

Curiosity of the Familiar

Seminar presented during the exhibition:

Juggling with the familiar II (work in progress) September 1 – December 18, 2010

Centre for African Studies, U.C.T, 14 September 2010

Travelling *Leica* : Photographic Resonance Across Continents

Lien Botha

Chapter 1 (*history here*)

The traveller is usually awake at 3 am, this is the time when she often used to leave the darkroom in days when a need for these still existed.

1980: It seems a convenient blur, it was just another year of violence and how particular was that year's violence to this year's?

That was the year the traveller acquired her very first camera – a Canon AE1 and when she held the small metal body in her hands her heart was beating with anticipated excitement - what was one to make of this recording device? 1980...Bob Marley brought us reggae with a concert to celebrate the independence of Zimbabwe, PinkFloyd's *Another brick in the wall* was banned because the government feared it could be used as a song of liberty by black schoolchildren while for white schoolchildren the words *Umkhonto we Siswe* were scary.



Lien Botha, *the road to Swartruggens*, 1982



Lien Botha *Lucky, near Swartruggens*, 1982



Zubeida Vallie, *Sylvia Nomatile Nijili and Daniel Andre Rousseau*, 1996



Dudu Zitha (untitled, no date)



Sophia Claassens , *Sophia se skaduwee deur die son*, 2008



Tracy Derrick, *Enclave*, 2006



Roger Ballen, *Bedroom door, Bethanie*, 1983

“We are leaving Tsakani, on the main road that will finally take us to Johannesburg. My heart gets heavier by the minute. In my mind I am imagining the three witches in Macbeth:

First witch: We needed his tongue.

Second witch: We needed his genitals!

Third witch: We needed his heart. His warm, pounding, tiny, little heart.” ¹



Santu Mofokeng, *U- drive Car, Little Switzerland, Kwa –Zulu Natal*, 1996



Santu Mofokeng, *Pensioners en route to pay point, Bloemhof*, 1989



Lien Botha, *Khutsong*, 1983



Lien Botha, *Marabastad*, 1983



Lien Botha, *near Alldays*, 1983

Chapter 2 (*getting through customs*)

Is this a history of violence or of ritual or of survival?



Francois Aubert, *Emperor Maximillian's shirt after his execution, 1867*



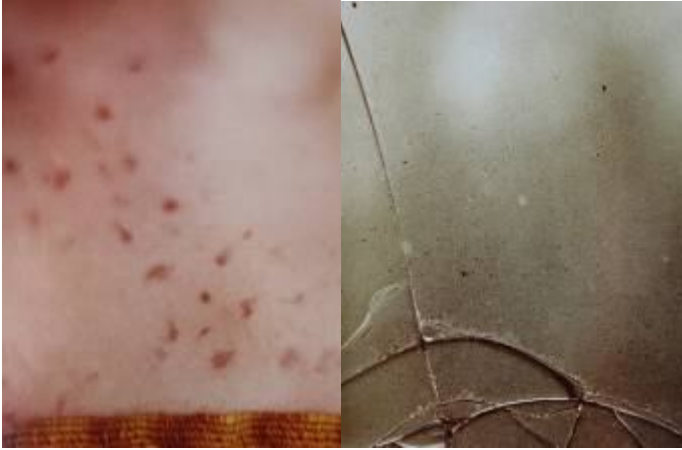
Uchechukwu James Iroha, *Flaming heads*



Miguel Rio Branco, *Matador*

From *Muffled Cries*

It all began in 1999 (or 2000?) with an invitation from Tereza Siza, director of the Centre for Portuguese Photography in Porto. She suggested I should create an installation on Power or Justice – I can't remember exactly – for the opening of the restored courtroom in the darkly impressive prison in Porto. Justice? I'd almost stopped believing in that a long time ago. And power? An idea that for me has always been closely tied to oppression, death, violence and destruction. 2



Stephanie Sabatier *Seeing the truth*, old Slaughterhouse, 2001



Hasan and Husain Essop, *Blessing the meat*, 2009



Hasan and Husain Essop, *Sunrise Farm*, 2009



Jean Brundrit, *If my house went through airport security*, 2005/2006



Christien Meindertsma, *Checked baggage*, 2004



Lien Botha, *Gewertjies in die Voorhuis*, 1998

Chapter 3 (*present tense and history there*)

In the year 2010 almost everyone is a photographer or taking photographs and everyone is blogging a book of some sort. Almost everyone in mostly affluent societies that is. *Bourgeois*... heard this word in France once.... there where photography was “invented” .



Nadar, *Charles Baudelaire*, 1854



Sully, *Portrait of a Man*, 1870



Soler, *A Local*, Tunis, 1890



Anonymous, *Henri de Toulouse Lautrec in a Japanese costume*, 1892



Jacques Kyuten, from *Sanctuaries*



Roger Ballen, *Old man*, *Ottoshoop*, 1983



William H Fox Talbot, *Tree*, 1842

Chapter 4 (*naturally*)

The traveller walks a lot, and in walking lies both the skills of observation and meditation. The other day for instance, she found a dead snake- a common slug-eater (*Duberria lutrix*) to be specific. It was lying in the middle of the road and upon investigating the snapped reptilian sinew she realized it was not a car that got to it but most probably a predator of some sort, with initial small gushes near the head and then the large gush in the centre of the body where the inners were protruding:



Walter Konig, *X-ray photograph of a reptile*, 1896



Edward Steichen, *the Pond*, 1898



Gareth McConnell, *Night flowers*, 1996



Shomei Tomatsu, from series *gardens of ruins*, 1964



Eugene Atget, *Nasturtiums*, 1902

Chapter 5 (in between)

The traveller is fortunate in the sense that she occasionally traverses between countries and this allows for a sense of detachment from reality should one choose such. When you travel, *say* in a country where you don't understand the language, you will probably miss most of the information pertaining to- for instance- labour strikes and crime statistics. For this there now is the internet with translation lost. The traveller is fluctuated, suspended, unbelonging (in part) and when the traveller arrives "home", *reality bites*, the traveller even though in need of a warm place with no memory, has nothing to lose, the traveller just is (accidentally) particularly located by the mother tongue of DNA.



Mari Mahr, *Life chances*, 1996, series of 29



Hasan and Husain Essop, *Cape Town*, 2009



Fay Godwin, *The Peddars Way and North Norfolk Coast Path*



Eniac Martinez Ulloa, *Halloween in Gilroy California*, 1989



Eniac Martinez Ulloa, *Carlos with his daughters, Ecatepec, Mexico*, 1990



Simon Norfolk, *Et in Arcadia Ego*, 2001. *Former teahouse in a park next to the Afghan Exhibition of Economic and Social Achievements in the Shah Shahid district of Kabul. Balloons were illegal under the Taliban, but now balloon sellers are common on the streets of Kabul, providing cheap treats for children.* 3



Gerald Machona, *I am a barman (Ndiri Barman)*, 2010



Gerald Machona, *Make it rain (Ita Kuti Kunaye)*, 2010



Hasan and Husain Essop, *Neuengamme*, 2009



Hasan and Husain Essop, *Aeroplane*, 2009



Muzi Kuzwayo, *If these stones could talk*, Payneville (no date)



Lien Botha, *Hondeklipbaai*, 1982



Tarek Al Ghousein, 2007 : (self representation in the Arabian gulf)



Daoud Aoulad Syad

The traveller needs to travel light of course and for that reason cannot harbour complicated phrases. If the image isn't lit, text won't ignite it.



Jacob A Riis, Ancient Lodger at Eldridge Street Police Station, NYC, 1890

The traveller is in awe of the rivers in other cities, voices which are able to rise like small songlines, the traveller may well have survived earthquakes, floods, veldfires in the Free State, the bad old days at the southern tip of a pixelated continent, the good new days at the southern tip of a pixelated continent, recession, the decline in the demand for professional photographers, the traveller nearly lost her eyes in Arles once to the collection of Dancing Bear W.M Hunt's collection near rue de la Republique where van Gogh lost his mind



Dancing Bear WM Hunt's collection, (No Eyes) Anonymous, portrait of three women, 19th c, paradoxical title of a 30 year collection - compiled to forge his own eyes. 4



Gary Schneider, Anya 1994 (Dancing Bear collection)



Jean Francois Joly, Piotr, Moscow, March 1995



Jean Francois Joly Edouard De Rothschild, Dec 2000



Jean Francois Joly, Olivier Saby, Nanterre, 1993



Joel Peter Witkin, Costumed inmate, 1993



Jean Francois Joly, *Josiane le Dernez*, Nanterre, 1994



Jean Francois Joly, *Dillia Khondoye*, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1997



Jean Francois Joly, *Jean-Marc*, Nanterre, 1993



Jean Francois Joly, *Ile De Batz*, France, 1999



Bad Student (2007) Joel Peter Witkin

Joel Peter Witkin, *Bad student*, 2007



Hicham Benohoud, classroom series(no date)



Roger Ballen, Bent back, 2001

Ballen grew up bracketed between Cartier Bresson and Arbus. The cells in Ballen's panopticon are fraught with things, bizarre artifacts and obliquely dysfunctional stuff. He has taken a medium known for its apparent factuality and singularity of vision and transformed it into a vehicle for portraying pluralism, relativism and the mortal struggles of our modern souls. Little more can be expected of art. 5



Roger Ballen, One arm goose, 2004



Roger Ballen, *Ratman*, 2002



Roger Ballen, *Oblivious*, 2003



Roger Ballen, *Early morning*, 2001



Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Astronomer*, 1867,



Lien Botha , *Transferred from boxing days* 1997

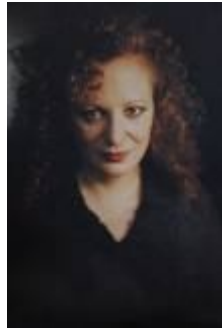
Chapter 6 (skirting issues)

The traveller skirts issues in order to survive, prefers not to get “involved” yet feels deeply for the impoverished and the oppressed and those unjustly existentially challenged, as in the case of so many “recovering South Africans”. The traveller is ideally suited to the place where she was born: schizophrenic, ill at ease, probably able to survive in the *veld* for weeks provided something like *trachyandra ciliata* is in bloom. Conveniently she needs to leave frequently in order to return here, there is no place like this they say, even though the hero of her youth now lives in Spain, and the current record price for an (ex) South African artist is alive and living in Holland.

Sometimes nothing said is best or enough. Women know this well.



Yasmina Bouziane



David Armstrong, *Nan Goldin*, 2000



Nan Goldin, *Chiclet at Nell's*, NYC, 1991



Nan Goldin, *Trixie on the cot*, NYC, 1979



Suzy Lake, *Pluck (proof)*, 2001



Gisele Didi, from *Intimate series*, 2002



Noruyoshi Araki, from the series *Tokyo stories*, 1988



Jenny Gordon, *Nao Faz Mal; Vilanculo Mocambique*, 2001



Joy Gregory, from *Autoportraits*, 1990



Joy Gregory, from *Objects of Beauty*, 1995



Ingrid Masondo, untitled, no date



Jenny Altschuler, *Tal at my feet at the edge of the pool*, 2005



Jenny Altschuler, *Mervin and Daniela*, about 1999



Nan Goldin, *Hug*, New York, 1980,



Svea Josephy, *Framing Documentary*, 2001



Majida Khattari, *Kacha* (cover) 1996, felt sewn with wire hoops and strips of elastic over the head. Photo taken at the fashion show in Arles during the International Festival of Photography in 1998 by Francois Mallinjud. 6



Jenny Altschuler, *Self-portrait through time*, 2010



Joel Peter Witkin, *Interrupted reading*, 1999



Mariella Poli, Savoy Hotel, 1997

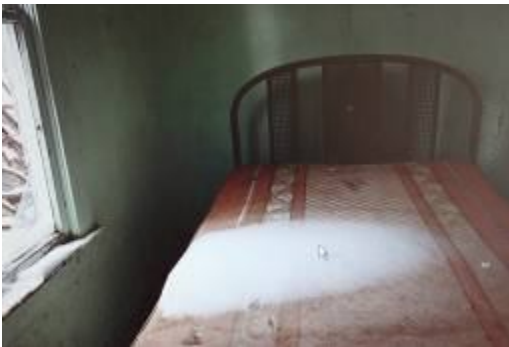
“At the age of twenty one I was married to a man I met one spring Sunday afternoon at the dancing pavilion by the lake. He was running the Savoy Hotel. We lived there for five summers, the length of our marriage.” 7



Mariella Poli, Savoy Hotel



Mariella Poli, Savoy Hotel



Eugene Richards, Corinth North Dakota, 2006 from: *the*

Blue Room: his first work in colour is a moving and eloquent study of the abandoned and forgotten houses of rural America. 8

Chapter 7(Copy and paste and conclude)

The copy, paste, edit ,cut and select all and the erasure of photoshop, the landscape as one wishes it to be invisible visible, the landscape without the memory of the wind or a flood or of a donkey cart trekking across it or of a drought or of a time before 1948 . Images according to our state of civilization. The German landscape for instance and by comparison a subject of correlation these days , the Middle East, before and after 9/11, and the altering vision that comes with loss or longing after death, before love after love, after war before war, after hunger before hunger all of that. The camera has the potential of being a third person, an alternative, an option, it is the new “shrink,” the psychologist of the 21st century. Our fast track to conscience are issues driven by the technological hollow, the in between of Einstein’s gravity and Hawking’s declaration that there is no more need for God, digital has buried Freud and beyond *blogging* you should be able to cut and paste your own options of the version you prefer on a particular day in a given context.



Man Ray, *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse*, 1920

Footnotes

- (1)Santu Mofokeng, *Taxi 004*. Johannesburg: David Krut Publishing, 2001, p32
- (2)Miguel Rio Branco, *Rencontres 2005*. Arles: Actes Sud, 2005, p 90
- (3) Simon Norfolk, *Rencontres 2005*. Arles: Actes Sud, 2005, p 40
- (4) François Hébel, *Rencontres 2005*. Arles: Actes Sud, 2005, p 147
- (5) Robert A. Sobieszek, *Shadow Chamber: Roger Ballen*. New York: Phaidon, 2005, p 6, 9,10
- (6)David A.Bailey and Gilane Tawadros, *Veil:Veiling, Representation and Contemporary Art*. London: inIVA & Massachusetts: the MIT Press, 2003, p 119
- (7) Mariella Poli, *Savoy Hotel*. Antiga Edizioni, 1997, p 10
- (8) Eugene Richards, text from *the Blue Room, Les Rencontres D'Arles: 40 years of Disruption*. Arles: Actes Sud, 2009, p 470