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2016

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Through the lens of the Romantic Child

Portraits of children by Mark Hipper and Terry Kurgan

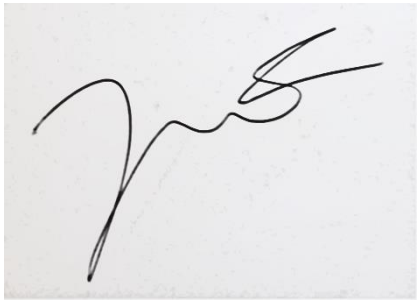
Written by Judith Evans

A research report submitted to the Department of History of Art, Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (History of Art)

Supervised by Nicola Cloete

Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work, submitted to the Department of History of Art, Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.



.....

Judith Evans

0611301D

August 2016

Acknowledgements

My sincerest gratitude to my two mentors: Anitra Nettleton who aided me through the earliest stage of this work and Nicola Cloete who guided me through to its completion, making time for me despite being occupied with more pressing, “tiny” matters.

To all of my friends who forced me to return and see this process through, and for offering advice and motivation during the process of getting there.

To my family, simply thank you for all of your unwavering care, love and support.

Abstract

This research report explores how the eighteenth century *Romantic Child* Ideal influenced the representations of children created by artists Terry Kurgan and Mark Hipper, and subsequently what the responses to these works reveal about a relationship to and participation in the ideal within the context of South Africa in the late 1990s. Through a close reading of two seminal exhibitions, the group show *Purity and Danger* (1997) which featured Terry Kurgan's photographs of her son, and *Vicera* (1998) Mark Hipper's mixed media offering of child nudes, I analysed the manner in which these artists both perpetuate and subvert the Ideal through their specific visualisations of *the child*.

Keywords: Romantic Child Ideal, childhood innocence, Terry Kurgan, Mark Hipper, child pornography, censorship

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Pictures of children are at once the most common, the most sacred, and the most controversial images of our time. They guard the cherished ideal of childhood innocence, yet they contain within them the potential to undo that ideal. No subject seems cuter or more sentimental, and we take none more for granted, yet pictures of children have proved dangerously difficult to understand or control.

(Higonnet, 1998: 7)

Introduction

Unlike many parents today who avidly document every moment of their children's lives, sharing these on social media and uploading the visages to the ever-expanding ephemeral digital "cloud", my parents took almost no photographs of me growing up. There is one image however, which I find myself returning to. In a way, I suppose, this image has taken on the role of defining for me what I imagine is *my childhood*. A poor composition, a selection of young children are scattered around a low coffee table, I am at the centre, frozen at the moment the candles atop a *Donald Duck* cake are lit. I am turning nine, the image reminds me, and I am happy, carefree, experiencing one of the most rehearsed moments in life, a *birthday*. While the scene is not unique and is arguably interchangeable with thousands of others of its kind, it illustrates a sense of separation, a distinction between adult and child, which today is almost completely taken for granted. The image evidences a range of symbols which have come to be associated with childhood; the marking and ritual celebration of the date of a child's birth, clothing designed specifically for children, characters conceived for the entertainment of children, and importantly the photograph itself suggests the necessity to document this fleeting period of human life. This one image-object encapsulates what all that is understood as "childhood" had developed into in the West by the end of the twentieth century. While the image it depicts seems *natural* and *normal*, it rather articulates a vision of a deeply revered social myth, the culmination of two centuries' worth of changing ideology concerning children and the images which *represent* them.



Figure 1: Judith's ninth birthday party, Bronkhorstspruit, January 1995.

My interest in images of children and the way in which we *respond* to them was in part spurred after an experience during my undergraduate years. While standing at the counter of a stale-smelling, smoke-filled nightclub, I was unexpectedly confronted by the aloof, penetrating gaze of a young girl. The child's visage was reflected in sepia tones from a computer screen onto the mirror positioned behind the bar. Her presence in the space was unnerving. Each coy pose that flashed across the screen, originally intended for the family photo album, was now, unwittingly, on show for... anyone. Posing for the camera, wielded by someone known to her, she exposed herself, unaware that her body was now being consumed by strangers. This experience left a latent impression on me. Why was it that, each time this child's eyes met mine, I felt compelled to look away? Why had the bodies of children become so incredibly contentious?

These two personal experiences acted as triggers for my thinking around the subject of childhood and the images which visualise it. How do we construct these pictures? What do we use them for? How do we control them? And, importantly, how do we feel about and react to them? While we are surrounded by pictures of children every day, in advertising and family albums alike, we do not often think about how they came to be understood in the way that they are. When portrayals of children in images do not conform to the accepted notions of propriety, they can make us very anxious and uncomfortable. But these moments of anxiety can offer us cause for reflection, will us to question why it is that we *feel* a particular way about the images of childhood, and how it is that we came to respond in that way. The images of children which artists Mark Hipper and Terry Kurgan produced in the late 1990s caused the public a great sense of *anxiety.* The vision of childhood they proposed did not seem to conform with what was considered *appropriate*, or in Hipper's case even legal. However, the public response to each artist and their representations of the figure of the child were distinctly varied. I argue that through reflecting on the representations these artists offered and analysing the response to their work, it is possible to gain insight into the effect that the most powerful mythology governing childhood has had in mediating our understanding of children; the Romantic Child Ideal.

Thus, this research report explores the manner in which the *Romantic Child ideal* influenced the response to the work of two South African artists who employed children as subject matter in their work. Through a close reading of two controversial exhibitions: the group show *Purity and Danger* (1997) which featured Terry Kurgan's photographs of her young son, and *Vicera* (1998) Mark Hipper's mixed media offering of child nudes, I analyse the manner in which these artists both perpetuate and subvert the Ideal through their visualisations of *the child*.

Theoretical framework

In order for the idea of childhood to exist, its vocabulary must also exist

(Flandrin 1991: 130).

According to author Jean-Louis Flandrin, the visual evolution of the child in the West was a measured one. *The child* appears rarely in the iconography of the Middle Ages in the twelfth century, differing from adults only in height, and only by the end of the fourteenth century are they vaguely distinguishable by their clothing. However, by the sixteenth century there seemed to have evolved a marked change in the manner in which the concept of *childhood* was perceived. Historian Phillipe Arièrs cites the first of these shifts as the notion of "coddling" in the sixteenth, and proposes by the seventeenth century, prompted by the revolutionary child-rearing texts of Rousseau, the attitude that children should both be safeguarded and reformed emerged (Flandrin 1991: 131).

This new philosophy on childhood required, however, a visualisation for them to become *real,* a vision of what childhood may look like in the future. "Fictions about lived experience were more consistent, more convincing, more beautiful than any lived experience could ever be." (Higonnet 1998: 8). Thus the eighteenth century saw the gradual emergence of a "visual vocabulary" of the *Romantic child.* Over time, the elite English portrait painters' visions of the Romantic child diffused into the mass media, which in turn hurriedly replicated this supposed innocence into multiplicity, obtainable and, more importantly, ownable by anyone. The emergence of the camera in the nineteenth century, with its ability to quite literally capture the child's image, meant that the notion of the *Romantic child* could finally *seem* natural (Higonnet 1998: 9). As the camera evolved, equipment and processing techniques became increasingly cheaper and more readily available to the public. Now, more than ever before, people were not simply able to possess images of children, but also produce them. The more "Romantically-styled" images that were produced, disseminated and subsequently consumed, the more axiomatic they became, until a vision of the child not viewed through the lens of Romanticism became unthinkable.

What remains consistent from the earliest visualisations of the Romantic child to the most contemporary which seek to undercut its entrenched ideology is the reliance on both the notions of mimesis, to capture the child's form, and alterity to distinguish *him* from adults. During the Enlightenment, philosophers and artists alike saw the child's body as being the literal locus of absolute innocence, natural and devoid of adult sexuality. Children's minds, just as their bodies, represented a "blank page", vacuous and ready for inscription. What makes visualisations of the

Romantic child discernable from earlier depictions was, more than anything else, the manner in which s/*he* was unlike adults, in body and mind. Children it seems represented a fairly convenient "vessel" within which the hopes and fears of an age could be embodied and "lived out" in the public consciousness. This is undeniably an objectification of the child's form, where notions of *the gaze* play an important role.

Historically men have been characterised as the perpetrators of the objectification of the body. It is arguable that the bodies of women and children have traditionally been used by male artists as subject matter because they are innately "malleable". Unlike men, who autonomously inhabit their bodies, the ownership of the female or child's form can be symbolically "owned" by others. I became interested in exploring the manner in which women (themselves historically disenfranchised) in turn visualise the image of the child's body. What "desires" do women choose to inscribe onto the image of the child they are representing? Do these visualisations register as erotic as they oftentimes do when the artist is a man? In what manner, and to what extent does the visualisation of the child's figure destabilise the entrenched, historically masculine-gendered, notion of *the gaze*? Patricia Pearson (1998) attributes the deeply entrenched notion of *feminine innocence* as the impetus for women avoiding suspicion in any wrongdoings perpetrated against children. Women are viewed as incapable of enacting this kind of transgression, because they are *mothers*. Fathers and men on the other hand are often the first suspects in cases in which children are abused. Thus, on the surface, from within this rhetoric it seems easy to understand how, Hipper's images of children were labelled as "pornography" by the Welfare Portfolio Committee in 1998, and as such his works were threatened with censorship. While, conversely, Kurgan's nude photographs of her children were not perceived as being transgressive to the point that they should be removed from public circulation. These cases seem to suggest that disparities exist regarding the propriety of men, as opposed to women artists, representing the figure of the child.

My attempts to address these questions in the researching and writing of this report revealed that these issues, far from being simply connected, are rather confusingly entangled – any hopes of drawing out the strands into the neatly wound-up, packaged argument I had envisioned at the outset was in practice somewhat futile. What became clear as I conducted my research was the impossibility of understanding images of children in any kind of *objective* fashion. Rather, in looking at the child's body we are forced to situate our gaze from behind the lens of the Romantic ideal. And as such our reactions to these images, the way we perceive and *feel* about them, is refereed by the social mythologies which have evolved around the subject of children and childhood. It is my belief that these social myths have been ever so successful in pervading our consciousness because they

have had the effect of convincing us that they are in in essence *real.* The case studies on which I have chosen to focus my analysis exemplify this notion, as the perception and response to the practice of each of these artists were distinctly situated within the ideal's prescriptive *frame.* In order to understand how the ideal came to wield this influence over our perception of the child, I have chosen to structure my analysis beginning with the thousand-year historical progression which the mythology of childhood takes. That is, from indistinct to pervasive, contentious and, as these exhibitions suggest, *inescapable*.

With origins in the eighteenth century, through the nineteenth to the present, the images of the *Romantic child* have been a constant presence in public consciousness. The figure of the child was employed by artists in the nineteenth century, as a symbol of unfettered, pure artistic creativity, a visual counterpoint to the unbearable dehumanising realities of everyday life. However, the advent of the camera unsettled the certainties of an *ideal childhood,* drawing out undeniable ambiguities not always intended by the photographer. Thus today we are faced with the reality of a world proliferated by images of the child's body, images which "guard the cherished ideal of childhood innocence, yet... contain within them the potential to undo that ideal" (Higonnet: 1998: 7). Mark Hipper and Terry Kurgan each create "contentious" representations of the child, which seem to have the potential to unhinge the Ideal's ideology, but it is the diverging response to these works and their makers that speaks powerfully to the enduring power of the Romantic Ideal to mediate our understanding of childhood, in a world very different to the one which facilitated its genesis.

Rationale

The *idea* of *childhood* is today understood as a natural and implicit social fact. Rather than simply a biological phase of physical development, "childhood" is characterised as unique and distinct, necessitating specific care and attention, ritual, education and clothing. However, investigations into the history of childhood reveal that, whilst our modern conception of childhood may *seem* natural, it is nothing more than an *idea.* Ideas about childhood and the children who experienced it underwent incredible transmutations over time reflecting the peculiar needs and desires of the contexts and societies in which they evolved. In the West the most powerful of such notions is the eighteenth century ideal of the *Romantic Child*: a formula which for centuries dictated the commonly held conception of not only what characteristics childhood should comprise, but significantly what it should *look* like. Thus the visualisations of childhood conceived in the eighteenth century were perpetuated and proliferated in the nineteenth. Significantly, the advent of the camera in this period

simultaneously created the illusion which made these visualisations seem "natural" as well as provided individuals the means to produce them in private. Systematically woven into the fabric of the family home and embedded in cultural consciousness, the ideal continued to colour the manner in which images of children were received and understood well into the twentieth century.

Aims

The primary purpose of this research is to analyse how the powerful and pervasive Romantic Child Ideal, with its inherent ideology of childhood innocence, influenced the representations of children created by Kurgan and Hipper, and subsequently what responses to these works reveal about a relationship to and participation in the ideal in a contemporary South African context. By focusing on the historical development of the idea and image of the *Romantic Child* as well as two significant exhibitions in the late 1990s by each of these artists, and the manner in which the works were largely received by the South African public, I explore the complexities which arise from their practice in relation to the ideologies of the *Romantic Child.* While much has been written regarding American and European artists who have similarly created "contentious" images of children, the exploration into this subject within a South African context has been far less extensive. Therefore, this work seeks to extend the existing limited discourse. I maintain that the lessons which can be learned from these historical examples can aid in forging a greater consciousness of the ways in which we *look* at and understand images of children within a uniquely South African context.

Approach

This research report explores the manner in which the ideology of the Romantic Child has influenced both the visual representation of the child's body as well as the reaction to such representations. Through a close examination of two significant late-1990s exhibitions by South African artists Terry Kurgan and Mark Hipper, I analyse the way in which their visualisations of the child's body either upheld or undercut the dictates of this centuries-old ideal. Moreover, through assessing the response to their work by visitors, the media and legal bodies, I investigate the deeper complexities which have developed over time in response to the Romantic Child ideal and have come to factor in to the response to images of children.

In order to construct a framework for understanding the Romantic Child ideal and the manner in which it has been able to influence the reading of the exhibitions my analysis focuses on, I adopted a qualitative methodological approach, drawing on existing sociological and art historical literature. The discourses articulated in these texts suggest that *childhood* rather than being a natural phenomenon is instead a socially constructed *idea.* Through an analysis of a range of images which depict children from the medieval period through to the twentieth century, I suggest that the shifting modes of representation not only evidence a change in thought regarding childhood but importantly served as a guide for disseminating such ideas within the societies who made them. Significantly what these images illustrate is that after the eighteenth century, that is after the development of the Romantic Child ideal, the accepted approaches to representing children and childhood deviate little from the tropes the ideal establishes. Technological developments in printing, and significantly photography, allowed individuals to participate in perpetuating Romantically-styled images and, as such, they became acutely understood as normal and natural.

My approach to engaging with the practice of each of these artists was mediated by my ability to access archival information regarding their exhibitions, which in itself underpins the arguments I set out in each chapter. While my research of Kurgan's practice followed a more traditional trajectory, my experience of attempting to understand Hipper's images and the context in which they were received was far more complex. This affected the way in which I had intended to construct my argument and I was forced to approach the work from a different perspective, the results of which, I believe, make for a more compelling discussion than the one I had set out to do at the start.

These particular artists afford me a unique opportunity to explore various issues related to the public response to their work, both in terms of the parallels in regard to their practice as well as the significant differences. Both Hipper and Kurgan are not only renowned for using children as subject matter in their work, but the image of the child is an important iconographic element in their milieu. The exhibitions which I am interested in, *Purity and Danger* (1997) and *Vicera* (1998), took place within a few months of each other and thus the public which received these works was located within the same temporal space. Both exhibitions were staged within the frame of a University setting; however, unlike many other "academic" art exhibitions which do not gain widespread public attention, each of these shows was reported on by major newspapers and as a result became known to a wider "lay" audience than would have ordinarily been the case. This offers me an insight into the responses to the works from people who were not exclusively from within the arts community.

The most obvious difference between these artists is of course their gender; Kurgan the mother of her child subjects, and Hipper a male "outsider" who has no familial relationship to the "children" he

depicts. As I assert in the second chapter, Kurgan's relationship to the child she visualises is central to the way in which the public responded to her work. Conversely, Hipper's decontextualized and re-framed visualisations of children were read and understood in relation to his gender and lack of "familiar" connection to his subjects. These artists also employ different mediums in their practice. I argue that Kurgan's use of photography to capture the image of her children is read in relation to the ideology of the "family snapshot", while Hipper's closely framed evocative paintings of sexualised children did not evoke the same sense of "security" for the audience who received them. The distinctly divergent responses to the works on these exhibitions, and the artists who created them, echo a similar pattern in the United States earlier in the decade where female artists were criticised for their use of children in their work, but did not face the same legal repercussions as their male counterparts. These cases, which I refer to in Chapter 2, have been the subject of analysis in existing literature, which offered me insight into my case studies and proved useful due to the limited discourse in relation to the South African examples.

In addition to the reasons I have already mentioned, I chose to limit my analysis to two works from each of these exhibitions because they afforded me adequate opportunity for my investigation and were sufficiently specific for the scope of this research report. While at the outset I had intended to contrast these works with those created by each artist at later points in their careers, I realised that that would require a much lengthier investigation, for which the scope of this report does not allow. Similarly, there are many more critical avenues which I had hoped to explore in my reading of these artists' wider practices but was unable to address. This however leaves room for interesting future research.

My case study of Terry Kurgan's *I'm the King of the Castle* (1997) was built on a number of published exhibition reviews, catalogues and interviews[1]. Kurgan's personal website provided me with images of the work as well as her personal explanation of how the work came about and the way in which she felt it was received. Her position was echoed in a journal article which she published in 2013. A review of the exhibition by Brenda Atkinson (1997) made reference to the conflicting audience response to the photographs. Kendell Geers (1997) wrote a scathing review of Kurgan's practice, which offered me a counterpoint to the otherwise mostly praising critical responses to this work in later publications. Kurgan's "artist statement" which appeared in Sue Williamson's feature article from 2000 offered me invaluable insights into her thinking (at the time) regarding "the performance of childhood". I conducted a semi-structured interview with Kurgan in order to gain clarity on the

[1] Most of the texts which I was able to access on Kurgan were given to me by Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) librarian Jo Burger in 2010. Burger maintains an archive of reports on various South African artists, mostly for use by matriculants in the research for their exit-level art history essays.

information which I had collected from existing sources, and further probe her on issues that were related to my specific analysis. After having discovered that examples of Kurgan's work had appeared on a pornographic website, I was eager to ascertain if she was aware of this and, if so, what her thoughts were on the matter. As recorded in my interview transcripts (annexure A in the appendix), she did not have knowledge of the website and was alarmed by its existence. While I do make reference to this discovery in Chapter 2, I did not expand on its bearing on the exhibition because I felt that it would add a level of complexity to my overall thesis- which I did not have the scope to adequately address. As I suggest in Chapter 4, the implications of this leave room for compelling future research.

The intense month-long controversy surrounding Hipper's *Vicera* exhibition had undeniable long-lasting effects. While the artist was ultimately cleared by the Film and Publications Board, the accusation that his works were examples of "child pornography" were nonetheless damaging, effectively achieving the censorship called for by the then Minister of Home Affairs Lindiwe Sisulu. It is impossible to deny that the works' subject matter is at once transgressive and perhaps would not be widely considered appropriate for "front page publication". However, the label of pornography intensified this, relegating the images to *bête noire* status in almost every context. As such, while the media insatiably reported on unfolding events[2], the works at the heart of the politically fuelled dissention were almost exclusively not reproduced. Similarly, critical engagement with the works is overshadowed by a focus on the more inflammatory, apparently "newsworthy" features of the images and events. Time and the collective consequences of these factors meant that attempts to engage Hipper's practice from this period necessitated a reassembly of disconnected "pieces of the puzzle" – of which the picture remains incomplete.

The most obviously absent component of the image is Hipper himself. Succumbing to complications with diabetes, the artist passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in August 2010. Thus the questions raised by the very incomplete archive of his work remain largely unanswered; any clarity he may have been able to provide me with can now only be substituted with speculation. It is precisely the fact that I am unable to say with conviction that a particular work did or did not appear in the *Vicera* exhibition which highlights my argument regarding the power of childhood innocence. As I will show, the pervasiveness of the ideal – and society's desire to protect and perpetuate a Romantic vision of children – have the effect of eliminating any alternatives to its formulaic prescriptions; they are

[2] In order to piece together the chronology of events as they unfolded around the exhibition, I collected over thirty five newspaper articles from various publications across South Africa, published in July and August of 1998.

simply “not allowed”. In this case, recall and reproductions of the exhibition and its images do not exist.

Through connecting with Hipper’s sister Marie-Louise Bethune in Australia[3], I was able to gain access to a collection of photographic reproductions she had commissioned artist Anton Brink[4] to compile after his death. Unfortunately, the particular details of the images were unrecorded and thus I had little sense of how to contextualise the images. For this reason I decided to adopt an approach of comparing the images she provided me with against a limited selection of known examples I was able to source from the internet and the media. By comparing these two sets, I developed a system of classification which focused on subject matter, colour, medium and style. This process was aided by my acquisition of an exhibition catalogue published by the Asperger Gallery in 1994[5], which included annotated images of Hipper’s work which he created while living in Germany during the early 1990s. Unlike those images I was able to gather from other sources (which were not as overtly transgressive), the catalogue contained examples which more closely corresponded to those which Bethune had sent to me. I was aware from newspaper reports as well as a Skype interview I conducted with Professor Mark Hayward[6] that the works featured in the exhibition were all created during Hipper’s time in Germany before he took up a post at Rhodes University in early 1998. This suggested that there was a fairly good chance that at least some of the works featured in the catalogue were examples which featured in the exhibition.

While gaining access to these images was greatly helpful, it unfortunately did not provide me with any clear indication of which particular examples appeared on the *Vicera* exhibition. In an attempt to gain clarity I contacted the Film and Publications Board, the Rhodes Art School, the Grahamstown

[3] After tracking down a current email address for Bethune through the institution she had listed as her workplace on her LinkedIn profile, I was able to gain her permission to view the images Brink had compiled. Through email correspondence and conversations conducted on Skype, Bethune was able to provide me with insights into Hipper’s background, his interest in children as subject matter and his response to the events which unfolded during the *Vicera* exhibition.

[4] I became aware of Brink’s archive through an interview conducted with Hipper’s friend Tanya Poole (Interview transcripts annexure C). Poole’s interview functioned as a departure point for me to make the connections which led to me making contact with Bethune.

[5] When I discovered that the Rhodes University Library contained a copy of the catalogue, I asked my sister who is currently a student there to have the text scanned and sent to me electronically. Without access to a scanner she then took the book to a copy shop in Grahamstown. The reaction of the staff to the images implies that Hipper’s works remain highly transgressive, and as such suggests the ideology of the Romantic Child continues to mediate the response to those images which do not conform to its stringent prescripts. My sister conveyed the experience to me in a letter which accompanied the electronic file, writing “…they were all horrified by the paintings in that book. The lady who was helping me called all [of] her colleagues to look at the paintings with a concerned look. Then they all proceeded to stare at me as if I was some kind of deviant…when I was paying, the lady refused to look at me in the eyes” (Joynt, 2015: para. 1).

[6] Hayward offered me invaluable insight into the context of the *Vicera* case. While I did not reference any of the content of our interview directly, it helped me substantiate the theories I had around the case study (Interview transcripts: annexure B)

Police Station and the Weekend Post newspaper, all of which had been cited in news reports as having documented the exhibition. Unfortunately, however, either I did not gain any response to my enquiries or the current staff had no knowledge of the case. For this reason I chose instead to identify descriptions of the artworks by visitors which were quoted in the media and "link" these to the examples I had collected. By comparing these written descriptions, and their reference to subject matter and medium, with the images I had in my possession I was able to make an informed guess as to which artworks had appeared on the show. The only works which I am certain were featured are those which appear in four photographs I was able to access documenting the installation. These pictured the *Junge* and *Körper* (1992) triptychs as well as a series of large-scale charcoal drawings of children's faces. I thus chose to focus my analysis primarily on the triptychs, as they afforded me the surety that they were part of the exhibition, in addition to the reasoning I mention above.

Literature review

The central focus of this research report is an attempt to better understand the complexities of the Romantic Child Ideal and the manner in which it mediates the way in which we have come to understand and consequently *react* to images of children. In order to explore the pervasiveness of this centuries-old Western ideal, I focus my study on the work of two South African artists, Terry Kurgan and Mark Hipper, who use the child's body as subject matter. The manner in which each artist choses to represent the child and the consequent response to their work from the public raise a number of unique, yet interconnected questions which I believe have not been comprehensively explored within a South African art-historical context. Thus while my construction of the context of the concept of childhood and the development and implementation of the ideal of the Romantic Child draws on a great deal of existing literature, my analysis of the artists and their practice is based on a far less comprehensive archive of material. For this reason I drew together a range of material from exhibition catalogues, journal articles, newspaper reports as well as interviews which I conducted with relevant people.

In his 1960[7] *Centuries of Childhood,* Philippe Ariès made the controversial claim that the modern Western conception of "childhood" was a fairly recent cultural construction. Through an analysis of historical images which depict children, Ariès asserts that the changing modes of representation are evidence that childhood rather than an implicit biological fact is rather simply an "idea" which has

[7] The English translation which I have referenced was published in 1962.

changed greatly over the course of the last thousand years. While Ariès was greatly criticised, his work was nonetheless instrumental in encouraging a development of the "New Social History" approach which sought to re-address history from the perspective of ordinary experience and which would result in a systemisation of the subject of childhood[8]. Hugh Cunningham and Neil Postman both emerge from this genre, extending the discussion through tracing the development of the ideas regarding childhood. In *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (1995), Cunningham addresses how broader historical, cultural and social changes influenced the development of the concept of childhood both in terms of ideology as well as lived experience. Postman too suggests that cultural changes influenced the ideas about children greatly; however, he places a particular emphasis on how technological developments facilitated these changes. In *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1982), he locates the invention of the printing press as the seminal moment in the changing attitudes to children and childhood because, in facilitating rising rates of literacy, knowledge could be disseminated across time and space. Importantly, this also aided in the separation of children from the world of adults, a necessary prerequisite of the ideology of childhood. I draw on these three texts, particularly those of Postman and Cunningham, in formulating an understanding of how changing conceptions around childhood as a unique stage of life prior to the eighteenth century essentially facilitated a context which made it possible for the Romantic Child Ideal to be conceptualised.

Anne Higonnet's *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (1998) traces the evolution of the Romantic Child ideal and the manner in which this concept has been characterised in imagery from its establishment in the 18th century, through the 19th, until the present. Higonnet's references span a number of genres, mediums and industries, from the portraiture of Sir Joshua Reynolds to the mass-media posters and greeting cards of Betsy Cameron. This text has served as a central guiding force in my understanding of not simply the evolution of the Romantic Child Ideal but, significantly, how the ideal continued to pervade visualisations of children well into the twentieth century. Higonnet addresses many of the concerns which are key to my investigation of the work of Kurgan and Hipper.

In *Erotic Innocence* (1998) James Kincaid offers an interesting reading of the use of children's bodies by the media. He asserts that children's bodies assume the role of the "blank page" – that is, an evacuated entity onto which others are able to inscribe their desires and subsequently consume

[8] Lloyd de Mause's *History of Childhood* (1974) and Lawrence Stone's *Family, Sex, and Marriage* (1977) are examples which exemplify this approach. Both of these texts were hugely influential in the study of the development of childhood. While I have not used them directly in my work, they undeniably influenced the thinking of those authors which I do cite in my text.

them. Through a series of additional case studies, Kincaid maintains his position that children's bodies are constructed only in aid of consumption by the adults who view them. This text has significant relevance to my work as it focuses on the construction of the image of a child's body and its consequent consumption by an audience – precisely the discourse which my thesis will engage.

Chapter outline

In the following section I offer an outline of each of the succeeding chapters and how they detail the central ideas raised by the authors mentioned above and extend my argument.

I begin in chapter one by situating the development of the concept of childhood. This significant shift in thought regarding the early period of human development is a necessary precursor for the Romantic Child ideology which would take an unflinching hold in the eighteenth century. By examining a selection of images of children which were created in the proceeding centuries I explore the manner in which the ideal both influences the *representation* of children as well as the way in which the societies in which they were created *react* to them. This lengthy section is intended to explain how our concept of childhood, rather than a natavistic reflex, is simply an entrenched set of codified ideas – ideas which have come to govern how children are depicted in images as well as how we *feel* about such pictures and consequently also those individuals who create them. In this way the chapter contextualises the selected work of Kurgan and Hipper, which I discuss in the succeeding chapters in terms of addressing how their visualisations of children uphold or subvert the tenets of the Romantic child as well as how they themselves are perceived in creating them.

In chapter two I trace the evolution of the notion of feminine innocence with that of Romantic childhood within the context of the Victorian family home. I argue that as the nineteenth century progressed women increasingly came to be understood in terms of their relationship to children and thus these two ideologies became conflated. Unlike in the preceding century, in the 1800s the subject of childhood became a field almost exclusively for women – not simply in their primary relationship to children but now also as the core producers and consumers of images of children. While female artists conveyed the public image of childhood, often using their own children as subject matter in paintings and illustrations, ordinary mothers propagated this trope in private with the camera. This process remained largely unchanged for much of the twentieth century, however as female artists began using their cameras to interrogate the ideal of childhood innocence through publically displaying their private family photographs, they also inadvertently destabilised the

ideology of feminine innocence. In the last decades of the twentieth century this coincided with a heightened anxiety around the sexualisation of children, and so female artists, such as Terry Kurgan who drew attention to her own child's sexuality, were heavily criticised – for the most part, I suggest, because they had been seen to have been *bad mothers*. What I attempt to illustrate however (partly through the comparison of the reception to Hipper's exhibition in chapter three) is that, while a certain public disdain may have been levelled at Kurgan for creating these images, it is short-lived and feeble. I further suggest that this is because, while on the surface the artist may have seemed to attack the Romantic Child ideal in her depiction of the naked body of the child, the incursion is incomplete as the pervasiveness of both the ideology of childhood innocence and feminine innocence proves far too powerful to be totally overcome. Thus I propose that Kurgan's practice, the images which she creates and the public response to both, exemplify how these centuries-old ideologies continued to mediate how images of the child are understood and responded to.

In chapter three I then continue the trajectory of this discussion through a close reading of the events surrounding Hipper's *Vicera* exhibition, staged just months after Kurgan's showing. The public reaction to Hipper's visualisations of the child's body would prove to completely overshadow any consternation felt towards Kurgan's nudes. More than simply alluding to the child's sexuality, Hipper obliterates the guarded restrictions of the taboo by showing us images of children engaged in an active sexuality. In this way I suggest Hipper achieves what Kurgan's work falls short of accomplishing – breaking down the almost impenetrable dictates of the Romantic Child ideal. While in many ways an analysis of Hipper's work and his role as artist appears to conform to the historical, archetypal role of the male artist objectifying the body of the child, preserving the traditional understanding of the gaze, I propose instead that by visualising the child as engaged in and actively exploring its sexuality, perhaps even ironically Hipper imbues the child with its own agency. In this way the child's body no longer becomes an evacuated object of consumption and it is this which destabilises the conventional power relations of the gaze. An analysis of the media coverage and censorship claims related to the exhibition reveals ingrained perceptions about childhood innocence and sexuality as well as the extent to which subverting them continues to be a problematic pursuit.

Chapter 1:

A Brief History of the Romantic Child

One of the most natural, taken-for-granted social categories for several centuries has been the distinction between adult and child

(Dubinsky, 2012: 8)

The first section of the seminal text *Centuries of Childhood* by Philippe Ariès is puzzlingly entitled "The Idea of Childhood". Surely "childhood" is not an "idea" but rather a developmental stage of life? A juvenile phase which each human is required to pass through before reaching adulthood? The Oxford English Dictionary (2015) seems to justify this position suggesting that childhood is simply "the state or period of being a child". Then what should one make of this disconcerting "idea of childhood"? In the opening passage of his book *Children and Childhood,* Hugh Cunningham offers readers an excerpt from the diary of an eleven-year-old girl involved in the siege of Sarajevo in 1992. In it the girl laments her exclusion from the elements of what she considers a childhood, "…without games, without friends, without the sun, without nature…without chocolate or sweets" and finally summarises this loss with the words, "In short a child without a childhood" (Filipović, 1994: 60). It is clear that this young girl was confident in her belief of what is required for a child to have a childhood and that, with the omission of these components, simply being a child did not grant the individual the latter. He writes, "For Zlata a child was not simply one aged between, say, birth and fourteen; a child could be a child only if he or she had a 'childhood'" (1995:1).

Clearly, while so inherently synonymous with one another, the notions of a *child* and *childhood* are distinct and not mutually inclusive. What Ariès' title and the diary entry point to is that childhood, while seemingly tangible and comprising quantifiable experiences, is simply nothing more than an *idea.* And, more than this, an idea which has been subject to numerous transmutations over time and place. What interests me is one of the most powerful and enduring of these ideas about childhood, the notion of the *Romantic Child*. It is this ideal, with its literary roots in the eighteenth century and further entrenchment in the nineteenth century, which has informed our present-day conceptions of *what* a childhood is. More powerfully than this however, it has coloured irrevocably the manner in which we perceive and react to images of children.

This lengthy chapter serves as a framework for understanding how it is that the Romantic Child ideal has succeeded in mediating the *representations* of the child: what we believe images of children should look like and, importantly, why we *react* and *respond* in particular ways to images which do not conform strictly to its prescriptions. In order to create a meaningful understanding of Mark Hipper's and Terry Kurgan's practice of using *the child* as subject matter, it is necessary to contextualise what exactly is commonly understood by this term and, importantly, how it is that Western society has come to feel so strongly about the ways in which the child is visualised. As I reveal in the proceeding chapter, while we may believe that the prevailing image of the child is simply a reflection of "nature", it is rather one which is highly constructed, the culmination of centuries' worth of evolution and entrenchment. Through tracing the evolving representations of the child in selected artworks in the West over the course of five hundred years, I reveal how the lens through which we view childhood was developed; becoming increasingly refracted until the only means of viewing the child is *through the lens of the Romantic Child ideal.* While my case studies occur within the context of a South African setting, these Western art-historical examples are important in forming an understanding of prevailing attitudes to the concept of childhood which were largely adopted by and influenced other cultures such as our own.

As the quote by Karen Dubinsky above suggests, the idea of the distinction between adults and children, the *cordon sanitaire*[9], has been taken for granted by Western society for hundreds of years. This notion of difference or "othering" is significant as without it, the notion of childhood would not be possible. But there was a time when, as Neil Postman claims, *there were no children*. That is, a time in human history where our cultural distinction between adult and child was far more fluid than it is today. And perhaps obviously, the ideal of the Romantic Child required a particular context in order to exist, one in which childhood and its necessary separating of adults and children was accepted and more importantly practised within society. Thus, while the historiography of the Romantic Child seemingly begins in the burgeoning industrialisation of Europe in the eighteenth century, its conception owes itself to the much more complex history of childhood itself.

While the ancient Greeks arguably invented schooling, differentiating a period of time in which an adolescent would be guided and taught, making them suitable to enter the world of the adult, we should not consider this captivation as one which is analogous with our own ideas of childhood (Postman, 1994: 7). Later, the Romans borrowed, as they did with much of Greek culture, the notion

[9] This term is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2015) as "a measure designed to prevent communication or the spread of undesirable influences".

of schooling and built on it. More importantly however, they created a significant connection between the idea of the child and that of *shame*. It is this connection which stands as a crucial step in the evolution of our notion of children because, as Postman writes, "without a well-developed idea of shame, childhood cannot exist" (1994: 9). He explains this further by citing rhetorician Quintilian's admonishment of those who behaved licentiously in the presence of noble Roman children. This example illustrates a developing distinction between adult and child, the notion that there is a need to shield children from adult sexual secrets (1994: 9). This development in the understanding of childhood would have powerful lasting consequences. As I discuss in chapter three, the way in which the public responds to Mark Hipper's visualisations centres on the anxiety created by the suggestion that children possess an active sexuality.

As the Western Roman Empire fell to a succession of Barbarian invasions, the infrastructure so integral in enabling the Romans to exert control over their vast dominion slowly began to disintegrate. While temples, monuments, aqueducts and roads decayed, other forms of less tangible frameworks of organisation similarly broke down and eventually all but disappeared. The most compelling of these is literacy, and it is in the loss of this that the tenuous notions of childhood established by the Romans vanish in the lives of those who lived in the thousand-year period after these events, the Middle Ages. It is during this period that the acquisition of knowledge becomes almost exclusively oral, ear-to-ear and person-to-person (Postman, 1994: 13).

This sense of the realm of the child and adult blurring is visualised in Pieter Brueghel the Younger's *A Village Festival in Honour of St. Hubert and St. Anthony* (1627) (Fig.2). While the work is a product of the Renaissance, the painting depicts the kind of social attitudes towards children which are distinctly Medieval. Here the children are not shielded from the lewd revelry of the villagers; rather they are inseparably integrated into the fabric of eating, drinking and groping. Historian John H. Plumb writes, "…there was no separate world of childhood. Children shared the same games with adults, the same toys, the same fairy stories. They lived their lives together, never apart" (1971: 7). Thus with no sense of the kind of separation of "adult secrets" from children such as Quintilian had demanded, the notion of childhood in this period could not and did not exist. With reference to the depictions of children in Medieval art as diminutive adults, Ariès writes, "…it is hard to believe that this neglect was due to incompetence or incapacity; it seems more probable that there was no place for childhood in the Medieval world" (1962: 33).



Figure 2: Pieter Brueghel the Younger, *A Village Festival in Honour of St. Hubert and St. Anthony* (1627). Oil on panel (111 x 165 cm). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland.

The double portrait, Federico da Montefeltro and His Son Guidobaldo (1475) (Fig. 3), generally attributed to Justus van Gent[10], is illustrative of the shifting perception of childhood which would occur during the Renaissance. This figure is clearly not of the variety which had existed during the Medieval period; rather he is immediately recognisable as fundamentally other than his aging father. However, more than what the painting literally illustrates about the shifting modes of representing children in images, it highlights key developments which would occur during this period of "rebirth" and which would ultimately lay the early foundations for the emergence of the Romantic Child[11].

[10] Pedro Berruguete (1450 – 1504) is often also cited as the author of this work.

[11] The notion of a child's distinct difference from adults is key to understanding the response to the work of Hipper and Kurgan, the significance of which I explore in chapters two and three.



Figure 8/: Justus van Gent, *Federico da Montefeltro and His Son Guidobaldo* (1475). Oil on panel (134x77 cm). Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino.

In this piece Federico da Montefeltro, fifteenth century Duke of Urbino, sits contemplatively reading a book in his *studiolo*, while his young son rests against his father's armoured leg. The elongated panel clearly does not depict reality but is rather a carefully constructed piece of propaganda, the symbols of which are purposefully included to confirm the Duke's desire to project his *vita contemplativa* (Clough, 1995: 19). The inclusion of da Montefeltro's son in this scene is an indication that as his heir Guidobaldo was expected to continue his father's legacy. This painting seems a fitting visualisation of the kind of role which Cunningham asserts the father begins to take on in this period. At this time, particularly in Florence where "children held a special and exalted place" (Gavitt, 1990: 275), the notion that children were keystones for the future of the state began to develop and take hold and for this reason "their proper upbringing was crucial to that future" (Cunningham, 1995: 42).

The Renaissance marks the beginnings of a schism which is created in social ideology, one which had been blanketed by the Medieval period. As it began to widen and unravel, it revealed the *knowledge* of Antiquity, and thus simultaneously created a space within which childhood could exist, a cradle to nurture its genesis. There are many developments in this period which conspired to create this fracture, but it is arguable that there is one, more than any other, to which childhood owes its

fortune – the printing press. This machine, with its ability to reproduce thoughts across time and space and place them within the reach of those who come into contact with them, did more than simply end the oral world which had previously existed, it created the universe of the individual[12]. Now, in this newly developed literary context, came forth the need for the individual to *think* about things previously not relevant to his oral, communal past which was so fixed in the present.

Along with vernacular versions of the Bible and translations of Greek classics came about more practical texts, advice books on botany, linguistics, manners and finally paediatrics (Postman: 1994, 29). Cunningham asserts that such advice books stress the importance of primary education, a particularly important break with Medievalism. He writes that fathers were instructed to "teach children their letters soon after weaning, with liberal use of fruits and cookies both to form letters and as a reward…and maintaining their authority 'by love'" (1995: 43). While it is not apparent that this piece of advice and others in the same vein were immediately followed, and one can argue that their very existence may have come about in order to rectify contrary practices, that their emergence and subsequent proliferation in this period show that "A new ideal of child-rearing was being formulated, the model for it being derived from classical culture" (Cunningham: 1995: 43).

This new Humanist approach to childhood found its most compelling voice in works of Dutch-born Desiderius Erasmus. Undoubtedly influenced by his exposure to Humanist writers in the three years he spent in Italy, Erasmus wrote a series of texts in the 1520s which systematically synthesised his interest in child rearing and education, the pieces based equally on Antiquarian literature and his own experience (Cunningham, 1995: 43). Erasmus, more than all else placed significance on early childhood education. In his opinion although the child had been primed by nature to accept instruction it was nothing more than "a shapeless lump", and it was the role of the parent to shape this formless mass. He writes, "The material is still pliable, capable of assuming any form, and you must mould it so that it takes on the best possible character. If you are negligent you will rear an animal; but if you apply yourself, you will fashion, if I may use such a bold term, a godlike creature." (Erasmus, 1985 305). The image of Guidobaldo who stands at his father's side, staring out of the picture plane into the future, ready to accept his father's legacy, illustrates the kind of training which Erasmus believed children should be given – that is, one which would prepare them for the future they were destined to inherit.

[12] Lewis Mumford explains this evolution: "More than any other device, the printed book released people from the domination of the immediate and the local...print made a greater impression than actual events…To exist was to exist in print: the rest of the world tended gradually to become more shadowy. Learning became book learning" (2010: 136).

Through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, tended to by humanist ideals, childhood had finally grown into a socially accepted fact; it was now visibly *real* and not simply an idea or suggestion. Plumb writes, "Increasingly the child became an object of respect, a special creature with a special nature and different needs, which required separation and protection from the adult world" (1971:9). Ariès believes that the proof of this lies in the distinctly different portrayals of children in art which begin to appear; according to him, painters become partial to depicting childhood for its "graceful or picturesque qualities…and coincided with the appreciation of childhood's charms" (1962: 37-38). This clearly indicates that childhood was now not only recognised but also increasingly *idealised*. Another important departure during this period is the increasing distancing from the idea of *original sin*. Less and less the child is perceived as an innately evil creature but, by the onset of the eighteenth century, rather they are "angels …endowed with a capacity for development and growth whose motor was more nature than God" (Cunningham: 1995: 62).

This shift in thinking about the child and of childhood in religious terms owes itself to Enlightenment philosophers, arguably most notably John Locke. Written in 1693, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* was first formulated in response to a request for advice for a gentleman in raising his son. In many ways the text is conservative and not unlike similar guides from the period. However, what is significant is Locke's belief that it was necessary for the child to "submit to his own reason" (Locke in Cunningham, 1995: 63). Thus Locke seems to bestow some sense of agency on the child, and more importantly its individuality. Cunningham suggests that this is critical in the development of what would eventually become a "child-orientated society" (1995: 64). Here, unlike in the past, there is an advocation that education should be tailored to the individual child. This book became so influential that by the first decades of the eighteenth century it had been translated into numerous languages and had become "the premier child-guidance book [and it was] dominantly secular in tone and content" (Cunningham, 1995: 65).



Figure 3: (Left) Jean-Michel Moreau le Jeune, *Courons vîte: l'astronomie est bonne á quelque chose* (1777). Engraving on paper (28.8 x 22 cm). Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Illustration to *Emile ou de l'Education* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (p 165) Engraving by Noël Le Mire (1778).

Figure 4: (Right) Jean-Michel Moreau le Jeune, *Voila la règle de la nature pourquoi la contrariez-vous?* (1777). Engraving on paper (28.5 x 21 cm). Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Illustration to *Emile ou de l'Education* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (p 21). Engraving by J. B Simonet (1778).

While Locke did much for creating a context in which childhood became an accepted and indisputable feature of society, it is his philosophical successor to whom the Romantic Child owes its genesis, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau's 1762 *Emile or On Education* (Fig. 4,5) was immediately controversial and was burned in France and Geneva. However, over the course of the subsequent decades of the eighteenth century and more especially the nineteenth century, it would become the seminal work on the subject of childhood. Anne Higonnet writes, "No written expression of the modern attitude to childhood was more coherent and eloquent than Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile"* (1998: 26). In *Emile* Rousseau highlights the fact that writers up to that point had never contemplated the child *as a child,* exclaiming, "Childhood is unknown"[13] (1979: 33). Simply, what Rousseau offers to childhood, and what Locke fails to, is to present to us a vision of the child which has intrinsic worth. Peter Collins explains that this is connected to but different from the notion of a child's goodness at birth: "It signifies that the child is not a miniature adult, but a being with

[13] In other translations this is quoted as "We know nothing of childhood".

characteristics somewhat unique to children, a being of inherent worth for what he is now, not only for what he will become later (1976: 54).

Rousseau affirms what had taken centuries to develop, the notion that "childhood has its place in the scheme of human life" (1979: 80). It is a time that should be enjoyed by the child free from constraints and in accordance with nature. Rousseau describes this as "negative education"; in his opinion it is far more beneficial to guard the child against the corrupting elements of society rather than to attempt to imbue them with virtue and truth (which the child arguably already possesses) (Collins, 1976: 53). One example of this is his assertion that children should be shielded from books as "reading is the plague of childhood"[14] (1979: 116), and if a child is to live as close to nature as possible then it must remain free from those symbols of the adult world which are by their design devoid of nature. Postman suggests that Rousseau describes reading in these terms because it risks exposing the child to the secrets of the adult world and thus permanently and irreversibly ending childhood (1994: 13). Paradoxically, while the written word had facilitated and nurtured a context in which notions of childhood could exist, children themselves are not granted access to this "symbolic realm".





Figure 5: (Left) Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Master Hare* (1788-89). Oil on canvas (77 x 64cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris .

Figure 6: (Right) Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Infant Samuel* (1776). Oil on canvas (89 x 70 cm). Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

[14] This is more famously quoted as "Reading is the scourge of childhood".

Higgonet suggests that in the years following Rousseau's stay in England during the mid-1760s his ideas about the child affected English portrait painters, who were beginning to create visions of childhood quite unlike what had been produced in the past (1998: 27). She claims that the works of such artists, particularly Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough, "look like illustrations of Rousseau's texts" (1998: 27). Rousseau's assertion that children should be dressed in comfortable, loose-fitting clothes, spend as much time outdoors as possible and have time to play with toys, for the sake of play rather than education, is seemingly *made real* in works such as Reynolds' *Master Hare* (1788-89). In this work we are confronted with a child, soft and unconstrained, totally in tune with the natural world in which he is pictured. The decision to place the child within a natural setting was a conscious and deliberate one, evidencing, as Cunningham suggests, that a "child-nature link" (1995: 67) was being forged at this time. This connection, while seemingly insignificant, would have great implications for the thinking around children and childhood that would develop in subsequent decades. Perhaps most importantly, it would create a rudimentary blueprint for what would come to be understood as the *Romantic Child*.

As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, the ideal of childhood was coming to fruition. The child had up to this point survived a tumultuous genesis, transforming from a pygmy adult into an innocent symbol of the natural world. For the first time in its history childhood was now not only considered a recognisable separate phase of life, but the best of them, a time which should be looked upon with reverence and nostalgia. The nineteenth century, however, would prove to be, as Dickens put it, *the best of times and the worst of times*, and this is none too true of childhood. This is in part due to the fact that in this period childhood takes on a paradoxical condition. On the one hand, as writers and artists raged against the intrusion of industrialisation on the world around them, they found in the child a pure innocence in which to escape. Conversely, the reality of childhood, for the greatest number of children, was neglect, oppression and abuse.

From around the time that Rousseau writes his *Emile,* the world had begun to change. From the moment that man realises the inherent potential of coal to fuel machines with steam power, the destiny of the modern world is turbulently and brilliantly altered. What results is a world that shifts its axis away from the agrarian and spins violently into the realm of the urban, with its seemingly never-ending hum of machines. Every element of life was slowly being consumed by these machines, as Peter Akroyd puts it, "the pulse of life was becoming less human" (in Hobkinson, 2011). People, forced into cities from villages across the countryside, were being governed by a man-made sense of time, thus losing their innate connection to nature. While these machines conspired to deliver man into an abundant modern age, they simultaneously shackled the *individual* to themselves weighing

him down into a circumstance of social despair. It is in this context, that of a world in flux unrecognisable from the "realness" of the past, out of which a group of poets emerges. Together they forge a new way of thinking about life – Romanticism – and the Romantic Child is willed into being.

Jane Humphries asserts that it is not the numerous inventors of machines to which the Industrial Revolution owes its endless expansion, but rather the army of "white slaves" who sustained it – children (in Carey, 2011). Children offered to eighteenth and nineteenth industrialists a cheap and seemingly endless supply of labour[15]. Unlike adults, children had been primed for centuries to "do what they were told" and could be moulded, or in most cases beaten, into compliance. Children became such a necessary requirement of industry that in some cases machines were purposely designed to be operated by children "with their nimble fingers" (Humphries in Carey, 2011).

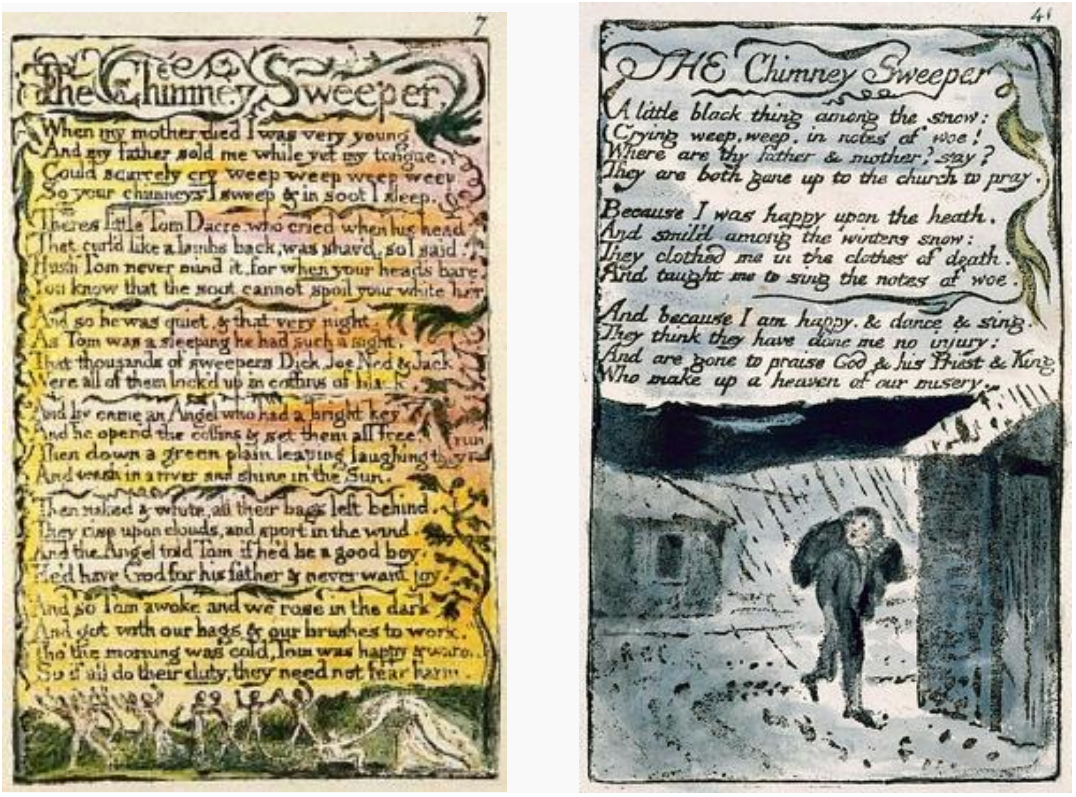


Figure 7: (Left) William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience: The Chimney Sweeper* (Copy L, 1795). Relief etching and hand coloured with water colour (11.2 x 7.3 cm). Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.

Figure 8: (Right) William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience: The Chimney Sweeper* (Copy L, 1795). Relief etching and hand coloured with water colour (11.0 x 6.8 cm). Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.

[15] Humphries claims that as a consequence of urbanisation, and thus new working opportunities divorced from landowners, women were able to marry at a younger age. This meant that the average woman could potentially conceive two more children than was the norm in the past (in Carey, 2011)

The sight of these blackened, wretched children was a daily commonality for poet and artist William Blake. He was horrified by the existence these children had to endure as a consequence of what seemed nothing more than fate. In Blake's opinion man and machine had colluded to remove the innocent child from nature and had delivered him to *hell*. *Songs of Innocence,* published in 1789, includes the poem *The Chimney Sweeper* (Fig. 8) in which Blake envisions a scene where an angel delivers the "climbing boys" from their toil and cleanses them in nature, providing them with redemption.

While this poem actively laments the misery of poor children, Peter Coveney maintains that the general tone of Blake's *Songs of Innocence* celebrates the "joy of child in nature" (1967: 57). In the companion collection to *Innocence, Songs of Experience* (1794)*,* the rural gives way to urban, childhood to adulthood. While the child had been the overwhelming subject of *Innocence*, they are conspicuously missing in the latter; Coveney explains that this is in order to give power to the progression into the adult world. With the child's innocence established, *Experience* exemplifies "the power of human nature and society to negate the enjoyment of the soul's innocence" (1967: 60). For William Wordsworth childhood's significance lay in its power to forge in the man "the growth of the moral personality" (Coveney, 1967: 68). Childhood was the "seed-time" which, if fostered in the context of nature, could ultimately guard the adult from the debilitating onslaught of the urban industrialised world (Chandler, 1984: 44). In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth affirms his belief in the significance of childhood: "…Our simple childhood sits upon a throne/That hath more power than all the elements" and "…The Child is the father of the Man…Bound each to each by natural piety" (Wordsworth, 1994: 79).

While Blake, Coleridge and Wordsworth did much to *articulate* a sense of the Romantic child, it is the artists of the period who were responsible for *visualising* it. And it is arguable that it is these visualisations, and those which sought to mimic them, which made this ideal of childhood so powerful and more importantly enduring. Higonnet asserts, "The visual arts confront us physically, tangibly, with images of the physical, soliciting immediate empathy and projection. Nothing could make us understand the concept of an innocent child body better than pictures or sculptures" (1998:27)





Figure 9: (Left) Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Age of Innocence* (1788?). Oil on canvas (76.5 x 63.8 cm). Tate Gallery, London.

Figure 10: (Right) Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Children of Edward Holden Cruttenden* (1763). Oil on canvas (179 x 168 cm). São Paulo Museum of Art, São Paulo.

It is the sum of the collected works of the preeminent British portraitists which "created a consistent and sustained image of childhood" (Higonnet, 1998: 23). Ariès shows us that there are numerous examples of images of children which exist before this time, but these portraits are disarmingly different; these are images of what we, centuries later, recognise as *real* children experiencing a *real* childhood. Reynolds' "fancy picture", *The Age of Innocence* (Fig. 11) thought to have been completed in 1788[16], has become the symbol of the Romantic Child; it has defined for us what we imagine childhood *should* look like. This visage, like the numerous incarnations that would come after it, focus on the innocent body of the child "defined by its difference from adult bodies" (Higonnet, 1998: 23). What sets this image of childhood apart from those which even Reynolds had himself previously created such as *The Children of Edward Holden Cruttenden* (1763) (Fig. 11), is the fact that here the body of the child is not being used to convey anything other than childhood innocence. Portraits of children prior to this spoke more of adult aspirations than of the children themselves; *The Age of Innocence* negates this impulse.

[16] According to Martin Postle, an article in the 8 April 1785 edition of *The Morning Herald* suggests that the work may have in fact been exhibited at the Royal Academy in that year. The work is referred to simply as *a little girl,* and is described by the author as "An Infant Girl, disposed on a grass plat in an easy attitude" (2000: para. 3).



Figure 11: Joseph Grozer after Reynolds, *The Age of Innocence* (1794). Stipple engraving (plate: 28 x 21.2 cm). Yale Center for British Art, Connecticut.

Interestingly, this visualisation of the innocent child, which Higonnet maintains "might as well be titled the invention of innocence" (1998: 15), was not given the title by Reynolds himself, but rather it was derived from the inscription on an engraving after the painting made in 1794 by Joseph Grozer (Fig. 12) (Postle, 2000: para. 3). The fact that the reproduction's name was able to subsume that of its referent illustrates the power of the bourgeoning print trade, described by Nicholas Penny as "assiduous in seeking publicity" (in Hamilton-Phillips, 1986: 251), which emerged in the late eighteenth century. Reynolds encouraged the publication of engraved versions of his work, as the dissemination and ultimate mass consumption of this printed material assured a familiarity with the originals thus fanning the artist's public popularity[17] (Hamilton-Phillips, 1986: 251). By the onset of the nineteenth century Reynolds' vision of the child had been transformed from an individual artistic interpretation to a formulary for childhood innocence. Progressively, and spurred by the increasing affordability of printed material, "after Reynolds" reproductions became ubiquitous household ornaments (Higonnet, 1998: 46). Often hung on the walls of children's bedrooms, these idealised public images suggested a prescriptive private emulation from their owners. The inclusion of a print after Reynolds' *The Infant Samuel* in Seymour Joseph Guy's *Making a Train* (1867), rather inconspicuously pinned to the subject's bedroom wall, speaks to the fact that such mass-produced

[17] This relationship was not one-sided. As Diana Donald points out, prints after Reynolds accounted for almost one quarter of the stock in a typical Fleet Street print-selling business, thus providing a significant portion of their income (in Hamilton-Phillips, 1986: 251).

images of childhood were acquired and used within households, consequently becoming integrated into everyday life (Higonnet, 1998: 46).



Figure 12: Seymour Joseph Guy, *Making a Train* (1867). Oil on Canvas (46 x 61.2 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

Reynolds' 1788 *Penelope Boothby* (Fig. 14) is arguably one of the artist's most reproduced images. Prints ranging from mezzotints to rich, saturated lithographs were avidly produced long after Reynolds' death in 1792. By the Victorian period the image was so recognisable that items of the clothing the sitter is wearing in the image – a Georgian-era oversized mob-cap and black fingerless mitts – had developed into a "fancy dress" category for young girls, not unlike the "Blue Boy" otherwise known as "Little Lord Fauntleroy"[18] costume for boys. To Victorians this style of dress would have been recognisably eighteenth century and essentially "old-fashioned" but despite this parents enthusiastically dressed their children in such clothing, which was notably different from adult styles. While the four-year-old Penelope Boothby who served as the subject of Reynolds' painting was likewise wearing a "costume" set apart from adult dress, the ideology guiding its styling was wholly different from the Victorian period. In the eighteenth century "children's clothing" was essentially invented to be less restrictive; with greater ease of movement the wearer could play and thus learn in terms of Rousseauian-styled principles. This approach was then modern and progressive. By the nineteenth century dressing children in this manner essentially "froze them in

[18] *Blue Boy* (1770), a full-length portrait of the son of a wealthy hardware merchant, is arguably Thomas Gainsborough's most iconic work. Thought to have been conceived in part as a homage to Van Dyck, the painting became immensely popular through reproductions in the Victorian period, eventually serving as the reference for Reginald Birch's illustrations in Frances Hodgson's equally popular fiction *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) (Higonnet, 1998: 47).

time", visually ascribing them a sense of difference and "timelessness" and as such excluding them from the adult world[19] (Higonnet, 1998: 49). The subject of *Cherry Ripe* (Fig. 15), Edie Ramage, appears wearing just such a costume in John Everett Millais' 1879 portrait.

According to the somewhat mythologised version of how the painting came to be made[20], Millais, who was in attendance at a party staged by the popular *Graphic* periodical, was so struck by the innocent vision of young Ramage dressed in her Penelope Boothby costume that he insisted she be delivered immediately to his studio so that he could paint her likeness (Bradley, 1991: 179). The following year *Cherry Ripe* was included as a colour reproduction in *Graphic*'s Christmas edition for subscribers.



Figure 13: (Left) Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Penelope Boothby* (1788). Oil on canvas (dimensions unknown). Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Figure 14: (Right) John Everett Millais, *Cherry Ripe* (1879). Oil on canvas (134.5 x 89 cm). Private Collection.

[19] Higonnet suggests that the struggle to shed the "Blue Boy look" became a symbol of the older boy's attempt to leave the confines of maternal domesticity and enter the world of adult masculinity (1998: 47).

[20] More conservative accounts of the commission, such as that offered by Pamela Tamarkin Reis (1992: 201), suggest that the portrait was commissioned by the owners of the *Graphic* as a publicity exercise in order to bolster sales. The Sotheby's catalogue note from the painting's 2004 auction maintains that Ramange was brought to Millais' studio the following day re-dressed in her costume. This suggests that Millais was motivated to paint the child's likeness more by his financial concerns than by his affinity for capturing childhood innocence.

Over 600 000 copies were voraciously snapped up by the public, leaving a great deal more consumers disheartened as printers were unable to meet the unexpected demand. The incredible popularity of Millais' vision of the Romantic ideal among the Victorian public was so great that even the 1881 mezzotint copy of the painting by Samuel Cousins became itself a "celebrated and prized piece of decoration" (Sotheby's, 2004: para. 7). Clearly time had done nothing to dampen audiences' desire for images of children.

Superficially Millais seems to deviate little from Reynolds' visualisation; arguably this could account for at least some of *Cherry Ripe's* popularity; however, on closer inspection there are pointed differences between these two examples of the Romantic child which speak to the evolution and growth of the ideal in the almost one-hundred-year period which transpired between each image's creation. While Reynolds' composition focuses in on the upper body of Boothby omitting her legs, Millais moves further away from his sitter revealing her whole body, significantly her small legs which dangle in front of her with her toes pointed awkwardly towards one another. Boothby gazes out of the picture frame with an almost disinterested air, her arms folded indifferently in her lap; conversely, Ramage looks up coyly at the viewer from underneath her especially oversized mob-cap, her hands pressed together and slid in between her legs, accentuating her body's shape beneath her billowy dress. These examples of the differences in composition and positioning of the subjects' bodies in each work all conspire to deliver very different images of the child. Reynolds' vision (undeniably sentimental and idealised) seems far more *natural* than that of Millais; this is because *Cherry Ripe* exudes *cute,* a quality only developed in the context of nineteenth century commercialism (Smith, 1998). Millais who was wholly aware of the potential profitability of producing more than just images of idealised children, that is saccharine, commercial depictions, set about purposefully adapting Reynolds' formula to serve the tastes of a new audience. Victorian society, far more child-centred than that of their Georgian predecessors, revelled in and avidly consumed cheaply produced mawkish-romantic depictions of children. Thus, Millais' decision to over-exaggerate his sitter's head in relation to her body, and her body to that of her surroundings and clothing, is entirely motivated by a desire to achieve this sense of "cuteness".

The disparity between the backgrounds in each work similarly illustrates the changing ideologies governing the ideal. Reynolds situates Boothby in a natural setting in order to convey the subject's inherent "natural" innocence, this in accordance with literary Romantic beliefs. Millais' subject is similarly seated within an outdoor scene; however, it is purposefully darkened in order to visually push the child's figure forward, singling it out for visual consumption. The manner in which the

foxgloves and other foliage neatly frame the body of the child feels somehow *unnatural*, more studio backdrop than the unbridled natural beauty evoked in the work of the Romantic poets. It seems that by the time Millais created his visualisation, the symbol of the child was no longer revered in relation to its closeness to nature, but rather had become objectified, a desirable commodity which could be fabricated for the consumption of adult audiences.

In the same year that Millais completed *Cherry Ripe,* another artist found himself equally enamoured by the image of a young girl dressed in a Penelope Boothby costume (Higonnet & Albinson, 1997: 113). He too desired to *capture* her apparent childhood innocence in visual form; however, he was not a painter and the medium he chose to render the girl's image was a developing scientific technology. Charles Dodgson, perhaps better known by his pseudonym Lewis Carroll, the author of the famous *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), was an avid amateur photographer with a particular interest in female child subjects[21]. Through his position as a mathematics don at Christ Church in Oxford, Dodgson had access to and fostered relationships with many of his colleagues' children. Xie Kitchin, the daughter of the Dean of Durham, became one of Carroll's "child friends", posing for him on innumerable occasions from the age of four. Unlike the real life Boothby and Ramage, who were "little girls" at the time of their sitting, Kitchin was fifteen years old when Carroll took three photographs of her dressed in a version of the Boothby costume. In the first of the series, Kitchin is seated in a chair and strikes a pose in line with those used in the paintings; however, the result is not the sentimental "cuteness" Millais had achieved in *Cherry Ripe.* With her chin resting on her hand, Kitchin fixes her almost confrontational gaze on the viewer, this in stark contrast to Ramage's timid, self-conscious glance. And while Millais succeeds in making his subject seem doll-like and small by exaggerating the size of her costume, Kitchin's somehow seems too large for her, as though she were dressed in clothing she'd long since outgrown. The starkness of the background in the photograph succeeds in divorcing this child from any allusions to nature and moreover forcing your eye repeatedly back to Kitchin's continuous, sustained stare. This image is not "pretty" or pleasurable to look at.

Perhaps the most significant difference between Millais' and Carroll's re-interpretations of Reynolds' Romantic child is the inescapable realism of the photographic portrait. While I have used the sitters' names to refer to the figures which appear in the artworks, Kitchin is in essence the only *real* child in any of them. While the real-life Boothby and Ramage may have served as the basis for those images of children, the visages rendered in paint are rather constructed symbols of childhood. Carroll might

[21] According to Lindsey Smith, Caroll apparently once wrote, "I am fond of children, but not boys" (1998: 28)

have hoped that dressing his subject in the costume would have the effect of suggesting a believable "timeless" Romanticism; however, the inherent characteristics of his chosen medium "fix" the moment of the portrait's creation in time, and moreover make the relationship between subject and maker implicit. Millais was able to manipulate the image of his subject in order to heighten the effect of the ideal; Carroll's image exposes the ideal's inherent façade.





Figure 15: (Left) Charles Dodgson, *Xie Kitchin as Penelope Boothby* (1876). Albumen print (15.4 x12.4 cm). University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 16: (Right) Samuel Cousins after Millais, *Cherry Ripe* (1881). Mezzotint (48 x 36cm). Collection unknown.

Unlike other forms of image making, this new revolutionary medium, photography seemed, on the surface, able to operate with a greater degree of objectivity, *capturing* only what could be seen by the camera's mechanical eye. It is these characteristics which made photography in the nineteenth century apparently so perfectly suited to be the recipient of the eighteenth century's enduring primogeniture, the *Romantic Child* ideal. All of the visual signs and symbols which had been carefully evolved by literary and artistic figures became a codex which informed photography's vision of childhood and transferred these elements to the visualisations which the new medium constructed, refined and seemingly *made real* (Higonnet, 1998: 30). While images of children and childhood made by Reynolds and others inferred the actuality of the *idea* of childhood, photographs, seemingly documents of reality, sought to provide evidence of its honest and truthful existence in reality. In the same manner that photography was able to provide "proof" for scientific claims, so too was it

harnessed to substantiate the belief in the ideal as fact". Perhaps more importantly, photographs of children made in the nineteenth century *relayed* the ideals of Romanticism to a new, increasingly visually literate, modern audience.

By the turn of the nineteenth century technological innovations, most notably those made by George Eastman's *Kodak* company, transformed photography into an easily accessible, democratic activity, "every person's art form" (Meggs & Purvis, 2012: 156). Indeed anyone could "Make 100 instantaneous pictures by simply pressing a button", as an 1889 Kodak advertisement (fig.17) tells us. Not surprisingly, over the course of the twentieth century the camera entrenched itself in the fabric of the home, becoming an indispensible member of the family responsible for not only documenting the fleeting moments of childhood, but also providing material evidence that it was experienced at all. Writing in the 1970s, Susan Sontag references a French sociological study which found that most households owned a camera and that families with children were twice as likely to possess one as those with none. It seems clear that by this time there had developed the idea that childhood necessitated documentation, and that disregarding this implied a parent's apparent apathy: "Not to take photographs of one's children, particularly when they are small is a sign of parental indifference" (1973: 5). Two decades later Higonnet claims that half of the film processed in the United States at the time "feature[d] the very young" (1998:87).





Figure 17: (Left) The Eastman Dry Plate & Film Co., Kodak Advertisement: *The Kodak Camera Makes 100 Instantaneous Pictures* (1889).

Figure 18: (Right) O'Connor-Toulmin Family Collection, *Family Portrait 1970s* (1970s). Photograph. The University of Sheffield, Sheffield.

The apparent visual and thematic homogeneity of images which appear in family photograph albums (fig. 18) suggests that, in addition to parents privileging their photographic gaze on the child, the resulting image-objects reflect those characteristics of ideal childhood offered by public, consumable manifestations. As images of the Romantic child are disseminated and circulated within the public, the public in turn mimics the characteristics in private, perpetuating in each successive generation the conviction about what a child experiencing a childhood should look like. The power of the Ideal to consistently sustain itself lies in the fact that it is an example of Roland Barthes' notion of *myths*. Roger Cox explains that these "ideas of immense cultural power", continually and systematically entrenched, have the effect of appearing to us as *natural* (1988:81). However, regardless of how natural or "normal" these images of children may seem, the almost reflexive action involved in their making is not: "Even the most casual snapshotter is highly selective, consciously or unconsciously choosing "Kodak moments" from among the infinite possibilities presented by chance" (Higonnet, 1998: 89). In creating images of children which evidence a particular set of characteristics articulated by James Kincaid as, "…sweet, innocent, vacant, smooth-skinned, spontaneous and mischievous" (1998: 14), importantly free from sexuality, we avoid the potential cognitive dissonance which may arise from subverting the dictates of the ideal. Thus, the lens of the Romantic child continues to sit adamantine in its mediation of our perception of the child.

While ordinary members of the public engage in creating images within the context of the family, photographers too cast their camera's gaze on their own children. For photographers the impulse to capture moments of their children's lives is not unlike that of any other parents, save that the outcome is perhaps more technically sound. However, for some photographers the images they create are not only intended for the family album; as accessible and compliant subject matter, their children's bodies are rendered vehicles of the artists' intention and destined for public exhibition.

Edward Weston focused his lens on the body of his young son in the 1925 *Neil* series in an attempt to evoke the beauty of abstract natural forms within the context of a cool objective modernism. The series, which comprised six printed images shot on Graflex film, pictured Neil Weston in a sequence of sensuous, lithe poses, his torso stretched highlighting a delicate musculature. Masterfully crafted, these images were an attempt to convey Weston's belief in the ability of the camera to "distil the essence of the visible" (Higonnet, 1998: 114). Immediately successful, these images contributed to Weston's canonisation as "one of the greatest artists in the history of the medium" (Higonnet, 1998: 114). His visualisations of the naked child's body were perceived at the time as no more sexual than

his depictions of contorted peppers. Despite the fact that most of the images reveal or allude to Neil's genitals, Weston's modernist aestheticism seem to neutralise their implicit sexuality, with Diego Rivera even commenting, "Your work leaves me indifferent to the subject matter" (Weston, 1990: 147). Rivera's response illustrates that Weston's images, and more importantly the context in which they were publically received, still operated within the dictates of the Romantic child. Neil "objectified" as *Neil* is "emptied" of all of his agency, thereby making him more able to perform the symbolic demands his father makes on him by "taking" his photograph (Kincaid, 1992). *Neil,* unlike his then live referent, "wants nothing, desires nothing, demands nothing -except perhaps his own innocence" (Jenkins, 1998: 1)

The manner in which we respond to the signs within a photograph relies emphatically on the context within which they are read. We draw upon the cultural messages implicit in the image in order to make sense of what it *means*. Barthes refers to these elements as the *studium* (1981: 25), describing this as an "average effect" which is mediated by the cultural zeitgeist of the time in which it is viewed. For this reason it is possible that an image's "meaning" can be decoded and understood in strikingly different ways depending on the historical, social and political climate. Sontag too emphasises this when she explains that "what follows the possibility of being affected morally by photographs is the existence of a relevant political consciousness" (1973: 14). Critics who had once praised Weston's work as exceptional incarnations of a modernist aesthetic recanted their previously held positions, apparently only being able to recognise the images' inherent sexuality when societal mores had changed (Higonnet, 1998: 137). Writing in the late 1990s, Higonnet suggests that if Weston had created the work in that context there is a considerable chance that his work would have been subjected to "a newly suspicious public" and perhaps even legal scrutiny as was the fate of many photographers whose work "hovers on the cusp of family snapshot and art photography" (1998: 139).

Examples of such photographers are numerable. In 1993 Marilyn Zimmerman's home and office was raided, police searching for more evidence of "sexually abusive material", after a cleaner at the university where she worked found a discarded contact sheet depicting the artist's daughter nude. In the same year Robyn Stoutenberg was accused of producing child pornography and her photographs, including one of her son posing nude with a dead chicken, were seized from the gallery where they were on display. In 1995 Toni Marie Angeli was suspected of making child pornography when she had negatives of her four-year-old son, shot as part of a Harvard University course, developed at a local photographic lab. Clearly in the sixty-year period between Weston's publication

of his series and those photographers mentioned above, public sentiments regarding the visualising of the child's naked body had become polarised. Expressing this sense of the period Higonnet writes, "No subject is as publically dangerous now as the subject of the child's body" (1998: 133).





Figure 19: (Left) Witkin Gallery, *Six Nudes of Neil, 1925 by Edward Weston* (1977). Portfolio poster, offset lithography (60.3 x 33cm). Printed by George Tice. Witkin Gallery, New York.

Figure 20: (Right) Edward Weston, *Pepper No. 30* (1930). Gelatin Silver Print photograph (23.5 x 18.5cm). Printed by Cole Weston (1981). Center for Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents, Tucson.

It is into this context of unease regarding the figure of the child that my case studies are situated. In South Africa at that time, as was the case in the United States and Europe, there was a heightened sense of anxiety around the perceived threat that images posed to the child's perceived inherent innocence. When Mark Hipper and Terry Kurgan revealed their visualisations of the child to the public, they both sparked controversy. In 1997 Kurgan's show raised concerns about the propriety of revealing her son's nudity to the public eye, while a few months later in 1998 Mark Hipper's instigated a month-long debate around whether or not he had publically exhibited examples of child pornography. Each of these cases elicited passionate responses from the public although, as I argue in the proceeding chapters, not for the same reasons or to the same degree.

However, what was consistent, and as this chapter reveals, is that the response to all images of children are mediated by the social mythologies that have evolved in regard to the understanding of

childhood. While our modern conception of childhood is premised on the belief in its inherent "naturalness" and in the Romantic Child ideal as simply a reflection of this nature, these mythologies are instead highly evolved constructions. The power that these concerning childhood are able to exert over our response to images of children is located in the fact that they have had the effect of convincing us that they are not ideas at all, but rather a truthful reality. When we respond in particular ways to images of children, we are doing so in a response to a prejudiced way of looking; we see childhood not simply through *our eyes*, but rather through the *lens* of the Romantic ideal of childhood. It is impossible to understand the significance of the works created by Hipper and Kurgan without understanding how the image of the child developed within the cultural consciousness of the public who received them.

Chapter 2:

Two volumes of one book: Feminine Innocence and Childhood Innocence

The moment a child is born, the mother is also born. She never existed before.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

When the group show *Purity and Danger* opened at the Wits Gertrude Posel Gallery in 1997, it would have been hard to anticipate how significant the event would prove to be. Yet, almost immediately South African audiences were forcefully catapulted into the uncomfortable, evolving debate concerning the representation of the child's body. Moreover, the forty sepia-tone photographs by the then little-known artist Terry Kurgan highlighted an even more uncomfortable discussion regarding the relationship between a mother and child, especially when that mother also happens to be an artist. The incident mirrors a number of similar examples which occurred in the United States, when female artists were publically derided for making use of their children as subject matter. Most notable was Sally Mann's famous 1991 *Immediate Family* exhibition which elicited a spectrum of criticism, ranging from merely maternal neglect and indifference to profiting from child pornography. These cases exemplify the fact that in instances where female artists choose to interrogate the treasured Romantic Ideal of childhood through their work, the transgression is *twofold*.

This chapter serves to provide a historical context for the societal perception of the relationship between mothers and children, as well as the understanding of this relationship within the framework of the production and consumption of images of children. I illustrate how the notions of feminine innocence and that of childhood innocence evolved in tandem, within the context of the Victorian *home*: a set of connected social mythologies which would be sustained well into the twentieth century. For this reason, I propose that our *reaction* to the work of female artists, who make use of the bodies of their own children as subject matter, is mediated not simply by the Romantic Child ideal, but also by the "eternal maternal" ideal which casts mothers in an immutable, innocent and reverential relationship with their children. The reflexive societal belief in the *ideas* about the apparent natural connection between a mother and child within the security of the "family home" forms the ideological milieu in which Terry Kurgan situates her practice in 1997. I suggest it is a *frame* which does not simply outline the understanding of her representation of the child, but directs and focuses it.

While female artists such as Kurgan and Mann may well have had criticism levelled at them, little of this ever translated into actual legal prosecution. Seemingly as the proverbial dust settled in the wake of the exhibitions, the public and the law alike simply accepted the artists' explanations and justifications – apparently *mother did know best*. This was rarely the case for male artists, like Jock Sturges, who were subjected to invasive raids and even charged with creating child pornography. Although ultimately vindicated, Sturges was left physically, emotionally and financially poorer by the experience in 1990, his career forever tainted by the ordeal [22](Rubin, 2002: 59). Here South African art history again offers a parallel to this example with Mark Hipper's 1998 solo exhibition *Vicera*, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Like Sturges, Hipper faced child pornography charges and, while ultimately cleared, the artist was perhaps unfairly best known for the controversy.



Figure 21: Terry Kurgan, *I'm The King of The Castle* (1997). Photographic installation [digital print on matt photographic paper] (39 photographs 42x29 cm each). *Purity and Danger exhibition,* Gertrude Posel Gallery, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Conversely, despite being warned by a federal prosecutor that the content of her photographs made her liable for arrest on the same charges, Mann avoided any form of prosecution and instead

[22] Almost a decade later in 1997, anti-choice protesters accused the bookstore chain Barnes & Noble of selling child pornography in the form of Sturges' book *Radiant Identities* as well as David Hamilton's *The Age of Innocence.* In 1998 the bookstore was indicted on thirty-two counts of child pornography in Alabama, although the charges were ultimately dropped when it was agreed that the books would be moved to "less child-accessible" areas (Lane, 2001: 125).

benefited greatly, professionally and financially, from the public attention garnered by the photographs of her children. By September of 1992 her work had earned an incredible half a million dollars (Woodward, 1992: 52). Kurgan too undoubtedly gained from the publicity following that and later exhibitions, at once spring-boarding her practice into public consciousness and signalling an important shift for her from print-maker to artist who "makes projects about photography"[23].

What can be made of this paradoxical reaction? On the one hand, women who undercut the ideal of Romantic childhood, especially when the bodies of their own children are used as visual fodder for investigation, are laid open to a particular kind of denunciation which focuses on their "fitness" not merely as artists or even as women, but rather pointedly as *mothers*. However, regardless of how transgressive or unsavoury their actions may be deemed by the public, these artists unlike their male counterparts seem to be protected from any substantial recourse by, to borrow from Richard Woodward, a "shield of motherhood" (1992: 32). The answer, it appears, lies not purely in the fact that these artists impinged on the ideals of Romantic childhood, but rather that they did this as mothers – thus simultaneously destabilising another omnipotent social doctrine: motherhood and its inherent ideology of *feminine innocence*.

Described by Francine Du Plessix Gray as "one of the most sacred premises of Western culture" (in Badinter, 1981: ix), the *eternal maternal*, has become so embedded in our cultural consciousness that we have almost come to believe its tenets are dictated by nature itself. However, as French philosopher Elizabeth Badinter (1981) and other feminist writers have pointed out, our reflexive conception of motherhood as natural and implicit is better explained arising from *mythology* than reality. The overriding and sustained belief in this mythology serves to arbitrate our perceptions about the relationships between female artists and their child subjects. The sense of contention which arises from the polemics of representing the figure of the child, that is the relationship between subject and maker of the image, is channelled through the security of the mother-child relationship and as a result becomes muted. While the public display of images which allude to the sexuality of the child, such as those created by Kurgan, may work to cause us "discomfort" by impinging on the dictates of the Romantic Child ideal, we resolve what we *see* by reminding ourselves that the overarching circumstance of their creation falls within a conventional framework – a construction which I argue has a long history of entrenchment, which has served to make it imperceptible and as a consequence appear *normal.*

[23] This quote appears as the tag-line of Kurgan's website (www.terrykurgan.com).





Figure 22: Sally Mann, *Immediate Family Series* (1991)*: Virginia at 4* (1989). Gelatin silver enlargement print (58.4 x 48.3 cm). Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Figure 23: Sally Mann, *Immediate Family Series* (1991)*: The Perfect Tomato* (1990). Gelatin silver enlargement print (46.5 x 58.6 cm). Guggenheim Museum, New York.

The understanding of a woman's relationship to children being *natural* is tied to the inherent biological difference that exists between the sexes. Reproductively, women are responsible for carrying a growing foetus and then nursing the child in infancy, thus their role within the early life of a child is implicit and necessary. The notion that, as a consequence of her sex, a woman is imbued with an innate maternal instinct and commitment to children, however, rather than biological fact, is a socially constructed attribute of the female gender. Gender, the "social fact", defines divisions between the masculine and feminine and the *normal* roles each are expected to assume (Connell, 2002: 33). Thus, while for many the equating of women with mothering and by extension children seems logical and instinctive, it is instead the result of entrenched patterns of socialisation, dictated by the needs and desires of a society in a particular time and place. Economic and political changes necessitate requisite changes in social structures and behaviours, ensuring communities' continued success in new contexts.

While history reveals many such transitions and reformulations, those that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are arguably the most enduring, surviving almost unchanged for over a hundred years. I argue that understanding the manner in which this evolution developed, and its relationship to the ideology of childhood, offers some explanation for the incongruent societal response to *artist-mothers* such as Kurgan and Mann in the last decade of the twentieth

century – and, more tellingly, even the disparity which existed, and perhaps continues to abide[24], between such female artists and their male counterparts.

The description of the traditional notion of a woman by Du Plessix Gray as "home-centred and sacrificially devoted to the well-being of her 'child-king', guardian of his evolving morality and education" (in Badinter, 1981: xiii) succinctly summarises the key characteristics of the ideal. What I find particularly interesting is the way in which she describes the child. It highlights the manner in which a woman's role in society had become polarised around the care of the child and, importantly, that the child was by this time considered important enough within society to warrant being cared for at all, never mind having a "sacrificially devoted" savant, the kind warranted by a king. It is in this way that these two *myths* reveal themselves to be "two volumes of one book", as the idealised maternal critically hinges on the sustained belief in the concept of *childhood*; hence while mothers may give birth to children, ideologically childhood *birthed* motherhood. While this fact may illustrate the manner in which these ideals are connected, it does not account for the immense power which emanates from the mother-child relationship; also it does not account for the belief in implicit *maternal love.* This attribute owes its inculcation to Victorian middle-class ideology, which throughout the course of the nineteenth century succeeded in making the myth seem reflexive and *natural.*

As the Industrial Revolution reshaped the landscape, remoulding nature into urban, mechanised cities, so too did it result in the systematic reconstruction of the existing social landscape. The new "modern world" which confronted society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century looked and functioned unlike that world which had come before and necessitated a series of redefinitions and refinements of the existing systems of social order, for example, class and gender roles in public and within the private confines of the *family.* The response to the threat which developing socio-economic circumstances made to the prevailing patriarchal order governing a woman's role in society was a stringent reaffirmation of notions of femininity, especially those which related to her role as a mother. This was especially evident in regard to the emerging Victorian bourgeoisie, who relegated women to their roles within the nuclear family and cloistered them within the confines of the *home*. The visualisations of this version of femininity which defined and then perpetuated the ideal, like that of the Romantic Child, would have lasting effects on the

[24] In 2014 artist Wyatt Neumann posted photographs documenting a cross-country trip he took with his two-year-old daughter Stella on his *Instagram* account. While mostly unremarkable, some of the images depict the child naked or partially clothed. Almost immediately Neumann was inundated with negative comments from other users who variously accused him of being a paedophile himself or using his child as the subject for what was in their estimation pornography (Braiker, 2014).

manner in which society understood a woman's relationship to children in general and more importantly her own children.

During the Victorian period gender roles were constructed around an "essentialist" understanding of sexual difference. Within this framework all women as a consequence of their gender were characterised in opposition to men, their weakness and passivity, presumed to be innate and instinctive, a counterpoint to the masculine attributes of action, aggression and spontaneity (Nead, 1984: 26). While based on biological gender difference, notions of masculinity and femininity at this time were defined in relation to the social anxieties which arose as a consequence of shifting societal realities; entrenched and normalised through medical and legal systems of control (Nead, 1984: 26). Thus "normal" and ideal femininity became inextricably tied to a woman's role within the domestic realm of the nuclear family as a wife and especially as a mother.

Family structures with their prescribed gender roles and identity had prior to the late eighteenth century been organised around agrarian cottage industries and remained relatively stable and unchanged for centuries. Within this paradigm the notions of "home" and "work", and thus female and male spheres, were closely connected and often not pointedly distinct (Nead, 1984:27). However, industrialisation and urbanisation had succeeded in polarising these domains, allowing for a clear demarcation of masculine and feminine spaces as well as a clarification of the roles which should be occupied within them. For the middle classes, masculine men operated in the public realm of business and politics, feminine women, domestic beings "naturally" suited to the home and care of children[25], were entrusted with the private (Stott, 1992: 72). This ideology is carefully articulated in James Hayllar's *A Family Group*[26] (1864), which depicts members of the artists own family, portrayed as the ideal Victorian Family. In this work, the patriarch stands benevolently watching over his children, as his wife sits with her head modestly down-cast gazing at the baby in her lap. In this articulation of the ideal family a woman's acceptance of her role as mother is "signified by her loving expression and the direction of her gaze". (Hayllar, 2012: 42).

[25] As industry increasingly took over the production of goods which would have been previously produced in the home, what was perceived as "woman's work" became increasingly focused on child care (Chodorow, 1978: 4)

[26] The title of this work is also cited as *The Artist's Family*

It was within the emerging Victorian industrial middle class family that this definition of female sexuality was most enthusiastically adopted, refined and entrenched. Eager to assert a sense of social and economic superiority over the working classes, the *mother-daughter-wife,* or "Angel in the House"[27], became a symbol of moral and cultural identity – "an expression of class confidence" (Nead, 1984: 27). Thus, significantly, the manifestation of ideal femininity, and later *feminine innocence,* was evolved as class and race specific[28] (Stott, 1992: 62). This cult of domesticity was cultivated as a direct response by the middle and upper classes in an attempt to safeguard their values against the backdrop of the perceived vice and immorality of urban cities and the working classes who occupied them. Jeremy Paxman claims that the symbol of the "home" was central to the middle-class Victorian cultural imagination, offering a vision of escape to a "sanctuary" where "…once inside you could close the door on all that noise and nasty reality out there, and be secure in your own home-sweet-home…[where] Father pays for it, children play in it [and] the one who holds it all together is the wife and mother" (in Misrahi, 2009). Historian Lynn Nead similarly points to the importance of the symbol of the home, maintaining that the image which was most frequently deployed during the Victorian period was that of the home as a "haven" or "shelter", and as such it was the woman's obligation to safeguard her family, particularly her children from the corruptions of the outside world (1984: 27-28). In addition to the physical nurturing that a mother was required to provide her children, she was also expected to be the initial and primary spiritual guide to childhood.

Unlike working-class women who were afforded a measure of freedom to engage in the "outside world", middle-class women were conversely restricted to the confines of their homes, by strict social and moral codes. The home consequently becomes the locus of a woman's influence and control, a "closed universe in which she [could] reign without sharing her glory" (Badinter, 1981: 183). Rather than trivial, a woman's occupation was seen as vital- the equilibrium and stability she maintained within her home, the "nucleus of the state" (Nead, 1984: 28), would in turn be extended to society as a whole. Within the landscape of her domestic domain a woman was able to assume a role which approximated those otherwise only available to men, as is articulated by Mrs Beeton in

[27] This term first appeared in 1856 as the title of Coventry Patmore's famous poem venerating the virtues of his wife Emily Andrews whom he believed exemplified the "perfect woman". Consequently the term became a symbol of the ideal Victorian woman and was avidly visualised by the mass media and artists alike. Charles West Cope's *A Life Well Spent* (fig.2) is an example of this ideal.

[28] Annette Stott maintains that a particular version of femininity was evolved for working-class women because attributes such as physical strength and stamina which were critical to working-class women were also "antithetical to most notions of femininity and certainly to the definition of femininity" (1992: 62). Similarly race precluded many women from being associated with the ideal (as is the case with the Romantic Child ideal). According to Nead the "working-class model" of femininity was defined in terms of "her piety, thrift and conscientiousness" (1984: 30).

her renowned *Book of Household Management* (1861) explaining that "as with the commander of an army…so it is with the mistress of the house" (80). Her rule of course extended to her children, as well as at least one servant whose task it was relieve her mistress of the less glorifying aspects of domestic life. Thus middle-class women were free to spend their time busying themselves with the charge of attempting to mirror the vision of ideal maternal femininity which was pictured in the images they chose to hang on the walls of their homes.



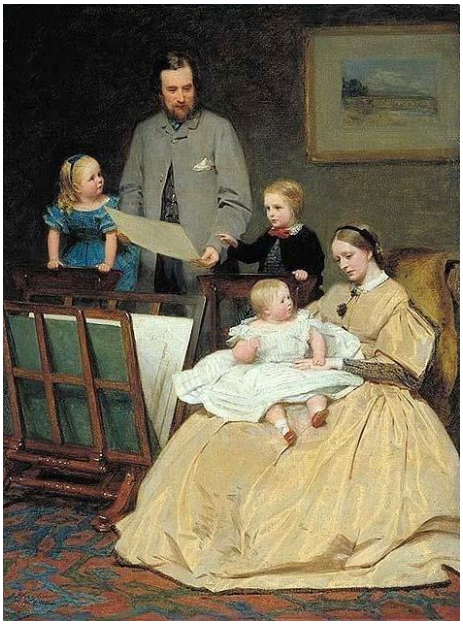


Figure 24: (Left) Charles West Cope, *A Life Well Spent* (1862). Oil on Canvas (dimensions unknown). Private Collection

Figure 25: (Right) James Hayllar, *A Family Group*[29] (1864). Oil on Canvas (91.7 x 70.7 cm). National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Most popular among such images were reproductions of Raphael's *Madonna Della Sedia* (1513-14) which were avidly purchased by housewives to hang alongside more contempoary incarnations of idyllic maternal love such as Charles West Cope's *A Life Well Spent* (1862) (Fig. 26) and of course various sentimental examples of the Romantic Child. However, unlike Cope's visualisation of motherhood which was carefully crafted to espouse the virtues of ideal Victorian maternity, this meaning was ascribed to Raphael's image by its new nineteenth century female audience. Detached from its original religious context and redeployed as a facsimile in the private domestic sphere, the "Madonna had come to look like a mother embracing her naked baby" (Higonnet, 1998: 42). This metamorphosis was so powerful that it arguably made any image of a mother and child take on a

[29] The title of this work is also cited as *The Artist's Family*

sacred quality previously reserved for religious iconography. Equating the Madonna, *the mother*, with all mothers functioned on some level to sanction the physical mother-child relationship with a new unassailable reverence (Higonnet, 1998:42). Higonnet suggests that reinterpreted Renaissance Madonnas, as well as those which called upon the trope, offered women a space within which to *desire* the child's body that did not disturb the strictest rules of femininty because, in identifying with notions of the sacred, the sensuality of the relationship is sublimated (1998: 43). Importantly, by aligning the location The audience's gaze[30] with that of the maternal gaze[31], the viewer's desire is



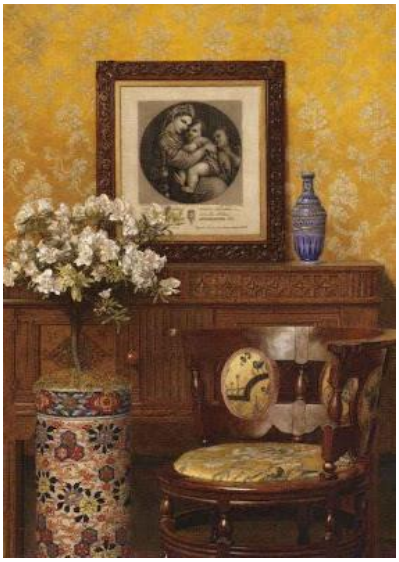


Figure 26: (Left) Raphael, *Madonna Della Sedia* (1513-14). Oil on panel (71 x 71 cm). Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, Florence

Figure 27: (Right) Kate Hayllar, *A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever* (1890). Watercolour with pencil, pen and ink on paper (34 x 24.8cm)

[30] The concept of the *gaze* is characterised in visual art by the manner in which "looks" are focused and exchanged between the subjects in, and viewers of a text. James Elkins asserts that an understanding of the gaze as one conscious of the political and social dimensions of looking, became in the last decades of the twentieth century, an essential feature of art criticism (2010: 1-2). Laura Mulvey's seminal *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) draws on psychoanalytical theory to assert that the conventions of mainstream narrative cinema are ordered by a "patriarchal unconscious" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001: 76), which situates the female body as the object of an "objectifying" *male gaze*. Mulvey drew attention to the inherent power relations in this dominant form of the gaze, one which is "fundamentally about the relationship of pleasure and images" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001: 76). I expand in more detail on the subject of the gaze in chapter three.

[31] The *maternal gaze*, or the "mothers look" is described by Sylvie Gambaudo as "the manifestation of a specifically feminine gaze" (2014: i). Historically within a psychoanalytical context the term is used to describe a critical phase in the child's subject-formation and "and within the unconscious optics that structure familial interaction" (Hirsch, 1997: 155). Feminist psychoanalyst Julia Kristiva (1982) put forward an alternative to Sigmud Freud's analysis of the gaze, suggesting that there are two "modalities of the gaze, one masculine and one feminine…the feminine [stemming] from an act of rejection of the masculine gaze and its castrating modality"(Gambaudo, 2014: 5). Drawing on Alina Luna's intrprtation of the maternal gaze outlined in *Visual Perversity: A Re-articulation of the Maternal Instinct* (2004), Sara Williams describes the maternal gaze as being "characterised by desire…not simply a desire for the child, but for the transformative effect it has upon the maternal body" (2011: 4)

simultaniusly sanctioned by the power of this "sacred reverence". This development in the evolution of the ideology and image of mother-and-child is essential in the reading of Kurgan's work because, by looking at the image of the child she presents the viewer with, *seen,* one assumes, the way that she does, the audience's look can be transformed from overt objectification to tender maternal pleasure.

While the subject of childhood had by this time already been long designated "a subject for women [and] a subject about women"[32] (Higonnet, 1998:39), the Madonna images mark a crucial shift in the fact that they were ardently *appropriated* by female audiences through active identification rather than being consigned a feminine subject matter. This *détournement*[33] of the Maddona is visualised in Kate Hayllar's *A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever* (1890), a depiction of a typical Victorian interior in which an "after Raphael" reproduction is introduced into the fabric of the domestic sphere. Placed above an ornately carved cabinet, and flanked by a decorative pot plant and a parlour chair, the framed print is at once a "desiring maternal gaze" (Higonnet, 1998: 46) and an *ornament*. It is in this way that women were similarly able to take "possession of childhood's image" by systematically transforming visualisations of the Romantic Child into domestic objects which could be possessed and consumed (Higonnet, 1998: 46).

Hayllar's work likewise speaks to the manner in which middle-class woman who endeavoured to engage in artistic practice were compelled to look within the confines of their home – the subjects which they typically depicted included the "objects" within that space they had control over: furnishings, servants and importantly their children (Cherry, 1993: 22, 138, 126). However, while women may have endeavoured to "objectify" those subjects available to them within their homes, they themselves were increasingly being "expected to assume…[an] ornamental role" (Stott, 1992: 62). Stott maintains that as masculine anxieties arose in reaction to the percieved attempts of women to engage in the world outside their domestic confines- the notion of *feminine innocence* became inculcated into the existing ideology of ideal feminity (1992: 73). In this way women were now not merely equated with their children simply in regard to their role as mothers, but the

[32] Higonnet explains that although Romanticism declined as the prevailing artistic genre in the late eighteenth century, images of children remained *romantic* and as a consequence somewhat feminine. Added to this the increasing designation of women within the domestic confines of the home meant that the subject of childhood became ever more exclusively associated with maternity. Thus images of children became "designed for feminine audiences" (1998: 39).

[33] According to Ken Knabb, translator of *A User's Guide to Détournement* (1956) written by Guy Debord, the French term can variously be translated as "deflection, diversion, rerouting…or otherwise turning something aside from its normal course or purpose" (2006: 6).

characteristics of the children themselves were progressively being ascribed to them. Adult women were cast as children who never fully "grew up" because, restricted to the security of their homes, they remained untainted by the external, adult world; a departure thereto would have ordinarily marked a child's loss of innocence. Thus socially, sexually and intellectually[34] women were perceived to be much more like children than their male counterparts. As such, female artists were believed to be innately more adept at capturing the essence of childhood. In praise of Kate Greenaway, one of the most commercially successful female artists of the period, critic John Ruskin wrote, "[she] lives with her girlhood as with a little sister" (in Higonnet, 1998: 53).



Figure 28: Kate Greenaway (1881). Chromoxylograph from *Mother Goose or The Old Nursery Rhymes*. Printed by Edmund Evans. Mary Evans Picture Library, London.

This rhetoric was so pervasive that by the turn of the century female artists were being actively encouraged to specialise in illustrative "child-like"[35] images, finding it difficult to find work other than illustrations for books and magazines which were aimed at women and children. "Commerce and femininity together entwined the subject of childhood" (Higonnet, 1998: 56). Throughout the course of the twentieth century women continued to produce the most commercially successful images of children. Photographers such as Betsy Cameron and Anne Geddes assumed the roles which illustrators such as Greenaway had occupied a century before and, as was the case then, their

[34] In her article *Floral Femininity: A Pictorial Definition*, Stott addresses how notions of feminine innocence were enforced during the Victorian period (1992: 62, 66, 63).

[35] Higonnet claims that the formal quality of Greenaway's illustrations, in addition to their subject matter, was "childlike". She claims that in comparison to Reynolds' *Age of Innocence,* Greenaway's *Ring-a-Ring-a-Roses* (1881) (fig. 29), "is almost pathetically naïve, simple, and – innocent" (1998: 53).

roles as women and mothers were actively asserted in the marketing of the images (Higonnet: 1998: 86). Similarly as in the past, female artists were encouraged by institutions to use their children as subject matter. However the cultural climate had changed and now the camera enabled frank depictions of the realities of family life alarmed the public who were invited to view them. Artists such as Sally Mann and others[36] came under fire from the public who perceived their actions as contraventions of the protection they as mothers should provide their children. However this did not result in any real consequences such as were suffered by their male counterparts- apparently the understanding of women as "sexually passive, innocent and harmless" continued to "maintain the security of [the] model of the world where women are forever nuturing and maternal" (Denov, 2003: 312). This is the context in which Kurgan situated her practice in the last decade of the twentieth century. It is my belief that, as was the case with Mann, the reaction to her work highlights the potency which the ideologies governing the mother-child relationship still maintain in regard to our perception of female artists, particularly those who choose to use their own children as subjects.

Curated by artist Penny Siopis the group exhibition *Purity and Danger* opened to the public in July of 1997. The title of the show was appropriated from the 1966 seminal text of the same name by British anthropologist Mary Douglas. The choice of title was unmistakably intended to infer the subject matter of the exhibition as Douglas' text dealt with issues of cultural taboo, transgression, pollution and symbolic boundaries. According to Kurgan, artists and public personalities were "asked to consider (in the halcyon days of a society undergoing enormous change) notions of 'good or bad', 'right or wrong', 'decent or indecent'" (2013: 464). This sense that the period immediately after the end of Apartheid was characterised as "halcyon days" is echoed by author Stephen Dubbin who suggests that, in retrospect, artists felt anxious to explore issues which had previously been considered too prescriptive during the previous conservative political regime. "South African artists were determinedly testing the limits of acceptability, playfully toying with the previously taboo" (2012: 145). The exhibition focused on the body as a site of exploration endeavouring to answer the question posed by Jane Taylor in her opening address, "What are our taboos now, at a time in which our constitution in so many ways is more radical, for some even more transgressive, than much popular opinion?" (1997: 43-44). In studying the reviews of the show, and their overwhelming focus

[36] As explained in Chapter 1, the 1990s saw Marilyn Zimmerman, Robyn Stoutenberg and Toni Marie Angeli criticised for creating and exhibiting nude photographs of their children. More recently in 2001, police threatened to close down the *I am a Camera* exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery (London), due to concerns about photographer Tierney Gearon's large-scale images of her children which "flaunt[ed] their nakedness" and "disturbingly" covered their faces with masks (Holland, 2004: xii).

on one particular art work of the fifteen on display, the answer to Taylor's enquiry must be *the body of the child*. Despite the apparent sense of political "calmness" these artists felt gave them an opportunity to explore taboos, the reaction to Kurgan's *I'm The King of The Castle* illustrates the enduring tension of visualising the child's body.

A grid-like photographic installation of thirty-nine photographs[37] (fig. 21) of Kurgan's then six-year-old son Jonah, the work pictures the child, according to Kurgan, "performing himself to his mother" (2013: 464). Rendered in sepia tones, the documents of Jonah apparently play-acting various roles (the *muscle-man,* the *ninja)* infer the nostalgia and security of the family album, while the child's repeated nudity and near-nudity, enlarged and publicly displayed, undercut any sentimentality the images may have held. Installed at the University of the Witwatersrand's Gertrude Possel Gallery, the exhibition coincided with the University's open day. Due to this, many members of the public not conditioned in contemporary art or trained in the theoretical discourses which the works sought to explore, formed the audience which received it. Not surprisingly, Kurgan's piece received a strong binary reaction from this composite public: "While some were moved by the sheer charisma of this child…murmurs of "pornography" repeatedly brushed the ears of the artist and the crowd" (Atkinson, 1997: 28). Dubbin suggests that viewer reactions were far more visceral, quoting responses such as "chilling" and "nauseating" (2012: 144).

How it is possible that the same images could have elicited such conflicting reactions? The disparity of the work's audience cannot be the only answer. Despite Siopis' hope that using the "frame" of the University would provide a more "art literate" reception (Atkinson, 1997: 28), artist Kendell Geers' assertion that the images were essentially paedophilic (1997: 11) illustrates that even those within the artistic community were upset by the piece. The reactions to the work were not only polarised around the child's nudity but seemingly also Kurgan's aesthetic choices. Kathryn Smith claims some dismissed the work as simply "'dressed up' Hallmark images" (2000: 60), while others praised Kurgan's careful artistic crafting. Kurgan's own summary of the response was "some people were disturbed by the work, others loved it" (2013: 464).

I argue that those who "loved" the piece recognised the symbols of the Romantic ideal embedded within the artist's visualisation. The sepia tones she chooses coax the viewer into reading the images within the frame of Victorian-era photography, a period in which the power of the Romantic ideal was at its most potent. American photographer Betsy Cameron, whose work became the fodder of

[37] This work also included one large photograph depicting Kurgan's son and daughter wrapped in towels, which I discuss in more detail below.

mass-produced mawkish posters and greeting cards during the 1990s, purposefully called upon the power of the muted photographic tone to convey the notion of childhood innocence. It is also for this reason that the above-mentioned observers chose the label of "Hallmark image" because they recognised and responded to the conditioned equation of children pictured in this manner with sentimentality. This sense of nostalgia is similarly conveyed by Kurgan's use of a fairly antiquated single-lens reflex camera (interview transcript, 10). Sontag suggests that the effect of using older technology imbues images with a sense of a "purer past", one in which images had an "aura" (1973: 97). The inclusion of costumes and play-acting likewise calls upon entrenched visualisations of the ideal where, as in Cameron's work, children are staged in various roles, pictured "performing" childhood.



Figure 29: Betsy Cameron, *Two Children* (1987). Commercially printed poster (35.5 x 27.9 cm). Bruce McGaw Graphics, Sunderland.[38]

It is the depiction of Jonah's naked body "performing" these roles that evoked the deep emotional responses from those individuals who were "disturbed" by the work. The mimetic effect of photography to encapsulate the body of the child, *objectify* it in the sense of producing a literal object which can be possessed and consumed, becomes tenuous when that body is naked. Conditioned in the perception that the *normal* child is one free of sexuality, images such as those which appear in the top row of Kurgan's installation (fig. 21 and Fig 32), force the viewer to directly confront the child's nudity, provoking a strong deep-seated reaction. However, in as much as the audience may feel they "know" what the "normal" child should look like because the audience has been taught to recognise the signs of natural childhood, they have been likewise trained to

[38] This was the best-selling poster in the world for seven years in a row (Miller in Higonnet, 1998: 78). Cameron's website (www.betsycameron.com) claims that her photographs "portray the ideal world of childhood, a place of ageless innocence".

distinguish which are not by seeing examples of those, "The quality of feeling, including moral outrage that people can muster in response to photographs…depends on the degree of their familiarity with these images" (Sontag, 1973: 14). The difference however lies in the context in which such images are presented to us- almost entirely as victims of some form of abuse. For example in figure 31, the child is pictured splayed across the picture plane, legs and arms outstretched, genitals overtly displayed. An ambiguous image, one could assume that in the context in which it appears in the series, the child must surely be asleep, safe within the confines of the home. However, viewed alone one may similarly draw the conclusion that what is pictured is the limp body of a child discarded on the floor after some form of abuse.

the same manner that images of the Romantic child are produced and used both in public and private, images of sexualised children are circulated in the media as advertising and as we are consistently warned, for more sinister private compulsions. Ethel Quale and Max Taylor, in their discussion around the definition and complexities of child pornography point out that while an image may not in itself constitute an example of "child pornography"[39], it may be none the less sexually attractive to the that the viewer (2003: 6). Thus an image such as that depicting *Jonah* nude, seated on the floor, coyly flashing a smile as he peers at the audience over his shoulder (fig. 30), may to a particular viewer be more sexually arousing, than mawkish and "sweet". Or perhaps even alluring because of these qualities. Thus in an attempt to extricate themselves from participating in any way in this implied abuse, *ordinary viewers* reflexively recoil from even an allusion to the sexualised child, using visceral language like "nauseating" to articulate the sense that their response is almost primeval.

Sontag asserts that photography's implied realism has the effect of convincing us that reality is in fact hidden "and being hidden is something to be unveiled" (1973: 94). While Sontag uses this analogy to describe the manner in which photographers seek to make perceptible a feature or emotion not visible in our lived experience, I believe it likewise describes the manner in which we perceive the image of the sexualised child to represent the "unveiling" of some "real" form of abuse. Thus for many viewers of Kurgan's work, the belief that the images were irrefutable evidence that the artist had in some way transgressed a boundary in her relationship with the child was a resultant response to the power of the medium, "photographic realism [is]…defined not as what is 'really'

[39] Defined by Quale and Taylor as "…is a picture of a child being in some sense sexually abused. That is to say, at its worst, it is the portrayal of a sexual assault and as such it is therefore the picture of a serious crime in progress" (2003: 4). However they make it clear by providing numerous examples that such a definition does not always adequately define the nature of child pornography.

there but what I can 'perceive'"(Sontag, 1973: 93). Katherine Smith suggests that in the title of the work, an allusion to well-known Victorian nursery rhyme, Kurgan pre-empts this response from the audience, "if we accept that it is Jonah declaring himself 'King' then perceivably it is us who constitute the 'dirty rascal'" (2000: 60). While the work undoubtedly calls into question Kurgan's relationship to the subject as the "photographer-mother", it perhaps more effectively challenges the viewer to question his/her own role in looking at and understanding them.





Figure 30: (Left) Terry Kurgan, (Detail) *I'm The King of The Castle* (1997). Digital print on matt photographic paper (42 x 29 cm). *Purity and Danger exhibition,* Gertrude Posel Gallery, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Figure 31: (Right) Terry Kurgan, (Detail) *I'm The King of The Castle* (1997). Digital print on matt photographic paper (42 x 29 cm). *Purity and Danger exhibition,* Gertrude Posel Gallery, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Maybe even ironically, while a charged debate arose out of a concern for the objectification of Jonah's body, it is precisely this which succeeded in objectifying him more than the camera had the ability to. While critics such as Geers allege that Kurgan had engaged in misappropriating the body of her son for her own artistic intention (1997:11), and Kurgan defended her practice by asserting that her work was a reclamation of "the intimacy of the mother-son relationship" (Atkinson, 1997: 28), Jonah is reduced to nothing more than a silent, flat, naked "performing" body. The "power" in the depiction of his sexuality is sublimated by the adults who use it as a tool for punctuating either point of view. In this way while this image of the child seems antithetical to our perception of childhood innocence in its revealing of his sexuality, he remains confined to the bounds of the ideal by its disavowal of his autonomy. While Kurgan insists on the fact that her son is a "collaborator" (2000:4) in the work's creation, he is denied a role in the debate about what it *means*.

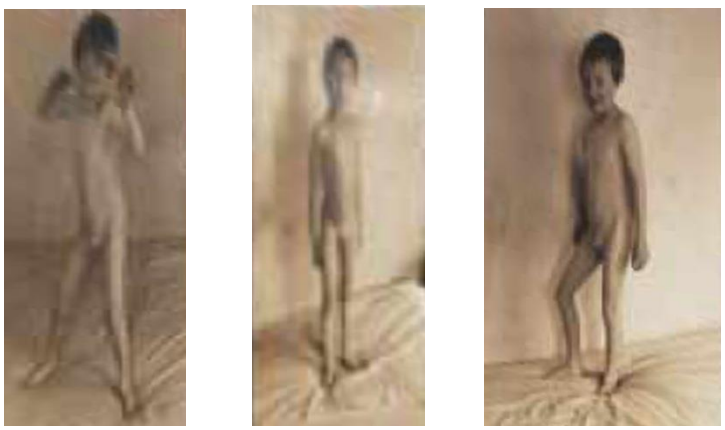


Figure 32: (Left to right) Terry Kurgan, (Detail) *I'm The King of The Castle* (1997). Digital print on matt photographic paper. *Purity and Danger exhibition,* Gertrude Posel Gallery, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

In an interview I conducted with Kurgan in 2015 she maintained that "the work was never about a Romantic or idealised vision or version of childhood" (interview transcript, 6). However, despite this, I believe that the work as well as its reception, none the less evidences the pervasive nature of the Romantic Child ideal as well as that of ideal motherhood and feminine innocence. By electing to use her own child as subject matter and photograph him within the context of the home, Kurgan situates herself and her work within the complexities of these enduring mythologies and thus it is difficult to disavow the effect these ideologies have in understanding her practice. *I'm the King of the Castle* presents an image of the Romantic Child, because in so many ways the work remains consistent with Romantic precedents, precedents which are articulated by Higonnet in the following terms:

> "…photographs centred on children's bodies make those bodies look innocent. We are being offered visual pleasure, but only on the condition that we perceive children's bodies in terms of their utter difference from adult bodies, or even that we perceive them as beings who hardly inhabit the present physical world at all. The child's flesh is what grabs our attention…but our attention is being guided by the child's accessories, clothing… settings, metaphors or captions" (1998: 77).

Unlike traditional images of the Romantic Child which include the contextual symbols of the domestic space, Kurgan has removed these, situating *Jonah* in a stark studio-like setting. All of the "signs of home" have been removed, however the "feeling of home" remains articulated in the soft padded material, possibly a duvet, on which he is standing. In this way Kurgan is able to both focus our attention on the child's body and yet at the same time convey the sense of confidence that what we are looking at is taking place in the comfortable security of the home. The gaze that the viewer is

thus urged to assume is that of the mother within her home, and the visual pleasure the audience may derive from looking *as she does* is sublimated and sanctioned through her "reverential" relationship with her child. The setting also functions to remove the child from the "real" by suggesting that he inhabits a "space beyond" one in which he can assume the identity of the costumes which he is variously pictured wearing and more convincingly enact his function of *performing childhood.*



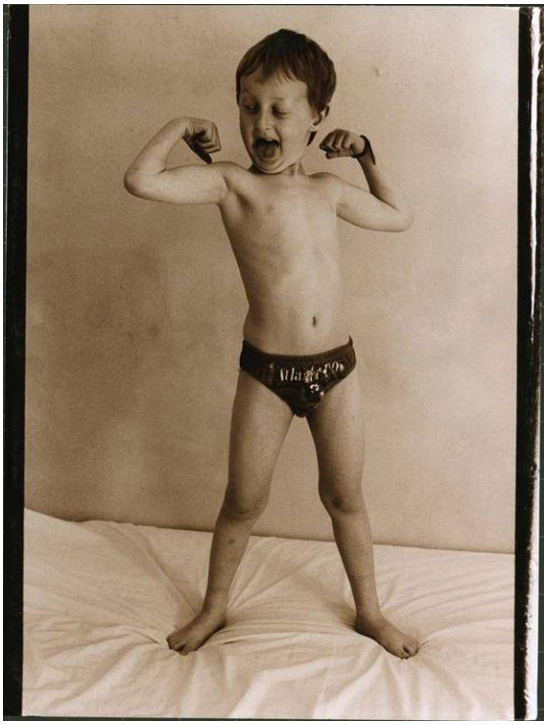


Figure 33: (Left) Terry Kurgan, (Detail) *I'm The King of The Castle* (1997). Digital print on matt photographic paper (42 x 29 cm). *Purity and Danger exhibition,* Gertrude Posel Gallery, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Figure 34: (Right) Terry Kurgan, (Detail) *I'm The King of The Castle* (1997). Digital print on matt photographic paper (42 x 29 cm). *Purity and Danger exhibition,* Gertrude Posel Gallery, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

In one of the frames *Jonah* stands awkwardly, facing the camera. Dressed in his underpants, his mostly unclothed body is starkly contrasted by his painted face and the "fancy dress" Native American chief's headdress which overwhelms the smallness of his frame (Fig.31). Kurgan suggested such costumes, as well as the poses which the child assumes in other frames (such as the "muscleman" (Fig. 32), were examples of the child "trying on different kinds of masculinity" (Kurgan 2015: para. 1). However, in many ways this depiction of the child "acting" conforms to the established tropes of the Romantic ideal. Firstly, the practice of dressing children in "fantasy" dress served to position children within a realm of the unreal. Much like the *Boothby* and *Blue Boy* costumes discussed in chapter one, modern-day incarnations such as those worn by *Jonah* have the effect of making childhood appear *timeless*. While Kurgan's work departs from the implied

"naturalness" present in eighteenth century painted examples, brought about by the realism of the medium as well as the child's awkward, uneasy body language, it nevertheless has the same effect of "othering"[40] the figure of the child- positioning it within the context of metaphor and performance. Similarly the allusion to adult masculinity which the child enacts in figure 32 echoes the category of the Romantic Child which depicted children performing adult roles they were "destined" to assume (Higonnet, 1998: 76).

While Kurgan's images do function to some degree to interrogate these established ideologies, I suggest that visually they are far too consistent with the tropes of Romantic childhood which the audience is fluent in. It is for this reason that I propose the work is unable to transcend the dictates of the ideal. This is illustrated most pointedly in the "very large photograph" that was "juxtaposed and in dialogue with" the grid installation (Kurgan, 2015: para. 1). The picture depicts Kurgan's son and young daughter Jessie lined up against the wall of the family home, wrapped in towels apparently after they had been bathed. This image seems far more "natural" and spontaneous than the installation. The figures are not pictured in the "studio setting", but rather they are seemingly captured within the context of the *family snapshot*, an apparently chance moment[41]. Standing side by side the children directly address the audience, casting a persistent outward gaze.

The work has a strong binary quality. *Jonah*, who appears to the left of the composition, is pictured wrapped in a black towel, looming large over the small figure of his sister who is bound up in white. With his feet pressed together the boy's posture and facial expression are somehow assertive, confronting the camera. While his sister, feet precariously spread apart, exudes an almost palpable vulnerability captured in her wide-eyed, ingenuous look. According to Kurgan this was the image which was chosen to represent the *Purity and Danger* exhibition as a whole (Kurgan, 2015: para. 2), thus it seems that this work unlike the grid installation, was perceived as being sufficiently

[40] The concept of "the other" can be understood as "that against which you define yourself" (Cole in Brons, 2015: 69). According to Lajos Brons "self-other distantiation" or "self-identification by means of distantiation from the other", was in the areas of feminist and post-colonial thought developed into the concept of *othering* (2015: 70). In *Cultural Geography*, Mike Crang defines this concept as a process which is established in an "unequal relationship" (1998: 61), one which Brons clarifies as "a superior self/in-group in contrast to an inferior other/out group, but this superiority/ inferiority is nearly always left implicit" (2015: 70). I use the term here in order to highlight the manner in which the figure of the child is defined by its essential difference to that of adults, an implicitly unequal relationship.

[41] In the interview I conducted with Kurgan she claims that all of the images which comprised *I'm the King of the Castle* were "serendipitous" and not "constructed". While it could be argued that elements of "construction" are implicit, the making of this image in particular was, according to her, by chance. She explains, "I took the photographs very quickly and edited…the image that stands for the body of that work, the two children in their towels, that was like barely there, like a negative. On film it used to be nought-nought and then one, that almost didn't happen, the top of the negative is missing (interview transcript, 2015: 11-12).

"sanitised" to be used in the advertising material. However, I believe that its appeal lies rather in the manner in which it both alludes to each child's sexuality and simultaneously denies it. This work plays far more powerfully with the ideology of childhood innocence than the other photographs, because it exemplifies Kincaid's suggestion of how innocence operates; we imbue the child with the erotic's of innocence and yet simultaneously deny it (1998:14).



Figure 35: Terry Kurgan, *I'm The King of The Castle*[42] (1997). Digital print on paper (2m x 1.25m). *Purity and Danger exhibition,* Gertrude Posel Gallery, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

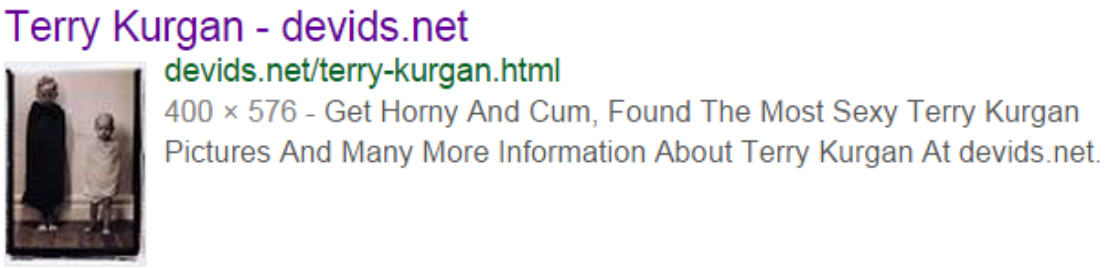


Figure 36: This image is a detail from the results page of the Google "image search" I conducted using Kurgan's photograph. This pornographic website (www.devids.net/terry-kurgan.html) was among one of the many sites that housed digital copies of Kurgan's work. I discuss this matter with Kurgan in the interview transcripts (2015: 12-14). The site has since been removed.

[42] The *PhotoSynthesis* (1997) exhibition catalogue cites the title of this work as *Jonah and Jessie*.

Here the towels which cover the children's bodies serve to synchronously shield and reference the nakedness which is just below the fabric, and in this way "innocence itself becomes desirable" (Higonnet, 1998: 132). Importantly in this image, unlike those "staged" examples, the viewer's look is tinged with voyeurism, as we are offered entrance into the *real* home, to partake in the intensely private rituals of the children's lives.

While I maintain that Kurgan is unable to wholly undermine the Ideal of the Romantic Child, *I'm the King of the Castle* is nevertheless a significant contribution to the discourse around how we think about the image of the child. From a feminist perspective the work serves to add to the public articulation of the experience of women, the difficulties of motherhood and their relationship to their children; a voice expressed through the role as an artist (Williams, 2000: 11). By offering us a private view into her lived experience, Kurgan compels us to question the way in which *we* go about constructing memory around the rituals and rites of childhood, both in private and in public. Importantly the images draw attention to the child's body and its uneasy and complex relationship to the camera. In essence these images and their exhibition created an "incisive" moment which facilitated a public and art-historical discussion concerned with picturing *the child* within a South African context.

I contend that the fact that the work is subsumed by the ideologies of the Romantic Child makes this case far more compelling because it highlights the pervasiveness of the ideal, both in the mind of the artist as well as that of the public which received it. As Higonnet suggests, by this time the image of the child which the ideal prescribed was so firmly entrenched that "it had become a visual habit, an assumption, a pattern expected, looked for, and replicated", and as such it would not even have needed to be conciously invoked by the photograher (1998: 86). The fact that Kurgan maintains that her works are "not about" the ideal infers that she herself was not aware that she was calling on the established tropes, or that in viewing her work the audience would recognise and *respond* to them. Kurgan's photographs, like those of Cameron, offer the audience the opportunity to experience the image of the ideal made "real" by the lens of the camera, yet the sepia tones, the costumes and the child's *performance* deny the photographs' "modernity", "right-here-right-now-ness" and position them within the comfortable nostaligia of a *Romantic childhood*. In short, even though Kurgan reveals her son's nudity to the public, his body remains framed within the ideal and in this way her image of the child remains one "we decided we wanted to see two centuries ago"(Higonnet, 1998: 86).

In reading Kurgan's work, we are also reading from a *book,* the *chapters* of which were written long before she ever conceived *I'm the King of the Castle*. The mythology of the Romantic Child and ideal motherhood, with their ideologies of feminine and childhood innocence, guides the viewer's eye in line with her own maternal gaze, focusing around her representation of the child's body, and the audiences response to what we *see* is mediated by forces so pervasive and entrenched that they have become *unnoticeable.* As the mother of her child-subject, photographing him in the context of the home, Kurgan is continuing a long-established tradition of the production and consumption of the image of the child. The *performance* of her subject which she captures with her lens for public viewing likewise continues to follow the pattern of how children have been performing their childhood in images for centuries. While Kurgan may have been reprimanded for revealing her son's nudity to public gaze, her actions are reconciled through the *frames* within which she chooses to operate. Ultimately Kurgan's vision of the child, while somewhat contentious, remains one that we "want to see", the *Romantic Child.*

Chapter 3:

A picture is worth a thousand words: The Gaze, Childhood Sexuality and Censorship

Previously he had been looking merely at phantoms, now he is nearer to the true nature of being

Plato, *The Allegory of The Cave*

In mid-1998 news of a "scandal" hit South African national and community newspapers. On a near daily basis emotively charged headlines heralded news reports outlining the developments in the case of a controversial art exhibition staged in the otherwise sleepy Eastern Cape community of Grahamstown. For over a month readers were transfixed by stories concerning *Vicera*[43], a multimedia exhibition showcasing the work of Ghanaian-born, South African artist Mark Hipper. In equal measure descriptions of the content of the exhibition were conveyed to readers in both vivid, affective terms and an almost clinical objectivity – but, however the descriptions may have varied, they all nonetheless provoked a *visceral* reaction as it was revealed what this artist had done: publically displayed images of children aware of and actively engaged in their sexuality. The very idea of these works seemed to attack the revered sanctity of childhood innocence; and consequently ordinary citizens, most of whom had never seen the works, rallied behind social organisations and political figures who called to have Hipper's "child pornography" removed from public consciousness. Heated public debate ensued, as calls for the protection of artistic freedom of expression were countered with the rhetoric of child protection. However, as it emerged that Hipper had not made use of any actual child models as subjects in his work, the continued appeals to censor the images seem to suggest that there was as much a concern for the security of real children as there was for the guarding of the *image* of childhood, that is the image of the *Romantic Child.*

[43] As a noun this word is the plural of *viscus* and refers to the body's soft internal organs encased in the abdominal and thoracic cavities, however the adjective *visceral* can be understood to describe emotions proceeding from base emotional instinct rather than intellect.

Ultimately the Film and Publication Board (FPB)[44] ruled in Hipper's favour, designating his work as *bona fide* artistic practice and as such he was not liable for prosecution under the newly amended Sexual Offences Act. However, while this may have marked the end of the narrative reported by the media, the latent effects of labelling these images as "child pornography" were enduring. Though attempts to censor the exhibition at the time may have been unsuccessful, the works nevertheless suffered censorship, as photographic reproductions were superseded by the linguistic descriptions offered to readers by journalists. Thus today, almost two decades later, this remains the prevailing mode in which the works are remembered and understood, not as images but as descriptions in text – as contrived and *misunderstood* by most as they had been at the time they first caused controversy. This case illustrates the obdurate power of the ideal of the Romantic Child in defining what we understand to be acceptable visualisations of the child, and in maintaining our belief in its ideology we systematically "write out" any examples which threaten its inherent façade. This chapter thus functions in part as an attempt to readdress the effective expurgation of these images from the archive by "re-presenting" the reproductions to accompany the linguistic account offered by the media at the time. And in this way create a context, albeit limited, in which these difficult but significant visions of children are able to enact the "work" they were intended to achieve when they were originally created.

The phrase "a picture paints a thousand words" is a trite recapitulation of the notion that an image is able to convey with a sense of immediacy that which a great deal of descriptive language accomplishes far more arduously. It expresses the notion that an image has the ability to encapsulate in a tightly wound spool a complexity which requires from language an extended unravelling into an aggregated mass. What is taken for granted in this saying's facile summation of the image-text relationship, however, is what exists between the visual and the linguistic, the act of *looking*. Which peculiar "thousand words" are selected to stand in place of the image is importantly dependent on the individual who engages in the act of looking. What he *sees* is as much a product of his interpretation of the symbols with which he is confronted as *how* he looks at them.

[44] The FPB was established by the amended Films and Publications Act (No 65 of 1996). The mandate of this board is to implement the objectives of the act which are defined on the FPB website as "[to] regulate the creation, production, possession and distribution of certain publications and certain films by means of classification, the imposition of age restrictions…and [to] make [the] exploitative use of children in pornographic publications, films, or on the internet punishable" (Film and Publications Board, 2015: para. 4). Significantly the FPB is the *only* legal body which can make a determination about and impose such a classification on a document. Thus their judgement essentially acts as linchpin in whether or not an individual can be legally prosecuted. After the initial FPB ruling the National Council for Child and Family Welfare appealed the judgement, which was ultimately unsuccessful. Still unable to "accept the reasons for its [the FPB] findings" the Council apparently sought legal advice over the decision as the then Eastern Cape Attorney General ruled that there "could be no prosecution" as a result of the FPB Review Board's verdict (Gillham, 1998: 2).



Figure 37: Installation view of Mark Hipper's *Vicera* exhibition featuring the *Junge* and *Körper* triptychs. This image appeared on the ArtThrob website (artthrob.co.za/sept98/listings) with the caption, "Mark Hipper's work is scrutinised at the Grahamstown festival" (1998).

The English definition of the word *look* reveals the multifaceted character of one of our most essential senses. As a verb and in the simplest sense, *to look* is to position one's vision in the direction of an object in order to *see* it. The length of time spent engaged in this action and the reconciliation of this optic feedback with the viewer's conception of the subject determines how and what is seen. To look is to search, to examine, to appear, to consider, to survey. While the words *glance* and *gaze* are offered as synonyms for look, these words' meanings are illustrative of the loaded nature of the act of looking and the implied value judgement by the observer of his subject. To glance is to see and hurriedly look away. This laconic action motivated either by a lack of interest or a sense of anxiety born out of the feeling that what has been perceived should not be seen. To gaze is at once different; this look remains fixed for a prolonged time, encouraged by the viewer's pleasure in perceiving the subject. To gaze is to look steadily and intently in admiration, in stupefaction, in wonderment, in curiosity, in excitement, in lust. As opposed to glancing, gazing suggests both the viewer's perceived sense of worth of the subject and persuasion that what is seen is acceptable to look at or, perhaps more importantly, that one simply *can*. Or as Margaret Olin suggests, "Its connotation of a long, ardent look may bring to mind the intensity in which knowledge

and pleasure might mingle when I behold a work of art" (1996: 209). It is this implied sense of power relations which has problematised the notion of looking and being *looked at*.

Prior to the twentieth century references to the complexity of *looking* in regard to the understanding of figural art were marginal and usually limited to a discussion of that which occurred within the frame. In the last decades of the twentieth century, however, the narrative potential of *gazing* became an indispensible feature of art criticism (Elkins, 2010: 1). Olin locates the concerns which have come to be characterised by the term *gaze* as entering discourse through the contrasting formalist theories of painting and feminist film theory, suggesting that the use of the term was part of an attempt to "wrest formal discussions of art from the grasp of linguistic theory, [and] to focus on what is visual about a work of art and yet address the wider issue of social communication" (1996: 209). Thus the *gaze* represents a means of contemplating visual art in a manner that takes into account the essential optical acts of *looking* and *seeing* and is conscious of the social and political dimensions of that visuality (Elkins, 2010: 2). Arguably the most significant contribution to this discourse is Laura Mulvey's seminal text *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). Drawing on Jaques Lacan's theory of the gaze as it operates as a point of identification in the *mirror stage*[45]*,* Mulvey argued that the portrayal of men in film, represented as figures in "real space", constituted figures of ego "identification" (Olin, 1996: 211). The figure of the woman, conversely, is portrayed as an eroticised object whose function "in patriarchal culture [is] as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" (Mulvey, 1975: 6). Defined by a *"to-be-looked-at-ness",* the "passive/female" is subjected to the "active/male" *gaze*.

Mulvey maintained that the total organisation of narrative cinema was structured around this gendered manner of seeing, which in itself was symptomatic of the overriding patriarchal ideology that governed society. Within the confines of the darkened cinema, the male spectator in the audience is shielded from the usual sense of shame which is associated with looking and is thus able to identify with the scopophilic[46] gaze of the ego-ideal projected on the screen. In this way the

[45] In his paper *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience* (1949), Lacan suggests that when infants first look in the mirror they identify with the external reflected image of themselves. This is a primary misidentification because the child's image of itself comes from an external source (Olin, 1996: 214-215). Mulvey explains that this external image is perceived as superior to the self, "an ideal ego, the alienated self" and "which re-introjected as an ego ideal, gives rise to the future generation of identification with others" (1975: 10).

[46] Simply defined as the "love of looking" or "pleasure in looking", *scopophilia,* has no English name, only according to Edmund Bergler, the moniker of "Peeping Tom" (in Allen, 1974: 109). For Mulvey, scopophilia is a

spectator is similarly able to achieve a sense of ascendancy and ownership over the *object* his "screen surrogate sees" (Elkins, 2010: 8).

In the visual arts this "male gaze" is characterised by the "objectifying attitude" that a representation takes toward its feminine subject matter (Eaton, 2008: 878). Importantly, as Anne Eaton points out, in visual art it is not necessary for a picture to be viewed by a heterosexual man in order to typify *the male gaze*. Rather the term refers to the overriding *attitude* which the image adopts and "the response that it prescribes to its audience – male and female, heterosexual and homosexual" (2008: 878). This pervasive ideology of looking thus transcends the confines of the picture and operates as "an instrument of objectification and of psychological and of spatial control" (Elkins, 2010:8).

The belief in *childhood innocence* primes the child's body for this objectifying form of the gaze because, emptied of its own agency: political, sexual and intellectual, the real child is rendered nothing more than an object, one which can more pleasurably be consumed as it "more perfectly fulfil[s] the symbolic demands we make upon it"(Jenkins, 1998: 1). By the last decades of the twentieth century this mythology concerning the child was so firmly entrenched that it had succeeded in creating the impression that it was *natural.* However as James Kincaid suggests rather than being an antecedent quality, it is something which must be "inculcated and enforced" upon the bodies of real children (1992: 72). While this mythology seems to situate the child in a space beyond the realities of adult life, their bodies are rather harnessed as a means to "wage [our] ideological wars", a compelling vehicle conveying the "rhetorical force" of these arguments – urging us to take action and protect the *innocence* of our children (Jenkins, 1998: 2). Henry Jenkins suggests that this historically delimitated view of childhood has "affect[ed] not only how we understand the child, its social agency, its cultural contexts, and its relations to powerful institutions but also how we understand adult politics, adult culture, and adult society, which often circle around the *spectre of the innocent child*" [my emphasis](1998: 2).

What happens then if we are confronted with an image that challenges this overriding and institutionalised means of understanding the child? If viewing the body of the Romantic Child is one which is premised on pleasure and control, what becomes of the *gaze* and its inherent power when the *object* refuses the evacuation forced upon it? Higonnet suggests that the reaction to the anxiety caused by such "troubling images of children" is to *control* them (1998: 11). Premised on the fear of

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very specific form of perversion, a "gendered perversion, one endemic to the mainstream classic-realist cinema" (Miklitsch, 2012: 94). In other words "scopophilia" can be explained as the predominantly "male gaze of Holywood" (Lyon, 2006:48), and as Graeme Turner succinctly articulates Mulvey's position that, "cinema is essentially involved with gratifying the desire to look" (2003: 135).

the consequences that such images pose to real children, public criticism, the law and the withholding or withdrawal of pictures from publication have all been deployed to neutralise the threat. However this has had the effect of "censoring the interpretation of images" (Higonnet, 1998:11) and, importantly, what they could offer us in forging a more authentic understanding of children, one which endeavours to break free from the inexorable lens of the Romantic Child ideal.

Vicera thus stands as emblematic of these concerns when, annexed by political figures and social organisations in an effort to further their objectives, the show stands as a seminal moment in South African art history, a case marking the entrenchment of the artist's right to freedom of expression and protection from censure. The public response to the images which appeared in the exhibition also serves to illustrate, however, the power which photography has had on our conceptions of the image of the child. While none of the artworks were photographs, our cultural conflation of the child's image with that of the photograph served to colour the manner in which the works were interpreted by those who saw them and, perhaps more importantly, by those who did not.

On the fourth of July 1998 an article entitled *Outrage over Child Porn Art* appeared on the front page of the Eastern Province newspaper, the *Weekend Post.* While the title was clearly fashioned to elicit and intensify indignation from readers, it was not immediately apparent how significant the publishing of this "exhibition review" would be. Within days the text would prove to be instrumental[47] in the set of events the summation of which would force South African society to confront the contentious territory that is the body of the child. The exhibition entitled *Vicera*, with which the article was concerned, was conceived as an inaugural showcasing of Hipper's practice, intended to introduce the artist to the Rhodes University community, which he had joined only months earlier as a faculty member in the Fine Arts department. Taking up his position at the beginning of the 1998 academic year, Hipper had missed the deadline for submissions to the official National Arts Festival program which had closed some months before his arrival in South Africa from Berlin where he had been living and working for a decade (Rademeyer, 1998: 1). For this reason, while the showing of *Vicera* was planned to coincide with the influx of thousands of visitors to the small university town, it was staged in the portico of the art school, independently of the official calendar. Opening on Sunday 28th of June, the exhibition was accessible for public viewing for one week before the commencement of the festival (Dodd, 1998: 3).

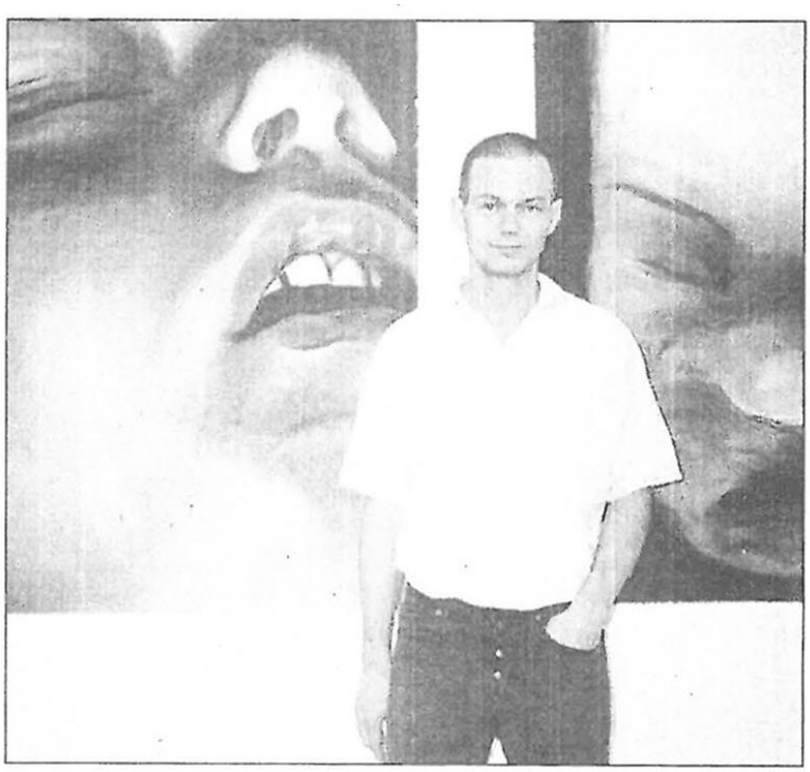
[47] While Sundstrom's article was not the first to draw attention to the *Vicera* exhibition, it nevertheless played a significant role in influencing public opinion about the exhibition's content. With a far larger circulation than that of *Cue,* the *Weekend Post* newspaper was able to draw greater attention to the exhibition, relaying a very particular message to a public already acutely concerned about the dangers of "child pornography". Keith Bain (a member of the FPB) claims that Sundstrom was one of the journalists who "exploited the shock-scenario" which arose after the opening of the exhibition, deriding her work as an example of "[the] type of judgemental and unconsidered journalism which serves as nothing more than garbage-for-the-masses" (1998: 158).

In attendance at the opening of the exhibition was the author of the Weekend Post article, Kathy Sundstrom, one of a number of journalists enlisted to report on the activities related to the anticipated official festival and associated fringe events. While many attendees of the opening night were undoubtedly unsettled by Hipper's disquieting depictions of children's bodies, seemingly most were satisfied with the artist's explanation and justification for his conceptual and formal choices. In his opening address, Hipper explains the contentious nature of his visualisations and their inherent ambiguity. He anticipates the gamut of anxious reactions of viewers to his work, pointing to the fact that this was an intended characteristic of the work's function. He states, "Because of who we are as South Africans and given the history of censorship and moral taboos around the exposure of the human body, many viewers are likely to be unsettled, though not unexcited I think, by these images… Realising that the artist employs similar devices to those used in pornography increases the unease…" (Hipper in Sundtrom, 1998:1).

For Sundstrom, however, no such nuanced distinction existed. What she could *see* is conveyed unequivocally in the title of her article, and is further emphasised by her description of the works as "shocking life-like paintings of young children engaged in sex acts and sitting in lewd positions" (1998: 1). Her next sentence marks an important departure from *exhibition review* to prescriptive moralising, imposing her value judgements on her readers: "Weekend Post has photographs of the so-called art which are unfit for publication, even censored" (1998: 1). In one line of text the journalist succeeds in negating the work's value as art objects, and determines that, by her estimation as *pornography,* they must be censored. By excluding the photographs of the works from the article, readers are forced to make sense of the images only in relation to Sundstrom's carefully selected *words*.

The suggestion that child pornography was being brazenly displayed in public seems to have brought about a previously absent sense of trepidation regarding the exhibition. Within a day of the article's publication the Festival newspaper *Cue* published a warning suggesting "sensitive viewers" should avoid the exhibition as "it may offend" (Khumalo, 1998: 1), this despite the fact that it had already been well attended by visitors "most of whom did not seem offended" (Khumalo, 1998: 1). Alerted by journalists' warnings were two social workers employed by the regional offices of the Council for Child and Family Welfare, who visited the exhibition in order to witness for themselves the images which had warranted such pointed and disquieting descriptions (Gillham, 1998: 1)[48].

[48] Gillham reports that in a letter sent to Rhodes University Head Dr Woods by the Child Council the organisation had "visited the exhibition as a result of the outcry in the media" (1998: 1)



WORK OF ART? . . . Unrepentant artist Mark Hipper in front of some of his less controversial life-like paintings.

Figure 38: Weekend Post, *Outrage over child porn art* (1998). This is the only photograph which was included with Sundstrom's article. It depicts Mark Hipper standing in front of a series of large charcoal drawings of children's faces.

They reported to their superiors having seen what director Karen McGrath conveyed to the media as "very explicit and embarrassing" (Rademeyer, 1998:1). A subsequent statement made by a spokesman for the organisation further delineated the body's interpretation of what Hipper had put on display: "Certain of the works, on the right-hand side of the wall of the main exhibition room, are most certainly pornographic, exhibiting young children in states of arousal, clutching their genitals" (Gillham, 1998: 1). The then minister of Home Affairs, Lindiwe Sisulu, added her public designation of "pornography" to the works after reading descriptions of the images in media reports. Unlike the social workers however, Sisulu had in fact never seen the works, neither in person nor as reproductions (Greig, 1998: 13). Sisulu's statement that "any artwork featuring children in sexual positions is not allowed" (Rademeyer, 1998: 1) suggests that in her view any image of a sexualised child is analogous with pornography, regardless of the context or medium, and "a painting of a young child masturbating would definitely be illegal" (Rademeyer, 1998: 1).

The question of the work's legality is inextricably tied to its being labelled as "child pornography". While in part informed by socially accepted notions about propriety in regard to the visualisation of the sexualised child, child pornography differs from those images we may similarly deem

"unsavoury" in that the making, distribution, exhibition, possession or viewing of images classified as pornography is *against the law*. By engaging in such activities, all of which are not unlike those necessary in the production and consumption of artistic practice, one may be implicated in a criminal act. Thus if Hipper had, as Sisulu and the Council were inferring, produced examples of child pornography, it would necessitate his being charged and prosecuted accordingly. But were these images examples of pornography? What is *child pornography?* And importantly how does one recognise it when you *see* it?

The Film and Publications Act stipulates the legal peculiarities by which images can be understood as child pornography:

> "'child pornography' means any image, however created, or any description or presentation of a person, real or simulated, who is, or who is depicted or described or presented as being, under the age of 18 years, of an explicit or sexual nature, whether such image or description or presentation is intended to stimulate erotic or aesthetic feelings or not, including any such image or description of such person— (a) engaged in an act that constitutes a sexual offence; (b) engaged in an act of sexual penetration; (c) engaged in an act of sexual violation; (d) engaged in an act of self-masturbation; (e) displaying the genital organs of such person in a state of arousal or stimulation; (f) unduly displaying the genital organs or anus of such person…(h) engaged in sexually suggestive or lewd acts…(j) engaged in any conduct or activity characteristically associated with sexual intercourse; (k) showing or describing such person"[49]

The particular visual characteristics described in the Act seem straightforward, suggesting that their detection or discernment in a particular image systematically qualifies the article as child pornography. There is an inference that by "just looking"[50] one may be able to see for oneself what an image *is* or *is not*. However, this assumption draws attention to one of the problems that *Vicera* brought to the fore, the inherent discrepancy between *seeing* and *perceiving*[51]. For some who saw the exhibition the works were "decidedly pornographic" (Rademeyer, 1998: 1), echoing the certainty expressed by public figures of the inherent and apparently undeniable immoral and illicit character of the works on display – for others this was not the case. Numerous visitors quoted in the media did not believe that the works were pornographic but rather expressed that in viewing the pieces they

[49] 2007 SEXUAL OFFENCES AND RELATED MATTERS AMENDMENT ACT

[50] I borrow this term from James Elkins who uses it to describe the physical act of looking in its most basic form, that is "seeing in a passive, unthinking way" (1996: 17).

[51] While it may be possible for many individuals to, in a simple sense, optically "perceive" the same visage, how they comprehend and make sense of what they understand as the subject of their look hinges on their subjective experience, their *perception.*

experienced a general sense of "disturbance"[52]. This discrepancy in what was understood to have been perceived by those who viewed the work suggests that the disquiet associated with these challenging images of children is not intrinsically located in the works themselves, but rather in the experience of those who *look* at them.

A central feature of what makes "child pornography" so abhorrent is that such images are in effect documents of the sexual abuse of a *real child* (Taylor & Quale, 2001: 21). However, as head of the Fine Arts department Mark Hayward pointed out, no children had been used as models, suggesting that Hipper's skill in rendering his subjects may have accounted for the fact that some individuals may have "construe[d] that he had a model in front of him" (Rademeyer, 1998: 1). This significant distinguishing feature between Hipper's work and that of genuine examples of child pornography suggests that the disturbance associated with his visualisations lies not in the concern for the welfare of any real children but rather in disobeying the entrenched mythology of the Romantic Child ideal, or, as one visitor put it, "he violates the thing we hold most precious – innocence" (Bolt in Wilson, 1998: 11). Thus, while Hipper's works may not have been pornography, they are equally transgressive in that they *disturb* a deeply revered ideology regarding the visualisation of the child. The unflinching focus of the confrontation compelled by Hipper's images is "aimed straight at the blind spot of the beholder" (Hettche, 1994: np)

Childhood sexuality is the "blind spot" of the ideal of childhood innocence; it is a willing ignorance of and prejudice towards that which would, if acknowledged, unhinge the carefully constructed vision of the idea of childhood. Thus our gaze assumes the same prejudice in viewing the child, seeking out those pleasurable, unchallenging examples which perpetuate a comfortable *nostalgia*- blinded to that which may cause us discomfort. Hipper's work demands a widening of our field of vision, to include that which is denied by the lens of the Romantic Child. The effect of this is illustrated by the reaction of a viewer quoted in Sundstrom's article: "…the paintings [are] of smiling angelic little children's faces, but the children are holding their private parts which have been distorted to look oversized" (Watson in Sundstrum, 1998:2). It seems that the locus of the anxiety for this visitor in looking at the works lies not simply in its depiction of "the children holding their private parts" but that they simultaneously signal childhood innocence's orthodoxy in their "smiling" and "angelic" faces. It is precisely this sense of "cognitive dissonance" brought about by engaging in the act of

[52] An artist from Fort Hare University, Elaine Matthews, was quoted as saying, "it's dream-like and disturbing", while another unnamed visitor felt that "the paintings are meant to disturb and make you feel uneasy" (Rademeyer, 1998: 1). In the numerous news articles published in the month during and after the exhibition, variations of the word "disturb" are used repeatedly in reference to the works.

looking that is the intended purpose of Hipper's work. The "disturbance" experienced by the viewer in his confrontation completes the arc initiated by the paint on the canvas.







Figure 39: (Left) Mark Hipper, *Körper [Body]* (1992). Oil on canvas (50 x 170 cm). Collection unknown.

Figure 40: (Right) Mark Hipper, *Junge [Boy]* (1992). Oil on canvas (50 x 150 cm). Collection unknown.

The paintings which the visitor refers to, the vertical triptychs *Junge* (companion pieces) (Fig. 37) and *Körper* (1992) (Fig. 38), were installed side by side in a corner of the gallery space. *Junge* to the right of the crease, was offset by the slightly larger *Körper* which faced it to the left. Hung in this manner, the long bodies, closer in size to that of an adult than the child they appear to reference[53], surrounded the viewer – forcing the eye to move from one figure to the next, prolonging the encounter and heightening the unease. While these are two separate works, the curatorial decision to position them in this way seems to infer that they were intended to be experienced as a group, perhaps viewed according to convention as one does a book, from left to right? One page a counterpoint to the other? While visually fraught, the works offer the viewer little certain direction in how they should be read or understood. The tightly framed bodies deny the contextual elements which usually accompany examples of figurative art, all of which are necessary for "insinuating" how meaning can be derived from looking at an image of a body in space.

[53] The scale of the works are illustrated in relation to Hipper's body, pictured in figure 39.

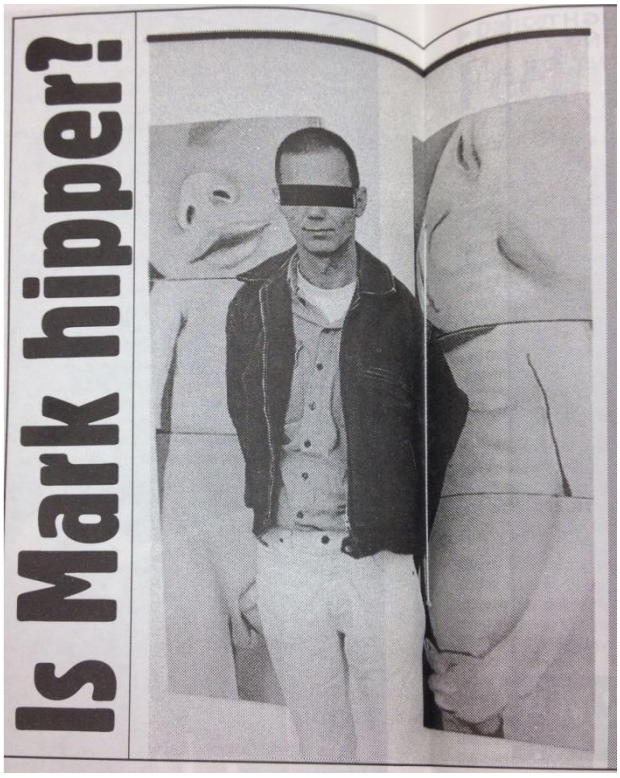


Figure 41: Cue, *Is this the most porno thing at the festival or what?* (1998). In this photograph by Sarah Wylie, Hipper is pictured standing in front of the *Junge* and *Körper* installation.

In these works Hipper departs from the traditional use of the triptych by presenting the canvasses vertically adjacent. In this way the individual sections seem to evoke the distinct episodic frames on a roll of film, isolating the focus of the eye onto each part of the body, one section at a time. This has the effect of "dismembering" the figure of the child, a fragmentation which is echoed vertically in the apparent repetition of the body on each panel. Thus in one sense the special arrangement of the canvasses seems to evoke the action of film, despite its static suspension and disavowal of the realism of the camera's lens. One journalist referred to the works as "three paintings of a young boy holding his erect penis" (Sulcas, 1998: 5), a description which infers that at least one visitor interpreted these works as visualising *one* figure. I find this description interesting because in its linguistic summation of what this work *is*, it is at once palpably limited and superficial. The notion that the works could be defined in one laconic sentence seems almost absurd when you are confronted with the bewildering complexity of the images. In attempting to describe them myself, I am struck with how limited language is in its ability to make sense of an image which defies any kind of straightforward classification. These works so inherently ambiguous, seem to actively recoil against clear descriptions or definitions.

In the images head, abdomen and groin are rendered as distinct parts, each painted on individual sections of canvas, the edges of which cut distinct horizontal lines across the "reassembled" figures arranged in vertical "strips". While disjointed and misaligned, the abdomens and groins seem to correspond – as the arms reveal in the *Junge* canvasses which reach downward and clutch the penises which rise up erect from the lowest level of the triptychs. The extreme close-up views of the faces do not sit as convincingly – far too large for the bodies they precariously adorn. While the sections which reference the body maintain a sense of scale and proportion, the heads are instead captured at increasing increments, seemingly "zooming in" on the face until in *Körper* one is offered only an extreme close-up view of only the child's carefully painted mouth and nose. In the right hand figure, the head which is encapsulated in a bright blood-red tone is positioned, gently tilted in the direction of the other figures ostensibly casting its gaze towards the bodies which it accompanies. The central figure, head likewise softly slanted to the side and encased in red, appears to look out towards the viewer with its one visible glassy eye; its frozen parted lips form an ambiguous expression – variously taking a breath, about to speak or experiencing sexual pleasure.

The most disarming aspect of these works is most obviously the depiction of the erect penises, which cast distinct directional lines across the combined composition. If the tightly focused faces had the effect of allowing one to assume an "objectifying eye", the presence of the detailed, pink, fleshy organs forces an almost violent aversion of this gaze. Paradoxically, it is in this curt depiction of the child's sexuality which counters the scopophilia inherent in the traditional male gaze. These bodies have been inscribed with experience and sexual meaning, thus no longer the "blank page" onto which we can inscribe our desires and, significantly, no pleasure can be derived from consuming them. This negation of the impulse of scopophilia is further strengthened by the manner in which Hipper has rendered the bodies, not as "life-like depictions" as Sundstrom contended, but rather as Whisson described them, "contorted bag[s] of leaking orifices" (in Knox, 1998:6). The pure, alluring smooth-skin which we anticipate is rather rendered in a necrotic, blue-grey tone. The red stroke under and around the eyes of the right-hand figure in *Junge,* suggests an empty ocular cavity while the central figure's outward gaze appears to emanate from a blinded eye, or one not yet fully developed, covered in a film of skin like that of a newly hatched bird. In *Körper* the torso is missing both nipples, while on the central figure one has been omitted – a malformation heightened by the misshapen hand which presses against the penis. These bodies are not objects of desire; they are instead grotesque and viscerally reviling. For Thomas Hettche, Hipper's disturbance of the body's form is a way of revealing its corporeality: "By removing the glossy finish from the goods, depriving

them of their false form and by showing them with their wounds, they are also displaying what this body once was" (1994: np). This sense of "bodily-realness" is denied by the Romantic Child ideal, which suspends the figure of the child in a timeless, unreal space – forever "performing" its childhood outside the bounds of adult and worldly reality. Hipper thus re-situates the figure of the child within the same human reality occupied by adults, now imbued with agency so it can no longer perform as the vehicle and object of our desire.

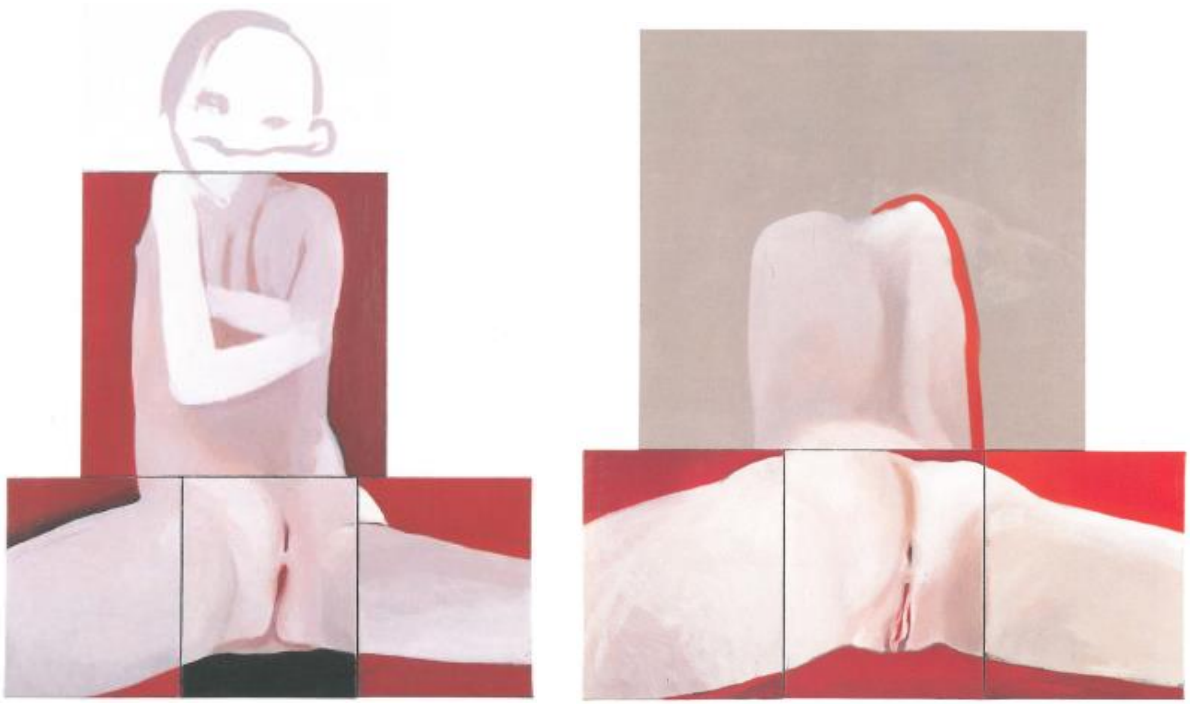


Figure 42: (Left) Mark Hipper, *The Splits* [1] (1993). Oil on canvas (120 x 170 cm)

Figure 43: (Right) Mark Hipper, *The Splits* [2] (1993). Oil on canvas (120 x 140 cm)[54]

In another series of work *The Splits* (1993) (Fig. 40 and 41), Hipper again employs multiple canvases as a framing device to focus the gaze as well as fracture and splinter the figure. These two works, which share the same title[55], appear to offer the viewer a "front and back" view of a female figure with her legs split wide open, pointedly revealing her genitals. In both images the pelvis and upper thighs are splayed across the width of three separate canvases, while the torsos sit perpendicular to the legs, rising up vertically from the horizontal arrangement below. As is the case in *Junge* and *Körper,* the edges of the canvas cut stark lines across and down the body, dismembering the figure

[54] This work was described in one news article as "a young girl lying on her stomach and slightly raised, displaying her private parts" (Earl-Taylor & Gillham, 1998: 1). As is the case with *Körper* and *Junge,* such a description infers a sense of realism which the formal elements of the work itself deny.

[55] According to the *Membran Körper = Corps membrane* (1994) catalogue, these works are both entitled *The Splits*. I have labelled them 1 and 2 in order to differentiate them.

into incongruent "parts", which in their reassembly offer a surreal, contorted view of the figure. The same carnal-red tone that Hipper had employed to encapsulate the heads of the figures in that work is here employed to fill the space surrounding the pelvis. Starkly contrasting the monotone flesh of the thighs, the red focuses the eye towards the central frame, where it reappears within the cavity of the vagina. The spatial and formal choices which Hipper has employed all seem to conspire to draw attention to the sexual organs which, contained in a *frame-within-a-frame*, assume the position of the direct address: "This is for you to look at". It is in this use of "framing" that I believe these works reveal what Hipper had meant when he claimed to have employed devices *similar* to those used in pornography. While many interpreted this statement to have referred to the explicit content of the works[56], I maintain that it is rather in the construction and framing of the figures, a reference to the conventions of photography and film which Hipper problematised in regard to our understanding of the child's body.

In the catalogue for the *Membran Körper = Corps Membrane* (1994) exhibition at the Asperger Gallery in Strasbourg, Hipper elaborates on his use of "pornographic devices" and their intention:

> "I use pornographic devices. But I try to fill them with different contents, with non-interchangeable objects, with a reality which the observer may have already perceived himself. What distinguishes my painting from pornography is that the observer does not become absorbed in my figures. Rather, he is confronted with a presence he has to react to. But he still remains within his own reality" (Hipper, 1994: np).

This interaction with the image which the viewer must enter into when confronted with the works is central to the way in which they are intended to function. Significantly, they bring into action what Paul Willemen describes as *the fourth look*, that is, "any articulation which brings into play the position and activity of the viewer as a distinctly separate factor…destabilises that position and puts it at risk" (1980: 56). In short, the framing employed to focus the gaze of the viewer on the explicitly rendered genitals brings the scopic drive into focus and thus the viewer is at risk of becoming the object of that objectifying look – "being overlooked in the act of looking" (Willemen, 1980:56). Conscious of the fact that what you are being confronted with is taboo, that you are *not supposed to look,* you experience a heightened sense of *censorship*, both internal in the form of shame and

[56] In one particularly damning editorial column which appeared in the *Eastern Province Herald,* Cal Seton-Smith adopts the *if it walks like a duck* analogy to criticise the "intellectual obfuscation" of the Film and Publications Board in their decision not to censor Hipper's work. He seems to suggest that Hipper had all but admitted to creating pornography, referring to the artist's opening address, he writes, "'Similar' means 'the same as'. That is surely easy enough to understand" (1998:4).

external in the implication of the law (Willemen, 1980:56). Willemen contends that these characteristics of censorship introduce the "social" into the act of looking. In this manner the usual binary nature of the male gaze is disturbed, destabilising the conventional power relations inherent in that form of the gaze. Similarly the element of voyeurism is negated in the context of the public space within which the works are displayed. Unlike the darkened cinema or private space in which the viewer could engage in looking in secret, here the direction of the gaze is made explicit, and "they [the viewers] are left directly facing the image with no alibi to justify their presence" (Willemen, 1980: 59).

Despite their seemingly *disturbing* depiction of children, I argue that Hipper's visualisations ultimately succeed in breaking down the unassailable control which the Romantic Child ideal exerts over the image of the child. However, any potential that the works may have offered in enabling a confrontation of the inherent façade of this powerful mythology, in order to reach an understanding of the child that is "closer to the nature of being", is systematically negated when the media replaces the artworks with terse, superficial linguistic pronunciations. The moment that Sundstrom's and other journalists' articles begin their circulation within the general public, contextualising the works within the frame of pornography and inferred sexual abuse, the images' "public"[57] is compelled to understand the works only through that *frame of reference.*

Linguistic descriptions are more "fixed" than visual symbols because their connotations are more defined and as such leave far less room for subjective interpretation. An account of the work's content as "a sexually explicit image of a young boy masturbating" (Bulbulia, 1998: 2), allows little possibility for the reader to comprehend the images as anything other than what they have been lead to believe is taboo. The works thus becomes "tainted" by the *words* which are used to describe them. Even in instances where journalists conveyed almost clinical summaries of the works' subject matter their descriptions are equally as damaging as Sundstrom's pejorative portrayal, because in both cases they infer that that what is *said* the works look like is all the works *are;* and that they can be understood superficially as simply depictions of children's genitals. In one way, labelling these provocative images of the child as simply *pornography* serves to function as a *deus ex machina* in the

[57] I maintain that the publication of these media reports marks an irreversible fissure in Viscera's audience, sorting them into two distinct publics: one group is able to see the works and the other is made to "visualise" them as reanimated incarnations of the words which are used to describe what some in the former group had *perceived*. This latter group, the "reading public", comprised a far greater proportion of the works' audience than the former. Thus the generally accepted understanding of the exhibition by "the public" was constructed through a collection of linguistic descriptions, not the images themselves.

dramatic sense, "rescuing" us from our confrontation with them, by allowing us to disavow them in order to spare ourselves the discomfort that would arise from facing the challenges they present. We can simply "avert our gaze", convince ourselves that their existence is within the realm of *perversion* and as such they should simply be discounted. The succession of "a thousand words" contained in newspaper articles is what enters the public consciousness through the mechanisms of the mass media. Unencumbered by the visual reproductions which would serve to complicate the verbal descriptions of the works' content, these words move seamlessly to take their place in the "archive".[58] History thus records *Vicera* not as an exhibition of *images* but of *words*, in effect imposing the censorship the law would not enact. In this way the Romantic Child ideal reasserts its dominance over any visualisation which threatens to reveal its *mythology*.

While the work in this exhibition may have been effectively excluded from the "archive", it nonetheless stands as an incredibly significant and seminal moment in South African art history. Hipper manages to achieve what few others are able to: transcend the seemingly impenetrable vision of the Romantic Child ideal, even if only momentarily. In this work he shows the possibility of imagining the image of the child in a way that is more *real* than the evacuated vessels we harness to play out both our desires and our debates. Despite being a man, and an "outsider", he provides us with a vision of the child that will not be objectified by the historical *male gaze* that audiences invariably adopt in viewing the bodies of children. He paradoxically achieves this by adopting the framing devices of pornography, that category of images which is premised on overtly objectifying the body. However, Hipper harnesses these modes of representation in order to make us aware of the ways in which we have been engaged in just such an objectifying gaze, all the while denying it, by situating the figure of the child in the context of a comfortable, idyllic nostalgia. He directs our sight directly at the "blind spot" of the Romantic Child ideal. But because this moment of self-reflexivity is uncomfortable and uneasy, we choose instead to *look away*, removing the images from our field of vision so that we need not face their provocation. As a consequence, however, the works are not able to compel us to experience the unease of looking at them; and thus we fail to experience the transcendence that they may have offered us. As long as the Romantic Child ideal is maintained as the favoured means of representing the image of childhood, it will continue to assert its dominance

[58] While it could be argued that there is an impossibility of recording, archiving, remembering and understanding images without being aided by words; what I assert is the critical difference here is that ordinarily the images are permitted to enter alongside the words which are used to describe them. In this way the "texts" create meaning through the relationship between words and images. In this case, as I have argued in this chapter, the linguistic text enters the archive *alone*, the image having been barred, and as a consequence the continued creation of meaning is stunted.

through *our* actions. We should look back on this case as a “scandal”, but from the perspective of how the case offers us cause to reflect on how we continue to understand the figure of the child in new evolving contexts.

Chapter 4:

Conclusion: *Bad Faith*

In order for me to deceive myself I must both know the truth and not know it

(Detmer, 2009: 75)

Mauvaise Foi or *Bad Faith* is a term employed by existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in his seminal *Being and Nothingness* (1945) to describe a state of *self-deception* which we adopt in order to avoid the "anguish" we experience in the acknowledgement of our freedom from the structures of society. Sartre believed that we find the cognisance of this freedom troubling and thus deny it as a means of evading the duty to act or take responsibility for our choices (Detmer, 2009: 74). Sartre points out that this state of being is inherently a paradox because there can be no self-deception if you believe a falsehood thinking that it is truth; and, if knowing the truth, simply deny it for the sake of deceiving another. Therefore, as David Detmer explains, "bad faith requires that I both know the truth (so that my denial of it constitutes a lie…), and not know it (so that I am genuinely deceived)" (2009:75). In this thesis I have proposed that society's sustained belief in the Romantic Child ideal is an example of just such *bad faith.*

While social historians have endeavoured to reveal that our modern conception of *childhood*, rather than immutable *truth*, is simply a highly constructed social *idea*, Chapter 1 details how we continue to believe in, and maintain its ideology. It is in this way the mythology of this idea has worked to convince us that it is both natural and the norm. Thus knowing that the experience of *real children* often does not conform to the *image* of ideal childhood, that is the ideal of the Romantic Child, we try to "inculcate and enforce" the tenets of the ideology because we believe them to be *true.* It is for this reason that the Romantic Child ideal and its notions of inherent childhood innocence have been able to maintain a pervasive influence over our understanding of childhood and children for more than two centuries; we both know the truth and simultaneously do not *know* it.

In my discussions of Kurgan's and Hipper's work in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively I have shown that when we are confronted with images of children which do not conform to the prescriptions of the ideal they cause us immense anxiety and concern. I have further suggested that the way in which we

act in response to these “troubling” visions of childhood is not implicit but rather intermediated by the pervasive power of the ideal itself, because it has succeeded in colouring not only the manner in which we think about the image of childhood but also the way we *feel* about it. Through an analysis of the *representations* of children which appeared in two pivotal exhibitions during the late 1990s by artists Terry Kurgan and Mark Hipper, as well as the *reactions* to these works by the public, I explored the manner in which the ideal of the Romantic Child mediated the way these challenging images were received within the context of the South African public at the time.

This research set out to situate the eighteenth century ideal of the *Romantic Child* as a pervasive social mythology which, despite seeming *natural* and *normal*, is rather a construction. Perpetuated both in public and private, the myth continues to powerfully mediate how we look at, interpret, understand and react to images of children and those who create them. Chapter 1 discussed how by the onset of the eighteenth century the idea of childhood had become an acceptable social idea. This created an essential context in which enlightenment philosophers, notably Jean-Jacques Rousseau, were able to refine concepts regarding what characterised an ideal childhood. However it was in the visualisations of these concepts by Romantic English portraitists such as in Joshua Reynolds’ *The Age of Innocence* (1788) that these concepts began to take force. The discussion showed how for the first time it seemed that *real* children, set in the context of experiencing a *real* childhood, were being conveyed by respected establishment artists. Importantly, the visual tropes expressed in these paintings formed a “blueprint” for what would become the normative ideology of childhood, aided by endless mechanical reproduction and emulations.

The chapter also detailed the significant development of photography in the nineteenth century which would provide individuals with the means to imitate in private those characteristics of childhood innocence idealised in public. Thus the camera became an irrepressible presence in the family home, essential for *capturing* the very selective apparent *reality* of childhood innocence.

As illustrated at the beginning of the thesis, family photographs of children particularly seem to offer us proof of our own experience of the mythology that Romantic childhood proposes, and as such they become one of our most prized, nostalgic possessions. Chapter 1 also discussed how the mimetic power of photography, however, was equally capable of exposing the façade of the myth; photographs which highlighted the untruth of the ideal had the effect of causing a fissure in its continuity. Similarly, because cultural contexts had changed, adherence to a centuries-old ideology became increasingly difficult to reconcile. The twentieth century eye had become conscious of the child’s sexuality, which the ideal denies, and as a result the implied contact between the subject and maker of the photograph became contentious. For this reason as artists began casting the gaze of

the camera in the direction of their own children within the confines of the home – to be in turn received by the view of the public – a great anxiety arose around what such contentious images of children meant.

This thesis also showed that the last decade of the twentieth century marked a number of cases in which artists, male and female, faced both public criticism and suspicion of the law when they publically exhibited images which alluded to the child's sexuality. However, the reaction and response appeared to be pointedly gendered. Chapter 2 proposed that the public scorn faced by female artists, often the mothers of their child-subjects, focused on their intrusion of not simply the ideology of childhood innocence but also that of ideal motherhood. However this "shield of motherhood" also served to protect them from the legal consequences faced by their male counterparts because of the sustained belief in female innocence: this notion of a woman's inherent "innocuousness", a product of a long societal entrenchment stemming from Victorian gender roles.

The reception to Terry Kurgan's *I'm The King of The Castle* (1997) is exemplary of just such a public response which, while critical, is ultimately mediated by the ideology of motherhood and its relationship to that of childhood innocence. I have argued that while Kurgan intended to problematise the erotics of the mother-child relationship through her photographic nudes, her implementation of setting, medium and representation all correspond too faithfully to the iconography of the Romantic Child ideal, a vocabulary with which the audience who received the work was fluent. For this reason as well as the fact that Kurgan creates work within the frame of motherhood and the home, I suggested in Chapter 2 that the images are unable to transcend the overwhelming power of these entrenched social myths, and in perceiving them our reaction is likewise unable to deny their effect.

Conversely, as I argue in Chapter 3, Mark Hipper's *Vicera* (1998) exhibition which included unashamed visualisations of childhood sexuality, more than simply intruding on the prescriptions of the Romantic Child ideal but utterly collapsing them. By presenting us with an unapologetic vision of the child actively engaged in a sexuality which the ideal denies, Hipper paradoxically imbues the body of the child with an agency that obstructs an objectifying historical *male gaze*. I suggest in this chapter that in creating these images Hipper compels us to *see* childhood differently, shaping a vision which gives the child's figure a tangible corporeality and removes it from the "unreal" world that the Romantic Child ideal situates it in. Importantly these works force us to confront the *bad faith* which we instinctively and unthinkingly engage in – urging us to face a more truthful understanding of the child, unencumbered by the ideal's *nostalgia*.

However, as I discuss in Chapter 3, this process is only possible if the images are seen. The overwhelming response to Hipper's work demonstrates how the ideal continues to powerfully and pervasively mediate our understanding of the image of the child, framing any visualisation which falls outside the confines of its prescriptions as "pornography". Premised on the rhetoric of "protection", the legal attempts to censor the exhibition at the time as well as the enduring imposed censorship of the work within the "archive" illustrate the manner in which the ideal will, through *our* actions, reassert itself at all costs.

Today representations of *the image* of children which do not conform to the conventions of the ideal continue to remain taboo, suggesting that an ongoing consideration of works that explore it remains necessary. Importantly, unlike what was possible in the past, technological advancements in the twenty-first century have created a context for anyone, including children themselves, to partake in creating images of *childhood*. These pictures have the potential for not only infinite reproduction but also unbounded and uncontrollable dissemination. Thus there exists the potential to create a greater consciousness of how we think about *childhood*: what it looks like, what it means and for what purpose we create images that document it. The ubiquitous *cloud* which now catalogues the pictures of children, past and present, has created the possibility for these visualisations to have an "after life", of the kind never imagined by their makers. The presence of Kurgan's photographs on a pornographic website, despite her intentions for their use or understanding, illustrates the impossibility of controlling images of children as well as the ways in which they forge new meaning in evolving digital contexts. While this discussion was beyond the scope of my investigation it does offer an interesting, and I believe important, avenue for further research.

On returning to my photograph of the birthday party, I find myself looking at the picture with a new *eye*. These case studies suggest that, while it may not be possible to completely transcend the dictates of the ideal of the Romantic Child, there is an opportunity for developing a wider consciousness about the way we look at images of children. By being more aware of how we partake in the process of constructing and perpetuating an *image of childhood* it is also possible to gain a more manifold understanding of the children they picture.

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Appendix

Annexure A

Interview with Terry Kurgan: 29/05/2015

Interview with Terry Kurgan [T.K] conducted by Judith Evans [J.E]: WISER, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

29/05/2015

Disk 1

J.E: In what manner does photography enable your visualisations of children…as opposed to other mediums?

T.K: In what manner does photography enable…gosh that's difficult… (Laughs)

J.E: Do you think that photography does in any way allow you to envision some other element of them that perhaps other mediums don't? Because you have used various mediums in order to do that

T.K: Yes.

J.E: So I was wondering if there was something about photography that enabled you to do something specific?

T.K: No, I think, I really do think…it's such a long time since that body of work and I even stopped photographing the children. They have grown up and left home now and interestingly enough my daughter is working, she is a student at UCT now, a third year student in film and television and she started working with, re-working all (it's not even that long ago) but she is working with all my material now, which is interesting. But I even stopped sort of taking snap shots. I think photography, I mean I really think the impulse to photograph them all the time, then, initially had to do with something about holding back time…all the obvious reasons why one takes photographs and memorialises certain things. But I was also really thinking, initially I used the photographs, I come out of a sort of print making and drawing background and I was initially using the photographs to make drawings from. I always used my own photographs, always worked from photographs not from life and at a certain moment made the realisation that the photographs were the work…I'm coming around to your question…I think because, I think about photography and the meaning of the photographs and the world has changed so hugely since that work. That work was before smart phones, it was before absolutely everybody was a photographer and it was before…I

think there is something like three, I get the figures wrong, but something like three million photographs are uploaded to Facebook every day. This [I'm the King of the Castle] is long before Facebook, before social media, before photographs seemingly to me are all about being in the present moment and presence rather than I think my own using them to kind of mark the intractability of time passing and photographs to do with loss and even as one has and holds a child they are moving away from you. I think for my own reasons some of that (and you were at my seminar last week), that kind of inter-generational inheritance, at a cellular level of loss to do with the generation just before me, losing their entire extended families in eastern Europe, I grew up with…I inherited something and the photographs I think, working with photography, there were certain universal stories, the photographs didn't stand only for my children, my own children personally, when I turned them into work but there were certain universal stories that they were telling and I think that photographs have some, again using the word "intractable" relationship with their referent. I mean you have probably read about this plenty from Barthes, Benjamin, Sontag onwards because they do have some relationship with something that was there at one time. They are a trace of that original light source being cast form an object through the lens. I think that there was more of a relationship with the real than the drawings. So that is the simple, fairly inarticulate answer (laughs).

J.E: I find that with some of your pieces you used some of the photographs from one of your earlier exhibitions and then re-worked them into prints

T.K: Yes

J.E: I find that quite interesting, what was the relationship there? How did you select those specifically? There were some photographs of yourself as a child if I am not mistaken

T.K: Yes me and my sister. I think again I was making work about…I really haven't thought about this, my head is really not there

J.E: Sorry

T.K: (laughs) No, no its fine, its ok, but just having to think about this again is…I'm not thinking about photography like this at all anymore. But I think I was making prints and drawings, some many years later, recycling images which I had used in *Lost and Found.* I think that's what you are thinking about. *Lost and Found* was principally about the incredible paradox of family photographs; why we make them and why we take them and the impossibility of holding on to present experience, all the things you have probably seen me write about here

and there. They sort of just pop out of my mouth like stock phrases but it is what I was thinking about. I was thinking about trying to, in that work and particularly the drawings that went along with that body of work, I was trying to almost physically enact what family photographs stand for and make me feel and the…again to do with time passing, mortality, the paradoxical object that a family photograph is, that it performs a particular…there is a particular look, there is a particular need that whoever it is in the family, there is that sort of fairly unequal and interesting transaction. So the father or mother, or father or mother photographer in the case of those photographs is wanting a particular look or has a desire in making that photograph whatever it is, they are putting their intense love of that child in that moment. The child might be in a grumpy mood and not necessarily reciprocating and offering up whatever it is that the parent is trying to illicit. So that was part of the content in that *I Promise I Love You* series of etchings and photographs, the impossibility, the mutual desire and the unreciprocated nature often. I worked with photographs that were of those in-between moments, the ones that don't necessarily offer up what it is that was asked for in the first place. But it was also to do with that split second moment and the drawings then in a later body of work *Still Life…*

J.E: Of your daughter?

T.K: Yes, the drawings kind of disappear; they disappear off each page, and then disappear out of the room (laughs). I don't know if that offers you anything more than I have ever said about them before? Is that helpful?

J.E: Yes, thank you. You have just spoken about this a bit too but, it seems that the notion of performing childhood is a recurrent theme in your work. Could you explain the nature of this idea and the manner in which it influences the content and meaning of your work? Specifically about *I'm The King of the Castle;* you talk about your son "performing childhood" and him being the "object "of the piece rather than the subject. I was interested in how that relates to the way you speak about the portraits you create in the *Whistler's Nose* piece that you wrote about the early work that you created, portraits of other sitters and the relationship between those. The word "performance" comes up quite a lot, so I was interested in that

T.K: Where did you find *Whistler's Nose?*

J.E: I got it from the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

T.K: When did I write that?

J.E: It was for your MA

T.K: For my MA? (Laughs)

J.E: Yes. (Laughs)

T.K: Judith you should have warned me you were going this deep back! I am now in my fifties. I am like "*Whistler's Nose?* That rings a bell!" (Laughs)

J.E: You talk about it in terms of how…like you were just saying, about the context of the parent and the child, but in that [*Whistler's Nose*] artist and the sitter both having to negotiate the result of what the image looks like. I found that interesting in relation to taking these photographs of your children and how possibly that [relationship] changes in that moment.

T.K: Well I was making some notes. Just let me look at this…it's actually in relation to something I am writing right now. I was looking at a photograph, you were at the lecture, I was looking at another photograph. In fact this one, let's just see, you can't really see it very well. There is a child sitting in close proximity to her mother's body, but these two women are completely engrossed in conversation and this little child is wedged against her mother's body and I was thinking about, in that context, there were some notes that I made to do with…I think I actually wrote it here. Just repeat your question.

J.E: I said, it seems that the notion of performing childhood is a recurrent theme in your work can you explain the nature of this idea and in your opinion the manner in which it influences their content and meaning?

T.K: Yes, so performing childhood. In those photographs…I don't think in that particular series of photographs, they were very disturbing to viewers I think because it…I am finding it very difficult to grab hold of your question but this is what it made me think about. I was thinking about…I have been looking at a lot of photographs from my writing project and they engaged me in thinking about the maternal look and the look that is meant to flow from the mother to the child but there isn't meant to be a reciprocation of that in terms of developmental theory and how children develop subjectivity and a sense of themselves, they develop that in relation to being mirrored. And so mothers and their gaze in terms of very young children- the empowerment of a child goes from and not to that gaze, development depends upon being seen, upon being mirrored in such a way that growth occurs. A mother like an analyst, like a therapist, needs to be a background figure against and in relation to which subjectivity and individuality are formed. So when the child looks he

or she sees herself, and when the mother looks she sees the child. So, and the reason I am writing this here is because I am thinking about it in terms of my own mother who always used to say to me, "You seem to be the wrong way round. You were the first person who ever loved me". I think when my little boy, all those eighteen years ago, at six, he is twenty-four now, was performing himself for me. He was partly performing himself, trying on different kinds of masculinity, it was a kind of role-playing, a kind of play-acting that all children do as they develop and grow up and separate and all that. But I think he was also trying to please me. That is about as far along as I can get an answer to your question.

J.E: That's great, thank you. May I also just ask in terms of how they were created, what was the time frame involved?

T.K: It was over a few months, and I was particularly struck by the play acting and the performance of masculinity. I was very interested how masculinity in both children is acquired and you unconsciously reinforce those things in your children. And I was very conscious in my boy of not, of trying not to. I mean my kids now look at the photographs and the clothes that they, that he was dressed in particularly, and they say, "God how you could dress me like that?" I remember that he wanted to play with dolls and I remember buying him dolls, but as soon as he got to school he was ashamed of that impasse and they started playing with "boy-toys"; Power Rangers, all those, I forget what they are called now…but when he was little all those male super hero toys and all of that. You pick it up from around you so quickly and he identified as a male and he was very clear about his gender. Those photographs were taken over a few months, I was very engaged in…but they were very…it was kind of a mutual…he loved to perform for the camera, he would say, he would ask me often to photograph and sometimes I would ask, but it was all performance and play-acting and separated, in that body of work, *I'm the King of the Castle*, it didn't feel like it had an enormous amount to do with him personally, it had more to do with him trying to image the inherent taboo around the erotic's of that relationship. The safe erotic's of that relationship, I don't mean…I just mean what is present in that relationship between a mother and child. But it also had to do with…god Judith this is a long time ago…it also had to do with…making work about what was seemingly in the political context of that time, very small, domestic intimate stories, but in fact I think the kind of drama of the family in the way that we individually develop in these is such an important story. I think early childhood is such an important time, it explains most things. I have always been interested in psychology, I've never studied it but I have an intuitive feel for it and an interest in it and I am always

attracted to family dramas from the eighteenth and nineteenth century into contemporary times. I'm interested in how it makes all of us behave the way that we do. Even just in this work environment you can tell quite quickly when you get to know someone what their childhood may have been like because of how they behave in a certain way. So *I'm the King of the Castle* is about the impact of…it's sort of separated from Jonah my son who was the object of the photographs and a little bit the subject but it is separated from his personality and turned much more into a work that was just sort of thinking about childhood, about mother child relationships, about erotic's, about taboo, about how unpopular it is for the mother to return the gaze of the child. So that was the point that I was trying to make about how mothers are meant to empower their children by mirroring them, not by looking back, or by them…that mutual exchange of gazes, of glances is seen to be inappropriate. I don't know if I can say anything much more intelligent about that anymore (laughs).

J.E: The Romantic Child ideal dictates that children should be perceived within the framework of vacancy and innocence, how would you situate your visualisations of the child's body within this context? I think you have touched on that…

T.K: Yes…I mean I don't think…I think that these were works both *Family Affairs* and *I'm the King of the Castle* were works that were precisely about…were not about the Romantic Child, the idealised child. I don't think childhood is a dark place but I think they were about…*Purity and Danger,* the title that Penny gave the show was about the presence of both innocence and knowledge, purity and danger, I think those things are present and children are full of extraordinary…Do you have kids?

J.E: No.

T.K: Children are full of extraordinary…they can give, they can express anger, jealousy with much greater ease and directness than adults can, all the emotions that we experience. The work was never about a Romantic or idealised vision or version of childhood, quite the opposite. I wish that I had done it for longer. I was discouraged by…there were a couple of things…I was quite discouraged by the public reception that the work got, it inhibited me carrying on with working about the children, my children, but I feel like that body of work touched the surface of something that perhaps I'm exploring more now, twenty years later and in a different way.

J.E: I was just wondering, somebody suggested that the framing of the university provided a context within which to read so that it was, I mean there was a lot of public outcry about the

work, or not outcry so much as just concern- but much of that was mitigated by the fact that it appeared at the [Wits] University. Do you think that it might have been received differently if it had been shown somewhere else?

T.K: Yes I think so. For example, I have never shown that again. The laws have changed. When I had a retrospective show in 2013 when I launched the *Hotel Yeoville* book and I showed five images from that…did you see that?

J.E: I saw your interview with the Mail & Guardian about the show.

T.K: So I showed just a few of them and I didn't show any of them where he was full frontal nude for fear… for two reasons, the first reason is that he didn't want me to show that work now as a consenting adult, he didn't want me to show that work. And the second reason is because the laws have changed and I think that I could run into trouble putting images like that up. I don't think that I shouldn't be able to. I think the fact that it was framed by a show on taboo, the work was very deliberately made into that frame. It was shown on one other show that went out of South Africa to Germany at the time as a complete body of work but other than that I have never shown it again because it is so difficult to show work like that. I just wouldn't want the trouble that it would invite.

J.E: How did the process of conceptualisation and execution differ between *I'm the King of the Castle* and *Still Life* works? I think that you have again also kind of answered those questions where one is where your child is much younger and your son and the other with your daughter. I suppose what I am interested in is that they feel very different; the ones of your daughter feel quite wistful, as you were talking about them almost escaping. I was just wondering, more in terms of how they were made… the relationship…

T.K: Do you remember that they were also drawings, I made drawings…and this was interestingly before smartphones, before apps, where absolutely everyone was making photographs, showing the…you know this was before it became common place to see in now days, it's like a simulated "neg", the edge of a negative surrounding an image. This work was made in almost, its eighteen years ago I think, and I still think *I'm the King of the Castle* is one of my strongest bodies of work. I would love to re-make it and I would love to re-show it. So jumping back a question, I would love to re-make it and I would love to re-show it because I think that it is a, it's still a powerful body of work that communicates many things; about photography, about…

J.E: About relationships?

T.K: Yes, about mother and child, about childhood sexuality, about adult sexuality, all of that. And about the vulnerability and transitoriness of life. But I wouldn't because of the public response to it would just not be worth my while…but…

J.E: I was just going to say that someone suggested that at the time in 1997- that it opened up a space for artists to address things that were taboo prior to that. Do you think that maybe we have regressed somewhat in terms of how we respond to things publically?

T.K: Yes, even more. It think that it is even more taboo. I think the hysteria out there, well there are two things, we do live in a country where there is the highest level of violence and abuse of women and children, and particularly of children but I think the reasons have not got to do with art exhibitions or photographs, it has to do with poverty and inequality and all the things we know. Poverty and inequality and peoples desperation, and children suffer the consequences…I lost track of…how did I start that?

J.E: About how we have become more conservative…

T.K: Yes, so there are two things; there is that, that you can't…inevitably images like that will be confused with a situation in South Africa where babies are raped and yes I believe that we have become way more conservative about all sorts of things, but particularly about visual representation. God, look what happened with Brett Murry. There are all these examples where people confuse representation with reality and all that. But going back to your question which was? What was the last question?

J.E: About how the process of conceptualisation and execution…and I guess I am also…

T.K: Oh the frame?

J.E: Yes

T.K: Yes. So the photographs when I printed them, I started including the…when I first made the photographs they were for drawings and I kept giving the drawings this edge. The edge was partly to do with the fact that the paper was primed on the ground, primed with rabbit skin glue, which I really love working with and in order to…you know rabbit skin glue is watery and so you need the paper to dry and shrink in order for it to be flat. It would give me this very different edge, this very different surface quality. So where there was this rabbit skin glue, materials would behave in a [particular] way. I created this frame which I began to realise was my way of "holding", "containing", keeping the image "in", in the same way that the photographic image is bounded by its negative. You are sort of "holding it", it became a

metaphor for all the things that preoccupy me about family photography and time passing, and I have never been good at any of that. And so the photographs…so the mechanism that I developed for the drawing having this internal frame, I began to think about that and why it was there and how it was this "container", I began to use that quite self-consciously with the photographs. Now when I look at them and show them they start to look like all the various apps like Instamatic and you just see photographs like that all the time, so they…it's hard not to think that they…you can't see them in their time and that that was device that I employed. The execution, what else about the execution do you want to know?

J.E: I suppose what I am interested in is the differences in age between the subjects. In the one instance your son is very young and in the other your daughter is older. I guess I am also interested in the relationship between the sitter and the artist, how that changes slightly as they age essentially?

T.K: No they were all made at the same time.

J.E: No, sorry I mean the *Still Life* series.

T.K: Oh, the *Still Life* series? Okay, yes. So the *Still Life* series, I was working with Ruth Rosengarten who I work with very often, we were wanting to make a show of drawings about photography and I…I didn't…there…she [my daughter] didn't particularly feel like the subject again, she genuinely didn't feel like she was the subject of those drawings, they were drawings not photographs, so they felt quite interpretive and she patiently sat for me for a whole series of photographs, then I ended up making the drawings just based on two or three of the photographs that just kept mutating and transforming. And again I think it just became a body of work about my usual preoccupations which are; photographic meaning and particularly family photographs and they became about mortality…all my usual preoccupations. So I still think that because those were drawings and not photographs they felt like they had a much more fragile relationship with their subject and when I look at them I don't even see her, for me they don't…they are more about surface and about drawing and about photography than they are about her. They really have very little to do with her, really, honestly, truly. She was the vehicle for other preoccupations.

J.E: Thank you. Going back to Sally Mann, How do you differentiate yourself from the kind of work that she makes?

T.K: Oh, god…

J.E: Or do you think that…?

T.K: No, I say oh god I so admire her work. I didn't know much about her work when I started, but once my body of work attracted the kind of criticism and negative regard that it did, and positive, I obviously had a careful look at her work. I mean she…her whole career has kept…I have moved between media and projects and haven't as single mindedly perused one thing like photography. I mean I am often called "a photographer" but I don't think of myself as a photographer at all, I think of myself as a visual artist, a multimedia artist, I use photography when it is a project and I am now writing. I think that she is the most superb photographer, actual photographer. I am a techno-phobe, I used instant cameras and that was a gorgeous…that body of work was made with a single lens reflex camera that I was given when I turned seventeen. It was the only camera that I ever really knew how to use and it was just so simple, I understood the relationship between F-stops, and speed, and used film, I wished that…I haven't ever really been able to manipulate cameras the way that I think real photographers can. I don't mean that to put myself down, I am more sort of an artist that uses photography. If I did a body of work that uses photography again, I would use a professional photographer to shoot them. If photography was what I needed, I would use somebody with a technical…I have used somebody with a technical skill in other bodies of work. I admire her…I love her…have you seen her body of work about her husband's…I think he has muscular dystrophy, he's got MS. He is like this beautiful man, his body is…

J.E: I have seen very few images; I haven't seen them in their entirety.

T.K: She works with a large format film camera and sets things up really carefully

J.E: I suppose that's what I find interesting about her, because she, because of the nature of the kind of photographs she takes, they are very constructed images…

T.K: Yes…

J.E: So in the very famous one of her young daughter in the water with her hair around her [face], I watched, because somebody filmed her making that, and she kept asking her daughter to dip her hair back again and close her eyes…

T.K: Yes…

J.E: There was a lot of manipulation that was involved in creating it. So I find that interesting because in a way she is documenting just ordinary life with the children, but in another way they are highly constructed images

T.K: Yes they are highly constructed images, and in the same way I feel like my work on those themes is like a drop in the ocean compared to the vast body of work that she made. My work on those themes, they weren't as constructed, they were often serendipitous. I took the photographs very quickly and edited…you know, the image that stands for that body of work, the two children in their towels, that was like barely there, like a negative. On film it used to be naught-naught and then one that almost didn't happen, the top of the negative is missing there, so they weren't constructed. I still love…I mean I think as constructed as hers were, I think they did have an enormous amount to do with the life those children were living and they had a very strong…I mean they were grounded in the reality of their lives, very grounded in her relationship and I really believe her when she said they were making up, I don't know how she put it exactly, but she said they were universal stories and I feel the same. I think my drawings of my daughter were the more recent ones made in 2011 and other drawings, they are somehow to do with universal stories, universal emotional life, dramas or quiet…the opposite of drama, quiet, small, intimate, personal stories that I think have resonance for everybody. If I succeed in anything, I suppose I hope that that is what I communicate, I'm not sure that I do, but that is what I hope…that I communicate. I do regret that I didn't persist with all of that, but I was quite discouraged.

J.E: By the response?

T.K: Yes, it just seemed…and also my kids got older and I didn't want to expose them in ways that made them uncomfortable.

J.E: I find it quite interesting though that in all of the reviews, everyone that was within the art world didn't find them as troubling as the average seemed to…

T.K: I know

J.E: It's quite interesting that…

T.K: Did you find some reviews?

J.E: Yes

T.K: There is quite a lot online, I just recently had somebody, for my website, my new website which is quite incomplete, the whole middle is missing, I've had somebody do a trawl and they have come up with a lot of things that I didn't even know were online.

J.E: Jo Burger at the art gallery, the library at JAG, she also has a file with a lot of reviews.

Interview with Terry Kurgan: 29/05/2015

T.K: Did you find the Kendell Geer's one?

J.E: Yes

T.K: I love that one! (Laughs)

J.E: Well this leads me to the next more difficult question that I wanted to ask…

End of disk 1

Disk 2

J.E: So I don't know how to ask this question, its quite difficult for me…I read that article (Kendell Geers), and he talks about how he felt that you should have been more cognisant of the fact that these images could be used for different purposes, other than what they were intended for, the gallery context etcetera. So while I was looking for images of your work, I did an image search. So I looked for a specific piece and I came across a pornographic website [www.dvids.net/terrykurgan.html] where your images appeared…

T.K: Really?

J.E: Yes. So I was wondering if you were conscious of that?

T.K: No. Which images were on there?

J.E: Well what's interesting about the site is that it feels as if it was an algorithm that selected the images, because they are images that come from your *Facebook* page, your *Linkdin* page, from various galleries, it all sort of collected them into this one page. So while it is not just images of the children, there are images of all of your work including the *Hotel Yeoville* pieces. So I was just wondering if you were conscious of that?

T.K: No! How can I see?

J.E: I can send you a link to the page. But it is definitely…it's something that an algorithm has collected

T.K: It's the same as when you…I have been reading a lot about Google and image search…what is it called? Yes, you put something in and then it will bring you all…But it is an algorithm based on compositional qualities like tone and colour, light, dark, I think…

J.E: Yes, I think so…well that is just how I found the site, rather than finding…because you know obviously it brings up… so it will look for things like that yes because then it will say "would you like things that are similar to this?". That is how I managed to find this website specifically.

T.K: But I mean there are millions of people who are uploading pictures of their children? So it must? I hate the idea that someone might be wanking off to a picture of either of my kids but there are not many online of them without their clothes on. Well I don't think so…there is one

J.E: No, no, there isn't anything specific and most of them are not clear enough for you to see anything, but I just wondered what your thoughts were on that?

T.K: I think now we have lost control and I am sure that there are millions of people who are constantly posting photographs of their children onto the web because they are showing a picnic, a birthday, this and that. I would be very curious…it doesn't bother me; it is not at all harmful to our children…

J.E: Because they have grown up?

T.K: They have grown up and you know I just think that we cannot control things. I concerns me though, what concerns me how children don't understand the permanence of a digital trace. How those images have come to be there, I have no idea, but the children post things that are of themselves.

J.E: So the argument has sort of changed from being about parents being the ones who put up images to those that they themselves put up?

T.K: Yes. In the last couple of years awful things have happened at my daughter's school where things would be circulated. Someone would post something really inappropriate of a friend and that's like…I am not all concerned… I need to look at it to answer your question, but I don't think that my work was ever harmful or dangerous to my children, I think there is way more stuff going up these days that is. Do you?

J.E: No, I suppose what disturbs me more is that there are sites like this that can do this

T.K: That can do this! That could gather things to anyone. No I think…

J.E: Yes, so in of itself, the photographs which appear are not pornographic except for the frame, with the pop-ups and the banners are…I suppose what was more unsettling was that when I

did the image search, when I pulled it into the search bar it brings up whatever results there are with the headlines, the write-up that appears next to the images was more unsettling than when you actually went into the website itself

T.K: So they have been completely re-contextualised the child in terms of pornography for adults who are interested in children

J.E: Yes

T.K: As I say it must be ordinary every day snapshots

J.E: They are pictures that appear on your *Facebook*, your *Linkedin* site and others and you can actually trace them back to the *Artthrob* page and various other things

T.K: You can actually see where they come from, yes

J.E: Because I had actually seen all of those websites previously, I was able to sort of see where they had come from

T.K: Yes. Send [the link to] me, I would be very curious

J.E: Yes I will. Alright, this question relates to Mark Hipper. I am not sure if you are familiar with the *Vicera* [controversy] that happened after your show?

T.K: But those were drawings hey?

J.E: Drawings and paintings…So I was just wondering, do you think that the response to the *Vicera* exhibition was gendered? Do you think that people felt more strongly, I mean in terms of how it escalated, as opposed to how people might have felt upset by some of your work but it never escalated to the point that it did where his work was censored.

T.K: What were those drawings of again? They were like children under water? They were drawings right?

J.E: Yes, they were drawings and paintings

T.K: I remember thinking that the whole thing was ridiculous, I mean just completely ridiculous

J.E: But I wonder do you think that because he was a man and he was making images of children that…

T.K: Okay, yes that I was protected because I was a woman and I was the mother of these children. I think that, yes, I do think that…you are reminding me now. I do remember

thinking that at the time, the fact that he was a man and not a father, those wernt his children. Incorrectly, I don't agree at all, but that perhaps he was perceived to be praying on them in some way. But I think it is all complete nonsense. Poor Mark Hipper is dead.

J.E: He died in 2010. He actually died just as I was busy with this, I got the news that he had died. It has been difficult for me to get a handle on his work because I don't know how to find out much about it.

T.K: No, and he was a really kind of marginal figure. I mean I remember really well he was sort of contemporary. I remember he was sort of very sort of socially uncomfortable, shy, introverted sort of man.

J.E: Apparently he didn't use any real children, in the sense that they were all decontextualized images form textbooks and that sort of thing. Do you think that that changes anything, or do you think that it matters?

T.K: No, I don't think it changes anything. But weren't they photographed under water? Wasn't he photographing under water? Wasn't he photographing children under water?

J.E: Honestly I haven't been able to find out much about them, but according to some of the sources about the outcry, at the time when he was interviewed he said that they were all images that he sourced from other places, but they might have been

T.K: Heidi, Heidi was his gallerist, Heidi Erdman

J.E: Erdman Contemporary? Yes, I have actually been in contact with her

T.K: It was just very sad when he died. He was teaching at Rhodes, a very solitary kind of figure. But I think there was no harm in anything he ever did. I really do think that the most dangerous thing about all of this is the taboo, that the fuss that people make it produces desire. It is, it is a terrible, harmful, it's a terribly harmful response which creates damage. I truly think that when Kendall Geers responded the way that he did, all those hundreds of years ago, it came from some sort of place in himself, from some kind of damage that had been done to him as a child. It has never been verified and don't repeat this, but I hear that he was quite an abused child

J.E: Inaudible

T.K: I mean my kids love that work, but as I say my daughter is reworking, for matric she did a very interesting series where she reshot my…she had me re-photograph her in the same

poses, in the same little tutu. I mean it is hilarious. She works with that work, she recycles my work. She is recycling this now [the newest series] I haven't even done it! (Laughs)

J.E: Thank you, I think that's…Oh I wanted to ask, and it relates back to the question about the site. In an interview Sally Man, well in a presentation she gives in 1991 she says something along the lines of "even now I am not sure about the consequences of my work". Do you think that there…I mean you have pretty much said this but, are there any things that you think…are there any consequences of it for your children or for yourself? You spoke about how you never went back to look at the work again?

T.K: No, I didn't want to show them again and especially not now in this era when everyone walks around with a smartphone camera…I never allowed at the time, I never allowed anyone to photograph the work, nobody ever photographed the work. All the photographs of the work are mine and I know that because I have never seen…one person documented the purity and danger show, so I got one installation view. I am rather sorry that I didn't document it better than I did at the time. I mean truly they are not bothered by it at all and I don't think that…I think that it has been incredibly affirming to them. My daughter says as much, she sends me little clips, I took quite a lot of video when they were little, again I stopped. I stopped photographing and documenting…I had a little camera, a bit bigger than, like the generation before that one (my video camera) and just tantrums, just not the stuff of everyday and for her eighteenth birthday, she is just twenty now, for her eighteenth birthday I just digitised it all and she is obsessed, she loves it! She often just *Whatsapp's* me little clip and it will say, "Look what a lovely mum". They seem to enjoy the way that they were reflected back to themselves. Which is not to say, please don't think that I wasn't any kind of perfect, brilliant, fantastic mother, but I was good enough and they feel very positive about the way that they have featured in my work. But it was never to the extent that Sally, Sally Man, had a huge, it was a huge body of work that went on for years. Mine was just two bodies of work that went on for two years. I think all the work was shot in the same year, but the body of the work, you know…I don't think that it has had any negative impact in answer to your question and there has been enough time for that to tell

J.E: Thank you very much; I really appreciate you answering these questions

T.K: It's a pleasure. I don't feel like, as I say, I have very, because of my immersion in the subject at the time, I have read books on the subject if you…how close are you to writing?

Interview with Terry Kurgan: 29/05/2015

J.E: I am in the writing process, but if you would like to share anything with me that would be great.

T.K: They are all, they are not here they are in my studio. I will have a look and email you

J.E: Thank you very much and I will pass on that link

T.K: Yes pass on that

Annexure B

Skype interview with Mark Haywood: 02/08/2015

Skype interview with Mark Haywood [M.H] conducted by Judith Evans [J.E]: Johannesburg/ South West France

02/08/2015

M.H: So how did you come across Hipper?

J.E: Well, I actually began my Master's five years ago and the proposal was accepted prior to Mark's death, and my supervisor at the time, Prof. Anitra Nettleton, suggested that I look at his work. At the time, I expected that I could just interview Mark personally but on the 11th of August 2010 he unfortunately passed away unexpectedly. I put my degree on hold and have come back to it now. So it's been quite interesting trying to track people down, do interviews, find information about him, because everything is quite splintered. So I appreciate you're willing to talk to me.

M.H: Well, he was the first appointment I made after taking over at Rhodes. I was a controversial appointment and so was he. I guess he was my favourite member of staff, basically. I was always digging him out of holes and defending him; he had a knack of getting himself in trouble.

J.E: Because of his work, or just personally?

M.H: Just personality. He always … he upset a lot of people. Very direct.

J.E: The only interview I've ever seen that was done with him, that was videotaped, was in 2009 after the incident at the Albany Museum where they pulled his work from the show. That was the only occasion I've ever heard him speak.

M.H: I'm still trying to recollect the row about the *Viscera* show. It happened very suddenly. If you're the Professor of Fine Arts at Rhodes during the festival… I think we had two other shows on… and you're trying to deal with everything in the normal run of things and then all this blows up… and you're also trying to get in a little of the festival as well, so you're awake 24hrs a day. There's a lot going on in a short space of time. So I've tried to remember the chronology of events because that's quite important, I think.

J.E: Maybe you can tell me if I'm wrong, but what I've worked out is it seems that the show opened on the 28th of June…

M.H: Which day was that?

J.E: … a Sunday, from what I've worked out, then Kathy Sundstrom's article comes out in *The Weekend Post* on the Saturday which was the 4th of July, one week after the show had opened, and it seems only then is there any controversy about the show. Am I right in saying that that article was very important in drawing attention to the show? Or had any problems been vocalised prior to it?

M.H: I'm not sure, I can't remember exactly what happened. Someone told me that an article had been written and suddenly there was a massive press exposure, but I think that may have been assisted by Rhodes Journalism students.

J.E: From *Cue*?

M.H: Yeah… wouldn't surprise me.

J.E: From what I can work out, on the Saturday *Cue* publishes a warning to people to avoid the show because it's distasteful, I guess, but it seems like there wasn't any reporting prior.

M.H: Yes, that seems reasonable. Within about three or four days of things blowing up, there's *The New York Times* discovering it.

J.E: Really? I wasn't aware it had been reported in the international press.

M.H: Yeah, it went completely insane! But I don't think I've got anything from that time. What I have got, but I think it's in England, is one of the invites to the opening. I know where it'll be if I've got it… just a postcard-sized thing. I'll scan it to you. If I don't, just send me an email to remind me. I might even have a poster for it somewhere, but I'm not sure. My secretary, Shelley, kept a book… God knows what's happened to that… it's all a long time ago. We used to keep an album… it may still be around but I would be surprised if it was because she's long gone… she left before me.

J.E: I see.

M.H: There's a lot of misassumptions about the show, which might be a good place to start, in that there were some works in the show which caused controversy not because of genitals being exposed but because of what were thought to be erotic poses of an adolescent, and that in fact was his wife.

J.E: The contortionist?

M.H: Yes. They assumed it was a child because she had an almost prepubescent body. And the child… the children… were actually him. They were self-portraits of himself as a child. A lot of the people who questioned it, particularly people from an African background, assumed he must have drawn them from life.

J.E: Like Sisulu?

M.H: Like Lindiwe Sisulu, yes. I'll tell ou a bit more about her in a moment when we've worked through the questions. She told a number of porkies about the show… pork pies, lies. So Hipper's reply to this was that he could just draw very well… from memory. He didn't need a life model to do a drawing like that. Your first question: What is your sense of what led to Hipper's interest in visualising children? My first answer is I'd be careful about assuming they were all children. Some were of his former wife who was an acrobatic gymnast who had a very youthful body. So it's a bit more complex than that in the sense that I don't think it's necessarily children in general, which isn't to say it couldn't be read that way, but I don't think that was his starting point.

J.E: Well, Tanya Poole, who was actually my starting point when I began this investigation, suggested that his family background played a lot into it… apparently his mother was British and his father German. And he had a history of ill health…

M.H: He was a diabetic…

J.E: …and he was interested in the fragility of the body. Would you agree with that analysis?

M.H: The last time I saw Mark Hipper was in 2001 so my answers are based on what I knew at the time between 1998 and 2001. What I say is that he might have subsequently articulated various theories about the role of the body in his work but at the time I knew him, and certainly at the time of the exhibition, that was not being made public. We look back on our work and we see things, realise things that we didn't realise at the time, so I'm not contradicting Tanya's account but I'd say it wasn't more grounded at the time of the *Viscera* exhibition. Something else… I think that virtually all that work was made in Berlin and had been shown in Berlin previously.

J.E: As far as I know, it was exhibited as *The Corpus Membrane*.

M.H: Yeah. So the work was shipped… all his possessions… when he moved to… he'd come back to South Africa the year before and done a year at UCT, teaching. All his stuff was still in Germany and I remember helping him unpack it at Rhodes. It had been shipped from Berlin.

He ran an artists' space in Berlin for a couple of years and I think the work had been shown there so it only arrived not that long before the festival. When I took over at Rhodes I really wanted to make the place international because it had been a backwater… the place was a mess in many different ways… so I wanted to put on a good show, something very different from what had been shown at Rhodes at previous festivals. What they used to do was to show the students' work in the gallery… it was presented very amateurishly… so I wanted a very slick, European-quality show as the first exhibition of the festival during my tenure as professor. So it was very heavily promoted and really well presented, but we didn't expect a fallout.

J.E: Alan Crump was quoted as saying that if it had been shown in Jo'burg nobody would've looked twice. Do you think that's true?

M.H: It's tricky because things… maybe at the time it would've been ok. My then partner, who was out from England and as a curator she's worked with a lot of (inaudible) prize-winners and stuff like that, said you would've had trouble showing that in England because of the depiction of the erection… of the children. So I'd say England was further down the… becoming more aware of paedophilia than perhaps South Africa was. It's been such a major thing here for so long. There're endless high-profile paedophilia cases in the UK and that's been going on for a long time so I think for social reasons it was possibly more controversial… certain local circumstances… whereas in South Africa where children are being raped the whole time paedophilia wasn't so high on the agenda. So where were we?

J.E: You were talking about *Viscera* and your intentions for the show and helping Mark unpack his work from Berlin.

M.H: So as I was helping him unpack the work because I had only seen the work in reproduction, you see, for his job application, we were talking about it and this and that. I don't remember the illness and the fragility aspect being mentioned at that time. He was interested in some of the taboos surrounding children's sexuality but I don't think at that time he could articulate them particularly clearly. I think he was still at a fairly intuitive level of externalising the work verbally. And the other way round, like writing books before I had the work.

J.E: He mentions that he'd been reading a lot of Freud at the time as well. Do you think psychoanalysis played quite a big role in his conceptual choices/subject matter?

M.H: It's possible. My own areas of critical theory I'm interested in are slightly different, so we didn't have many conversations about that aspect of it. I'm into very different people… but it's a reasonable assumption to make. Someone who might be of use to you is the guy who found Hipper dead, Tim Huisamen. Have you spoken to him?

J.E: No, I haven't.

M.H: He is a professor, yes he's a member of the Senate, professor of Afrikaans at Rhodes. He was probably Hipper's closest friend there after I left and he used to work with him quite a lot before because they lived close to each other. I lived on the edge of Grahamstown and there were no taxis in those days so going out drinking and going home several miles was not a good idea in the dark in South Africa. So I tended not to socialise much. But he was a very good friend. I'm sure they would have talked a lot about various things. It would be worth talking to him, definitely. The other person is a painter friend, Robert Hodgins, whom Hipper used to hang out with in Jo'burg. Another person is Gavin Younge. If you mention my name… I don't know what Gavin might have to add. Gavin was the best man at our wedding, a very good friend of mine, we go back a long way now. You might get some stuff there. I think you can project a lot of things onto Hipper's work. It's interesting that after that his work changed quite a lot. He then started making the carvings and the body masks. Something which you might not know… very soon after he arrived in Grahamstown he made a lot of effort to connect with African culture in various ways. He started learning Xhosa. We shared a maid… I gave my maid some work with him and she started to teach him Xhosa. He spoke Afrikaans as well though he wasn't South African. He wanted to make work which was more grounded in Africa than in Berlin. The *Viscera* work was in a way the end of a phase… made in Europe… he wanted to move on. When I moved to South Africa I didn't do any work for twelve months because I wanted to learn and understand a bit about where I was.

J.E: I actually found two articles that report on shows that he did in Cape Town and Durban in early 1997 that people also apparently found upsetting but there wasn't the same outcry about them. I wonder what it was about Grahamstown at that particular time that became "the perfect storm"? Was it the political context? Do you think it was mostly Sisulu?

M.H: Things that happen at the Festival tend to have a high profile. You've got all the nations' art press there and TV crews and stuff, plus the Journalism Department; they're hyperactive and I think sometimes they try to generate news as well. I'm not saying they stirred anything up here, but I would imagine that their attitude to it didn't calm things down. The Journ.

students were everywhere, trying to ferret out stories. So those were some of the things that drove it. Then Sisulu announced she was offended as an African woman, without having seen anything, and announced that she was going to come to Grahamstown to see the show. But what happened was she came to Grahamstown on a Saturday and I stood in front of the Rhodes Art School the whole bloody morning waiting for her to show up and she didn't. My spies afterwards told me that she'd spent the whole morning at the ANC's Arts Centre which is a couple of miles away in the township. She never saw the work, she never saw it at all.

J.E: I read a quote in which she admits she'd never seen the work before she labelled it pornography but that seeing it later never changed her mind. I thought that was really ridiculous.

M.H: We decided not to make her lose face by revealing she hadn't been to the exhibition. It would just make things worse. And she's a very, very powerful woman. There was no need to take her on like that by showing her up. Far better to present cogent arguments. This went through Rhodes Senate. The Vice-Chancellor, David Woods, was very good; he used to support the Arts School and come to openings, and he gave me free hand to deal with everything. I remember not going through the University press office or anything. He said, "You should speak directly to the press, but don't let Hipper near them!"

J.E: Oh really, is that why the reporting from the time doesn't evidence anything he said? You were trying to keep him away from the journalists?

M.H: We were trying to keep him away because he was a loose cannon. It's as simple as that. Wasn't patronising. It was just that if he spoke he was unlikely to improve the situation.

J.E: And I'm sure that a lot of people were quite willing to take things out of context in order to make it more sensational.

M.H: There was an interview on Carte Blanche… I don't know if any of that's around?

J.E: I contacted them but I think I need to try a little harder to get them to give me access.

M.H: I'm just scanning down (your questions)… I think I'll email this back to you. Paul Wessels… I think in some sense the idea of the viewer completing the work, I think you can say that about any art work, so I've not really answered that question beyond that.

J.E: In relation to that, what I'm interested in is that my impression is from the moment it's labelled as pornography and especially in Sundstrom's article where she claims that they did take photographs of the work but that they wouldn't include them with the article because they should be censored… from that moment his work ceases to exist as visual objects – they become descriptions in text.

M.H: It's true and it's not true because you're dealing with a reproduction of the work first of all, not the work itself, so the work doesn't cease to exist – the work continues to exist but it has another dimension to it.

J.E: But I mean for the audience – the work's public has to understand the work in terms of people's descriptions of things that they can't see.

M.H: You can say the same thing about a black-and-white reproduction of a coloured artwork. It's not the same – it's got some aspects of it which it conveys, it's got others which aren't. It's got limitations of the media, limitations of size or whatever. It's not a simulacrum. So there're always going to be things which are missing, which create misreadings. In this instance the images were intentionally censored, but they were only one set of images. The work still existed and existed in other reproductions so I don't think you can be too sweeping about that. Certainly, if the censored images start getting reproduced everywhere, then that's interesting because they take on a life of their own. The life of images and the afterlife of images… Phil Mitchell, an American art critic, has written several books on the life of images, what do images do, how do they operate, how do they grow… is very good. And that might be an aspect. I think one of the things that did come through with regard to censorship…

…what happened, they supported the Fine Arts Department and the Senate quite liked the idea of taking on the government in a censorship battle. We were very solid, whereas I can imagine at some universities if that had happened, particularly in England, that would not have been the case.

J.E: I was just wondering why the university had been so supportive during *Viscera* but not likewise when one of his body masks had been on show in the Albany Museum and was then removed.

M.H: OK, a number of reasons maybe. First of all, a different Vice-Chancellor who possibly wasn't a supporter of the arts. Secondly that the Fine Arts Department became a bit of a shambles after I left, in fact that was one of the reasons I did leave. Also the Albany Museum is in a

very difficult position because they've been trying to change the name of the museum, trying to get rid of 'Albany' and anything (colonial) in the Eastern Cape. It's probably the "Africanisation" of it. So anything which involves controversy I'd imagine the Albany Museum would back down. They're very threatened in lots of different ways. They wanted to rename Grahamstown as well, after a Xhosa leader who told his people they were proofed against bullets because of his magic and so they charged down the hill to the university and got gunned down. It's macabre. There's a lot of that going on so I think that's maybe a subtext to the Albany Museum, pulling the body masks. Funnily enough, my maid who is very clumsy who also worked for Hipper… he came in one morning… he had one of his body masks hanging on the wall in his house and she had hung her coat on one.

J.E: Did the international press feel it was an infringement on freedom of expression or did they similarly feel that these were illicit images?

M.H: There was a lot of support in the international press, I think, by putting things in about his wife being portrayed, the fact that there was this assumption in South Africa that they were all children, and then this thing about some of them being drawn from life, a mixture of myth and reality, a sort of conflation, and if you say it's the artist's self-portrait it shifts it because it's no longer voyeuristic in that sense – a child is not being taken advantage of. I think those are important points in terms of how it wasn't particularly controversial. But also it was a long way away, I mean Grahamstown's a fairly remote place. I think the fact that it was the National Arts Festival made the difference in terms of international press coverage. If it had been a gallery in Jo'burg, a normal exhibition, not so many press would have been there. There'd have been a bit of an outcry, but it would've been a local one. The Arts Festival is international and you have international arts press there, this massive concentration of people. It's easy for something like that to bounce around the world, would still only seem a minor story in context in The New York Times or the British press. So it sounds good that it made the pages of The New York Times: "Censorship row over exhibition at South African arts festival". I think anything involving South Africa and censorship, the New South Africa, in the outside world gives it a bit of extra spin in a way, I think.

J.E: Do you think it necessarily matters how the images were created? Do you think that should change the way they are read? The way the law is phrased re classifying child pornography says it can be any image of any medium alluding to a person under 18, whether they are or not.

M.H: It's bad law. It's badly drafted law. There's a lot of that in South African because so many laws were written hastily after the end of Apartheid. I remember the Terry Kurgan incident and I think the disparity between hers and Hipper's episode was that he had a much higher profile because of the arts festival, which is the key to this in many ways. It's a window for the world to see South African art and it gets very intensive coverage so everything gets amplified. There's a frenetic atmosphere and so people are having hissy fits. Things are much more extreme during the festival because for the rest of the time Grahamstown is asleep. So I don't think the disparity is to do with gender because, again, the image which caused the problem was a male child and I don't think the gender difference would make any difference really, but that's just my personal view.

J.E: Were any of the images that I attached the most controversial ones?

M.H: The boy masturbating was the one. Hipper's main comment about that was… with a smile on his face, he's proud of himself. So it's as though he wasn't doing it for a viewer, it was for himself. It's reflective in that sense. Most of these you've attached look familiar. You've certainly got the time period right. I'm not sure about the mouth/vulva ones whether they were slightly later. No, I think they were in the show. I'm not sure about those… there were so many others in that exhibition. There're a lot of works which you haven't got here…

J.E: I have a whole file of images that his sister sent me. The ones I sent you seemed to correspond with the descriptions in the press. Maybe I could send you some others?

M.H: The one which caused the problem was the young boy with an erection with a slight smile on his face. That was the most controversial. He's definitely got a sort of smirk on his face. You might try the Rhodes Art School – there might be some departmental records still. I think certainly in the UK it's much more difficult to do anything with children. If you work in a school you have to have a criminal record check done before you can actually work there. Not just as a teacher -- a cleaner, any job where you have contact with children you have to have this clearance certificate to prove you don't have any convictions for child molesting. There've been so many paedophilia rings in the UK that it's very much a taboo subject.

J.E: Terry Kurgan thought about going back to that series of works but she definitely wouldn't because it's just too contentious and difficult. There seems to be a heightened anxiety about children.

M.H: The sad thing is that it doesn't seem to have done anything to protect Black children from being raped and such. It's a White problem. The problem is not spoken of, the unseen ones, that's what really needs highlighting rather than a middle-class White person.

J.E: They were trying so hard to suggest that Hipper was a shady paedophile when I'm sure many children were being abused within in their own family circles.

M.H: I think Hipper was more interested in students over the age of 18 than in children! He didn't appear to have any proclivity for children. The other thing with paedophilia is that in England it's made a lot of adults frightened of showing any affection towards children.

J.E: The focus of my thesis is the ideal of the Romantic Child, how that played into how we understand childhood and children, and pictures of them.

M.H: So you've done an historical survey of images of children?

J.E: My first chapter is a summary of how our understanding of children through visualisations of them changed over the course of 1000 years from the medieval period to today. Also major developments in technology and how that affected the distribution of images and their comsumption. Then looking at Terry Kurgan and Mark Hipper and these two cases as case studies for a South African reaction to images.

M.H: What do you think of the Chapman Brothers' early work?

J.E: Very alarming! What Hipper's work highlights is the 'gaze of the bystander', the feeling that one gets, knowing that other people are watching your reaction to them. So I think the Chapman Brothers play into that quite a lot. I think Mark Hipper's images are a lot more visceral and haptic.

M.H: Yes, but the Chapmans'are exquisitely crafted. The Chapmans are completely anal about craftsmanship, they're perfectly made like a Jeff Koons. I saw one of the big ones in the gallery, a group of little girls fused together. It stopped me dead in my tracks. It's a bit like the reaction to the sublime, that you can't take it in for a second. 'What the hell am I seeing?' and then rationality kicks in. I think they're some of the best things they've done. I think they get a bit 'schlocky' a lot of the time and when we were new to their tactics they had more impact than they do now. I don't think there's been any controversy -- those have been reproduced endlessly. There's a sort of innocence, a sort of mutated innocence of the Chapmans' figures. How does the audience receive these figures? As victims? or as a huge joke because it's so outrageous? Perhaps the other thing is it also highlights the enduring

power of painting which leaves something to the imagination rather than something being complete. The spectator has to complete it. A painting can, I think, achieve a lot of things which photography can't achieve in that respect. You have more work to do.

J.E: That why I asked you that question about the "work" of the work because it does leave something open that needs to be completed by the viewer; their perception of the work completes it.

M.H: It's the same with any painting, even a photo-realist painting. I'm not a painter incidentally, never have been, it's far too difficult. You can go back to a painting far more perhaps than you can go back to a photographic art work. Usually with a photograph you get it all at once. Its power diminishes each time you return to it. With a good painting that not the case. Hipper was a good painter.

J.E: Nobody really engaged with the formal elements of Hipper's work on an art-historical level.

M.H: It's possible, maybe it still needs to be written. I wouldn't say it was the highest point in his career, but I think some of the things he did after were less strong. The body masks I felt were a bit flimsy. I've got a very good body mask, extremely good one, not of his, an authentic one. I always felt… they weren't critically solid for me. It wasn't appropriation. It was a sort of mish-mash of perhaps not very well articulated intentions. What was going on was a White man appropriating a native African art form… to do what? For me, they weren't conceptually precise. At the same time he got a great deal of satisfaction out of the physical act of carving. I think they were the first things he carved and he spent a couple of years just carving after that. Jacaranda wood, which isn't even an African tree – it's Australian. For me, that's a flaw in a way. Unless you weave a good piece of critical theory around the jacaranda wood being an import, the wood being pale rather than dark, etc. Unless you start to construct that sort of critical foundation for that sort of work, which as far as I know he didn't, it's not strong enough. That's my feeling anyway.

J.E: Do you think the after-effects of *Viscera* were damaging in that he was sent in a direction making work that was possibly not as good as before?

M.H: I think there might have been, in that respect. On the other hand the publicity he got from it, having not really been in South Africa that long, probably stood him in good stead for the rest of his career.

J.E: I get the feeling that it was very damaging for him because he was constantly perceived by the public through this lens, tainted by what happened even though he was cleared.

M.H: He was an extremely sensitive person. At the same time he was so forthright. He used to do a lot of damage to other people's sensitivities. That's the way he was, he was in endless trouble through upsetting people – at the same time he was so sensitive. It's an ironic contradiction. I feel that this work was European and he'd come back to Africa where he was born. After the show he wanted to move on. Whether that was due to what happened at the show or whether… the work was a number of years old… a different continent in a very, very different situation. So I think you must be careful not to read too much into the impact of the show on what he did subsequently. I'm not saying it wasn't a factor but there were certainly other factors as play as well. My work changed completely when I moved to South Africa. The subject matter changed, the way I worked changed, but it took me a year to actually make anything because I needed to understand where I was. I didn't show the old work in South Africa and I acquired new interests – I had to. What I was doing in Europe wouldn't make sense where I was. Some of that with Hipper too. From Berlin to Grahamstown, come on!

J.E: Why do you think he did come back?

M.H: I'm not too sure about the end of the marriage. He certainly wanted to make a break. He was at UCT for a year before we appointed him, so he'd been back but he only got a temporary post at UCT. He certainly wasn't in a relationship of any permanence when he arrived. He left South Africa as far as I understand to avoid being drafted into the Army, that why he got (inaudible) and did his Master's there at the Meisterschule with Baselitz. I don't know whether you've explored any of that connexion? Do you know the German Meisterschule system?

J.E: I'm not too familiar with it.

M.H: You have one tutor, your master, if you like. Hipper's was Georg Baselitz. I think there's some brutality there perhaps, in the sensitivity. I mean the work's very German for me, so I think there's a lot of stuff he brought with him. He was a superb draughtsman and the shift from drawing and painting to carving was completely new for him. He started from scratch as far as I know with this new body of work. The university had chopped down some jacaranda trees and there was a lot of wood lying around and he thought he'd have a go at carving and he was carving seven days a week. When he wasn't teaching he was carving. So

it was a massive shift. A lot of it, when you got into conversation with him, was about wanting to make his connexion with Africa, whatever that meant. After I'd been in South Africa for a year… do you know Obie Oberholzer? Associate Professor and Head of the Photography Section, Rhodes University, School of Fine Art. He said to me, 'You will never understand Africa.' I said, 'I don't even understand the Rhodes Art School!' There was a lot of romantic slosh in Grahamstown about Africa, to make a connection with Africa.

J.E: Have you heard about the 'Rhodes must fall' campaign?

M.H: Yes, I have. I'm following that very closely. I think one of the strongest arguments against changing the university's name is that it's an international university and if you give it some name which is too exotic it will not help the university as an international institution.

J.E: Nor their brand and their image.

M.H: Exactly. Same as the Grahamstown Festival. You spend fifty years building up the festival as the Grahamstown Festival, then you change it to the M? Festival, or whatever, you're starting from scratch in a way, internationally. There are a lot of people who are proponents of Africanisation in that sense who are looking at the situation from within rather from how it's perceived elsewhere. It's an organisation operating internationally and you have to take that into account. It's naïve not to do so, to throw away 50 or 60 years of branding. It's such a radical act… you're starting from scratch.

Annexure C

Interview with Tanya Poole: 20/06/2015

Interview with Tanya Poole [T.P] conducted by Judith Evans [J.E]: Pretoria

20/06/2015

J.E: What is your sense of what lead to Hipper's interest in visualising children?

T.P: I think…I think that Mark had been looking at systems of authority, um…you know that he was half German? And went to the German school ? And then he did…he studied in Germany as well (at one of the Kunst places), and uh, do you know Anton Kostels work?

J.E: I don't, no

T.P: Okay. He was sort of looking at similar things. He had found some old books which were about kids doing gym in the playground and you know, its … I think it was a little bit informed by Nazi Germany and pre-Nazi Germany and I think there was a little informed by South Africa which in turn, I think, was informed by some of those European pre-war and wartime systems of authority and … there was that whole body beautiful drive, that Arian nation thing. Um now what I'm telling you is my reading of stuff and from what I know he was looking at so don't take my word as his, it's just, you know, what I think you trying to get it is and they'd have these fields full of people tuk tuk tuk all of this uh…

J.E: Sort of like the same stuff in Riefenstahl Olympiad, the scenes of like of uhm sort of seas of women like doing the same exercises and repetitive exercises.

T.P: Yes exactly that, everyone dressed the same in quite kind of, I mean if you think that it was the 1940's; quite revealing outfits, like those sort of funny little gym pants and gym vests. And I think that he was, he was looking at authority, he was also looking, he also had quite a neurotic eye, I suspect all that body and all that, I don't know what those things were made of, spandex or whatever, you know? But I mean I'm not talking about kids here, I'm talking about grownups, but they would've been young adults, they would have been 17 or 18, people in sort of the prime of the Arian youth as being kind of put on display for their … perfectness. There's a lot of homoerotic images, I think from books around that time as well, people are really good at sublimating I suspect because of the authority structure that was so heavily in place. When I look back at things that I know about that period, and I see the sort of weird like slightly warped pleasure stuff that came out of it. When people talk about that time in the sort of late 30's in Germany where they had these dances, there was a lot of

grotesquery, a lot of erotica, there was … it was very very hectic, you know people kind of did mad things. You had this sense that people were kind of teetering a little bit on a precipice. And when things get like that people behave outside of their [inaudible] and because they doing that they also bring back an extra kind of authority or hardness into it. It's not a… there might be pleasure or a kind of Dionysian hecticness about it, but it's not gentle or uhm, what's the word… nurturing. So it's the long route, I'm trying to think of all the things that I was aware of that Mark was looking at. So some of those he was looking at the adults who were doing it and some of them were the kids as well, was now, now we have to bring up our c ildren in the same system. We have to exert authority in every aspect of our lives. Interestingly, his mum was from Liverpool and his dad was German, it's quite unusual for… Britain and German of that generation …

J.E: Yes because of the animosity from the war.

T.P: Yes, so I suspect there was a little bit of a higher consciousness of what, the kind of things that had gone on. Then his mum, who was from Liverpool, went on to not only learn German but teach German after she met his dad. So I also remember him looking at books which dealt with disease or medical… medical journals and it wasn't necessarily only around that time but there was definitely older books, but I mean I'm trying to look back and I cannot tell you if they were from the 70's or 50's.

J.E: I think that's why I was under the impression that they weren't like real children in the sense that there was a subject in front of him that he was using because he spoke about he had used images like that, that were sort of decontextualized from those kinds of sources, like medical journals and various other things and that later series with uh you know with the older children that are, like *Jump* for example …

T.P: Oh okay ya, there's a couple of different bodies of work that I can sort of talk briefly about there, but for this stuff you talking about whose looking very specifically, very decontextualized children and he was looking at mouths and he was looking at mouths and eroticism, mouths and pain, uhm you know that he was diabetic?

J.E: Ah I heard that's why, what resulted in his death, from complications with that.

T.P: Fuck it was awful, we were actually waiting for him, we were sitting waiting for him and he just didn't pitch up and he was lying dead in his house. Absolutely awful, but it affects your eyes and he had also had a lot of dental work done. I think if you look at *Viscera,* one of the

things … I'm hopping about all over the show sorry. Uhm one of the things which I think that a lot of people missed about the exhibition Viscera is that people saw an older man looking at young boys masturbating and thought that it was a paedophilic gaze. I'm not so sure about that, I think that a lot of Mark himself was invested in a sort of self-portraiture in that sense actually. I think that Mark's body was always uncomfortable, not in a… in the way that it looks like, how we would imagine that fatness would be ugly or but a capable body. Uhm, and teeth were certainly part of it. I can see him looking at that stuff with an eye to his own sense of what it would've been like in the 60's? 70's? 70's I guess and looking back to his parents, what he imagined his parents experiences could have been as well. Later he worked from models, he was, I think he was actually engaged to somebody in Berlin. She was a contortionist, he worked from life from her, I think she had quite a slender, sort of youthful body. And then the series *Jump* (2007), that was also somebody that he was in love with, Beth Armsrong…um, she modelled for him, so that was a very specific woman.

J.E: Yes. I found it interesting that a lot of people misread those images as being children as opposed to an adult, pictures of an adult…

T.P: Yes…

J.E: …that sort of where that disconnect comes in between the people that saw…so those made up part of the show right? The *Viscera* show?

T.P: Not that I am aware Jude, I'm pretty sure that they were later. My chronology is…like its telescoping back and it's a bit foreshortened.

J.E: I think that's one of the problems that I am having now is that there's all these images that are kind of disconnected and there's no sense of like where do they all fit in together. So it's difficult for me to also get a sense of how he moved through working with those different images.

T.P: There was a show that he did where he had tiny little paintings with actual teeth stuck into… I don't know if you saw those? Stuck into paint, cause that was also a bit like a link between those dentistry images and the actual real teeth, and I think they could have been baby teeth. They were quite grizzly, they were quite beautiful.

J.E: Cool, uhm is there anything else?

T.P: No, no but I mean it's so amazing, I mean I've been thinking sitting this week thinking, or the last couple of days thinking what can I possibly give you that you haven't got already. But I mean it's like unlocking all of these memories, it's fantastic.

J.E: I think like the problem I said, is that it's difficult to… uh because I can find a lot of small pieces about him and about his work and some images but there's no sense of what they are and how they fit together and how he used them and at what time and that sort of thing. So that's what makes it quite difficult for me, so this is fantastic, thank you. Uhm okay cool, do you believe the fact that Hipper does not depict any real children should have bearing on the manner in which these works are perceived and understood? And I'm thinking as opposed to Graham Ovenden, who was, I don't know if you've heard of him? He was a very respected artist in England, uhm he came from the pre-Raphaelite, or he was influenced by the pre-Raphaelite movement. So in the 70's he and a series of other artists sort of tried to rejuvenate that movement and those ideals, so it was a kind of harping back to the medieval time period. And he started taking, or making paintings of young children and he was very respected and I think he had a whole bunch of portraits in the portrait gallery and things. And then uhm, a few times like in the 1980's, he was raided cause he also collected a lot of Victorian photography of children. Uh so he was arrested and a lot of his work seized uh because he was accused of making child pornography. Uhm but then the art world came to sort of his rescue and there were a number of petitions to have him released and to have his work released and various other things. But then fairly recently, like in the last 5 years, somebody came forward or a few girls that sat for him came forward to say that he had molested them and he was eventually …

T.P: That sounds very dodgy to me.

J.E: … ya he was eventually sort of convicted of like sort of paedophilia and uh you know abusing the children back then. So what I'm trying to say is that because like, I mean so not as far as you know that he had an actual child sit for him, there were older. Ya so that's what I mean that they like images of children that he used and sort of reconstituted as opposed to that moment having a naked child in front of you and using that as like a subject for your work. Do you think that has, that sort of changes the way the work should be read or does it not really matter if they are real or not.

T.P: Obviously those, you know, there's so many lines that are blurred there so uh I mean I have a child myself, she's 13 years old and I'm an extremely protective parent. So I mean, my eye

in my answer now is coming from as someone who has strong radars for this kind of stuff. And I never got that from him, ever! So I don't think so and I think if you look at I mean obviously sort of what I've given you for the last, for what I've answered for the last answer is kind of applicable here, it's much more of an illustration of of quite a different content of systems of control, of where does somebody else's authority over you stop, it stops at your own body. But sometimes it doesn't, if you look at the question of abortion, who the fuck is the government to say that you, I will or will not do this with my own body. And I always had the sense of those young men or boys masturbating, that it was tortured like a very serious, like a diary of Adrian Mole, rather than any pleasurable, what the word be … ya looking for your own selfish erotic gain. It's not pornography in that sense, having said that I don't doubt that he crossed a few lines there but I think it's interesting, I don't think the offensiveness of it in that sense went into paedophilia or anything unnatural. I might be sticking my neck out.

J.E: When that work was censored in 1970 with Viscera when they put an age restriction on it, it eventually…

T.P: As they should.

J.E: … ya ya but I mean suppose like the whole thing with pornography is not necessarily the photos but that there was a real child that had been affected by having those photos taken. So that's sort of the problem I suppose with Terry's work of her child, you know at the time that's what upset people about it but here people got upset about images of children and there wasn't even necessarily a real child behind them. So that's kind of what I'm asking, you know do you think that makes a difference or is you know is the image enough I guess?

T.P: What exactly is the question there?

J.E: Well does it matter that there is a real child or not? In the same way that apparently a lot of porn websites use the same software they use to age people missing children, to make them look older they reverse it and they…

T.P: You're joking.

J.E: … Older young women that are like 18 look younger purposefully.

T.P: Oh my god, fuck how hideous.

J.E: So there answer is always, you know these are over 18 women, but they still perpetuating the idea of a child.

T.P: Ya I mean it's difficult, obviously Sally Mann has had to fend off accusations her whole life. Perhaps some of these accusations are true; you know we have this gut feel for what is right and what is not. I mean for myself and my daughter, I have always asked her permission to put anything up that I have painted of her. I would never paint her naked body, although I did once when she was a little girl, she had some knickers on but again that was about the fear of death, it wasn't about anything else. Having said that I don't think that actually even that is kind of allowable because what do you know when you 8 and somebody says can I put this picture up on the wall, you not smart enough to know what good restrictions there should be. Uhm as far as I know Mark didn't have any children directly sit for him. Uhm I think that an artist as a parent is very different as an artist who is not a parent. It's a very dodgy area.

J.E: Could it be argued that Hipper's depictions of children are those of bad children and that his children who illustrate of proto-sexuality and thus betray the dictate of the Romantic Child ideal which demands that children be understood in a context of sexual vacuousness and innocence?

T.P: Yoh that's like 3 questions in one. Tell me about your understanding of what you mean by the Romantic Child ideal?

J.E: So, influenced by the Romantic poets and artists that interpreted, so people like Wordsworth and others that looked or used the child as an example of innocence.

T.P: A kind of Rousseauist attitude.

J.E: Ya so Rousseau was the one with a meal that sort of establishes that notion and links the child and nature as sort of being separate to community and I suppose with the Romantics, the Industrialisation of Europe at the time. This ideal emerges and then with artists, particularly Romantic artists, that then interpret those ideals and visualise them. It becomes like a child that is pre-sexuality and always wearing white, clean, in nature, dumb, vacuous, nothing going on inside so that it is, so it's like a tabula rasa or bland slate and then you imbue whatever desire you have onto the body of the child, and then you can just sort of fill it up. So one writer in particular writes about how as soon as a child seems to have sexuality, it betrays the ideal of the child and that's why we find it so upsetting because we've been

encoded with this sort of knee-jerk reaction to think of children as being a vision of the Romantic Child. As soon as there's an image of a child that looks different to that it upsets us even more because it is undercutting the ideal. So someone talks about them as being "bad" children essentially because they seem to have the sexuality (I'm thinking especially of those images of the children masturbating). Those are very visual, jarring images of sexuality; all the children are drawn according to their sexuality.

T.P: Yes… their genitals… little blushes of colour there. He makes it very clear; he's not being coy about it. The myth of the innocent child is shattered with a lot of people. There is a view of nature and there's a view of children and there're people who group them together in terms of nature is innocent, children are innocent and all of this becomes mythologised to a point of blandness or inactivity or [inaudible] whereas wi h me I feel much more strongly that you can get children that are almost an eruption of nature, they're lawless, they're mad, they're uncontained by what we consider good or bad. You get children who are very different from that who know what is good and what is bad and are very well behaved. My daughter's like that. As a child, I was the opposite. It's untrue to say that prepubescent kids don't have sexual feelings. I think some do and some don't. You have the full range across. Those pre-Raphaelite painters for example are fucking horrendously naïve. I also wonder if that's not another system of control as well, and not only a system of control but a system of excuse for the kind of approach that that guy you were talking about… Graham Ovenden was looking at where he was saying, 'No, this is innocence. How could I be a paedophile? How could I be bad actually looking at innocence?' I think the whole ideal of the Romantic Child would have to be very carefully deconstructed. And I think the idea of innocence itself has to be constructed. When we hear the word 'innocence' now something which is pure and untrammelled and untested and untried but actually it just means 'inexperienced', in another sense of the word 'innocence'. Somebody who hasn't done something yet. So that's a very complex question.

J.E: Do you think in a way he gives children a sense of agency in his paintings, in that he allows them a voice? That possibly society disallows children?

T.P: He imagines… but he certainly gives them agency and I respect that. I've seen too many images of kids especially the innocent stereotype which seems to me like another system of constraint and weird fantasy of people who want to control other people. This is weird. So I haven't actually even thought about this stuff that's coming out. I remember my parents or the parents of anyone of my generation knew you mustn't snog the boys in the car park

when you're 15 or whatever. When it comes to me, my child must do what she wants to do. It's not my body, it's her body and that's that. She has to learn her boundaries by intuitively feeling them and then she also has to put those boundaries in place. [inaudible] going into dodgy areas and getting into difficult situations but the last line of it is if she has feelings and wants to act on them that that's fine. It's her jurisdiction.

J.E: Why do you think it is that it's the institutional framing of the Viscera exhibition did not have an effect in guarding against the emotional and legal reactions to the work? I don't know know if you've heard of Steven ?? He wrote a book called "Spearheading Debate". It came out recently but he actually looks at both these exhibitions: Purity & Danger and Viscera and how people reacted to them. He talks about how the framing, especially with Purity & Danger, that it took place in the university, that guarded a lot of the reaction that it might have had but as far as I know Viscera wasn't part of the programme.

T.P: It might not have been but it was in our gallery.

J.E: How did that possibly guard against some of the reactions with that one but it didn't guard against this? Do you think it was during the festival that other people like those who might understand those images saw them and reacted to them?

T.P: To sort of go about it a roundabout way, I would imagine that, yes, people do feel guarded by institutions. I mean the debate was pretty [inaudible] at that time but all of our colleagues stood behind Mark if for nothing else but the principle of free representation and for an artist to have his/her own voice. I suspect people might have got a little bit ambushed because again the sense that the institution will guard us but then they're also going into that institution naively if that's what they think is going to be happening. I mean … part of the institution not teach Steven Cohen's 'I got fucked up my art' watching him ride with a dildo up his arse on a pair of skull heels. That's the stuff you teach and you learn about. It has to be transgressive if there's going to be any progress. In that sense people felt pretty strongly despite perhaps their own personal reaction to it but as a matter of principle.

J.E: In your opinion what element of Hipper's work was perceived as being so inherently transgressive that it warranted the imposed age restriction on the exhibition?

T.P: Children and sex.

J.E: It had a 12+ age restriction if I'm not mistaken so if these are images of children experiencing their sexuality…

T.P: …then why is it banned?

J.E: So you're almost saying that children can't look at other children…

T.P: …but then adults can. That's very problematic absolutely. One could argue that in quite a few ways and one could probably spent the entire afternoon arguing about it, so I'll just go one route and that is… I'm just going to speak very personally about this rather than on principle. I went to ??'s show up at the Monument and an age restriction hadn't been put on it and I took my daughter with me… she must have been 9 or 10 at the time… and one of the surveillance videos showed a group of 4 or 5 men stomping somebody to death … for real. It would have actually traumatised my daughter for a very long time if she'd actually seen that. But she didn't see it; I whipped her out quick and I made quite a big scene about it because it's bullshit… children are innocent and not innocent. There're times when you have to, have to protect them. Whether they're innocent or not innocent stems from themselves. The only thing you can do is help protect them from outside influence which you feel they're not ready for. Which is not necessarily bad, not good. In the instance of Mark's show but that for which they're not ready or equipped. That's when trauma comes in. If you're sensitised to something or understand something or if you've been exposed to something it's very different than if you haven't. So that is where I would argue for an age restriction even though it seems weird that the agency is almost flipped on its head. I think Mark was seriously playing with dodgy material. Children and sex is way too private and it shouldn't be revealed, given over to someone else's gaze, because the gaze is about power and power corrupts and power can traumatise. On the other side every right is taken away so in that sense the exhibition is deeply problematic. Having said that, I know that many of Mark's issues were with his own body and his own sexuality. A lot of that stuff was straight forward portraiture. Some of it was other ideas not about sexuality but what sexuality could represent as a vulnerable mode. There were two old people who came into the exhibition and they left and Mark said, 'Did you find this obscene?' The guy said, 'The only thing I found obscene about your exhibition is your [inaudible]'.

J.E: Do you think that the public's response to this exhibition had any effect on the manner in which Hipper dealt with the images of children in subsequent work?

T.P: I don't know, it might have. I think if you'd asked him he'd have said it wouldn't but I think it might have. I think that wasn't the kind of reaction he was trying to court. I have to be

honest, I think he was devastated that these accusations of paedophilia were… and he felt quite gutted and misunderstood.

J.E: When I interviewed Terry she actually said that she stopped working with that stuff altogether because it was just too much, that she'd always wanted to look at it again but couldn't because of the public reaction and didn't want to experience that again.

T.P: I had a similar experience. It's grim territory and not something you want to be tarnished with.

J.E: Thank you so much. Is there anything else about Mark's practice and just sort of spending time with him, about how he worked, possibly?

T.P: Not really. He was a real artist. You get lecturers who are more managerial than artistic. Mark was very much an artist. He was a difficult man and he was hard to get on with. He was very abrasive but he was very sensitive as well. He wasn't (inaudible), he was just very complicated… and quite lonely. And he worked all the time. We shared a studio space when I took over his job… I mean, you couldn't even get in there. Very prolific. And a thinker, a real thinker, a writer and a reader.

J.E: I find it so odd that I haven't been able to find anything that he wrote.

T.P: I don't think I remember anything he wrote, publishable writing. As for journalistic or diaristic stuff, lots of notes on his paintings, lots of annotations in books. He loved Tchaikovsky, loved images, he was such a beautiful painter and he understood paint and drawing. Nigel was just saying the ease of line and then something just got snarled up. [inaudible] understanding of how to communicate through failure of line is as much through success of line. That's when you're really starting to understand the medium as a proper self-reflexive tool, for me, and [inaudible] Beth, they were in love. He did some work which is about kids in that sort of … did some kids swimming… those were quite interesting in the sense that… sort of two different realities… little bit of your body… your head above, then a floating, naked body underneath. [inaudible] on a camera or an eye and like a little bit disconnected. Those were quite interesting. The one that I've got of … I'll take a photo and send it to you… quite a big painting like this and it's a trademark [inaudible] been along together holding hands. I think they're all blindfolded, or one isn't, one has fallen over. It's beautiful; it's like a nursery rhyme. There's nothing dodgy or transgressive or even provocative about it. It's quite, again, informed by these books with the images of children.

But when I saw the stuff that he was doing with Beth I thought that was interested as well in that context. The way that children were brought up at that point… do this, do that, jump on this chair, check your gym knickers… if that stuff goes unquestioned it can produce a generation of Victoriana in morality. So I'm surprised that people mistake Beth's body which was very long and slender and nubile in a sense for those kids because they are seen very much in proximity.

J.E: I was also thinking about the line drawings of the contortionist. A lot of people read those as images of children. So I think that's where my question came in about it not being a real child, but it doesn't matter because it still looks like one. Do you know what sort of time period all those (inaudible) when he was in Germany or from like the early 1990s?

T.P: Not all of it. Definitely the contortionist was when he was in Germany. Those were done from life in Berlin. Then, I think quite a few were subsequent to that. I'm sorry I can't help you more with the dates. Nigel is better with dates than I am. Before you go, let me get some more details…

J.E: Thank you so much.

Annexure D

Skype conversation with Marie-Louise Bethune: 01/07/2015

Skype conversation with Marie-Louise Bethune [M-L.B] conducted by Judith Evans [J.E]: Johannesburg/Sydney.

01/07/2015

J.E What do you think he [Mark Hipper] intended by using children as subject matter?

M-L.B: What it means, what he intended…I don't know if those are thing you can ever really discover entirely… what people's motivation is behind what they're doing. I think what Mark wanted to show is the fact that children do have sexual feelings… they don't necessarily know what to do with them but they do most certainly have them, and it's a part of who we are as human beings. It's something that we as a society tend to disregard and say isn't happening. The frame of reference in which it's really only ever talked about is child sexual abuse rather than anything that might just be in a sense of exploration of self. Does that make sense?

J.E: Yes, definitely. I was wondering what effect you think that whole situation [*Vicera*] had on his practice, on him personally, if it changed the way he wanted to make artwork? Or possibly it didn't have any effect on him?

M-L.B: I don't think it had any effect on him, actually. I don't think it influenced his art, what he chose to continue painting and drawing and how to make art. No, I don't think it did that at all. I think it was extremely stressful. I think he found it quite… um. I don't think he enjoyed being portrayed as somebody that was a pervert and having the show banned. I think it just outraged him entirely. I think Mark's response to any form of attack was generally outrage rather than… um, as a sort of coping mechanism for things. I mean the ludicrous thing about the show being banned, and then eventually that was lifted, was really the whole idea that that the person who decided it was offensive hadn't seen the artwork, so it really is the idea that was deemed to be offensive rather than the actual work which was really supposed to provoke thought. And I suppose in a way it did provoke thought either way for the people didn't see it, just I don't think they were really interacting with what was intended so much as their own thoughts on, I suppose, child pornography and voyeurism, which was not what Mark was about. I don't think there's any part of Mark's art that is intended to excite or to act as a type of pornography. Instead I think his emphasis is really on showing different ways of being and feeling and people's vulnerability. I think he's showing that in the people that

he draws in '99 -- a sense of his art is, I suppose, portraits of some sort or drawings of people.

J.E: Do you have any sense of what he used as subject matter for his works? Were they found images or were there any instances where he had a sitter?

M-L.B: Well, both. He used to use a lot of medical books. I don't know whether you've seen a lot of the people that look really weird…

J.E: The contorted figures, the line drawings…?

M-L.B: Yes, he had a contortionist that came and modelled for him in Berlin for quite a while, but he also did use images of contortionists, but he did also actually have a live contortionist that he worked with for quite a while in Berlin. Mmm… OK, it's giving me ideas of what images to send you as well… You'll see there's a whole series of drawings he's done of people who look really weird, and they are weird and they've got, I suppose, diseases and malformations and things. Is my sharing pictures with you good for you? …working for you?

J.E: Yes, I managed to download them off iCloud so it's fairly easy. Thank you. The only thing that I was wondering… are the pictures labelled by any chance? I'm just wondering about the titles of the work.

M-L.B: No, no titles at all.

J.E: So are the pieces all just untitled?

M-L.B: They're all untitled.

J.E: Oh, I see. OK.

M-L.B: The only thing that is at all titled is that series of lithographs that, um… in those folders. I don't know whether you've seen those…

J.E: Let me just get them open… Sorry…

M-L: And the one book that he made… actually that isn't titled, it's just a book. No, he didn't use titles. It's an interesting thing… I don't think Mark seemed to think you need to be explaining your art, that your art should be… that it's really up to the viewer to see what they wanted to.

J.E: Yes.

M-L: Having said that, he spent quite a lot of time writing… but writing about other things, not his art.

J.E: Do you have any examples of his writing?

M-L: Yeah, I do. I don't know to what extent… I'd have to look through that. There are books and books of writing…

J.E: Oh, I see…

M-L: …mainly hand-written stuff. It's not stuff you'd tend to publish either, so I'd obviously have to look through that to see whether that's something I'd want to share.

J.E: Yes, of course…

M-L.B: To what extent is he… What part is his artwork forming in your thesis?

J.E: Well, I really began my interest in images of children when I was doing the coursework for my Master's. I began it five years ago and finished the coursework but then never finished the research report and so I've come back to it this year to complete it. In the beginning I did a few papers on children's beauty pageants and I got interested in visualising the child from that point of view. Then I wrote a series of other papers about female artists that use children as subject matter in their work but it became very clear that often the reaction to their work had a lot to do the fact that they're mothers and the very close relationship to the children they depict, so I wanted to contrast a male artist that used children's bodies with a female artist that did the same thing. So essentially my paper's about looking at and comparing the works of Terry Kurgan and Mark in terms of medium and relationship to the subject.

M-L.B: …also in terms of representing children? So you want pictures of children really?

J.E: Most people are familiar with Mark's work because of the *Viscera* exhibition so most of the writing about his work, for example, that I've found references that. And what I find interesting is that often the works read as images of children so that's also a part of what I'm looking at… the Romantic Child ideal has affected the way we see images and it makes us react to them in a particular way, so that's what I'm interested in, looking at his images from that point of view, especially the differences in medium. In 1997 Terry Kurgan takes a whole series of photographs of her son, many of which he's naked in, and people are mildly upset by them but this is nothing like the serious reaction to the *Viscera* exhibition. So I'm thinking

about why that is and why the public feels so strongly about images of children. So even though some of Mark's images possibly aren't of children, like those line drawings of the contortionist, people are still convinced they *are* images of children. That's what I find quite interesting.

M-L.B: Oh yeah, with Mark, he definitely had images of children, definitely drew children. But I notice, now just looking at a couple of them, there are quite a lot of drawings here of Leah who was Mark's girlfriend for a couple of years. She's a ballet dancer and she has this almost childlike physique and so she looks like a child but she's actually a grown woman. It's interesting you were saying you were looking at children in beauty pageants. I suppose Mark's whole sense of what he thought was interesting wasn't beauty… probably was the antithesis of the beauty pageant. I remember it was years ago when I was a student I was modelling for some life drawing classes, mostly as a challenge to myself: "Could I do this?", but also just to earn money. I had just had my appendix taken out and I had this hideously large scar, bright red, the stitchmarks still very visible going down the entire length of my stomach, but not one person in the whole art class drew my scar. And I remember looking at them while they were drawing and thinking, "If Mark were drawing me, he'd be drawing my scar." And everybody else was willing this away. Perhaps another relevant example is this girl that was going to come and sit for him. Actually, I think he'd approached her about wanting to draw her … I don't know, maybe her family approached him… anyway this teenage girl came and sat and wanted him to draw her in Grahamstown and she had these braces… she was awfully self-conscious about these braces and didn't like them. He drew all these pictures of her and then one day she came in and she was beaming and saying, "Yay, I've got rid of my braces!" and I can remember Mark saying to me well here she was all delighted she didn't have her braces anymore but as far as he was concerned she was no longer interesting to draw. Because now she was just this ordinary pretty teenager whereas what had interested him about her was the awkwardness about the braces and the whole sense of these foreign bodies in her mouth and feeling self-conscious.

J.E: The Romantic Child ideal has been so pervasive and we still have a reflex to look for images that look like that. But there exists today what they call 'knowing children', children who have discovered their sexuality, and that undercuts all that the ideal stands for. So I think in both cases, these artists create images of children like that.

M-L: Well, I've just dragged all these pictures into the shared folder so you should now have access to a huge amount of pictures.

JME: Thank you so much. I really appreciate that.

M-L: A word of warning. You'll see, a lot of it is 'in your face' stuff. It's a bit heavy-duty seeing it all in one hit like this. Probably a good idea to do just a couple of images at a time. If there's anything specific you want to ask or talk about, please feel free to mail me, ring me, or whatever. I also don't presume to be an expert on what he did, but we were very close and we did have a fairly innate understanding of each other. With these images to refer to, it'll make it easier for us to talk, if you have questions. In some of them I know the people that are in the images; a lot of them I don't. If for some reason you can access these pictures, just let me know.

JME: Thank you again. I'm really so grateful.

Annexure E

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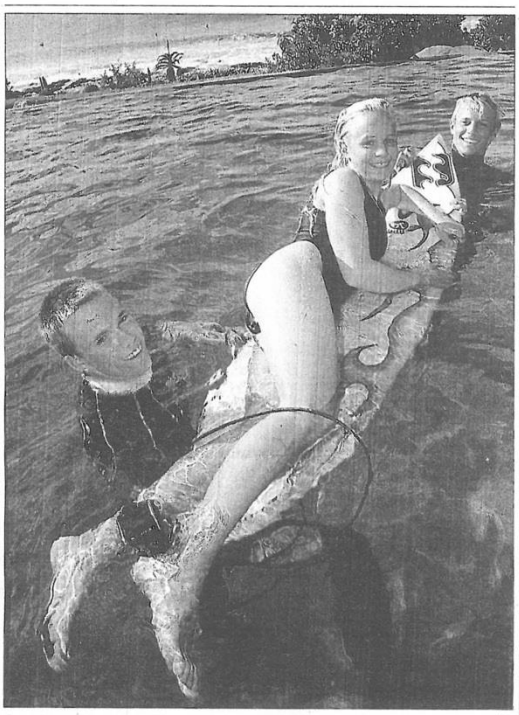
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Exhibition's 'sick' life-like paintings are slated

Outrage over child porn art



POOL WITH A VIEW . . . Cape Town's Tara Hossack, her brother Gallen (right) and Jeffreys Bay's Warren Tuck fool around in the strategically placed pool of Cheron Kraak, Billabong Africa's owner, which overlooks the world renowned Supertubes. Gallen, South Africa's junior professional surfing championship, and hometown favourite, Warren, are competing in the inaugural Billabong Pro Junior championships. Picture: Mike Holmes

AN art show condemned as "disgusting child porn" has rocked the Grahamstown Festival.

At the centre of the storm are shocking life-like paintings of young children engaged in sex acts and sitting in lewd positions.

By KATHY SUNDSTROM

Weekend Post has photographs of the so-called art which are unfit for publication, even censored.

The Department of Home Affairs, the Publications Board, Child Welfare officials and concerned members of the public have slated the exhibition by Rhodes University lecturer Mark Hipper, titled "Viscera" (meaning the internal organs of the body), as "sick", "shocking" and definitely "child pornography — not art".

The large drawings are mostly portraits of children. One shows a naked young boy masturbating, and there are others of young children's genitals. This disturbing exhibition comes only a few months after Weekend Post exposed the loophole in legislation which allowed for trading of child pornography on the Internet. The loophole was effectively plugged on July 1 with the introduction of long awaited legislation on the Publications Act.

Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Lindiwe Sisulu, who will be in Port Elizabeth on Tuesday to address the public on the latest child pornography legislation, said: "The law is very clear and extremely uncompromising on child pornography.

"Any artwork featuring children in sexual positions is not allowed — a painting of a young child masturbating would definitely be illegal.

"I can't see why anybody would want to draw that kind of thing anyway, what response is the artist trying to elicit?"

Mark Hipper, in his opening address at the art exhibition, said the purpose of his art was to "explore what disturbs us and why", and in a newspaper report proudly displayed next to his work says he "hopes to evoke a sexual reaction".

"Because of who we are as South Africans and given the history of censorship and moral taboos around the exposure of the human body, many viewers are likely to be unsettled, though not unexcited I think, by these images.

"Realising that the artist employs similar devices to those used in pornography increases the unease," his opening speech reads.

Mr Hipper felt the controversy surrounding his artwork was "blowing it out of proportion — many of my paintings are of landscapes".

Grahamstown Child Welfare director Karen McGrath said although only a few of the paintings were controversial, these were "very explicit and embarrassing".

"I have never seen anything like this, there should definitely be an age restriction on the exhibition as it could definitely turn some people on," she said.

Staff at the art gallery have also expressed disgust at the exhibition and warned people inquiring that they should definitely not bring their children — even though children are easily allowed to enter the exhibition.

The only indication of the sensitive nature of the paintings is a notice on entering which says, "This exhibition contains images that may upset viewers who are easily

Page 2



WORK OF ART? . . . Unrepentant artist Mark Hipper in front of some of his less controversial life-like paintings.

It's third time lucky for Jana Novotna

LONDON — There were tears aplenty at Wimbledon after Jana Novotna won her first Wimbledon title today.

And they were tears of joy — even in the royal box as the Duchess of Kent wept.

It was a fair swop.

In 1993 Novotna wept on her shoulder after being beaten by Steffi Graf.

And last year, when beaten yet again, the Duchess consoled Novotna by saying: "Don't worry, third time lucky".

And today she said to the exuberant new champion: "I told you so!"

Novotna overpowered Nathalie Tauziat 6-4 7-6 (7-2) — well supported by the crowd.

It's her first Grand Slam win and the joy on her face was tangible as Novotna ran from the hallowed centre court and vaulted into the stands to hug her mother and friends.

But there was little time for celebration.

Novotna had to go back on court after a short break to play the doubles semifinal.

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PORT ELIZABETH Computer FAIR
Technology and Office Equipment
Feather Market Centre

Surfing fever

Classic

Fury over child porn art show

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offended".

Photographer Donna Watson, a visitor at the exhibition, said it was "ugh, yucky, yucky!"

"One painting is of smiling angelic little children's faces, but the children are holding their private parts which have been distorted to look oversized," a disgusted Miss Watson said.

"It is purely sick — he has climbed on the bandwagon when it comes to child pornography.

"I've seen my fair share of art at the festival and it offends me," said another visitor who used to work for the festival office. "I also think it's quite depressing."

Her friend, another young woman in her 20s who did not want to give her name, said: "I just ran in and out. I didn't look at anything."

A middle-aged Port Elizabeth mother, who also wanted to remain anonymous, said the exhibition had disturbed her.

"I certainly wouldn't let pre-teen children in to see this and the notice outside should be stronger. I wouldn't ban it but it should have a realistic age restriction."

She said she felt "a bit shaken" by some of the paintings, "like a voyeur except worse because these are images of children."

Captain Leon Klaasens of the Grahamstown Narcotics Unit said although he was unaware of any controversial exhibition, he thought it would be illegal to have paintings of children masturbating on display and would investigate further.

Port Elizabeth Childline spokesman Michelle Fourie said it was "horrific" to hear that paintings of this nature were permitted in an open art exhibition.

Mrs Fourie said, "I am speechless, child porn is child porn and I am very concerned about the impact this material may have on young children visiting the exhibition."

Childline intends to make a complaint at the police station.

DP spokesman Bobby Stevenson said the news that an exhibition of this content was allowed had "taken my breath away".

"It is totally disgusting, South Africa has a high rate of child abuse and I believe displays of child pornography in any form can only lead to more child abuse," he said.

"If one has to choose between artistic freedom of expression and protecting the rights of children, I say we need to protect the rights of children."

Mark Hipper has recently been appointed lecturer in painting at the Rhodes School of Fine Art.

He returned from Berlin, Germany, where he has been living and painting since 1985, to take up the post. He has exhibited as far afield as Chicago, Strasbourg, Berline and Poland.