-making and practice?
   
   A: It’s a playful inversion.
   
   N: of reality of something?
   
   A: Ja. Making a joke of something for the purpose of either lifting out something within that. For example: a parody of an art exhibition would probably be sort of like an art exhibition but certain things have been turned on their head to be played with or critiqued.
   
   N: Well I suppose some of the things, the passport and all those things, were something that looked real, it looked genuine but wasn’t used in the same way, and you didn’t quite know you never quite knew. Well that was the fun of it: to make things that seemed real, but they were for something unreal, and creating its own reality using things that are known to be for real objects, especially the objects.

12. A blog article by Layla Leiman (2013) illustrates a key shortcoming in the existing literature, when she says that “Fook Island was not intended to be an overt political statement. However, it can be read as a kind of alternate but parallel history to South Africa in the 1970s; a kind of absurd response, the only kind of response one could argue, to the realities of the time”. Although it is partly correct, this statement is indicative of what I would believe is a fundamental misreading of Fook Island prevalent in the existing literature, an approach which sees Fook as frivolous, apolitical and offering no immediate or direct response to the prevailing ideologies of the time. In reality Fook entailed a keen undermining of apartheid hegemony by fighting against censorship laws that sought to control and restrict the population. Although there are some articles that investigate Battiss’ erotic art as defiant of censorship, none acknowledge Fook Island as a concerted project focussed specifically on challenging censorship.

Do you agree with this statement, and would you like to add any comments?

People see Fook as frivolous, and that it wasn’t engaging, is that true?
N: Well, I think I said earlier, quite a few people in the art world thought it was frivolous or a joke. But they were too serious, I think a lot of people enjoyed it but the serious types they just didn’t actually grasp the idea behind it. It was seen that way.

A: What you’ve been saying is slightly different to what I’ve written here, which is nice because you’ve just been speaking about the freeing, and the fun, and liberation, and maybe as you said Diane Victor and William Kentridge actually make comments on real events, whereas Fook just offers you something alternative, and fun, and free, and it doesn’t focus on the negatives, because it gives you an alternative

N: Yes and as I’ve said Battiss wore the T-shirt “I invented myself”. You invent yourself, it’s not somebody else inventing what you do. I think that’s it: he continuously invents himself, rather than focussing on all his own problems, he rather kept reinventing himself, and hoping other people would reinvent themselves through an idea like that, which it did. Except for those few intellectuals that thought it was crap, they were just jealous that they were so stuck up and tight. Most people really did take that on from just a brief introduction to it: whether it be an art show or they were told about it, they really took it on even more so than I did in the way that it was a release. Especially people who have a normal job, or young people, to the extent that basically if it got further they needed more of it, which I couldn’t give. But totally different to Kentridge or Diane, total opposite way of thinking. It’s saying “change yourself” It’s not criticising. It’s saying “reinvent yourself and things around you” You can do it in your bathroom if you want to. It is a concept of the mind. Fook island was never in one place, it moved around, it is a floating island in one’s mind.

[...]

Battiss was like a therapist. It was good therapy just to think that way you don’t have to read books about it, you could read just one page and see a couple of things and it would stimulate you to see how you could be have something unique to say, or have something special in this world to offer. Because you not focussing on ISIS or people like that [Laughs], nowadays especially the world as it is, jeez, it’s like terrible.
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Introduction
The P.R.O.U.D. M.A.N. (PM) for men is designed to allow its user to pass water with pride. The PM is more than just tool for your tool: it is a symbol and a celebration of what it means to be a man. It is a guard against the jealous whining of women and your quickest way to ensure that every wizz is wonderful.

Safety
The PM is splendid, but as it is long and hard it is also heavy and can hurt any pussy that cannot handle it.
-Lift with your legs, not your back
-Always grasp the PM with both hands, making use of the gripping points.
-Do not attempt to walk while using the PM.
-Be aware around children. For men under the age of 12 please make use of the P.R.O.U.D. M.A.N. for little men.

Cleaning & Maintenance
The PM does not require any cleaning or maintenance. The build up of natural musk adds to the unique character of each PM. In the case of spillage of food, beer or blood onto the outside of the PM wipe with your hand.

Features
The PM has many unique and wonderful features.

(1) Hip hugger - Reduces strain to back
(2) Mirror - For smirking at yourself while you do an awesome piss, any time, anywhere.
(3) Gripping point - For safe handling of this monster ;)
(4) Scent funnel - For scenting your marking
(5) Leather ribbing - For comfort
(6) Leg positioners - Keep the legs bent at 133°, the neutral body position experienced in micro-gravity situations. This means that women can no longer demand that men piss sitting down.

Figure 1: Features
Figure 2: Neutral Human Position (under microgravity conditions)
Warranty Information

The P.R.O.U.D. M.A.N. for men is manufactured to the highest standards and subjected to rigorous quality controls. We are proud of our products just like we are proud of our cocks.

If the PM malfunctions or breaks as a result of poor workmanship or materials we dare you to come tell us.

Disclaimer

Because it is used outside of the control of Tosch Tools Incorporated, we cannot be held responsible for any damage, loss, embarrassment, humiliation or disappointment that arises as a result of using the PM.

Tosch Tools cannot be held liable for the responses of women to the PM, as they are driven by irrational patterns of thought underlain by penis envy.

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Figure 16: Two views of Caucasian Conciliation Contraption (CCC) – Being worn. Allen Laing, 2016, wood and found objects. Photographs by author and Oliver Mayhew.
Figure 17: *Caucasian Concilliation Contraption (CCC) – On Stand*. Allen Laing, 2016, wood and found objects. Photograph by author.
Figure 18: Caucasian Conciliation Contraption (CCC) – Instruction manual. Allen Laing, 2016, digital print on paper. Screenshot by author.

Hello! And thank you for purchasing this contraption from CCC Co.

We believe in our product, and are glad that you have chosen our company to meet your conciliatory needs.

Please see the information below to find out more about your new contraption, how to use it safely and effectively, and for our conditions of warranty.

1. SAFETY and PROPER USE
This product has been made with the utmost care and attention to detail and quality, and should provide years of good service. However, since it is being used outside of our control, CCC Co. can take no responsibility for any injury or loss arising from its use.

DO - Place the headpiece (1) firmly and comfortably on your head, making the required adjustments [2] and ensuring that the neck brace [3] is well-fitted.
DO - Bite firmly onto the mouthpiece [4] ensuring that the torque transfer through the Humbar [5] moves the head into a bowed, humbled and vulnerable position.

DON'T - Attempt to open your mouth!
DON'T - Get defensive or hurt.
DON'T - Attempt to unbow head or turn away from the subject under discussion.

2. CONDITIONS of WARRANTEE
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Reminds me of a scrabble board a bit

fidlernicholas
Use the tokens to draw a dick

maaike00 joined

heidi_fourie  ⬆ PINNED
Welcome contributors! Give Allen instructions by voting for a lett... more

Hello 😄 😆 😊 😊 😊
FACSIMILE OF WRITINGS BY PROFESSOR W.R. ETTERFORSKER

1 newspaper article from Chicago examiner
170 handwritten pages from personal diary, letter and notebook
INCOME TAX FOR FRENCH

PARIS, Dec. 11—Speaking as both premier and foreign minister, M. Doumengue to-day declared in favor of an income tax and also for the continuance of the treaty with Russia.

EDUCATIONAL

I CURED MY STAMMERING

Norwegian Jubilee Exhibition
Prof. Etterforsker Goes to Africa

Translated and reprinted from Skandinavien Newspaper

Acclaimed ethnologist Professor Walter Etterforsker, who is making a voyage of discovery to Africa, is attending the Northern Jubilee Exhibition. He writes from Oslo:

"In just three weeks' time (22nd of December—ed.) I set out, like our fathers of old, in a ship great and stout. The Sables sail me southward from our rugged, weathered and beloved land to a sun-drenched and savage place, in service of my countrymen I shall journey for a week and two fullays in a vessel, an indescribably clumsy thing, entirely emerging from the deep, swift vessels of our fearless father Leif Eiriksson, but nevertheless grandly indicative of Man's mastery of the physical world. I go forth as discoverer and scientist to a place which, just recently, has been rescued from the savagery of all sorts. I am single-mindedly on my mission to study and understand a young, heretofore European clan which, full of heart and soul, calls the Union of South Africa their home. The great task with which I have been burdened will cause me to be carried far farther than the little known bays of Port Elizabeth and Port Natal, to be rudely deposited at the jungle door of Lorenzo Marques.

From this hitherto crassly uninhabited forest town I shall be rowed away by prying, leading ever-farther and further from home, carrying me beyond anything that we Norsemen have had to endure, into the closed and remote confines of the central African region. My one directive in this foreign mission is to search for a newly formed and not-yet-maintained race (self-styled as the 'Africans') and to determine their fitness for the human race, inasmuch as the African Village Exhibition has been planned to open in May of this coming year at the Jubilee Exhibition. I may fill with sorrow the thought that, rather than being in our log cabin in Lillestrøm this Yuletide with my lovely wife and children, I should sit on a ship bound for Africa, but I must think of the adventure that lies ahead. For God and victory, I have no time to lose.

Skandinavien shall keep its readers up to date as the Professor's story unfolds.
Monday 1 December 1913

I have just sent the steward to take my letters (addressed to the press) to the post-office. I depart in three weeks, onboard the SS Montcalm, a cargo-liner of nearly seven thousand gross registered tonnes. She first set sail in 1897, and has just returned from Montreal on her last transatlantic crossing, this 7th of November, since the Titans of the White Star line (despite the tragic loss of their Titanic) have displaced these smaller steamers (this is scarcely surprising, when the Titans are running at nearly double the rate of knots and more than six times the tonnage!). Montcalm will be travelling to South Africa for the first time since 1900, when she was enlisted to carry Yeomanry remounts for the British forces fighting the Boers (who are today named 'Afrikaners'). She carried these English volunteermen to die fighting on foreign shores, for Empire (Diamonds, Gold), and for their King.

My passage aboard her occurs under unusual circumstances. She has been chartered under the auspices of the British and Norwegian crowns, along with private sponsors and public companies, to follow a unique route from Kristiania counter-clockwise down and around Africa, up through Suez into the Mediterranean and back to my homeland. Besides myself there will be a small contingent of other researchers, journalists and correspondents conducting or participating in
a variety of censuses and surveys. To offset the costs of this voyage the ship will also be fetching and delivering a hodge-podge of goods, materials, communications and people. As a result of our unusually frequent stopping, and the ship's cruising speed of 12 knots, my section of the journey will take close to 5 weeks. The ship will stop at London, Lisbon, the isle of Gran Canaria off of the coast of West Africa, Lagos (British Nigeria), Cape Town, and Durban at Port Natal (Union of South Africa), and Lourenço Marques (Moçambique, Portuguese East Africa) where I disembark. Thereafter the ship continues to Dar-es-Salaam (German East Africa), then the British East Africa Protectorate, stopping again in Suez, and thence to Lisbon, London and Kristiana once more, to return both most of the original passengers and crew, as well as other returning officials and scientists who will be collected en-route.

Unlike a modern transatlantic liner, or the massive carriers which ply the far-eastern trade routes, I must resign myself to this outmoded steamer, due to the particular requirements of my journey. I am consoled by the fact that I have a cabin of the sort that I would not usually be able to afford, and enough space to store my books away from damp, and for my phonographs (to hear Grieg's compositions, performed at the Kristiana Theatre with himself or Holter conducting, always takes me home, and should soothe my longing heart). I am
led to believe that I shall be quite royally treated on the way down, and I do have hope that some of the passengers and destinations that I shall be introduced to on this trip will make it worth the particularly long duration.

Monday 22 December 1913

We departed at 5:49 A.M., nearly 4 hours before the sun’s rising this morning. Besides the Captain, and Mr. Bjorgesson the reporter, I am the only educated passenger onboard the Montcalm at this time. I spent all day below deck, unwilling to confront the driving sleet above for a chance at fresh air. Yesterday was the solstice, and with today’s foul weather the world is as dark as it may be. The ship’s boys tell me that the stove was being cleaned today (this should have been done before departure) and so it is a struggle for me to get heated coffee. (I was led to believe the hospitality on board would be far better than this!). The soup was tolerably warm by supper time. The electric light bulbs in this ship are fairly reliable, and I am happy enough to have one in my cabin (I insisted on it). Nevertheless, I would not list reading Boas in a stuffy, lurching cabin among the greatest of life’s pleasures. By Wednesday we should be at quayside in London to collect supplies for Lagos and the Union, and Saturday in Lisbon to collect messages and equipment destined for L.M. The new year will see me in African waters for the first time!
Wednesday 24 December 1913

We landed at London just after midday. The ship was tied up loading freight for more than 6 hours, and thus I dined ashore. It was not simple to find an establishment which was not boarded up for Christmas time, but I did: an Inn (run by Greeks), where I supped with other itinerants and pass-sers-through on goose, Yorkshire pudding, fruit mince pies, and honeyed ham. Compared with other times of year, it seems that the English cuisine is least bland around Christmas. The rain has followed us from Kristiana and has not let up for a moment. It is now close to quarter-past-nine, P.M., and I imagine that we have passed the Calais lighthouse some minutes ago.

Thursday 25 December 1913

We celebrated Christmas day at sea. We have a triplet of English surveyors added to the passenger manifest from yesterday. Bowler-hatted men whose names I do not, at present, remember. This day will certainly not be counted amongst my favourite Christmases. We were fortunate to have Roast chicken, pickled fish and smoked pork for dinner, besides creamy potatoes and a Spanish wine of fairly good vintage. The stormy weather holds forth.
Sunday 28 December 1913

I am led to believe that we drew in to Tagus river mouth around 6 A.M. and the new passengers and goods were boarded and loaded via a ferry before sunrise. (As we did not need to dock the ship we were back to sea by dawn). I write sunrise because today is our first day of sunshine, although the cutting wind continues to keep me belowdecks. Our supper today consisted of fish stew and sausages that were brought on from the city. Our new passengers are executives of the Companhia do Niassa (of Port. East Africa). These men (Messrs de Serpa Porto and da Silva Pinto) were in Lisbon negotiating the sales of stocks in their company to various parties from across Europe.

Despite the strict application of a form of ‘hut tax’ known as Chibalo, meant to motivate the natives to diligent work, the lazy devils ruin their lands, which have to be run at a loss of profit by the Company. The Company has seen to the construction of all desirable modern infrastructure but the Africans (who have the enviable status of being citizens of a province of Portugal, not mere colonised subjects as so many of their kin) have no apparent desire to better themselves, and squander this great privilege. If it were not for Western Industriousness, and the dependence of many of the colonies of...
Southern Africa on L.M. as a port for imports and exports, my companions tell me that country would tear itself to pieces.

The Bowler hats are named Hussey, Jenner and Kellogg, and it has come to my attention that they are railway engineers bound for the British East Africa Protectorate to fulfill an advisory role in service of His Majesty's Corps of Royal Engineers. These three gentleman are civilian volunteers in the Territorial Force, and have never seen military action (nor will ever, if they are to have their way). Their objective is to advise H.M.'s C.R.E. regarding a particular stretch of the Uganda Railway (in the Kenya Colony) which has fallen prey to repeated sabotage by natives. I gather from them that a native Nandi diviner and chief prophesied that a black, fire-spitting snake would tear asunder the lands of his people, and these primitives have interpreted this vision as pertinent to the British railways. Subsequently they persist in damaging the lines. This is despite the fact that is long ago as 1905 the diviner was cleverly dispatched of by one Col. Meinertzhagen, who at a meeting to negotiate a truce with the cheeky native prophet produced a pistol in stead of an empty hand to shake, and blew the darker man's chest right open. If the natives had any sense they would have let their resistance lie there. But despite the obvious superiority of the British nation, they refuse to stay put down.
This particular railway brings in more White farmers and businessmen, as well as Indian petty businessmen (shop owners, &c.) and is thus a great boon to the country! The Trio intend to devise a series of economical additions to the line to prevent further senseless savage sabotage. I suggested a line of machineguns, but as they point out the assailants are not worth the price of the operators and equipment, nor even the ammunition! They propose some cleverly disguised spike-filled ditches: just enough that the naughty devils are unsure which parts of the line might be safely approached and which not, thus scaring them off at minimum cost. So these poor Brits and Portuguese are running themselves silly halfway around the globe to solve the problems caused by ungrateful Africans! I feel less pity for my own discomfort on this voyage thus far, now having heard the obstacles faced by these brave men!

Thursday, 1 January 1914

We landed at the isle of Gran Canaria, in Spain’s Canary Islands, just after sunrise, which is to say at about 7 A.M. this far South. I do miss my Norway, but it is certainly a happy break to be making my way closer to a second serving of sunshine. We had come to this Island to rendezvous with the Governor-General of Dakar, a Jew of French nationality. Our ship is to carry important documents from this honourable
Émile Achille de Camondo to his partners in the Anglo-French mining group in Johannesburg.

Post-business discussions, the Ship's Captain, Bjorgesson, Porto, Pinto, Kellogg, Jenner, Hassey and myself all had the great and unexpected pleasure of being invited by this de Camondo to a party at the villa of his friend Edward Fyffe, a British fruit importation magnate, the Banana Baron of Fyffe Hudson & Co. Next, imagine my surprise in discovering a fellow Norwegian (Knut Engström) and 2 Swedes at this soirée. This trio of Scandinavians are speculating capitalists: they are investigating the potential profitability of investing funds in peanut farming in Senegal (French North-West Africa). One of their goals is to export the legumes as a foodstuff, but more importantly, they aspire to establish a manufactory where the crop may be processed into glycerol, before being exported to Southern Africa for further processing at their chemical works outside of Johannesburg, to deliver DYNAMITE! Not only this, but the nitroglycerin produced also has medical properties, for those suffering from various heart conditions. Ingenious are we Norsemen!

The new-year's party was certainly one of the most unusual I have had the pleasure of attending, and it was delightfully rare for myself to be in the company of such distinguished and powerful men. It is the Year Anno Domini 1914, and d-
though I am not yet in Africa, my heart throbs with anticipation of my adventures ahead! Eight long days lie between us and Lagos. I shall catch up on my reading.

Friday 9 January 1914

It is late in the afternoon and we have landed at Lagos, a marshy assemblage of islets and mudflats. Some packages are being unloaded from the ship, apparently destined for the British Administrative Complex. To my great relief we should not be moored for longer than 6 hours. Because our voyage is subsidized, and we are not carrying a typical cargo ship’s load, we have not thus far spent an insubordinate amount of time in any port, and our cargo has simply been transferred directly onto smaller craft. The humidity here is unbearable, although I am assured that this is the dry season. I am of the opinion that this merely means that the moisture rises from below one in great soaking sweats rather than falling from above as rain. The latter might be preferred, if the rain were to bring cooling relief besides. I was grateful for the sun in the Canaries, but I think I have already had my fill of Africa at this juncture. It is notable, for the first time in my experience, every single manual labourer, servant, porter, carrier, etc. is African. Only the officials are all European. I have had the accounts of the Companhia men and the Bowler Hats (of the lazy Africans), but I must admit, despite the heat that has
soured my view of everything, these dark-skinned servants
have the widest smiles, and are acting satisfactorily promptly.
It could be that this Lagos is home to a particularly good breed
of them, as opposed to those at the East coast.

Sunday, 18 January, 1914

We arrived at the Cape of Good Hope. I believe, some time
after midnight. No one was available to receive us at then, and
thus we waited until past sunrise (i.e. 5:55 A.M.) to exchange
some cargo and mail, and to take on new passengers. The pas-
sengers are even tardier than the carriers. They were meant to
arrive at 7:30 A.M., in order not to disrupt the earlier load-
ing and unloading, but by 8 they had not arrived, and had
sent no messenger. I would have disembarked and explored the
harbour if I had any idea of how long they would be in com-
ing, but all I can do now is wait. Considering that my journey
is now so close to completion, after nearly a month at sea,
I cannot risk becoming separated from the ship at this time,
so I stare through my porthole and write. The renowned Ta-
ble Mountain does not impress me, but I suspect it had more
significance in a time when it symbolised a station of refresh-
ment for weary sailors, whose ships fared far more slowly
than this Montcalm, and who had no Marconi, fewer hospi-
table stations on the way down, &c. I cannot see much from
my cabin, with the machinery of the harbour surrounding
the ship, but I note a glaring lack of trees. A few European looking Pinaceae stick out in the distance, nearer the foot of the mountain, and in the few gardens and amongst the houses in my view I notice some ornamental crowns. I have been told that this peninsula carries an endemic phytochorion known locally as Fine-Boss, but being forced to remain on board I shall not see it. Nevertheless, I do doubt that it would greatly impress me.

Tuesday 20 January 1914

We passed by Port Elizabeth this evening. It becomes hotter & more humid again as we head East. The passengers who embarked at Cape Town are researchers from the ministry of forestry and water affairs. They are investigating locations for reforesting where in the previous two centuries trees were removed thoughtlessly. They are also gathering data on the impact of wooded areas on dam levels. Their names are de Wet and van der Walt. It was fascinating for me to hear that higher densities of vegetation (especially trees) in a watershed area lead to lower dam levels. De Wet has explained that this is because rain which falls on treetops has a much higher likelihood of being whisked away off the canopy by wind or sun than actually running into streams. However, as van der Walt points out, many of the Union's streams flow unrestricted directly to the oceans or to marshland areas where they have little eco-
onomic impact, and thus it is better to halt the rains at their source, where they may produce growth of aesthetic and economic value, and create areas of natural beauty in which Man and his family may relax. Being Norwegian, I am inclined to agree whole-heartedly with van der Walt, but the pair bicker so bitterly that I have chosen not to embroil myself in their politicking. Besides, I want to alienate myself from them to a certain extent, in effect to punish them for their lateness the day before last.

Thursday 22 January 1914

We have landed at the town of d'Urban (more popularly written: "Durban") in Port Natal. It appears to be bustling for such an undercivilized country as this, but the harbourmaster tells me that traffic volumes have been somewhat lower for the past two decades, since my Afrikaners have preferred to ride their new railways up to the port at Da Lagoa Bay. The Durban - Pretoria railway is furthermore above100 km longer than the L.M. alternative, although in my particular case this potential overland timesaving translates poorly at the final analysis, due, naturally, to an extended sea voyage. My motivations for terminating my voyage at L.M. are bolstered by a sentimental streak, but are in the most part informed by ethnological concern on my part: if I am to study the Afrikaners, how can I use the methods and routes of their enemies to reach their lands? I should gain more from riding and dining besides Af-
rikamers and Portuguese in the cars of the NZASM than sitting beside a familiarly English gentleman up from Natal, and arriving in Pretoria one day earlier.

I am convinced that the humidity here is close to that of Lagos, but this must be impossible, considering that we are in the vicinity of 5 degrees south of Capricorn while they are the same distance from the Equator. The civilizing effects of a prolonged European presence is certainly noticeable here when compared with Lagos. De Wet and van der Walt have left us today. The Drakensberg mountain chain which lies around 300 km inland from here is an exceptional site for forestry, so they say, and go thence to apply their expertise. I shall dine and board ashore, as we only commence the final leg of our journey at midday tomorrow. I must see whether someone can starch my collars at the hotel, and pray that (impossible though it would be) L.M. is less humid than this town.

Saturday 24 January 1914

We have reached Lourenço Marques and here it is hot as all damnation, but to add to my misery, January here is the rainiest month! I am bound by my duties as a scientist and professor (and my own understanding of what is physically possible on this planet) to write here that I can see the rain falling as discrete droplets, although by my subjective perception I am
I am convinced that the precipitation would be better described by the word "steam". I am now worried that the good assurance which I held because of my superbly dry cabin (to which I was so generously able to entrust all of my precious books) has been undone in an instant by this kettle-bowl blast! Pinto and Porto accompanied me to the hotel, which is fortunately no more than a stone's throw away from the tramline that runs directly from the harbour, but I am concerned for my cases and trunk which the many natives clamoured to carry here for a small tip. They have been instructed to wait for the rain to stop, but the ship departs again in just under 4 hours, and waiting may not be an option. If the rain has not let up by 4 P.M. I shall take a tram back to the docks and bear the cost of paying for my baggage and some carriers to come down with me. The concierge may also be coerced into lending me some canvas with which to cover my possessions. I am writing this from my room, slightly quivering with frustration and anxiety, as runnels of condensation crawl down the inside of the windowpanes! Despite the challenges that lie ahead of them in Kenya, at this exact moment I envy the Englishmen who are still in that ship with all their charts and equipment bone dry.

I am catching a train to Pretoria Monday at 6 a.m., and the concierge has assured me that the air is still cool at that hour. I have studied the hotel's barometer, and the millibar reading...
has been rising steadily enough that I may hope for a dry departure. The trams will not yet be running that early, but the concierge promises me that a cabriolet or at least a rickshaw will be made available to me. I shall sup for the last times tonight and on the morrow with de Silva Pinto and de Serpa Porto, making my farewells, and then off into the unknown again to begin my great period of discovery. I have known them now for two fortnight, and although they displayed a preference to talk amongst one another in their native tongue, I have grown to like the pair, and I can see what manner of local atmospheric pressures they are dealing with, and empathise accordingly.

Tuesday 27 January, 1914

I sit and write this in Pretoria. Having climbed by train up the escarpment to a height of above 1300 meters, I seem to have escaped some fraction of the heat in this land forgotten by God, but rain and humidity are never truly far from me. We overnighted at Waterval Boven which, I was told, is one of the colder towns in the Transvaal, and I fear that I have gotten ill. I suspect my arduous voyage and the shocking changes of clime have contributed to this terrible condition that I now find myself in. But certainly my undue exertions yesterday have exacerbated my current state. We were forced to overnight at Waterfall, because the train (which at times on this section
of the rails must climb a gradient of 1: out of 20) was found to be faulty in some respect. In addition to this impromptu halt for a mechanical inspection, there were concerns about a child missing from the town, and speculations that he might be hiding in the tunnel (as he was, apparently, wont to do). For these reasons we were compelled to abandon the coaches and walk the distance of more than 10 km to the town, notwithstanding a total vertical climb of over 200 m! The railwaymen were able to rally some natives to carry food, water, clothing, other essentials, &c. for us, but we still had to carry ourselves. I left this diary in my compartment on the train, as I saw no use in letting it be destroyed by inept hands.

The train had been serviced and the child located (I pray that he got an exceptional lashing!) by nightfall, but due to schedule clashes along the line we were detained until this morning, when we had to brave the cold on foot from our lodgings around the town back onto the train.

I am staying at an hotel in Arcadia, a part of the town which houses the Union Buildings (completed just the year past, it is probably the largest building in Africa south of the Pyramids), the British Consulate and a number of foreign embassies. I am feverish and sweating rather profusely. I do pray that I am not stricken by the Malaria. It is now after 6 P.M., and I am ready to fall asleep in my current state. It irks me that this hotel could not present me with a decent bowl of chicken.
soup, and as my situation is dire at this moment some good rest is my only recourse.

Saturday, 31 January 1914

It would appear that I have been in a condition of absolute stupefaction and delirium since my arrival here four days past. I write now, able to sit upright at the desk, feeling quite cured of a sudden. The hostess and her maids were at my side when I awoke, and they seemed terribly distraught. Feeling quite all right I tried to dismiss them, as I was scarcely decently covered, but I had to put up a fight to get them gone. The hostess cried that I had been in a frightful high fever and had been mumbling and tossing about at all hours. I have a vague recollection of some of what she mentions, but in truth I can't say much about what transpired between when I lay down to sleep and what happened until moments ago when I awoke. One symptom, which I find striking, is that I sit here writing in my sleeveless undershirt and pants, with my bare feet on the boards, and that I feel quite at ease with myself, no thought even for a hat or tie! But I jest too much! I am most excited to begin my expeditions and research.

Sunday, 1 February 2014

I have come to the Transvaal to study this refugee nation ex
Europa that call themselves Die Afrikaners. There are certainly many cases of persecuted people fleeing the arms of their fatherland to foreign shores, to escape his crushing embrace; settlers of the wildernesses who feel that they may at last be free, but none is so dramatic as theirs. The Christians who sailed west discovered a land, and first called it America, before they moved to reside there and call themselves American. These bearded Afrikaners have come to a place already named, and baptised themselves as its own children. They have fled from religious and political persecution, preferring the injustices of cruel nature over the injustices of other men. They are a brand new race, carving out of virgin lands a new way of life, and this is what I am drawn to. They have no history, no literature, not even a language truly their own. I am told that these reviled souls yearn for nothing more than a dust-choked farm on which to kneel and beseech their God for a few drops of rain. So simple, noble, steadfast. While Europe surges forward on currents and expulsions of steam and electricity these men want to return to the simplicity of Eden, despite having beheld the flaming sword that razed the paradise.

In Ancient Society Morgan refers to men being in either a state of "barbarism" or "civilization", but I believe that these fled farmers might represent an interesting interstitial phase of cultural evolution, on a continuum between the two poles.
This period of fieldwork in the Transvaal, by the end of which I hope to be living and working amongst the Afrikaner people, is bound to be interesting, for I shall be living in two worlds. I shall be at one moment amongst motor cars and electric lights, even talking to gentrified Bœdhers, and in the next, post a few hours' journey into the wild countryside, I shall be amongst the men who, I have heard, are moulded from the very soil that nourishes their crops and their beloved livestock.

I have fewer than three months to find a suitable group who are willing to accompany me to Norway, with an array of their possessions and cultural artefacts, in time for the opening of the jubilee fair on the 5th of May! I shall be thinking about what sort of pavilion is required, and shall write to my colleagues regarding what I need erected (including sketches and diagrams), by the end of March at the latest.
My Dearest Alone,

I have been given to believe that this letter, if posted on Monday, will reach your front door by the morning of St. Valentine’s day. I would send a wire, but I am unsure whether I shall find such modern amenities where soon I am bound. I shall pray for the expert handling and safe voyage of this missive, although it must be borne per train back whence I arrived, be carried onto a Dutch ship to Amsterdam and thence be transferred to a Swedish vessel that will deliver it to Kristiania. (Unlike yours truly, this letter will be crossing into the Mediterranean per the Suez Canal). If this does reach you in time, I hope that you will find in the envelope not only a number of postcards, but also all of my love and longing and kisses for you, Alfi and Eli. My birthday comes around in 2 weeks’ time, but you know how unconcerned I am by these affairs, so please do not feel any guilt over the fact that I shall be by myself. So long as I learn something valuable on that day it will be a great gift for me.
I arrived in Pretoria four days ago, and have been staying in a quaint hotel in an urban residential area (Arcadia). 15 minutes walk from the heart of the town. The character is strongly ordered by the British administration and I do not feel too far from home. I have encountered some Afrikaners, but they are all of the tame variety, and I do not know whether you can believe this, but their language sounds almost like Danish! This makes some sense as it is a creolised form of Dutch, but without the melodies and elegance that our ears have grown accustomed to. I do not wish to slander these simple men, but when listening to them speak I do like to imagine that I am hearing the lowing of farm beasts!

I have been, since my arrival, until today, stricken by a cold, which I attribute to the great distances travelled and hardships of my voyage. For the human lungs to draw on air cold, then hot (first wet then dry), then again humid, cold, and again hot all in the space of just longer than a month must be a cause of terrible distress to any corpus. I do not dare to think what ills technology holds in store for us as this obsession with faster and faster travel consumes us. I do not doubt that some day soon we shall see laymen flying post-haste between countries in aeroplanes. In my enervated state I missed you more than ever, missed your motherly care, your cooking (I am craving Lapskaus!). Here I am tended by an English matron who is assisted by black maids, such is the state of this place.
I intend to spend the major part of February travelling west from Pretoria in search of authentic Afrikaner homesteads and farming communities, and then to make a turn in Johannesburg, where, I am assured, I shall find a cultural and intellectual feast to refresh my mind and to allow me to step once more away from the world of primitive man. Johannesburg has six theatres at present, and although it will be a pity to attend performances without you, I still believe the very act will give me some solace.

I hope to hear much news from you, but do remember that until March I shall have no permanent address. As I have previously instructed you should send letters to me care of the Post Office at Church Square and I shall send for them when I know that I am to be sedentary for a reasonable period of time.

All of my love and best wishes

W.R.E.
Monday, 16 February 1914

Today two things happened: one banal and one remarkable. I had my 52nd birthday, and I met an Afrikaner man who I later discovered is named Niklaus van Rensburg, also called Siener (The Seer). I have been travelling steadily South and Westwards in a chartered motor car, and from today I must retrace my steps and return to Pretoria, thence to Johannesburg where I have been invited to attend a celebration at the Rand Club. I have at my disposal a 1911 Ford Model T, which is being driven for me by a Professor from the University of South Africa, who is also (most importantly) my translator. (The Afrikaners speak a dialect of Dutch that is unique to the Union of South Africa. In Cape Town it is known as Kaaps Hollands, whereas in the former republics it is called Afrikaans Hollands, which I shall call Afrikaans for the sake of simplicity). I suspect that in the 3 months that I shall be using the car, the reckoning for this rental will be equal to that of purchasing brand new the equivalent motor in the United States (if I were paying the rental fees myself), but as owning a car in South Africa is still relatively novel, I am grateful to have access to this one. It was only due to the good relations between my colleague at Kristiania University and his friend (my translator Prof. Schoeman) at the University of South Africa that I was able to have access to this vehicle, and thanks to the same colleague (the Norwegian) that I
was granted a fund for its charter.

I was told by Prof. Schoeman that once outside Pretoria we would be able to get fuel at the Blauwbank mining complex, at Ventersdorp, Klerksdorp and Schweizer-Reneke. This, to some extent has determined my route, as it is thought wise not to hazard more than 110 miles on the Ford's 10 Gallon fuel reservoir when using these dirt roads (the British have still not adopted the Metric system of measurement and have forced that habit on their Union here, so I am forever making conversions in my head!). Added to this, our maximum rate of travel is limited to no more than 20 kilometres per hour, we are forever stopping to repair burst tires and must avoid travelling by night. The result of these constraints is that our journey progressed rather slowly. We have thus far been to farms near the Hartbeespoort (the gnu valley) where the Boer War general Schoeman (not directly related to my guide) has a large plot of land. Schoeman tells that this area is also favoured by the Afrikaner hunters. We moved to the Magaliesberg region next, stopping at the mining station for two nights and making sojourns to the surrounding farms for two days. We moved further west down through Ventersdorp and its environs to Klerksdorp (a town which is already 77 years old, venerable by local standards). We then made the long journey down to Schweizer-Reneke (henceforth S.R.) via Ottofsdal, the latter being a small town established last year around a new
This first expedition of mine is meant, really, just for a scouting and reconnaissance mission. I am familiarising myself with the geography, the people, etc. I have been talking to those who are prepared to meet me, although I have learnt from my interactions with Schoeman not to make my intentions on this journey clear to those I interview. When I first explained to him my aim of determining the feasibility of taking a cohort of Afrikaners to the Jubilee exhibition in Kristiania, to form part of a "Cultural Village" annexe to the African Peoples Pavilion, he was much affronted, and I had to assure him that this statement was made entirely in jest (and in poor taste on my part). Although he speaks the Queen’s English, Schoeman does consider himself an Afrikaner. My current strategy thus entails instructing him to convey to the Afrikaners who we meet that I am studying the similarities between their way of life and that of Germanic peoples in Europe. I am invariably greeted with delight whenever I speak Norwegian to them, and they are fond of my description of their language as a nobler-sounding Danish. I do feel guilty to mislead them so, but once I have found the appropriate group of them I shall make my intentions plain to them, and continue or intercourse on a basis of mutual trust.

Although the heat is still intense in these parts, it is much dri-
er, and thus less taxing to my vitality. In addition to the reduced presence of atmospheric moisture, my discovery that these people are not affronted by an adult man who goes about his formal business in short trousers and an open-necked shirt, without coat or tie, wearing soft leather shoes, and perhaps a soft hat out of doors, has made the heat much more bearable.

However, I must now tell of the remarkable man, Van Rensburg, the prophet. Stemming from my studies of Sami Shamans, I am ever fascinated by figures of divination and foretelling, who are revered by their societies. We came across the prophet midway between Ottosdal and S.R., ourselves having become to some extent lost. We were in the position of knowing that we could not be far removed from our final destination, and thus that our fuel reserves were in danger of reaching their allotted end, which made being lost all the more distressing. The cooperative store at Klerksdorp had only enough kerosene for us to nearly fill our reservoir, and being under orders from the owner of the motor not to carry additional fuel cans in the cabin (which would ruin the upholstery if spilled) we had in reserve only a small tin wrapped in a blanket and tied to the spare wheel, where it could not damage the paintwork. We were thus in a nervous state as the engine roared with the effort required to carry us up a particularly steep and rutted track.
At the summit of the rise Schoeman turned the motor left onto a track which ran off in the direction of our shadows (that is to say, South by West), as S.R. should have lain in that direction. I lurched forward in my seat, as Schoeman unexpectedly activated the brakes, and after taking a moment to recover from the jarring, I looked ahead, discerning a man with a deeply lined face and sad, piercing blue eyes. "Schweizer lê in die ander rigting" quoth he, pointing north ("S.R. lies in the other direction" I have asked Schoeman to provide me with this original Afrikaans, which was partly intelligible to me at the time, based on a similarity between that language and my Norwegian). We were intrigued as to how this man knew our final destination, and that he should point us in the opposite direction to where our deductions suggested it should have been. The man explained to Schoeman how to find the town, adding that via his route the journey would from this point be mostly downhill, and thus we could take solace that our fuel would last. This observation was again rather accurate to the particular situation in which Schoeman and I found ourselves. We thanked the man and proceeded to S.R.

At the town we refuelled our Ford and found this inn where we will lodge for the night and have a meal prepared for us. We shared the common dining room with a couple of men, who looked, according to Schoeman, like military men. I asked
Schoeman whether we could approach them, for it seemed by
their demeanours and apparent enjoyment of their drinks that
they were not at the moment discussing matters confidential
or excessively grave. According to our usual practice, I greeted
them in Norwegian, and Schoeman in Afrikaans, thereafter
explaining that he would translate what they say into Eng-
lish for me, and from me the reverse to them. Because they
despise the English, I make sure to speak that language with
my strongest Norwegian accent, actively stumbling over my
sentences, while Schoeman deliberately affects an Afrikaans
pronunciation. Both of us also insert non-English words into
every sentence, just to place our interviewees at ease.

The men had been talking about the new church building which
was recently completed in Ottosdal. They wished that "Die
Siener" would apply to be the preacher, since before the
war he had been made a church elder at the age of 21, despite
lacking a theological qualification. His family has a farm near
the town of Wolmaransstad which lies to the South and West
of Ottosdal, and is a mere three hour's ride away. Noticing
the reverence with which they spoke of the man, I asked more
questions about him and their beliefs. When they described his
melancholy and piercing blue eyes, and his deeply lined face,
I became sure that the man they spoke of was the very same
who directed us to S.R. from atop the hill. I presented them
(via Schoeman) with this suggestion, and soon they too agreed
that we must have been met by the seer, and were impressed that he had anticipated our destination as well as our concerns about our dwindling fuel reserve.

This Seer had reportedly been mute in his youth, and as a herder of livestock had nearly no education. However, his mother taught him to read from the Bible, which is the only book that he has read, and continues to read exclusively to the present. He was commandeered to fight with the Afrikaners against the British at the outset of the war in 1899, but being a pacifist he refused to bear arms. Instead, following a series of nightly visions, he began prophesying to his commanders, and by all accounts he proved to possess excellent pre-cognition. Although his predictions were invaluable to the successful actions of his commando, he also prophesied that the Afrikaners would lose their fight, and he was proven to be right. Even at the present he remains a close confidant of the renowned Boer military leader General de la Rey, who often visits him for consultation. Unfortunately, because he is unversed in the art of writing, none of his prophecies have been recorded for posterity, although some have clearly been preserved in the memories of his disciples. The subject of conversation shifted to concerns about a drought in the region, and queries as to whether the seer had made any comments about a coming rain.
Due to this meeting of the seer, and hearing tell of some parts of his life, I now have a definite focus for the furthering of my researches. I must unhappily leave this region tomorrow, but I shall be returning in March, and shall then petition the seer for subsequent interviews. While previously I was looking forward to my respite in English Johannesburg, I suddenly feel regretful at having to leave this area so soon after such a fantastic discovery.

Monday 2 March 1914

I have discovered an anomaly in the Corner House in the heart of Johannesburg.

I was invited to the Rand Club this past Tuesday 24 Feb, and there met the aged Jules Porges, with whom I got along splendidly, on account of his love for old Lappish artefacts. His grandfather (Jonas Simon) was a Ukrainan Jew who had collected Lappish curiosities, and passed on his interest to his son Moritz (Jules' father) who fled to Austria during the pogroms of 1821. Moritz met and married Henriette Reiflinger in Vienna, and Jules was born there to aging parents in 1839. When his father died in 1870 he took over his collection of Lappish objects, which he still has to this day. Jules, a diamond trader and financier, had sent juniors from his Parisian firm to Kimberley in 1873 to buy diamonds and digging claims, and
invested heavily in the mining boom there. When gold was discovered in Johannesburg he became involved in establishing a consolidated body of mining companies in South Africa. He was also instrumental in founding the Cornerhouse group with Hermann Eckstein, Alfred Beit and Julius Wernher.

Although he is now mostly retired (and has outlived all of his former partners [his juniors]) he was at the Rand Club on Tuesday to celebrate the 27th anniversary of the The Diggers News, a paper which was started by a good friend of his, and the celebration of which also served as a grand general reunion of sorts. I was at the celebration by virtue of my earlier meeting of Knut Engstrom (on Gran Canaria), who is in South Africa to sell his dynamite to mining companies here. The point of my tale is that Porgès and I got along so grandly, and he suggested that I visit the headquarters of the company of his protegés in Johannesburg at The Corner House. He would telephone the following day to arrange for me to visit the edifice on Sunday when the offices would not be occupied (that is yesterday, 1st March).

I did visit that illustrious tower yesterday, and this visit is what I am desperate to record here, for what I experienced was singularly extraordinary. I was ambling around the seventh floor of the mostly empty building, and found myself walking slowly through an open-plan office, with beautiful Rhodesian
Teak floors, dividers and wall panels, grand Edwardian bureaus and cabinets and all of the trappings to be expected in the offices of successful business. I went towards the windows at the South-Eastern corner in order to look down onto the acclaimed offices of the Standard Bank across the street.

In an instant I felt the most terrible wrenching. My ears were filled with a sound like the waters gushing down the glaciers in Spring, or an avalanche. My mind was a-quake, blasted by a cacophony of lightning, and I saw flashing white and black and nothing at all in my vision. The very next moment all was calm and I felt completely normal, besides my racing heart. Unsure of what to make of this I continued toward the windows, but realised that all had gone terribly awry. The wood paneled walls and floors and the glass lamp fixtures that hung from the ceiling were totally vanished, and I saw before me raw plaster, an horribly scarred floor below me and the bare steel skeleton of the building above me. Rows of long white tubes were crudely fixed to the ceiling, emitting a bluish-white light. (I suspect that these are a form of Moore’s/ Hewitt’s mercury-vapor tubes). I spun around, but I was isolated in a little island of light. The light around me tapered off sharply to the blackest pitch, so that outside of my little pool of illumination nothing whatsoever was discernable. This indicated to me not merely an absence of light beyond, but an absolute absence of matter.
Turning back to the windows I saw in the corner a strange little collection of what looked like primitive carvings. A mask was affixed to the wall, a cabinet held objects apparently made of ceramic, leather and wood, while to one side stood what looked like a bronze figurine. On the walls were small, black plaques of square glass covered with paragraphs of white typeset letters. It appeared that most of the writing was in English, and by virtue of each plaque bearing a number corresponding to a number beside each statuette, I concluded that the texts described the objects. I saw, amongst other things, a wooden bell, shaped somewhat like a rooster and in places painted purple. I saw a white mask that resembled the head of a hippopotamus, a saw a figurine with a grimacing jackal’s head. A sound arose from the streets outside, a rushing and roaring sound, like a thousand motor engines and a thousand sounded horns. I also sensed the presence of many people in the room, and caught fragments of conversations in a strangely accented dialects of English and in Afrikaans and Bantu tongues, heard music with a strong, thumping rhythm and singing in a language that I could not understand.

I seemed imperative at the time that I should record the scene before my eyes, and I began to make sketches and take notes of the weird array. For what must have been more than an hour I pored over the relics, furiously scribbling in my books.
until a great weariness came upon me and I felt myself slipping into oblivion.

I must have fainted, for I was awoken by my chaperone (my guide within the Cornerhouse), a female receptionist, shaking me urgently by the shoulders. I looked up at her, feeling entirely disoriented, and saw that her face was beaded with sweat and fraught with panic. She reports that she found me lying in a crumpled heap on the floor. I asked her how long it had been since she last saw me, for it felt as though I had been in the strange corner for quite some time (and I know now that I really had spent hours making sketches, proof of this exists in my notebooks), and I had no idea for what measure of time I was not cognizant. She says that I could not have been away from her sight for more than 5 minutes. Upon withdrawing my pocket watch from my waistcoat, I confirmed that not half an hour had passed since my 6 P.M. arrival there. I was then, and am now still, distressed when I realised that my shirt front was wet from my own saliva, and the button of my collar had burst, apparently from the tensing of my neck.

I thanked the secretary (Ms. Brown), and begging for her discretion I took my leave immediately. I stumbled toward the hotel in which I was boarding, which thankfully was not too far away. In my room I drew closed the curtains and fell into a deep sleep. I awoke today to write this experience down.
1. May 1914: Notes taken at the Cornerhouse

Building suddenly damaged. Evidence of removal and destruction. Dust, mouse droppings, cigarette ends, liquor bottles. Vitrine in corner, bronze statuette, mask, plaques. Black and green notebook w. drawings and annotations, many blank pages (seems like abandoned endeavor). Six sculptural objects as below, with relevant pages in book (titled: The Saints of our Golden City) referenced:

First page of book (index):

- St. Simanga
- Muggers! Pickpockets! Conmen
- Polynesian
- Historical Criminal Figures
- Keytakers

- Casual Young Thieves
- African
- Cockerels—Shona—Chichongwe
  - Arrogant zvida

Drunken Vagrant Pickpocket
Far Eastern

St. Seekoei mvabu-ngani

Aggressive Car Jackers During the day they stay cool in mud

Papua New Guinea. or river, emerge at dusk

Hippopotamus River Horse Territorial in river, not on land.

Zulus like to be command

Grazing associated with hippo mating & birth

Solitary

Coldly Professional Housebreakers Catholic

Arrogant bitch child entitled

Naked Streetwalker

First Object: Carved wooden bell
Approx. 40cm long, 10cm diameter. Leather strap attached
approx. 5cm from top. Carving is crude and demonstrates an apparent lack of finesse or refined skill. Carved forms resemble a chicken/man hybrid. Large nose/beak, large white eyes, bright red comb and wattle. Small arms, purple and white shirt. Bears similarity to 19th C. slit gongs of Melanesia at Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro. Relevant text in book (entries selected from various separate pages):

- Casual Young Thieves
  - African
  - Cockerels-Shona-Chichongwe
    - Arrogant zvida

(Pencil drawing of chicken overlaid with drawing of Melanesian slit gong)

St. Chichongwe
(Four drawings of primitive masks)

(Drawing: Tall totemic figure. Possibly wearing a knit-cap! skullcap (like a Tophae), a short-sleeved "T-shirt", bearing letters Y/MCMB, belt with oval buckle, trousers like "blue jeans", shoes of U.S. 'basketball' design)

(More drawings of totemic figures)
Second object: Jackal-headed man
Approx 25cm long, 15cm wide and deep at max. dimensions.
Widely grinning jackal's head with anthropomorphic features
(nose, teeth and body). Wood apparently the same species as
other objects. Also crudely carved, brutish workmanship. No
use of colour.

St. Simanga
/Muggers! Pickpockets! Conmen
Polynesian
- Historical Criminal figures
- keytakers

St. Simanga
(Drawings of 3 faces, a 7-fingered, rake-like hand and a
slim leather men's brogue-style shoes)

(Drawings of masks and jackal heads in frontal and profile
orientations, including ruled perpendicular lines and meas-
urements w. ratios and letters. Idea and design for statuette
evolves as the pages progress. Similar method used for design
as with "St. Chichongwe": combination of existing mask forms
(from disparate sources) with the form of an existing animal.)
Artist has made use of "collage" to connect parts of heads and bodies. Drawing on 11th page resembles final figure, but arms and legs differ.

Third object: Ceramic Mask
Approx. 20x25x20 cm. Ceramic mask that might fit the head of a small man. White stoneware? with coloured glazes? in selected areas. Holes for eyes, nostrils and mouth, 4 large teeth. Mask resembles the face of a hippopotamus. Expression aggressive.

Fourth Object: Wooden mask
Approximately life-sized. Carved wooden mask made from same wood as in objects 1, 2 & 5, with the addition of cowrie
shells; human hair. No entry in the Saints book.

Fifth Object: Scowling figurine
Approx. 25x35x5 cm. Carved wooden figure. 'Head' is flat (lacks dimension) and shaped like upside-down shield. Face scowling. Legs emerge from the lower left of the head. Arms rigid, gesture in geometrically restrained manner. Same wood as other objects. May be referred to by description "Arrogant bitch child".

Sixth object: Naked walker
Approx. 45x20x15 cm. Naked male figure, covering upper body with sheet. Bronze. Apparently striding forwards against wind. Bearded. Likely Naked Streetwalker.

10 March, 1914 Analysis of objects seen at Cornerhouse

Here follows an analysis of what I was able to remember and record of what I saw. One may suppose that my first concern should be to establish the veracity or actuality of the event at which I was present, but I have incontrovertible evidence in my notebook: how could I have recorded the great number of observations that I did, in the short span of time described by my chaperone, while I was frothing at the mouth and thrash-
ing on the floor? I must some how have corporally relocated to a space similar to (but discrete from) the original Cornerhouse that I had entered at six o’clock. I must have then spent about an hour at this new locale, and then returned to whence I had begun, before 5 minutes had elapsed there. I suspect that the apparent epileptic fit was a result of unthinkable stresses imposed on my body from travelling so rapidly through space and time, for I have no history of such fits in my bloodline. I have no explanation at all for what has happened, but I do know that if it did happen, and is worth remarking on. (however, I also possess enough caution to not yet share my discovery, lest I be ridiculed).

By analogy, consider that although the first microbes were observed in the 17th Century, the scientific establishment ridiculed and ignored Dr. Lister when he suggested that a correlation exists between these unseen life forms and the putrefaction of wounds, and surgery should be undertaken as an anti-septic endeavour. Medical professionals thought of his theory as absurd as little as 40 years ago. If Lister could change surgery so drastically, through a belief in invisible factors, based on physical evidence, I may certainly do the same.

The black notebook accompanying the statuettes, titled “The Saints of our Golden City” bore an index on its initial page, wherein reference was made to some of the objects in the
following manner: each was assigned a title, a class of criminal attacker, an animal, a geographical location, and a name from a language not English. I have managed to find translations for the non-English words in the Johannesburg Library in Kerk street and with help from some professors of mining at the South African School of Mines and Technology who have spent time in the north of Transvaal, and as a result have knowledge (and dictionaries) of chiShona and isiZulu along with Afrikaans. The names are translated to English as follows:

Chichongwe  – chiShona  – A young male chicken, Cockerel.
Simanga  – isiZulu  – Astonishment (surprise)
Seekoei  – Afrikaans  – Hippopotamus (literally sea cow)

Names directly assigned in English are:
Arrogant Bitch Child
Naked Streetwalker

Names without apparent corresponding objects are:
Drunken Vagrant Pickpocket
Coldly Professional Housebreakers

The wooden mask that I saw has no obviously attributable name recorded in the "Saints" book.

(A column of 6 names appears at the top right, but I cannot establish what these refer to. They appear to be European and
Chichongwe is linked with "Casual young thieves"; Africa; and a Cockerel
Simanga is linked with muggers, pickpockets and conmen; Polynesia; and a Jackal
Seekoei is linked with Aggressive Car jackers; Papua New Guinea; and an Hippopotamus

In each case the geographical marker seems intended to point to a certain local style of mask-making, but rather arbitrarily and inaccurately. As reflected in the notes I had taken, the Chichongwe bell matches not African but Melanesian artefacts that were on display in Paris. The Simanga figure is a blend of styles as widely flung as Polynesia, Far East Asia, Central and South America and even show a slight Medieval European influence. The Seekoei figure is the closest in form to its supposed place of origin, but the modelling of the hippopotamus’ face is far too representational to be considered Papuan. In addition to their incorrectness, the objects are poorly crafted, and lack all of the vibrancy and authenticity that give primitive artefacts their appeal. The wood used is likely a sort of Poplar, which is neither indigenous to Southern Africa nor to any of the cultures referred to in the book, and not ideal for carving, as it tends to be spongy, and is not at all durable.
It would seem as though the maker of the objects has tried to embody certain types of criminal characters by using borrowed styles that are meant to appear primitive. To legitimise this false mythology, the maker has selected a familiar animal spirit for each object and bestowed upon the spirit, in a rather predictable and pedestrian fashion, a name from an African language.

Why somebody would go to these lengths to create such strange objects, and why they would be in some version of the Cornerhouse, and why I should have seen this, lies beyond my powers of explanation. The objects may be the work of some manner of charlatan, a forger perhaps, but the workmanship is so poor and the inaccuracies so glaring that this is hard to believe. No serious collector would grant these objects a second's consideration. The accompanying notes all demonstrate a process of fabricating these objects that is artificial and contrived. For the moment it is fruitless to speculate. I have no idea what to do with this knowledge, and will not at present publish it in any form. I shall try to visit the Cornerhouse again to see whether I can study this strange phenomenon, without drawing attention as to why.

My last recourse is to wonder whether the Seer might be able to expound this mystery for me. I must certainly see him again.
Monday, 13 April, 1914

I have decided to abandon my original mission of finding Afrikaners to exhibit for the jubilee fair. The incident in Johannesburg unsettled me so severely that I stayed overlong in that town. My questions remaining unanswerable, I moved out into the countryside again, in search of the seer. Because of his accurate prediction of my destination and fuel volume when we drove to S.R., my experience in the Cornerhouse, and his visions, I felt that he and I shared a unique connection. It seemed possible that what allowed me to move into the alternate Cornerhouse, may have enabled him to visit alternate sites and futures, and see events unfold that he could recall as predictions upon his return to his original time and place. In the slow and problem-fraught automobile I searched the same towns and farms as before (in the triangle between the Ottersdal, Wolmaransstad and S.R.) but could neither find the prophet nor an indication of his situation. Furthermore, those who I asked about his whereabouts seemed distrustful of me, and even questions in pursuit of my original objective (the jubilee pavilion) were largely fruitless.

I shall write to my faculty (who are most likely already concerned or incensed by the fact that I sent them no communications since February, and must be distraught as to what I...
intend for the fair, and how they must prepare) and inform
them that due to illness and misfortunes on my part, and a
lack of cooperation from the Afrikaners (who are worse to
deal with than true primitives, who have no airs about what
they are) I have to withdraw my project from the fair. I shall
try to convince them of the Seer’s importance and the links
that I may draw between his practice and that of Sami sha-
manship. This letter will likely only reach them by the last week
of April, and so the cancellation will not bode well. However,
if I am able to make a strong argument for my investigation of
the prophet, they may forgive me the expense of the Ford and
my journey down here.

I shall also write to the passenger liner service which was to
take my subjects and myself home on the 27th of April, to
let them know that only I shall be sailing back. Perhaps I can
negotiate a credit on a portion of the fare, to enable myself
to travel down to Southern Africa again at a future date.

Tuesday, 16 June 1914

After a supremely confusing, fruitless and exasperating time
in Africa, I returned to Norway on a direct line with only 3
short stops, and arrived just in time to attend the jubilee with
my family, an occasion that underwhelmed me. I experienced a
general sense of displeasure and disappointment directed at me.
from all my Norwegian peers, family and friends, for having neglected to write regularly while abroad, and then returning with scarce evidence of what it was that kept me so preoccupied. In the Union I skirted the waters of an endless spring of newness and knowledge, but my body is parched nevertheless. I can focus on nothing other than obtaining closure. I have already met with my life assurance policy writer to confirm that Alone and her daughters will be provided for if I do not return safely from S. Africa this time. I don’t know why, but I am overshadowed by a great sense of foreboding and discomfort concerning my obsession to return South despite the frustrations of my last expedition.

I have no assistance from the university for this coming journey, besides being granted an unpaid leave of absence without forfeiting my post, and the possibility of sending papers for publishing. I am waiting until just before my departure to tell Alone, because I am too afraid to confront her sooner. One little thread of gold in this grey tapestry appears in my ship’s ticket, which I have been able to hold over from April.

I take a ferry to Flensburg in 10 days, thence trains from Frankfurt to Barcelona via Paris and Toulouse, and at last a ship that should deliver me to Lorenço Marques by the 21st of July. If all goes well I shall be in Pretoria on the 22nd. This journey entails me travelling from a state of summer to one of
Wednesday 22 July 1914

I have arrived in Pretoria, but this time I stay in a rented outside room near the Portland Cement factory in Daspoort. My ship down was uneventful, I had not the luxury of an electric light in my cabin, nor the space to keep any books safely near me. I have come down with a handful of texts, but I have been unable to immerse myself in them, since none of them can explain to me the seer, nor my experience in March. I have my typewriter and notebooks with me, along with much blank paper. The 3 days which I spent riding trains down from Flensburg were unpleasant. In Germany, France and Spain tensions are high, and strangers all seem distrustful of one another. It was a great stroke of fortune that at the end of June I was at the harbour in Barcelona on the verge of departing, on the Sunday that the news of Franz Ferdinand's assassination was broadcast. If my journey had been delayed by a day I might have found myself in a heated situation in Germany or France. I haven't had much news of developments since then, I shall try to find a newspaper soon. I don't even want to think about my wife's reaction to my leaving. I dread even more her reaction if she finds out what sum of plate I have brought here with me.
I am appointed to meet my acquaintance Prof. Schoeman to-­
morrow.

Wednesday 5 August 1914

War has been declared by Austria-Hungary on Serbia the
Tuesday before last, and the general feeling is that the con-
flict is likely to escalate quickly. On Saturday Germany de-
clared war on Russia; while Norway, Sweden and Denmark
have all issued statements of Neutrality. I hope that my family
will remain safe! I feel terrible now for having left.

Many Boers in the Union sympathise with the causes of the
Germanic empire, especially since the Germans gave aid and
arms to the Boers in 1899, and their enemy (the British) are
the enemy of the Boers too. My Schoeman (with whom I
have been spending much of the last two weeks) has adopted
a decidedly polarised view, and is quite militantly opposing the
entry of the Union into the war on the side of Britain. My
Norwegian English accent, to me, does not sound like a Ger-
man English accent at all, but I am making efforts to speak
like an Oxonian Englishman when in the large towns, in or-
der not to evoke suspicion around my foreign person. On the
farms I continue with my exaggerated Norwegian accent, so
I am acting the chameleon. I hope that Schoeman will not see
this as cowardice or hypocrisy. I do not know what my status is here. While my homeland is clearly neutral, the South Africans in general can be rash and impulsive, with an insistence on choosing sides.

We have made arrangements to return to the Seer’s triangle in the western Transvaal, this time in a farm transport lorry. Schoeman’s involvement with the anti-British dissenters has brought him closer to the Seer, by way of bringing him closer to the General De La Rey et al. Although Schoeman does not meet with these leaders himself, he does commune with their subordinates.

Sunday 23 August 1914

This morning I attended a service at the Dutch Reformed Church. I realise now what a great oversight it has been on my part, as an ethnographer, not to attend such a service earlier. This morning was the first occasion on which every single Afrikaner man that I saw, including the youngest boys, had on long trousers, and many had a jacket, tie, waistcoat, hat, &c. The Afrikaner women are always modestly dressed, but today I saw them arrayed in much finer dresses, far brighter colours adorned them than the faded working hues in which they are attired on their farms and homesteads. I attended the service with Schoeman, for I was concerned that attending
by myself, not having been initiated into the mysteries of this particular form of worship, I might cause grave offense. The service was performed with a sombre attitude throughout, and although hymns were sung, they are recited with a doleful air. I have heard of Pentecostal and Quaker congregations in the United States, as well as black churches there, were hymns are sung with great energy, emotion and expression, but here that is certainly not the case.

The church that we attended is the same which I mentioned on my first expedition in February, in Otrosdal. The Seer was never made the pastor of this congregation. The man who did preach today, Dominie Weijers, was dour, and spoke with a smouldering in his voice about certain prophecies from the books of Daniel and Habakkuk; and their pertinence to the current situation abroad, and in South Africa. It appears that a general doctrine is taught in these churches, which links the Afrikaner with the tribes of Israel, i.e. the chosen ones of God. I could not follow the sermon which was given in Afrikaans, so Schoeman related parts of it to me afterward. There is certainly a militaristic sub-text running through what is being preached.
I have been in Johannesburg for the last two weeks, trying to spend time in the vicinity of the Cornerhouse. The town, being foremost a place of business, seems less focussed on the war than Pretoria and the smaller Dorps. So it may be said here I am protected by Mammon. What a wicked thought, but in truth I am far worse possessed by a need to know what happened on the first of March! It may be a deductive leap of faith, but due to my lack of success thus far in attempting to reconnect with the Seer, I have postulated that there may be value in searching for a similar figure in the vicinity of the Cornerhouse. At the time of my experience the Seer was most likely 400 kilometres from me, and thus the possibility exists that a character who had the same shamanic access as he, and stood in nearer proximity to me at the time, may have precipitated the events of 1 March. Although I was initially sceptical of the objects that I had seen, due to their crudity, and appearance of being contrived by a charlatan, it now seems possible that they are the genuine works of a person who interacts in and through this world in the same way as the Seer. I have no way of explaining what happened and therefore not the slightest place to begin speculating or postulating from. Thus I grasp at straws.

The newspapers have since Thursday been reporting on the
death of General De La Rey. Afrikaner papers report that he was killed in an ambush! British papers claim that he was in a motor car that repeatedly refused to stop at a series of roadblocks (which had not been set to intercept him at all, but to catch the Foster Gang: a married couple, and two other men, who had been committing robbery and murder around the Rand since the start of July, since Mr Foster had escaped from the Pretoria gaol). De la Rey's motor was shot at by a police officer, and the general died soon thereafter. At the time of his death de la Rey was a senator of the Transvaal, having served as a member of Parliament since 1907. I know that the man was loved by his people, he was a wise leader and an advocate for peace and reconciliation.

Compared with my earlier visit to South Africa, I have brought far fewer suits (space in my coffer being occupied by a greater variety of short clothes), and due to my much rougher living conditions on this occasion, my few suits are starting to look threadbare. I am concerned that the respect that I may have commanded as a European Gentleman and Professor is waning, and every day I am more regarded as an itinerant, vagrant, or a Boer.
Tuesday 22 September 1914

Today I was given a message by the receptionist at the Corner House. I went to tour the 7th floor for the third time, and I think Ms. Brown and her superiors are growing tired of me, for I have no reasonable explanation as to why I keep returning. Ms. Brown observed me when I had the apparent 'fit' six months ago, but I do not know whether she has told her superiors, or suspects that my recurring visits are somehow linked to that. I tell them that the broad and distant views afforded by the building's exceptional height supplies me with much inspiration; so it must arouse suspicion when I make surreptitious inspections of the South East corner almost obsessively.

But, returning to the message: when I saw Ms. Brown today she handed to me an urgent message that had been left for me. It is dated 18 September and although Ms. Brown was informed that Schoeman was the sender, his name does not appear on the envelope. Inside a sealed envelope which was unopened when I received it, I found a carbon copy of a handwritten letter. The letter reads: "SVR dreamt DLR. From October find me north of Krugersdorp. On Kromdraai farm".

This letter has made me certain of my next movements: I shall not return to Pretoria, where the government is most likely
preoccupied with all the complexities of war, and where ten-
sions between Afrikaners and English living in close proximity
to one another may be high. I shall not stay in Johannesburg
where I frustrate myself and make no progress on my stud-
ies of the Afrikaners and their prophet. I shall not return to
Europe, for plans have been set in motion for the Union to
invade German South West Africa, and South East Africa,
where my ship would need to pass and may be caught in the
crossfire. Similarly when I arrive in Europe I am not sure
what dangers lie in store for ships sailing those waters. I shall
find Schoeman, who I believe meant in his letter that "Siener
van Rensburg dreamed (of the death of) De la Rey". This is
the first bit of confirmed prophecy that I shall be witness to,
and it concerns such an important figure at such an important
time in the history of this land. I shall prepare to go to Fru-
gersdorp at once where I must establish trust with an Afri-
kaner who will be able to take me to Kromdraai.

Sunday, 1 November, 1914

I have moved permanently to a small holding: portion 58 of
Farm 520 JQ Kromdraai. I am living here in an old stables
along with Schoeman and some other 'rebels'. We hope that
our friendly relationship with some wealthy Jewish traders in
the area will help us secure certain funds and essential equip-
ment in exchange for various services that our group can offer.
in return. I say 'we' but I am able to offer not much more than my insights as Professor, which Schoeman can do without me, and in the mother tongue of his comrades. But I realise I have not explained what he meant in his September missive that summoned me here, and this is of great interest. (aside: I still have not had another chance to meet the Seer!)

On the second of August, the seer had a dream about De la Rey, in which he saw the General returning home, bare-headed in a carriage adorned with flowers, while a black cloud with the number 15 on it poured down blood! Although van Rensburg had interpreted this dream as an ill omen, his followers suggested that it meant De la Rey would return triumphant (on account of the flowers), while the rain of blood would be the enemy's. As we now know: de la Rey was killed, on the 15th of September! And did return bare-headed (in a coffin) to his home, the farm in Lichtenburg, in a carriage (hearse) adorned with flowers! The undeniable accuracy of this vision astounds me still. I Must Meet the Man!

We are isolated on this farm by virtue of the Union having declared martial law on the 12th of October in order to quell a rebellion by Maritz and others, who hoped to take advantage of the outbreak of a European war to throw off British dominion. The rebellion was foiled in two weeks, and because the seer's group has been tangentially linked to the
guilty parties, we have elected to remain out of the public eye for the time being. I shall spend as long as it takes for me to gather meaningful research on the Prophet, and will be learning South African agricultural methods in the interim.

Thursday 2 December 2015

AT LAST! I have had another experience like that of March first! I have reason to believe that at some times between 6 P.M. 30 November to 6 A.M. 1 December I moved in and out of a state/place such as I was in at the Cornerhouse. The external facts that are available to me are the following: On Monday 30 Nov. I finished helping the Boers in the Fields, although there was not much work to be done at this time of year, I was told. The group weeded or inspected irrigation channels before the sun was too high, rested in the shade for dinner, and carried out a general inspection, sharpening or repair of tools in the barn (which is also our kitchen, sleeping area, workshop, &c.). Being finished with these un-demanding tasks (and being, to tell truth, unsuited to improve upon the condition of any tool by some effort of my own), I elected to go for a walk, alone, to rid myself of the un-spent vigour imparted by a hearty dinner, and relieve my mind of a state of restlessness and over-activity.

I took my notebook and pen cylinder (which contains a four-
tain pen, lead pencil, and a "ball-point", none of which are a delight to write with when away from one's desk). My aim was to walk up a small gorge and relax at a place where a stream trickles down the rocks, out of the heat of the barn, and away from the distractions of my comrades. I sat alternately writing and musing, thinking not much of serious matters, which I had largely put aside since moving to the farm, to avoid indulging my growing sense of sheer frustration. On that day (the 30th) I had been on the farm for a day less than one year plus a month, and remembering how long ago I had left Norway for the first time, how long ago I had seen or heard from my family, and how fruitless this Expedition had been thus far, I grew deeply pensive. I sat musing and ruminating about the direction which my life had taken, and must have fallen into a sort of reverie.

I found myself dreaming and waking, dreaming and waking, but not in the manner of a usual fit of napping. These cycles of passing in and out of states of consciousness give the same impression of rushing and black-and-white jarring that I experienced almost two years ago in Johannesburg, albeit in smaller increments and over an extended period of time.

I was at times beside the stream I had arrived at, with my notebook and a small stream trickling by. In the next instant the scene was slightly changed: The trickling of water down
the rocks was stronger, and a small pool lay at the terminus of the water-falls. A fire crackled in a stone circle; and some candles, bags of a thin artificial membrane with the word "Spar" imprinted on them, some bottles and wooden objects, and a typewriter with an exceptionally compact and modern appearance lay strewn around. I took particular note of a thick plank that seemed to have been roughly sawn from a section of tree trunk and shaped so that a silhouette of a face was formed in the negative space at one side, with two long extensions rising from it. In addition to metal and cloth parts near the face, a fascinating clear crystalline box was attached to the top of one "horn", and in the box was a smaller and transparent man-made box with geometric shapes and a lens on one side. I would hazard to call this a camera, albeit exceedingly diminutive in size (there is only a single lens, no dials for focussing or selecting apertures, and the photosensitive slides must be so small that this device should record a very poor picture, and must between every photograph require a cumbersome re-loading in a dark space somewhere).

Then I was back at the trickle of water with my notebook. A flash and sensation of wrenching again at the fireside and surrounded by the strange assortment. My night proceeded much in this way, back and forth, back and forth. When I woke where I had begun, I would feel beset by a morbid lethargy, and lie slumped with my back against a rock, my
head rolling from side to side, and when I awoke again beside the fire I would feel vigorous and move around the objects at hand. I went back and forth like this, until morning. But at last, when I departed in the morning from the fireplace, I returned to a night-time 'present.' This again confirms my earlier speculations about that experience. My last period at the pool & fire 'other space' was spent paging through various books and detached leaves of writing, set down both by hand, and mechanically. As before when I went to the 'other space' I was accompanied by those things directly attached to my person, i.e. clothing and notebook. At one point, as I was taking notes of these other notes that I had found, they began of their own accord to be gathered into one place, and as they moved off back out of the gorge, I returned to the 'present.' I went from there, in the dark, back to the barn, and fell asleep on my bedroll.

The next morning no one was curious as to where I had been, for I had told them I desired privacy and I am sure that they consider me an eccentric man. I shall compose an analysis of what notes I took the night before last and of what I hold in my memory. If I can draw pertinent links to my analysis of 1 March of last year I may at last have something of value to publish!
30 November 1915

I have again been displaced! like at O H place is recognisable but changed. Stream flows with greater volume, and small pool formed at base of vertical rock face. Again evidence of unaided, strange artefacts.

Fire in stone circle

Large, flat rock next to fire & pool supports compact and sleek blue typewriter. Candles and notebooks also on table rock.

Larger and longer flat rock forms a slanted arrangement recalling liner's deck chair.

Objects likely from manufacture:

Membranous, filmy material (like delicate scraped intestinal casing, but more voluminous) bearing imprinted letters SPAR and ‘spades’ design.

Cloth satchel, painted with letters “Billabong”, held closed by minute interlocking metal fingers (Did American Swede Sundback patent this 11/2 year ago?). Contains green glass wine bottles. Contains apparent roll of v. pure & soft san tissue paper.

All-metal shovel with smooth handle (Bakelite).

Rope made of colored cotton or similar

Orange domed cylinder of enamelled metal, w. brass spout.
dial and trigger? May be a kerosene brazing blowlamp, but no evidence of pressuring piston pump. Glass bottle labeled "Gordon's Dry Gin", but contains dark brown liquid. A somewhat large, but not too well padded, square cushion. A cardboard and blue leather case, also with interlocking metal finger closer, likely for the typewriter.

Objects likely handmade:
Wooden gourd, tear-shaped container with leathern strap and wooden plug at narrow end. Wooden cylinder, wooden forceps. Drinking bottle? made of plaster of Paris, crude porcelain, w. wooden boot on lid, & plaited leathern sling. Planked section of tree stump, much reduced, to produce silhouette of face, and two apparent 'horns'. Horns connected by wooden dowel, tipped with bronze? 'eye'. Tip of foremost (towards nose) horn bears clear, hard, crystalline cube w. lens. Camera? To left and right of top of silhouette: two wooden 'braces' following shape of crown of head, padded with red velvet. Steel bar and hinge apparently allow locking/releasing of hinge.

Typed pages:
I hope I have time to re-write.

Page 1:
I have begun the ceremony
The sun is still out.
The fire is hot.
I am feeling somewhat restless, but not quite apprehensive.
I am eager to see what the vigil will bring.
I have not slept particularly well the past while, but I have enjoyed making objects throughout the past month.

The smoke from the fire is happily drifting away from the waterfall, and away from me.
Sawing the stumps was quite exhausting.

Night is approaching, but as I have said, I am eager.
It feels good to be an 'artist' now that I have finished all of the commercial work that I have been doing, to save enough money to last me through December and January.
It was almost drizzling earlier, but all signs of rain have passed, and the forecast only mentioned a 10% chance of precipitation, down from the 20% forecast earlier in the week.

I have felt very isolated and frustrated alone here in the Bush, missing the company of other people. What I hate most are wealthy people, who appear to have no empathy, and seem to be sociopathic, running on the most grotesque kind of vio-
lent mercenary instincts. But it’s good to be at the foot of the waterfall. Sami people from Scandinavia call these types natural forces/phenomenal places Sieidis, and consider them be portals to the spirit world. My head is heavy from the whiskey, and lack of sleep, but I think that the GABA and caffeine should kick in some time soon.

Page 2
I killed a snake in my studio the other day, so now I am slightly worried about seeing one tonight, but the fire should keep them at bay (I hope). I am worried that the fire might melt the plastic fittings on this typewriter.

just finished all of the coffee. I was feeling a little paranoid and on edge, but I am starting to feel calmer. I often get paranoid alone out here, but I’ve never really had any bad experiences to justify that. Isolation is definitely a bastard.

I will begin some incantations and dancing soon to evoke N. URN. URN. YOU ARE N. URN. URN. YOU ARE N. I AM N.

It was full moon 5 days ago. I will see how bright it is tonight. I foresee a multitude of monologues.
The lions are doing their moaning thing that they always do. But I am feeling reasonably good about it. It is pretty dark now.

But still things are pretty cool. I am not checking the time. I appreciate this sweet headlamp that I bought for this. My hope is that drinking reasonably expensive whiskey will mean no hangover for me. And I think I have gotten the hang of the fire. I still feel self-conscious about the dancing, but mostly because I can't get the lighting right.

I don't like hearing the cars.

The point of this ceremony is to become N., but I am not sure what that entails. N. is not primitive, he just feels really out of place everywhere. That is to say, everywhere in SA is not quite western, not quite wealthy, not quite anything. He feels frustrated with everything. I don't know.

Plus I'm tired, now, which is not how it's meant to be. But I think once I pass a certain time the tiredness will flee.

Page 3

What was the best part? On occasion, the burning wood smelled.
like Crunchie chocolate. That is to say, like a caramelised sugar treat. But mostly it was cold and I felt like I was mostly wasting my own time. I have done it and have some sort of record at least, but I’m really hungry, and this Stombok R it-

ad Action Camera Headpiece is really chafing my chin. Bye

Pooooooooopo pooooooooopooooooooo
jjluxjnuhheyuyr75664yyfrfrtggg gegegeguuawwookkppo od
fthf
aafshf jjdhh ehiffi hshyyyr hhshsyy yr hh afuuyppos sjjshr
------- hthhaha h what a rich dick cunt with no empathy
and
a tiny cock afatatatau

End of blue f.writer p. copies

Next pages from typeset personal diary(??)
Dates from 12 Nov 29 Nov 2015(!!)
I take short notes only
Begin.
12. Photographically record own actions
Done at Studio Nugget Square, Rand Merch. Bank(3)
Promo Footage
Chatting, lazing, on phones, off camera
Footage was indictment

16. Camera has terrible resolution(??) Low light recording.
   &c.
   Studio dark and cavernous, sleep all day, begin work at 14:00
   Camera cannot be high up, must be on head.
17. Jacaranda wood, from TUK's 2011 free sculpture project
   Moved to 'here', previously at dad's "gross ass" (?) toilet
   Earlier sawed face-size ovals, combined with welding helmet
   (?) strap to make mask. Artist's toolboard, ABSA (?) Competition
   Wood with antler shapes (diagram) "looks pretty cool"
   Looks "sort of" tribal. Way more arty if GoPro is on top of
   antler, than on head strap.
   Cut out shape of face's profile, slide whole onto face.
18. Works well. Needs stabilization to balance. Then: "set to
   take time-lapses as I work" (Diagram)
25: wearing during work: is not working (not convenient)
   uncomfortable and heavy, "crap idea".
   Turning 25 soon (age) significant to record. "I will turn it
   into a Coming-of-Age ceremony and then record THAT, so the
   headpiece will have a genuine function after all".
   Wants tools to be absurd, yet genuinely necessary.
   Named Stombok Ritual Action Camera Headpiece (STRACH)
(Afrikaans! Germanic CH - gravel)

Means: free buck/mate buck, (is dark (ominous)) forced silence of buck.

Plans: eve of 25th birthday, go to waterfall(!!!) on farm from 18.00-06.00 w. journal(!) type writer(!) etc. for recording epiphanies. To assist epiph. evoke euphoric psychosis(??) via consuming whiskey, coffee, phenibut(??) "legal anti-anxiolytic" (like alcohol, w/o disorientation)

Building paraphernalia to "mythicise and ritualise" use of above. Not to come across as "trashy stoner getting fucked on pharm"(??) + tobacco: burning leaves and head rush is ritualistic.

29: Tomorrow's ceremony (AKA Neanderthal Nativity)

Needs fire, needs wood, drive to the fallen oak wearing STRACH, collect logs, schlepp them to pool (which is man-made!) make stone fireplace.

At 17:00 fetch headlamp, substances, typewriter, writing book, etc. "mik-en-drak camera" (?) At 18:00 consume "substances while saying some mumbo-jumbo" then wait and see what happens over 12 hours END.
Monday 6 December 1915

I have been analysing what I recorded on the 30th, and the most astounding facts come first.
The entries in the 'personal journal' (My postulation) are dated 2015! The last entry (29/11) refers to a certain ritual taking place "tomorrow", meaning 30 November 2015, from 18:00 (6 P.M.) to 06:00 (A.M.), exactly the times that I was absent from the barn (although I kept no accurate record during my experience, for I had no pocket watch, I know I stayed awake from after dinner until before the other men awoke in the morning). The distance between myself and the author is therefore (I may theorise based on the evidence) exactly 100 years. The location, however, appears to be the same, only changed by time, but not place. This is fascinating! I continue to theorise, that some physical force transplanted me through time, as may have happened in the Cornerhouse, and as may have happened with the Siener to enable him to make so many accurate predictions. This temporal advancement may also explain the appearance of puzzling material objects, such as the thin film bags, the petit camera, the compact typewriter and blow-lamp, the typeset personal journal (imagine the luxury) &c.

Next, the writer of these notes, and (most likely) maker of some of the wooden objects may be Afrikaans. He names the object that he (most likely made) in a mixture of Afrikaans and
English (specifying that it must have an Afrikaans pronunciation), and demonstrates a knowledge of Afrikaans homonyms. He also makes use of the term wik-en-drak, which my comrades here have confirmed is Afrikaans, translating to aim! point and push! press. They wondered whether I had heard of a gun being referred to thus, (I answered yes, when I was still in Pretoria) but the Author links the phrase to the description of a camera. (Once again, likely a new technology, differing in some way from the cameras of today, which fits in my inspection of the 'camera' on the horn, which had no way to focus or operate it other than what might have been buttons). His potential Afrikaans origin reassures me of the actuality of my experiences, for it re-iterates the Seer's ability, the link between him and myself, as well as my intense study of these people. A further link (albeit more tenuous) is the reference that this author makes to the Lappish primitives of the arctic (who he calls by their demonym: Sami) and the mention of their regard of Sieidi (magical natural places). For him to be interested in Scandinavia, and me in Afrikaners, is surely a sign of this thing for which I have no name as yet!

Finally he uses a word "time-lapse" while working, and elsewhere refers to a forecast of the likelihood of precipitation, which is corrected from an earlier 1/5 likelihood down to 1/10 (and since he never mentions rain, and I never saw any, it made an accurate prediction). Although we make forecasts as-
ing a barometer, his manner of mentioning a forecast that is liable to change in the space of a week, and his use of a term so uncanny as 'time-lapse', leads me to wonder whether the people of 2015 might not have some more powerful technology to make forecasts, and I may thus wonder whether they also create lapses in time (perhaps retro-casts?) to link him to me, or me to him.

My analysis, from here onward, needs to be rooted in greater degrees of speculation. The author refers to the necessity for him to indict himself, using, what I believe, is the camera-like device on the top of the horned, heat-mounted wooden contraption that I saw. Whether this indictment is figurative or literal, and self-imposed or forced by society, I cannot tell. How he would indict himself and why, and how the "footage" would be recorded (I doubt whether a foot of celluloid would fit in the 'camera', let alone any mechanism), I do not know. These matter-of-fact references by him to devices that I have no knowledge of, again point to the temporal displacement.

That he refers to himself as one who is "making objects", and "an artist", as well as one who creates objects with a "genuine function after all", tools that are "absurd, yet genuinely necessary", reminds me of a shamanic (or other category of mystic! diviner! magician! trickster) character. It does also recall
the objects and writings that I found in the Cornerhouse. If this character should fit into any of what I know, he must certainly be either an aspiring Shaman, a shaman in training, a faux shaman, or a self-imagined shaman. He is awkwardly aware of trying (and failing?) to achieve some sort of magic in his work (he is surely a man, to be doing what he does, and I judge by the profile in the mask. I shall persist in referring to him thus until I find evidence to the contrary). He confesses a desire to "see what the vigil will bring", whereas an initiate of the mystical arts has been taught to know what a specific ceremony or action will bring. He furthermore suggests (in his journal, at a time before the ceremony) that he "build paraphernalia to mythicise and ritualise" the use of certain substances; and will pronounce "mumbo-jumbo". I have certainly never encountered a hesitant shaman; one is far more likely to find a over-confident charlatan. SO WHAT IS HE?

He tells that "the point of this ceremony is to become N., but I'm not sure what that entails. N. is not primitive, he just feels really out of place everywhere, that is to say, everywhere in SA as a not quite western, not quite wealthy, not quite anything! He feels frustrated with everything. I don't know." Good gracious! He gives me nothing to work with! He does not know himself, he cannot justify or explain his own actions, how then must I? I wonder whether he may be (or aspire to be) a 'coloured' (mixed-race or hoffentot in S.A., as
certain speculators predict that if the current miscegenation is not stopped, everyone in a hundred years will be some form of interbred mulatto). Is this why he refers to himself needing to become someone/thing (N.?) which is "not quite primitive, not quite western, not quite anything". His reference to this character in the third person, who may be him or whom he may become, nudges me closer again to calling him a mystic. For now the best description of him at present is to fix no description.

He ends what I presume to be a report of his "vigil" very blandly, complaining of cold and wasting his own time. Then, like a silly child, he has written out a string of letters, ending with the statement that some deleted (person?) is "a rich f**k c**t with no empathy and a tiny c**k". I have deleted the three curse words, for I am convince all are meant to be taken in the most offensive possible meaning. Why someone who is attempting to perform some sort of meaningful or sacred ritual, a self-proclaimed "coming-of-age" ceremony, would conclude it with such a complete lack of decorum or demonstration of adult niceties, is beyond me. I hope that, if I am studying a single man, the circumstances surrounding which appear to make him worthy of study, he is not so base and meaningless that I should be compelled to dismiss him for an uncouth boor.

At this point I am hopeful for another similar experience, but not yet so confident as to consider my findings for publishing. I shall continue to pore over what I have recorded thus far, and see whether any new revelations or connections emerge.
I have been sent, by my Afrikaner comrades, on an errand to Potchefstroom. This town is the oldest European settlement in South Africa, north of the Pale (Vaal) River (in the former ZAR). This is the birthplace of my adoptive nation (Afrikaners). It is well known in the West Transvaal that in 1838 the Voortrekker leader Andries Potgieter (Andrew the Tinker) planted a willow tree beside the Mooirivier (the beautiful, fair river) and declared the end his arduous Northerly flight. This is where De la Rey was destined on the day that he was shot, from whence the venerable General would have sent to the Crown his resignation, and risen up to staunch the flow of strong young Afrikaner men who were being sent to die at the behest of their former gaolers.

The town is the seat of the first University in the Transvaal, once exclusively a seminary, which I shall be visiting to see whether any precedent for the Seer's abilities may be found in the histories and religious writing. My comrades have sent me to make calls at various households where I am tasked with delivering confidences and news which might be compromised by prying or censorious eyes should it be sent according to standard postal usage. With the Union being at present in a state of war, and the known resistance of certain Afrikaners.
to the conflict, a situation emerges where communications, especially in certain towns and regions, are well observed by the Government and various other spies, who hope to curry favour by betraying their countrymen.

I am writing at the King's Hotel which was built 14 years ago by the family of brewers known as Baumann. I have had occasion to sample their beer in Johannesburg, where it is very popular, and had the pleasure of drinking another today at the Hotel, which was built across the street from the brewery. The hotel is splendidly adorned with much wrought iron. The Town Hall is at the other side of the street, and this is a spectacular area for touring. I wish I had the means of booking a room here, but although I have been expending little money in the past year and a half of subsistence living, I do not want to get separated from my bullion on account of recklessness during a time of war. I must keep my money for paper, since recording my observations while I am here is the only thing of true value that I can do. I am staying outside of the town at the farm of an Afrikaner who is numbered amongst those whom I need to contact. I shall be setting off in that direction soon, and hope to reach it before nightfall. I was assured by my Kromdraai comrades that it is impossible to miss.
Saturday, 15 April 1916

I am writing from the farmhouse of m'nheer (Mr.) Swart. I have had a hard task in persuading him let me alone. He is convinced that I am sick and, I suspect at the same time, highly suspicious of me being somehow queer in the head, or not what I claim to be, after I returned here this morning. He is most likely, treating me thus because I arrived at the house in a reasonably dishevelled state, for I have not yet slept.

I was at the College reading the histories of the Afrikaners, with a focus on their particular religious beliefs, superstitions, &c. My outdated credentials from the Royal Frederick university were still taken to be valid by the librarians, and I had spent the entire day reading and writing. When the last librarian asked me to leave a good while after the library had already been officially closed, I felt unsatisfied and ill at ease. I was not in a mood to return to the farmhouse, where little stimulating conversation was to be had. My Kromdraai-related objectives in the town were already completed, and I felt sure that, in the views of Mr. Swart, the time had arrived for me to be on my way.

I walked around in the vicinity of the College, my eyes downcast, examining the yellowing grasses and avoiding the drop-pings of cattle. The light was fading, but I felt no desire to
find a shelter yet. I had no meaningful sum of money on my person and at that time I resolved to sleep in the open out of a sense of self-disregard or self-hatred. It was already rather cold, and I was not dressed warmly enough to sensibly attempt this, but as my mind strayed around black thoughts I minded this not. At once the deepening doom crescendoed to an absolute blackness, and as my heart proceeded to race I was assaulted by a sudden brightness. Before I regained my vision I was sure that I was having my third experience.

As the brightness resolved itself into colours and shapes I could see that I was no longer in a field, but inside of a building. I stood inside either a Salon or a gallery of some sort, for the walls were hung with all manner of paintings and drawings. The light began to fade, but I certainly saw the most abject and disturbing images on the wall as they faded out of view. I would have believed myself transported to Babylon or Gomorrah if I had not recalled that both of my previous experiences entailed only an apparent shift in time and not place. The figures depicted in the images on the wall were many times naked. Not nude, but vulgarly naked, bared for all to see. Besides this they were often engaged in acts of violence or sexual misconduct, nothing less than pornography. Please do not recall Munch or Picasso, who by contrast were inoffensive and tame. The fleeting images managed to impress my memory with their crudity and lasciviousness.
I shall not write at length of the smut or art on the walls, for as the darkness rolled in my view was limited to a small pool of light, where stood a three dimensional form that I had not noticed until that moment. Compared with my previous experiences, in which I saw a broader array of stuff, I was this time presented with only the single form, along with a small heap of papers. This form which I was permitted to see was, unfortunately, no less horrific than what was on the walls. I could right away deduce that the form before me was an exaggeration plus grand of a human phallic. I have produced a detailed record of this thing which stood before me, in addition to recording most of the contents of the typeset papers that lay at its base. I shall return to Kromdrai and make an effort to analyse these in concert with my earlier analyses, for this may represent the right moment for me to produce an academic discussion of what I have thus far discovered.

All is black now but one object. Wooden form rests on square-section, painted-black metal beam. Object appears to be phallus, approximately 50 cm long, 30 cm diameter. Main cylinder appears to be poplar wood, with various attachments. Domed anterior (glans) is ceramic or plaster, light red to pink terracotta colour, very smooth and symmetrical with nipple or spout at end in centre. Posterior is truncated or cut at right angle to shaft of cylinder, lined with stitched triangles of varicoloured leather. Cylinder is hollow. Protruding from the cylinder, in perpendicular plane to shaft, but slanting down towards the ground are thin sections of dark, hard wood (teak?). Sections have design of structural, supportive members, and at two points, regularly spaced along length, are 'C'-shaped fixtures, whose openings face back toward main cylinder, i.e. each toward another. On top of main shaft is a small triangular mirror framed in wood (equilateral, one apex faces posterior and side faces anterior). Small wooden funnel left of mirror, handle made of ceramic/plaster to right of mirror. Large V shaped wooden brace with apex pointing towards anterior and arms extending towards posterior.
Two apparent groupings of texts:

1. Three leaves joined by metal wire, included monochromatic graphic illustrations and written text, front page titled "P.R.O.U.D.M.A.N. for men"

2. Three unjoined leaves, with appearance of diary entries similar to those found at Kromdraai, one monochromatic illustration on second (chronologically) page.

Text no. 1:

P. 1:
P.R.O.U.D.M.A.N. for men
Paraphernalia for Relaying Outwardly the Undeniable Dignity of Micturation As Platard
Original Instructions
Tosch

P. 2:
(linear illustration of object that I have here with me)
Congratulations on purchasing the Tosch Tool
Please read carefully through the material contained within this pamphlet to ensure that you derive maximum benefit, enjoyment and safety from our product.
Please see the warrantee information at the end
of the booklet.

For any comments, queries or complaints please send notice to:
Tosch Tools Incorporated
PO Box 7936
Johannesburg
Johannesburg 2000
Tel.: (27 76) 276 3356
Fax: (27 76) 276 3353
E-Mail: info@toschtools.co.za

P.3.
Introduction
The P.R.O.U.D. M.A.N. (PM) for men is designed to allow its user to pass water with pride. The PM is more than just tool for your tool: it is a symbol and a celebration of what it means to be a man. It is a guard against the jealous whining of women and your quickest way to ensure that every wizz is wonderful.

Safety
The PM is splendid, but as it is long and hard it is also heavy and can hurt any passy that cannot handle it.
- Lift with your legs, not your back
- Always grasp the PM with both hands, making use of the gripping points.
- Do not attempt to walk while using the PM.
- Be aware around children. For men under the age of 12 please make use of the P.R.O.U.D. M.A.N. for little men.

Cleaning & Maintenance
The PM does not require any cleaning or maintenance. The build up of natural musk adds to the unique character of each PM. In the case of spillage of food, beer or blood onto the outside of the PM wipe with your hand.

Features
The PM has many unique and wonderful features.
(1) Hip hugger - Reduces strain to back
(2) Mirror - For smirking at yourself while you do an awesome piss, any time, anywhere.
(3) Gripping point - For safe handling of this monster 😊
(4) Scent funnel - For scenting your marking
(5) Leather ribbing - For comfort
(6) Leg positioners - Keep the legs bent at 133°
the neutral body position experienced in micro-gravity situations. This means that women can no longer demand that men piss sitting down.

P. 4.
(posterior, anterior and side-view illustrations of object, labelled with numbers [which apparently refer to p. 3.])
(diagram of figure apparently employing the object, overlaid with schematics indicating certain angles, label at eye position reads "One G line of sight")
Figure 1: Features
Figure 2: Neutral Human Position
(under microgravity conditions)

P. 5.
Warranty Information
The P.R.O.U.D. M.A.N. for men is manufactured to the highest standards in subjected to rigorous quality controls. We are proud of our products just like we are proud of our cocks. If the PM malfunctions or breaks as a result of poor workmanship or materials we dare you to come tell us.
Disclaimer
Because it is used outside of the control of Tosch Tools Incorporated, we cannot be held responsible for any damage, loss, embarrassment, humiliation or disappointment that arises as a result of using the PM. Tosch Tools cannot be held liable for the responses of women to the PM, as they are driven by irrational patterns of thought underlain by penis envy.

P 6.
TOSCH
(Simplified graphic illustration of object framed by lines delineating a square shape)
Copyright 2016 Tosch Tools Incorporated

Text No. 2 (1-10 April 2016, summary)
P.1:
1.
Invited to participate in show (exhibition)

Tired of identity politics? Having to apologise for what one is, where one is born, &c.

Men = violent trashbags, piss me off too, pretend to be logical/unemotional but are not

Rape left right and centre (do not know that it is wrong)
Women = megalomaniac, manipulative, destroy lives of children, partners, co-workers, etc.
Loyal dog will eat dead master, lion & mudslide will kill you. Life super sucks, everything is cruel & hateful, we are bound to be dust.

Men = sh*t, women = sh*t. Men > Sh*t > Women due to abuse of power
Stuff has to change. Does not want to make art about this. Worn thin.
Does not want to talk about gender

3
Takes fired brief at face value: men have d*cks, women do not. Thus men urinate standing up & women do not, women do not like this (Heidi). men are trying to be obtrusive (when urinating)
Thus he will make a "huge d*ck that a man can use to pee". He avoids public urination, but encourages those who wish to flaunt it, to do so.
"googled some news stories about"
"comments section of a newspaper story" Women vs men, rac-
cid mudfight about uncivilized culture, becomes so toxic that
he cannot keep looking
Johannesburg has a urine stench to which people are oblivious
He peed his pants in Paris after drinking in the streets (France
or Freestate not specified)
Confused by young lovers courting (very crudely!) in Jo'burg,
that stinks of urine.
"peeing thing is something that I can get behind" does not take
a stance, just wants to "sculpt a huge comic *ck" "it always
gets a laugh" improves chances that "gay and cougar collectors
will want to buy it"

Artwork depicts "large, well-crafted penis aesthetic pleasure
to behold", with secure grip, manly, guns' grips. Mirror "so
he can do wavy eyebrows at himself like Johnny Bravo" (?)?
Sitting and urinating is unnatural: body naturally assumes
following pose in zero gravity
(illustration of man against background of stars, with slightly
bent hips, knees, elbows and wrists)
Caption: "Image paraphrased from NASA research"
If contraption allows user to assume this posture, he is ab-
solved from criticism
Names device "Paraphernalia", believes that acronym spells PRAUD MAN per chance (?!) Also surprised that poplar trunk has the same dimension as a 5l water bottle. Casts plaster into bottle to create glans, "ribbed for her pleasure" (?) Avoids censorship through use of natural materials

6 Use ground stones to create "Donald-trump coloured glans" (?) Poplar is "white-boy skin colour" and veiny

9 He drives to Potch. 11 April! "Hitting the road" (?) Hippies (?) are there, "the wife with her dealer and his wife" "have eaten a bunch of shrooms" They will look at crystals and "fairy lights", won't get up to look at penis sculpture. He plays "Puscifer" (?) loudly, it's "groovy and dark" to "freak them out" They think the bush is "Whinnie the pooh" and they are "eating tons of vegan, raw, earth-friendly, organic, added-sugar-free desserts" Switches on "pool's blue underwater lights" "h. dig it" to make up for music.
Night again. Hippies awake f. 36 hrs. Chowing shrooms, "cuddle-puddle" breaks down, "shaman" (dealer) start crying "lol" (?)

PM finished, goto Heidi to photograph, borrow PC to make "user manual", sleep, print, drive to potch.

Thursday 20 April 2016

Some thoughts About My Potchefstroom Experience

1. The subject is likely an artist. Although in my first encounter I was not sure why the objects that I observed had been made, based on my subsequent discoveries I may make the point with confidence. He participates in "shows" & "exhibitions", and this one (in Potchefstroom) in particular has a "Brief", i.e. "Identity politics" and he does not want to make art about this. He also refers to "the last 30/40 years of art". The subject placed quotes around the word "artist" in his writing from my 2nd experience, an indication of him doubting his self-definition, whereas he has matter-of-factly made statements linking him to this occupation as recorded in Ex. #3.
2. The subject of the second and third experiences is likely the same. The profile of the STRACH matches the profile on the front page of the PROUD/MA/ Original Instructions leaflet (by inference the subject of the first experience is the same as the last two, for in every experience I have only been able to observe objects in a small pool of light, and it seems likely that I am somehow connected to a single individual. Furthermore, the use of similar materials and techniques in all instances may indicate the same maker. The diary texts may also reflect a single author, although the tone has grown far cruder and more acidic from experience 1 to 3).

3. The artist is crude and grows cruder
In Ex. #1 a naked man with exposed genitalia is depicted, and one figure is referred to as an "arrogant bitch child". I have remarked, how in V. no. 2 he writes "isolation is a bastard", he refers openly to his abuse of Alcohol and a substance which he calls Phenibut, of which I have never heard. In his diary he refers to "gross ass" and "crap". At the very end of a set of 3 pages, he seems to conclude his 'ceremony' by writing (redacted) what a rich d*ck c*nt with no empathy and a tiny c*ck

By V. no. 3 he is cursing regularly, complaining childishy and without shame. His use of language is improper and points towards the absence of proper education. He discusses rape and
death as though they were unremarkable, moving quickly on to his own misery post the discussion and disregard of such grave matters.

4. A sense of despair is growing
The objects which I have seen are related to crime, the abuse of the artist's own body, and grotesque meditations on sex organs. The artist's tone throughout the first experience is neutral and detached. In the second a sense of self-depreca-
tion is detected, and by the third the man complains bitterly to himself. One apparent cause for this is what he has termed "Identity Politics"

Politics is the science of statesmanship, which lies in the public realm of men. Identity is the sum of one's biological sex; nationality and first language; religious and philosophical con-
victions; chosen interests and chosen friends, in that order. It is how one is defined by those things that are inherent, and those that are chosen. It is unclear why he feels that he should need to "apologise for what one is", for the inherent characteristics are decided by God, and the chosen characteristics are a matter of pride. If one must apologise for one's friends or philosophy, why would one hold those friends or ideals dear to begin with? From a description of guilt he makes the leap to discussing his views of how (despicable) men and women be-
have, to the nature of a dog that will eat its master's corpse.
to a wild lion and a landslide being agents of death. I cannot fathom how he has drawn connecting lines between these phenomena, concluding that "life super sucks" and we are destined to be dust in a cold universe.

From these observations the artist is inclined to make sweeping statements about the state of "all men", which is absurd, for each man decides his own fate. Surely, if he (the artist) is neither a rapist nor a "violent trashbag", why should he feel the need to condemn such men to himself? Any decent man would be abhorred by such deviant actions and find no link between them and himself. Furthermore, he claims that men are shit as a function of their holding power in society. But I read of good kings and bishops as often as bad. When he compares the degree of "shit" present in men to that of women, I am once again at a loss, for he is comparing herring and cod. When a King unjustly breaks a treaty, or a judge accepts a bribe, how can this be compared to the infidelity of a wife or the favoritism of a mother?

I greatly desire to proceed to an analysis of the artwork in short order, but I needs must establish what the confusing terms employed by the artist refer to. I have no definitions for many terms used by him, nor do I understand why the actions of other men and women are such a source of distress for him. There must
be a lapse of understanding between him and myself, most likely due to the fact that he and I write a century apart. I shall accept his initial statement to mean the following: "I know that criminal men are wicked, and that weak men pretend to be unemotional and logical when they aren't. Mentally disturbed men rape wayward women, who are manipulative and destroy the lives of others. If I can master myself, and not behave in a cowardly or wicked manner, I have nothing to be ashamed of." This is what I want to believe of the man, but unfortunately his sense of distress must be an indicator of his corruption.

I must suspect that the events which started in 2014 for this man, and have led through his 25th birthday celebration up to the time of my discovery of his latest artwork, are events tied up more and more with occult occurrences. In the case of e.g. Lappish Shamans, the occult is tempered and rationalised within the context of a primitive society that does not require the levels of sophisticated social conduct needed to preserve the ways of Western life. I shall assume that the artist's society of 2016 is not yet so degraded as he, for he still acknowledges a sense of guilt connected with his actions (although he does describe an appalling demonstration of public courtship and sexual intercourse).
5. The artist’s intercourse with the dark forces

Various observations written down by the artist attest to his involvement with dark activities that are not typical within Afrikaner society nor in Western Civilisation at large. (Aside: I must name this artist, to avoid such a cumbersome and indirect term. Based on his writings at the waterfall I shall call him N.). As examples of darkness N. is pre-occupied with morbid thoughts, he has no decent sense of shame, he has written that what he plans to make (a penis) that is "an aesthetic pleasure to behold" (homosexuality is the exclusive province of heathens). Furthermore he is familiar with the "hippies", whom he describes as a menage-à-trois between a married couple with another man’s wife. These three take "shrooms", which I must assume are intoxicating mushrooms, based on his description of them seeing "Fairy lights" and crystals. The Viking beserkers are believed to have used the Amanita Muscaria mushroom to become possessed by otherworldly rage, and the Lappish and Siberian Shamans used this too. In the case of the shamans the urine expelled by them after ingestion of the Muscaria, would be given to their congregation, who would drink it to become intoxicated as well. This not only connects to N.’s obsession with excreta, but also represents a type of inverted Eucharist which he is glorifying (he remarks that the trio were seated for 6 hours at a time, and that he could not ascertain whether "they do get up to pee", reinforcing my theory of drinking urine).
He furthermore mentions that he is "gonna play Puscifer really loudly" to "freak them out". I cannot be sure what these terms mean, but I must assume that he has misspelled (intentionally or accidentally) the name of the Devil, and he is somehow punishing the faithless triplet outside by doing so. It may be because he is unhappy with the presence of "whinnie the poo" (further scatology?) or with their eating of vegan, raw desserts. I am still quite confused by all of this new information, and hopefully further discoveries will elucidate what I am to make of this. I am somewhat saddened to deduce that these amazing discoveries relate to such a wicked theme, but perhaps, as is the case with the Seer, I am exposed to these experiences in order to bring a warning message to my contemporaries.

It seems that (possibly because of his involvement in occultism) N. has become confused about what it means to be a man. He questions certain obvious and incontrovertible facts about the sexes in his writing, and seems to have an unhealthy appreciation for excreta and the phallic form. The division of people into two sexes is defined by their genital organs. The external male organs are more robust than those of the woman. The man is created to stand out boldly, to traffic in public, whereas the hidden and shameful nature of the woman's parts, the hidden sanctity of her womb, compels her to remain in the
home. N. seems to assume a degree of equality common to the sexes in claiming that men and woman are both "Sh*t", but that men are more so. This is deeply unsettling, although I have not been able to establish whether his usage of the word is in line with what I know it to mean in the present. He uses words such as "dig", "trash", "Sucks", "toxic" & "cougar" in atypical ways, while he introduces a number of new words that I am unable to definitely define viz. "NASA", "groovy", "hippies", etc. This makes a sensible unpacking of his writing challenging.

N. does not express the expected sense of shame in describing how he relieves himself into his clothes in public. Although I am assuming that his accounts are written in a personal diary, which no-one else would read, I know that I would not record such an account without describing the deeply shameful nature of it. I would rather resort to relieving myself openly than withholding to the point of fouling my clothes. The latter is certainly more shameful, and completely without sense, especially for a man. As an ethnographer, the perceived moral value of my observations is irrelevant, and must give way to my scientific and empirical observation, and expounding of facts.

What, then, is meant by the object that I observed, with the accompanying "Original Instructions"? The object is above all a
large phallus. It has been intentionally and thoughtfully con-
structed by an Artist, but also by a lost Afrikaner, who I
postulate seeks something more from his art than what was
sought by masters like Michelangelo and Rodin, or even Bran-
casi. What this self-proclaimed artist does seems to fall under
what I have studied in the Lapps, and read about other cul-
tures. But typically, like his compatriots, this Afrikaner does
not fall neatly into the categories of Western or African, nor
Civilised or Savage. I therefore propose that although he has
made an object that may be shown in some vulgar approxima-
tion of a salon, it simultaneously serves a ritual function (in
the manner of African masks which are designed to embody
certain spirits during ritual dances).

N. has produced an object that extols his fascination with hu-
man waste. The "original instructions" label the work as "Para-
phernalia for Relaying Outwardly the Undeniable Dignity of
Micturation As Natural", which is a difficult set of contradic-
tions to understand when grouped together thus. The misspelled
"Micturation", I'm sure, should read Micturition, which is
indeed natural, but certainly not something that should be
"Relayed Outwardly", but rather be kept hidden in private
spaces. The notion of "Dignity" somehow being linked to this
process goes beyond my powers of reckoning. The booklet
continues to confuse me, for it is typeset, and presents the
object (the PM) as manufactured by Tosch Tools Incorporated.
I have read, by N.'s own admission, that he built the object himself. It is furthermore confusing that he would describe and artwork or ritual masking contraption as a tool. It may be a tool for social or psychological change, whereby N. hopes to infect other people to indulge in his particularly strange fascination with the bodily humours.

It is at this point that I must attempt to link this "tool" back to the STRACH that I saw in November, along with the scattered objects at the fireside, and back to the first ensemble of sculptures at the Cornerhouse, if I have any hope to understand this man, and have something to present to my Scholarly peers. Each in isolation is so disconcerting that it seems as though my only hope for comprehension lies in the similarities in the physical outputs of this man, and the three particular occasions that I have been inexplicably granted a chance to see what he has made.

The only work which appeared to be in a salon was the latter, but the objects in all 3 experiences adhere to the notion of being Ritual Tools or Masking Contraptions. The first assortment of masks represented N.'s projected embodiments of criminal figures that lay outside of himself. The STRACH represented a transitional phase, where he attempted to change himself into something new. Although he expresses dissatisfaction with the efficacy of the Mask or Tool to affect change
in him, the Darkness of my third experience suggests that he has in fact been changed, and the tools which he has created celebrates a new type of twisted persona, one that has already become, not one that is becoming or lies completely outside of him.

What this means for myself, the Seer, the Afrikaners, My Country, my Family, and the world at large, which is tearing itself apart in a war, I do not know. But I am able to say that human life continues for at least another century. However, if it continues in the world that is relayed by N., this is not necessarily an encouragement or source of hope.

Friday 21 April 1916

I have noticed, upon re-reading what I wrote yesterday, that I am not yet in a position to present my findings to the academy. It struck me that I have not even discussed the possible meaning of what is implied by N.'s use of the term "zero gravity" and an illustration of a man amongst stars. I can certainly understand that Zero-gravity refers to a state where one is far enough removed from a massive body for its gravitational field to exert zero effect on one, but that N. discusses it so flippantly and in passing, as though it were not astounding to be separated from the massiveness of Earth, is beyond anything I can imagine. Humans have thus far produced
flying machines and submergible (in water) devices, but the sort of machine or vessel that would transport one far enough from the globe that one might experience a state that could be described as "zero gravity" is hard to fathom. Writers of fiction have entertained the thought, but fiction entertains many absurdities (which is of course why I never deign to waste my time reading it). Verne, Wells, Burroughs, et al have all imagined such expeditions, but I have always found it to be a pity that such learned men should stoop to such children's fables. I shall write more later.
I am leaving for Johannesburg tomorrow. I have been at Kro-
mdraai for more than a year and a half, and am no closer to
meeting with the Seer. I have been very much tied to the
Farm, where I feel out of place, being unable to contribute
overmuch with my academic credentials. I feel that I need to
become engaged in some sort of intellectual task, earn some
money in some way, and buy new clothes. I had come to the
South African Union again in 1914 remembering hot days, and
how, by comparison with my native land, their winters were
exceedingly mild. I forgot that, at the time of my first visit I
had been booked into civilised accommodations which were well
supplied with winter heating, so when I returned in July, ar-
riving from the Norwegian summer, I came with a few woollen
suits and cardigans. I was, in addition, wholly unprepared for
how particularly cold this farm is, being situated in a river val-
ley, and me sleeping in a barn without any insulation. Moths
and insects have destroyed many of my warm clothes, and as a
result I am colder in Africa than I ever was in Norway.

I will look up my old friends Jules Porjes and Knut Engstrom
to establish whether they may be able to offer me some form
of employment (I am desperate enough to accept the embar-
rassment of such a situation). In Johannesburg I will also be
able to write again to my Alone and children. It appears that
the tensions surrounding the Union's entry into the war have relaxed since the outbreak nearly two years ago, and white South Africans of all nationalities are being sent to fight and die without discrimination, and Blacks and Asians are sent to be servants. So equal are the conscriptions that no-one sees fit to protest them at home.

Friday 7 July 1916

I have been in Johannesburg for two weeks now. I have procured new, warmer clothes, and more writing paper. Being the itinerant that I have become, I must needs carry the entirety of my possessions in a heavy satchel. I have discarded most of what is soiled and damaged, or donated it to my Kromdraai Afrikaners, or left it in my case there, on the assumption that I am likely to return there in Summer, with fading hopes of an expedition to find the Siener. My inventory of useful worldly possessions is thus: 6 notebooks, 3 partially filled, 3 blank; 2 fountain pens, 6 spare nibs; 2 graphite pencils; 1 dipping pen; 30ml bottles of black writing ink; 1 brown, 1 grey, 1 navy wool suit; 5 pairs socks and pants; 2 sets of khaki shorts; 2 pairs shoes (black and brown); 1 pocket knife and honing steel; 2 silver candlesticks; shaving razor and brush; hair comb; toothbrush, cloth and towel, typewriter. I have neither records nor phonograph; nor books.
I have learnt that Porgès’ visit to South Africa in 1914 was his last, and that his health is in a fragile state. Engstrom was out of the country at my arrival, but fortuitously returned at the start of July. I was granted an audience with him on Monday, and he kindly offered me a petty administrative post at the South African School of Music in End street, at the outskirts of Johannesburg, of which he is a prominent benefactor and keen patron. I believe that it embarrassed him to find me in my present state, so apparently fallen from eminence when compared with our original introductions. He has assured me that my experience as a lecturer in conjunction with my knowledge and love of music means that he will soon secure a decent post for me, possibly as a teacher of the history of music, but that at present there are no openings for new teaching staff. What is additionally helpful, is that I am able to occupy the small house at the bottom of the School’s garden, so that my accommodations are not of concern to me.

Friday 14 July 1916

Experience number four. The flashing black and white and all was changed. I took the tram yesterday to the town centre. My duties required me to visit the Standard Bank, and after attending to them I ate dinner at Meischke’s Building, which houses the Guildhall, a pub that has been in continuous operation at that corner for nearly thirty years. Being adjacent
to the Cornerhouse, I could not resist making a turn there. The staff were somewhat surprised to see me after nearly two years' absence, but did allow me inside again. I visited all of the floors, and went up onto the roof, and within an hour I had no more interest in being there, and left. I would not get any work done at the school between now, and the close of business, so I elected to walk back, rather than take the tram. I was ambling most slowly through the streets, loath to be anywhere in particular. At the intersection of Main Street with Polly, I noticed a seed rolling down the street, borne along a light breeze. The seed had a spiny heart and two semicircular wings making a halo around it. I picked it up and walked in the direction that it had come from. I arrived at a kind of tree which I had never before seen, in Johannesburg or elsewhere. Most trees in the town are fast-growing, such as cypress, poplar, London Plane, etc. This tree appeared to have been here for a long time, which seemed unusual, for in the gold rush years timber was cut with a voracious indifference for all manner of uses. I stood under the broad-leaved tree, admiring its beauty, in the rapidly fading light, when I was stricken with the experience.

This experience was by far the most disturbing, in terms of the new location which I had been transported to. In the first and second experiences my setting changed only in the way that time would change any landscape or structure. My sur-
rounding remained entirely recognisable. At the third occasion I was in a strange and usual indoor space, but one which was constructed so simply that it didn't demand overmuch of my attention. I felt almost as if I were inside of a white cube that had been put together from stiff, clean cardboard. The space where I found myself at this most recent transportation, however, was shocking to my senses.

I was indoors. I was immediately reminded of illustrations of the interior of the crystal palace. I cannot compare it with a cathedral or any of the "Sky-Scrapers" from New York City, since these all have poetical interiors, made of flowing and graceful lines. This interior space seemed like an inside-out space, like a closed-off courtyard and the glass around me belonging to the outsides of other buildings. Adding to the topsy-turvy design was the dire lack of decoration or ornamentation that is needed to change a building from a heap of steel and stone into something illustrious and grand. Bare pipes, struts and cables protruded all over, as though the site were still incomplete, yet surfaces were painted, plastered and tiled as if to indicate the fullness of this construction. Thus an airiness, loftiness, grandeur which should have inspired wonder in me, left me with a vertiginous feeling, and truly nauseated.

This claustrophobic-yet-spacious foyer was as bright as day.
yet lit entirely by artificial light. From the blackness outside some windows, I suspected that night would continue his advance. I heard loud music and many voices, as I had at the Cornerhouse during my first experience, and could smell food. I did not see any people. I peered up the central foyer space, and the lights at the very top began to fade. Not as though they were being extinguished one by one, but as though a rolled-up stocking were being pulled down from above, engulfing all light in a continuous motion. I was compelled to flee from the encroaching dark, and shuffled forward dizzily terrified, until I came to rest, along with the remaining puddle of light, before a wooden form and a brown box of corrugated cardboard.

I have taken notes of what I saw there.
Thursday 13 July 1916

All is black now, besides objects before me. I am in large glass and steel and stone interior. I stand on a wooden floor, sense that many people should be around me, sense that I should hear noise, but all is quiet at present. Before me stands a wooden form, approx. the size of a regular fruit basket. Form rests on turned wooden 'leg' apparently from a piece of furniture. Wooden leg/pole/strut is embedded in pyramidal metal framework. Besides is a box, with illustration of object and "Caucasian Conciliation [sic] Contraption" printed outside. On top, in clear film cover, white paper leaves, front page "CCC, what every white person needs! INSTRUCTION MANUAL". Besides box lie leaves from personal diary.

Wooden object on top of pole is built around a central boat-shaped oaken form. Resembles Scotch Glengarry bonnets. From this, to port and starboard, extend slender structural members (similar to those in PROUDMAP). At the end of the members, a pair of octagonal cones, made of a straight-grained, yellow-coloured wood. The broad sides bear a circular opening, and point in the direction that I shall designate 'forward', and the narrow sides (of t. cones) curve inboard, thus resemble ear trumpets. From forward to aft runs a pivoting member, connected forward to a shaft that runs down to a pair of wooden plates. Aft a shaft runs down to a large
horseshoe shape, opening facing inboard. 'Glengarry' seems to be lined with plaster; horseshoe shape is plaster and wood. Colour of plaster is dirty pink and resembles that used in PM. When forward wooden plates are brought together shaft engages pivot which engages aft shaft, moving the horseshoe downwards.

Leaves attached to box: half tabloid-sized sheet, printed on all sides:

Front page:
Caucasian Conciliation Contraption
What every White person needs!
(Profile silhouette graphic of object)
INSTRUCTION MANUAL

P. 1.
Hello! And thank you for purchasing this contraption from CCC Co.!

We believe in our product, and are glad that you have chosen our company to meet your conciliatory needs.

Please see the information below to find out more about your new contraption, how to use it safely and effectively, and for our conditions of warrantee.
1. SAFETY and PROPER USE: This product has been made with the utmost care and attention to detail and quality, and when used correctly should provide years of good service. However, since it is being used outside of our control, CCC Co. can take no responsibility for any injury or loss arising from its use.

**DO** - Place the headpiece (1) firmly and comfortably on your head, making the required adjustments (2) and ensuring that the neck brace (3) is well-fitted.

**DO** - Bite firmly onto the mouthpiece (4) ensuring that the torque transfer through the Humbar (5) moves the head into a bowed, humbled and vulnerable position.

**DON'T** - Attempt to open your mouth!

**DON'T** - Get defensive or hurt.

**DON'T** - Attempt to unbow head or turn away from the subject under discussion.

2. CONDITIONS of WARRANTEE: This contraption, like all CCC Co. products, bears a 2-year limited service warrantee covering the materials and workmanship of our product against any pre-existing factory faults or defects. Any irresponsible or improper use of our products is not covered by this agreement.
CCC Co. cannot take responsibility for the end user's willingness to truly engage in conciliatory conversation, to truly change their own ideological stances, to change their lifestyle, to change their use of language and actions towards others or any other actions required for true conciliation.

P. 2.

(labelled line drawing)

1. Headpiece
2. Adjustable screw
3. Neck brace
4. Mouthpiece
5. Hambar
6. Empathic understanding accumulators
7. Earpiece
8. White user

Endpage:
Tri-circle design
"Copyright CCC Co. 2016"

Summary of Personal diary 8-16 February 2016

Steve shithead Hofmeyer saying racist crap, claims to speak for all Afrikaners.
I sick of what he represents: sentimental, unthinking, misguided, cruel, hateful, bitter, sad, stubborn, etc. etc. tendency in people to glorify the old South Africa.
The denial of the wrong of apartheid.
The inability to separate culture, history, heritage from fascist party that brainwashed them.
Don’t admit their house was cheaply afforded on the broken backs of black labourers.
Their country is not theirs, and not fairly owned.
The government and people they criticise are symptoms of past actions that they refuse to reject or correct. These kinds of people are idiots.
People who say, I’m not privileged because I grew up poor

12

Asked Jhono why malid friend Taliza hates white people - posting attacking posts targeted at white people.
Taliza, N. = Friends "you chilled in my flat", got along well, etc.
"why are you posting all this passive aggressive stuff on Facebook attacking me?"
Sent offhanded joke to Jhono: why does Taliza hate white people lol?
Expected reply: "I worked hard for what I have today. I even do outreach to townships. Haha it’s probably just a phase, something with her emotions. Probably misses Zimbabwe."
Actual reply: Unable to discuss per 'phone. Request to meet in person

Meets Jhono.
Jh explains that "surface of what I now see as the Rainbow nation full of born frees is just a thin veneer laid over a rotting substructure of history that was never correctly addressed or resolved.

No arguments of Jh apply to N. why should N. pay and suffer for hurts never caused.
"There are black people that are richer than me, I've also suffered, and I've done a lot of good"

N. adopts Jh's arguments, angry at Jo, hears own words, thinks "don't be such a whiny asshole" Jh has enlightened N. regarding Tuliza's anger, feeling "justified in broadcasting this emotion to everyone on her Facebook feed"?

Comprehends Jh only post hearing N.'s "own words coming from the mouth of my good friend Jo".
N. does not have answers, solutions, opinion. Realises need to "shut up and listen" to start learning.
Empathises with those who "can't keep from offending my
Idea for my next artwork: "Shut up, & listen up". No one wants to hear message, therefore "sneak it past their guard with a funny, quirky artwork".

Diagram similar to that illustrated in CCC tabloid: arrow points to mouth "SHUT", another at ear "OPEN!"

Tuesday 18 July 2016

My analysis of experience no. 4 has been difficult. N. has thus far dealt with the matters of criminals, his own coming-of-age, and his (and possibly his society's) obsession with "identity politics" (read scatology and sexual obsessions). I have deduced that he is an artist who enjoys dwelling on unsavoury, impolite, unhealthy topics, but nevertheless, despite his (modern? slang? dialect?) diction, I have been able to see that he may, in parts, be like me, in the same way that I may say Afrikaners are, in parts, like Norwegians. My most recent experience has left me in doubt of this similarity. That is to say, the predicted downward progression of this man has gone further than I had initially dared to extrapolate. I say this because after he had written about the low nature of men and women, and his low opinion of humanity in general, I was sure that the man is ridden with black bile, or needs suffers
from some nervous condition such as predicted by Freud et al.
I have even wondered whether this person is not an hermaphrodite, or possessed with multiple differing personalties or schizophrenia and paranoia.

But through all of these musings I thought of a man who had started life like myself, and by virtue of some illness had deviated to his latter depraved state. But what I observed this week past has led me to doubt entirely the sanity of my subject of study. He has contradicted himself, common sense and science so often that I must doubt his normalcy.

To start. I am sure that he has created a device whose use depends on white Europeans holding their peace, and listening to non-european people. I must assume, based on the accompanying "instructions" and his personal diary, that white people should heed the instructions of blacks, heed their grievances, fears, concerns; and in addition to this bear various forms of abuse from them, with gladness! I must protest that this is patently absurd. Man heeds God; Woman, Man; Child, Woman; Servant, Child. Any reversal of this leads to chaos! We have in the course of the last 15 years been allowing women greater suffrage, beginning with voting at local elections in 1901, while as of 1913 Norwegian women have been voting at a national level. But note, this was not rushed, and not permitted without sensible checks and restrictions in place! A wife of a
pauper or of a convicted criminal may still not vote! A child will never vote, nor an insane or hysterical person.

So how then, even in the most empathic and caring person, is it sensible to give so much freedom to non-Europeans? I communed with the Brits bound for East Africa, the Portos going to Mozambique, I witnessed the state of things in Nigeria, and without cruelty I can say that it is fitting for Europe to be the custodian of this globe, for her children are supreme. Why then, should (an Afrikaner, white) artist produce a Con-traption for Caucasian Conciliation? If it were to reconcile the Englishman and the Boer, I should say yes, reconcile those Caucasians, one with the other. But this N. clearly suggests that the White Man must offer conciliation towards his charges. The schoolteacher should "shut up & listen" to the students! So how do I continue with this analysis?

To confuse matters ever more, behold the dates: although I was transported in Potchefstroom before being moved in Polly Street by the strange tree, the dates of the personal diary pertaining to this absurdity predate the writing about "Identity politics!". So what then? This is why I hypothesize a disorder of multiple personalities, of schizophrenia or paranoia. A man (who should be a single man) acts as though he is to some extent or other divorced from his reality, or himself.
But as I was forced to do with my previous analysis, let me separate my moral or personal consciousness from my scientific analysis, and attempt to uncover possible meanings of the work I saw before me.

What I can say, to draw a golden thread from experience no. four back through to the first, is that this man has an obsession with fabricating falsenesses. Firstly in the form of forged primitive totems made by a western city dweller, speaker of Afrikaans and English. Next in the self-imposed coming-of-age ‘ceremony’ determined in private and without context (only pretext) with much irony and self-abuse. Thirdly in a set of ‘original instructions’ presented with his rude machine, and lastly now via the ‘instruction manual’ for his CCC. This artist wants to pretend that there is some manner of authentic provenance behind his machines. I have been privy to his personal diaries, but I have no indication of whether he showed the works to his contemporaries or audience, and if he did, whether he tried to convince them of the purported authenticity.

Besides Ex. #2, which I saw in a wild setting, the other 3 were seen inside of buildings. Although the view of the Cornerhouse in 2014 showed it in a greatly degraded state, it is today still auspicious edifice. The bright white ‘cube’ space in Potch, although horrible to my architectural tastes, did not
seem derelict or mean, and the inside-out space which I was
in just five days ago, must certainly have cost money to erect,
despite its vulgar and naked interior. The glass alone Thus, I
must deduce that in the 21st Century, these works are being
seen by some audience. In the case of EX #2, at the very
end of my experience, I remarked upon the papers that I was
studying disappearing out of my hands. I also recalled voices
and music during EX #1 & #4. This indicates to me that I
was in a present moment at the time, without being fully
connected to it (further evidenced by the strange funnel of
anti-light which always limits my view to the work of N).
Thus I am unsure what proportion of what I see may also be
seen by the contemporary audience. However, if I am to fol-
low logic, (this man being a charlatan of sorts) I must suppose
that the frank, personal diary entries are reserved for private
review alone, whereas most of the rest is intended for public
consideration.

On the credulity of a 21st C audience, I cannot speculate,
and therefore to what extent (if they exist for the work of N.)
the audience believes his claimed functions and histories (of
his objects), or accept them as ironies, or the imaginations of a
lunatik, I cannot tell. An artist, showing artworks in a gallery
or salon, certainly evokes a certain awareness in the viewers
of the work, that they might not otherwise have had towards
images or objects seen elsewhere. The artists whose work has
more and more prominently been shown in the various Salons des Refusés these last 50 years certainly indicate that what may be accepted as art is changing. Also, the studies (which I am most familiar with and fond of, of ethnological artefacts) have been inclining at the same time to regard the objects of ceremony, ritual, superstition, dance, theatre, and everyday use as objets des arts, or of the fine arts themselves. Thus I cannot speculate on the reception of N.'s works, or his attitudes relative to his potential audience, but I may suggest that the scope of possible responses is exceeding broad.

Having established this, and bearing in mind my bafflement with the statements contained within the instructions for the CCC, I must consider whether these are not an irony. I would gladly answer "yes" if I had not read the personal diary entries.

N. begins this series or diary entries by writing that "Steve sh*thead Hofmeyer has been saying all sorts of racist crap". His apparent disgust with racism sets the tone for the rest of the entries. I am familiar with the theories surrounding racism: the study of the differences of man, and the scientific analysis of strengths and weaknesses amongst people who developed in different parts of the world under differing circumstances. The current dominance of the anglo-saxon race in all matters technological, philosophical, moral, scientific, &c.
provides a self-evident index of the racial hierarchy, but phrenological and facial morphological studies, as well as analyses of cultures and beliefs have proven time and again the superior fitness of this white race. Now, if a racist is (as I have seen it used in some occasions) synonymous with an adherent of the racial theory of mankind, why should this Afrikaner (white man) hate them? I may add self-hate to my list of diagnoses, but I fear I may end up presenting, in N., the compendium of spiritual and mental disorders! I have earlier postulated that the man may be a half-breed, or hermaphrodite, and this confused state of his may be the fuel for his unfounded vulgarity and senselessness. I must admit that it saddens me that these experiences of mine, so rare and particular, should relate to such a man, rather than a nobler one. But, considering the difficult nature of the seer’s prophecies, I console myself by thinking I am being sent portents and warnings which I may make clear to my contemporaries, so that we may avoid the future where a man such as N. is considered the normal citizen.

If N. next means by "the old south Africa", the ZAR, I do not understand why he as a Boer would despise it. I asked an Afrikaans man on the tram, and am led to believe that "Apartheid" means "Being-apart" or, "apart-ness", very similar to the German sense. This may refer to his dislike, therefore, of the English and boers having been apart (in the ZAR). So if
this point, the man denies racist theories of difference, does not want another man speaking on his behalf (as an Afrikaner) but also welcomes cohabitation with the British. Now he makes mention of a house built cheaply on the "broken backs of black labourers". What the racial enmity between boer and Brit has to do with a black man, I cannot tell. Their masculinity and physiology makes them happy labourers, and I have been told, when they are not actively avoiding hard work, they do it well, and on occasions with smiles serve their white directors. Being that N.'s introductory thoughts are so muddled, I have a really hard time of understanding what follows.

Tuliza is a woman from Zimbabwe (a ruin in Rhodesia, which some claim was built by Africans, while most scholars conclude that it was certainly built under Arabic or western supervision). Tuliza is posting stuff on "Facebook" to attack N. Attacks sent by post must certainly be verbal, defamatory, incendiary, etc., but why they should be posted to "Facebook" to attack N. in particular I cannot explain. She is his friend, but also hates white people(?). Jhono’s response to N. is unexpected and unsatisfactory. It appears that Jhono is the one who instigates in N. this illogical sympathy towards black people that must so disrupt the established order of sensible society. N. points out (in a final spasm of lucid thought) that somehow Jhono’s (anti-white(?)) arguments are incorrect, but after meeting with Johan (an Afrikaner John), N. is swayed to
Jhono's reasoning. Whether Jhono and Johan conspired to this end is never made clear, but I must assume that N. would reject such a notion, for it would invalidate his change of mind. Post this meeting of the 3, whereafter N. has a tone of religious reverence for Jhono, N. begins his claims of white inferiority, and the necessity of whites to heed black instruction. This then, about 5 months later, leads to the artwork with its "instruction manual" that I saw last Thursday. N. has created this artwork to "sneak" his message across to his viewers. Thus he has been inspired by Jhono, and by accident also by Tuliza and Johan, to create an object of propaganda, to disseminate his absurdity. That he considered this a wily strategy is surprising to me, for the only reaction I can have to such a wasting of one's time, is to pity and despise the wretch ever more deeply.

I still feel no nearer to having something publishable, for if I were to set down the dark filth produced by the artist, I would be relegated to the academic Salon des Refusés. I hope that more experiences will follow, for the more I have to talk about, the more likely it is that something publishable will emerge. I am so out of favour by this time, that another few years of waiting can surely not upset my colleagues any more than me claiming such apparent absurdities are true.
Wednesday, 17 October, 1916

I have not returned to the Kromdraai ensemble since leaving them in May. I have allowed myself to become used again to town life, and I am slowly realising that the Afrikaners are not so unique a social group. I would imagine that any cohorts of white settlers with strange religious beliefs (thus a feeling of being persecuted) who move into an empty land where they are forever beset by bands of thieving natives would lead to the rise of strange and unusual cultural practices and habits.

But being in the town, I see that the poorer and more ignorant amongst them are over pious and naïve, and likely to be exploited in the town, as often (out of a Calvinistic obsession with hard labour) they are too hardworking to the point of grinding themselves to dust. Those who are apt to succeed in business attach themselves to the 'uitlander' capitalists, who become the patrons of their crafts, or their business partners. These Afrikaners must cease to be Boers, for they divorce themselves from an agrarian lifestyle, and morph back into their European past-selves. This sunburnt land built on gold-mines has an unhappy story to tell for the most part, of fortune seekers who did not find what they were looking for.

I continue to serve as an administrative assistant at the School of Music: no teaching post has yet been forthcoming, but I am happy in the mindless facility of the position, and the sti-
ble income, warm residence, etc.

Saturday 28 October 1916

I went to the suburb of Rosebank yesterday. I rode 10 kilometres per tram, travelling through 6 stops before disembarking. I passed by the Herman Eckstein Park as well as the Zoological Gardens, all founded on land donated by the same man after whom the Cornerhouse is named (he acquired the farm in order to prospect for gold, when it was discovered that no gold was to be found there, he converted the land to a plantation, of over 3 Millions of trees; and a dozen years ago donated it to the town for use as recreational grounds). Just north of this Sachsenwald lies the young Rosebank, where I had been invited to drink coffee at the mansion of the husband of a widowed mother of a student at the School where I am employed.

The appointment had been arranged as a late afternoon service of coffee and dainties, with sundowners to follow at the balcony on the third floor of the house. I had to get myself to the intersection of Tyrwhitt and Craddock Avenues. Although the tram would take me nearly from my doorstep to that of the widow, I had the misfortune of closely missing the first tram which I intended to take, and thereafter being delayed en-route by a birch tree which had fallen across the tracks.
The foreman overseeing the clearing of the tree informed me that a relatively hot and dry year had caused the failure of the shallow roots of this tree which is so familiar to me in my home lands. The end result of all this delay was my severe tardiness in arriving at the domicile of Mrs. Mittenwald.

I arrived as the sun was setting, and understandably the lady was in quite a state of unrest and concern. She had been ordering fresh coffee made every thirty minutes in anticipation of my arrival, and I was told that the third pot had just been tossed out before I got there, and apologized that I would have to wait for the next to be brewed. She further explained that she would have to prepare this one herself, for both of her maidservants had apparently just become embroiled in some emergency of an indigenous nature. When she departed I realized that I was apparently the only guest who had managed to come at all, and I settled myself in a plush armchair. It was at this moment that I was beset again by the flashing black and white lights, and although I woke up on the carpet with Mrs. Mittenwald frantic over me, I believe that having sat down before my bodily fit took hold must surely have protected me from sustaining grievous harm. This, naturally, was my Fifth Experience of transportation.

This experience was different from the others, for I had the simultaneous sense that I was seeing a sort of moving picture show unfold, while I looked; and the sense that I was a visitor to a museum, looking at a diorama, as I have felt on prior occasions. I have recorded the experience in my notebook:
Friday 27 October 1916

No longer on the balcony. At street level, still night time. Everything around me is different. Similar impression to Polly Street, viz. glass and steel, but I am really outside (there are trees). Green Glow infuses the scene, emanating from large round (1m dia.) glowing disk. Many (electric) lights. Unusual: I see many people. Seated with books opened unusually (in landscape-orientation). Books appear to be very similar one to another, glowing with soft light. Most have a second glowing, nearly circular shape on the outside cover, too. Appearance of manufactory or mess hall: long rows of (work)benches. Apparently "Servants" distribute large cups from behind a counter, with illustrated lists above their heads. Thus likely a combination public house/dinner hall/field office/manufactory (baffling). The eyes of the other people appear to be fixed on me, although their faces are not clear. A young woman (indecently dressed; everyone else that I can see are also immovably and foolishly dressed) rises and moves towards me. My vision is strange, neither realistic nor dreamlike, but ending sharply and abruptly. My field of view feels distorted and limited, and is wont to jump in a jarring fashion. I appear to be looking through the eyes of a man (or rat?) who is trapped in a rectangular box, but also looking through dusty, scratched or frosted glass (but the scratches! dust-motes crawl and skit-
The green disk depicts a star-crowned (woman?) with flowing hair, and arms (with hooked elbows) that terminate in pincers. I feel uneasy: demonic depiction, occultism once more. The amount of light around me is ominous too, and wholly unnatural. I would hesitantly call this a congregation of some dark community. I see no moon or stars: the sky is a flat colour. Not black, but a metallic grey. The woman and I(?) sit down. Dialogue ensues over what appears to be a process of brewing coffee, but I cannot make sense of the sounds. After some time the woman leaves. It feels as though I have let out a long breath which had been held in under duress, while at the same time a massive weight crushed my chest. As the weight is drawn away, I exhale, and when I breathe in again I am standing before the same site that I had just seen, but I am back in the now-familiar circle of light surrounded by nothingness, and can see no other people. I am looking again through my own, human eyes.

Before me is a wooden tripod. I remember from earlier the tripod may be folded up and used in the manner of a walking stick. Under the tripod is what must be a small kerosene stove.
(of similar piston-less design to that used at the waterfall), and on the stove is an enamelled, spouted pot. The pot has a place on the tripod where it may be stored, in the same way that two enamelled cups, a wooden spoon, a glass jar of coffee grounds, and a canteen are all able to be stowed in the tripod. A small wood and steel stool stands beside the tripod. A braided leather cord is tied to the legs of the stool, and I recall that earlier this was used to carry the stool, in which the stove was stowed amidst the three legs. As before, typeset pages from N.’s personal diary accompany the object. This time I find no explanatory “instructions” of any sort.

Summary of diary pages: 28 March; 23 April; 20-27 October 2016

28 March 2016
Starbucks is launching in SA: say coffee in SA is too cheap!
This is the power of their brand machine.
Farmers get underpaid compared to Starbucks
"This green cup looks great on Insta™!"

23 April 2016
People queuing at Rosebank Starbucks.
He drinks coffee black. (Reasons) after stimulant effect.
"what I really want is to not be my standard self. I want to
fuck around all night and still get up at some more or less decent time (with too little sleep) and function like a productive adult."

Same reason for drinking alcohol: "primarily wanna get f*cked."

N. wants to pay less for coffee: "I will make a thing that allows me to make coffee anywhere."

20 October 2016

Coffee Machine = (see my description above)

Wants to really invite someone for coffee at Starbucks

25/10

Johan (from Ex. #4?) has plan - whatsapp groups where artists can share opportunities for jobs &c. In posts a message: "Allen wants to interview people, to include them in a performance artwork, the applicant must be comfortable with getting 'intimate' with Allen during the performance."

"This text will appear below a photo of me flexing my biceps, shirtless, in the bush."

Rationale: most awkward, comic situation = total stranger on "blind date".

Hilarious because of "sexual tension and trying to put one's best foot forward, dashed to pieces when I ask them to sit on the sidewalk outside with me."

= immoral to mislead someone & waste their time with out-
right lie.

Via "interview thing" applicant won't really be misled, nor have their time totally wasted.

Assume that whoever agrees to a "shirtless dude (dandy?)" that wants to do an 'intimate' performance with them in order to get R500 and maybe a free coffee, will probably be an interesting person.

intimate clause "reintroduce the sexual tension present on a date"

Jn will pay participant, not N. (first name Allen?)

26/10

"Dude" responds, then N. "facebook stalked him" calls him "super gay" (N. has used "gay" in the past, referring to "Gay and Cougar collectors" which I glossed over, being unable to interpret it as meaning something other than carefree and unrestricted. However, I now recall that in that reference, he opined that a penis would appeal better to Gay collectors. This fact, together with its current use alongside the word Dude, compels me to assume that the sometimes-used connotations that fall more closely in line with ideas of moral recklessness, frivolity, and possibly prostitution are intended in N.'s usage). Dude is "a dancer, and he's black! He has very eclectic fashion sense." "Here I have an artist, he'll be flamboyant, shiekly dressed, and either appalled or enthralled to sit on the pavement with me."
"Visually, this is would be amazing (yin yang)."

"I never specified in the ad what gender of performer I would prefer to get intimate with, precisely because I want to ramp up the misunderstanding and awkwardness."

"At this point the coffee argument is getting subsumed by the thrill of this candid camera stunt."

Two other men and a woman have replied: men may just want the cash, woman may be apprehensive about meeting a stranger (here we agree that women should be afraid of meeting strange men without a chaperone!).

27/10

"Two dudes pulled out." N. could not satisfy their questions suspicious.

Left with Colet: dancer.

"I must remember to pretend that I don't know this if she tells me, so that I don't come across as even more creepy than I must seem at this point."

"She's not unattractive." N. thought an ugly person who wants to get intimate with someone attractive like him would use the opportunity.

(N. has for the third time used the word lol. I am only familiar with the sentimental letter writing convention meaning "lots of love", but this does not seem applicable here. I will attempt a decryption later)
30 October 1916

Analysis of this experience has been slightly more difficult than in previous occasions when (I feel) I was presented with more evidence. I left Mrs Mittenwald's house, after nearly being compelled by her to spend the night there. I am becoming more certain that she invited me alone to her house, even sent away the maid, due to having designs on me as a replacement Mr. M. By the time I had come to my senses, post the experience (once again, Mrs. M reports that I was not unconscious for more than 5 mins, although to me it felt at least an hour), and after Mrs. M with much fussing, cooing and patting of my forehead, and clinging onto my arms had made certain that I was no longer in any danger, the last tram would no longer be running. At first she strongly insisted that I should remain the night at her home, but I refused with utmost vigour, stressing the fact that I am a married man. Next she offered to call a friend of hers who has a car of his own, but I could not impose on someone via her, for needless to say, she would be indebted to them, and thus I to her. I did not want a taxi cab called (if one could be found at that hour) for I have little money, and I did not want to be in her (late husband's) debt. But without assuring her that I had a safe way to get home she would not permit me leave. I could not batter her to get out of the door myself, for her son is a pupil in high standing at the school, and I already felt trapped in an unwholesome...
situations that needed careful defusing.

At last I told her that the foreman who removed the birch from the tracks earlier that day lived in a house just near the tram stop closest her house, and by virtue of my prior conversation with him we had become, in a manner of speaking, friends, and that this man, being a bachelor, would not need to disturb any of his family in order to do me a favour, and having his own automobile could take me home, without the need of strangers to me being unnecessarily put out of their homes so late. Of course every word I soothed was a lie, but once I walked out into the night and around the bend I was out of her sight, and her clutches. From here I endeavoured to walk home, following the tram tracks back. Although I am not young, my time with the Afrikaners at Kromdraai made me grow fond of some exercise, and I estimated that at the latest I would be home by 10 P.M. Being October the nights were not yet so inestimably hot, and no-one should be about to scoff at me for walking with coat and hat removed.

Suffice to say, I did make it home by the time predicted, albeit with sorer feet than anticipated, but with a light heart, knowing that I had avoided a scandal, and jeopardising my job. I must admit that hearing the lions as I passed the zoo had me wondering whether I should not have braved Mrs. Mittenwald, but I got home alive and unmolested.
As regarding these Experiences that I have had, I am torn in my discovery. I have stumbled upon a phenomenon so novel and fascinating that I must needs publish and broadcast it as widely as I am able, but the subject of which being a character so base and vile that I must hide evidence of his existence. What N. does is exceedingly silly, he makes no meaningful contribution to his society. He is a jester, a liar, debauched, &c., and I am surprised to find that for nearly 3 years he has remained active, for I shouldn’t have been surprised to discover that his treachery was also his demise. If not dead by his own debauchery he should at least have been locked in an asylum or prison! Thus I vainly continue to study the evidence I collect, hoping that in some broader view of this man’s life something will emerge that is worth sharing.

The setting: N. has chosen for brewing coffee is a place suffused in a sickly green glow, where rows of people stare at glowing books with fruit motifs on the rear (the temptation of Eden?). I am saddened by having to assume that either the world of the 21st C as a whole, or the specific society of N., is a place of excessive spiritual darkness. What alternate reading may one propound when presented with the sight of a pin- cer-handed green woman with a disingenuous (harlotous) smile, encompassed and being elevated as though to the state of a Goddess. The indecent dress of all those present recalled stories
of the fertility cults of Ishtar in Babylon. This cult certainly is centered around coffee, and thus may be an import from South America? I am not sure exactly what this fact may mean.

Arriving at this setting, N. chooses to go to the outside, with a contraption which allows him to brew his own coffee. In this sense he may be denying or refuting the hegemony of the cult, although no obvious move is made by any insiders to attack or remove him. He brews coffee for the single woman that he has accosted. They have a conversation, and then she leaves him.

According to N.’s own diary entries, he was initially motivated by the high price of coffee, which is caused in South Africa by the introduction of Starbucks. I must assume that this refers to an importing company of some sort, which had theretofore not traded in South Africa, but through the “power of their brand machine” (I am unsure whether this particular reference is literal or figurative, although I certainly saw contrivances inside of the public house which appeared to be of a mechanical nature. If the glowing books are powered by electricity, they may also be the machines referred to) were able to penetrate into the country, and sell coffee at a higher price. Furthermore, N. seems to drink coffee (like most other things he has described imbibing) for some sort of psychoactive
effect, and not purely for taste (he claims to drink neither sugar, milk, nor syrups in his coffee). N. also claims moral outrage at the manner in which coffee farmers are paid for their raw beans, versus the earnings made by Starbucks. In this he demonstrates a lack of understanding of global market forces, and this is reflected in his admission that he imposed on his friend to give him money, because he had none at the time.

N., according to his hypocritical wonts, does not lament the high price of coffee because the farmers are being underpaid, but only because he wants to pay less for the product. His superficial arithmetic produces a saving of 75% for himself based on his preferred method of consuming the beverage, but without re-evaluating what he assumes that the farmers receive for the raw beans. Clearly, he would prefer to see the entire globe impoverished like himself, rather than see wise investors and entrepreneurs being rewarded for their canny management of money.

His initial distress about the proposed increase in the price of coffee is aroused in the first half of the year, when news reaches him of the Starbucks arrival into his country. When he resolves to create a machine that allows him to combat the expense of café-bought coffee, within five days he has (possibly under the influence of his friend Johan) lapsed into a pretext for sexually teasing men and women in the guise of
something that he calls "performance art".

Similar to Ex. #4, N. refers to posting message, but in this instance on "Whatsapp" rather than "facebook", although he now refers 'stalking' on facebook. In the previous case facebook was a centre from which Tuliza attacked him via post, this time it is a place for stalking. Thus, in this form of communication, one may either visibly address someone with the aim of attack, or secretly stalk them to uncover information about them. Why anyone would willingly subscribe to this (besides, perhaps, ruffians and extortionists) goes beyond my powers of speculation, and thus I hazard to assume that people of his time are somehow coerced or compelled to participate in the "facebook". The "whatsapp group", being a place where "artists can share opportunities for jobs, &c." seems to entail a more benign forum, although, based on what he confidently requests on such a public forum, it is not a place of nicety or decency. In his diary are 3 reproductions that appear to be photo- and lithographic, with the headline "Assemblage opportunity", and text that recapitulates what N. has written privately in his diary. I must assume that the distribution of these pamphlets takes place in the whatsapp groups.

The ultimate intention of the message sending is to entice participants to meet N. in exchange for money, and the future possibility of a job (a ruse, which N. argues is not immoral,"
as a "blind date" (?) would be). N. and Jn have orchestrated a kind of meeting with the stated aim of creating an abundance of awkwardness and "sexual tension" in a complete stranger. The potential candidates turn out to be three men and a woman. N. dismisses one man, speculating that he is just after money, and lauds the other whom he has "facebook stalked" for being "gay" (likely overly promiscuous, or a prostitute, possibility of meaning "homosexual"). N. again reinforces my suspicion that, if he is not patently androgynous or sexually deviant, he at the least has a perverted mind that revels in the study and entertainment of such tendencies. He exclaims his "thrill at the candid camera stunt". Once again N. intermixes the notion of deception with the notion of candidness. Either he, or the entire society of his era, have the queerest tendency to blur all boundaries of moral and right action into an absurd mixture of oxymoron and contradiction. I had heretofore pictured N. as a middle-sized man, of a brown complexion, hair neither straight nor curled, eyes dull, neither fat nor thin, muscular nor emaciated, neither bearded nor shorn, neither masculine or feminine. In fact, my best estimation of his appearance had amounted to the image of a slug! However, in the photographic reproductions, which I am led to believe depict the person of N., show a milk-white man with a red beard and hair, his body being very thin but not indicative of hermaphroditism. Strange that a normal body can house a devious mind.
Before the allotted time of meeting all of the men had excused themselves from the intercourse, and N. was left to confer with the woman. It appears that he has also "facebook stalked" this woman, and that he must withhold this fact from her, despite having collected information from her before hand.

N. has flown on a fancy from bemoaning the cost of a cup of coffee in a café, to misleading a stranger in order to take "candid" photographs of them. He has created a portable coffee brewing device, taken it to an unsettling congregation of workers! drinkers! students! servants; and dubs the entirety "ART"! What am I to Do with this infuriating knowledge? Maybe I am the anti-seer, cursed with this vision, unable to help humanity with what I learn so!

Friday, 1 December, 1916

I have been visited by Mr Engstrom this afternoon, who came bearing news that he has found me an opportunity for work: a vacancy in the department of music at the UNISA, for a lecturer in the history of Western Music. The post being part-time, I should not expect a greater salary than I currently enjoy, but I will have more stimulating work and more free time. I should also be able to re-initiate my study of the Afrikaner, for what it is worth, more effectively from that
town. I will need to consider at this point whether I have any hope of returning safely to my home, but considering the ferocity of the German U-boats in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, I am wont to stay here until the war wears itself out. Although I have been sending some letters to Norway, I have not been able to receive any, due to not having a certain address, and furthermore I suspect that much mail and telecommunication in both directions are being lost in transit and at the hands of censors.

Barring any misfortune, I should begin the new year in Pretoria. Prof. Schoeman is most likely still at Kromdraai, but I should be able to make new acquaintances and find a place to board without too much difficulty.

Tuesday 27 March, 1917

In the newspapers today: After a series of strikes starting in the second week of March and culminating in the effective crippling of Russia's entire productive industrial capacity, soldiers were called upon by the Tsar to force workers back to their posts. With the best part of the military embroiled in the struggle against the central powers, the remaining soldiers were loath to engage the masses, particularly because the
crowds were comprised of a great number of women. After the resulting mutiny of his troops, the Tsar has abdicated, and Russia is being led by a provisional government at the present.

An article on page 5 reports that the Mystic Rasputin’s body had been exhumed after the Tsar’s abdication, and burned. Rasputin had been murdered on 30 December last year, after having been stabbed, poisoned, shot three times, and thrown into an icy river. The body was buried by the church, but revolutionaries have burned it, most likely to prevent the man’s grave from becoming a shrine or a rallying point for Royalists and the other “enemies of the revolution.” Rasputin looks remarkably like the Seer, and has a similar history to him, up to a point. Where the Seer has remained pious and spiritual, unconcerned with worldly pleasure, Rasputin had by the end of his life diverted from his religious convictions, and become sinful and hedonistic, in many ways reminding me of the kind of filth I have seen of N. I wonder whether I am not in some unfortunate manner seeing a future in the same way that Rasputin did, and whether, if these experiences of mine continue, I am doomed to end up deranged as he, rather than revered and useful like the seer?

No use speculating. I am a scientist. I am enjoying the new post, and am also thankfully out of the clutches of Mrs Mittenwald. I am staying at a boarding house in Villieria.
Wednesday 25 April, 1917

The university is shut for vacation, which, unusually, has begun at the Easter Weekend and continues until the 29th. This particularly long break from the usual schedule has arisen due to the number of faculty and students who are absent due to the War. My new colleague Prof. Kruger invited me to accompany him, his wife and child today to the east of the town where the Pienaars (or Moretele) river runs. At sunrise we followed Church Street and its extensions out of town (which eventually leads to Bronkhorstspruit and on to Middelburg). To mark the conclusion of the vacation Kruger's wife had planned a breakfast picnic for the day, and I suspect that Kruger pitied me in my lonely state of forced bachelorhood, and so bid me come along.

He stopped his car on the western side of the river, and the four of us crossed by foot, and then walked a little way south before encamping ourselves there. We talked together for some time while the wife and child played, then we all ate, and afterward the child was bade play by himself to allow the mother some respite in which to read a novel. At this time Kruger himself advocated a nap, and thus I was left alone. I wandered some way from the family, being still fond of walking, especially when in the wilderness. I spied a copse
of trees that looked wholly unusual in this landscape, looking to be about thirty minutes' walk distant. The trees were quite tall, and alien for this landscape. I estimated that any man who is wont to take a nap after breakfast should do something so queer for at least an hour, and decided that I should have gone to the trees and returned before Kruger or his wife had any mind to begin the next activity. I took along my sketch book in case anything interesting should be seen there. The boy offered to accompany me, to which request I acquiesced.

We reached the stand, which consisted of 'Pride of India' (lagerstromia speciosa) and Jacaranda (J. Mimosifolia) trees. Although these trees are well known in the city, they looked very strange against a backdrop of veldt, and being clustered so closely. One tree seemed particularly old, but also diseased. The child ran ahead of me, pushing through the tight mass of trunks, and in his haste he disturbed the old tree, which caused a large branch to drop from it. As I rushed to save him from the growing shower of debris, I experienced the sensation of moving into a sixth Experience. I have recorded this in my notebook.

When I returned to the present time, the boy was gone, and I searched around and about for him. A number of tree branches had fallen, and I suspected some of the smaller had struck me, but the boy was nowhere to be found. I began to
feel rather frantic and started walking in the direction of the
Krugers’ car (west). Halfway to the river I spotted the boy
and his father approaching in my direction, and realised that
naturally the young man had much sense, and being unhurt,
had gone to look for help. As is usual after my transporta-
tions, the boy, and thus his father, had exceeding concern for
my health, but I assured them that nothing out of sorts had
happened beyond a little accident. We four picnicked tenta-
vively for another 30 minutes, but by this time the Krugers
looked ill at ease and Mrs Kruger expressed her strong desire
to return home, with grave apologies for interrupting our day
of excursion. I write this now as evening approaches, and will
as ever provide an analysis of what I saw.
Wednesday 25 April 1917

I am next to a busy road, whose surface is apparently tar-macadamised, and painted with white lines. I can hear rushing motorcars, it sounds as though I should be run over by them and reduced to pâté, but thankfully I can neither see nor feel any. I hear a voice:

"This is very impressive. So basically you are trying to say you are an advocate of nature. I see a specimen of a teacher, actually me I'm a person looking at the root of such works, simplicity is a vital key to abstract extraordinary results. An artist is a capturer, he is a projector. Artists posses a certain excellence in your nature, you are just like your Creator, who is always wearing a dustcoat written "Creator". Take everything from a man that does not mean that a man will turn into a giraffe he remains a man. A man is defined by what he has come to do.

I have only recorded parts that I was quick enough to write down. It is the voice of an African man.

I am now in Church square. I am still in the alternate time. In fact this is the longest duration that I have subjectively experienced in this other time. But for the last many hours I was unable to move of my own volition. I was frozen, but had the sensation of being moved. Not of walking, nor running.
nor of riding in a motorcar or carriage, but of actually being a carriage. I had the sensation of being jarred, then resting, then being jarred again. I had the feeling that I was stiff and heavy, that my joints were creaking as I rolled over an unending stream of tiny, sharp pebbles. While this feeling ensued I saw myself moving ever westwards. At first my long shadow lay ahead of me, and as time dragged on it grew shorter until it swung out of view and the sun rolled overhead and later shone in my eyes. Another part of this tortuous journey resulted from the fact that every few minutes, when I was stopped and the jarring was paused, my petty respite would be broken by a shrill noise and a sharp pain. This continued ceaselessly as I moved westward, along the hard black road. There was a plenitude of ugly distorted objects that looked like paper or glass, yet were neither torn nor broken, but crushed whole and disfigured. Filmy sacks such as I have seen in my experiences on previous occasions lay caught in bushes. The sound of rushing motorvehicles, worse in sound and greater in magnitude than any I had heretofore heard of or ever read of, was relentless. The heat of the sun had a particular quality of thrusting deeply through me in an unfamiliar way. When the sun was low on the horizon I arrived in church square, and without a perceptible transition I could feel my body is flesh again, and although not forgotten, I know that the jarring and piercing was committed upon another, woody body.
Having now again the use of my muscles, and being no longer shaken to distraction, I see before me, in the Square bereft of humans and bearing new buildings, a tree trunk with wheels attached to the bottom. The trunk is held in an upright position due to an apparently collapsible wooden rod sticking out from one side and forming a tripod of sorts with the two wheels. At the same side of the trunk as the strut, a unshaped stick protrudes diagonally upwards, whose heat is smoothed as though from long handling. Above this a once-planed plank extends at about my shoulder height horizontally from the top of the trunk. The end of this plank furthest from the trunk is notched with a broad semi-circle from below. Rising vertically from this is a jointed arm which terminates in a thin, tabloid-sized rectangle of ply-wood. Around the trunk are specially shaped retainers for a variety of tools, including a rough mallet, what is likely a saw, what may be a self-powered hand-drill and broad-tipped drill-bits. Two large disks are also loosely attached to the trunk, and may be intended for spare wheels (they have the same diameter as those currently joined to the trunk). Attached to the top end of the trunk are about 20 desiccated branchlets, apparently from various sorts of tree.

On the floor lie leaves from N.'s personal diary 18-21 April 2017. A summary follows.

18
ABSA (cf. Nov 2015) atelier deadline
Got sucked into Nirox Student (Expletives) sculpture fair
Unhappy about payment
Was tricked into agreement, via flattery
Has 10 (later on this page, 8?) days to make something for the competition
Play it safe! Double my chances, and will do ABSA as well.
No time for craftsmanship: thus rough object, performance, video
For comp. make artworks that are cool, but won’t sell
Last two entries = Artist’s toolboard (2015) my second fake museum type installation, and the CCC (2016) which had the fake tool vibe.
both were really intricate to make.
Many of my good ideas are not even mine. I just execute them. (lists Heidi, Johan and Jhono again)

Lessons learnt from the Coffee machine: need an experienced videographer w. equipment, who prioritises your video.
Has R2000 + artwork as pay = ideal candidate will accept this.

Pride of India tree trunk found, appealed to N. Trunk = shoulder height, weighs 30-40 kgs.
Likes trunk as is, wants excuse to put wheels on it, to facilitate the showing process.
N. is limited to a performance for chance to win comp.: "pays to not do what you usually do if you wanna win"  
"painter Pauline Gutter made an obelisk with a video screen playing scenes from Boer Soek ‘n Vrou intercut with scenes of livestock auctions"  

Trunk must become robust & mobile to fare off-road, wheels & axle must withstand constant jarring  
N. never cuts down trees, In Pretoria suburbs people constantly cut branches,  
Thus cruelty-free stream of wood, transported by "bakkie" (motor truck?)  
Would N. pick up wood if it were not easy?  
(Ancientode about carrying heavy crate is analogous to pushing this tree trunk and the cross of Christ?)  

Re. distance to travel: ritually & conceptually significant, physically manageable is going from my studio in Waltloo to church square. 2 Meaningful locations separated by 17km in a straight line  
Church Street has been renamed with African names  
Gather & attach flotsam trunk: 'growing' a tree atop a bare trunk, in public
Design considerations:
(Illustration of double axle, "super strong")
"Looks cool", "spare wheels"
Suspect main wheels and spares will likely fail. "but it's fine, it's the story that counts"
Holster for cordless drill, holster for Japanese saw, assortment of drill bits, mallet, and most importantly: SUN SHADE!
(Illustration of adjustable sunshade)
"Don't know how well it will actually work, but thank God my works are Magic and are about asceticism and process and suffering and etc., and I don't actually make objects. It's just got to look good on camera like an Insta™-ho™'s ass™ on the gram™. Arf arf."
(I'm certain that the 'TM' superscript was used in the PROUDMAN too)

Sunday 29 April 1917
Tomorrow I go back to work, so I attempt an understanding of Ex. #6 today:
N. has pushed an unwieldy trunk 17km. He adapted the trunk to be better-suited to this task, making contingency for the possibilities of broken wheels and a shade to avoid the sun's heat (I have established, from the photographs that I have seen, that N. is not of mixed parentage, but has in fact an exceptionally fair European complexion, without appearing to be afflicted by Albinism). He intended to 'grow' the tree with
fallen branches.
He has made this work because he does not have time, because some group of people coerced him into doing something which took up much of his time and which he now regrets. To meet the deadline he found it better to perform and create a 'video' (video in Latin mean "I see", but based on his later use of "videography" I must presume that N. refers to a sort of photography, and I am inclined to suspect it being of the moving picture variety). It would seem that the ABSA competition in which he is participating values highly the inclusion of video in submissions, and possibly Afrikaans entrants, since he writes that a certain artist won by making reference to Boer Soek 'n Vrou, which must be about Afrikaners.

The last reference to 'performance' was made with regards to the coffee-making farce. The voice that I heard at first, before I moved down to Church Square might have been part of the performance.

What is encouraging is that there was much less negativity and vulgarity presented in this vision (besides the complaining about 'Nirox' with accompanying expletives). What was unusual in this experience was my embodied feeling of empathy with (I suspect) the wheeled trunk. The inhospitality of the road environment, its harshness and ugliness all made themselves felt to me. The arduousness of that journey impressed itself upon me. At the conclusion of that experience, looking at the lonely and leafless tree in a wholly manmade situation, knowing the journey that he had made, at what cost, only to complete his labours being none the richer, but becoming a sort of martyr, I saw that at least some value had emerged from N.'s endeavours.
Saturday 1 December 2017

I spent the afternoon yesterday at the Pretoria Country Club. I had, by my involvement in the fraternity of teachers of music, met the Master of music at the Pretoria Boys High School, who is a member of the Club. The gathering had no particular occasion besides that of recreation and enjoyment, so we played billiards, ate dinner, and spoke of a variety of things while wandering around the grounds. By six o'clock the married men had gone their way, and only myself and some bachelors remained. I had been relying on the kindness of the schoolmaster to take me home, but he had apparently left while I was somewhere else on the grounds. I did not bear menace towards him, for I know how forgetful learned men can be, especially when they have grown accustomed to a wife and secretary to arrange trivial matters for them.

The bachelors were going to a party in Arcadia, but I already felt far too old for their company, and not in spirits to be social, just to secure myself a ride in a motor car which would have me home far later than my own two feet. Thus I began to amble westward and northwards slowly. The sun had not yet fully set, so I had not difficulty making my way. Thunderstorms are wont to pour down in the late afternoon from...
December to January, and I had on my person an umbrella, but happily the sky was clear and the weather fair, though quite hot. Knowing that 2 hours of walking lay ahead, I was in no hurry, and walked contentedly through the streets, where trees planted between up to four decades previously have begun to establish themselves nicely. The Water Kloof is mainly full of young trees, notably jacarandas, which have grown to heights of nearly 10 m (when not trained to form low crowns, by careful pruning), although their trunks could still be encompassed by my both hands and fingers.

I walked down Long Street, and although most of the few houses were quite dark, one was gaily lit up and I could hear many distant but happy sounding voices coming from it. I also heard the sound of music, not as from a gramophone, but as being performed by musicians. I thought, being now involved in the school of music for nearly a year, I might go and introduce myself to these revellers. When I arrived and presented myself to the assembly the voices grew quiet, although the music did not pause. I was unsure as to why everyone should react with such suspicion and hostility towards me, until I realised that the company was composed not only of Europeans, but of natives, mixed and Asiatic people all in one place. On later reflection I further suspect that there may have been amongst the company those who N. might call "gay dudes", and who I might refer to as Marys. They might have been appre-
hensive of me, thinking that I might report them for immorality and miscegenation. But I held no malice toward them.

After I had greeted the assembled and remarked on the excellent quality of the music being performed, introducing myself as a foreigner and academic, I was soon welcomed, and I am sure that the original timbre of joviality was restored. I had not planned on staying long, nor had I brought any gift or contribution to this festivity, but I was made to feel exceedingly welcome. I did not right away suspect that I was amongst Marys, but just amongst artists. I was pleasantly surprised to realise that all the brown people in the company were very agreeable to be around, with no evidence of those usually acclaimed flaws in their persons. It seems strange to admit that I was treated with more coarseness and suspicion in the Afrikaans and English enclaves of this land than I was treated at that gathering on that night.

At one point I went to the outhouse, a neat building which happily had a flushing system! I returned from there to the party in the house, and no one seemed disturbed by seeing me again. This led me to the conclusion that despite me having a seventh Experience during my time there, it passed quickly enough in the present reality that no one remarked on it.

What I experienced is as follows:
I sat down in the water closet, which was dark, as I did not want to make a nuisance of myself in asking for a candle. In an instant I was dazzled by bright colours. I was still in the small closet, but every square centimetre of the interior walls, including the door, was covered with colourful framed pictures or paintings. I did not take the time to study the content of these, but certainly they were of the refusés camp. I pulled open the door, and stepped into a workshop, at which, I could quickly establish, frames for pictures were being built. I turned to my right and walked through a doorway into a space packed with people. I laid my hand on the shoulder of the casually dressed man nearest me. He wore a large (but not unkempt) beard, eye-glasses, a blue T-shirt, and was thick set and well built. I surmised that he must earn a living from hand-work. He made no reaction at my touch, nor at my "excuse me". I was initially worried that I had offended him, and rapidly withdrew my hand. He continued to ignore me so steadfastly that I wondered at his stoicism. It took me another second to realise that like him, no soul stirred in the room. Every one was fixed in a pose, whether their glass was half-filled to their lips, or a child stood on tip-toe, or some other's laugh had frozen half-way up his throat.

I had to accept that I was in a solidified moment, possibly related to what N. called a "time-lapse". I returned my focus to the scene surrounding me when I was abruptly and quite no-
lently pushed to one side. I had perceived no body moving, but the broad, bearded man now stood where I had been standing, and the pose and position of the assembled had all altered to a lesser or greater degree. Most were postured with their bodies generally facing away from the window-front that I perceived to my left, and so I directed my gaze toward the right. A figure stood behind a counter on which was scattered a plethora, a panoply of pretty, petit pieces of wood. The figure was masked behind a band of wood which resembled no mask that I would have recognised as such were it not mounted to the head of a man, for there was no face, no eyes, no features of animals, spirits, or anything considered a ‘being whatsoever. The masked figure had also on his shoulders epaulettes of wood, which were joined across the breast by a rod of wood, from which extended downward a second rod bearing at its terminus a block, from which hung files, a knife, a saw, small metal bits for drilling and such like hardware. It also had a holster similar to that seen on the wheeled trunk, and in his hand was grasped a drill like the other I had seen (on the AoN). I now can see what is referred to by “cordless drill” and I must say in this one sense (along with the plenitude of electric light) the future seems to hold some hope in store for us.

Again, imperceptibly the scene was changed, and the broad man accepted via an outstretched arm a small token from the masked. Next shift: small children stood before the counter.
and some time later each was handed (by degrees of stock-still movements) a wooden token, each of which was unique. I moved to the door to see what transpired outside. I could see a band of musicians, very different from those who had been in my present day, apparently engaged in a performance outside. Turning back inwards I saw a broadsheet-sized paper on the door which announced something about seeing the doctor (I have made a detailed record of it in my notes) but the essence of the message was that one could take an inexpensive gift to the masked man ("doctor"), inform him of a personal ailment, for which he would somehow produce a medicine. On the other walls were photographs of the same man wearing a variety of masks, some of which covered his face and others which left it exposed. I was quite certain that I was looking at the same face that I had seen in N.'s personal diary, that is to say a white skinned man with red hair, who is fond of having his image captured while he is shirtless. Amongst the photographs I saw two representations of N. wearing the CCC, and two of him wearing the STRACH at the waterfall. The walls also bore 6 artworks that resembled models of trees, and were contained in circular frames.

I was happy when soon after my emergence from the out-house a couple with an automobile offered to drive me home.
I am present in an actual space, where I am the only one who moves normally. No one else sees or responds to me, but stay unmoving until of a sudden everyone has become still in a different moment of time which I assume follows chronologically from the last, but lacks the intercedent contiguous movement. People are present in a tiny salon space, all are casually and brightly dressed in their 21st C manner. All are watching a masked man behind a counter who is making small assemblages of wood. A band of musicians plays outside.

A large hand-written note says the following:

**TO SEE THE DOCTOR**

1. Make sure you have any sort of object, or a story, to trade
   - you can write a story on the paper at the door
2. Take a number and wait for it to be called
3. Tell the doctor (When your number is called) what ails you, receive your medicine, and give him your payment
4. Share photos of your medicine on social media use the hashtags #xylomedical
   #allenlaing
   #takkies2_0_1

The salon has pictures of a red-headed man on the walls, who
is posing with various masks, including CCC and STRACH. Cabinets in centre bear wooden bowls filled with flakes of wood or saw-dust. Floor is similarly covered in wood dust. Behind masked man are chevrons of wood, which are likely exemplars for a variety of manufactory-made picture frames. Up close to the ceiling many artworks are hung in every available nook. A large (pornographic) painting of a nude woman with white paint on her face and breasts hangs above the chevrons.

The mask worn by the man does not depict any sort of face. It is made from a light orange to yellow to brown wood, and features a bulbous monoceros protruding from about the forehead. The mask is riddled with holes, and the wood appears to be splitting, but has been "stitched" with slivers of wood. The man (artist, N.) wears a wooden harness that is used to carry various wood shaping tools. The counter before him is strewn with a huge variety of bits of wood. Below is a summary of the pages from his personal diary 29/10/2017 - 29/11/2017

29/10

N. needs money, and needs a rapid way to generate income before the year ends. Stuart has offered him a space in his salon, and N. debates various strategies around maximising the amount of money he can earn in a limited amount of time. He
explains how to make a "fakkie" which is a false tree branch, which he believes is easy to make and something that buyers will desire.

31/10
N. has already grown bored with his work. He has a strong motivation to fill the gallery with much sawdust, based on his memories of the smell and feeling of it, and being denied on a previous occasion to have his wish fulfilled. He wants the audience to smell various types of wood. He wants to create a sense of sanctity within the gallery.

2/11:
N. hopes to expedite process by resorting to a performance, but is disappointed in himself because he has undermined his own intention to earn quick money from the exercise. N. wants to abdicate from the responsibility of combining wood in his artworks by staging "a live performance, and the audience interacts, and they see you make something in 5 minutes, and you give it to them as a free gift, suddenly those two bits of wood that you just stuck together are contextualised and personalised, and become awesome."
N. considers ways to advertise his work.

16/11:
N. will present himself as "a doctor/mechanic/magician type
figure, not quite spiritual or esoteric, but not quite reasonable or sane: Mr Doctor Laing"

"...The bits of wood that I stick together are 'medicine'. They tell me what ails them (a found concept) and I grab a couple of bits of wood that could arguably somehow have value for their particular problem, join them and tada this person has a free artwork, and hopefully posts photos on social media, and hopefully talks about me, and hopefully also buys one of the for-sale artworks, or one of their friends do."

"Mr Doctor Laing needs tools, and tool harness" (illustration of tool harness with epaulettes) (description and illustration of mask)

21/11:
N. laments his slow progress, says: "I'm cursed and I keep doing this. I love it, I'm addicted and trapped."

29/11:
"Everything is sort of ready".
"I haven't really done any marketing besides Instagram".
Analysis of Ex. #7:
The first fact worthy of note is that N. has executed an artistic performance in public on the evening of November 30, 2017, and had previously performed a similar artistic performance, albeit in private on the evening of 30 November 2015. As I remarked on Ex. #6, N. continues to present himself as holding more positive feelings about his existence, when compared with my earlier experiences of him. He seems less weary of life, and bearing less anger towards his society. Although he has a tendency to self-denigration, I have observed this amongst the Englishmen, and I have seen it in the Afrikaners, and N. must be descended from at least one (Afr.) if not both of these races. N. enters his (27th) year, this time amongst other people, presenting them with gifts, and if not a true medicine, at least a token of remembrance. Although his motives do seem a little selfish, they must too reflect some measure of beneficence or altruism, especially since he has granted gifts to children, whom I assume cannot satisfy his stated need of generating an income for the December period.

I must assume that the audience in attendance do not look upon N. as a true healer or shaman, but are aware that he is merely pretending. According to my knowledge, communities that rely on a shaman to mediate between themselves and the
other realms are apt to engage in the mediation actively and commandingly, all performing together even as one at a time petitions the medicine man to petition the spirits on his behalf. N. appeared to be fulfilling the role of a clerk or grocer more closely than that of doctor. He admits that his motivation is primarily commercial.

Sunday 21 April 1918

When I awoke this morning, there was in my room, beside my bed, a tile of glass and enamelled metal. The tile had by my estimation the thickness and dimensions of an unopened hymn-book, albeit somewhat narrower and taller. The glass side had at its top and bottom two fields of a slightly different material, the top bearing a slim perforated plate, a circular opening somewhat like a lens, and the word S MSWNG; the bottom field having an oblong rectangular shape which stood so slightly proud of the surrounding glass. When laid my finger on this shape, the glass, which had some minor cracks in it, began to glow. From sheer shock I dropped the tile on my bed, and saw that the back surface had another small lens beside a cabochon yellow diamond-esque insert, as well as the word S MSWNG in silver against the black. The left and right sides of the tile had slight ridges protruding from them, and the bottom side
bore a circular and oblong opening.

I laid my finger again on the front oblong, and the glass emitted a glow. I realised that this was an ingenious sort of light box which projects light from behind a photograph, so that the image becomes suffused with a lifelike glow. I was initially shocked because I had never seen on which was contained in so simple a form, and produced such a even light, without being hot and without needing a wire to feed electricity to it. What was additionally strange was that the photograph was rather a lithograph or other form of graphic image. Against a grey background with dark spots and stripes on it were arranged a number of symbols contained in shapes midway between a circle and a square. All were brightly coloured, and while some contained recognisable symbols, such as Latin letters, Arabic numerals and arithmetic functions, others contained simplified pictograms, and others wholly abstract shapes. Under each "picturette" is a word, for example "Calendar", "TheTreeApp", "Clock", "Gallery", "Gmail", &c. I was drawn to one picturette which depicts as a background the colours of a sunset, and laid over these colours in white are a round-cornered square, in whose centre a circle, and betwixt the two shapes, in the upper right quadrant, a white period or dot. The word under this was "Instagram".

I know that N. has written "insta" and "Gram" when referring
to "looking good" in the case of coffee and the tree trunk, and has used the superscript TM to somehow accentuate these terms. Being curious about what the purpose of this picturette could be, I ran my finger across it. In that moment the print behind the glass changed, and I saw a photograph in colour, of five smiling black men, wearing the 21st C dress. Above the photograph "gregmaqomla", below it three simple diagrams: a heart, a circle with a pointed protrusion (like a Q), and two obtuse-angled triangles, with reflectional symmetry about their second-longest sides. Further below: "gregmaqomla Looking forward to having a great time with this lot as we depart for Massachusetts!!!!!!" Further below "View All 2 Comments", then "Add a comment" Last line: "2 HOURS AGO". Above this photograph were 4 4/3 circles, each with a picturette or small photograph contained inside. One circle had the word "Live" written at the bottom.

The picture in the circle was of N.'s face, and I found the single word to hold a subtle threat. Should I do some sort of thing in order that he may live? Or is he live, i.e. living, as though that were something peculiar or particular, rather than something ordinary? I did not like the potential powers of this tile in my hand, and at once I recalled the glowing books in that uncanny "star-buck" workhouse. With a growing sense of panic, I touched the circle, and immediately the picture changed. However, this time the image continued to change.
not like any moving picture I had seen before, but as clearly as though the file in my hand were nothing more than a transparent piece of glass, and I were simply looking through it at reality directly. I was excited to a further level when I heard sound coming from the file in my hand. Not the sound of a gramophone needle amplifying the shape of grooves in a platter, but the crystal clear sound of reality heard through a crack in the door. I was finally shocked to my peak when I noticed typeset words that appeared on the surface of the moving pictures, without being disturbed by the movement behind them. Not only that, but as time progressed new words appeared from below, creeping up to push the old words up to a point where they simply evaporated or disintegrated.

Each line of words bore a circular picharette to its left, often with a face depicted in it. Next to each specific face/image I noticed that a specific phrase or word reappeared, and accepted this to be the title of the person/thing depicted. Based on the sound that I could hear (which was a number of voices, at least one female and two male) it appeared that the people shown in and manipulating the images on the file were broadcasting requests, and the people depicted in the picharetttes were able to respond to these requests usually by causing a single letter of number to appear on the file surface, and in rarer cases to cause whole paragraphs to appear. The person foremost in the image on the file, who was in deed N., would
then affect to interpret the received symbols, and execute a
certain action upon a large, chequered wooden table or slab.
This process continued for four hours, with N.’s respons-
es seeming to me not to be wholly synchronous or in concord
with the symbols and paragraphs appearing next to the circular
picturettes, but nevertheless following a pattern.

N. bade his listeners farewell, and crouched so as to remove
himself from the view depicted in the tile, and as he disap-
peared I was immediately standing where he had been, able
to circumvent the table on which N. had created a meaningless
mélange of wooden geometric forms alongside natural dendroid
shapes. Besides the wooden cacophony lay rectangles of wood
bearing on one surface hand-written verbs and adverbs. There
was also a large framed glass pane and another small tile, each
of which showing the remarkable fluid views onto another re-
dity. The smaller tile, which lay on the table, displayed what
I had already seen earlier, the images mixed with typeset text
and all manner of picturettes, while the large, framed pane
showed different views of N. and his companions, sometimes
shown via the tile and sometimes as though they stood right
behind the pane, like a moving picture show of astounding
quality.

On the table I found again the few leaves from his personal
diary (5, 19 April), a summary of which follows.
(N. reflects on his habit of hoarding wood, suggests that it improves the wood)
Again too little time for ABSA competition, due to working in William Kentridge's studio for 5 weeks before the deadline was well paid.
Still has 3 weeks, will make something, like AoN last year, no time for craftsmanship, but will "call on the public to make it for me quickly, call on the fates and chance. Video it so that the story, process become visible and become the thing to look at. I've been wanting to incorporate Instagram into my art-making process somehow for some time."
"Broadcast a live story over Instagram, so all of the people who log on can be present with me at the time of making, see and hear what I see and hear, and then tell me what to make. I also like social media because in this age it is just another place. It's a well infrastructured place, huge corporations have spent a ton of time and money to make it so. It has certain functionality and we are bound to its rules willingly so that we may revel in its bounties of ego stroking and vicarious love. There are things you can and can't do. And it's free. So why get someone to create the online space that I want, at great expense. Social media is a found medium, found space, found tool, found content."
the artwork: put bits of wood on a table, like a palette
Audience decides placement, takes responsibility for end prod-
act
"On Instagram you can do very few things, that's why I like it. It is the oasis of serenity in the wilderness of content
overload that is the internet"
"You are allowed to upload up images or videos of specified
size and length, and only straight from your own phone. Each profile has a lanting page that shows a number of re-
cent thumbnails, so you can look at your profile and quickly
establish if you are sharing curated content or just shit. In a
live story you can do even less: you (the broadcaster) can share
what your phone camera sees and hears, you can type out
text, and ‘pin’ a single section of text at a time."
"So there’s an audio video feed, and a stream of comments.
If you want to do anything else, tough."
Audience "get to join my feed, and tell me via text what to do
with wood from my palette"
"They can be lying in bed in stained undies or on the loo
taking a poo, and tap their little app, a magic mirror on the
world, and then, potentially from the other side of the plan-
et, I can execute their wishes".
Lay people compete to make an artwork from afar.

19104
Alex is helping, with Tyler and Heidi. N. = Naïve, but Alex =
Alex will film, communicate via a number voting system. A trial run will be performed, to identify and avoid potential mistakes.

(Drawing of his planned layout)

Monday 29 April 1918

Here follows an analysis of the last experience, #8:

The central theme must be this thing called Instagram. N. calls it a place, built by corporations, and having certain rules. Most likely via the glass files multiple people are able to be in this place at once, and may communicate with one another. One is free to visit Instagram, but one is bound to its rules in order to receive vicarious love. N. will broadcast his actions, and allow others to instruct him in what to do thus, thus absolving him of certain responsibilities that he would otherwise be bound to via the process of creating art.

Instagram is part of "social media" and "internet" whose purposes sound similar to that of newspapers today, albeit one may transmit moving pictures in this format, and one may transmit written words, apparently instantaneously.

N. has chosen to use this social medium to expedite an
art-making process which he has sacrificed in order to make
money elsewhere. The involvement of other people (as was done
in the case of the Advocate of Nature and the Tikkies) is used
to bypass certain norms and expectations. It appears that this
is allowed because in his time viewers of art have become more
interested in stories and justifications behind particular art-
works than in the artworks themselves as products of a master’s
skill.
FACSIMILE OF WRITINGS BY MR A. NIEANDERTAALENSIS

29 inkjet printed pages on white cartridge paper
   Personal diary
This relates to my very first vision!!

1 March 1914 → I found the green book which was titled "The Saints of our Golden City."

I have decided I should begin recording my thoughts. Especially with regards to these newest artworks that I made for Joburg, Joburg. I think they are quite strong. I mean in terms of everything I produced while studying and after, these 6 works are the most cohesive so far. And the way I presented them, and like the whole fantasy story or mythology behind them is pretty cool. Like this is the kind of work that I can produce anyway as my art practice, and then maybe also work it into a master's degree, so it's like 2 birds with one stone. So about last night's show: I can't believe that Johan and I actually pulled it off. It's like probably more than 6 months of work. Which I suppose is actually a damn long time, since galleries do a show every month and pop ups and fairs. We sold the diabe and another R30000 worth of other work, which means that Urban Ocean get R25000, and we don't have our lease cancelled! Sort of bully vibes, but this is such a cool place to stay.

Why?
And stone? Joe actually pulled off the food insanely!! For FREE?? And he had like 10 staff with him and no hot water! That's exceptional. I don't know why he agreed to be part of this, Johan does have a very convincing way with people it seems.

So ja because the 6 'Saints of our Golden City' are all based on my experience/the experience of my close friends it makes sense to be writing about my experience. Because as with the entire rationale of Joburg Joburg, Johan and I have had major paradigm shifts so far since moving from the 'burbs to the city, and it looks like they'll keep coming. I mean, I get the idea Johan actually LOVES being mugged and almost hijacked and shit. And like I've said on another occasion: Coming to JHB via Paris was enlightening, because JHB is more like paris than Pretoria in my opinion. And that sort of revelation is great on so many levels. Because when my dad helped me move in here a year ago, he was so uncomfortable and almost scared, just by being in JHB. So this is the background I come from, and the city proves to me that it's not what people say.

Not that I don't still have my prejudices etc., but it's been great. Anyway this is maybe why I've made really decent art for the first time. So let's see where this ends us up.

JHB = Johannesburg

This document confirms what I saw at the Cornerhouse!

Thank God that after all this time my claims are shown to be valid.

The typesetting on this document, and the illustration are further proof

I'm feeling ill...

minimum

Hello Hawk
12 November 2015

I've been writing down my thoughts, for some time, but I often skip or miss a lot, so I think the easiest way to get a true idea of how I am working will be to photographically record my own actions. We did it when we got the studio at Nugget Square and wanted to shoot promo footage for the Rand Merchant Bank project. It was the most interesting to actually see how much time we spent chatting or lazing about, or on our phones or being totally out of the studio off camera. The footage was an indictment more than anything else.

14 November 2015

Today I bought a second hand GoPro hero 3, which is not the newest or the best, so I can indict myself.

16 November 2015

The camera has terrible resolution, terrible low-light recording capabilities, and terrible everything else. My studio is also dark and cavernous, and anyway I sleep all day and only start working at 14:00. So, unlike at Nugget Square, putting my camera up high in a corner and capturing the scene fish-eye style, I probably need to have it right on my head, so that it can actually record what I'm doing right where I'm doing it.

17 November 2015

I have this piece of Jacaranda wood which I sawed up into slabs while I was still at TUKs in 2011, and we were working on the tree-sculpture project. I've had it since I moved here (while I was in JHB it stayed in my dad's garden tool room next to the gross ass toilet). Earlier in the year I sawed two big face-sized ovals from it, which I combined with the welding helmet strap to make the mask for my Artist's Toolboard that got onto the ABSA competition. Point is, I now have a bit left which has two antler shapes sticking out the top. See diagram:

![Diagram of the piece of wood]

I think that this piece looks pretty cool, and I've been wanting to do something with it. It looks sort of tribal, and it will be way more arty if I mount my GoPro at the top of the antler than if I just put it
on a head strap. So I'm thinking of cutting out the shape of my face's profile at the bottom, then I can slide the whole piece of wood onto my face from the side.

18 November 2015

The profile thing works surprisingly well, since I literally just held a piece of cardboard next to my head and traced my face with a pencil. I think I just need some stabilising things that balance the vertical shape on my head, and then I should be set to take the time-lapses as I work.

25 November 2015

So, basically, wearing this while I work is not working. It's super uncomfortable and heavy and just no. It was a crap idea, but not totally in vain. I'm turning 25 soon, quarter century, so that's something kinda significant for me to record. I will turn it into a coming-of-age ceremony and then record THAT, so the headpiece would have a genuine function after all. I want my tools to be absurd, yet genuinely necessary. I'm calling it the Stombo Ritual Action Camera Headpiece (STRACH). I want the CH to have an Afrikaans/Germanic scraping-gravel goophone sound, not the English 'sh'. Stom is a tree stump and Bok is buck. But stom also means mute, so it could be kind of dark: why is this buck mute? Who is forcing it to be silent? Is it somehow disabled, or under duress? Or it could just be the tree-stump-buck headpiece.

So my plan is: on the eve of my 25th birthday I'll be going to the waterfall which is here on the farm, and I will spend 12 hours there from 18:00 to 06:00. So half in my 24s and half in my 25s. I will have a journal there, and a typewriter (super hipster) and then record whichever epiphanies I have while there. To assist these epiphanies I will sort of try to evoke a state of slight euphoria-psychosis by drinking 375ml of whiskey, a litre of coffee and 3g of phenibut, which is a non-illegal anti-anxiolytic that essentially just puts extra GABA agonists in your brain (alcohol for example binds with GABA receptors, so that happy tipsy feeling ensues). Phenibut makes you feel happy-tipsy without making you disoriented, slurred, etc. I am building some paraphernalia to mythicise and ritualise the use of these so that I don't just come across as being some trashy stoner getting fucked on pharms (too pansy to find a dealer and get hard shit). Also going to be taking some rolling tobacco, because burning leaves and getting a little headrush feels appropriately ritualistic.

29 November 2015
For tomorrow’s ceremony (AKA the Neanderthal Nativity) I will be needing a fire, for light, warmth, to scare away animals, snakes, and attract bugs so before 6 I need to get some wood. I will wear the STARCH, drive down to the big fallen Oak, and manually saw off enough logs to last me the evening (how many?). I will record how I schlep them by hand (there is no vehicular access) to the pool by the waterfall (which interestingly is quite man-made, volume of pool and waterfall are both helped by concrete dams and human moving around of rocks)) and there I will create a little stone fireplace so that it looks cool and I don’t burn something down or whatever.

Then, at like 17:00 I will go with my torch (my brand new headlamp!); my substances, typewriter, writing book, probably water, matches and little milk-en-druk camera to wait for 18:00. As the clock strikes I will consume all of my substances while saying some mumbo-jumbo, and then wait and see what happens over the next 12 hours.

1 December 2015

Ok, so the thing took place. It was really pretty uninspirational. I got there with the camera running, got naked and took a nude from the one side of the (5m wide) pool to the waterfall, touched it, and swam back, got dressed (I was wearing torn-off jeans and a t-shirt). At 6 I drank some of the whiskey, cold coffee and took the 10 capsules. I read that people who abuse phenibut take up to 10 grams at a time, build rapid tolerance, and within a week they are f*cked and need to actually go to rehab to recover. I’ve only taken large therapeutic doses (under a gram) and only once a week to once a month, it sounds really stupid to abuse the stuff all the way, and at the doses I’ve taken it never felt that amazing that I would risk it. In a social setting that is fun in any case it makes one feel just slightly more relaxed, and that’s the limit that I’ve gone to. Anyway this 3 gram dose, me being all alone and not particularly stressed or stimulated, did nothing special.

I then lit the fire with the meagre kindling that I could scavenge from nearby and it was quite a mission, because I don’t have an axe with which to split the oak branches, so I really had to get quite a blaze improvised before my legs would light at all. This was probably the most fun part. Once the fire was going I climbed around on the rocks and I chanted and sang some meaningless words to try and get into some altered state. I also tried to take cool photos, but there wasn’t much to record. It got dark some time after 7 and I fired up my headlamp which still contained the batteries that came with it when you buy it. Contrary to my optimistic faith in my new toy, it turned out they were super low, and the torch is super thirsty, and before it was even fully dark they were flat. I decided that it would be cheating to go and get the spares that I forgot to bring along, and I lit some candles.

I sat around really bored until I dunno probably 9pm and then decided to sleep. I tried to write or draw some wacky arty shit and produce a masterpiece based on my very ‘interesting’ setting, but it hadn’t worked and by this time I had exhausted my potential to entertain myself. I had only my short pant and shirt, and despite it being the height of summer, it actually gets cold in the cradle of Humankind when you are in a gorge next to a stream. I also had only the hard, cold ground to sleep on. I scratched around in the dirt to create a body-shaped depression and lay with my back to the fire. I actually did fall asleep at some point, and woke up when the fire had burned to embers. The rest of my experience entailed me stoking the fire back to life around a single log at a time, and then sleeping until the flames died down, which woke me up I repeated the exercise.
The entire experience, as mentioned was underwhelming, and I wonder now what I was expecting, and why I hadn’t either just worked on something rewarding and productive in my studio, or alternatively just chilled with my few friends and partner (who were upset that I chose to isolate myself on my birthday).

8 February 2016

Steve shithead Hofmeyer has been saying all sorts of racist crap, and best of all, claiming to speak on behalf of all Afrikaners. I am so sick of everything that he represents: a sentimental, unthinking, misguided, cruel, hateful, bitter, sad, stubborn, etc. etc. tendency in people to glorify the old South Africa. The denial of the wrongs of apartheid. The inability to separate their culture, history and heritage from a fascist party that brainwashed them. Unable to admit that the house they live in was cheaply afforded on the broken backs of black labourers. That the open country that they so love is not inherently or exclusively theirs, and not fairly owned. That the government and people they criticise are symptoms of past actions that they refuse to reject or correct. These kinds of people are idiots. People who say, I’m not privileged because I grew up poor...

12 February 2016

Today I asked Jhono why our mutual friend Tuliza hates white people. Tuliza has been posting these very attacking posts targeted at white people, and I’m thinking, but Tuliza, we’re friends, you chilled in my flat, we got along so well, talked about so many things, you smiled so nicely, why are you posting all this passive aggressive stuff on Facebook attacking me? Why? So I sent the offhanded joke to Jhono: why does Tuliza hate white people lol? Jhono was MEANT to reply, ja dude, women hey. They’re full of shit when they want to be hey. Jissus what did we ever do haha. Lol I worked hard for what I have today. I even do outreach to townships. Haha it’s probably just a phase, something with her emotions. Probably misses Zimbabwe.

But no, Jhono says: hey dude, it’s actually not something I can discuss over the phone. Let me know when you wanna have a coffee.

15 February 2016

I wanna get to the bottom of these feelings that Tuliza’s posts are making me feel, so I actually met up with Jhono today. He very thoroughly explained to me how the surface of what I now see as the Rainbow nation full of born frees is just a thin veneer laid over a rotting substructure of history that was never correctly addressed or resolved: he even drew a ton of diagrams (he’s an architecture lecturer). The thing is, none of his arguments are super applicable to me: so why should I pay and suffer for hurt that I never caused. There are black people that are richer than me, I’ve also suffered, and I’ve done a lot of good.

16 February 2016

Tonight Jhono, Johan and I ate together. The same topic came up, I was still feeling bothered by it. This time Johan started saying the exact things that I had been saying to Jhono yesterday. He brought up the exact same defences as me. This time, I found myself genuinely taking up Jhono’s arguments. I got angry at Johan’s narrow minded and feeble rebuttals. I heard my own words and was thinking, jeez dude, don’t be such a whiny asshole. I’ve realised that Jhono, in a very calm and
reasonable way enlightened me as to why Tulza felt so very very angry, and felt justified in broadcasting this emotion to everyone on her Facebook feed. But none of this could sink into my head until I heard my own words coming from the mouth of my good friend.

Now I realise: I don’t have answers, I don’t have solutions, I scarcely have formulated an opinion that I agree with or can make sense of, but I realise that what I’ve never done, and what I need to do, in order to start learning, in order to approach a place where I can begin moving in a meaningful direction, I need to shut up and listen. When someone expresses pain, I need to wait before speaking and really hear what they are saying. Ask myself why someone would feel justified in saying that. They are reasonable and lovely, yet they can’t keep from offending my whiteness, why, how?

So this is my idea for my next artwork. Shut up, and listen up. I’m pretty sure none of my friends and family want to hear it, I didn’t, so the best way I can think of getting this message across to people who are in earshot of me, would be to sneak it past their guard with a funny, quirky artwork.

21 March 2016

I have taken the STRACH, PP (the ritualised-pill-taking apparatus), CPSS, ABC, SLA and WPA along with 6 fake museum info plaques (with explanatory diagrams) to the KKNK arts festival where Heidi and I have a two-person show in the old Prins Vincent building in Oudtshoorn.

22 March 2016

I have been running the camera on the STRACH and recording time-lapses of how people move through the gallery, but this doesn’t deliver much interesting footage. But I must say, people have really been liking our exhibition! Getting the best response to my art so far, people love hearing me talk about my 6 machines and how and why I made them and how they work.
23 March 2016

An art collector bought my STRACH! He told me that he has a Diane Victor amongst other things, and that he likes the way that art (especially ‘difficult’ art) creates a conversation when he has guests over to his house. I never thought to make it clear that the GoPro is not included in the artwork, it seemed obvious to me but I guess I should have made it explicit, it was awkward to explain that the price doesn’t include this...

25 March 2016

I was invited to be on the RSG stage today along with Hanneke Benade and her mother to talk about the visual arts show at the festival in general and briefly about my own art. I walked down the street with the camera running and everyone gave me a funny look or a laugh along the way, it sparked some conversations. Some people didn’t give a shit, like the working class people in the street who probably see the festival (which they can’t afford to participate in) as, at best, an opportunity to hustle strangers, and at worst an annoyance that temporarily makes everything in their town super expensive. We were there early, and literally from one night to the next the restaurants changed their menus with only more expensive items (and left no vegetarian options: two of my fellow artists had to fight about the fact that the meat-free dish which they had eaten the previous night had magically disappeared from the menu, and the waitrons were all like ‘what, no, that’s definitely not possible....’). The other group who didn’t care about me walking down the street was all of the drunk oomies and tannies in the beer tents drinking Castle lager and eating fatty, meaty, and more often than not ostrich based foods.

Before getting on the stage we were in this uncanny ‘backstage’ area with an entire troupe of kaapse-klopop type musicians and this one wood and concrete bench that was hilariously precarious. The whole thing flexed and creaked and threatened to crush everyone’s toes or scrape our achilles’ tendons to bloody shreds if it collapsed. But everyone persisted in sitting down and getting up again repeatedly. There was this guy already on the stage who was doing very unconvincing covers of Shaggy’s raga classics “girl, you’re my angel, you’re my daaarrling aangeel!” and “wasn’t me”, much to the delight of the assembled onlookers.

When we finally got on stage we had a pleasant chat with Dowwe dolla and some DJ, and just like that we buggered off back up to the Prins Vinsent building where the exhibitions were.

26 March 2016

This old guy with hippie pants just bought my wordpower accumulator. He has his own Wikipedia page, he was South Africa’s longest running MP, always opposed to the NP, and most recently part of COPE. He’s now retired, and he kept coming to our show to chat with me and Heidi. I entertained him although I never thought that he would be an art collector, but we had some good chats. So now the STRACH is gone, I’ll probably borrow it back for my exhibition, if I am allowed. The WPA will go to the midlands, so I think it will be prohibitively expensive to bring it back. I luckily have many photographs and drawings of it.

After the Joburg, Joburg pieces and then the Apparatus Adulatione, this exhibition is the next major stepping stone for me to continue making the sort of art I am making now. The <R20000 sales will be
my biggest ever and this motivates me a little bit to keep making art. I think the work was really well received, and the humour in it is definitely the major selling point.

28 March 2016

Here's something that I heard today: Starbucks is launching in SA, and their official statement was that coffee in South Africa is too cheap! This is the power of their brand machine. Coffee already costs like R12-R15 for an Americano, closer to R20 for a cappuccino and probably R25 for something with syrups and shit. This dude is saying, it is necessary, imperative, to ensure that South African consumers are spending an average of R40 on a cup of coffee. Like, what the hell dude. 250g of coffee costs R50. And he's saying this on official channels, matter-of-factly. He believes that there is a great injustice in the way coffee is currently being served. When his 'fair-trade' farmers in Kenya are getting like R20 a kilo for the green beans. These dudes planted a whole orchard, nurtured those trees, protected them from pests and the elements, picked all the fruits, fermented them, removed the seeds, and they get R20 a kilo. So per cup consumed they're getting 30/1000 = 0.03, x20 = 60 cents. And Starbucks gets the other 39.40. After shipping, roasting, packing, staff, rental etc. (all serious costs) I'm sure they're still getting between R10-20 per cup in pure sweet profit. Which is absurd. And thank God these guys are doing the fair trade thing, I feel so responsible now, and this green cup looks great on Insta™!
1 April 2016

Derek Zietsmann invited me last year to take part in this show, and I've just been swamped with all sorts of other things, so I haven't had time to start until today. I'm pretty much tired of identity politics, the fact that one always has to apologise for what one is and was and will be, how one was or wasn't born and what one's place is in the bigger scheme of things. I know that men are huge violent trashbags, they piss me off too. I know men pretend that they're super logical and unemotional and aren't. I know they rape left right and centre and don't understand that it's wrong. But I also know that certain women can be megalomaniac and manipulative and can destroy the lives of their children, partners, families, co-workers, etc. I also know that a dog that was loyal to its master will eat his body when he dies, man locked in the house alone with the animal. A lion will fuck you up and a mudslide will crush your bones. Life super sucks, everything is cruel and hateful, entropy is our ever present nemesis and we are bound to be dust in a cold universe.

Cool, so men are shit, women are shit. Men are historically maybe a little more shit, because they managed to be in power and use that position of power to be the superiorly shitty ones, but I think anyone in power would end up abusing it like that. Stuff has to change. Cool. But I don't wanna make art about this. It's so afgesaag, so worn thin, so tired. The last 30/40 years of art has been identity politics, and as more marginal identities claim their sovereignty, the morass of identity, and who hurt who branches out infinitesimally: a fractal of such complexity and with so many colours that for all practical purposes it is the mathematically dullest sort of grey uniformity. If everyone is special and oppressed then no one can be. Anyway. So I'm part of this exhibition, and I don't wanna talk about gender.

3 April 2016

I have decided to take this very tired and broad brief at its simplest face value: men have dicks, women don't. Ergo, men can and do easily pee standing up, women don't. Men don't mind stopping anywhere any time and peeing, women don't do it and don't like it when men do. Ha ha ha. I know Heidi doesn't like it. She says it's like men are trying their best to be obtrusive. Can't they just like turn a little away from view. So I will make a huge dick that a man can use to pee. I try to avoid peeing in public as much as I can, but let those who want to flaunt it, flaunt it.

4 April 2016

I googled some news stories about men peeing in public. Summary of the interesting bits: any comments section of a newspaper story goes like this – women say its gross, men say it's natural, it's a fertiliser, animals do it, it waters the plants, it's unhealthy to hold it in, women say no, a black man comments, INSTANT RACIAL MUDFIGHT! The first white person chimes in like ya it's your uncivilized culture and three replies later things are so toxic I can't keep looking. Also, one man apparently died crossing the road to go and pee somewhere that was less obtrusive.

I remember when I moved to Joburg what fascinated me was that people were so oblivious to the super urine stench. I get why the city stinks: there are very few public toilets, and those that there are, are super super gross. There's paving everywhere. People need to pee (I know cos I peed my pants in Paris when I had been drinking in the streets, I didn't have a car, and the only toilet that I knew of was in my flat a number of minutes away, and I heard you can get hardcore arrested if you
pee in public. Anyway.) Ok so my point is, cool, the city stinks, no problem. But what blew my mind
was how often there would be a well dressed, attractive couple of young lovers, like 16-20 years old,
and the guy would be standing between the legs of the girl who is seated on a brick ledge about a
metre off the ground, and he’s whispering all sorts of sweet words into her ears, and she’s shyly
giggling, she playfully shoves his chest, he locks his hands around her waist, and pulls in for a
smooch. Very suave and romantic, lovely little teenage scene. But this whole thing is backdropped
with this thick, musky, savory, almost burning the nostrils smell of urine.

So the peeing thing is something that I can get behind. I agree that it’s weird to do it in public, but I
also have, so I can’t be a hypocrite and totally condemn it. And when I did try to hold it in that one
time, it didn’t bode so well for my pants. So with this artwork I don’t want to take a stance. I’m not
pro or anti: I just want to sculpt a huge comic cock. Humans have done it for ages, and it always gets
a laugh. Plus, when it’s a nice dick chances are slightly higher that the gay and cougar collectors will
want to buy it.

The facts: 1. men pee in public
           2. they seem kind of chuffed about it
           3. they argue that it’s natural

So my artwork will include the following features: very large, well crafted penis, an object that is an
aesthetic pleasure to behold. The user needs to be able to grip this monstrosity securely, so I’ll add
really robust, manly looking moulded grips, like what you’d get on a gun’s grip. The man needs a
mirror so he can do waxy eyebrows at himself like Johnny bravo. And I’ve had this genius idea:
sitting and peeing is UNNATURAL. Why? Look at the posture that the human body naturally assumes
in zero gravity:

(image paraphrased from NASA research)

So, if my contraption allows the user to assume this posture while using it, he will be doing the most
natural activity possible, and thus absolved from criticism.
5 April 2016

I've started building the device, and I have a name already: Paraphernalia for Relaying Outwardly the Unmistakeable Dignity of Micturation as Natural, which by a zany and entirely fortuitous circumstance spells out PROUD MAN... Another weird coincidence is that the section of Poplar trunk that's been lying outside of my studio for some time has the exact same diameter as a 5l water bottle. Implication? I can cast plaster of paris into the rounded plastic upper part of the bottle, and I get an instant glans which has a central hole, is smooth on top, and ribbed at the edges for her pleasure™. Additionally, what I've done is to combine a found tree trunk with a found object: I avoid censorship because I haven't actually intervened with these shapes to make them more phallic. Oh, and the tree trunk happens to have the right girth to length ratio that it makes a perfect semi-erect I've been holding in this pee for too long member when capped by the plaster dome.

6 April 2016

Certain stones on the farm are this sort of clayey, sedimentary type, and if you find the right ones you can grind them to a fine red powder. Mix this with plaster in the right ratio and you are left with the most amazing Donald-trump coloured glans. Also, with the bark stripped off the Poplar has the perfect sort of throbbing veiny look, and once I put linseed oil on the wood it will go a good white-boy skin colour. I only have 10 days total to make this, and everything is working together so well.

9 April 2016

I have to drive to Potch the day after tomorrow to deliver this thing to Derek. I'm close to done, but pretty sure this is going to be an all-nighter. Rather miss sleeping tonight and get some rest before hitting the road. The hippies are here: the wife with her dealer and his wife. They are sitting on a blanket by the pool and have eaten a bunch of shrooms. Now they will look at the pool, the fairy lights which they brought, the trees around them, and some crystals, for the next 12 hours at least. I go and see them every now and then. I've told them that I'm making a huge penis, and they think it's super funny, but they won't get up to look. I don't even know if they do get up to pee. They've been in one spot for six hours already. I think I'm gonna play some Puscifer really loudly. It's groovy and dark, so maybe I can freak them out. They told me just now that the bush closest to them is whinnie the poo, and they've been eating tons of vegan, raw, earth-friendly, organic, added-sugar-free desserts.

I switched on the pool's blue underwater lights and the hippies dig it. Make up for my music.

10 April 2016

It's already dark again. The hippies had been awake for more that 36 hours and were just chowing more and more of the shrooms. Eventually their 'cuddle-puddle' broke down and the 'shaman' (dealer) started crying lol. I'm finished with the PROUD MAN, so now I have to take it to Heidi so that I can borrow her camera to photograph it, borrow her PC to make a 'user manual', sleep, print in the morning and drive through to Potch before lunch time.
23 April 2016

Ok, so apparently people have been queuing outside of this Rosebank Starbucks. I haven’t been near it, but this is super dumb. I drink my coffee black. Why? Milk goes sour, and needs refrigeration. But it also overwhelms the coffee taste. It makes it insipid. I only put milk into instant coffee, precisely because I want to mask the bad taste. I drink no sugar. My mom weaned me off of sugar at a young age, because even before all the diet fads she said it’s unnecessary and probably not good for your body in general. I like the taste of black coffee. But mostly I’m after the stimulant effect. The taste makes the addiction more socially acceptable and is a bonus, but what I really want is to not be my standard self. I want to fuck around all night and still get up at some more or less decent time (with too little sleep) and function like a productive adult. It’s the same reason why one drinks alcoholic beverages: yes, it does sometimes taste nice, but stop lying, you really, primarily wanna get fucked.

Ok. So I drink hot water that has been in contact with coffee beans for 15 seconds to 5 minutes. That’s it. Put it in a paper cup. If you don’t make it too hot I will down it right away, so you don’t have to give me a plastic lid thingy. 50c for the cup, 50c for the coffee grounds, add overheads for water, electricity, staff, franchising fee and shop rental, I should be paying a maximum of R10 for a really tasty coffee, double shot. What I am going to do is make a thing that allows me to make my own coffee anywhere.

20 October 2016

It’s been a while since I had the idea. I’ve been busy with other stuff, but I’ve finished with my Coffee Machine: it’s main part is a walking stick that I made while hiking in the Western Cape. It has two additional foldable legs that can be locked parallel to the walking stick, or deployed to create a tripod. Attached to the tripod is an enamelled steel pot and a wooden ring with two enamelled steel mugs hanging from it. A wooden holster holds a plastic army canteen with water, and a wooden tube holds a glass jar of coffee grounds, with a little carved wooden spoon attached to the side. I have a little wooden stool that hangs from a braided leather strap, and also serves to hold my gas stove. With the stick in my hand and the stool at my side, I can enjoy coffee anywhere.

I’ve been talking to Johan about how to direct the performance that I want to do. In essence, I want to go to Starbucks, and sit outside, and make coffee on the sidewalk. But if I do it alone, or with a friend, it’s just me being weird and stubborn. I want it to be real, in the sense that someone is invited to meet me for a coffee at Starbucks, and then we end up not actually going to starbucks.

25 October 2016

Johan and I have hatched a plan. There are a bunch of whatsapp groups where artists can share opportunities for jobs or commissions or the like. Johan will post a message saying that this dude Allen wants to interview people to establish whether he would be able to include them in a performance artwork that he is working on. The applicant must be comfortable with getting ‘intimate’ with Allen during the performance. This text will appear below a photo of me flexing my biceps, shirtless, in the bush. The rationale behind this particular approach is as follows: the most awkward (and thus potentially comic and human interaction value) situation would be for me to invite a total stranger on a blind date. This would be hilarious, because there would be all that sexual tension and trying to put one’s best foot forward, dashed to pieces when I ask them to sit on the
sidewalk outside with me. But we feel that it would be immoral to mislead someone and waste their time by telling that outright lie.

The interview thing is pretty much true, and we will offer remuneration for their time and transport costs. So the 'applicant' won't really be misled, nor have their time totally wasted. We also assume that whoever is actually willing to agree to a shirtless dude that wants to do an 'intimate' performance with them in order to get R500 and maybe a free coffee, will probably be an interesting person (the intimate clause is a way to reintroduce the sexual tension that would have been present on a date) (oh and Johan has offered to pay the money, because I'm literally incapable to spending that amount, I have under 300 in my account. Legend Johan).

26 October 2016

I got a reply from a dude, and then I facebook stalked him. He looks super gay, he's a dancer, and he's black! He has very eclectic fashion sense. I mean, here I have an artist, and if my stereotyping is
on point he'll be flamboyant, sheikly dressed, and either appalled or enthralled to sit on the pavement with me. Visually, this is would be amazing (yin yang). Oh, and I never specified in the ad what gender of performer I would prefer to get intimate with, precisely because I want to ramp up the misunderstanding and awkwardness. I realise that at this point the coffee argument is getting somewhat subsumed by the thrill of this candid camera stunt, but the fact is still: I will be making coffee at a business meeting, and I won't be spending R80 for two people but probably R3. I also have another guy, and a woman who have replied. This guy Matt that I know also replied, but I know he's straight, and it wouldn't be awkward, and he probs just wants the cash. Fuck that. (the guys are probably in the majority, because women have reason to be scared of meeting up with strange men unfortunately, and these guys are probably reckoning on getting paid for the interview, and then declining. That's what I would do.)

27 October 2016

Ok so it happens tonight, and (I should probably say fortuitously) the two dudes who had said yes pulled out. They were asking too many questions and I guess I couldn't really come up with convincing answers? It maybe seemed like a prank or some sort of entrapment. The flamboyant one was spooked, ignoring me and dropping unconvincing excuses by late last night, and the other pulled out just today. So I'm left with Colet. Her Facebook has a lot of tango-looking dance photos, so she's into that embodied, physical kind of social interaction, but her info section says she's an English lecturer. I must remember to pretend that I don't know this if she tells me, so that I don't come across as even more creepy than I must seem at this point. Oh, also, she's not unattractive. I kind of thought that there was potential for a really ugly person who wants a free pass to get intimate with someone attractive like me (lol) would use the opportunity....

28 October 2016

I'm at Johan's flat, borrowing his PC to edit the footage. We had him on camera and with a go pro, and me with a gopro on my head, on a wooden headband, and a freestanding one in my hands. So it's like four 1 hour bits of footage that I want to get down to 5 minutes. I told Colet that we'd meet at 7, and we got to rosebank by 6. We had to park like 3 blocks from the place because it was so packed. Me and johan discussed our POA and hung around until like 5 to 7. Then I phoned Colet to make sure she was already there, because I needed to make the big reveal as I pop up looking all weird, I couldn't be there before her because she might then have run away. I also wanted johan to be there before me too to shoot some establishing shots. I had on my one set of 'neat' clothes. Gray shirt (it had been black in 2008) that my brother used to barman in. He got too huge from gymming, and ever since it's been my 'neat' shirt, worn about once a month. I have the nice leather shoes that I got on special, and the pants from heidi's sister's wedding earlier in the year. Then the stool on strap around my shoulder, gopro on my head and stick in hand. So I'm between smart casual and shaman/creep.

Before I called Colet we also shot some footage of passersby that had a chuckle at me and asked what I was doing. I walked the three blocks with my Staff of Coffee, the cups going "tank, tank" as I stepped with my right foot. Colet had been waiting 5 minutes by this time, and was looking at her phone, so I had my moment of triumph as I stood right in her space and said "Are you Colet" and she looked up and sort of smiled. "I've brought my own coffee, do you mind sitting outside?" It was perfect, the little curb that we went to was right below the glowing Starbucks mermaid in circle logo,
and it smelled of PISS! It was great that I was actually quite nervous, and she was actually really non-chalant. I hadn’t at all prepared what I would say, but I wanted to keep the ‘interview for a performance’ spiel going as long as I could. As I review the footage I notice I kept saying “um, ok, so.....” about twice a minute.

I think Colet had me figured out though, and soon Johan joined us and the three of us were just sharing black coffee out of two mugs. After Colet left with Johan who had to draw money for her, I went back to the car to wait for Johan, and I started chatting with the car guard. He told me how he slept on the streets or in this shelter, and that all of his contemporaries use Nyaope. He looked clear eyed and sounded clear minded so I really believed him. I started imagining how I would invite him for coffee, and have Johan film it, and give him R500 too. Johan was keen (He called me at this point and said I should meet him in the starbucks, inside, he’s having a coffee product that he purchased there. I said I didn’t want to actually enter their space, that’s disrespectful, he said no I’m allowed to be his guest. I went in, we chatted some, he said set up your coffee stick here, I said, uh, ok. I actually got as far as starting to boil the water. At this point a waitress backed up by a guard asked me not to do that, so I just immediately said cool, I understand, and started packing up. Johan left his scarcely touched coffee product that cost more than R40 on the table, and as we walked back to the car we discussed the s’urity) but I very quickly became nervous about the inherent power relationship and sounding patronising. (when we eventually left Johan ended up tipping him R50, I dunno what would have been more morally and socially correct?). However, before I went to Johan in the coffee shop, I had an interesting chat with the guard off record. But I’ve noticed my courage and drive is always greater before I begin any of my performances. Once they’ve begun I very quickly become fatigued from the extreme social and mental pressure that these things invariably drop on me. Nevertheless, I’m quite happy with how this went. Now, just have to edit.... And Johan’s PC is slow.
It's the ABSA atelier deadline in like a week. I got sucked into this Nirox Student fuck-you-little-desperate-fuckers-you'll-do-all-the-work-for-absolutely-free-jus-because-we-give-you-our-tax-write-off-money-in-our-little-circle-jerk-cabal-haha-you-eat-shit-‘sculpture fair’. Seriously, they arbitrarily assign between R10000 and R40000 to each student, totally out of proportion to what one’s credentials and what one has pitched to be producing. I pitched a huge, immersive installation, and get less than someone that is just doing a performance with their body and an existing object. I mean, that’s illogical. Anyway, I agreed, because they tricked me into feeling important when it didn't count just to fuck me in all the ways that do matter. Right now, I have 10 days to make something for the competition. When I committed to the Nirox thing I had already written off ABSA in my mind, but I guess the underwhelmingness of the Nirox sculpture/installation, and the fact that I don't yet know whether it holds any advantage in store for me, means that I now want to play it safe/double my chances, and will do ABSA as well.

Having 10 days means that I can’t craft an exquisitely finessed and detailed object. That takes 3 weeks. So a rough and tumble object+performance+video seems like my best choice. Also, I tend to make the artworks which I think will be cool, but I know won’t sell or fit in to a commercial gallery for the competition. My last two entries were the Artist's toolboard (2015) my second fake museum type installation, and the CCC (2016) which had the fake tool vibe. I think both are good, maybe even commercial, but those were really intricate and finicky to make. Many of my good ideas are not even mine. I just execute them. Some of my really good artworks and who’s idea it was:

1. Apparatus Adulation: Johan and/or Jhono
2. Artist's Toolboard: Heidi
3. Coffee machine: Johan (conceptual credit and filmmaking)

So it’s not necessarily that many, but they are very key works in my career. There are also probably more that I can’t think of. I know that Heidi’s opinions inspired the CCC and PROUDMAN.

Lessons learnt from the Coffee machine: editing super sucks, you need an experienced videographer with proper equipment, pay him so that he puts time aside and actually prioritises your video. I only have 8 days, so whoever films this must be focussed on it. I have R2000 to pay, and I will be offering one of my unsold artworks as the payment. My brief is, whoever is considered by one other person to be a ‘professional videographer’, and at the same time is willing to do work for R2000 and a smallish artwork, is the ideal candidate. Also they must be willing and available right away.

So my idea is this: I picked up this really nice Pride of India tree trunk about a month ago, and although I normally saw my wood into planks, the trunk as a whole really appealed to me and I haven’t had the heart to butcher it. The trunk is sort of shoulder height, and I can lift it man alone with not too much effort, it probably weighs about 30/40kgs. It’s such a nice thing that I want to use it as is: I sort of want to show it to people like my prize rooster, put a blue ribbon on it. And for a while I’ve been wanting an excuse to put wheels on it, to faciitate the showing process. Being in a position where I have 8 days, and I’m limited to a performance if I want any chance to win the competition (I mean, painter Pauline Gutter made an obelisk with a video screen playing scenes from Boer Soek ‘n Vrou Intercut with scenes of livestock auctions, i.e. it pays to not do what you usually do if you wanna win). So: 1. Trunk, 2. Wheels, 3. Performance.
I’ve started rigging this trunk up for mobility; it needs strong wheels on a strong axle, and some sort of way to manipulate its movement. If I’m pushing it offroad or even on a crappy tar road or pavement both the wheels+axe and me have to be able to withstand the constant jarring of an unwieldy 40kg mass. So this is step one. Regarding what I’m gonna do, I’ve been thinking about how I collect these trees. It’s actually funny because when I was at Nirox, I was surrounded by trees, beautiful old exotic trees and indigenous trees, but because I never felt right to cut them down, I used very little natural wood. Now that I’m in Pretoria again, and I jog and drive through all the nice little suburbs where people are constantly taming nature and lopping off branches left and right, I suddenly have this cruelty-free stream of wood, that some other dude had to do the effort of removing from the tree. But the way I get the wood from where it lies to where I can work on it is on my Bakkie. If I was someone without a car, I’d have to go to great lengths to borrow one or great expense to charter one, and thus probably collect wood much more selectively. I’d have to know beforehand what sort of tree this was and whether it has any sort of definite value, all in the the time span (typically less than 24 hours) that the wood lies next to the road before someone hauls it away to a dump or landfill. So the question that emerged (and even now I don’t know if it’s political or edgy enough to win the comp) was if I had to haul the wood by hand, would I do it? Do I love this wood that much?

In 2013 at the Turbine Art fair people were shipping sculptures up from cape town and leaving the crates in the dumpster. This is fresh, clean interior grade ply that was accurately and squarely cut, probably like a R3000 crate, and it moved a sculpture once, and now it’s good for the dumbster. I was working at the foundry at the time, the turbine hall was like 3km from the foundry, and about 3.5km from my flat, so I asked if I could have the crate, and they said if it’s still here on Monday it’s yours. The crate is about 1.2m long, 1m tall and 50cm wide. I don’t know how I arrived at this conclusion, but I reckoned that will somehow manage to be tied onto my motorcycle. So I decided to quickly zip off during my 45 min lunch break, put the crate on my bike, and drop it off at the flat, then get back to work in time. I got there, and realised that the crate basically fills the same volume as my whole bike, and there’s no trick to tuck it under my arm and drive with it. Absurd. I also reckoned though, if I leave it there, someone else will claim it, or at least some homeless dude will find it to be very useful. So I hooked my arms through the slats, leaned forward, and began trudging toward my flat. I don’t know what I looked like in 3rd person view, but I imagined that classic Jesus carrying the cross from the Passion films. Step, step, step, ..., rest and wipe brow, step, step again. I was committed to having this crate, to not having it be senselessly wasted, so I carried it in my back to my flat. I felt as though this should have been recorded. Flash forward to now, same thing, but with a tree trunk.

Do I love this wood that much? Yes, even more than that crate that I schlepped. So I will push it down the street. I thought of going from east Tshwane in the am and ending in west Tshwane as the sun sets. When I googled this, it is 100km, so, it’s just not gonna happen; I will literally die, and the deadline will pass over my dead body. Next I checked >>Pretoria<<, east to west, its also like 40km. So the only thing left to me which is kind of ritually and conceptually significant as well as physically manageable is going from my studio in Wallloo to church square. The one spot has meaning to me, and the other has meaning to the history of the city I’m in, and they are separated by 17km in a straight line by the R104, formerly Church Street, and now Stanza Bopape, WF Nkomo, Pretoria road
and other names. I have decided that since I’ve ditched my Bakkie, and am now relying on my wheeled trunk to be my new wood receptacle, my mission now becomes to move with the sun down this straightish route, and along the way I will pick up a variety of bits of fallen wood (which I do anyway as part of my daily routine) and on the fly attach this to my beloved trunk. The result is that I ‘grow’ a tree out of the top of a bare trunk, sort of in the public gaze. It’s not yet very conceptual sounding, but literally just doing it will reveal something by the end.

21 April 2017

Design considerations:

I’ve made the wheels super strong, with a double axle thing. Whether this is at all engineeringly sound, I have no clue but it feels like better than nothing, and it looks cool. I also have a set of spare wheels that are actually offcuts from a totally different project, which I can hopefully attach on the fly if anything goes wrong. These main wheels will probably fail, and I will probably realise that the spares are impossible to attach out of my studio, and if I get them on, they will break to pieces, but it’s fine, it’s the story that counts. I also have a holster for my cordless drill, with a bit or wire attached to prevent anyone from running off with it while my back is turned. A holster for my little Japanese saw. An assortment of drill bits, a self-made wooden mallet, and the most important addition, a SUN SHADE! The sun shade is adjustable in two planes like this:
I don't know how well it will actually work, but thank God my works are Magic and are about asceticism and process and suffering and etc., and I don’t actually make objects. It's just got to look good on camera like an Insta-ho's ass on the gram. Arf arf.

25 April 2017

Faaaark. I just did the performance today. Brighton Kimbo was my cameraman, and he had an assistant with him. Very glad that they were prepared to help me, they really went the extra mile. My shoulder is super sore, it looks like a huge hickey/burn/pimple/bruise. And the artwork is in one piece which is weird. It didn’t really break. The little foldable stand thing that I made to keep it upright did kak, and the sunshade failed almost instantly, but everything that counts is still there. I actually brought this ridiculous Magic glue with on my sojourn, it's this thick cyanoacrylate (vis. super glue, the curing process of which takes place anaerobically, i.e. make the oxygen disappear, make the gap between molecules super small, and it gets hard. It actually doesn't make sense, because when the liquid is in the bottle there is no oxygen between the parts that are below the meniscus but they don't harden, and if you shake it so that technically there is at some point oxygen in the solution and then later not, it still doesn't cure) which is activated by a spray of butane which somehow drives out the oxygen or something. So you gloop it onto something, like clear honey, and then you spray this pure propellant over it, and it goes hard. A cloud of fairy dust and then crystals. So I 'fixed' a number of ratty bits with this fantastic product, again and again up to the point where I ran out of the glue.

I also did use my bakkie, so the whole concept of not transporting the tree by bakkie sortof fell flat. But it was Brighton's idea, he could do 'dolly shots' from the moving vehicle, also store all of his stuff in there, plus I don't think he was (understandably) keen on walking 17km there, and then back. I don't how how I was planning to get back in the first place? What I like about him is that he's actually a teacher full time, and videographer part time, so he wasn't too slick. In a good way. I just left him to his own devices and the performance doesn't look like a TV ad. Most professional shooters make you look like you're in an ad. Even with the editing, I just kept telling him to cut it shorter, but he really did the majority, which is good, because I clearly don't have a clue how to edit. But with my bakkie, we cheated. There was a point at the botanical gardens when we loaded the tree onto the bed and drove to a place to eat lunch and 'charge my drill's battery' (we did, but I think I was making excuses) this was also Brighton's call, cos he wasn't as balls deep as l and realised time was running short. After eating he also encouraged me to drive more, up to the union buildings. So out of the 17km I skipped about 5.5. But this was definitely a good call, because we finished with the sun going down.

What was fantastic at the union buildings was this guy who appears out of nowhere, and starts rapping about my artwork. He gave me the title: "So, basically, you are trying to say, that you are an advocate of nature ... actually, you are a value-free technician, one who is not defined by matter, or ideology, or by where he is standing, you understand? ... In life there are 3 kinds of people. We are all looking at a tree: another man sees a tree, another man sees a table, another man sees a books ... I am not an artist, but I am an escapist: one who avoids serious matters by indulging in fun." This dude is talking with shades on and a backturned cap while standing in this cool contraposto way, he's tapping his foot, and shaking-pointing his right finger. He talks so much and so fast that he does this sharp "hurgh" intake of breath between his run-on sentences. I reckon he was high on ganja, but
maybe not. But I am also very thankful for his appearance, he took the artwork from being me indulging my whim of pushing a wheeled tree down the street to me actually finding some meaning, fun, engagement that made it feel like societal thing of some value.

In fact, as white motorists we have this idea that the ‘black pedestrian proletariat’, this faceless mass of worker bodies, is some sort of threat, like lock your doors, keep your belongings out of sight, you ARE going to get smash and grabbed and hijacked three times on every drive. Don’t open your windows, don’t interact. My white community is brainwashed and has brainwashed me, “they just want something from you”. And that’s bullshit. We can’t see the people on their own mission with their complete complex lives. We live in cages and drive in cages, shop in cages and work in cages, relax in cages. It’s fucking absurd. And we think we have it right. I had this heavy, precious load on my shoulders, and nothing in particular planned, and this meant that every stranger was a treasure trove. I had all the time and motivation in the world to stop when someone hailed me, and hear what they have to say. And it felt great. The tree was like my anti-cage, my ticket to touch normality. I remember that my friend always told me these stories about his conversations with strangers on the taxi, in the shops. He is part of a huge community, and I am part of the jealous, angry, terrified minority of wannabe overlords. I saw a black dude chatting to a roadside beggar, share some thought, joke, observation, laugh, shake hands and carry on. A guy talking to another guy, who’s occupation is to earn money in a way that he’s able to. So that was the value of this walk. The west has theorised the mysterious, pretentious flaneur and dandy, the watcher of the city. But we’ve run from that. People could pretty much DO something to me while I stood with both hands holding up this tree. And what they did was to do the normal thing. I was just there to bask in it.

I am still a white dude with all of my baggage, but I do feel like my eyes open at times. I like to be alone, I’m not a social person, I don’t like most people. I don’t like mass entertainments like most sports, tv shows, pop music. But that’s another thing altogether. There’s also so much that I’ve let myself be cut off from. I did two performances in 2011 on the (safe space) university campus, where I became the spectacle and the dude asking for strangers’ time, and these were also really great for me. I’ve done a number of performances since, and these are my clearest moments in this world. That’s why I keep doing art, amongst a million other reasons. In JHB I was the only white dude walking the streets and in The Pick and Pay. There was something to that. But it’s fleeting. This makes not so much sense at this point.
29 October 2017

Stuart is a champ. I just called him today and said I'm broke, and I need money because Ke Desember boss is arriving and January is coming, and basically if I don't do something 3 months of ridiculousness is coming for me. So he said he'll give me a show on the 30th of November. So I have a month. Christmas is coming and I wanna make some cheap and nasty commercial stuff, it basically has to be possible to complete a piece in a day and then still be able to sell it for at least 2-3k. I was working on some 'jewelery boxes' for Elbie to sell at Kamers vol geskenke, but I was literally bored before I got to 10. And she and her associate also didn't sound too keen. I'm going to her wedding on the 11th, and also touring the Cape a little with Heidi, so in addition to that extra cost, I also have 11 fewer days to make my show. So I have about 3 weeks, that's 21 sculptures, potential income of R50000 - 33% gallery commission = about 33000, but I won't sell all, so that gets more realistically to R8000-16000. Which actually isn't enough for 3 months. So it's a bit of a fuckup to begin with. But what can a man do? Bite down and go forth.

The idea is that I once made this sculpture for my Brother's girlfriend, called Takkie 2.0. I took a jacaranda branch, traced its outline, and then cut out each section of the twig, out of thin jacaranda slabs, then split each section in thirds lengthwise, and rejoined them in a staggered way. Let this illustration explain:

Overly complicated explanation for a simple thing. Anyway, point is, it's easy to understand as a pretty thing, nice and decorative, no heavy content, no controversy or intellectualism. So people can buy it for a Christmas gift. Affordable.

This is the plan. One a day for 21 days.

31 October 2018

So I have started 5 different takkies. I have their sections, still have to join and then shape. But this is so damn boring, I will finish these 6 some time, but I won't be making more. I remember when I helped Louis with his second solo at Lizardore, we made this lifesize man out of jacaranda wood, and for our particular system to work (we were using 3D scanning to give us a number of 'slices' that are easier to copy, get proportion right away) we had to have slices all of even thickness. So we rigged
up the router on a sled that spaced it 10cm above a table surface, I sliced jacaranda sections with the chainsaw to about 12cm thick, and then for like a week I sat there trimming the thick pieces down to 10cm. I wore a respirator, goggles and earmuffs, so my breathing, hearing and vision all had this underwater/scuba quality. And because the wood was still wet, the sawdust would heap on my, it would be cool and moist, so I really felt like I was in a fish tank for a week. I told Louis that all of these masses of sawdust are like super integral to this show, that feeling of being immersed, and we should fill the gallery floor with sawdust, so people get the smell and feeling, and the sawdust muffles the sound. He said no.

But for MY show, no one can say no to me, so I will fill the gallery floor up with sawdust. Because I want people to smell the different woods. The ficus bark smells like a vanilla coconut, camphor smells like camphor, the eucalyptus smells vinegary (it died from a fungus attack so I dunno if the fungus created the smell or the wood), the aromatic cedar smells aromatic, etc. etc. So I'm thinking, let me make bowls out of each sort of wood, and then at the end I fill each bowl with its own sawdust, then people can actually smell each one separately. Then it also becomes more ritualistic, like a temple with offering bowls and incense sort of thing. Then I can also make the bowls for sale, so I'll have bowls, and takkies, and?....

2 November 2018

Everything is taking quite long, so I'm back to thinking about my old friend, mr Contemporary Art Installation and Performance. If you can't get the object out in time, don't complete it and just do a performance. But, the idiocy of it all is that I embarked on this project to make money, now, less than 5 days later I'm off the track and balls deep in non-commercial stuff. But we leave for cape town on the 5th. So what can I do?

My plan is: I have a lot of really nice looking pieces of wood in my studio. They're nice because they're nice. But put two nice ones side by side and it looks contrived or kitsch or just doesn't work. So it's a lot of effort to take it from a nice bit to a nice artwork. Because when you put down an artwork, you are saying, hello everybody, I’ve considered this thing, laboured over it, wrestled with it, chopped and changed it, etc. So here it is, as good as it can positively be, the utmost extent of my capability, skill and training, I can't do it better than this. This is what I don't have time for. But when you do a live performance, and the audience interacts, and they see you make something in 5 minutes, and you give it to them as a free gift, suddenly those two bits of wood that you just stuck together are contextualised and personalised, and become awesome.

So I will spend my time out of Pretoria thinking of a sneaky way to present my exhibition so that it looks very flashy and spectacular, and I get away with not having that much new work. I think I'm going to print some huge sized photos of me wearing various of my masks that I've made in the past years, and maybe ask Heidi to take some new ones too, then I can have that on the walls with the 6 takkies, the bowls in the centre, the sawdust on the floor, and me performing behind the counter. I can sell editions of the prints, and the whole ceremony pumps up the marketing and desirability of the art. Let's hope...

10 November
So I was back in the studio today: 2 weeks left. The 6 bowls are in process, the 6 takkies, Heild is sort of taking care of the photos, so now I have to make the performance cool. Totally lost the commercial plot at this point. It didn’t even take a week. But my performance: people react well when I’m costumed in my wooden art pieces. It makes for good photos. So I need some sort of costume. What I’ve decided for my performance is this: my ‘thing’ is that I make these apparently functional, yet absurd, yet possibly magical devices in order to solve my various problems or concerns in life. So I’m a doctor/mechanic/magician type figure, not quite spiritual or esoteric, but not quite reasonable or sane. So I will be Mr. Doctor Laing, and the bits of wood that I stick together are ‘medicine’. So people come to my show to get their personalised medicine. They tell me what ails them (here I have something to work with, a found concept) and I grab a couple of bits of wood that could arguably somehow have value for their particular problem, join them and tada this person has a free artwork, and hopefully posts photos on social media, and hopefully talks about me, and hopefully also buys one of the for-sale artworks, or one of their friends do.

And Mr. Doctor Laing needs tools, so my corporal adoration will take the form of a tool harness. I have this unfinished artwork that can sort of hang off of my shoulders, and I will use it as a quickly available platform to build my tool harness on:

![Diagram of tool harness](image)

Basically I need a saw, drill bits, drill, craft knife, files, pliers and Plasters! I can have some more stuff on the table. And then a mask. I got this peach tree stump from Danielle, and I was super excited to have peach wood. Imagine: the wood actually smells of peaches! But hey, worms love peaches, so they eat the shit out of this tree. It dies I get the trunk. Cool. I see the worms and I start chopping away with a panga, because what they do is: they eat the wood, they crap it out again, so the tree’s volume doesn’t appear to be decreased, but it’s density has. So you just worry the rotted parts with a panga and they fall out in like chunks, and all the parts that push back against the panga are healthy. Easy sorting. So I hack and hack and I reach that point where the worms have stopped their full on assault and have gone off in separate little tunnels, so it feels like I’m at the point where there is more wood than holes, and it looks like I’m getting about 70% of the trunk still. I climb in with the chainsaw and take it bit by bit, feeling where there’s resistance and where not; and I go a bit further, and further, and further, to the point where I realise the worms did more damage than I thought. I’m down to less than half of the trunk remaining, and I go in with the panga and chisels again, back to
the chainsaw. Long story short, I was left with literally a sliver of tree, it was probably the part that was just too dry, too warm, too cold or too wet, but it’s the only part that the worms haven’t ruined. There goes a couple of hours of probing this ‘precious’ bit of tree and I get a sliver. Seems like I shouldn’t have bothered. However, since I HAD put all the work in, I kept the sliver just to be stubborn.

But now that I need a quick mask, the sliver is looking very useful. It’s like this wood tornado shape, like a Bedouin face scarf, powerfully swishing in a semi-circle. And the ends are even unravelled by the worms, so it’s pretty cool for a fortune-teller/doctor/engineer guy.

![Mask Image]

21 November 2017

I’m nearing completion on my stuff, but nothing is complete. The mask is coming along. I want to add a turned Mulberry wood horn and then call it ‘fruity-façade’ haha. The harness thing is also sort of done. My idea of ‘quick’ is absurd though, like if I made 1 tiny component that no one else will even notice in 5 hours I’m like yeah! Quick! And that’s not earning you anything! Wool Fucktard.

Yes. But I’m cursed and I keep doing this. I love it, I’m addicted and trapped. The bowls are done and drying the takkies are done but need some sort of framing device. I also have to start getting together bits and pieces that will actually be used to make the ‘medicine’, I have to curate the aesthetics and also think through practical points, because I’m imagining that I will be making a medicine every 3 minutes for 3 hours to produce a total of 60. Like I know it’s unrealistic, but I’m still aiming there. And I wanna give the audience tokens so that they know what their place in line is without them hanging around and making me nervous, so I can just put up a sign that says “now serving #34” and then they come and #35 readies themself. But I wanna make cool wooden tokens with symbols carved in that also become like little artworks. Stupid? Yes. Time consuming? Also yes.

29 November

Everything is sort of ready. As ready as it gets. I’ve taken some of the stuff to Stu already and will take the rest tomorrow morning. His high turnover exhibition style (which allowed me to have this
show on a month’s notice) means that at 3 we take out all the clutter and other art in his little
gallery and can start hanging my work for the show that starts at 6.30. hmmm. Let’s hope it all goes
all right. I haven’t really done any marketing besides Instagram.

1 December 2017

It’s cool that I also did a performance exactly 2 years ago for my day of birth. One completely private and sad
and weird, and one very social and human. Last night was crazy. I was in the gallery till almost midnight, and
then I just went home and slept. There were a lot of people and I don’t even make more than 30 artworks in all
that time. The number system that I developed confused people, even though I had a clear explanation. I
should have just bit the bullet and written Arabic numerals in stead of being otherwise with my symbols. But
the biggest problem was that like right at the start, like 10 kids show up. And obviously they don’t get my sort
of ironic medicine man thing, they think I’m like a clown who makes balloon animals, and they’re these rich
kids so they get what they want. And I’m like shit maybe their parents are loaded and if I please the kids they’ll
buy my art. It was a fuckup. Because the one wanted the moon, the one wanted a unicorn horn, the one
wanted a maple leaf. I wasn’t supposed to do figurative stuff, so it took way longer than I planned, and still
looked shit. I wasn’t prepared for that. And then some of the people for whom I would have wanted to make
medicine, like Angus Taylor, had already left.

So here are valuable lessons to be learned. But I still think it was a success generally. I always half arse these
things and people humour me. It’s so hard to put on a professional performance without money though. It’s
like this constant circle fuck. In ancient societies there were small, tightly cohesive groups that were part of a
larger cultural practice, and you could do rituals because everyone contributed. Now we’re so used to
American style bonanza entertainment that its haaard. So last night was good but also not that good. At the
same time. The people came in, walked on the sawdust, looked at my photos but like I’m 27 and I’m not a pro.
I’m still a fucking kid and actually I’m just an embarrassment. But also I really love what I do and believe in
what I do and people that I respect, that have dount in the art world, compliment me and say keep it up. So I’m
here. Any every now and then a glimmer of adulthood breaks through the overall failure.

Like I would be super legit if I had gotten an engineering job, and I could have done it, I’m very intelligent in
that way. But I literally am compelled to be an artist. But I sort of suck at it and I can’t properly fund it. There
are really shit artists out there who earned money first as something else, and then paid their way into art. Buy
the infrastructure, the marketing, the admin, etc., etc and kwa, you’re in. make some sentimental yet edgy
shit. But it was a good performance. Just keep slogging. One day you’ll maybe make it and you’re not dead yet.

5 April 2018

A true patina, the most difficult to achieve, and the most desirable, is made by time, actual use, collecting a
thing, treasuring it, taking it with you, not just discarding it. Not sealing the thing with wax or a clearcoat of
polyurethane, but letting it age, and then polishing it up again, age, polish, use, polish. Guy du Toit said that
the more time you spend touching, sanding, treating, scratching, smoothing a thing the better it will look. Just
add time. I have a shitload of wood that I’ve been collecting for sometimes more than 7 years, and sometimes
it was quite old to begin with (old Furniture, etc.), so now it’s old-old. I keep it because I want it to be part of
something cool, but it’s hard to know what to do with the thing because the thing is already itself. How do you
make it part of something ‘better’? I have a lot of artworks that were completed and exhibited, and then stand
around my studio for a long time. Then they pissed me off, they’re just getting rained on, gathering
dust, falling over, expiring. So I cut a piece off, or cut all the pieces off, now I can store it better. Then
I grab a suitable piece at some point and it becomes part of my next sculpture, then that too goes
back to being components. These are my found objects, found in my own collection. I’m not
sentimental. Use the precious thing up, and treasure the leftover residue, if you like.

So again I have too little time for ABSA atelier. I had the opportunity to work in William Kentridge’s
studio for 5 weeks before the deadline, and he was prepared to pay what I consider my time to be
worth at this point, and it was an undeniable opportunity. So I said, fuck the maybe of ABSA, here is
the yes of money. But now, post that, the deadline is still reachable (3 weeks), so I will make
something. Like with my advocate of nature a year ago: I don’t have the time to craft something
super duper and permanent and craftsmanshiply finessed: call on the public to make it for me
quickly, call on the fates and chance. Video it so that the story, process become visible and become
the thing to look at. I’ve been wanting to incorporate Instagram into my artmaking process
somehow for some time. My friend Oliver Mayhew has tried to collaborate with me in this way
before, we sent a proposal for funding for some absurd project to the Goethe Institut. I’ve also
spoken about it many times before. But now with the short deadline and the necessity of too little
time on my side, I think I have a way to do it.

I will broadcast a live story over Instagram, so all of the people who log on can be present with me at
the time of making, see and hear what I see and hear, and then tell me what to make. I also like
social media because in this age it is just another place. It’s a well infrastructured place, huge
corporations have spent a ton of time and money to make it so. It has certain functionality and we
are bound to its rules willingly so that we may revel in its bounties of ego stroking and vicarious love.
There are things you can and can’t do. And it’s free. So why get someone to create the online space
that I want, at great expense. Social media is a found medium, found space, found tool, found
content.

So::: the artwork::: I put all of my ‘found’ objects: the failed, cannibalised parts of sculptures, the
offcuts from other projects and the bits of nice wood that are overflowing from boxes in my studio, I
put these on a table, nicely arranged like a palette (I’ve often referred to the large table in my studio,
which is covered in bits of wood as my palette). But I don’t have to take the hard decision of what
goes where, I don’t have to take responsibility for what the end product is. On Instagram you can do
very few things, that’s why I like it. It is the oasis of serenity in the wilderness of content overload
that is the internet. You can’t share fake news links, you can’t poke people or write on their wall. You
are allowed to upload up images or videos of specified size and length, and only straight from your
own phone. Each profile has a landing page that shows a number of recent thumbnails, so you can
look at your profile and quickly establish if you are sharing curated content or just shit. In a live story
you can do even less: you (the broadcaster) can share what your phone camera sees and hears, you
can type out text, and ‘pin’ a single section of text at a time. You may want to do this because
anyone watching your story can share text as well, and what this does is to bump earlier lines
upwards and eventually out of view. So there’s an audio/video feed, and a stream of comments. If
you want to do anything else, tough. So my vehicle is this.

Leading up to my live performance, I will be asking my audience to be available and online, watching
me at the specified time, and I will prime them for what and how will be happening. They get to join
my feed, and tell me via text what to do with wood from my palette. That’s it. They can be lying in bed in stained undies or on the loo taking a poop, and tap their little app, a magic mirror on the world, and then, potentially from the other side of the planet, I can execute their wishes. They get to make a wooden artwork with tools that they didn’t have to buy, with a material that they do not need to know how to use. And they have to fight the other people who are doing the same thing to grab my attention in the little sliver of time that they have before their comment rolls offscreen and disappears forever.

This is my maybe 6th to 10th performance artwork, and I have made many mistakes in execution and delivery in those past ones. So this is my idea, now I will be ironing and fleshing out the potential pitfalls and opportunities.

19 April 2018

So when I had the idea I messaged Alex, who had for some reason offered to help with whatever I ask whenever I need it. So I asked him. I said: will you point the phone at me and type on it, and then I perform. My naïve ass thought it’s that simple. Back in reality, I met with him and his employee Tyler, and Heidi (on alex’s recommendation) a couple of times and we brainstormed and think tanked this thing. The final idea is he films (he’s a filmmaker) Heidi/tyler holds the phone and the other (Heidi/tyler) types from a different phone, from a profile that we’ve indicated is authorised to mediate. We also realised that because the stream of text keeps flowing upward, it will be difficult to actually catch everyone’s requests. Also, if we could record all the requests, I still wouldn’t be able to execute them in any sort of real-time way. So the idea that we have is to have a number voting system.

So, people have like 30 seconds to choose one of 9 pieces selected by Heidi/tyler, and then to choose 1/4 pre-written action words, and a-z quadrants to do the action on the piece in. So I still do what I know to be possible, and the voting rabble are embroiled in a power struggle to get their option to the top. We do 4 50 minute sessions, allowing us 10 minutes to recoup. After 4 hours there the artwork is, tools down, and we start editing. This gives me 7 days before the submission, much better than any previous time. Johan is adamant that we need to do a trial run, but because we need all 4 of us there, we decided to do the trial run with a selected private audience Saturday at 8 before the performance for real starts at 10. I’ve made some pulled chicken stuff with wraps, chips, chocolate, and alcohol free beer for my pro pro-bono team, and all the stuff for the performance is lying neatly in my studio. I hope I don’t get nervous like with the takkies and ruin this.

(Drawing of my planned layout)
22 April 2018

Finished the performance yesterday, had a look at some of the footage, and then slept. I'm exhausted. The trial run that we did in the am was really useful. We realises that 1/4 actions, 1/9 objects and A-Z 1-9 placement options was too many. Also that the repeating of numbers led to confusion. We also decided that I need to constantly be talking, even if it's really banal, just talk about what sort of wood I'm using, why, etc. The layout that we used for the final performance looked like this:

As for the performance: it started out a little slow and confusing. What was fortunate is that there were certain individuals who were at work or sick in bed or just really bored or whatever, that they actually stayed on for the entirety of every session, i.e. 4x50 minutes, and these people formed a sort of impromptu community. They also established a sort of grammar and language that worked despite the limitations of the medium. I think if no one had spent more than 10 minutes on, they would have felt confused and alienated and logged off again without meaningfully contributing. So what happened was good luck. Because I spent like R500 promoting this on Insta, so I was hoping for strangers to be on, but it was mostly people I know. But ja people tell me they genuinely enjoyed it, and since I never coerced anyone, and yet many people spent around 50 minutes on, it must have held some inherent entertainment or stimulation value for them. But the biggest issue was a time lag. Even the people who were in the same room as me, on the same wifi had 10 seconds, whereas
some people were mentioning a 30 second delay. So by the time Heidi or tyler had actually seen and read the comment from a viewer out loud to me, and I had actually responded, and maybe asked for a reaction from the viewers, it's possible that a minute could have passed. And I couldn't sit waiting for this minute to catch up with me, so I kept busy, ad-libbing. That's why I say that those 6 people who took the time to be involved in every session actually helped to make the whole thing a success. I see a pattern here, of my trusting blindly that whatever I do will be just interesting enough that random people will participate and hopefully make my performance a success.

Waking life is sort of like this writing, fleeting dream images.