

Lamb of God

an exhibition by Pippa Skotnes



The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

and



presents

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INTRODUCTION

During a visit to Cape Town, curator Sigr d Szetu and I met and talked with Professor Skotnes in her office. In a corner behind stacks of books and papers was a horse skeleton. "Part of an exhibition project", she told us, "a book actually".

The book is now complete. A book like one you have never seen before.

At the centre is a skeleton of a carthorse. In its life the horse tramped the streets of the sprawling township of Khayelitsha, outside of Cape Town, and then it died in the local SPCA.

On its bones are written a history of blood and martyrdom, of aspects of the intellectual history of the Church and of ideas around the transubstantiation of wafer into flesh in the ceremony of the Eucharist.

It is embellished with gold leaf and wears shoes of solid silver.

On each side of this horse are two others. On the bones of one are written narratives of sacrifice and hymns and prayers for the dead. On the spine the major battles of the First World War are named and those of World Ward Two are inscribed on vellum pieces that make up its tail.

The third horse carries the narratives of a people - obliterated during the colonial era in southern Africa - and written in their language, now no longer spoken by a single soul.

This exhibition comprises cases of objects, images, prints, and texts. It explores **the book** - what constitutes a book and how do we read it? It explores **the archive** - how do we use and translate an archive? Finally it explores the **narratives of sacrifice** and the Eucharist. Suggesting that "Real Presence" resides not only its Christian manifestation, but also in the ideas of the indigenous /Xam of South Africa - And in art itself!

"Lamb of God" is an artwork and book of life: Love, hate, compassion, sacrifice and redemption. It is storytelling at its best. It is essentially real presence.

Bergen, March 2004
Bj rn I. Follevaag
Producer

A Miraculous History of the Book

Isabel Hofmeyr

At the centre of this exhibition stand three volumes. Each comprises a horse's skeleton covered in hand-written texts. Both sumptuous and macabre, the skeletons – burnished in gold leaf, shod in silver shoes and fully bridled – draw us closer. The texts inscribed on the skeletons are of diverse provenance but cluster around three historical periods, namely medieval and early modern Christianity; the First and Second World Wars; and finally a group of texts, produced in the 1870s, in the now dead Bushman language /Xam. Located around the three horses is a galaxy of items: boxes, reliquaries, cases of objects with textual inclusions, bridled horse skulls, and multi-media images.

We approach the three skeletons and start reading. There is, however, no fixed vantage point from which to read. The contour of the bones, the direction and size of the text determine how we must choreograph ourselves. We crane and peer, swivelling our heads this way and that. How, we wonder, are we to read these skeletons, their texts and the objects that surround them? How are we to navigate the feast of comparison and the extravagance of relationality implied in the exhibition and its parts?

Like any traveller unsure of where to go, we must seek directions. These are of course best sought in the texts of the exhibition themselves, since any text carries with it an implicit set of 'instructions' for how it wishes to be read. These instructions lie in its formal arrangement and rules of composition which will provide us with a set of guidelines for how to proceed. By heeding these, we might try to make ourselves ideal readers, to bend and tune ourselves to the imaginative address of these textual objects.

However, the question of what a text is or might

be has been much debated in literary and cultural theory and much of the intellectual project of the humanities over the last half-century has been to name and capture the multivalent nature of textuality. In Barthes' memorable phrasing, texts are objects of "shimmering depth", "vast cultural spaces through which our person...is only one passage", filled with the elusive "rustle of language" (31). At the same time, much effort has gone into understanding texts as material objects, as commodities that circulate. To adapt the terms formulated by Alfred Gell, an anthropologist of the art object, texts as material objects are "temporally dispersed ... moving through time and place, like a thunderstorm" (226). Other domains, most notably studies of the history of the book have likewise explored the text as material object. As the doyen of book historians, Roger Chartier, has observed, any history of the book entails a three-fold equation: "the text itself, the object that conveys the text, and the act that grasps it" (161).

However, the theorists cited above have generally emerged from societies that are hopelessly literate. The everyday practice of textuality around which much theory shapes itself is consequently thoroughly institutionalized and most reading practices become uniform and regulated. As a result, reading becomes semi-invisible and decorporealised. Indeed, at one point, Barthes notes, almost plaintively "Reading is the gesture of the body (for of course one reads with one's body)..." (36). The sentiment in parentheses could only emerge in a context where reading has become an all but disembodied practice.

In order to capture the full richness of texts and textuality, those interested in books and reading have often turned to societies in time and space where reading is not uniformly institutionalized: to medieval societies, to colonial and postcolonial settings where the technologies of writing are explored and experimented with on the borders of, and outside formal institutions (Prinsloo and Breier; Street). These investigations have

illuminated many cases where novel understandings of literacy are at work. Early African Christian converts, for example, or medieval believers for that matter acquired literacy miraculously, generally in a dream journey to heaven or from the Virgin Mary (Hofmeyr, "Dreams"). Jamaican slaves insisted on being buried clasping their communion tickets which were believed to be passports to heaven (Curtin 29, 37). In such understandings, texts circulate between heaven and earth and pose the beguiling question of what kind of audience might be brought into being by such a path of textual circulation. As books are baptized in new intellectual formations, the way they are understood is enlarged, a phenomenon we see in the metaphors used to describe books in para-literate situations. These include the book as a flag, as marriage, and as dance (Hofmeyr, "Metaphorical"). In these comparisons, books and their potentialities, are grasped in novel and distinctive ways and our understanding of texts and their promise are commensurately expanded.

In this exhibition which entangles so many different times and spaces, and which poses so powerfully the question of text, writing and material objects, these novel theories of text and textuality are made vivid before our eyes. If we heed the horses' instructions, we will learn and experience a theory of the textual object which takes us beyond much contemporary thinking on the subject. We will experience texts as multimedia and multilingual portfolios which straddle the printed and the spoken, image and text, the visible and invisible world. As a whole, the exhibition maps out the imaginative boundaries of what a miraculous history of the book might look like.

To explore this idea further, let us take three types of text distributed in the exhibition and heed their instructions. They are the bone book; the rosary; and the archive.



Lamb of God: Book of the Divine Consolation
Detail: skull



Lamb of God: Book of the Speaking in Tongues
Horse skeleton, gold, silver, vellum, parchment, ink, linen thread and wood, glass ampoules containing lines from an essay by Stephen Greenblatt.
Detail: scapula and ribs



Lamb of God: Book of Blood and Milk
Detail: skull

The Bone Book

To comprehend the bone book of the horses, we find ourselves undertaking forms of reading that are simultaneously modern, medieval and postcolonial. As modern readers we quickly recognize the bone books as tissues of quotation and as fragments of other texts. We also respond to their apparent randomness. From a distance, it looks as though the skeletons have plodded through some postmodern textual blizzard, fragments of language cleaving to them. As consumers of contemporary popular culture, we note the information that two of the skeletons were originally cart horses in Kayelitsha, the large township outside Cape Town: the 'low' and 'unofficial' has been recycled as 'high' culture. We smile at the textual parody of one horse which has a set of bibliographic cards suspended under its spine.

But at the same time our reading must be medieval. We are, after all, contemplating the singular and handmade book, transcribed with patient dedication. Is this act of transcription, as it was for many medieval scribes, a type of prayer, a textual form that attempts to speak to other worlds? At times, we cannot read silently but must mouth a word made unfamiliar by the contour of the bone and so we come to resemble medieval monks, hunched over a codex and reading in murmurs. Again like medieval readers our senses are intensely involved: the red lettering, gold burnish and silver enchant our sight. We hear and feel the horses' tails and the manes, made up of hair, small bones and curls of vellum. We could be in the world of Augustinian allegory and enigma in which texts speak allusively or in riddles (or in St Augustine's words:

"wisdom's way of teaching chooses to hint at how divine things should be thought of by certain images and analogies available to the senses" [quoted in Brown 253]).

At moments, the modern and late medieval combine. In several pieces, we encounter little ampoules, each containing a line from an essay by Stephen Greenblatt (1996) which describes some of the polemical exchanges between Catholics and Protestants in the Sixteenth Century and particularly those relating to the sacramental bread of the Supper of the Lord. What happens if a mouse or rat nibbles some of the consecrated host? Does he ingest the Real Body, or does he not? A copy of Greenblatt's article has been cut into strips, goldleafed and then curled into the ampoules and distributed across the exhibition. These ampoules look as

though they may contain nourishing elixirs to be consumed, reminding us of the medieval (and later) preoccupation with Christ's body as flesh and with the idea of the Bible as a text to be ingested ("Open thy mouth, and eat what I give you," God instructed Ezekiel while presenting him with a roll of text [quoted in Manguel 171]). At the same time, the ampoules spread text across a surface and point to contemporary preoccupations with the textualisation of space.

Yet, at the same time, these medieval and modern practices are thrown into postcolonial relief and are reconfigured by the presence of the /Xam texts and the colonial world that they imply. In a medieval context, a vernacular language would betoken newness and promise. Here the vernacular, its speakers exterminated, signals language death and the violence of colonial conclusions. If there is a rustle, it is the rustle of dried language. Yet, the colonial context also produces newness. Books and literacy, for example, are reshaped as these technologies of writing are baptized in new intellectual traditions,

many of which are oral.

This interface has constituted one theme of Skotnes' previous work, particularly in relation to the Bushman and the /Xam, a group with whose intellectual and artistic traditions she has had a profound engagement. Her exhibition Miscast and the edited volume that accompanied it constitute, in Skotnes' words, a "critical and visual exploration of the term 'Bushman' and the various relationships that gave rise to it" ("Introduction" 20). An earlier art book, *Sounds from the Thinking Strings: A Visual, Literary and Archaeological and Historical Interpretation of the Final Years of /Xam Life* (1991) investigates in text and image the intellectual history of /Xam communities. Her two most recent books (*Heaven's Things* [1999] and *Stories are the Wind* [2002]) likewise engage with the richness of /Xam thought.

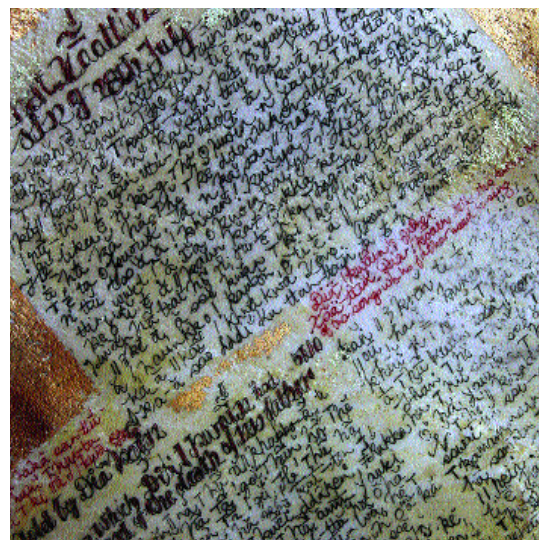
One major source to which she has repeatedly turned is Lucy Lloyd's extraordinary archive of /Xam narrative and philosophy. These

testimonies, songs and folklore were dictated to Lloyd and her brother-in-law Wilhelm Bleek in the 1870s in Cape Town by /Xam prisoners from whom Lloyd and Bleek learned /Xam. The prisoners were released into their care and over a period of several years, Lloyd and Bleek took down 13,000 pages of bilingual testimony along with drawings, instruments and objects which today comprise the Bleek and Lloyd archive, the only substantial collection of documentation on nineteenth-century Bushman life (Deacon; Hall; Skotnes, *Real Presence*).

As Skotnes points out, these /Xam testimonies constitute a complex and multivalent textuality, a feature which Lloyd understood and attempted to capture in her form of transcription which generally involved three parallel columns, one containing the /Xam narrative, one being an English translation and one being a further /Xam commentary on the narrative. Skotnes comments (in the edited collection on *Miscast* whose layout incidentally is informed by the principle inherent in Lloyd's transcription):



Lamb of God: Book of the Speaking in Tongues
Horse skeleton, gold, silver, vellum, parchment, ink, linen thread and wood. Detail: silver shod hoof



Lamb of God: Book of the Speaking in Tongues
Horse skeleton, gold, silver, vellum, parchment, ink, linen thread and wood, glass ampoules containing lines from an essay by Stephen Greenblatt.



Lamb of God: Book of the Divine Consolation
Horse skeleton, gold, silver, vellum, parchment, ink, linen thread and wood.

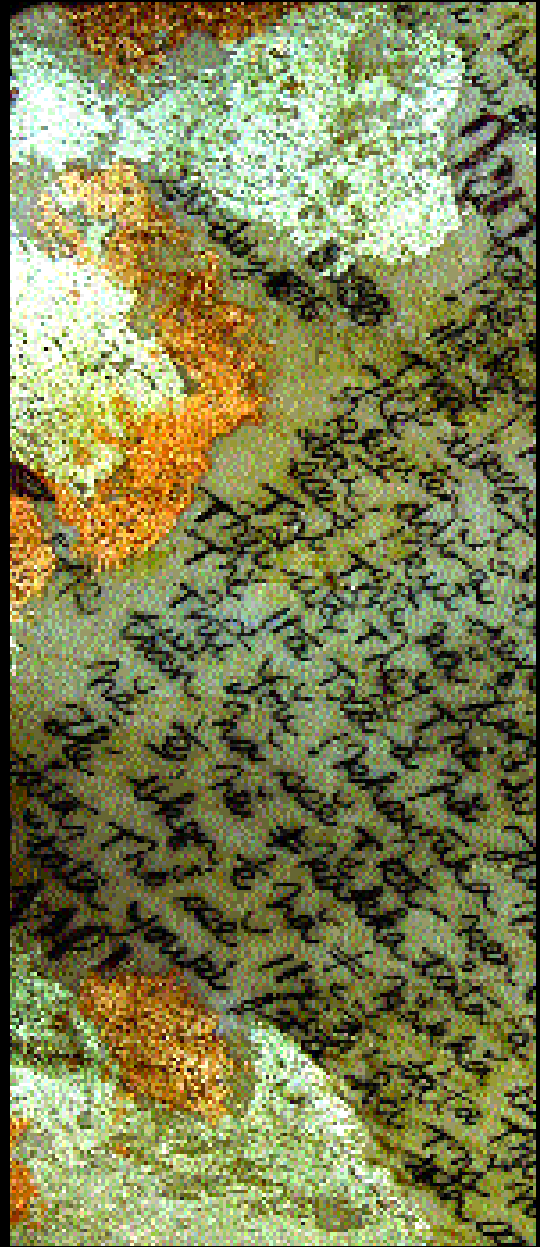
the stories [Lloyd] was recording were not linear, and neither was the method of measuring the time frame of their occurrence. To accommodate the qualities of these oral traditions, she would often introduce a parallel text which would run alongside the story on the left-hand page. The result was to give a new dimension to the story, to make the process of reading an active and mobile one, and to give a materialising life to the notion of //Kabbo, one of her principal informants, that stories his people told were like the winds that came from far off, and could be felt. ("Introduction" 23)

Skotnes continues:

[The Lloyd archive] has a visual presence, and its structure requires that it be read, not as a narrative or set of narratives, but as a complex network interweaving ideas and stories that link one with the other, that confound a sense of chronology, that throw into doubt one's sense of time and, ultimately, one's sense of what is real. ("Introduction" 23)

In this exhibition, these ideas of multiple and interwoven textualities have been deepened and complicated by the /Xam texts being inscribed on bone. This principle of text on bone provides an organizing principle of the exhibition and requires a range of reading strategies.

Most obviously perhaps, the theme of bone highlights the pre-occupation with medieval religious practice and its obsession with bodily fragmentation, relics and resurrection, or put in Caroline Walker Bynum's terms, whether dead parts could again be made whole through redemption (1991). The description of fifteenth-century devotional painting as a form that put Christ's body parts "on display for the ... beholder to watch with myopic closeness" (quoted in Bynum 271) could well be adapted for this exhibition: wherever we turn, we encounter bones – singly, in piles, buried, disinterred, lovingly presented alongside dried roses, encased in twirls of vellum, displayed in pill boxes and



Lamb of God: Book of the Speaking in Tongues
Horse skeleton, gold, silver, vellum, parchment, ink, linen thread and wood, glass ampoules containing lines from an essay by Stephen Greenblatt.

reliquaries, and clasped in the arms of the priest-figures who dominate the war landscapes.

At the same time, the exhibition provides an acute reading of the omnipresence of bone in southern African history. In the case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), for instance, a dominant narrative was the story of relatives desperate to find the unmarked graves of their 'disappeared' loved ones, murdered by the agents of the apartheid state. In some cases, these bones were found and re-interred. In others, the bones could not be located. The testimonies of the TRC constituted a textual mantle or reliquary over these bones, an endeavour to confer some coherence on the trauma and to lay to rest the ghosts of the past. The theme of bones and reinterment has continued to assume importance in the post-apartheid public sphere (a recent prominent case involved the San woman Saartjie Baartman, brought from Paris where in the nineteenth century her body had become a museum exhibit and buried in a public ceremony in South Africa on August 9 2002 [a public holiday: 'Womens' Day]). These ceremonies around human remains are all attempts to establish a material continuity with a past that has been violently torn and, in keeping with African divination, is an endeavour to make the bones speak. Skotnes brings together text on bone as an organizing principle of the exhibition and in that relationship, opens up a new imaginative and visual historiography that draws together medieval and post-apartheid concerns: can we resurrect, make whole, narrativise, or confer coherence on that which has been broken and killed?

The contours of this historiography are further suggested by the three textual archives that the bone books 'anthologize'. These are texts on medieval Christianity (including hymns, extracts of Dante on purgatory, lives of Saints, lists of popes, and controversies on the Eucharist); the First World War and finally /Xam texts from the Bleek and Lloyd archives. By radically integrating

texts across time and space, this exhibition resonates with recent revisionist thinking on Empire (Cooper and Stoler). This school of thought questions the usefulness of older models of 'centre' and 'periphery' in which everything flows from metropole to colony and instead, asks us to think of Empire as an intellectually integrated zone in which circuits of influence travel in more than one direction at a time. In the words of Gyan Prakash, we need a realignment that releases "histories and knowledges from their disciplining as area studies; as imperial and overseas histories...that seals metropolitan structures from the contagion of the record of their own formation elsewhere" (11). (This same sentiment has been expressed, in lighter vein, by Salman Rushdie who has noted that the British do not understand their history because it happened somewhere else [Clifford 317].) To encompass such ideas, we need a multi-sited methodology which demonstrates how events are made in different places at the same time.

This exhibition performs these ideas for us in visual terms. One insistent backdrop is the battlefields of the First and Second World Wars which explode before us in virtually every image we see. This exhibition reminds us that this catastrophic encounter affected not only Europe but all of Empire: troops from across the Imperial world were drawn in; fighting happened both inside and outside Europe; in some analyses, the war itself was sparked by Imperial rivalries. As Prakash indicates, the catastrophes and contagions of Empire cannot be sealed off and demarcated as the business of either metropole or colony. Imperial catastrophe becomes everyone's catastrophe.

This point is underlined by the images that repeatedly splice together different orders of Imperial carnage: in several images of First World War battle scenes, we see a foreground of disinterred bones, which at first sight seems to be coterminous with the First World War battle scene in the background. However on closer



Lamb of God: Book of the Speaking in Tongues
Horse skeleton, gold, silver, vellum, parchment, ink, linen thread and wood, glass ampoules containing lines from an essay by Stephen Greenblatt.

inspection, we see that the brown colour tones of the foreground differ slightly from the background and we learn that the pile of bones in the front of the image only recently came to light in a Cape Town building development and probably comprise slave remains.

If we are to have an integrated and multi-sited history of Empire, then these relations have to be simultaneously grasped: foreground and background, then and now, text and image, here (Cape Town) and there (the Somme). As other have pointed out (Myers), such a revised history could usefully be traced through the things and objects of Empire. By tracking the flows of commodities that coursed through Empire, by documenting the biography of things and the unexpected routes that they took, we will start to make apparent the complex pathways and intersynaptic networks of Empire. The exhibition and its multiple objects put this methodological challenge to the viewer. How, for example, does

an unused roll of Second World War bandage make its way to an antique shop in Cape Town, and what might we learn from that story? At the same time, the exhibition plays with this method: dotted across its space are what look like colonial postcards. They are however digitally produced. We are asked to ponder the result and conceptualize what it might mean for a fragment from the present to be imaginatively and retrospectively circulated via the postal systems of Empire. In some cases, the digitally produced cards mimic the carte-de-visite format and bear the name of the photographer W. Hermann who took photographs of the Bleek and Lloyd /Xam informants and printed these as cartes-de-visites (Hall). In this case, we are asked to consider the role that a particular visual genre plays in circulating images, and what it means to transpose that format from the past into the present with a changed set of actors within its frames of this exhibition like a leopard's vertebrae, a horse shoe nail, a toy stretcher, and a dried rose, what type of history might these produce?

The Rosary

When I first went to Cape Town to see the exhibition taking shape, I had never used a rosary. In no time, Skotnes produced one from the wonderful cornucopia of her studio overflowing with every imaginable object – family photos, animal skulls, wreaths, medical antiques, a stuffed monkey, tape measures, feathers, dried flowers, parchment clippings, baby shoes, x-rays, relics.... She also printed out a set of instructions, from the Internet, on how to use it (a text that incidentally recurs in several images in the exhibition). Using a rosary for the first time, I experienced the complex interaction of mind, body and text that it demands. The operation has several simultaneous dimensions: saying a roster of prayers, in a particular order, while touching the beads to keep track of one's progress, all the while meditating on the 'mysteries' or events from



A rosary, then, is a mini-textual 'factory', a physical site where texts are generated and disseminated, floating to the next world and the ears of God. Rather like /Xam stories which float in the air, these texts can glide through time and space and have effects in this world and the next. At points in the exhibition, this comparison is made explicit. In one grouped display of boxes, we encounter a leopard spine inscribed with the texts of the rosary. On either side, are photographs of Diä!kwain, one of Lucy Lloyd's primary informants. The juxtaposition invites us to compare the rosary as a set of textual practices with those of the /Xam.

The juxtaposition is arresting and itself becomes a 'factory' of speculative comparisons in which /Xam and Catholic practices are compared and defamiliarised. What if the leopard's spine were to become the rosary? Imagine the rough



penitential work involved in reciting a whole cycle of the rosary! What if we considered the rosary, not as an inanimate object, but rather treated living objects as rosaries, using them from afar to generate texts of meditation? Is it useful to think of the leopard as a type of rosary for the /Xam? Did it unify a set of discrete and repeated texts (for instance, about leopards and humans, hunting, predators, the porous relation of humans, animals and gods) and so function as a usable archive?

The /Xam often saw texts as objects that floated in the air, came with the wind and carried within them the past and the future. The texts of the rosary function in the same way: they are released into the next world, and like all religious texts, collapse time. To contemplate on Jesus' life is to enter, what one historian has aptly called the "apostolic dream time" (Peel 155).

As Skotnes herself has explained, this complex and layered comparison between Christian and /Xam practice forms one of the important foundations in her corpus:

The exhibition hopes to create an arresting comparative exposition of rituals and ideas that are at once central to /Xam cosmology and more broadly Christian traditions, and set these against images from periods of global and colonial conflict where, it contends, notions of sacrifice have enabled violence and brutality. One of the aims of this project is to place /Xam ideas within the global imagination – not that this has not already been done in other ways – but here in a way that simultaneously highlights the tragedy of the loss of culture and the strangeness of our own (western) traditions and beliefs. ("Lamb of God")

Another 'instruction' we can, then, take with us is to read the exhibition as a /Xam rosary. It is after all an exhibition made up of different 'joints' or 'beads', each of which we must experience physically, each of which we must contemplate on, each of which is a mystery and each of



Mysteries of the Rosary: Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious
15 wooden glass fronted cases, cloth, bone, photographs, glass
ampoules containing lines from an essay by Stephen Greenblatt
and various other objects.
1160 x 820

which (because it is so multivalent) would render up a different narrative on any day of the week. Like a rosary, the exhibition functions as the locus for a set of texts. Many of these have 'floated' to us through time via the agency of people like Diä!kwain and Lloyd and are held together productively by the 'rosary' of the exhibition.

The Archive

At several points in the exhibition, the archive created by Bleek and Lloyd is invoked: sections of it are inscribed on one horse, images of rolled up documents from the archive are included and individual pages and letters written by Lloyd are reproduced. Indeed Lloyd herself appears in the exhibition, dressed in a priest's robes.

The idea of the archive has of course loomed large in recent academic thought (Hamilton et al) and has become a strategy to contemplate reflexively on disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Archives are now less sources of information to be mined for facts but are rather institutional sites through which the politics of knowledge may be profitably





analysed. The term, often used with a capital 'A' has become a way of talking about virtually any corpus of texts as a configuration of power (Stoler). In relation to state-sanctioned collections of documents, debate has focused on archives as sites for analyzing state craft and technologies of rule. The nature of state power is then analysed through the systems of classification that states use in their "paper empires" (quoted in Stoler 90); the grid of intelligibility through which these operate; and the codified fictions through which states authorise themselves.

The exhibition invokes the metaphor of the archive and so turns our attention to these debates. However, it soon becomes apparent that this exhibition is less interested in reading archives as configurations and grids of power



than of asking how these may be eluded. This tendency becomes apparent if we turn to the biography of the horse skeletons. As the artist explained to me, the idea for these emerged after she had unsuccessfully attempted to prevent the State Library from claiming a depository copy of an art book, *Sounds from the Thinking Strings: A Visual, Literary and Archaeological and Historical Interpretation of the Final Years of /Xam Life*. Skotnes maintained that the book was a work of art and so did not fall within the scope of the deposit law. The State Library maintained it was a book. After a protracted set of court cases, the Library won and claimed its book. What type of book, Skotnes wondered, could one make that the library couldn't claim? Could one make a book to evade the state with its extractive demands



and forms of classification?

The horses then are an attempt to create a fugitive archive, and to think more fugitively about archives and their uses. In this regard, the discussion of archives as sites of secular religion and as cemeteries becomes apposite particularly as these resonate so deeply with the medieval themes of the exhibition. Mbembe, for example, describes the archive as a temple and a cemetery: a religious space because a set of rituals is constantly taking place there, rituals...of a quasi-magical nature, and a cemetery in the sense that the fragments of lives and pieces of time are interred there, their shadows and footprints inscribed on paper and preserved like so many relics. (19)

Seen in this way, the archive raises question of

resurrection and redemption:

Following tracks, putting back together scraps and debris, and reassembling remains, is to be implicated in a ritual which results in the resuscitation of life, in bringing the dead back to life by reintegrating them in the cycle of time, in such a way that they find, in a text, in an artefact or in a monument, a place to inhabit it, from where they may continue to express themselves. (25)

Like Lloyd's archive, this exhibition too attempts to create a protean place from which those in the past can continue to 'express' themselves. This 'expression' has been realised by an act of curatorship in which objects have been configured in unexpected juxtapositions. In this configuration, these objects and their relationships have been transformed and we consequently think of them differently. This set of curatorial procedures offers advice and instruction both for those who use archives and for those who compile and administer them.

This emphasis on art and curatorship as transformation points to a second issue to emerge from the exhibition's engagement with the Bleek and Lloyd archive, namely the theme of translation. As theorists like Apter (2001) and Liu (1999) have reminded us, this issue is being increasingly identified as critical to theorisations of Empire and transnationality. These recent debates have moved away from traditional approaches to translation which have defined their business as examining factors internal to translated texts and speculating on what orders of understanding their linguistic and stylistic choices do or do not enable. Instead, the issues are now generally posed in terms of translatability, understood as a repertoire of social and political questions: under what circumstances can texts, or indeed other objects, concepts or social groups, be seen as equivalent and translatable or incommensurate and untranslatable. How, and why are such climates of intelligibility (or non-intelligibility) created?



Mysteries of the Rosary: My Father's House
12 wooden glass fronted cases, cloth, wooden objects, photographs, lights
1250 x 1090



Speaking Through Stone
pigmented inkjet print on cotton paper
630 x 880

As with discussions of the archive, a consideration of translatability directs our attention to themes of the sociology and politics of knowledge. How do intellectuals, institutions, public opinion and popular taste interact to produce climates where texts, objects, or social groups are regarded as equivalent or otherwise? The exhibition dramatises these themes of translatability by presenting us with /Xam texts which no-one can read but none the less declaring its intention to make them translatable and equivalent. This theme is further complicated in the repeated figures of the priest that dominate the First World War landscapes. Several of these hold out a Eucharist wafer and so, invoke the medieval debates on this topic, extracts of which are inscribed on one of the horses. In consecrating the host, a priest is of course performing an audacious act of translatability, declaring the host and the body of Christ to be the same thing.

The priest-figures in the images are all friends, family, colleagues and students of Skotnes and, as such, represent the intellectual classes, involved, like the priests, in attempting acts of translatability and commensurability. The exhibition itself is of course an extended experiment in translatability. Its grammar has equipped us with a set of instructions and from this we learn that if we extend our imaginations, all things have the capacity for equivalence and translatability. In her inaugural lecture, "Real Presence", Skotnes explored these ideas. Like the Eucharist, which makes wafer into flesh and vice versa, so too art has the capacity to make different things similar: "The art object

[is] capable of being precisely what it [does] not appear to be, it [has], like the flesh in the wafer, what Catholics, call, Real Presence" (5). Elsewhere in the same lecture she notes: "[Art] insists on our simultaneous experience of [multiple] identities – and through this process, an experience of Real Presence" (14).

In conclusion, let us turn to a medieval observation from Peter the Venerable who lived in the mid-twelfth century. Preaching to his monks, Peter became devil's advocate and asked: "...what does it profit us to frequent with hymns and praises bones lacking in sense?" (quoted in Bynum 264). Peter then went on to rebut his own question by demonstrating the importance of venerating the bones of the holy since the souls of their erstwhile owners now resided with God and their bones would in due course be resurrected. Peter's message is plain: we continue to believe in dry bones because we prize life over death.

Turning from a religious age to a secular one, we might still pose the same question, but in different terms: "What does it profit us to venerate and embellish the bones of carthorses?" Having experienced this exhibition, we will all have our own answers to this question but our responses will surely concur that the carthorses have taught us to read a miraculous book, and that we will, for ever after, be able to see life, narrative and new possibilities in bone where we saw none before.



Speaking Through Stone
pigmented inkjet print on cotton paper
630 x 880

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Mysteries of the Rosary; Prayer to St Rita
11 wooden glass fronted cases, ink, vellum and gold leaf embellished leopard skeleton (killed by a farmer in the northern Cape), 7 skulls of blue cranes (killed by a farmer in the northern Cape), glass ampoules containing lines from an essay by Stephen Greenblatt, horse shoe nails and various other objects.
Detail of leopard spine

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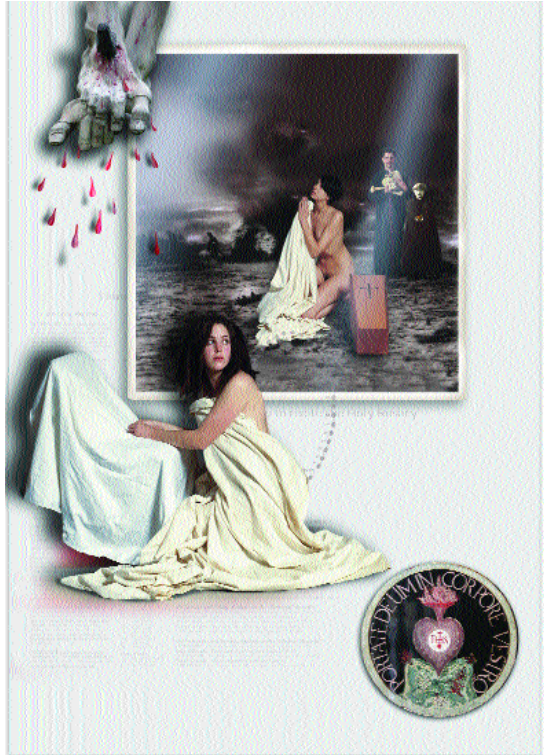
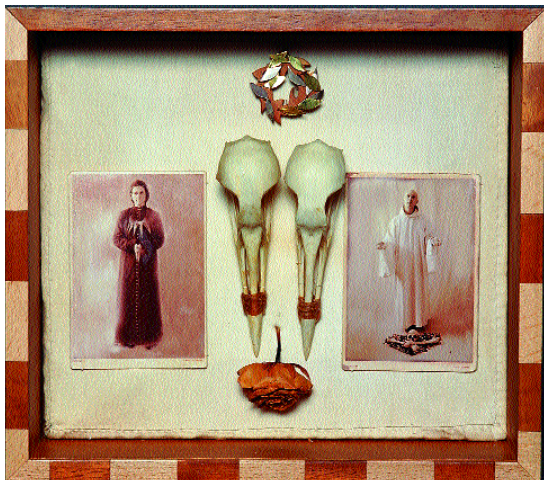
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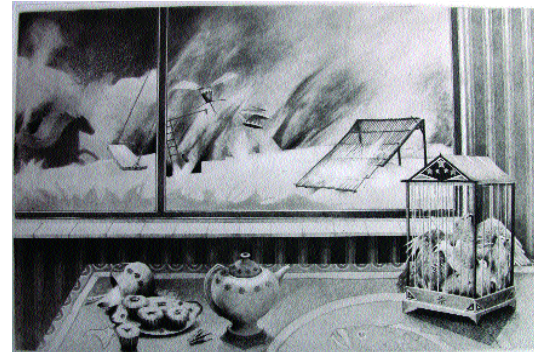
Curriculum Vitae

Pippa Skotnes was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1957. Her parents were both South African born, but their parents had come from England, Canada and Norway in the earlier part of the 20th century. Her father had fought in the Second World War in Italy and Egypt with the South African forces, and her maternal grandfather had fought in the First World War in Gallipoli, where he had made a promise in a trench to a Catholic priest that were he to survive he would raise his children as Catholics. She attended a Catholic School, Parktown Convent where she matriculated with a distinction in art in 1975.

She left Johannesburg in 1976, a particularly turbulent year in South Africa, to attend the University of Cape Town where she studied fine art and archaeology. She was awarded her MFA degree with distinction in 1983 from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, at the University of Cape Town. Much of her early work was concerned with the South African landscape and the story it told of successive occupations and invasions of people from early part of the first millennium AD to the colonisation of the Cape in the 17th and 18th centuries, to the forces removals of the apartheid government. Her early work was largely in the medium of etching and



From the series: Imprints
Etching 440 x 340, 1983



For the dead years
Etching 660 x 460, 1985

many of the series of prints that she made revealed an obsession with conflict, the evidence of occupation, country graveyards, abandoned mining towns, the foundations of torn-down houses and shacks.

In 1987 she won a national award for a series of prints that described in finely etched detail the interior of shacks that had been bulldozed in an attempt by the government to "clear" an informal settlement outside Cape Town and dispossess its inhabitants of the meager shelters they had made for themselves.

In 1986 she undertook the first of many trips to the Drakensberg Mountains of the eastern part of South Africa. Now a world heritage site, it was in these mountains that in the late 19th century the Bushmen, the indigenous people of southern Africa, fought the last battle for the land that was once all theirs, and left on the rock faces literally thousands of paintings. Included amongst these are images of their own destruction, paintings of British soldiers on horseback firing rifles into groups of fleeing families. Seeing these paintings and living in the caves that were once the homes of the artists, had a profound effect on Skotnes and, working with the archaeology department at the University of Cape Town she began to research southern African rock art and holocene archaeology, and the history of the Bushmen in the sub-continent.

During the late 80s and early 90s her

scholarly research was largely concerned with the interpretation of rock art and exploration of the Bleek and Lloyd archive of 19th century /Xam texts. These were some 13 000 pages of documents and unpublished interviews with 19th century Bushmen who spoke a language (/Xam) which at that point was unknown and unrecorded. The interviews were conducted by



Diatkwain and Jan Rondebout
Photograph of two /Xam prisoners who were informants of Lloyd and Bleek in the 1870s

Bleek and Lloyd (a philologist and a school teacher) and the contributor/ teachers of /Xam were prisoners arrested by the British government in the 1860s for crimes such as stock theft and homicide.

In effect these were South Africa's first resistance fighters, and the archive provided a

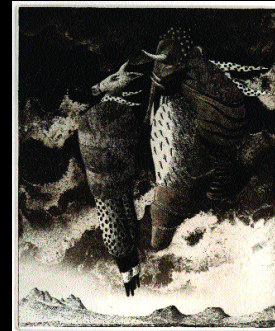


Lucy Lloyd photographed in the 1870s in Cape Town

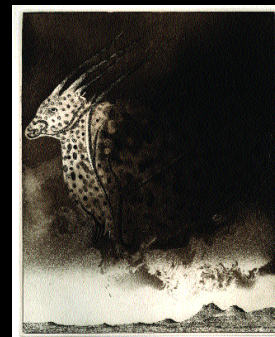
wealth of knowledge about the ideas of a people who now no longer exist. During this period she published papers, contributed to chapters in books and gave papers at conferences on this work. In addition much of her creative work involved the imaginative interpretation of this material and the historical context of its production, and she published several hand-made artists books and portfolios which explored /Xam texts, /Xam history and rock art. Illustration 5 and 6 and 7. One of these books, Sound from the thinking strings, (which won the University of Cape Town annual Book Award), became the subject of an extended legal action with the South African Library (a legal deposit library) in which the artist defended, as she saw it, the integrity of her discipline and the freedom



Sound from the thinking strings,
Etching 160 x 200
1991



Sound from the thinking strings,
Etching 160 x 200
1991



Sound from the thinking strings,
Etching 160 x 200
1991



Central section of the exhibition Miscast: Negotiating the presence of the Bushmen held at the South African National Gallery in 1996



Detail from the central section of the exhibition Miscast: Negotiating the presence of the Bushmen held at the South African National Gallery in 1996. The text on display detailed atrocities committed against the Bushmen in the colonial period.



Peripheral section of the exhibition Miscast: Negotiating the presence of the Bushmen held at the South African National Gallery in 1996.

of artists to choose the appropriate vehicle for creative expression. (In terms of the law then, all publications had to be given freely to the legal deposit libraries, regardless of whether they were art works in very small limited editions).

By the mid 1990s, Pippa Skotnes' interests in history, Bushman resistance and the Bleek and Lloyd Archive found expression in a project which sought to examine critically an aspect of colonial history as it was represented in South African Museums, resulting in the Miscast exhibition at the South African National Gallery in 1996 (Skotnes 1996, 2001). This exhibition captured public and scholarly attention, and for its five month run, and beyond, was the subject of dozens of articles, papers, reviews, graduate projects and teaching programmes globally. The deputy director of the South African Museum, Patricia Davison, described it as "a landmark in exhibition practice ... stimulating unprecedented controversy" (Davison 1998).

During 1997, Skotnes began to develop new interests, stemming largely from the controversy surrounding the keeping of human remains in museums. She became intensely interested in the institutional and political use of the human body, and began to look for origins in the early modern period in Europe and in the crucial philosophical and religions debates around the body at the time of the Voyages of Discovery and the beginning of colonialism. This research came to focus on the theme of sacrifice, finding its origin in biblical tropes and examining aspects of Catholic history that defined and exemplified ideas around sacrifice, death and redemption. Much of the late 1990s and the work she has made for this exhibition, brings together her understanding of the meaning of the Catholic ceremony of the Eucharist (and its repercussions) and the mercurial, ambiguous world of /Xam thought, in the context of conflict, colonisation and extinction.



From the series: White Wagons
Etching 530 x 630
1993



From the series: White Wagons
Etching 530 x 630
1993



Chronology

1979-1983

Studied at the University of Cape Town where she was awarded a Bachelor of Fine Art Degree, a Post Graduate Advanced Diploma in Fine Art and a Master of Fine Art Degree, awarded with distinction. During this period she was awarded numerous scholarships and student awards.

1990

Appointed to the staff of the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town

1993

Promoted to senior lecturer in Fine Art

1997

Promoted to associate Professor in Fine Art

1999

Appointed a Research Associate at the South African Museum
Promoted to Professor in Fine Art

2000

Appointed director of the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town.

Selected Awards

1987

H. G. Steyn Award for excellence in the Fine Arts.

1988

J and B Financial Mail Annual Award for "Rare Achievement in the Arts and Literature".

1989-2003

Numerous University of Cape Town merit awards and Research Council Awards for field work, research, and creative practice.

1993

Standard Bank Young Artist Award (a National award for Fine Art in South Africa)

1994-2003

Numerous foreign government, local funding agency and corporate awards for research and creative practice

1997

Elected a Life Fellow of the University of Cape Town

Publications

Books, portfolios, chapters in books and articles
Skotnes, P. 1989. Sound from the thinking strings. Artworks in progress: Michaelis School of Fine Art Staff Yearbook: Cape Town.
Ractliffe, J and P. Skotnes. 1990. Mordant Methods: Art and Technique of Intaglio Printmaking. Cape Town: Katrine Harries Print Cabinet.
Skotnes, P.(Editor) 1991. Sound from the thinking strings: A visual, literary, archaeological and historical interpretation of 19th century /Xam life. Cape Town: Axeage Private Press.
Skotnes, P. 1991. /Gan-a. Cape Town: Axeage Private Press.
Skotnes, P. 1991. The dream: five original etchings and five transcriptions from the manuscripts of Lucy Lloyd of interviews with the !Kung informants !Nanni and Tamme. Cape Town: Axeage Private Press.
Skotnes, P. 1991. Is there life after trance? De Arte 44:16-24.
Skotnes, P. 1992. The little elephant: A !Kung tale. Hand-bound by the artist.
Skotnes, P. 1992. Heavens things: Watercolours, and text from the 19th century manuscripts of Lucy Lloyd. Hand-bound by the artist.
Skotnes, P. 1993. Springbok: Watercolours, and text from the 19th century manuscripts of Lucy Lloyd. Hand-bound by the artist.
Skotnes, P. 1993. White Wagons: or What we thought of the white man's wagons. Edition: 25. Axeage Private Press, Cape Town
Skotnes, P. 1994. The visual as a site of meaning: San parietal painting and the experience of modern art. In Dowson, T. and Lewis Williams D. Contested images: diversity in southern African rock art research. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
Skotnes, P and Payne, M. 1995. The art of the curator: exhibiting art in contemporary South Africa. Social Dynamics.
Skotnes, P. 1995. Cast Naked: exhibiting the Bushmen in South African Museums. In Ouzman, S. The Wind Blows Dust. National Museum, Bloemfontein.
Skotnes, P. 1996. (ed.) Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen. Cape Town: UCT Press.
Skotnes P. 1996. The thin black line. In Deacon, J and Dowson T. Voices from the past. Wits University Press.
Skotnes, P. 1996. At the cutting edge: Cecil Skotnes as Printmaker, in: Harmsen, F. 1996. Cecil Skotnes. Cape Town: SANG.
Skotnes, P. and Payne, M. 1997. Thomas and the Bone Yard. Catalogue for the exhibition of David Brown. Cape Town: Llarec.
Skotnes, P. 1998. Blood and Milk: four books in progress. Artworks in Progress: Yearbook of the Staff of the Michaelis School of Fine Art
Skotnes, P. 1999. Heaven's Things: a Story of the /Xam. LLAREC Series in Visual History, University of Cape Town Press, Cape Town.
Skotnes, P. 2000. Report for the Department of Constitutional Affairs: The San: a report on the contemporary status of the San and the historical reasons for current settlement patterns, with recommendations. 79pp.
Skotnes, P. 2001. The twelve apparitions of Genevieve Lloyd. Artworks in Progress Volume 6: 64-9
Skotnes, P. 2001. "Civilised off the face of the earth" Museum display and the silencing of the /Xam. Poetics Today 22:2. 299-321. Duke University and University of Tel Aviv.
Skotnes, P. 2001. Bearded Seals and Fifteen Geese: Cecil Skotnes: A South African Artist in Norway.

LLAREC: Artists Monograph Series in conjunction with the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
Skotnes, P. 2002. The art of repossession: the place of the !Xu and Khwe in South Africa. In: Schiller, H. et al. Bushman art. Frankfurt: Arnoldsche Verlagsanstalt GmbH. 160pp.
Skotnes, Pippa. 2002. The Politics of Bushman Representations. In Landau, P and Kaspin, D (eds). Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa: University of California Press.
Skotnes, P. and Fleishman, M. 2002. A story is the wind: an art and performance project in Clanwilliam. University of Cape Town: LLAREC Series in Visual History.

Exhibitions (selected)

1981	Two person exhibition of etchings, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.
1983	Group exhibition with the Bloemfontein Museum Group, Bloemfontein
1983	Exhibition of Master of Fine Art work, Irma Stern Museum, Cape Town.
1983	Solo exhibition of etchings and drawings, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.
1983	Solo exhibition of etchings, drawings and screenprints, De Jong Gallery, Pretoria.
1983	Solo exhibition of etchings and drawings at the South African Association of Arts, Worcester.
1984-1984	Art for Peace, End Conscription Campaign, Baxter Theatre, Cape Town.
1984	Art on Paper, South African National Gallery, Cape Town.
1985	Two-person exhibition (with David Brown) of etchings and screenprinted-drawings, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, including the Lament Series. Invited to participate in the exhibition of "Women Artists of South Africa", South African National Gallery, Cape Town.
1986	Solo exhibition of etchings, screenprints and drawings, South African Association of Arts, Cape Town.
1987	Solo exhibition of etchings, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.
1987	Solo exhibition of etchings, University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein.
1987	Vita Art Now, Johannesburg Art Gallery.
1989	Three-person exhibition of etchings, Kunsabinett, Windhoek, Namibia.
1990	Recent publications of the Axeage Private Press, with Malcolm Payne and Alma Vorster, South African Association of Arts, Cape Town and Galery Atelier, Port Elizabeth.
1991	Sound from the thinking strings, exhibition of the book by the same title, and curated exhibition including twenty etchings and artefacts borrowed from UCT archives, State Archives, the South African Museum and the UCT Archaeology Department. South African Museum, May to June.
1991	Exhibition of work by Pippa Skotnes, Robert Slingsby and unknown San artists curated by Rosemary Holliday (William Humphries Museum) and David Morris (McGregor Museum). William Humphries Museum, Kimberley, October, November.
1991-1992	5th International Biennial Print Exhibit, Taipei Fine Arts Museum. Republic of China, December 1991 to January 1992.
1992	Invited to participate in the International Painting and Graphic Art Exhibition, Nice, France.
1992	Looking at art: Looking at watercolour. Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.
1992	Exhibition of hand-made books and hand-bindings. Grahamstown Festival, June, July.
1993	In the wake of the white wagons. Standard Bank National Festival of the Arts, Grahamstown, July. —In the wake of the white wagons, King George V1 Art Gallery, Port Elizabeth, July/August. —In the wake of the white wagons, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, September.

1993 —In the wake of the white wagons, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, October.
—In the wake of the white wagons, Carnegie Art Gallery, Newcastle, December
Etching in South Africa, curated by Hans Fransen, The Old Townhouse, Cape Town.
—Picturing Ourselves, work from the South Western Cape, curated by the South African
National Gallery, National Festival of the Arts, Grahamstown, July, and South African
National Gallery, Dec/January 1994.
1993 Invited to participate in the South African exhibit, Incroci del Sud —Affinities at the Venice
Biennale, Venice June, July.
—Incroci del Sud—Affinities, Sala 1, Rome, October.
—Zuiderkruis, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, December/January 1994.
1994 In the wake of the white wagons, Durban Art Gallery, Durban, January/February, William
Humphries Art Gallery, Kimberley, March, Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, April/May, South
African National Gallery, Cape Town, May-July.
1994 Bag, an exhibition of etchings and watercolours at the Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg,
January-February.
1994 Selected Recent Work, Oliwenhuis Museum, National Museum Bloemfontein.
1994 Exit, an exhibition curated by Malcolm Payne, Metropolitan Life Gallery, South African
Association of Arts, Cape Town, April.
1994 Invited to exhibit on Displacements: South African Works on Paper 1984–1994. Block
Gallery, University of Chicago, USA.

1994 Invited to participate in States of Contrast: Contemporary Printmaking from South Africa. At
—Florida State University Museum, USA
—Chicago Printmakers Collaborative, USA
—University of Wisconsin, USA.
1994–95 Invited to participate in an exhibition Ubuntu –Kunst aus Sudafrica, at the Konrad Adenauer
Foundation, Sankt Augustin, Germany, and the Hamburg Ethnology Museum
August/September. Vienna Ethnology Museum.
1995 Included on Visions of Southern Africa Clare Hall Gallery, Cambridge.
1995-8 Included in the exhibition: Panoramas of Passage: Changing landscapes of South Africa,
curated by Clive van den Berg
Albany Museum, Grahamstown (July 1995)
Meridian International Centre, Washington DC (Oct–Feb 1996)
Museum of African American Life and Culture, Dallas TX. (Feb–April 1996)
Fernbank Museum of Natural History, Atlanta (May–August 1996)
California State University (October–November 1996)
University of Hartford (December–April 1997)
National Museum of Afro-American Culture (April–June 1997)
The Arkansas Art Center (June-August 1997)
Lint Institute (September–November 1997)
University of Kentucky Art Museum (December–March 1998)
1996 An exhibition of books by people who don't write: Johannesburg Art Gallery. Curated by Jack
Ginsberg and David Paton. August – October.
1996 Miscast: Negotiating Khoisan History and Material Culture. Work constructed and curated
from collections in South Africa and Europe

1997 Image and Form: work from Southern Africa and Nigeria. Brunei Gallery SOAS London,
March – July.
1997 Bleek, Lloyd and the San: (curated) a complimentary exhibit to the rock art displays at the
South African Museum.
1997 Transferring the Charge: Printmaking in South Africa, curated by Elizabeth Rankin and
Philippa Hobbs. National Festival of the Arts, Grahamstown. July.
1997 The wind in //Kabbo's Window: a stained glass window for Smuts Hall, University of Cape
Town.
1998 South African Artists at the John Wilson Art Center, Washington. Curated by Thea van
Schalkwyk. May 2nd to May 17th.
1998/9 Cecil Skotnes and Pippa Skotnes at the Rudolph Scharpf Gallery, Ludwigshaven Museum
Germany. Invited by Rudolph Scharpf. December to February.
2002 Stories and time: installation of a kinetic exhibit at the UCT field Station at Clanwilliam as
part of the Fairheads Art and Performance Event. September.

Artist's acknowledgements

The artist would like to thank all those who have made this exhibition possible:

"Stiftelsen 3,14" the M.K., the University of Cape Town, the National Research Foundation (South Africa) and the Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Fund. She would also like to thank, in particular, Gary Branquet for various aspects of the carpentry involved in the exhibition, Stephen Inggs for photographic assistance and John Skotnes for fine silverwork. The support, assistance and comments of the following people were deeply appreciated: Stuart Bird, David Brown, Jules Skotnes Brown, Thomas Cartwright, Claire Gavronsky, Stephen Greenblatt, Isabel Hofmeyr, Karen Jacobsen, Malcolm Payne, Sandra Prosalendis, Eustacia Riley, Rose Shakinofsky, Cecil and Thelma Skotnes, Pamela Stretton, Anthony Traill and Ingrid Willis as well as all of those who willingly posed for the photographs that were used in the images on this exhibition.



Speaking Through Stone
pigmented inkjet print on cotton paper
630 x 880

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Published 2004 by Stiftelsen 3,14, Vågsallmenningen 12, 5014 Bergen, Norway
ISBN 82-995429-0-2
Design and layout by mabirkeland.no



hotel
Victoria

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WALLENIUS WILHELMSEN

Gjensidige
NOR

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GALLERY 3,14, BERGEN, NORWAY



M.K. CIURLIONIS NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART, KAUNAS, LITHUANIA