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About memory in fashion: a study of the work of Clive Rundle

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Chapter One: Traces of Memory

> Our interest in *lieux des memoire* where memory crystalises and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn – but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites.
>
> Pierre Nora (1989: 7)

ON CREATIVITY, FASHION AND MEMORY:

This research study draws on two considerable fields of investigation and application: fashion and memory. As I prepared the final editing of this research report, I attended a public talk hosted in conjunction with the 3rd Apartheid Archive Project (25-29 July 2011), titled: *On Memory and Creativity*, where South African "icons"[1] Nadine Gordimer, William Kentridge, Chris Van Wyk, Hugh Masekela and Zoe Wicomb presented reflections on creativity (and imagination) and memory. What surfaced in the discussions held was an investigation into compound and variable, personal and political pasts, and the creative influence that these memories and histories have had on the work of these individual artists. Most notably the discussants raised questions as witness to these pasts; as multiple, complex, complicit and variable questions of the pasts of a South Africa still fraught with the trauma of (apartheid) memories that continue to contaminate the present according to the archival project's mission statement, as "the pernicious effects of the old apartheid order on our inner-worlds; on memory, identity and subjectivity"[2].

Broader frameworks of research into notions of memory and creativity include Liza Saltzman's *Making Memory Matter* (2006), which reflects on strategies of remembrance in contemporary art, identifying new kinds of material memories made evident in the works of artists such as Kentridge, McCall, Parker, Wodiczko

[1] Mark Gevisser referred to the selected guest speakers as "icons", or even "national treasures" in his introduction to the evening *On Creativity and Memory*, Wits Great Hall, Johannesburg, 28 July 2011.
[2] Nostalgia, Narratives, Nationhoods: Conference Report, prepared by N. Duncan and G. Stevens, 6 August 2011.

and others through profiles, casts, shadows, silhouettes, light-works or projections. With reference to Pierre Nora's assertion of "a general perception that anything and everything may disappear" (1989: 7), these ghosts, silences, absences and erasures in the contemporary arts reference various complex, contemporary realities and anxieties. Notions of a slippage of time and its resultant fragmentation underpin this research study and, as Nora[3] suggests (1989: 2), the pasts that have disappeared are impacting on perceptions of the present and projections of the future.

For this research report, I focused on contemporary studies in the fields of fashion, creativity and memory, and contextualised this research in relation to a discourse of South African *fashion,* with specific attention on the work of South African fashion designer, Clive Rundle. My aim in this report is to investigate evidence of notions of history and memory in his work, and thereby contribute to a broader scope of academic study and analysis of South African fashion. Due to limitations of scale in this report, I have chosen a case study approach to avoid generalisations in terms of the phenomenon of fashion (as a system, as a product, and as a social activity), but also to provide an in-depth, original and critical investigation in a field that has received limited local academic attention. This research report however will rely on a number of global concepts in the material, symbolic, and cultural analyses of fashion[4]. The term *fashion* that I have used throughout this research study refers to *the result of* a set of activities within which new ideas are manifest in garment forms, and through which new forms of creative, social and personal identities are perpetually re-constructed. Caroline Evans (2003: 3-4) posits a similar critical approach which looks at "applied, rather than pure theory as it relates to contemporary visual culture", where new forms of fashion result from a creative development that is set "against the unstable backdrop of rapid social, economic and technological change".

[3] Pierre Nora (1989) identifies differences *Between Memory and History* with the acceleration of history which has impacted on contemporary perceptions of both the present and the past,

[4] The research is posited in a local context, but the concept and discourse of fashion applied in the study is framed within the global terms and understanding thereof, as distinctions between global and local fashion production have radically dissolved in the digital age, see Brand & Teunissen (2005).

An upsurge in academic interest and research in the discipline of fashion in the last twenty years has seen more inclusive definitions and analyses contributing to the development of a more comprehensive, theoretical discourse on contemporary fashion practices and theories (for example, Lipovetsky 1994, Kawamura 2004 and 2011; Niessen 2003; Rovine 2009). Following Roland Barthes[5] (1967), whose seminal study of the semiotics of fashion, it is tacitly accepted that the material objects of contemporary fashion are imbued with symbolic association and meaning. These can signify notions of belonging, modernity, culture, individuality, affiliation and history, through their connotative and denotative associations and, furthermore provide sites of inquiry into diverse and complex investigations such as; class, gender, culture, power, production, capital, and identity (for example, see Bourdieu 1979; Wilson 1985; Davis 1992; Lehmann 2002; Rovine 2009; Teunissen 2009).

The development of a more critical discourse in fashion encouraged my theoretical interests in investigating local contemporary fashion and afforded new research approaches[6] in terms of South African fashion developments that are witness to multiple social, political and cultural transformations. I have chosen to focus on the work of contemporary fashion designer, Clive Rundle (b. 1959) whose critical and complex works have claimed to offer socio-political commentaries[7], and whose creative fashion expression raises complex cultural questions in a new South Africa. I argue that, by exploring the various traces of memory and history I can offer a critique of his work in relation to a broader context of cultural production. I do not propose that Rundle's work is definitive of the scope of contemporary South African fashion, nor propose that he represents a typical or conventional approach in local fashion. Instead, I have chosen Rundle for the 'cutting edge' qualities of his work that follow notions of the avant-garde that Wood and Perry (2004: 25-32) identify as the ability to

[5] Barthes (trans. Ward & Howard, 1985 [1967]) developed a complex analytical framework for clarifying the signifying structures behind the representation, consumption and circulation of meanings in his study of *The Fashion System* Barthes and Stafford.

[6] Kawamura (2011: 1-3) posits that historically, fashion/dress research was not taken seriously as there were no clearly articulated theoretical frameworks and methodological strategies to study fashion/dress, nor tools and options to investigate fashion/dress, especially when it was treated as an abstract concept rather than raw materials of clothing.

[7] See *Clive in Wonderland,* Elle Magazine, May 2010: 39

signal change, to offer innovation and confrontation, and to stimulate forms of creative agitation. Furthermore Rundle's oeuvre offers a dialectical aesthetic that encompasses a complex relationship of the past in the present. Evans (2003: 6) identifies an "experience of cultural discontinuity, death (or its corollaries mourning, trauma and shock), gender instability and free-floating anxieties" in the work of many late twentieth and early twenty-first century fashion designers, which bears witness to the idea of fashion's affinity with modernity and social, cultural and political change.

TRACES OF MEMORY:

By interrogating conceptual and material traces of memory and history in Rundle's work, this research will rely upon established frameworks of cultural and material studies addressing notions of research that highlight studies both "in terms of the object, and in terms of activities, processes, and forms of intervention in given contexts or discourses, or the creation of new contexts in which something might happen" (Costello & Vickery, 2007: 3). Costello and Vickery claim that contemporary analyses of art (and its practice) have tended to become increasingly relative to the "means, location and context of its utterance"(ibid.). The analysis of fashion in this study falls in line with this critical thinking.

In the process of researching Rundle's work, I investigated selected objects, conducted multiple interviews and developed an understanding of the context of the production of these objects within the broader system or framework of local fashion, with the focused intention of exploring memory traces or historical fragments within the work. The study refers to what Marinus Kwint (1999: 2) identifies as the ability of objects to furnish forms of recollection where objects either constitute or represent reflections of the past, or stimulate acts of remembering. Kwint (1999: 3) further highlights how objects act as "archives of memory" that store and/or process information outside of experience, which allow for recollection through "the processes of evocation".

Critical to this study, is Walter Benjamin's ***tigersprung***[8] as the dialectical image of coincidence between historical event and contemporary moment, which Benjamin called the 'tiger's leap' of fashion into history, as it (fashion) negotiates the present, and where the past resonates in the present. Esther Leslie[9] (1999: 117) reflects on Benjamin's references to the evocation of "involuntary memories through objects", and how objects suggest experiences and act as catalysts of imagination and sites for remembrance.

As this research project points to an analysis of Rundle's work, insight into the memory traces – the involuntary flash or *tigersprung* of the past - that surfaces in the selected objects in Rundle's work, offers potential for understanding the socio-political and creative context of the work. It is in understanding the nature of what 'resurfaces'[10], which this study works; with what Evans (2003: 9) claims as "ghosts of modernity"[11] in the seemingly random returns, which offer valuable insights into contemporary anxieties and values. Evans (2003: 34-35) identified rapid changes in contemporary society as "the violent jolts of modernity" that place demands on people to "endlessly adjust to an eternal present; often placing the modern in opposition to history and memory", creating a simultaneous need to look forward, as well as backwards.

Nora (1989: 7) suggests that as individuals continually re-invent themselves in the present the "continuous break with history, perpetuates a need to revisit the past", whereby contemporary obsessions with memory occur "because there is so little of it left" (1989: 13). Nora further argues that the perception of this

[8] Benjamin's theses on the '*Philosophy of History*' (1939-40) introduced the term 'tigersprung'. This concept has influenced a number of recent academic writings on fashion (including Evans 2003; Lehmann 2000; Wilson 2002).
[9] Esther Leslie (1999: 107-122) traces the matter of memory in a number of Benjamin's writings, including *One-Way Street and Other Writings, The Arcades Project, Illuminations.*
[10] Evans (2003: 243) argues that memory traces invoked in fashion often reflect historical fragments of a trauma, instability or transience from other eras, and that these traces often come back under the weight of new cultural trauma. Evans further describes these traces of the past that surface in the present as the 'return of the repressed', because traumatic memories are experienced with a sense of great vividness and immediacy, and seem to retain an indelible imprint of the past, thereby presenting an incontestable link with history in an era of simulation (ibid.).
[11] Evans (2003: 9-10) explores Benjamin's notion of the modern subject who experiences sociological change, and the impact of this on the psychology of individuals in their attempt to adjust to a new modern world. Evans describes how traces of the past surface in the present like the return of the repressed, and how meaning seems to mutate to the surface of things, in such a way that 'clothing functions as a metaphor for the instability and contingency of modern life'.

acceleration of history bears witness to an "increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good"(ibid.).

THE POLITICS OF FASHION:

The 3rd Apartheid Archive Project conference *Narratives, Nostalgia and Nationhood*[12], highlighted the importance of nostalgia in the critical creative possibilities of using personal narratives of the past to investigate experiences of history and the ways in which these are "employed not only as a means of reconstructing histories, but also as a set of resources for the future", expanding contemporary social or public memory, and reclaiming or reconfiguring dominated knowledges and experiences (Pickering & Keightley 2006, 937). Issues of remembrance and remembering are central to the *re-definitions* of nationhood, of history and identity and belonging, which are surfacing in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Shortly after the democratic elections in 1994, many South Africans witnessed, in the public hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission[13] (TRC), evidence and narratives of experience of violence, trauma, wounding and forgiveness. Annie E. Coombes (2003) and Mario Zervignon (2002) explore the impact and complexity of political and social transformation in South Africa as well as the evocation of traumatic narratives, pride and shame on visual culture. Although this impact is recognised and realised in the fields of visual arts, it is worth considering the possibility of influence of these issues of history and remembrance in the realm of local contemporary fashion.

Evidence of political references (of oppression, subordination and control) in South African fashion can historically be framed within colonial contexts (Ross, 2008; Hendrikson 1996; Hobshawn & Ranger, 1983). More recently, references to heritage and history are surfacing in contemporary local fashion, that include

[12] This conference was held in Johannesburg, 27-29 July 2011, in which scholars and academics critically engaged with nostalgia as a means to expand critique and discourse on social memory, and cultural and political redress.
[13] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a court-like body at which anybody who felt they had been victims of violence could come forward. The commission's brief was to "unearth the truth about our dark past, to lay the ghosts of the past to rest so that they will not return to haunt us and that we will thereby contribute to the healing of a traumatised and wounded people, for all of us in South Africa are wounded people, and in this manner, promote national unity and reconciliation" (Coombes 2003: 243-278).

designers like Stoned Cherrie, Darkie, Marianne Fassler and Rundle, as seen in *10xSA Fashion* (Chang 2006: 13-16). Rundle's approach to fashion considers complex conceptual historical references that bear witness to contemporary anxieties and speculations in an unstable context. Evans (2003: 5) identifies this "strand of fashion" that articulates Benjamin's *tigersprung* as an attempt to "heal the wounds of the past". Similarly Ulrich Lehmann (2000: 210) states that fashion, "as an indispensible catalyst for remembrance", can act out new political concepts of history. Considering fashion as a site for the manifestation of traces or places of memory, calls forth Nora's notion of *lieux de memoires* (1989:7), as objects, places and images that act as sites of memory, which take on mnemonic functions, and bear the traces of memory.

Preoccupations with new identities have permeated the work of many South African artists as they renegotiate the past, exploring South Africa's material history like an archive of memories, re-presenting familiar terms in new ways in an attempt to reconstruct histories. South Africa's transition from apartheid witnessed what Nora (1989: 15) identified as "ruptures with history and identity". The multiplicity of meanings of the past, and our understanding of history and memory makes it difficult to process collectively. South Africa visual artists working with notions of memory include William Kentridge (erasure, politics and identity) and Penny Siopis (trauma and history), Siemon Allen (memory and the archive), Senzeni Marasela (history and identity), Berni Searle (gender and politics), and Steven Cohen (history, trauma and sexuality (Coombes, 2003; Nuttal 2009; Saltzman 2006). Contextualising these issues within a framework of contemporary fashion, can offer new directions in the development of the discourse of South African fashion. Saltzman (2006: 71) identifies the "Freudian model of the wax tablet or the literary form of the palimpsest[14]" as the basis of Kentridge's charcoal drawing which follow a process of marking, reworking and erasure, that surfaces questions of history and memory as being in a constant state of flux. The palimpsest in contemporary art, with patterns of past writings and erasures evidences traces of the past that

[14] Palimpsest referred to the writing material or manuscript on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for a second writing; monumental brass turned and re-engraved on reverse side (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1976).

can be read in the layers of the present, and I argue here that fashion too acts as a palimpsest that can evoke remembrance, history and thereby politics.

Saltzman (2006: 72) further identifies a "production of memory" in Kentridge's work, with reference to South Africa as a "struggle between the forces of forgetting and the resistance of remembrance" (Kentridge cited in Saltzman, 2006: 72). The need to go in search of a new histories and identities has created an obsession with memory in contemporary art, in cultural and social politics, and more recently in fashion. Spaces, gestures, images and objects have become the *lieux de memoires* "in attempts to either restore historical continuities or to renegotiate the pasts - real or imagined" (Nora, 1989: 18-19).

Although this study aims to bring together the various fields outlined above, it cannot offer comprehensive surveys of the key components due to the scale of the various discourses involved, and the limitations of time and scope of this study. This report therefore proposes a singular reading of notions of history and memory in the work, in the hope that it can contribute to further understanding of Rundle's work, and to the broader scope of understanding of South African fashion in the twenty-first century.

Chapter Two: Fashion and Rundle: Materials and Meanings

RUNDLE and RESEARCH

With a career that spans fifteen years of seasonal fashion shows with South African Fashion Week[15] (SAFW), and almost twenty years in the business (see Appendix A), I have been witness to the work of Rundle in shows, through collaborations, and in coverage in the fashion media. This research report however, required a further in-depth study, with specific attention to particular features within his work, and this was facilitated by a number of subject-focus interviews[16], studio visits, access to archival photographs, information and press articles[17] and to garments in the store, as well as in countless debates and discussions[18] over the ten months that led up to the exhibition (June-July 2011).

I also attended a number of seminars and events[19] in which Rundle participated, where he presented aspects of his work, beyond the realm of the fashion show. These views of Rundle, my own interpretations of the work, and other receptions of his collections; for example, fashion reviews in the press, offered broad outlines that supported the idea that his oeuvre operates in a realm mixed with histories and narratives. These interactions with Rundle and his work (at the studio, store, and fashion shows) offered insight into his design philosophies and creative approach, and more specifically, in terms of how notions of time, history and memory critically inform or feature in his work.

[15] South African Fashion Week (SAFW), established in 1994, has helped develop critical design identities within the fashion industry by encouraging individual expression, supporting this through relevant media attention, and promoting local talent.

[16] An introductory interview for the research project was conducted on Thursday 01 July 2010, with Clive Rundle, assistant Mbuye, pattern assistant Mathilda, and myself, that highlighted Rundle's critical processes involved in the development of his product: fashion.

[17] I am highly indebted to Donne Rundle, Clive's sister, who has collated a comprehensive archive of Rundle's work that includes notes, interviews, videos, press, photographs, invitations, letters, and various other ephemera from Rundle's work spanning 21 years.

[18] Approximately ten more scheduled meetings ensued that took place over the next ten months of research and development in terms of this research report, although there were many other casual telephonic and social conversations during this time.

[19] *Second Skin* held at South African Fashion Week Arts & Culture Seminar 2008, *40 days of a Collection*, a discussion presentation 09 June 2009, Johannesburg and *Climbing out of the Wall*, an installation event, Design Quarter, Johannesburg, 04 June 2010.

To facilitate a closer reading I chose to work with the 'finished' garments, not *toiles*[20] or work in progress from the studio, nor ramp or magazine photographs that imbue the garment with a particular look and feel, but rather with the garments as objects. Kawamura (2011: 17-19) raises various questions in relation to research in fashion and dress studies that highlight the various directions that the study of fashion can take. In this research I wanted to identify the various traces in the garment itself (of history and memory), and I chose to explore this through close observations of the objects. I selected two items from Rundle's dedicated Rosebank store named *Clive*[21]. These garments were randomly selected from an oeuvre in the store that spans at least fifteen years of creative work. I selected two pieces as 'random samples' from two different collections (A/W 2007 and S/S 2010), as I noted that any one of Rundle's many show pieces could have been investigated closely; all of them come from different inspirations, carry different narratives and reflect different concepts. Rundle too, did not interfere in, nor influence the selection. For the scope of this research study though, I chose to limit it to the in-depth analysis of only the selected items. I did not chose to investigate their differences, but rather the possibility of identifying traces that are witness to Benjamin's *tigersprung* and the notion of memory in the work.

By close observation, analysis and interpretation of these selected garments I chose to investigate how, as forms of visual data, they act as "texts" (Emerson & Smith, 2000: 22-28) and as sites of meanings (signifiers), that are subject to semiotic or mnemonic forms of cultural interpretations, and their narratives, meanings and codes. Barthes (2006 [1967]) proposes that garments provide semiotic references that can be established by comparative visual and contextual analyses, in the same way that scholars in the field of object studies have established an interpretative criticality (Candlin & Guins 2009).

[20] In the fashion process, most designers produce a sample of the product (initially for fittings) in a cheaper calico fabric in the creative development of the work, which is known as a *toile*.
[21] *Clive,* the store in Rosebank, Johannesburg opened in 1988, and is the only retail outlet in South Africa of Rundle's work and contains garments from all his collections, as well as ready-to-wear produced solely for the shop. Within one rail, there can be combinations of up to five different collections spanning 15 years of creation.

Aspects of the garments that informed this analysis included investigations into the shapes, details and tactilities of their material surfaces, whereby through various descriptions, deductions and speculations, I could construct interpretations of the possible meanings inscribed in these garments. Artists work with materials in ways that their 'mark-making' can be studied, and similarly, through a close study of the 'marks' made in fashion (seams, shapes, finishes, details, etc.), comparisons can be drawn between the process of construction in fashion, to processes involved in the making of an image, a sculpture, a video piece, or a painting.

In proceeding with this research project, I discovered that Rundle's work often carries juxtapositions; as dialectical objects, senses, histories and temporalities appear in singular garments and across entire collections, blurring boundaries between art and fashion, between function and aesthetics, and between the past and the present. The work is often defined as avant-garde fashion[22]. Rundle claims that he embraces chaos and the abstract idea of the impossible, and manages through his work to "reconcile extremes of beauty and ugliness, of the past and the future, of construction and deconstruction"[23]. In this research analysis (of traces of history and memory in Rundle's work), I have investigated the slippage between the past and the present, between art and fashion, and between absence and presence, where these negotiations of meaning have both surfaced and disappeared. Rundle's creative process produces objects that are layered with multiple histories, as sites for the impulse of remembering history (Kwint 1999:3), much like the palimpsest surface suggests historical, social and cultural memories 'written' on the object. Leslie (1999: 106) identifies Benjamin's idea of involuntary memory as a kind of disorder that "disrupts linearity and confounds temporality," which echoes the dialectical chaos that surfaces in Rundle's work.

[22]The avant-garde in fashion is recognised by extreme, unconventional, radical and unconventional questions raised by the fashion outcomes seen for example, in the work of other fashion designers working such as; Martin Margiela, Rei Kawakubo and Gareth Pugh, who present an analytical, experimental approach to fashion.
[23] Quote taken from Rundle's website: www.cliverundle.com.

RUNDLE and DISPLAY

This research study resulted in a curation and installation of notions of memory in Rundle's work as an exhibition that highlighted these investigations into memory and history. Contemporary discourse around the curation of fashion exhibitions[24] has encouraged curators to move away from the purely aesthetic, biographic or material approaches to fashion exhibitions towards more conceptual curatorial methodologies. The fashion exhibition affords alternate readings and displays of fashion beyond the commercial fashion system. In proposing a fashion exhibition as an installation in an art gallery, I aimed to provide a critical context for the work that could frame the meanings, associations and creative concepts within the work as evidence of the completed research.

Experimental thinking around exhibitions and fashion curation developed from Judith Clark (2001:1) and her initial incursion into exhibitions of fashion or dress that encouraged or allowed "surfaces to float free of their histories". Clark's research into fashion curation led to the exhibition *Spectres/Malign Muses* (ModeMuseum, Antwerp, 2005; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2006), which used "metaphors of the trace" to illuminate the "ghosts of modernity in the spectacle of fashion" (Clark in conversation with Evans, 2005: 46). Various visual and material 'reflections' were used in *Spectres*, for example, digital projections, video screenings, surfaces that highlighted the traces of history evident in contemporary fashion.

The exhibition, *CliveRundleAboutMemory*, was conceptualised to address and display the results of the investigation and observation of memory and history in Rundle's work. A number of galleries were approached, and the gallery Afronova accepted the proposal (see Appendix B). The contemporary gallery is situated in Braamfontein, an urban-regeneration node in Johannesburg, and simultaneously reflects a history (by its location) and a present (with its minimalist interior

[24] As part of a growing awareness of the curatorial challenges and changes within the field of fashion exhibitions, the London College of Fashion established an *MA in Fashion Curation* (2004), led by Judith Amy De La Haye.

architecture and a focus on contemporary exhibition). This dialectic created a supportive context to showcase my exhibition on the traces of memory in the work of Rundle.

FASHION & THE INSTABILITY OF MEANING

The importance of raising questions about the traces of the past (that surface in the present in fashion) is significant to this study that addresses fashion as a site of narratives with multiple histories and entangled pasts in an era of discontinuity, simulation (Baudrillard, 2009: 109) and post-modernity (Evans, 2003: 304-307). Evans's contemporary reading of a number of Benjamin's writings (in his philosophy of history, memory and the *Arcades Project*) reflects on how Benjamin offers art and design historians:

> … a complex model of how similarities across periods, that seem apparently separated by rupture and discontinuity, are plotted as historical time; not as something that flows smoothly from past to present, but as a more complex relay of turns and returns in which the past is activated by injecting the present into it (Evans 2003: 330).

Evans (2003: 11-12) expands on the instability at the turn of the 21st century where the volatility of illusion and spectacle, and the return of history and the repressed (as a labyrinth), is noticeable in the work of key contemporary fashion designers. The traces (of history) which carry elements of the 'stressed' or 'repressed', argues Evans (ibid.), are memory traces in the context of "historical trauma and shock" that often relate to larger questions of memory and history, rather than merely representing the personal narratives of current fashion designers. Evans (2003: 308-309) furthermore maintains that the symptoms of alienation, dislocation and trauma, are responses to the chaos and uncertainty of the contemporary world and concludes that fashion can act as a platform for healing as well as the stage for reinvention, portraying various notions of instability, transience and transformation

Benjamin's reflections on the instability of meaning and on the dialectical nature of the *sign* in his *Arcades Project*, in which fashion, change and consumption is

critical, underpins his relevance in this study, as fashion is not just a set of signs, but also a set of allusions, illusions and narratives (Evans 2003; Lehmann 2000; Buck-Morss 1991). Marchetti and Quinz (2009: 117) also investigate the function of various 'signs of fashion' that operate to produce difference[25]. Often differences are understood, or interpreted from clothes and the constellation of images and signs that camouflage or impose on the body. According to Marchetti and Quinz (2009: 118), signs have "become interchangeable symbols in a fluid and unstable game" and fashion highlights this instability as it often starts "precisely with the process of erasing known and recognisable signs, towards new grounds of distinction" (ibid.).

Most attempts to interrogate fashion and its meanings will reference Barthes (2006: 13-14 [1967]) who maintained that fashion is a system that is "entirely absorbed in its meaning". Barthes developed an analysis of the meanings (in the structure of fashion signs) that are constructed through historical association, sociological situations or the structure and conjunctions of fashion (ibid.). Interpretations though, of the meanings of the signs in fashion are problematic, as Marchetti & Quinz (2009: 11) highlighted; the ability of the sign to "shift meanings makes fashion a slippery terrain for determining identity and authenticity". These interpretations and meanings are highly context dependent and ambivalent (Davis cited in Kawamura, 2011:27), socially and culturally constructed (Bourdieu, 1979), and often dialectical (Evans 2003: 29-35).

It could thus be argued that fashion designers not only engage with known codes or signs, but, simultaneously, combine and subvert these signs into abstraction, as a way of negotiating the ambiguities, complexities and instability of the signs (Teunissen 2009: 10-14). Baudrillard (cited in Hegarty 2004: 49-54) describes the "vanishing point of meaning" as key to the contemporary world that describes a 'liberation' of the signs from their referents, and suggests that this "floating free of the sign" could equally be inverted and declared as an explosion of meaning and abstraction. Baudrillard (2009: 110) further claims that signs,

[25] The classical fashion theories of Simmel (1904) and Veblen (1899) most notably, focus on correlations between 'difference' and the construction of social status, and class inclusion and exclusion, although 'difference' in dress also has inherent political and cultural meanings and distinctions.

from any place in the world, “open up to combination, variation and subversion the moment they become mediated”.

When observing objects of fashion as sites of meaning, through the attempted reading of their signs, it becomes evident that complex notions such as memory and history can be attached to these objects. Nora identified *lieux de memoire* as both simple and ambiguous, concrete and abstract and indeed, “are *lieux* in three senses of the word - material, symbolic and functional (Nora 1989: 18-19)”. This research investigation into the traces of memory in Rundle’s work, interrogates the material and symbolic aspects of the objects (although the functional sense – as dress – is not denied).

Chapter Three: Objects and their Narratives

> Both [the theoretician and the semiologist] conceive the image as speech, which holds its tongue. But both play on the same inter-convertibility between two potentialities of the image: the image as raw, material presence and the image as discourse encoding a history.
>
> Jacques Ranciere, in *The Future of the Image* (2009: 11)

ADDRESSING THE OBJECTS:

Central to this research has been Rundle's approach to fashion that permits a *tigersprung* of ideas and memory in his work. I have chosen to interrogate the objects through an interpretative analysis of the signifiers of these fashion objects, and through a close reading of the details and codes inscribed on their surfaces. I recognise the limitations of interpretative reading, but also argue that there is value in addressing the object as the site of *codes, narratives and meaning* and engaging these in a dialogue and analysis. In this research, particular aspects of memory and history (as manifestations, as traces, as absences) have been investigated in relation to the work of Clive Rundle, and the relevance of these narratives to a broader contemporary South African fashion context considered.

Two fashion objects were selected through which in-depth interpretative readings of the meanings or signs that "flicker on the surface" of these objects were conducted (Baudrillard 2009: 105). I did this to examine how these garments communicate meanings, and whether they can be read as *lieux des memoires,* noting that these observations are not intended to fix singular meanings, but rather to act as interpretive explorations of the objects to determine traces of memory and history. The decision to look at evidence of these *traces* in the broader context of his work eliminated a case study of 'one single collection'. Rundle's work is contextualised within the extremely transformative period in South African history, where the narratives in his work could be argued to deal with preoccupations with trauma and memory, much like the work of other, contemporary creative artists.

Throughout the research, I did not request that Rundle 'interpret or explain' the meanings of his own work, but have rather encouraged discussions in terms of his creative process and input, and various design debates that influence his work, thereby sharing with Rundle an ongoing enquiry into the mechanisms and modes of his fashion approach. Choices of particular details in his collections, and whether these are assigned specific meanings, may have arisen in discussions, but these were incidental to the focus of the interviews and discussions, which mostly reverted to an awareness of the overall processes and broader contexts of his work, for example,

> Rundle explains that the development of his design ideas reflect back to reference both the body (and the fit) and the function (of a collar, a button, a tie, etc), and in a post-modern sense, continually questions the perceptions of these aesthetic relationships to the body. Rundle banishes the rules that govern the system of fashion. Many signature details, creative processes and technical features in fact reference a dedication to the craft of fashion, the fit of a garment, the function of a gusset, the fall of a sleeve, the form of a shoulder, rather than a predetermined meaning applied as detail.
>
> Notes taken during interview, *Clive*, the Rundle shop: 24/08/2010.

With specific reference to questions of memory and history, Rundle outlined a rather distinctive practice that evidenced notions of 'absence and presence' in the development of his collections, which reference aspects of memory that inform his work.

> While discussing the current work on the "Embroidery: Braille" collection, Rundle explains a process that manifests most strongly in the development of the patterns - a process, which leads towards something, which was there (but invisible) from the beginning (namely, an absence) and becomes something in the end (a presence). This process refers to notions of absence/presence, negative/positive, forwards/backwards, and truth/illusion that are continually at play within his work. The original kernel of a collection could be a word, a fabric or a thought, that exists from the beginning of the collection, which controls the direction or development of the collection, and determines when something is 'right or deemed complete'; thereby defining the entire collection.
>
> Notes taken during interview, the Rundle studio: 01/07/2010.

Rundle maintains that collections result from various processes of association, distillation and evolution that are able to "reflect the chaos and embrace the impossible" of the world surrounding him. The Summer 2009 collection showcased at SAFW, 04 April 2009, Turbine Hall, Johannesburg resulted from an archival assimilation of gritty news footage and reflections on times past:

> Like black and white photographs, this collection presented a blurring of the past with the present; modernity infused with the sepia tones of recollection. Rundle used specific items that recalled the past. Stockings (in black or white), suspender elastics (in nude) and slip dresses that referenced historical styles and simultaneously the fetish, in the same way as [Ulrich] Lehmann (2000: 106) argued that fashion is infinitely self-referential, with each detail quoting or referring back to the past.
>
> De Greef, *Rundle and Return*, Africa e Mediterraneo, 2010: 51.

The highly complex and questioning nature of Rundle's work can be used to index how he interrogates uncertain and unstable boundaries between the familiar and the unusual in the fashion terrain, between material history and material progress, between craft and illusion, between ideas and functions that approach a deconstructivist[26] philosophy in his work. Flavia Loscialpo (2009: 1-2) identified a new generation of independent thinking designers that "incarnated a sort of 'distress' in comparison to other fashion of the times … where such designers disinterred the mechanics of the dress structure" and, with them, the mechanisms of fascination that follow fashion. This philosophical deconstruction of fashion includes "disruptions in undoing the structure of garments, in renouncing to finish, in working through subtractions and displacements" (ibid.), and in rethinking the function and meaning of the garment itself. Much like the Belgian fashion designer, Maison Martin Margiela[27] whose work has explored the affects and effects of time and production since the late 1980s, Rundle's fashions propose material evidence of both past references and of process-work.

[26] The term "deconstruction", taken from Jacques Derrida identifies a philosophical approach that deals with the ways that meaning is constructed and understood by writers, texts, and readers, which has been applied to the constructs of fashion (including its meanings, presentations and production) since the late 1980s especially in terms of the work of Japanese and Belgian fashion designers.

[27] Barbara Vinken (2005: pp 139-150) refers to Martin Margiela as the "founder of deconstruction" and "master of reduction". Although Margiela is highly recognised as instrumental in the development of this conceptual approach to fashion, a number of other designers are included in this generation of "thinking designers".

Alison Bancroft (2011: 80) suggests that fashion designers' ability to "maintain impossibilities and irreconcilable contradictions in their work" speaks of the way in which fashion items, like art objects, are themselves deconstructive of philosophical and historical discourses. In the following descriptive analyses, the selected objects are treated as the visual signifiers that allow for these interrogations, yet simultaneously they act as manifestations for sites of meaning that evoke, stir, compel and blur the narratives inscribed on their surfaces.

DESCRIPTIVE NARRATIVE 1:

The *mesh-shirt* (in Figure 1) chosen from the SAFW Spring/Summer 2010 collection (shown on site at the *Clive* shop, Rosebank, April 2010), is made from a deconstructed vintage men's shirt, namely the white collar, cuffs and front placket, coupled with a new, sheer black mesh body, and embellished with short metal zips on the upper front.



Figure 1: Mesh-shirt on dress mannequin. Photographer Erica de Greef.

The crisp sharp white classic men's shirt details contrasts the soft, semi-fitted and fluid black mesh of the body of the garment. The vintage collar and cuffs present their historical past as recycled found objects[28], whose material traces

[28] In other collections, Rundle has explored recycling of second-hand men's tailored jackets and his own garments/parts of garments by re-modeling them into new designs, where their histories or pasts were still clearly evident (Corrigall, A/W 2008).

bear witness to past craftsmanship, materials and finishes. Kwint (1999: 2-3) refers to ways in which objects "serve memory" - by furnishing recollection and stimulating remembering, and as archives or records of the past. In this case, both the tactile and visual qualities of the white shirt collar and cuffs, privilege what Kwint identifies as the "process of evocation" (ibid.). However, the finishes and fluid quality of the body of the garment contrast with these material traces of the past in the masculine collar and cuffs. The soft black mesh offers a sheer, feminine, transparent semi-presence in contrast to the solidity and familiarity offered by the edges of the garment (as collar, cuffs and placket). The mesh has replaced the old 'body' with a new contemporary material, and provides the distinction between presence (the solid, visible, perfectly finished, tailored white shirt details) and absence (the unfinished, invisible, ghost-like, spectral black body), and between the past and the contemporary.

The juxtaposition of these references to the past (in the present), when confronted by one another, creates new meanings by confronting previously concealed connections. Evans (2003:34) described this method (by analogy to Benjamin's *tigersprung*) as a "complex relay of turns and returns in which the past is activated by injecting the present into it". The deconstruction of the seams (as taken apart, unfinished and exposed) brings attention to the 'joins' in this particular garment that evidence the connection between the past and present, but also notably between the black mesh and the white cotton components as connections between the masculine and the feminine (see stitching of the mesh onto the placket in figure 2). The perfect finishes of the men's shirt collar, cuffs and plackets, the attention to the classic, original and remaining buttons, refined stitching and the tailored construction, is contrasted with the adjoining mesh with its edges that are unfinished and incomplete, and a sheerness that exposes the (female) form that it dresses (see figure 1 and 3).



Figure 2: Mesh-shirt cuff detail. Photographer Erica de Greef.

On the mannequin, this *mesh-shirt* sheaths the 'body', following the curves and contours of the form that it envelops (see figure 1). The sleeves hang empty, elongated beyond imagined fingertips, with large fold-back cuffs (now unfolded) and the tailored plackets edging and giving form to the end of the otherwise insubstantial sleeve (see figure 2). The sleeve without form offers a ghost-like presence; the original white cotton sleeve (and body) ghosted here by the translucence of the mesh, acting as an outline or erasure of its previous body. Saltzman (2006:12-13) identified "*absence* at the very centre" of the conjuncture between emotions of loss, grief and trauma. Saltzman further identifies this ghosting as "a structure of preservation or memory", even though it is an "empty index, the index at one remove, the index that is no longer a sign" (ibid.).

The mannequin acts to complete the object; now filled, embodied by an inanimate, but three-dimensional form, the object becomes fashion[29]. The mannequin as a studio object features predominantly in the work of Maison Martin Margiela[30], in the construction, evaluation and evolution of the creative processes critical to the production of fashion. Rundle similarly utilises the mannequin, as central to his process of developing collections, and as a medium for observation and critique. The mannequin simultaneously takes up space

[29] Vinken (2005: 140-141) analyses the role of the mannequin in the production of fashion, but also in the production of meaning through a contextualisation of the object within this system of production.
[30] Both Vinken (2005) and Evans (2003) investigate Margiela's use of the mannequin, as a *leitmotif* of the fashion, the production of the real, and the limitations of the ideal.

(material presence) and disappears (as inanimate object), and in this sense bestows a dialectical absence and presence.

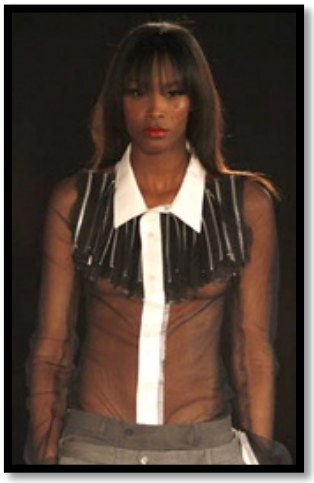


Figure 3: Mesh-shirt at SAFW show, S/S 2010. Photographer Ivan Naude.

In filling the garment (see figure 1) the mannequin acts as a faceless mirror or ghost to the wearer (see figure 3). Evans (2003: 50) describes the spectre as "always a revenant. It begins by coming back" (citing Derrida, 1994), the spectre or ghost is "a spirit that returns from somewhere else; a nothing that takes on a body". On the model, the sheer black mesh shifts in meaning; where the mesh becomes rather a shadow over the skin, a gauze or semi transparent veil (see figure 3), almost disappearing, as it becomes the flesh, as if absorbed into the surface. The *mesh-shirt* on the model takes on the form and identity of the model, losing its own identity, and becoming absent. The transparency of the mesh allows it to become embodied by the wearer.

The mesh body simultaneously contains the female body, as well as signifying femininity: as fluid, fragile, vulnerable, malleable, vessel-like, to be filled (not emptied), and without structure. The dialectic in this reading though, lies in the conflicting notion of this same mesh body as new, modern, synthetic, even post-modern (challenging the rules of its function of covering), whereas the masculine collar and cuffs here are fixed, formal, old-fashioned, and rigid, suggesting a gendered reversal in the materiality of the garment.



Figure 4: Mesh-shirt zip detail. Photographer Erica de Greef.

The decorative detail of the *mesh-shirt,* of multiple short, black, metallic zips (see figure 4) was repeated in other garments from the same collection. Masculinity is further invoked in the short metal zips as reference to functional features in leather biker garments, with reference to James Dean's 1950s rebellion, and as aggressive, durable, strong, cold, hardwearing and functional.

In this case, the zips present a number of contradictions. They are decorative, their function denied. They are upside down – sliding open upwards (suggesting a reversal). They perform *en masse* and in multiples, paired and symmetrical. Collectively, these are stitched onto the fine, sheer and delicate mesh base. The sound of the sliders and the cold texture of the metal teeth present a perceptive clash, the history or trace of the shirt's original components as fragments, silenced in the presence of these zips. The zips as surface detail, double as a weight and a presence, and furthermore enclose a (secret) stiff, folded and pleated tulle[31] insert (see figure 4), so that, when the zips are unzipped and opened, the tulle explodes out in fanlike displays, revealing what was hidden or trapped inside. The tactile similarities of the tulle and the mesh body create a further blurring of surfaces. With this changeable, manipulated and controlled act of display Rundle challenges the definitions of detail as functional or decorative, and rather proposes a detail that is deceptive.

[31] Tulle's structure is similar to mesh, yet is stiff with a crisp handle.

The multiple narratives and codes in this garment signify Benjamin's *tigersprung* in the dialectical image of coincidence between historical event and contemporary moment, but also the contradiction and abstraction of the signs and their referents, as Baudrillard (2009: 105) suggests, floating free from their meanings. Instead of remaining within defined notions of association and recognition, Rundle radically destabilises the codes and meanings by deconstructing and (literally, in this collection) reconstructing component parts and challenges time and gender constructs within this one garment.

Interestingly, the 'voices' of these codes are also different: the masculine collar, cuffs and zips are loud, assertive and clear, whereas the feminine mesh and tulle is transparent, silent and suggestive. Yet, the masculine is silver and white (colours that are recessive, virtuous, innocent and pure)[32] and the female body colour is black (associations to rebellion, punk, aggression, gothic, evil and the ominous). Further political references to ownership and identity that surface in this garment feature the white, male finishes (collar & cuffs) that are worn by the black female (mesh body). The zipped detail further blurs these male/female, past/contemporary, and absent/present distinctions. Rundle confronts the singularity of meanings in this complex and confrontational garment, the *mesh-shirt* (S/S 2010).

DESCRIPTIVE NARRATIVE 2:

The second selected garment, an engineered, pinstriped tailored jacket with matching 'waistcoat' as inner dress (see figure 5), is taken from Rundle's SAFW Autumn/Winter collection of 2007 (shown at Museum Africa, September 2006). This *suit-dress,* representing a hybrid garment, reflects its origins in the *justacorps*[33] of the late 18th century. These historically tailored ensembles developed into what is today identified as the contemporary classic three-piece men's suit[34]. Although this tailored Rundle *suit-dress* reflects the classic men's

[32] See Brannon (2005: 155-173)
[33] *Justacorps,* a knee-length coat, fitted to the waist and flared below, without a waist seam were worn in the French courts by the aristocracy during the late 17th and early 18th century.
[34] For more detail on the development of the suit, see Alicia Cornwell (2005).

suit in terms of its colour, fabrication and details, alternate references could be made to the *tailor-mades*[35] of the early twentieth century (outfits favoured by the Suffragettes who appropriated men's jackets and ties, wearing these with full-length skirts), as well as the very noticeable references to the ubiquitous *school uniform*[36]. Through this hybrid garment Rundle collectively deconstructs notions of masculinity and power, control and chaos, history and memory.

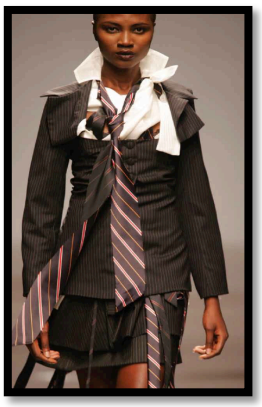


Figure 5: Suit-dress at SAFW, A/W 2007. Photographer Ivan Naude.



Figure 6: Suit-dress close-up detail. Photographer Erica de Greef.

The pinstriped fabric in this *suit-dress,* is associated with fabric used in men's suits, although in this example (see figure 6), this "masculine" fabric disappoints when up-close; without structure, form or substantial weight, it relies on the body within and its paneled construction, for its form. When buttoned up, with four buttons and not the classic three-button of the contemporary suit jacket,

[35] Tailor-mades or *tailleurs* featured ankle-length skirts with matching jackets, worn by women during the early 20th century as the rise modernism and industrialization began to impact on lifestyles (and dress) in the urban context.

[36] The development of uniforms as part of social, judicial and educational systems was dealt with by Yagou, Ash, Cambridge, Himam, and others in the *Special Issue: Uniforms in Design History* (Volume 24, Issue 2, May 2011)

this garment begins to disturb the rules. Furthermore, there are no pockets (no function), no back vent but rather twin side vents, and a fit that is slimmed to complement a female body, yet the proportions and critical components remain those of the classic men's suit. Furthermore the *suit-dress* has additional gussets, extra seams, refined contouring, hidden lace-ups, an attached inner waistcoat (functioning as a corset), and back inset panels that un-zip to reveal complex, hidden constructions (see figure 7).

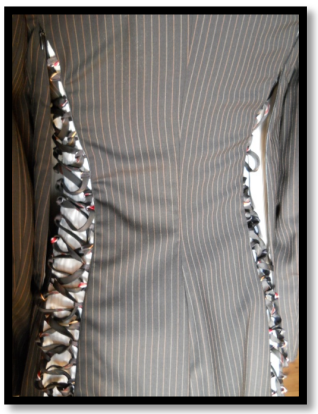


Figure 7: Suit-dress back lace-up detail. Photographer Erica de Greef.

The buttons of the *suit-dress* are self-covered (see figure 6); they are proportionately larger than those of a standard suit jacket, and notably retro[37]; four buttons were last seen in Edwardian suits, and briefly revived in the Teddy Boy[38] styles of the 1950s. The collar and lapel in this *suit-dress* are not fused and therefore lack the formality of the stiff, controlled and professional appearance of the business suit. An intricate underarm gusset and engineered paneling, ingeniously worked into a slanted side seam (see figure 8), suggests an unconventional fit adjustment to allow for an altered (female) body form with a slimmer, smoother fit, while simultaneously allowing for movement. The underarm seam of the two-piece sleeve has also moved forward, while the back vent has split and moved sideways. These 'slippages' disturb the reading of this garment as one recognisable by its codes and reflects free-floating signs opened up to "combination, variation and subversion … the moment they became mediated" (Baudrillard, 2009: 108)

[37] Elizabeth Guffey (2006) explores the return of fashion styles and the notion of retro in the 20th century.
[38] Teddy Boys of the 1950s wore dress-suits reminiscent of the early 1900 Edwardian styles, with elongated lengths, a more fitted silhouette, and a four-button front.

The two side vents unzip as panels, revealing an off-white jacquard lining with a complex hidden lace-up detail (see figure 7). The closely positioned loops (2cm apart) made of a striped 'school tie' fabric[39], are laced up, using the same fabric. The invisible zips of the vents disappear as they open, revealing initially what seems like a laced up godet (inset), but when they are completely open, the sides of the jacket lift to expose a fully constructed under-garment, which 'becomes' the front waistcoat-corset-dress. The lined front of the jacket completely frees itself as a false front, exposing an 'echo' panel-line that curves and suggests a body shape with shaping (see figure 7), which sweeps to the back, forming a twin, parallel line with the lace-up feature. The waistcoat-corset-inner-dress thus exposed becomes a constructed other. The multiple buttons on the inner dress (also covered, but this time slightly smaller) reflect the Rococco-esque men's waistcoat[40] of the 18th century, although a further reversal occurs here in that, instead of the pastels and brocades of their historical form, this garment and its buttons are now muted in pinstriped grey.



Figure 8: Suit-dress inner construction detail. Photographer Erica de Greef.

Beneath the veneer of the suit, lies this waistcoat-corset-inner-dress, this complex hybrid garment of control, femininity, structure and sexuality. Various 'ghosts of activity' haunt this garment, with lace-ups and school ties historically

[39] Upon questioning Rundle about the particular association of this classic 'school tie' fabric to any particular school, he said it was a roll of fabric bought without knowing if there was any such association or not.
[40] Made popular during the late 18th century, these multi-buttoned waistcoats were flamboyant, decorative and extremely fitted.

referencing notions of control. The *suit-dress* presents continual disturbances in its layering. The historical references in this *suit-dress* clash with varying temporalities, and professions, gender and age. Following Evans (2003: 33), I identify this juxtaposition of signs as invoking Benjamin's idea of 'dialectical images' of complex historical relays with themes running between past and present. Similarly useful here is Buck-Morss 's reflection (1991: 250, cited in Evans, 2003: 33) on the "critical constellation" between the past and present, that do not simply illuminate each other, but come together to trace previously held connections, as well as challenging their dominant narratives. Rundle's *suit-dress* mixes the meanings into complex accounts of power, distinction, discipline (Finkelstein, 1999: 8) and discrimination (Entwhistle, 2001: 40).

References to disheveled and disordered school uniforms were also evident throughout this A/W 2007 collection particularly through the use of the 'school tie' as accessory (see figure 5). References to school blazers, white shirts and school ties are based on a colonial history of the school uniform (from the British Victorian schooling system) that constructed sameness and belonging[41], yet referenced control, discipline, convention and rule. The metaphor of the school uniform in South African history carries the trace of memory of the 1976 Soweto Uprising[42] with the inequality in the apartheid education systems. The uniform in South Africa recalls the unequal educational histories of private and public schooling, and was evident in the fashioning of the respective school uniforms. Rundle's use of the uniform, traces these memories, and yet, in a contemporary, new South Africa the school uniform has become a symbol of empowerment, opportunity and transformation. The tousled uniform suggests both a rebellion (against dominating structures) and a destruction of order and knowledge.

The "violence" inscribed in the deconstructed components of the garment reflects the radical "break with the past" that Nora identifies as critical in the construction of memory, which:

[41] Journal of Design History, *Special Issue: Uniforms in Design History* (2011).
[42] Reflected in Sam Njima's iconic photograph: the interface of politics, education and school systems.

> … remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived (Nora, 1989: 8).

In this hybrid garment that acts to deconstruct the politics of gender, Rundle suggests a reversal of power in a new democracy. The codes presented throughout this collection confronted 'schoolgirl innocence' with chaos and sexuality. Through the deconstruction of the seams, details, proportions and what would be defined as 'rules of fashion'[43], Rundle confronts notions of history and memory with this discomforting garment, which carries conflicting notions of attraction and violation. The violence of a South African past, of political inequalities, of schoolgirl rape statistics and complex gender politics, are inscribed on the surface of this garment. The *suit-dress* thus, carries the marks of history with the traces of the past, which "no matter where [they stir] in the thickets of long ago" reflect a *tigersprung* of fashion. In this collection, Rundle's use of metaphor and memory evidences fashion's capacity for the "flair for the topical … [in] the tiger's leap into the past" (Benjamin (1938) cited in Evans 2003: 34).

Neither garment analysed in this section, evidence authentic or clear representations of an historical past, but rather evocations of multiple memories, "stirring in the thicket of what has been" (ibid.) and creating a connection with the present (where fashion acts as now-time), activated through a recognition of the codes and signs inscribed on them and a tension or disturbance of their inherent narratives. There is evidence of a temporal dialectic tension, as well as palimpsest traces of the past in these garments. Rundle's creative references to a destruction of power, underpin much of the instability presented in the individual works that result from his seasonal collections.

[43] Garments often have very defined 'rules' in terms of details, functions, applications, for example who wears the blazers, shirts, dresses; how these garments are worn; and, what comprises their structure and functions.

Chapter Four: CliveRundleAboutMemory

> "Today, the photographic sequences, the video monitors or projections, the installations of familiar or strange objects that fill the spaces of our museums and galleries seek less to create the sense of a gap between two orders – between everyday appearances and the laws of domination – than to increase a new sensitivity to the signs and traces that testify to a common history and a common world."
>
> Jacques Ranciere *The Future of the Image* (2007: 66-67)



Figure 9: Autumn/Winter 2011, red stitch detail. Photographer Mark Erasmus.

The most challenging development of this research inquiry, was the evolution of the study from an object-based analysis[44] into an exhibition that would communicate with an audience, activate various forms of critical response, and develop the abstract notion of identified memory traces in the work of Rundle. This challenge is not unique, and although common to contemporary fashion researchers and curators, in the context of South African fashion, this form of serious critique and exhibition, presented a pioneering opportunity to showcase South African fashion (in an established art gallery, *Afronova*), as a critical, important and legitimate moment in the development of an analytical discourse of contemporary South African fashion constructs.

Considering perceptions and expectations within the local fashion context, it was important to establish an exhibition title that simultaneously challenged these expectations (that this could be a retrospective of Rundle's work) and extended

[44] Kawamura (2011: pp 90-101)

the investigation of the central notion of memory in the research study. The exhibition *CliveRundleAboutMemory* developed from the critical explorations of his work, and in support of identifiable notions of loss and absence within the realm of memory, its trace, and the *tigersprung* of fashion in Rundle's work (see appendix B: proposal).

A critical decision to "remove" the artefacts or objects that were investigated in the preliminary research from the exhibition itself was a measured approach, taken to highlight the very nature of memory (as absence, as reflection, as abstract). Furthermore, the interrogation of the various sites experienced by an audience as 'the fashion system' (namely, the photographed image, the fashion show, the mirrors, the cutting tables, patterns and other ephemera) was considered important in this installation of 'meanings' constructed in the name of fashion. The selected 'absence and presence' of these components, which collectively contribute to the broader contexts of meaning, production, evocation and interaction within the realm of fashion, was critical in the final development of the exhibition.

The shift in focus, from the artefactual study of the object itself (removed from its context in the initial study) to an exhibition in a gallery context that looked to processes involved in the production of these particular objects, as well as their meanings, was critical to the conceptual development of the research observations and the potential criticality of South African fashion. I chose an interdisciplinary approach in the curation of this exhibition, to expand upon the notion of memory in Rundle's work and to contextualise it within a broader framework of politics, contemporary culture and the fashion system.

For the exhibition I engaged a number of collaborations between myself, Rundle and various specialists with whom Rundle had previously worked and continues to work, namely; filmmaker Hedwig Bester, conceptual artist Mark Erasmus, fashion photographer Natalie Payne, videographer Eugene Marais, show producer Savannah Erasmus, researcher Anthony Tischhauser, and assistant Mbuye Malo (see appendix E: exhibition details).

Within the rectangular ± 120 square metre space of the gallery (with one glass front, two solid wall spaces, and one 'interrupted' wall), there were three supporting pillars that disrupted the central balance of the space. The neutrality of the "white cube" (O'Doherty 1999) offered the possibility of re-contextualising selected components of Rundle's process, where the curatorial intentions of the exhibition could manifest in the context of Rundle's work that investigated and also reflected what was missing, as representations and displays of traces of multiple material memories. Breward[45] (2005: ii) described how *Spectres* as a fashion exhibition dealt with "shadows and traces of history that were revealed, and whose hidden and sometimes menacing presence added meaning to certain traditions of contemporary dress".

The components chosen for the exhibition were carefully considered for their individual and collective contributions to the conceptual framework of the exhibition. Each element in the installation of *CliveRundleAboutMemory* dealt with features within the construct of memory as well as aspects of the memory traces evident in Rundle's work. These components included: a very large mirror for a reflective surface; a double photo-print of an empty fashion show ramp; a look-book with folded pages that exploded out; a continuous digital wall projection of multiple monotone ink drawings, notes and sketches; a painted canvas 'wall' with stitched, hidden dresses that would 'disappear'; an abstract expressionist painting referencing the palimpsest nature of the 'wall', and, a cutting-table-turned-wall-mounted diptych that mapped layers of time, place, process and pieces of Rundle's work. A red cord, thread, drip-paint, stripe and string was used throughout the exhibition as visual narrative link and an extension of the red thread stitching often seen in Rundle's work (see appendix D: invitation, figure 9, and figure 10).

[45] Breward (2005: 12) investigates *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back,* Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2005), curated by Judith Clark that questioned values of established disciplinary boundaries between art, history and fashion, and presented new ways of exhibiting genealogies of fashion, creating a new grammar, with new patterns of time and reference'.

The outcome of my curatorial approach to remove the fashion objects, the mannequins and the material realm of fashion, was an exhibition that was nuanced by layering, absence, metaphors, disruptions and mirrorings. *CliveRundleAboutMemory* was an exhibition that did not present easily interpreted meanings, but rather challenged the audience and encouraged (through the considered display), further reflections, discussions and investigations into the role of time and memory in the work of Rundle, within a broader socio-political context of South African cultural production. In his opening address for the exhibition, Dion Chang[46] referred to Rundle's work as an invitation to "an emotive journey, never knowing what he is trying to tell you". Chang further referred to Rundle's collections as encompassing "longing and yearning, *just like memories*, as a question of layers"(ibid.).

THE MIRROR and PAINTING (3+3+1):



Figure 10: Installation View: Mirror, Wall, Painting and Video Screening. Photographer Erica de Greef.

> We spoke about the mirror- the mirror in its physical space and its 'positive' or literal uses, and then the effects of the mirror, depending on where you stand, and who is looking into it; on which side of the mirror you stand, and all the spaces in between. In this case, for me, the mirror was not the huge reflective surface

[46] Notes from Chang's opening address of the exhibition were worked into the third memory board that evolved throughout the duration of the exhibition.

> leaning into the installation, but rather the solid surface with the figure cutouts that was reflective.
>
> Claudia Bentel in *And All the Spaces in Between,* The Gift of the Garb Blog, July 11, 2011.

The first object installed within the gallery space was the 3.5m x 6m foil-cloth mirror[47] that dominated the gallery and the exhibition with its multiple reflections of walls, floors, objects (see figure 10) and audience (see figure 11). The mirror itself held a 'memory' of a previous Clive Rundle collection, Spring/Summer 2011, shown at Shine Studios[48] in April 2011, as the mirror had served as backdrop to the ramp at the showing of Rundle's collection, and other collections shown throughout the Spring/Summer 2011 shows. South African Fashion Week (SAFW) hired the mirror from *Showtex*, for the duration of collections, as the ability to reflect and act as a screen (determined by the source of lighting), created the necessary illusion and spectacle expected of contemporary fashion shows (Evans, 2003: 88-92).

This mirror from the S/S 2011 shows, was selected as an important component in memory of Rundle's most recent collection, and was re-installed (in its original design) in the gallery. With its size predetermined, it had to be accommodated by being installed at an angle in the gallery, which created a disturbance of both the vertical and horizontal planes within the space, but also confronted the viewer with multiple surfaces (see figure 10). This large-scale mirror was critical to the entire exhibition as it invoked emptiness, silence and absence. However, with an individual or group presence through reflection, the mirror acts as reference to the aesthetic of fashion (the vanity and reflection of self). Furthermore, the mirror constructs the essence of a fashion process and also forms an essential component in Rundle's process[49]. The mirror moreover reflected on a previous creative collaboration between Rundle, Mark Erasmus

[47] The mirror is a product of *Showtex*, suppliers of textiles, products and new technologies for shows, installations and theatres that offer complex visual effects.

[48] Shine Studios are also located in Braamfontein, less than 500m from Afronova gallery.

[49] Rundle often refers to the 'mirror as truth' in much the same way that Italian humanist and architect Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) in his *Della Pittura [On Painting}* (1436) claims " I do not know how it happens that painted objects have grace in the mirror, it is a wonderful thing to see how any fault appears deformed in the mirror" (cited in Melchior-Bonnet 2001: 121) The reflection creates a tiny gap in the heart of resemblance; it adds grace, this *je ne sais quoi* of beauty, irreducible to the rule of proportions.

and myself where a *Mirror-Box* was conceived, developed and installed[50] at the Sieppel Gallery, Arts on Main for the Autumn/Winter 2011 collections for SAFW in September 2010.

The mirror as leitmotif for multiple notions around the fashion process, the instability of a surface, and a site for exploration, was seminal to the development of the exhibition. The use of mirrors and mirroring as distortion or reflection[51] imparts a participatory role to the individual in the active viewing of one's own reflection, as an act of 'recollecting' or remembering the self. In *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back,* mirrors (and lights and lighting) were used in the display of the "shadows and traces" (Clark 2005: ii) and invoked Evans's exploration of "the ghosts of modernity" that haunt contemporary fashion (Evans cited in Clark 2005: 34). These effects were used to challenge notions of embodiment and belonging, experience and disruption in the context of contemporary fashion (ibid.).

Cambridge (2011: 124) describes the use of reflective surfaces in the recent Maison Martin Margiela exhibition[52], whereby the "sightlines were blocked … causing fracturings of time and space, on which much of the designer's work is predicated". Similarly, I chose to use the angled mirror in my exhibition to disturb and abstract the gallery space, with the sharp intersection of lines and planes that reframed the gallery, simultaneously flattening and expanding the space (see figure 10), thus creating an 'unstable' context for the showing of notions of memory in Rundle's work.

ON REFLECTION:

The audience at the exhibition opening was continually doubled in the mirror, their reflections merging with other people and objects in the gallery, until the audience eventually outnumbered the reflections and dominated the mirror (see

[50] Titled *No. 1,* this mirrored box was developed on the structure of a found crate, and was mirrored both inside and outside with a thin opening to enable the viewer to see inside, and to listen to *Bird Calls for Beginners* played on an iPod from inside the mirrored box.

[51] Anish Kapoor showed large mirror-works commenting on the "narcissistic ideal, scale, illusion, scrutiny and the self", Royal Academy of Art, London, 2009.

[52] *MMM (20) The Exhibition* held at Somerset House, Embankment Galleries, London, June 3–September 5, 2010

figure 11). The collective, and individual reflections in the mirror, of a fashion-oriented audience, highlighted the narcissism of fashion, with the mirror as an extension of identities and ego; where individuals continually caught their reflections, and shared their own and the reflections of others in this large open mirror that dominated the exhibition space. Melchior-Bonnet (2001: 223) warns of the deceptiveness of these reflections:

> In order to get the mirror to admit to its falsehoods, the onlooker must not fall prey to its steady, straightforward reflection. Just as an echo abbreviates and alters the direction of a sound, the reflection caught in the corner of the eye offers an alternate path of vision, revealing new angles while at the same time ensuring a kind of symmetry, albeit an imperfect one.

The mirror activated by the audience, became a site for the present, and only in photographs is the fleeting presence of individual reflections remembered (see figure 11b, and emptied figure 10). The mirror after each event[53] is emptied again of the passing images, without witness to recall, without presence. In this sense the mirror is the 'continuous present', transitory and momentary, reflecting Nora's sense of memory which is "a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present" (1989: 8). Evans (2003: 94) describes how Alexander McQueen used the seductive yet distressing power of the mirror in his Spring-Summer 2001 collection *Voss:*

> McQueen had constructed a large mirrored box in the centre of his runway, so that as the audience took their seats they were obliged to sit and watch their own reflections in harsh lighting. As London shows regularly start anything from three quarters to an hour and a half late, the audience became progressively more uncomfortable as it was faced with its own reflection. Individuals had to choose from looking away, watching themselves or watching others watching themselves; after a while this self-scrutiny produced an intense and paranoid self-consciousness.

The other objects in the gallery, reflected in the mirror, the painted canvas wall, the painting, cords and cables, floor, lighting and walls (see figures 10 and 11), continually shifted in the reflection, depending on the position of the viewer. Melchior-Bonnet (2001, 110) suggests that a dissemblance slips into the duplication of the object and its reflection. In the case of the angled mirror of *CliveRundleAboutMemory*, disturbing lines and planes confronted the viewer

[53] The original event of the fashion show, the opening event and the subsequent walkabouts and film screenings, each time acted out new reflections on the same surface.

from all angles. As Melchior-Bonnet argues, the mirror does not present a reliable surface for looking at oneself; "its agitated surface forms and deforms the image" and it is this ability of the mirror "to blur dimensions and distances, to change perspectives and scales, [that allows] one to traverse through the oddities and incoherencies of the world" (2001: 228).



Figure 11a) & b): Installation View: Mirror at Opening. Photographer Jonna Slappendel.

THE GHOSTING MIRROR:

The specially developed foil textile of the mirror in my exhibition allowed for the performative duality of the mirror, as a reflection or as a screen (seen in figures 11a) through the mirror, and 11b) as reflection). The mirror became an unstable surface, depending on the light source, and on the position of the viewer. A closer inspection of figure 10 reveals the mirror as a semi-transparent surface (where the supporting cables are noticeable through the surface of the mirror). The mirror acted almost as a portal, a feature, which Melchior-Bonnet alludes to as the dialectic of the mirror:

> "On this side of the mirror, identity is most inconsistent, and it takes very little more for a slight of madness to degenerate into delirium…. The mirror is this no-mans land between the concrete life of the everyday and the place of dreams"(2001: 262).

The dream of crossing through a mirror responds to a need for an imaginary universe, of living in a kind of fantasy world, an *Alice-in-Wonderland* escape to another logic; "the logic of dreams and desires, free of rivalry, dictates this other side" (Melchior-Bonnet 2001: 263). The fluidity of the mirror in the exhibition offered a site for questioning, and a surface that was not marked by the boundaries of the real, but rather offered a shimmer of other narratives.

Alexander McQueen's *Voss* collection similarly explored the dialectical nature of the mirror and its metaphor of the gaze[54] as Evans (2003: 94) discusses the development of his use of the mirror:

> Having once reversed the spectacle [of the viewer/viewed], McQueen effected a further reversal by turning the audience into voyeurs once the show started. The lighting went down on the audience and came on inside the box, which proved to be made of reflective surveillance glass, mirrored inside as well as out. This time the models inside the box could not see the audience but they could clearly see their own reflections. Thus the audience could watch the models watching themselves.

This semi-transparent mirror of my exhibition, with its own history that bore witness to various interventions throughout the fashion shows of S/S 2011, as well as throughout the duration of my exhibition, kept its secrets, hidden beyond its ghostlike surface. With no evidence of history, the blank surface of a mirror offers only an allusion to realness. The fleeting ghosts of ideas, objects and events on a mirror's surface, produces dreamlike reflections of the truth, and of the multiple processes of fashion, as layers and as a veneer of ideals, ideas, and illusions.

PAINTING (3+3+1):

> All have remained imprinted on these walls, each layer witnessing the passing of time, each layer disclosing a vertiginous realm of innocent and tainted memories.
>
> Alessandro Busa in *Palimpseststadt – The City of Layers,* MU*DOT, issue # 8



Figure 12a) & b): Installation View: Mirror cables and Painting. Photographer Erica de Greef.

[54] Evans (2003: 92-99) refers also to the politics of vanity in this description of the mirror, the mannequin, the model and the construction of contemporary catwalk shows.

On the left-hand back wall a large (5m x 4.5m) painting was installed that was chosen for its multiple relationships to the research project, the narratives contained within the exhibition, and the complexity of erasures, layering and the exploration of palimpsest surfaces. The painting (titled *3+3+1*) was completed by Erasmus[55] at the time of the initial "Climbing out the Wall" event (see below for more details), and in this exhibition, was used as an extension of the canvas wall (described below in more detail) and the reflected surfaces of the gallery (see figure 10). Erasmus worked in close collaboration with Rundle in various projects that included the *Graffiti* installation at Rundle's store in 2011, the *Climbing out the Wall* at Design Quarter and the *Mirror-Box* at Sieppel Gallery both in 2010, and various other photographic and creative initiatives.

The surface, texture and colours of the painting bear the traces of what became evident in the development of the exhibition; references to the marks that surfaced in the canvas wall, the reflections of the floor (see figure 10), the cutout backs (figure 12b), the mirror installation cables (figure 12a), and the mirrored reflections (figures 11a and 11b). The effect of this collaborative association alluded to Rundle's admission that his inspiration is most often drawn from abstract sources, not easily discernible in the final fashion outcomes. For the scope of this study and research, further investigations into the style, narrative and criticality of the painting, have not been dealt with, although I recognise the additional commentary this could provide on Rundle's creative expression, in relation to this work and Erasmus's style more generally.

***CLIMBING OUT THE WALL* *2:**

Upon entering the gallery, the mirror dominated the space; the canvas wall that was installed between two pillars, only became evident to the viewer once well inside the gallery (see figure 10). This large-scale and site-specific installation was initially conceived and performed at an AddictLab event[56] on 4 June 2010, at Design Quarter, Fourways, Johannesburg.

[55] For a brief biography of Mark Erasmus, see appendix C.
[56] The original *Climbing out the Wall* was conceived by Rundle as part of AddictLab's pop-up event with a number of other creative collaborations and presentation, hosted by Jan van Mol.



Figure 13 a) & b): Climbing out the Wall at the opening. Photographer Jonna Slappendel.

*Climbing out the Wall *2* in this exhibition refers to this *second* installation of the same event, an uncommon happening in the fashion world which celebrates the new, and relates particularly to the recollection-memory of the initial event. The decision to re-install the 'wall' and to re-enact the event formed another critical component in the curatorial narrative of the exhibition.

The "blank" canvas surface, across three separately constructed sections created a wall (3.6m long x 2.4m high) that had been dripped with red, grey and black paint (in the first installation at AddictLab[57]), camouflaging three, stitched dresses worked into the "wall" and creating a continuous surface (see figure 14a). The streaks of dripped paint, the dried textures of the paint on the canvas, and the continuous background and foreground, image and frame, content and context of the wall and the dresses, expressed a palimpsest of time; an aged surface. In much the same way that Benjamin explored the architecture of the arcades as sites of memory in his *Arcades Project* (cited in Leslie, 1999: 110), this canvas wall contained narratives of time and a past event; a fusion of consumption (fashion), construction (the dresses) and activity (the interaction with the bodies of the models).

Time (encoded in the layered, dripped paint marks) obliterated all distinctions between the dresses and the wall into which they were stitched (see figure 14a).

[57] Erasmus recalls the paint was still dripping when the models emerged from the wall at the original event.

The dripped paint represented a kind of 'graffiti writing' on the surface of the canvas wall, as a representation of erasures of difference and distinction. In a discussion on graffiti, markings and erasures, in terms of his own work, Galpin defines the notion of graffiti as:

> "… neither the inscription nor its message but the wall, the background, the surface; it is because the background exists fully as an object that has already lived, that such writing [graffiti] always comes as an enigmatic surplus (1998: 8).

The staging of the event (of literally models climbing out of the wall) at the exhibition opening further impacted on the creation of another memory; before the 'climbing out the wall', there were hidden dresses stitched in the wall (figure 14a); after the event, the dresses had disappeared (figure 14b). Three models were positioned behind the dresses in the wall. With the help of assistants they 'occupied' the dresses. Hands, arms and forms emerged through the wall surface (see figure 13a), and slowly transformed as the dresses were released from the wall, fitting the models as they 'climbed out of the wall' (see figure 13b, and DVD). The two-dimensional surface had become three-dimensional form. Stepping out of the wall, now fully dressed, the models manifested a material magic: the fashion designer's secret trade of turning cloth into shape. After moments of the audience witnessing the embodiment of the dresses, the models turned, passed through the crowd, and walked out of the door, across the street and into the night. This disappearance of the dresses left behind only the memory of what had once existed.

A film camera was set up directly in front of the wall, to film the 'climbing out the wall' and this was prepared as evidence of the event, but also as a witness, which was then screened throughout the rest of the exhibition (see television monitor in figure 10 and see DVD insert inside back cover). The live, unedited footage of this film captured the models' slow release from the wall, as well as the fashion audience in action; sounds of conversations, camera actions, expressions and ambient sounds; and the soundtrack of the Dalai Lama's chanting meditation[58]. Benedikt Sebastian recalled the event in a video claiming that his version was "a

[58] This soundtrack was also selected as reference to a previous Rundle collection, Autumn/Winter 2009 at the Turbine Hall, Johannesburg, where this soundtrack was overlaid with a David Attenborough nature narrative.

reconstructed construct about the Clive Rundle retrospective by Erica de Greef … which had no affiliation to the exhibition and the creators thereof, and was simply a simulation of what I remembered of the evening" (2011).

The canvas wall that had blocked all visibility between the two pillars, now offered glimpses through the spaces left behind. The wall divided the space inside the gallery. The angled mirror limited access on the right with the dominant reflection crowding the corner created between the wall and the mirror (see figure 10). Access on the left was 'free', and with carefully positioned lighting, what is normally hidden from view in the fashion world; namely, the back stage (see figure 12b), was highlighted. The wall therefore became a site that offered exploration into the various constructs of fashion, its functions and the social relations that occur within fashion systems.

NEGATIVE SPACES:

> What fascinated me, from an intensely personal point of view, was that the central theme [of the exhibition] seemed to be about the 'negative' spaces. When you study art, you learn about composition and how important 'negative' spaces are, indeed, without them, the 'positive' spaces do not exist. Erica and I spoke about the major ambiguity contained in this specific use of language, and its mirrored effects.

Claudia Bentel in *And All the Spaces in Between,* The Gift of the Garb Blog, July 11, 2011.



Figure 14a) and b): Installation View: Presence and Absence. Photographer Laurel Heritage

The visual presence of the dress (figure 14b) is made evident because of its absence, whereas the camouflaged presence (figure 14a) negates the veracity of

these dresses in the wall. The resulting 'wounds' in the wall, the negative spaces created by the cutout dresses, interfered with the wall surface (see figure 10, figure 12b and figure 14b). It is by the absence of the dresses that their presence is noticed and noted; seeing the missing dresses *because they were not there*, this recognition by absence, acknowledges that what had once been 'solid', is no longer. Saltzman (2006: 4-5) refers to the evocation of objects, people, buildings, and events in contemporary art practices by their very non-appearance, as ghosting or absence, portrayed in profiles, silhouettes, outlines and casts.

This reversal of 'presence' was further interrupted, by looking at the wall in the mirror (see figure 10), where the negatives or cutouts are made evident by the background of what was viewed through their 'portal'. The 'negative' shapes changed, appeared, vanished, tricked, and mimicked the mirror's deceptive functions, depending on the position of the viewer; further investigating ways of seeing and ways of reading (in this case of reading fashion) by the actual absence of the dress. Much of Rundle's work in my exhibition was presented as a negotiation of what was absent, and not necessarily by what was present.

THE VIDEO RETURN:



Figure 15: Video Screening of the opening event. Photographer Erica de Greef

Screened on a television monitor on a plinth, the film of *Climbing out the Wall *2* continuously looped the act of the three models 'climbing out the wall', seen through the cutout of the dress in the wall (see figure 15 and figure 10). The repetition of the three-minute film, acted as a flicker on the surface of

remembrance that Benjamin (cited in Leslie 1999: 117) alludes to in the description of involuntary memories that repeatedly recall a series of images triggered by an object (or at times by the absence there-of). The cutouts left behind (as loss), act as the prompt for remembering, for those who witnessed the original event. The video alternately reconstructed the memory of what had happened, for those who did not witness the original event. The video archive as a site of memory, or as storage of a happening, is contextualised by the remaining evidence. A new layer is generated with the video performance (of the opening event) that carried the exhibition's own memory. Di Trocchio (2011, 10) describes the travelling Maison Martin Margiela' [20] exhibition, which includes video screenings of the opening parties at each of the new venues in much the same way.

Saltzman (2006: 29) refers to Rosalind Kraus's 1976 article "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism" as understanding video as the "splitting and doubling of the mirror-reflection of synchronous feedback". It is the physical presence of the subjects (models, voices, shadows) in the video, that act as witness to the event, as a delayed projection of what had happened and creating a memory of the original participation. In *CliveRundleAboutMemory* the showing of the video, witnessed through the cutouts, reflects both the act, and the material evidence of the same act (see figure 15).

MEMORY BOARDS:



Figure16 a) and b): Memory Boards and Close-Up detail. Photographer Erica de Greef.

> The use of the juxtapositional layers of time and idea, echo the fragmentation and dislocation of contemporary visual art, where ideas of recycling cloth, history and image, are key to how memory is embedded in the work of many of these [South African] artists.
>
> Andreas Zervignon, in *The Weave of Memory,* (2002: 71)

Two boards (merged as one, 1.2m high x 4.8m long) were clamped[59] onto unfinished, pale wooden block-lengths that formed a support structure, directly on the wall, compressing a kind of worktable into a two-dimensional flattened spread (see figure 16a). A third memory board was developed throughout the duration of the exhibition, as a record, and further construct of memory itself, as a work in progress of layering details and ephemera (notes, comments, evidence, etc.), installed on trestles in the gallery at the first walkabout (see table in foreground of figure 18a). The 'cutting table' mnemonic as a surface for the construction of fashion bore witness to Rundle's own process, where the cutting table dominates the studio as the site of production of fashion, compounded with notes, comments and sketches on the newsprint surfaces[60].

For the exhibition I chose to work 'layers of time' into this worktable surface through the use of selected images, notes, papers, pattern card, maps[61], notes, and fashion show photographs in the form of a bricolage that spanned Rundle's twenty year career, constructing a complex narrative of pages, photographs and prints that were applied in a way that mimicked the layering of street posters[62] with graffiti overlays (in paint, papers and pen) as witness to both time and interference. This palimpsest surface of images offered a tracking of a history of Rundle through the display of the selected ephemera from a number of processes and various sources that included, recent close-up, detail photographs of garments from Rundle's store (macro-images, with a focus on stitching, on

[59] Considering the attention to process that was an important component throughout the exhibition, the use of clamps furthered this structural 'deconstruction'.
[60] Many of the drawings projected on the wall (see below) were taken from the newsprint on the cutting table, some current but others cut from the spread and archived.
[61] For this project, original pages of hand-drawn detailed suburb maps from Holmden's map of Johannesburg (printed 1955) were used.
[62] Making use of wallpaper glue, and weathering processes (with outdoor exposure to sun, rain and pollution), and working in layers, the boards were developed over a period of a month.

textures, on edges); investigations into Rundle's archives[63]; scanned drawings; and, various letters, notes and tracings. This selection was layered and worked across a conceptual geographic mapping of Johannesburg. I chose to locate the images, photographs, fashion moments and notes in their geographic locations across the two boards (stretching from the eastern suburbs of Kensington and Troyeville, through central Johannesburg, to Braamfontein in the west, and north to Rosebank and Sandton). Instead of a chronology as witness to the oeuvre of Rundle, I chose a geographic tracking, which presented a 'compression of time and history', and a layering of these histories, forming collaged genealogies and narratives in the overlays and juxtapositioning of the work. Sebastian Benedikt commented on the exhibition, after the opening as being:

> … presented as a fragmented, yet constructed exhibition, similar to Rundle's style, it explores his work process from concept to finish and on show is a collection of various materials from his past.
>
> Sebastian Benedikt in *About Memory,* June 26, 2011.

The memory boards that simultaneously mapped geography, a genealogy and a history of Rundle's work, recall Benjamin's reference to the *tigersprung* of fashion. Hidden relationships between the works (that over time could have been masked or blurred, or in singular presentations or collections that had been forgotten) are surfaced in this manner with the repositioning of images, details, narratives or ideas beyond their chronology. Tracing the genealogies with red string and red pen lines[64] evidenced their connections (see figure 16a), which variably, identified silhouette, design details, past processes or recurring motifs. Finally, a dripping of paint (on site[65]) in the manner/mode applied in the canvas wall, created a visual and narrative link between the two "walls", both as constructs of time, and palimpsest witnesses to Rundle's work.

The memory boards evidenced multiple traces, as the layered, overlapping images at times obscured previous layers, yet also offered new readings of

[63] Donne Rundle has chronologically, digitally archived all available material from Rundle's career; including films, photographs, notes, press and related media.
[64] Rundle collaborated in these traces with stamps, red pen lines, and comments during the installation of the boards.
[65] The dripped paint was 'performed' by Erasmus at the first walkabout, with the dripped paint marking both the boards and the actual gallery site (as evidence of process).

their genealogies that occurred through seemingly random 'returns' evidenced in these new contexts. Clark highlighted the power of tracing these visual links in her exhibition *Spectres* (2005: iii) where the juxtapositioning of "patterns in historical fashion investigated how several motifs return, and time folds back on them". Similarly Evans (2005: 330) notes how Benjamin's *tigersprung* refers to the complex relay of turns and returns in which the past is activated by injecting the present into it.

Both garments studied in *Chapter Three* were included in the boards, with close-up photographs of their stitching, various details, and craftsmanship now grafted in time and place on the memory boards; elements of a fashion context that were not explored in their interpretative readings, but made evident in this witness to the Rundle's creative process in the boards. Much like Rundle's work, the memory boards articulated processes of bricolage, collage and montage (Ranciere 2007:55), as well as critical elements of recycle, re-use and re-appropriation that underpin many of Rundle's collections.

THE DRAWINGS:

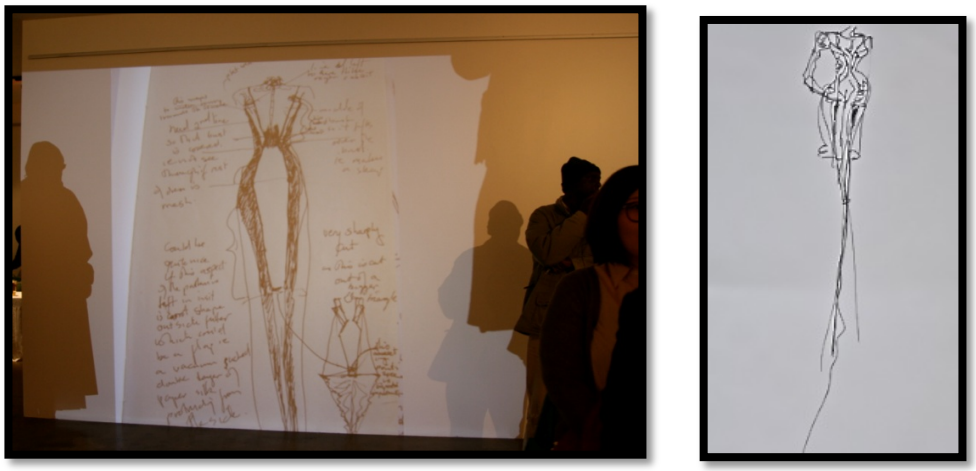


Figure 17a) & b): Projection: Drawings & Stalker. Photographer Jonna Slappendel.

Occupying the entire right-hand-side wall of the gallery, these drawings (described in detail below) were projected from floor to ceiling, directly across the gallery space from the other side of the gallery (from a height of 40cm from the floor). To reach the back half of the gallery that included the mirror, wall and

painting, access was across this projected field of screening of the drawings. The resulting disturbance across the visual field, of shadows cast onto the drawings, and the subsequent layers and interruptions (see figure 17a) at times entirely blocked out the projection altogether (especially noted on the opening night). Rundle's own creative process similarly engages with various forms of ambient public interference (in the form of media attention, collaborations, research and student internships, etc), which are at times invited, at others invasive.

An essential component in Rundle's creative process is the communication of *ideas*, as translations from thought into tangible forms. Over the years, numerous critical development discussions have been inscribed, annotated, and recorded on the newsprint-covered cutting tables[66] of the studio workshop. Many of these pen drawings (mostly black on white line drawings) are activated with notes as explanations, and range from the "seed"[67] or germ of a collection, to detailed technical descriptions (see figure 17a) and full garment outlines. The collection of "table" drawings in the wall projection for the exhibition, was selected from a compilation prepared by Rundle's studio for their own archiving, titled "Clive: Drawings", and encompasses sketches, notes, scribbles, explanations and detailed drawings, randomly compiled, which do not follow a chronology, and are neither referenced nor dated. These drawings, together with what are collectively known as the "stalkers"[68] (see figure 17b) were compiled into a looped presentation of approximately 45 minutes (each projection 10 seconds). This archive of renderings offered the audience a rare insight into Rundle's creative process, with an annotated background for some of the work recognisable to those familiar with his collections, to others, as an introduction.

The references to previous collections in this digital projection brought Rundle's past oeuvre into the present. Nora (1989: 13-14) comments on the archival need of contemporary society to collect "remains, testimonies, documents, images,

[66] These newsprint paper covers are replaced after a number of seasons and often carry multiple 'conversations' across a number of collections, discussions and creative developments.
[67] Rundle described how each collection begins with a very specific idea or seed that functions as the central thought or idea of an entire collection, described at "40 days: a presentation", April 2010, Johannesburg.
[68] After the collection is finalised, and in preparation for the fashion show, the entire collection is sketched in numerical order, and this set of drawings has collectively been labeled the "stalkers" by the Rundle studio.

speeches, any visible signs of what has been", as a continuous "materialisation of memory", and showcasing Rundle's own archive of drawings in this exhibition evidences a surfacing of the traces of his creative past in the present.

The decision to turn these drawings into a video projection, instead of keeping them in paper or print formats, presented a change of form, and activated these drawings into a moving, dynamic, ongoing "conversation" of ideas; representing them as a continuous, present dialogue of conceptual development. The projection of the oversized drawings and annotations illuminated the gallery wall, dominating the gallery with Rundle's ideas and creative processes. Saltzman (2006: 27) describes the use of video in contemporary art where video projections act as a referents to an absence[69] as the "dematerialised image … and perhaps always, a kind of specter". These black and white drawings, as digital projections, became shadows on the wall; their life-size "presence" activated a reversal of the fashion show, where the 'ghosts of the collection' were now presented in lieu of their original material forms. A memory of the finished garments on the ramp returned as sketches, scribbles and shadows on the wall in the exhibition.

A second reversal occurred in the gallery with daylight flooding into the gallery through the entire front window. This influx of light caused (at times) a total burnout effect (as the light intensity changed), washing the drawings in light, and causing a complete fade as the entire video projection "disappeared". This noticeable, and cyclical burnout of the projection frustrated the viewing of the drawings. Reference to the projection however was possible on the small laptop screen that powered the projection. The instability of the creative process witnessed in this projection, highlighted the notion of limited accessibility to ideas and creative discussions, and like memory itself, at times completely disappeared.

[69] Saltzman (2006: 26-27) explores the role of the light source in projections that turns the image into illusion, the photograph into phantom, the presence into absence.

THE EXPLODED BOOK:



Figure 18a) & b): The Exploded Book. Photographer Erica de Greef.

Suspended in the front window at eye-level, the exploded book consisted of multiple folded and un-folded pages[70], in a three-dimensional explosion of pages. In the pages, collaged photographs of the S/S 2010 collection were printed onto the fragile semi-transparent paper, with clearly demarcated fold-lines. Fashion designers create seasonal 'look-books' that contain the key elements and essence of their collections. Here Rundle had photographed the incidental, behind the scenes, background and intimate moments of the model, Nina in his S/S 2010 collection, during the shoot for Dossier magazine. These photographs were then further manipulated and collaged by Rundle, and reprinted for this look-book, one of three copies that were made[71].

The folded pages frustrated the view (see figure 18a); the collaged images concealed, shadowed, disturbed and multiplied, and any attempt to follow a narrative or access the full image, page, or story was prevented, further frustrated by the fine hanging of the object on a single thread, that turned and quivered at any interference (see figure 18b). The multiple surfaces interrupted the visual plane usually associated with reading images, and thus presented a series of fragmentary glimpses into an event (the dressed, fashioned model) and the collection. The exploded book with pages opened became a three-

[70] Rundle specially selected a fragile quality paper that would quickly evidence "wear and tear"
[71] One was sent to Paris agency for distribution, one kept as original and this book which had already been photographed, filmed, and displayed at various installations (in Johannesburg, Cape Town, etc.).

dimensional object, with all the information (visually) spilling out, while simultaneously inviting the viewer in. A kind of voyeurism occurred as one tried to interrogate the story, the model, and the narrative hidden but exposed in the pages, half-truths and fragments in the smokescreen of fashion.

THE WINDOW PHOTO-PRINTS:



Figure19: Window Detail. Photographer Mark Erasmus.

A narrow (2.5m wide x 0.5m deep) window front of the gallery provided the space for the window signage (as vinyl lettering on glass) and enough space to install the selected photographic image. In choosing an empty ramp as the front window piece to contextualise the notions of memory in Rundle's work, the photographed served as a reflection on absence, but also as witness to possibly the most important and quintessential element of the fashion system; the fashion ramp. Evans (2003: 67-68) refers to the Debord's prediction of 'the society of the spectacle' (1967), of the fashion show that perpetuates and circulates this platform constructed to create images, of both the event and the idea.

The photograph of the ramp is taken from the same S/S 2011 event as the mirror (Shine Studio, Braamfontein, April 2011), here both the "objects" were decontextualised, and their meanings interrupted. The window photo-prints had been retouched, deliberately faded and bleached to present a notion of time and

history, and printed as a mirror-imaged pair on vinyl[72]. The ambiguity of the photograph is further enhanced by the trace of an individual handbag and jacket, that neither confirms or denies whether the image alludes to a day after the show (what was missed) or taken before the show (what was still to happen). These pressing anxieties greeted the viewer at the window.

A further analysis of the chosen photograph (for this window photo-print) could include in more detail what is in the photograph; what the photograph is of; and the presentation of the photograph once made (Emerson & Smith 2000: 21), but for this research study, I have not investigated the complexity of reading this image in detail (as well as those photographs produced and used in the memory boards and the exploded book). The complex and completely integrated relationship of fashion with photography is noted here, but again for the scope of the study I have not interrogated nor investigated this relationship[73].

FILM SCREENINGS 1 & 2 and WALKABOUTS:

Two film screenings and two walkabouts were scheduled for the month long exhibition (see Appendix C: press release). These further possibilities of engagement with the exhibition allowed for a number of conversations, interactions and discussions. The first film screening, held on Wednesday 29 June 2011, and titled *Ghost in the Collection*, was an edited fifteen-minute film of the A/W 2011 collection, which showed at Arts on Main, SAFW, September 2010. The film was produced and edited by Hedwig Bester in collaboration with Rundle, with live sound from the fashion show, and followed the exact duration of the original show. Show footage though, was intercut with footage of the development of the collection taken in Rundle's studio; footage that witnessed the making of the individual garments, but also the ghosts of the collection; the garment's history, and the memory of the making. These spectres flickered across the surface of the garments on the ramp (in the video reconstruction), and, as a further metaphor to the underlying concept of the collection

[72] The use of 'advertising' vinyl in the window relates to the branding of fashion, with the common practice of presenting fashion on billboards.

[73] For further insight see Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,* Ranciere's *The Future of the Image* on the role of photography in the system of fashion.

Embroidery as Braille, offered an exploration into meanings in fashion through the tactility of knots and stitchings on the surface of the garments.

The second film screening took place on the Wednesday 13 July 2011, titled *Paris 1988*. This exclusively produced ten-minute video exploration of a range created by Rundle in 1988 (shown in Paris, by invitation, 1988), was produced and edited by Nicola Cooper, using original, archived photographic images, (originally photographed by Fiona McPherson) and archived by Donne Rundle. The grainy black and white studio photographs were cropped to focus on key construction details, in a way erasing signs of time – decontextualising the work – in much the same way as my object studies investigated the surfaces of the garments outside of temporalities and context. The soundtrack to this video work was again a reference to another collaboration; the *Mirror-Box* installation which had inside the mirror box, a hidden iPod with *Bird Calls for Beginners* (2008).

Both film screenings were curated to enhance the conversations, and encourage further critical dialogues with the exhibition and with Rundle within a broader framework of SA fashion. I recognise that these film screenings, as well as the walkabouts, could be discussed in far more detail, in terms of the discussions, participants, impacts and collective influence on my understanding of the exhibition and the research, and with Rundle's own interaction with the outcomes of the exhibition, but for the scope of this report, I have not explored this further.

Thus, in tracing memory in Rundle's work, how it may appear or disappear, with surprise, as mistakes or involuntary flashes, through a palimpsest or reflection, the exhibition of Rundle's work presented evidence of critical research and an investigation into various critical concerns regarding the reading of, and display of, fashion and the further problematic of developing and portraying abstract notions of memory, politics and history in his work.

Chapter Five: Reflections on the Memory Traces

This investigation of memory in a fashion system, invited two parallel explorations and outcomes: of the objects and the context. The findings, resulting in this report, can ultimately contribute to broader developments within a critical, creative discourse of South African fashion. Galpin (1998: 6) warned about a fine line "between making a deconstructive reading of art, and implying a deconstructive strategy within the work". This research study however, deliberately incorporated both of these aspects in approaching the research question to identify, showcase and define notions of memory in Rundle's work.

In the close readings of the two chosen objects, clear historical traces surfaced and 'clashed' in the garments described in *Chapter Three*. References to conflicting gender roles, contrasting meanings and socio-political statements conveyed multiple dialectical tensions within Rundle's work. The exposed complexity of these interpretative readings of the work, highlighted in these two object studies, illustrated Benjamin's notion of the multiple pluralities that exist in one site (for Benjamin it was the fashion arcades of the previous century, in this study, Rundle's work). Any singular item from Rundle's oeuvre holds the potential of similar dialectical narratives that were interrogated in the selected readings. Barthes (2006: 13) argued however, that meanings in fashion held their own internal logic and structure, and in his attempt to decode the meanings, he realised the "slipperiness of fashion".

Rundle's narratives break with the weight of the past inscribed onto the garments and in the encoded meanings, textiles, processes and representations. In the close readings offered in this study it can be seen how Rundle dislocates and repositions the historical references, often in juxtaposition and in layers that evidence and blur the edges between the past and the present. In the creative process Rundle simultaneously employs and negates the encoded meanings that collaborate in the aesthetic and symbolic constructions of a collection, invoking in these collections new sites of meaning and multiple readings.

The palimpsest trace of historical narrative in Rundle's work references both additional details and gradual erasures of a socio-politics of fashion. In times of transformation, where the representation of new identities and new narratives is evident in dressed identities, renegotiations with history, culture and tradition have resulted in counter narratives that contribute to new identity constructs. Nora (1989: 11) claims, "that a quest for memory is the search for one's history, and with the acceleration of history, this responsibility of memory has become simultaneously individualised and multiplied, fragile and diversified". These allusions to historical narratives and the need to remember (individually and collectively) have informed much of the current investigation of memory, loss and healing within contemporary art and cultural production. *Uberwunden: Art in Troubled Times,* September 2011 (Goethe Institute) and *In the Seams: The Aesthetics of Freedom Expressed*, October 2011 (IFA, Aktion Africa and Goethe Institute) were two recent conferences held in Johannesburg, further exploring notions of aesthetic languages during times of social change. Investigations into the sites of meaning in this study were underpinned by the complex interpretations of these material objects as cultural, political and social indices of ambiguity, conflict and change.

Of critical concern in the development of this study, however was the translation of the findings of *Chapter Three* (object readings within a private space, removed from their contextualising processes), into an exhibition in *Chapter Four* where the research was taken into a public realm of display. Had the study aim of this research located itself only within the critical reading of the objects, then the resultant 'display' may have showcased the selected, researched garments (and other garments that may have extended the narratives), within an academic context of fashion studies (for example, in a fashion museum) and 'illustrated' the outcomes of the interpretative readings. The research exposed various material genealogies; for example, the *suit-dress* and its historically diverse referents of the *justacorps, tailor-mades,* school uniforms and business suits. An exhibition highlighting these results however informative, would not have engaged with the more complex experiential notions of memory within the work, and a limited expression of the research outcomes would have resulted.

Considering this research study had two aims, one, which investigated the notions of history and memory in Rundle's work, and the second, which looked towards making a contribution to the contemporary development of a South African fashion discourse, the decision to showcase the work in a gallery (and not a fashion specific context or fashion related museum space[74]) was critical to final research outcome. The framework of a gallery, as maintaining forms of intellectual and cultural capital, allowed for the contextualisation of Rundle's work within the broader theoretical perspectives of this research. The gallery as exhibition context presented a platform for the questions raised around fashion and the 'aura' of the objects (Benjamin, 2008: 7) in this study, but more so, allowed for investigations into notions of presence and absence, as evocations of the tangible experience of memory. The use of illusion and absence in this considered display of fashion processes and sites of production (cutting tables, sketches, mirrors, fashion shows) were necessary metaphors for the act of memory in the development of the exhibition.

Furthermore, the tangible, performative *Climbing out the Wall** invoked notions of loss, with the disappearance of the dresses. The exhibition, as evocative and devoid of clear narratives, acted to frustrate a surface reading, in much the same way that Rundle disrupts the signs encoded in his garments, through the slippage of their meanings. Supporting wall texts or further narratives *may* have assisted in the overall audience understanding of the conceptual aims of the research; however, this may too, have removed the affecting experience of the exhibition itself. The abstract concept of memory within the exhibition, in terms of Rundle and his work, required further enquiry and contemplation by the viewer in order to develop an understanding of these constructs, and the meanings inscribed or understood through his work.

Nora (1989: 11) argued that the quest for memory in the interplay of "recording, materiality and visibility of the image" begins to act as outwards signs of

[74] Museum Africa, Newtown, Johannesburg holds 33 000 pieces in its fashion/dress collection and could provide the adequate context for fashion related exhibitions in its cultural programme.

memory in the construction of modern archives. Rundle's own archival process constructs the 'personal' history (through collections of drawings, photo archives, patterns, etc.), however, these archiving acts rely upon random selections and recollections of memories, processes and values. In the preparation for this research, various interactions with Rundle's archives presented 'involuntary connections' between the past, and current interests and discussions. The palimpsest surfaces and the meanings inscribed in the layers of Rundle's work reflect multiple references to past obsessions; at times conflicting, at other affirming.

Incorporating the exhibition experience into the understanding of the nature of memory-work, proposed a dialogue with Rundle's work, rather than a fixed response, whereby questions of ambiguity, meaning, instability and power were engaged in a process of display and reflection. It is my proposal that these instabilities within Rundle's work resemble similar instabilities, erasures and ghosting as seen in other contemporary art. Obsessions with memory, and furthermore, regenerations of identity-narratives within fashion, reflect history; that "becomes a kind of haunting … that we refashion the skeletons of history into armatures for ideas" (Evans 2003: 14).

Perhaps it is testament to Rundle's work, and the critical, thinking approach of the creative intent that informs his work, that positions Rundle's fashion in the socio-political, whereby the fragmentary compositions allude to greater concerns with regards to power, distinction and consumption. These issues and meanings flicker on the surface of his work, in much the same way as the drawings flickered on the wall in my exhibition, with shifting light intensities, and the memory boards and angled mirror interrupted the linearities of the space and time. Rundle's bricolaged collections at once contain history yet prompt remembering through re-contextualisations of these narratives within the present. It is Benjamin's *tigersprung* activating the past by injecting the present into it (Evans 2003: 34).

I realise that *CliveRundleAboutMemory* established a brief introduction to issues of remembrance, memory and history in Rundle's work, by an observation of the fragments and narratives that were researched within the scope of this study. Further opportunities of research lie in more critical readings of the specific nature of what surfaces in Rundle's oeuvre, and with more rigorous research methodologies that enquire into the psychological nature of memory, and focused investigations into notions of pain, or wounding, or trauma in terms of understanding the relays of turns and returns of the past (Evans, 2003: 34), as they flicker on the surface of the present. These deeper investigations may clarify the specific socio-politics of memory within Rundle's work that this exhibition and research has not achieved.

My understanding from these in-depth investigations has led me to conclude that similar research opportunities lie in explorations and comparative fashion analyses of other critical fashion designers in South Africa, which would promote further critical understanding of the creative and conceptual influences in the field. The insight awarded through research will contribute to the discourse on fashion and the potential creative dialogues available to students of fashion and fashion practitioners in the development of local fashion identities. Due to the interest shown by fashion professionals and students, as well as a more general public, at the opening of the exhibition and for the duration thereof, it can be noted that further research and exhibitions in this field can hold cultural value and can offer an important platform for the development of a critical discourse in South African fashion.

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