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Barbara Wiesen
Gahlberg Gallery, Director
2001

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I would have ... [told them] about the suffering of wives without husbands and children without fathers in impoverished tribal reserves, about the high infant mortality rate among blacks in a country that exported food, and which in 1967 gave the world its first heart transplant. I would have told them about the ragged black boys and girls of seven, eight and nine years who constantly left their home because of hunger and a disintegrating family life and were making it on their own: by begging along the thoroughfares of Johannesburg; by sleeping in scrapped cars, gutters and in abandoned buildings; by bathing in the diseased Juksei River and by eating out of trash cans, sucking festering sores and stealing rotting produce from Indian traders on First Avenue.

This excerpt from Mark Mathabane’s autobiography, Kaffir Boy captures the bitter disparities between the multi-ethnic majority and the white minority under the oppressive apartheid regime in South Africa. The country’s apartheid ideology and political methodology stated that physical, social and cultural separation between the diverse racial groups fostered harmony, whereas integration produced conflict. The application of these beliefs gave rise to an urban structure in which the majority black population was relegated to peripheral townships and homelands (bantustans), where most lived in poverty and were forced to commute long hours to work for very little pay.

The construction of apartheid and the social conditions that arose from it have informed creative expression and intellectual activity in South Africa throughout the 20th century. However, whereas the art of the 1970s and 1980s resonated with strong political agendas, the art of the past 10 years exhibits nuanced investigations of the immediate social and sometimes private realities of the artists and their subjects. Deborah Bell, Sandile Goje, Philippa Hobbs, Robert Hodgins, William Kentridge, Zwelethu Mthethwa and Sam Nhlengethwa, the artists represented in Artlook South Africa, have moved beyond overt political statements; instead, their visual vocabularies consist of a complex combination of documentation and interpretation of their lived experiences in post-apartheid South Africa.

In 1948 the Afrikaner-dominated Nationalist Party (NP) won the general (whites only) election, and racial discrimination was officially legislated. The Nationalist Party passed the Population Registration Act in 1950, which required that all South Africans be racially classified into one of three categories: white, black (African) or coloured (of multiracial descent or of one of the major Indian or Asian subgroups). In order to limit the flow of Africans into the city, the government required that all Africans carry “pass books” (work permits) which contained fingerprints, a photo and personal information. Failure to produce one on demand would result in expulsion from the urban areas or imprisonment. Under the Group Areas Act of the same year, the government divided urban areas into zones, where members of only one specified race could live and work. From this glimpse of South Africa’s history it became obvious that this was a country whose landscape was partitioned into racialized ideological spaces.

In his book The Production of Space, French philosopher Henri Lefebvre describes such places as locations where the dialectics of domination and resistance are acted out; this has been described as the ideology and politics of space. Apartheid policy took the ideology of space to absurd extremes, as the Nationalist Party strengthened their control over the capitalist economy in South Africa and exploited the majority black population based on a racist division of power, authority, resources and finances. It was against this politically charged space that the struggle for democracy emerged in South Africa. As repression of the majority accelerated, protest gave way to unarmed and, ultimately, armed resistance.
Since its inception in 1912, the African National Congress (ANC), one of the primary groups opposing the changes in South Africa, tirelessly rallied for the establishment of a nonracial alliance to end apartheid and create a nonracial democracy. Despite the apartheid regime's efforts to destroy all opposition to its policies in the 1980s, resistance movements continued to operate inside, as well as outside of South Africa. The 1980s were a tumultuous decade in which the mechanisms of apartheid came under extreme scrutiny, as a result of which the entire apartheid structure slowly unraveled. Most of the opposition occurred within the urban areas as impoverished people ignored the pass laws and poured into the cities to find work.

In Space, Knowledge, and Power, French philosopher Michel Foucault argued that "space is fundamental in any exercise of power." In relation to space and power, he is interested in these questions: "Who is empowered by any arrangement of this space?" and "Who has the ability to act, to influence or to authorize action?" People living in post-apartheid South Africa have many different answers to these questions, depending on the spaces they occupy within this culturally diverse nation. The effects of the relationship between power and space can be seen not only in the townships and cities, but also in the artwork produced by the seven artists in the exhibition Artwork South Africa. Although none of the artists have explicit political agendas in their work, the residue of the apartheid ideology becomes clear as one ponders each piece.

The opposition between private domain and public space is basic and can be helpful when approaching the works of the artists Deborah Bell, Sandle Gole, Philiipa Hobbs, Robert Hodgins, William Kentridge, Zwelethu Mthethwa and Sam Nhlengethwa. The category house (private) pertains to a domestic universe, where things are in their proper places. A room implies harmony, warmth and calm. The interior series by Sam Nhlengethwa includes colorful prints with mundane titles such as The Red Wall, The Grey Door and The Blue Frame. These works are not tied to a specific place; they could be real or imagined spaces. However, the work My Grandmother's Kitchen in the '60s not only situates the room within a historical time period, but also opens up the act of remembering for the artist. The viewer can imagine young Sam sitting at the table hoping breakfast will be served soon. It becomes a personal space.

The social groups that occupy a house have associations ruled and formed by kinship and blood relations; relations that are ruled "naturally" by the hierarchies of gender and age, with males often taking precedence. The Lovers series by Zwelethu Mthethwa addresses the roles of both males and females within the township and, by extension, their private spaces and social conditions. To understand the subtle meaning of these works it is important to discuss the development of townships in South Africa.

During the late 19th and early 20th century various economic and social changes took place in the rural and urban areas of South Africa. The discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1867 and gold on Witwatersrand in 1886 created demands for cheap labor which in turn created industrial workers, capitalist producers, landless farm laborers and migrant workers. As South Africa acquired an industrial economy and society, African men from different towns left their families behind under compulsion to go work in the mines for which they returned sporadically with the money earned.

In the 1920s every city in South Africa recorded a massive increase in its black population, a growing proportion of which were women and juveniles. The flood of migrants to the cities changed the face of black urban life. The municipalities initially reacted by attempting to impose a tighter system of permits on women and lodgers. The surge of immigration also brought new friction to black urban society. Because virtually no new housing was built for blacks in this period, a large proportion of new arrivals found accommodation as
subtenants in the houses or backyards of the established black urban dwellers. With space at such a premium, interpersonal tension became acute and tenants were often exploited by their landlords. The picture that emerges is one of people ceaselessly on the move in the hope of finding some urban niche or marginally improving their economic position. This fostered a variety of social discords, the most pervasive of which was mental instability. As the opportunities for employment in industry multiplied, many men stayed for longer and longer periods in the towns, neglecting or even abandoning their wives on the farms and reserves. Many women responded by migrating to the towns, either in search of their husbands or to carve out lives for themselves. The new unions that men and women formed in these circumstances were often transient and unstable. Today the problem has intensified with the spread of AIDS.

Endemic poverty and the quest for economic stability destroyed family life for the black South African urban dweller. These social conditions not only generated a deep-seated insecurity, but also unprecedented social and familial conflict. The range of these emotions becomes clear when the colorful but serious etchings of Zwelethu Mthethwa are read within the South African historical framework. The older couple in Lovers III does not express any emotion as they stare into space, while the younger couple in Lovers II engage in a battle of wills as the woman pushes the man away. Mthethwa reveals glimpses of the private moments of their existence, taking place inside their township houses.

Robert Hodgins is another artist who incorporates images of house interiors, but from the other end of the social spectrum. The colorful work, We just sit around, satirizes the white middle class woman as a creature of leisure, while black female domestic workers run her household. For the majority of black women, the most viable way of generating a cash income was through domestic service. This often meant that they had to leave their own children with their parents while taking care of their white charges. Sandile Gogo addresses the traditional roles of women in the work Mother Prepares the Samp. The space is obviously rural, with the task of food preparation the responsibility of the female in the household. African women often had to support their families by searching for employment, while also continuing to perform the roles society dictated to them. This dislocation of social roles, with women trying to fill the roles of homemaker and breadwinner, was problematic. With parents busy supporting families, children were often left to their own devices, leading to increased criminal activity, drug addiction, and delinquency among some young people.

With the fall of apartheid in 1994, democracy became a reality. However, this reality was not instantly realized. Addressing this discrepancy, Sandile Gogo structures the composition of Making Democracy Work around a giant tree, the obvious choice for a public gathering outside the city. Yet upon closer inspection, the logic of the composition starts to unravel as details become obvious – a computer on a desk without outlets, formal attire in a rural space, and a television crew filming the meeting. This juxtaposition of technology in a rural environment demonstrates the long road South Africa still must travel. The title of the piece suggests the underlying meaning of the work: in the new South Africa every person counts, and even rural people are involved with the future of their country.

This juxtaposition of technology in a rural environment highlights another important phenomenon. The displacement and passage of an object from one space to another can also be read as the inversion or neutralization of that space. For example, the computer in the middle of a field confuses our understanding of the situation. Is this a depiction of rural farmers or new technology? The distance between these two domains calls attention to the object — the computer — placed at the crossroads between these two areas, transforming it. A computer is nothing more or less than a computer when it is in an office. It takes on new layers of meaning when placed under a tree, in a landscape lacking electricity.
Deborah Bell also manages to raise questions of spatial incongruities in *Diary III, Diary IV, Red Lion I* and *Red Lion II*. A plethora of objects — from AK-47s to AIDS ribbons — are strewn around the focal points of the compositions, which are all objects from African cultures. The stories these random objects tell might be personal or political, but references to South Africa always lurk beneath the surface. The AK-47 gun included in *Diary IV* is a well-known image of both terrorism and liberation in the South African context, but remains an object of violence and destruction in its most general sense. These works can also be read on a universal level, which becomes an important device for allowing the viewer to freely associate the objects into a personal narrative. Dissimilar pockets of space are therefore visually integrated on the surface, but allow for references to other times and places. In *Diary III* a figure reminiscent of St. Sebastian suggests a connection to the Italian Renaissance, while the Man Ray iron with nails engage the viewer in a modernist art historical discourse. However, one need not understand all the references in Bell's works to grasp the spatial puzzles that she has created: these works function because of the various connections that can be made when viewing her work.

The work *Serial Toys Encrypting* by Philippa Hobbs literally opens up new narrative possibilities each time the work is installed. The piece consists of 17, 8" by 8" hand-made paper squares, which have been embossed with patterns reminiscent of kitchen tiles. Each of these squares has a different household object placed on the textured backgrounds. Hobbs makes us aware of all the mundane objects in our houses that we tend not to pay much attention to — a lampshade, a razor blade, and a faucet. The narrative is elusive, and not site-specific. There are no real clues as to where this scene is located. Although this work does not follow a coherent pattern, it does offer us a look into private space of a household.

*Atlas Procession I (variation)* by William Kentridge also flirts with the specifics of place and space. Who are these people moving in a circular format across the picture plane? Are they South African migrant workers or are they people fleeing wars all over the world? Narratives start to unfold according to the viewer's own specific location, experiences and knowledge of world events. However, *Atlas Procession I* situates the composition in a specific place as Kentridge has added a map of the islands between Greece and Turkey within the circle of the inward moving procession. People are always moving to other places hoping to carve out a space for themselves. South Africa continues to be a country interested in issues of space and place as the journey to truth and reconciliation continues to unfold.

Henri Lefebvre claims that "[social] space is a [social] product." Space, he pointed out, is not simply "there," a neutral container waiting to be filled, but a dynamic, humanly constructed, "means of control, and hence of domination, of power." This is a common phenomenon since most people deal with the ideologies of space throughout their lives, whether it is in South Africa or in other countries. The strength of the works presented in this show is their universal, yet local, qualities. These pieces can be appreciated on various levels without consulting a history text, but once one is informed about the history of South Africa, the meaning of these works becomes more poigniant and relevant to Lefebvre's argument. We all deal with issues of private and public space in our daily lives. By allowing the viewer to enter into their worlds, the artists foster a better understanding of the social history of South Africa, but also address a part of human existence that is often taken for granted: the spaces we live in.

*Corinne Louw, Curator*
A Celebration of Multiplicity in South African Art

If countries are also allowed what Andy Warhol once so laconically described as '15 minutes of fame', 1994 was it for South Africa. It was the year of our becoming. A year of long, proud voters queues and an unspeakable kind of elation. Our destiny was the world's obsession. We were riding the moment's headline. A few weeks later Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the president of South Africa. Spotlights, Camera flashes. We became a democracy. Loud applause. Great cheering. Epic music. Black kids hugged white kids in the streets and we became known as the rainbow nation. Then the credits rolled and CNN moved on to the next big story.

That's when our real story began. When the paradox of black and white ceased to be legislated, the paradox of everything entered our veins. And, in the absence of global media fanfare, the mainline to that paradox is contemporary art. That's where the inner South African story is being told. That's where the contradictory truths of post-apartheid reality come to life. This widely varied exhibition of prints is an attempt to bring you, in a faraway land, a slice of that story.

The artists represented in this show — Sam Nhlengethwa, William Kentridge, Robert Hodgins, Deborah Bell, Sandile Goge, Zwelethu Mthethwa and Philippa Hobbs — have all enjoyed good doses of local and international attention, a magnetism born out of honest images that cut to the quick. It's a winning combination of some of the wisiest and wittiest, stubbornly satirical and celebratory artists working in South Africa today. They've all been doing their thing for a decade or two — in some cases more than two — so they've all had the experience of making art in two different South Africas. They've all felt the guttural tug of wanting to speak out in a time when strategic silence was a national policy. And when political purpose ceased to be a driving imperative, they had to go inwards again to redefine their individual identities and aims; although Sam Nhlengethwa would tell you, it was never quite as clean cut as that. During the days of apartheid he always managed to find things to celebrate in his art, and now that we're living in the new South Africa, it's not as though everything is permanently rosy and upbeat. His response to real injustice can be seen in devastating dark-toned works like it Left Him Cold (1990) in which the body of the murdered Steve Biko lies swollen and bruised in a desolate prison cell.

Inspired by the work of African-American artist Romare Bearden, who he describes as his "idol and influence," Nhlengethwa is renowned for his pulsing collage cut-ups that capture the extreme energy of township life like a jazz anthem by Hugh Masekela. From 1970 he lived in a black working-class area near Springs, called KwaThema, and it is the spirit of his home turf that shines through in the congested, jivey township vignettes that became Nhlengethwa's hallmark.

Since 1993 he has been living in the largely white, middle-class suburb of Benoni surrounded by the mine dumps of Johannesburg's East Rand. In his series of hand-printed lithographs, interiors, he depicts interiors from "all facets of our society, from the informal settlements to the established suburbs and urban life." Unlike many of his earlier works, these images are serene and unpopulated. Personal difference can be seen in small details that furnish the brightly colored rooms, which co-exist in tranquility beside one another. Each interior, from A Hotel in Randfontein to My Grandmother's Kitchen in the '60s, has something unique and defining about it. Each occupies its own bit of South African space.

A Hotel in Randfontein, Sam Nhlengethwa, 1998 lithograph in eight colors.
South African art tends to suffer from generalizations and misconceptions. The popular image from afar remains either one of highly politicized protest art or traditional African craft. In the face of this kind of cultural homogenization a lot of artists here are unhappy with their work being narrowly read as limited to South African terrain and polemics. Survival here requires constant reinvention. So rather than offering some kind of reductionist polarities about post-apartheid art, Artlook South Africa aims to introduce you to the great adventure of identity making and idiosyncrasy that is unfolding right now in seven studios situated on the southern most tip of Africa.

Speaking of adventure, one cannot but think of Robert Hodgins, who approaches his palette with the unabashed relish of a child at a fairground. At 80, he remains an infant terrible, his wildly inerent anecdotes dating back to underground capers of Cape Town dock life in the 1930s. To Hodgins, painting is an act of intense pleasure to which he brings everything he knows and everything he is. So great is his own delight in the pure visceral power of color — deep crimson reds bleeding into liquid orange, broken by electrifying cobalt blue — that one is fooled into approaching his canvases with playful curiosity. “Here’s a bright happy thing,” you think to yourself, as you are seduced into a world of corruption, falsity and despair. Yet the redemptive, power of color never leaves you as you gaze into one of Hodgins’ works. It stays there tempering the dark satire, introducing laughter and forgiveness in the face of grotesque human folly.

The cumulative image that leaks across my mind screen is the businessman in his pinstriped suit and tie, a character central to Hodgins’ œuvre, haunting the canvas in a multiplicity of distorted shapes and forms — diseased heads erupt from starched collars with neatly fastened ties, as if hemorrhaging from within. Rather than the incarnation of character, these blotchy and bloated faces are the accumulations of consequence, an unsettling reminder that all those cigars and bad decisions have their anatomical and spiritual comebacks — and they’re not very pretty.

Far from being abstractedly judgmental in his grappling with madness, memory and power, Hodgins seems to invite us to share empathetically in the painful vulnerability of flesh. His art could be read narrowly as decrying the evils of white capital in South Africa, but that would be limiting the potency of the works, which are as true to this place as they are to Beijing or New York.

Other truths lie beneath the equally bright and seductive surfaces of Zwelethu Mthethwa, whose art making encompasses two main media, photography and pastel drawing, both of which are executed with strong hues and a vibrant immediacy. Notice the textural details in these prints that have been worked into with pastel after the printing process is complete, making each one a unique work rather than a facsimile or replica of the original. The common perception of printmaking has at its core an aspiration to verismimulitude and replication. In our increasingly digital age uniqueness is a valued commodity, so this misconception has resulted in printmaking being a kind of poor relative to painting and sculpture. Most people believe that once the artist has arrived at the final proof, the printer copies it mechanically, aspiring to no variations within the actual printing.

From the prints in this show you will see that this is clearly not the aim of the artists represented here. Each delights in the alchemy that takes place between the ink-soaked prototype and absorbent surface, relishing the quirky details and sometimes accidental markings that happen during the printing process.

My Last Duchess, Robert Hodgins, 2000
Monotype from multiple color passes
Mthethwa shares Hodgins' love affair with color, although he uses it to a totally different end. In his photographic portraits he uses strong color as an emotional tool—part of the celebration of artifacts, simple interesting objects, and the recycled materials that his subjects use to decorate and design their private spaces. The majority of the people portrayed in Mthethwa's portraits come from the Eastern Cape region of South Africa, formerly known as the Ciskei or the Transkei. All are rural emigrants living in the rambling Langalabuya settlement in Paarl, a few hours from Cape Town, and all moved there in search of work. These portraits are reminiscent of Athol Fugard's searingly brilliant play Sizwe Bansi Is Dead, which is about the transformative power of the image through which people escape the everyday, identity-sapping indignities of poverty for one brief flash and a two-dimensional eternity. Mthethwa's pastel works are all about the daily drama of life in Africa; fetching water, telling stories, getting married, slaughtering goats and celebrating rites of passage. A Mthethwa image might feature a couple with bright blue faces, alongside a yellow house beneath a crimson sky. The earth could be redder than the man's jacket, the color of money greener than the surrounding hills. Mthethwa's works are infused with quirky magic realist touches and a rich sense of community life. Even his more intimate close-up portraits have small windows that open out onto a life beyond the personal: thin dogs, naughty children and people greeting as they move on by. Mthethwa also takes delight in detail and design: the beaded headdress of the woman in the Lovers series, the iron bed, the tin mug, the beer bottle and the cigarette burning away in the ashtray. These are the defining details that place the work in a South African township late at night at the raunchy tail end of a party.

Like Mthethwa, Sandile Goje has a magic realist take on community life. In his case the culture of the Eastern Cape where he was born and continues to live, Goje says, his images are often born out of a desire to reveal the subtleties of his home culture to those unfamiliar with it. In Meeting of Two Cultures, two houses on legs greet each other. One is a geometric Western-style brick house on pudgy legs and the other a traditional African mud house but on thin, spindly legs. Despite their differences, the two houses shake hands.

"I think most of my works are African," says Goje, "being influenced by both Eastern and Western, rural and urban life. Just looking at the landscape or landscapes I get ideas. I always imagine myself or see myself being part of creation. I love the way landscapes are. They are permanent, not changing. You can't find them anywhere else. When you look at them and see their beauty, thoughts are endless and so are ideas."

Goje's works are often spiced with humor and mild doses of surrealism, encapsulated in whimsical titles like How Can Humans Fly? What a pleasure to listen to music, and I will pull up my socks for just one more time. Trees are a powerful feature in his work. "To me," says Goje, "a tree is a symbol of being home, of being taken care of, of shelter. A tree is something that beautifies the landscape, something that makes the landscape complete."

Goje was one of the first students at Dakawa Arts Centre when it was founded by Artists Against Apartheid in Grahamstown in 1992. Before the unbanning of the African National Congress, Dakawa was in an ANC camp in Tanzania. Goje is now a studio manager at this community-based arts center, which has its roots in the struggle. That period is remembered in a linocut by Goje called Memories of the 80's, in which a man in a leopard-print vest sits smoking his pipe in a room furnished only with a cupboard, a bed, a bunch of flowers and a transistor radio.
Yet the simple interior is bursting with energy from all Goje's different markings and patterns, as if memory itself is decorating the room.

"It is a thought of somebody who was active [in the struggle] at some stage who was known at that time and acknowledged," says Goje. "His inputs were important and he was committed to making things better for himself and others. Now his memories are all he has left, keeping him alive in his small shelter that he had before. Physically, he's not what he used to be. But these memories are not only his. They also belong to those who witnessed those actions."

"When the political change did come," explains Philippa Hobbs, "somehow the impetus to produce those resistance pieces was removed and one was left wondering what your role as an artist was. The most obvious response to that was you look inside yourself. It is quite extraordinary how many artists who were active around the end of the '80s and early '90s experienced this reflex action.

"In the 1980s I had started to make woodcuts and that's when all the water imagery came along. I was dealing with deluges and floods. It was all about grand sweeps of history, socio-political commentary, epic disasters — all having to do with the political turmoil in the country, I suppose."

Although she did start bringing in human imagery in the early '90s, it was closer to 1994 that her work started to become more seriously personal — "more intimate, speculative and brooding. I started to get involved with the female figure," says Hobbs.

The vignettes and cameos of an earlier series of woodcuts and collographs called Stunt Girl Stills became the impetus for Hobbs' current series that deal with feminist ideas in a more emblematic way.

"I wanted to do something that didn't need a frame, so I started to do little vignettes, little etching collographs on thick paper. And the paper became thicker and thicker. I started doing installations with lots of little pieces of all these strange vignettes with curious things like domestic animals and body parts and little gadgets, especially female gadgets and implements."

Printed on the textured surfaces of the tablets are images of domestic objects (egg beater, plug, bowl and tap) and grooming implements (douche bags, razors, tweezers, bandages and pliers).

"Leisure is a heavily politicized thing in South Africa," says Hobbs. "White women had leisure in the old days and when you were at leisure you could shave your legs and groom yourself endlessly. You could start becoming obsessively fetishy about your body, continuously organizing your body. These are the instruments by which women prettify themselves and make themselves acceptable."

One is left with a sinister sense that these implements, meant to maintain, groom and beautify, are also capable of hurting or damaging flesh.

In contrast to Nhlangathiwa, who infuses the familiar, objective world around him with the dynamism of human energy, Hobbs uses elements from the external world to represent a metaphysical universe of emotion and thought. "All my figures are set in psychological landscapes."
This is also true of the Deborah Bell prints in this show, although her landscapes are perhaps more spiritual than psychological.

"My early paintings in the '80s dealt very much with male-female interactions and there was this sense of grappling corporeally. They were about flesh, about passion as desperation, usually located in places like cinemas or backstage, spaces that were quite claustrophobic; gloomy, nighttime spaces. The way I painted the flesh or even their clothing showed their inner turmoil and emotion. They were desperate, desperate figures.

"In the late '80s, early '90s, my figures suddenly became naked and moved outdoors and, oddly enough, their nakedness made them innocent. At the time I remember someone saying to me that, looking at their faces, you didn't know if they were African or European, South American or Asian. The faces weren't specific. They came from everywhere and they became like primal man, primal woman.

"Far from the earlier claustrophobic, sinking desperation they became naked and they were on a pilgrimage, walking through deserts. They were very strong figures and there was something primal about them. They seemed more poetic, because the space was perhaps more mystical rather than a specific room."

Many of the images in Diary III and IV are drawn from Bell's notebooks. When travelling she spends hours and hours in museums and galleries taking notes and doing sketches. You can trace them here in images like the Man Ray iron with nails in it; images from crucifixions with nails and the crown of thorns; drawings done from Degas sculptures and Miro paintings. These she mixes with ancient African forms and contemporary pop cultural findings like razor blades, razor wire, condoms and the Ark's ribbon. Geographies blend and cultures intermash to form Bell's timeless alphabet of symbols and icons.

William Kentridge, with whom Bell has frequently collaborated, is another master at mixing obscure and diversely-rooted references in his multimedia forays into the ambiguities of history and memory.

"I'm interested in the way politics work in the diaries of personal events," says Kentridge. "When one tries to find a coherent history in modern South Africa, it is all too often a lopsided history."

Kentridge's points of reference and sources of inspiration are truly encyclopedic. Here they range from the shape of an old 78 rpm record, to newspaper reports, to a series of 25 bronze sculptures made partly from domestic objects, to the color of the sky in a particular ceiling fresco by Venetian artist Tiepolo.

The Atlas Procession prints are part of Kentridge's current preoccupation with the circular format.

"I started working with this format while making some etchings with my friends Claire Gavronsky and Rose Shkardovsky when I was in Italy. It started as a test between Rose and myself in terms of etching inking technique to see who could print a gramophone record as an etching plate and show all the grooves. In the Arezzo flea market we bought some old 78 rpm records and saw how pristinely we could ink them up. The first set were printed as plan records and then there was engraving and drawing on top of the printing ... I came back to that four years later with a new series of prints on Italian living language course rpm records ..."
The feel of this procession of characters moving round and round in circles is the exhausting inevitability of human beings constantly moving through time and geography, fleeing wars and longing for home.

"There are sections where the procession is celebratory and others in which the characters are more like refugees fleeing. They come from photos one has seen of people moving. People fleeing Rwanda, people in central Europe, people leaving Mozambique: populations on the move. There is a sense of not being grounded. It's not a procession of the poor or a procession of the rich. It's a mixture of different people on the move for different reasons," says Kentridge.

"Since I started doing them I started looking at what people carry in the street, what they push around with them. The most bizarre things get pushed on trolleys through the streets of Johannesburg. Shopping trolleys from Pick 'n Pay and Checkers are a standard means of transportation. It's astonishing the things that people push around or carry on their backs. Human bodies as beasts of burden are still very much with us."

It is artists who give expression to the hopes and fears of society, and hopefully by taking in this hugely varied exhibition of prints, you will start to get some sense of the kind of polarities and contradictions at play in this society. South Africa is one of the more extreme countries on the planet. We live, like the Germans, with an often unarticulated sense of guilt and horror in relation to our past. Like the Russians, we hold our breath in the face of the future, drinking heavily to drown out the dark rumblings of the statisticians. In between we have proud days. And others when we like to sing and dance and congratulate ourselves on our miraculous new nationhood.

Alexandra J. Dodd, South African journalist
DEBORAH BELL

Deborah Bell was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1937. She received her B.A., B.A. (Hons) and M.F.A. (1966) degrees at the University of Witwatersrand. Bell has lectured at various tertiary institutions, including the University of Witwatersrand and the University of South Africa. She has traveled extensively in Africa, North America and Europe. In 1996 she spent two months working at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris.

Bell works in a number of mediums, including painting, drawing, printmaking, animation and ceramic sculpture. She has been in many solo and group shows, both locally and abroad since 1982. From 1996 to 1997 she collaborated with Robert Hodgins and William Kentridge on various projects. The most recent collaboration is entitled Ubu and the Truth Commission, reflecting on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was set up in South Africa to address the crimes of apartheid.

She describes her latest work as an extension of themes which she had been developing over the last few years. “I have been spending time in museums and browsing through books and newspapers, recording images from history (which I see as reflecting the emotions of mankind) and weaving them together in poetic conjunctions to create some meaning of where we stand in relation to our past.”

The Red Lion I, Deborah Bell, 2000
drypoint, handcoloring
PHILIPPA HOBBS

Phyllis Hobbs was born in 1955 in Johannesburg, South Africa. She studied printmaking both locally (Johannesburg College of Art and internationally (Philadelphia College of Art). Since 1981 her solo exhibitions have been displayed at venues such as the Goodman Gallery and the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. She exhibited at the Antwerp Biennale in 1996, the Venice Biennale in 1993, the Exhibition of Image Technology in Sao Paolo in 1993, and the Critical Impressions and States of Contrast touring exhibitions from 1992 to 1997. Hobbs' work has been shown in Singapore, Poland, the United Kingdom, France and Germany.

She has taught at various institutions in South Africa throughout her career and in 1993 she established Postproof Studio in Johannesburg as an independent printmaking initiative. Her teaching and practice emphasise the importance of both classical and experimental processes of printmaking, from enormous color woodcuts to collagraphs and plaster prints. In her work she investigates the self fearlessly, in an examination of what it means to be female. This does not mean that she adopts a feminist agenda, but rather that she allows female experiences and her own attitude toward femininity to infuse her work with a serious language.

From 1995 to 1997 Hobbs teamed her printmaking experience with art historian Elizabeth Rankin, professor of history at the University of Witwatersrand, to yield a curated art exhibition and an extensive book on contemporary South African printmaking titled, *Printmaking in a Transforming Africa* (David Philip Publishers, Cape Town, 1997).
SANDILE GOJE

Sandile Goje was born in 1972 and grew up in the Eastern Cape of South Africa with little explicit recognition or encouragement for art and art-making. After completing high school in 1992, Goje was selected to study at the Dakawa Art Centre in Grahamstown, South Africa. Here he studied under Swedish printmakers Kristine Anserm and Main Seeman, and South Africans Eric Mtshita and Joel Sibi.

In 1994 Goje was awarded a scholarship to study in Sweden at the Graphic School in Stockholm, where he further refined and developed his printmaking and papermaking skills. Goje returned to South Africa in 1995 and assumed a position at the Dakawa Art Centre, where he taught printmaking until the school closed in 1996. Presently, he works as a designer at Koch Ceramics in Grahamstown, South Africa.

Goje expresses the wish to reveal the nature of his culture to those to whom it is unfamiliar, and does this through his bold black and white relief prints. His work has rapidly aroused interest.

Beyond the Eastern Cape, he won an award in the PG Glass competition in 1997, and was included in the exhibition and book, Printmaking in a Transforming South Africa. Numerous public and private collectors, including Standard Bank, Technikon Witwatersrand, MTN and SA Breweries, have collected his work.
Robert Hodgins was born in Dulwich, London in 1920. He immigrated to South Africa when he was 18. In 1940 Hodgins joined the Union Defense Forces and served in Kenya for a year and then in Egypt for three years. In 1944, he returned to England and later attended Goldsmiths College, London University, where he studied art and education. In 1951 Hodgins received an arts and crafts certificate at Goldsmiths College, and in 1953 received a national diploma of design in painting.

Thereafter, Hodgins returned to South Africa and started teaching at the School of Art at Pretoria Technical College.

Hodgins is the senior figure of painting in South Africa, and just celebrated his 80th birthday with a major sell-out exhibition. He has long been an influential figure in the arts, and his vast knowledge of literature and art has benefited many of his students during his 17 years (1966 to 1983) as senior lecturer in painting at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. He retired in 1983 to paint full time.

Hodgins is best known for paintings in which he uses simplified figures to sardonically depict people as self-concerned, lacking conscience and infinitely unaware of their own fallibility. For the last 15 years he has also experimented with printmaking, using the medium to express a range of satire. Illustrated in his collaborations with Deborah Bell and William Kentridge. Hodgins has been included in various group exhibitions in South Africa and internationally.
WILLIAM KENTRIDGE

William Kentridge was born in 1955 in Johannesburg, South Africa, where he still lives and works. The son of prominent anti-apartheid lawyers, Kentridge first studied politics and African Studies at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg (1973–76) before studying fine art at Johannesburg Art Foundation (1976–78). Throughout this time Kentridge worked extensively in theater as an actor, designer and director. He was a founding member of the Junction Avenue Theatre Company based in Johannesburg and Soweto from 1975 to 1991.

In 1988 after working in Johannesburg as an art director for television and feature films, he became a founding member of the Free Filmmakers Cooperative. Kentridge is a versatile artist who has worked with a wide variety of media and techniques, including chemical drawings to etching, film to film animation, acting, set design and directing numerous theatrical productions.

In 1989 he created his first animated film in the Scho Eckstein, Felix Tellebaum series Johannesburg 2nd Greatest City after Paris. In 1992 Kentridge staged his first theater project in conjunction with Handspring Puppet Company: Wojak on the Highveld. Since then his works have been included in major international exhibitions ranging from Sydney, Havana, and Istanbul Biennales to Documenta X in Kassel, Germany, as well as a mid-career retrospective co-organized by MCA Chicago, the New Museum, New York; and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
ZWELETHU MTHETHWA

Zwelethu Mthethwa was born in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa in 1960. He graduated from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town (UCT), in 1984 and received an advanced diploma in 1985. He was the first black African lecturer to be appointed to the UCT Fine Arts faculty (1984). He was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and received his M.F.A. from the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY (1989).

Mthethwa began exhibiting in the mid-1980s and to date has exhibited in the United States, United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Holland, France, Singapore, Germany and Spain. He has had numerous group and solo exhibitions around South Africa. In 1999 he participated in ARCO, Madrid, In Africa by Africa in the Barbican Art Gallery in London, and in SITE Santa Fe, NM.

While Zwelethu's work attempts to bridge cultural gaps and is not politically motivated, it nevertheless acts as an emotional barometer, capturing the dignity of the customary existence of township dwellers engaged in the hurly-burly of living out the daily drama of life, fetching water, telling stories, getting married, slaughtering goats and celebrating rites of passage.

The 1990s witnessed a huge surge in Mthethwa's art career, and he continues to be invited to participate in international exhibitions and Biennales. His work is represented in most major public and corporate art collections throughout South Africa and in private collections worldwide.
SAM NHLENGETHWASam Nhlengethwa was born in 1955 in Payneville Springs, South Africa. In 1978 Nhlengethwa received a fine art diploma from Rorke's Drift Art Centre in Natal. After graduating he taught part-time at the Federative Union of Black Artists (FUBA) in Johannesburg. At first FUBA was an agency for black artists who wanted to market their work in South Africa and internationally. Currently FUBA provides instruction in music, singing, fine arts and theater for more than 3,000 children every month. Once seen as one of South Africa’s leading Resistance artists, Nhlengethwa has grown from this and adjusted the style and content of his works to explore other themes such as music, specifically jazz and the mechanics of everyday living. He works with found printed images from posters and magazines, including his recollections of township life in his imagery. Nhlengethwa was urban born and raised and therefore relates intimately to township existence, not only in his collages but also in his prints.

Nhlengethwa has received various prestigious awards throughout his career and has attended workshops in New York, Senegal and Cuba. He has participated in group exhibitions since the early 1980s in Germany, France, the United States and Botswana. He has held many solo exhibitions at the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg, as well as several two-person shows. His work is represented in major public and corporate art collections in South Africa and abroad.
**TIMELINE**

1652 The Dutch East India Company establishes a settlement at the Cape of Good Hope, initiating 150 years of conflict between the settlers and the indigenous populations of the San (hunter-gatherers) and the Khoikhoi (farmers). Europeans dominate the western half of the area by 1800.

1806 Britain takes permanent control of the Cape Colony from the Netherlands. In 1809 the British decree that the San and the Khoikhoi must work for white employers and restrict their travels.

1836-40 In an attempt to escape British rule, thousands of Dutch families (Boers) embark on the Great Trek (migrations from Eastern Cape to what became the Orange Free State, Transvaal and Natal). At this point South Africa's interior consists of a combination of British colonies and protectorates, Boer republics and indigenous nations.

1875-80 British and Boers initiate wars of conquest against the Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho and Pedi cultures, incorporating them into a capitalist, white-dominated economy.

1877 Britain annexes Transvaal.

1880-81 Transvaal rebels against British rule ("First War of Independence").

1899-1902 South African War ("Second War of Independence").

1910 The British colonies of Natal and the Cape join with the Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State to form the Union of South Africa.

1912 South African Native National Congress (SANNC) forms, changes its name to African National Congress in 1923 (ANC).

1913 The Native Land Act prohibits Africans from purchasing or leasing land from Europeans outside the reserves. This act allocates only 13 percent of the land to Africans who make up more than 80 percent of the population.

1914 Nationalist Party (NP) forms.

1930s Laws require blacks to report to an official and carry passbooks while walking through non-black areas. An amendment empowers urban authorities to remove "surplus (African) females" from white areas and place them in established African locations. Africans migrate in large numbers to urban areas.

1939-45 World War II spurs substantial increase in black industrial labor force.

1948 Urbanization and economic growth during World War II fuels white fears that South Africa's racial barriers will collapse. The conservative Afrikaner-dominated National Party led by Daniel Malan wins the parliamentary elections and introduces apartheid (separateness) as part of official government policy. "Whites only" signs are placed throughout the country.

1949 The prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act declares that marriages between members of different races are illegal. The ANC organizes a passive resistance campaign against apartheid.

1950s Government tightens the legislative framework of apartheid and passes an additional set of laws. The Population Registration Act classifies all South Africans as black, white, colored or Asian. The Group Areas Act gives the government the right to designate racially separate areas, as well as remove Africans from their land. The Immorality Act states that sexual relations between different races are illegal. The Suppression of Communist Act grants the government the authority to ban any activity or organization considered to be hostile to the government.

1952 The ANC and the South African Indian Congress launch the Defiance Campaign against laws (pass laws, Group Areas Act, Voter Representation Act, Suppression of Communism Act and Bantu Authorities Act) that lasts one year and results in more than 7,500 arrests. The Abolition of Passes and Consolidation of Documents Act is introduced which initiates the use of a single reference book or "dompass." It is illegal to be without this document, which serves as the cornerstone for regulating African labor.


1955 The Black Sash, a South African women's organization, forms to protest the Colored Vote Bill that prohibits people of mixed race from voting. The Group Areas Act is enacted and the forced removal and relocation of blacks begins.

1956 20,000 African women assemble to deliver a petition in protest of the decision to extend the "pass laws" to black women.

1958 Police arrest 2,000 African women for refusing to accept their passes. Hendrik F. Verwoerd (the architect of apartheid) becomes Prime Minister.

1959 The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) is formed by former ANC members opposed to the ANC's alliance with non-black organizations. The extension of the University Education Act segregates all South African colleges and universities.
1960 The PAC organizes protests against pass laws. The Sharpeville protest turns violent as police open fire on protesters, killing 69 and wounding 187. The government bans the ANC and the PAC.

1961 South Africa becomes a republic and leaves the British Commonwealth. ANC adopts armed resistance and forms a military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe ("Spear of the Nation"). The Sabotage Act permits security police to detain suspects for consecutive periods without bringing them before a court of law.

1964 Rivonia Trial leads to imprisonment of eight ANC leaders, including Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki.

1970 The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act is passed, which requires all South African blacks to become citizens of one of the 10 tribal homelands regardless of where they live. Organized according to ethnic and linguistic divisions, the homelands include Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei, Gazankulu, KwaZulu, Lebowa, KwaNdebele, KaNgwane and Ovagwa.

1973 Black workers strike nationwide for higher wages and improved working conditions, which results in black unionization.

1975 The Inkatha Freedom Party is founded by Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

1976 Thousands of black schoolchildren in Soweto demonstrate against the government’s mandate that they should be instructed in Afrikaans. Police open fire on unarmed protesters.


1980 The Free Nelson Mandela campaign begins.

1982 Right-wing Afrikaners opposed to apartheid reforms leave the NP and form the Conservative Party (CP). The new constitution proposes a tricameral Parliament with separate houses for whites, coloreds and Asians, granting limited political rights to coloreds and Asians. Africans are still excluded.

1983 The United Democratic Front (UDF) forms to oppose the proposed tricameral constitution and its legislation for blacks.

1984 Protests against rent increases and the exclusion of blacks in the new constitution turn violent and spreads throughout the Vaal Triangle townships. Soldiers are sent into the townships to suppress the violence.

1985 Government declares first partial state of emergency in major urban areas in response to ongoing township violence. Many blacks are killed as a result of police brutality and clashes between black factions. The media is prohibited from reporting the unrest.

1986 The European Community and United States impose economic sanctions on South Africa. The government proclaims a second nationwide state of emergency, again censoring the media. During states of emergency, police could detain anyone for up to six months without a hearing. Thousands died in custody, frequently after gruesome acts of torture. The Mixed Marriages Act and the pass laws are abolished.

1987 A strike by railway workers leads to the worst violence in South Africa since the government declared a national state of emergency in 1986.

1989 PW. Botha retires as president and is replaced by F.W. de Klerk. The nationwide state of emergency is extended for its fourth year.

1990 De Klerk lifts bans on ANC, PAC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Nelson Mandela is released after 27 years in prison. Negotiations between the ANC and government begin. The ANC agrees to suspend its armed struggle and the government releases more than 3,000 political prisoners. The Separate Amenities Act is repealed.

1991 The Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, and the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 are repealed.

1993 Twenty-one South African political parties agree on an interim constitution that paves the way for a democratic election.

1994 The ANC wins the first non-racial election. Nelson Mandela is inaugurated as President of South Africa. The Government of National Unity is formed by the ANC, the NP and Inkatha. Foreign governments lift sanctions.

1995 Parliament establishes the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to investigate human rights abuses executed during the apartheid years.

1996-98 TRC hearings

1997 The new constitution comes into effect. Declaring, “The time has come to take leave,” Mandela steps down as president of the ANC. His deputy Thabo Mbeki replaces him.

1999 The second democratic elections are held. The ANC wins and Thabo Mbeki becomes president.

2000 The 13th International AIDS conference is held in Durban.
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Hours
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