

# CHAPTER TWO

## Introduction to Imbali

Having briefly examined selected “progressive” rationales for art education, categories of educational ideologies, and art education projects initiated in South Africa between the 1950s and 1980s, in this chapter I introduce the Imbali Visual Literacy Project. I will position Imbali’s approach in terms of the above-mentioned rationales and situate it historically. Imbali is positioned in this way because it is these progressive ideologies that, on closer inspection, underpin much of what the organisation does and how it approaches projects. This foregrounds the illuminative evaluation of the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme* and the answering of the research questions presented at the beginning of chapter one.

## Beginnings

Imbali was founded in 1988. It grew out of an art competition run by Women For Peace<sup>1</sup>. The art competition was open to children of all ages and race groups, the theme being “Peace”. From the entries received it became immediately obvious that there was a vast difference in the character of work by children from white schools and that of their black counterparts<sup>2</sup>. It was concluded that because there was little or no art education present in black schools, learners in these schools did not have the opportunity to develop creative or perceptual skills. To address this need, the Imbali Visual Literacy Project was set up as a project of Women For Peace to train teachers from disadvantaged schools and backgrounds in visual literacy skills, equipping them to impart these skills to their learners. Imbali’s approach to training for art education placed value on looking and perceiving, viewing this as an important and vital aspect in the creative process (Ruth Sack, personal comment).

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<sup>1</sup> Women for Peace is an organisation committed to establishing communication between people of all race and language groups in South Africa. Its focus is to empower grassroots communities.

<sup>2</sup> The artwork of black children from township schools revealed a relative lack of visual stimuli, art materials, and inspired art teaching.

Imbali's focus on visual literacy was crucial as it defined an area of work that was different in focus from other arts education initiatives at the time. By foregrounding visual literacy, Michelle Jersky (the first director of Imbali) positioned Imbali on the intellectual and more cognitive side of arts education discourses<sup>3</sup>. Many other arts initiatives around this time were focussing predominantly on imparting art-making skills and techniques emphasising free expression, creativity and spontaneity (the Art Foundation, Curriculum Development Project (CDP)<sup>4</sup>, Sibikwa Community Theatre Project). Imbali's positioning comes in part from Jersky's background in art history. She completed a master's degree in art history at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and during this time was also involved with the African Institute of Art (AIA) teaching art history at the Funda Centre. Looking at and understanding art for her was a logical starting point out of which art-making arose<sup>5</sup>. At the time of Imbali's inception, Jersky was the education officer at the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) and this also impacted strongly on Imbali's approach. All the early teacher-training workshops were conducted at JAG and the Standard Bank Gallery and the curriculum was rooted in contemporary art practice. Responding to and constructing insights and meaning around contemporary artworks typically needed to take place in these spaces. Drawing extensively on gallery resources, the workshops encouraged teachers to feel comfortable in and take ownership of these spaces. They were also urged to bring their learners to the gallery and extend themes and explorations begun in the Imbali workshops.

The need to focus on teacher development in the visual arts in black schools was also recognised by other organisations in the late 1980s. In 1986 the AIA initiated Khula Udweba, an art teacher-training programme based at Funda Centre in Soweto. The CDP was established in 1989 in Johannesburg. Their focus was to develop curricula for the visual arts as well as train teachers; their distinctive concern was for developing art-making skills. The Visual Arts and Craft Academy (VACA) and Sibikwa Community

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<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that Imbali's focus on visual literacy was antithetical to the practice of art-making or the applicability of these skills to specific teaching contexts (Michelle Jersky, personal comment), nor that Imbali views art-making as "non-cognitive". Art-making can be as much about cognitive processes as looking at art can be.

<sup>4</sup> After stating a name in full with the abbreviation or acronym in brackets I will subsequently use only the abbreviation.

<sup>5</sup> Jersky notes here that Imbali was not initially referred to as a visual literacy project; this evolved as the project defined itself alone and in relation to other initiatives and contexts. (Michelle Jersky, personal comment)

Theatre project, although initially not specifically focussing on teacher development in the visual arts only, also began during this period.

Imbali developed during a climate of general disillusionment with regards to the lack of art education in black schools. Under the Bantu education system, “Art”, when it was present, encouraged uniformity and conformity, placing a strong emphasis on the making of decorated utilitarian objects. There was little encouragement to develop creativity, self-expression or thinking through art. “Art” was considered a non-academic subject especially useful for “slow learners” who were battling with more “demanding” subjects like maths and science. The need to develop innovative teaching methodologies in the arts that built upon student creativity and imagination, cognition and understanding as well as their own cultural heritage, social and personal experiences and perceptions, could not be denied. Imbali’s particular focus on visual literacy, understanding art as an important area of cognition – i.e. of thinking and understanding, went in direct contrast to the simplistic perceptions about art held by Bantu education at the time.

Imbali’s mission at the time of its inception was:

- To enable teachers to develop and communicate visual literacy skills
- To make art and art education accessible to as wide an audience as possible
- To promote awareness of South Africa’s diverse cultural heritage

(Jersky – Introducing Imbali, 1990)

Imbali perceived visual literacy training as being an entry point into the worlds of art, culture, design and heritage, but also as playing an important role in allowing people to assume a position of greater autonomy with regard to the information received daily from various media<sup>6</sup>. Michelle Jersky articulated the benefits of teaching visual literacy in an early Imbali document as follows:

Educational benefits:

- Training in creative thinking
- The development of critical analysis and assessment skills

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<sup>6</sup> Particularly during apartheid, having the skills to interpret and evaluate the media was crucial.

- The cultivation of creative relationships between teachers and learners
- The development of both verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- The opportunity to develop motor skills and coordination through art practice

Social benefits:

- The promotion of cultural interaction through an understanding of one's own culture and a respect of and openness to others' cultural experience
- An understanding of the ways in which our cultures embody the ideas and values of both individuals and communities
- Acquiring skills with which we can observe, question, challenge and contribute to the values and directions of our communities.

Psychological benefits:

- The development of self-expression and self confidence
- The development of creativity and innovation
- The development of a clear sense of the individual's identity
- The basis of a therapeutic healing process for those who have experienced trauma (Jersky – Why Arts and Visual Literacy? 1990)

Jersky ends this list of benefits by saying:

It is important to challenge the idea that "Art" is inaccessible and reserved for a privileged few. The making and viewing of art and other forms of material culture are activities which must be available to all. The study of the arts has a peculiar benefit in its own right, that of exposing students to a unique non-discursive form of knowledge. (Jersky 1990)

Imbali's early days laid down important principles for ways of understanding and working within the area of art and culture. Its emphasis on visual literacy is crucial in positioning it in relation to other art organisations initiated around the same time. Imbali's beginnings in museums and galleries are also important as it is this legacy that paved the way for the *Street Children Art Programme* being based at Museum Africa.

Imbali's old brochure (2000) states:

It is now accepted and known that all children have a basic need to express themselves and their unique qualities in creative ways. Each child needs to have an opportunity to become visually literate, to develop an independent, creative spirit and an individual vision. Being involved in creative processes also helps children to become productive, secure and fulfilled human beings (Sack - Imbali Brochure 2000).

This is an ethos and way of understanding art and its value that had substantial impact on the *Street Children Art Programme*.

Imbali's approach in these early years fits into what Eisner termed "essentialist justifications" for art education (Eisner 1972). Underpinning this approach is a recognition that learning about art and visual literacy has unique contributions to make to an individual's experience, growth, development and understanding. What art contributes to the education of an individual is precisely what other fields cannot - a non-discursive mode of knowing. This essentialist<sup>7</sup> position should not be viewed as a stance that is hostile to the understanding that art can play a transformative role in all areas of life, particularly in effecting social change.

Given that Imbali was founded during a time of growing resistance to the apartheid regime and its policies, the transformative role that the arts can play was a vital factor. Imbali (and other similar projects mentioned in chapter one) challenged the apartheid policies of denying access and education to certain groups of people based on their skin colour. An ethos of resistance, working towards social reconstruction and transformation was embedded in Imbali's approach from the outset. However, because it viewed looking at and making art as contributing uniquely to human experience and understanding, I maintain that it is arguable to position Imbali on the Eisnerian essentialist side of art education justifications. Despite this, it should be understood that

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<sup>7</sup> As mentioned in chapter one, the essentialism that I speak about here is more closely aligned to "strategic essentialism" than to essentialism.

these distinctions are not always as clear-cut as they appear. There is evidence here of different rationales co-existing. However, positioning Imbali under a “reconstructivist” banner would foreground social issues, with art and visual literacy being used as a tool for social reconstruction. I am arguing rather that Imbali’s approach valued looking at and making art as contributing uniquely to ways of understanding the world.

## **Recent Years**

In recent years Imbali has changed and grown substantially under the directorship of Ruth Sack. Currently, not only does it train teachers in visual arts, and continue to develop and run museum education programmes, but it has also been involved in delivering an art programme for inner-city street children (the subject of this research), and a number of full time craft courses for self-employed crafts people of all ages.

Ruth Sack comes from a background in theatre design, art and culture teacher training<sup>8</sup>, making her own art and curating exhibitions. Sally Clark<sup>9</sup> and Joni Brenner (who worked with Sack when she was appointed director in 1997), also have art-making and teaching backgrounds. This marks a shift in Imbali away from Jersky’s almost exclusive focus on looking at and understanding visual imagery, to a more sustained engagement with arts processes, materials and individual expression<sup>10</sup>.

Concurrent with Sack’s appointment as director were a number of major shifts in focus for many NGO’s working in all sectors. Instead of working against government, there was a strategic need to support government in its implementation of new policy. For Imbali this meant becoming involved with the Education Department, supporting it in its implementation of the Arts and Culture Learning Area and supporting the Department of Labour with its skills development initiative in the crafts sector. The emphasis on sustainability, and offering longer, more extensive training became more important.

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<sup>8</sup> Sack ran teacher-training courses at both the CDP and the Art Foundation.

<sup>9</sup> Clark also worked closely with Jersky when she was the director of Imbali.

<sup>10</sup> Brenner completed a master’s degree in Fine Arts at Wits. Her main focus was portraiture – she was very interested in the expressive potential of art making.

In January 2005 Imbali's mission was updated to include the crucial role of craft training and the need for social and economic empowerment and personal development.

Imbali's new mission:

- To work towards social and personal development through art and culture education and training
- To enable learners to develop and communicate art and craft skills and knowledge
- To promote visual literacy and an awareness of our arts and cultural heritage

Imbali's mission has broadened its scope to address an issue of growing concern within South Africa – poverty.

It now becomes necessary to distinguish between two streams within Imbali in recent years – teacher training and crafts training.

### **Teacher-training**

As mentioned already, the shifts in teacher training came with a decision to support government in its implementation of the new curriculum. This began in 1998 with Curriculum 2005, and continued in 2002 with the Revised National Curriculum Statement. The new National Curriculum was developed in line with the new Constitution of South Africa post 1994, its aims being to “develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa” (Revised National Curriculum Statement). With Arts and Culture as one of the eight official learning areas the need for focussed and sustained teacher training in this area was critical. Sally Clark played a key role in this process; as well as working for Imbali writing and facilitating teacher training workshops, she was part of the Arts and Culture team at the Gauteng Institute of Curriculum Development (GICD) - later re-named the Gauteng Institute of Educational Development GIED). Her knowledge and experience interfacing with the new curriculum had an important impact on Imbali's teacher-training. The Imbali courses began to engage more formally with the national curriculum documents. This culminated in 2004 in a collaboration with the University of the Witwatersrand. After a

two-year part time course that Imbali runs teachers are accredited with an Advanced Certificate in Education – Arts and Culture.

### **Craft training**

The socio-political context in South Africa has changed substantially since the 1980s when Imbali was initiated. Increased unemployment and the resulting poverty cycle has become one of the country's most pressing problems, and Imbali has responded to this by incorporating into its activities and scope the training and development of visual literacy and craft skills for people of all ages.

This began in the late 1990s when Imbali was approached by a range of people and organisations requesting skills training in this area. In 1998 Imbali was involved in two projects in Mpumalanga after being approached by the Mpumalanga Department of Environment and Tourism. The first worked with a group of woodcarvers, developing their creative skills and expanding their repertoire of imagery beyond giraffes and birds. The second worked with a group of bead workers to help develop and stimulate imagery for appliqué and embroidery panels for the new Nelspruit legislature building. In the same year Imbali began a craft programme at the request of the youth officer at Dyambu Youth Centre near Krugersdorp, a juvenile offenders' detention centre for youth awaiting trial. The motivation for this initiative was that if youth developed some skills while in the centre, following their release they could use these to generate income and so would be less likely to commit further crime<sup>11</sup>. It was this craft initiative at Dyambu that led to the opening of the Imbali Crafts Training Centre in Kagiso towards the end of 1999. By offering skills-training in ceramics and textile design to unemployed youth, the Kagiso Craft Centre provided an important service to this impoverished and under-resourced community

It was these experiences that led in 2003 to Imbali being appointed as a training provider for the MAPP-SETA in Craft Production, part of the Department of Labour's national skills training programme. Imbali currently (2005) runs three National Certificate Learnerships in Craft Production.

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<sup>11</sup> The truth of this assumption has never been researched and so is difficult to verify.

### **Collaboration with government**

It is important to note that Imbali began as an organisation operating outside of mainstream education. It was founded at a time when apartheid disenfranchised the majority of the population in South Africa; the role of Imbali was to empower children and teachers (themselves working within the formal schooling system) with skills in visual literacy so they could have access to an increased understanding of arts and culture and their visual environment. Currently Imbali's position is shifting; it is working to support government initiatives. Its craft training courses are now being accredited by the National Qualifications Framework and its teacher training course by the University of the Witwatersrand. Even the museum education programmes and resource material developed around these programmes are coming under increased pressure from educators and museum education officers to be aligned with the National Curriculum. Imbali's *Street Children Art Programme* was one of the few Imbali programmes that still functioned completely autonomously, outside any official certification structures. This programme marked a significant departure from the rest of Imbali's work.

Imbali's move in recent years from formal school interventions to other "target audiences" indicates an increased slant towards the area that Eisner identified as contextualist justifications for art education (Eisner 1972). Another way of framing this is to speak about reconstructivist rationales for art education. These rationales view art education within the broader socio-political landscape (Siegesmund 1998). The reconstructivist position holds that learning about art should contribute towards social transformation in a very direct way.

Acknowledging issues like poverty, unemployment and a shortage of skills – issues impacting on a number of individuals and communities in South Africa - has prompted the government to channel an increasing amount of funds towards initiatives like craft training which contribute towards income generation and self sufficiency. Imbali has become involved in this roll-out of training and has developed courses in the area of crafts skills and income generation. This focus on the context in which Imbali is operating – that of a post apartheid South Africa, where poverty and unemployment are

at some of the highest levels ever recorded - signifies a move away from essentialist ideas around the unique contributions to human experience that only art can offer, to an acknowledgement of the wider role learning about art can play in contemporary South African society with regards to poverty alleviation and income generation. This shift seems to echo what Grant Kester (see chapter four) argues as being the purpose of “community orientated art education projects, that they cannot simply justify themselves in purely essentialist terms. They have to be “answerable” in a tangible way, to the broader socio-political and economic contexts of their “subjects”. They need to offer long-term, sustainable interventions” (Kester 1998 and 2005). This is a position I will look at in depth in subsequent chapters.

## **Positioning Imbali**

Imbali is a dynamic organisation that changes with the times and the demands of society, individual learners, staff, funders and accreditation bodies. These demands are complex and sometimes contradictory. Imbali frequently has to delicately balance a number of competing agendas while trying not to lose sight of its own specific identity, vision and integrity<sup>12</sup>. In the face of a changing society with changing needs, Imbali’s convictions about the importance and value of visual literacy and arts and culture have to be continually re-evaluated and made relevant to new contexts.

In the late 1980s when Imbali began, it was focussed strongly on visual literacy and providing teachers and their learners with skills to interpret the visual world and express their feelings about the world and themselves through art-making. The focus was on developing the individual in a manner that foregrounded their experience as a starting point for both looking at and making art. The roots of this learner-centred approach stretch back to the progressive movement in education of the 1920s and 1930s in America. John Dewey was a strong proponent of this approach. He argued that art as a form of experience has unique and valuable characteristics. Imbali’s recognition that “all children have a basic need to express themselves and their unique qualities in creative ways” (Imbali brochure) echoes these sentiments. Also, some of the benefits of visual literacy articulated by Michelle Jersky under the headings of educational benefits,

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<sup>12</sup> Imbali’s identity, vision and integrity is dynamic, and has changed emphasis over time, but its core principles around the value of visual literacy and the socially transformative powers of art have remained central.

social benefits and psychological benefits fit comfortably under the progressive umbrella - for example, the development of self-expression and self-confidence, the development of creativity and innovation and the development of verbal and non-verbal communication skills. This position (for example, the assumed inherent value of the development of self-expression and self-esteem) will be critiqued later in this report using Grant Kester as a key proponent of another approach to engaging with art – that of “dialogical aesthetics” (Kester 1998, 2004 and 2005).

The value Imbali placed on visual literacy and the importance of understanding the world through visual perception can be traced back to Eisner’s thinking in the 1970s. Eisner viewed artistic ability as a mode of intelligence in its own right. He claimed that through the senses individuals can directly know the world and expand their consciousness. He saw the arts as products of cognition and not as something separate; he viewed them as an essential element in epistemology (Eisner 1972, 1998). This kind of thinking influenced Imbali’s approach to art. Art is seen to be more than just the creation of a painting, drawing or sculpture; it is a realm of experience and understanding that has the potential to “expose people to a unique non-discursive form of knowledge” (Jersky 1990). This exemplifies the essentialist view of art education as described by Eisner in the 1970s. But as mentioned previously, this position should be viewed in a nuanced way. Seeing art as providing a unique way of knowing the world does not exclude the possibility that learning about making and looking at art can also contribute in a profound way towards social transformation. Art should not be viewed in a way that isolates it from the world and experience. Developing artistic skills and understanding is integral to understanding and interacting with the world, providing fresh insights and ways of perceiving and interacting with other people and the environment.

Siegesmund’s (1998) argument that the major contribution that art education can make is to help students’ “reason through perception” is an idea that sits comfortably with many of the aims Imbali proposes as the value of learning about visual literacy. Under “social benefits” in her document on *‘Why Arts and Visual Literacy?’* Jersky discusses some of the values of learning about visual literacy in terms of culture. First, it can promote cultural interaction through an understanding of one’s own culture and a respect of and an openness to others’ cultural experience. Second, it can help in

acquiring skills with which one can observe, question, challenge and contribute to the values and directions of one's communities.

Imbali's firm grounding in progressive education theory and a democratic ideology is key to defining its position in its early years. This has shifted somewhat in recent times, but the foundation laid by these ideas remains.

### **Shifting perceptions of Imbali's identity**

In recent years, social and economic pressures have caused Imbali's position to shift. Although visual literacy is still an important focus, it is making a real and substantial difference to people's lives, i.e. making them aware of the capacity to change and to be self employed and sustain themselves, that is coming to be seen as vital (contextualist/reconstructivist justification). Visual and cultural literacy have to be seen to contribute to this end. "Outside pressure has dictated to a large extent what we do at Imbali; in many cases there has been no one else to do these things. Now craft is also intrinsic to what we do, our identity has been affected" (Ruth Sack, personal comment).

In the past Imbali asked questions of itself such as: How *relevant* is what we are doing, and what impact are we having? Now Imbali continually has to ask itself: How *useful* is what we are teaching people? What are they going to do with that which the NGO offers? These evaluative questions will be brought to the fore in following chapters through my illuminative evaluation of the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme*. But the continual question, "what is valuable about what Imbali is doing?" is present in all Imbali projects.

There are many complexities to consider when attempting to position Imbali. These have become more intricate as Imbali has developed and expanded. There is Imbali the organisation which presents itself as doing certain things for certain reasons, and the kinds of ideas that inform this are those on which Imbali was founded as well as more current thinking. Then there are individual facilitators who have their own ideas about

why they do what they do.<sup>13</sup> Students, in turn have their own individual sets of ideas about why they come for training and what they are going to get out of it. Lastly, there are the funders' expectations. Funders often have vested interests in funding arts projects and programmes and consequently have a number of assumptions or objectives surrounding their involvement (Ruth Sack, personal comment). This observation is noteworthy as it highlights the complexity of values that inform an organisation like Imbali and its programme design and implementation<sup>14</sup>. Many of these factors will be considered in more depth with reference to the evaluation of the *Street Children Art Programme* in chapters five, six and seven.

### **An historical position**

That Imbali is an organisation that is in constant flux is indicative of the arts in general in South Africa at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The era of resistance is over, but opposition still continues to be a dominant force in defining positions. I will now position Imbali historically in relation to the various arts initiatives discussed in chapter one. In doing this, important features of these programmes that contribute in various ways to laying the foundations for Imbali will be identified. These links have not been made before now.

The Polly Street and Rorke's Drift Art Centres, the Johannesburg Art Foundation, the Thupelo workshops, and the African Institute of Art, like Imbali, all fostered a democratic ideology (Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford 1997). They all began as grass-roots organisations, focusing on making art accessible to a (mainly) black population who had been disenfranchised by the apartheid system. Art as a means towards self-expression and communication was valued. Art was also viewed as an important social instrument, providing people with a means through which to express their thoughts and feelings, which were often in resistance to the structures of power. A socially conscious

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<sup>13</sup> Jersky however notes that the group of people directly and indirectly involved in Imbali were/are [a fairly] ideologically homogenous group. She goes on to explain that while those involved in Imbali did (and continue to) have differing views on many issues, they also overlapped in their involvement with various organisations (for example the GIED, initiatives at Wits and the CDP) (Jersky, personal comment).

<sup>14</sup> These complexities seem to be a defining feature of other arts education programmes in the informal sector in South Africa.

art was encouraged, partially in order to contribute to bringing about social transformation.<sup>15</sup>

Because all these projects functioned outside of the mainstream<sup>16</sup> they were free to develop their own curriculum, tailoring it to what they felt were the needs of learners. These needs varied. At the Rorke's Drift Art Centre, printmaking was taught as a cheap and accessible medium through which to communicate. At the Polly Street Centre, Thupelo and the AIA, the use of alternative materials was encouraged. Sokhaya Charles Nkosi describes how at the AIA in order to survive, students often had to settle for "unthinkable" materials like PVA, plastic, rags, wall-paper glue, cow hide, pin boards, wood, sand and anything else that could be found and collected (Nkosi 1994). Imbali's emphasis on using cheap and accessible materials definitely continues this legacy. In the teacher-training courses much effort is put into experimenting with using non-art materials like food colouring instead of paint, and flour and water for *papier maché* instead of glue. In the craft courses one of the main focuses is on re-using and re-cycling materials. In the *Street Children Art Programme*, all the construction and sculpture was made out of waste materials like cardboard boxes, plastics and fabric scraps.

The subject matter of the images made at the Polly Street and Rorke's Drift Centres and the AIA was often directly related to the students and artists' lives. African content and experience was encouraged as subject matter, and traditional African arts were seen as an important source of inspiration. This was in contrast to the formal (white) art institutions whose curricula were almost exclusively Euro-centric, based on purely Western conceptions of what art is<sup>17</sup> (Richards 1997; Koloane 1997). Imbali's focus on using learners' interests, motivations and experiences as a starting point for art-making continues this Afro-centric tradition.

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<sup>15</sup> Although I compare the Polly Street and Rorke's Drift Art Centres, the Johannesburg Art Foundation, the Thupelo workshops, and the African Institute of Art with Imbali and identify them all as sharing a democratic ideology, it is important to note that the former centres and project focussed on developing artists, while Imbali's focus is on developing art teachers and crafts people.

<sup>16</sup> By "mainstream" I mean Universities, Technikons and schools who received funding from the government and had to conform to government standards (for example, by not admitting black students) in order to receive support.

<sup>17</sup> Rhodes University's art department in the mid 1990s was still focussing on drawing from the antique. The first year of a Bachelor of Fine Art degree concentrated almost exclusively on drawing plaster casts of ancient Greek and Roman sculptures.

The “workshop” mode of making art and interacting that was used at the Rorke’s Drift Art and Craft Centre, Polly Street, Thupelo and the AIA has been adopted as a dominant structure for a number of subsequent programmes, including those of Imbali. With the *Street Children Art Programme* in particular, this was an important feature. Some common features of the workshop mode are the following: First, they implement a more informal instructional space. Unlike a school where pupils attend on a daily basis, a workshop usually takes place for a few hours on a weekly or twice weekly basis (as in the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme*), or over an intensive two or three week period (as in the Thupelo Workshops). Second, workshops are usually attended on a voluntary basis - they attempt to offer information, skills, knowledge or a particular kind of experience to a pre-determined group of people. Third, they are usually run by organisations or individuals who have specialised knowledge and experience in the area of the workshop. Finally, they are interactive, tending to encourage active involvement from the participants.

A 1997 Imbali document describes Imbali workshops as processes that:

- encourage active learner participation
- relate to learners’ own lives and experiences
- promote visual literacy
- encourage critical thinking, research and questioning skills that are relevant to the broader learning context
- work in small groups to facilitate hands-on learning

Although these five points describe the benefits of a teacher-training workshop, these principles are the basis of all Imbali workshops, and reiterate how the workshop mode differs from more formal modes like “lessons” or “lectures”.

## **Summary**

In recent years Imbali has re-defined itself in a number of areas. Its role in a society that is rapidly changing is something that Ruth Sack continually considers and evaluates. Imbali has also grown and now has a range of full-time and part-time facilitators from

varying backgrounds. Sack feels that it is very important for Imbali to remain clear-sighted about its principles and values.

Imbali should be viewed not only as an organisation that began at a particular time in a particular context with particular principles and ideologies, but also as an organisation that has changed with the changing times. There is a complex set of ideological, social, political and economic issues surrounding the positioning of Imbali. Some of these have been introduced and examined above; others will be highlighted in subsequent chapters where I introduce and evaluate the *Imbali Street Children Art Programme*.