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The photographic document as subjective register in contemporary South African visual culture

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2008-11-25T10:57:23Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/5848

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Abstract

This research report examines the notion of the photographic document as subjective register in contemporary South African visual culture. It provides a critical framework for considering my own photographic practice, which explores how photographs can be used to concretize emotion and to register the subjectivity of the photographer. In exploring this subjectivity, I consider the notion of truth-value in the photographic document, especially in socio-documentary photography, focusing on some examples from the South African 'struggle' tradition. I then look at the shift towards a personal approach in photography in South Africa, using the exhibition *Democracy's Images: Photography and Visual Art after Apartheid* as a case study of these shifts towards the personal in South African photography. The show helps to locate my own work, which is highly invested in the personal. The notion of *affect* is unpacked in considerable detail since my own work focuses primarily on the evocation of emotional experience.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in Fine Arts by Coursework and Research Report in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Natasha Christopher

_____ day of _____, 200__

for

Costas
and for Tomás

and in loving memory of my father

Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the generous help I received from many people and in a multiplicity of ways. I thank Penny Siopis, my supervisor, for her guidance and insight. Elizabeth Burroughs was extremely generous in giving me her time. I thank her for the thought-provoking conversation sessions we shared and for her conceptual and editorial help. Joni Brenner is a colleague and a dear friend whose tireless support, nurturing friendship and artistic exchange urged me on to complete this research report. I found Santu Mofokeng's experience as a practicing photographer, and his knowledge of the history of documentary photography in this country and elsewhere very useful in testing my own insights.

In this journey of exploration I thank my immediate family, my parents and siblings for providing the fertile background that has informed this research. I thank them all for their encouragement and loving support.

My colleagues and the staff at the Wits School of Arts provided a generous and warm environment of understanding and tolerance. I make special mention to the Heads of the Visual Arts and Digital Arts Divisions and to the Head of School who accommodated my special demands as staff member and student. I thank my fellow artists in the Division of Visual Arts for their input into my creative process.

I acknowledge the generous staff bursaries that I have received from the University of the Witwatersrand. I am grateful to the Wits School of Arts for funding the final year of this degree.

Finally, I thank Costas Gavriel, my husband, who bore the brunt of my frustrations and absences on the home front as mother and wife with fortitude and forbearance. I thank him for his constant love and for his patience. And, I thank our child Tomás Gavriel for his sweet love, and for enabling me to see myself.

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DVD DVD of the exhibition *River* held at the Sub-station gallery, Wits University, April 2004. The DVD includes the video *River*, the animation *Ghost Flower*, installation photographs of the exhibition, and images of the nine photographs on exhibition.
DVD enclosed on inside of back cover.