

MASTER OF ARTS IN FINE ARTS

ELIZABETH CASTLE

Student number 739110

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DECLARATION

I Elizabeth Castle hereby declare that all the research is my own and to my knowledge has not been done before in this format. I also declare that all the interviews with artists and Council Members of the Johannesburg Art Foundation have been conducted by me. The work on the exhibition *Controversial ways of seeing* had written consent from the artists and owners. Finally the display of original archive material and the inserts in the paper have written consent from the custodian of the archive.

Signed by Candidate Elizabeth Castle

Signed by Supervisor David Andrew.....

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Abstract

The Johannesburg Art Foundation (JAF), founded in 1982 by Bill Ainslie, maintained a teaching philosophy which opposed any form of discrimination and stressed that art education should be a possibility for everyone. There was no prescribed curriculum and the programme was not dependent on an external educational authority. I argue that particularly in the decade 1982-1992, the South African apartheid government's educational policy towards cultural activities was prescriptive, stifling and potentially paralysing for many artists. Nevertheless, the teaching at the JAF sustained a flexibility and tolerance of ideas combined with an emancipatory ambition that promoted exchange. The philosophy was infused with a social justice and a political activism agenda squarely in opposition to the separatist apartheid education laws.

This study contextualizes the impact and efficacy of the teaching approach at the JAF in terms of its intellectual, social and political perspectives during the years 1982-1992. This teaching approach prompted acerbic encounters within the competing systems of formal and informal institutions. It is this controversial anomaly signifying elements of collision in the pursuit of developing modernism that are investigated to some extent.

Personal involvement as an artist and teacher, during the period 1982-1992, allowed my contribution and participation in the development of the teaching philosophy. The paucity of available literature on the subject has stimulated a comprehensive preliminary investigation of the way in which the JAF cultivated alternative educational policies.

The individual methodologies and personal experiences extracted from interviews with artists, Council Members and members of staff are documented in order to provide a detailed characterisation of the values of the JAF. In addition, original documentation representative of the genealogy of the JAF forms part of the curatorial practice for the exhibition *Controversial ways of seeing* at the Bag Factory Gallery.

The JAF declined from 1992 and finally ceased to exist in 2001.