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The lamppost: a metaphorical reflection on archival absences and presences

Khoza, Bongani

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The Lamppost:
A Metaphorical Reflection on Archival Absences and Presences

Bongani Khoza
0408546V

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Supervisors
Rory Bester
Jo Ractliffe

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Signature Date

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INTRODUCTION

Aim

My research intends to highlight the relationship between photographic images and written texts as presented in Santu Mofokeng's practice, using the art book *Taxi-004: Santu Mofokeng* and the *Invoice*[1] exhibition as case studies. I read the relationship of visual texts and verbal ones as building a representational narrative to foreground Mofokeng's auto/biographical subjectivity within the South African context. Through these representational narratives, Mofokeng reflects on historical and social issues that continue to have disturbing effects in contemporary South Africa. My research also examines photographic and writing modes as indicative of Mofokeng's autobiographical approach. Thus, through a theoretical framework concerned with the image-text relationship in the production of narrative, I attempt to unpack the study of Mofokeng's practice in relation to the social and historical context within which he operates. I also critically examine the role photographic still images play in telling a story alongside written texts to illustrate pictorial and autobiographical narratives. Of particular interest to me are the ways in which the accompanying written texts elucidate the photographic work and simultaneously allude to what is excluded from the photographs. Mofokeng's formal photographic language, in conjunction with written text, enables the creation of a pictorial and autobiographical narrative. I will specifically examine how an autobiographical narrative emerges and complements the photographs through the use of written text.

Case study

This research is motivated by an understanding of the significance of subjectivity and autobiography as a mode through which Mofokeng engages with historical and social issues in contemporary South Africa. Mofokeng's subjectivity and autobiography are articulated in the art book *Taxi-004: Santu Mofokeng* (2001). Featured essays by Mofokeng and Sam Raditlhalo both refer to Mofokeng's lived experiences rather than describing or explaining the photographs included in the book. Similarly, the *Invoice* exhibition includes an introductory text written by Mofokeng. This introduces the photographic images as a "kind of statement, an account of events, people and places in a pictorial narrative; a bill duly rendered

[1] *Invoice* is an exhibition that took place at Iziko National Gallery in Cape Town in 2007, and at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg in 2008

in a selection spanning 12 years before and after apartheid".[2] The exhibition included photographic essays or parts thereof, such as *Chasing Shadows, The Black Photo Album/Look At Me: 1890-1900s*, *Rumours/The Bloemhof Portfolio, Landscapes of Trauma,* and *Billboards,* to name but a few.

Invoice constituted a selection of Mofokeng's photographic works from 1982 to 2007, accompanied by captions and an introductory text written by the artist with the same title as the exhibition. It was a significant exhibition through which Mofokeng asserted his individual vision, which is further expressed in his inclusion of self-authored texts that act as a mode of inserting and asserting the artist's subjectivity.

Chapter outline

This research report includes the following chapters:

History in representation: Questions of biography and auto/ biography
Coullie *et al*'s, 2006 introductory text to *Selves in Question: Interviews on Southern African Auto/biography* provides a theoretical link to the subjective and the various representational subjectivities produced and represented by Mofokeng. These subjectivities are images indexical to the text Mofokeng writes, and act as indexical signs (images act as triggers) of both memory and history, resulting in the images becoming icons of history, intentionally or unintentionally. Here, the objectification and subjection of the subject are simultaneously enacted and imposed on to historical and social contexts within which the viewer/reader can interpret the subjects.

Subjectivity in representation: *Lampposts* and *Invoice*
This section examines ways in which Mofokeng's *Invoice* reflects on his personal history as informed by, and in relation to, the social and historical context within which he operates. This resides partly in the way he uses the flash of the moment that is captured in his photographs to locate and construct specific ideological narratives within various political and cultural contexts, which are neither static nor unchangeable. By doing so, he highlights his subjectivity, and the subjectified object (a photographic image) is produced through a particular photographic language (style) in a manner similar to the way the language (written text) produces a narrative. I will posit this through an analysis of his work in addition to making comparisons, where applicable, to other people who work in the same field, and drawing on other scholars and practitioners from various fields with the intention of creating an organisational structure through which to interpret Mofokeng's work.

[2] This quote appeared in an introductory wall text written by Mofokeng for *Invoice*, which showed at the Iziko National Gallery in Cape Town in 2007, and the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg in 2008

Reconfiguring the document: Selected works by Santu Mofokeng

Here the purpose is to both qualify and problematise Mofokeng's visual and written text through an examination of how environment shapes our intentions and readings of works presented. I do this by drawing on a number of resources through which to read and interpret Mofokeng's images.

Negotiating and mapping space: A practical body of work

I also contextualise my body of practical work, reflecting on how I explore my own subjectivity and social position in contemporary South Africa, particularly in urban Johannesburg. I do so by subjecting my viewers to a form of both implicit and explicit participatory critique of the work presented, exhibited by me. The intention is to highlight subjective differences that arise, informed by lived experiences that influence and shape the interpretative elements of the reading of the photographs and videos presented.

1. QUESTIONS OF BIOGRAPHY AND AUTO/BIOGRAPHY

1.1 Reality, memory and metaphor

Selves in Question proposes complex forms of auto/biographical storytelling. It is useful to explore not only the relevance to my practice of the ideas raised in *Selves in Question*, but also an understanding of the example of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which has a narrative richness derived from the complexity of both the content of testimony and structure of the process itself.

The interviews gathered in *Selves in Question* allow readers to explore:

> the ways in which various practitioners negotiate the discrepancies between self-representation and representation of self by others [and] how auto/biographical accounts are positioned in relation to narrative accounts of collective identities and the consequences of this relationship for individuals and society at large" (Coullie *et al,* 2006: 7).

Coullie provides context about the interviews that appear in later chapters of *Selves and Question*. Here, Coullie unpacks and engages with the ways producers of autobiographical narratives constantly have to negotiate inconsistencies that arise through the process of self-representation and the representation of the self by others. Individual autobiographical accounts placed in relation to collective autobiographical accounts have a huge potential role of steering the direction of personal narratives and the societies they occupy.

Rather than existing in a vacuum, individual narratives are informed by a web of collective family and societal narratives. Practitioners (storytellers) involved in narrative making are in a constant battle to negotiate both self-presentation and the representation of the self by others, as well as the representation of others by the self. The consequences of these representations shape the collective identities of communities and societies derived from the representation of the self, self-representing, and representing others.

The authors of *Selves in Question* investigate:

> the impact of autobiographical accounts on their producers and audiences, in addition to the effect of producers of autobiographies being able to probe a multitude of variables, including but not limited to specific historical junctures, cultures, languages, geopolitical locations, ages, genders, and social positions, in relation to auto/biographical practices. The interviews [conducted by the authors of *Selves in Question*] bear witness to some of the specific southern African modalities of subjectivisation. Looking back, they offer insight into the crises of agency and identity construction unleashed by colonisation. Looking towards the future, they explore the new alternatives, dilemmas, and possibilities opened by decolonisation and democratisation in the post-colonial era (Coullie *et al,* 2006: 8).

Coullie highlights the complexities prevalent in the creation and representation of autobiographical accounts of the self in the South African context. In addition, the impact of a variety of practices, processes and forms enabled the creation and presentation of the self to flourish and simultaneously suppressed its application of the history of colonisation as the context. Lastly, the author points to the creation and presentation of the self in relation to the future of post-colonialism and post-apartheid South Africa.

The significance of the complexities prevalent in the creation and representation of the self is, as Coullie notes, that the majority of personal narratives are confined to written and verbal accounts within the South African context in particular. However, Coullie acknowledges that autobiography also has nonverbal forms of representation such as through music, painting, photography and cinema. By extension, Coullie emphasises how the concept of autobiography in itself challenges all forms of autobiographical representation. This is evident when one tries to separate autobiography from biography in the process of creating autobiographies of the self, in contrast to some practices that combine both autobiography and biography, such as *izibongo* [praise poetry] in the process of representing the self (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 6).

Modes of delivering an auto/biography can involve performative praise singing, referred to as *izibongo* among isiZulu/isiXhosa speakers, the telling of a personal life story, and the telling of other individuals' or collectives' narratives. These modes speak to "ways in which auto/biographers speak on behalf of others" and the self (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 9) The creation and representation of the self can be fictional, where the personal narrative is created and represented metaphorically. On the other hand, the creation and representation of the self through conversations happens between family members, usually involving a senior member of the family and a younger member; and last but not least,

through conversations about the self to other individuals and/or collectives. The conversations are often about the past, held by individuals and collectives to come to terms with the past and the impending future.

The introduction to the book claims it has surveyed South African autobiographical practices in the context of the precolonial era with regards to how indigenous, colonial, settler and post-colonial traditions of storytelling overlap in relation to their politics and epistemology.

> Modern capitalism requires individuals to act in accordance with the ethos of bourgeois individuals: the self is, in this conception, largely private property … It entails a distinction between the private and the public domains so that there are parts of the self which can only be known to the self which – when revealed in the personal testimony – enormously increase the value of that account (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 12).

The idea is that a personal story is, by and large, a private story and entity. Of importance here is that the personal story is afforded the acknowledgement that the self can know only some of its parts. In addition, if the self decides to reveal itself to a larger community, it creates a particular perspective for the personal story to be viewed by both the self and community in which the personal story is presented.

1.2 Expressing and locating voice

By "expressing voice", I refer simply to an individual's ability to convey his/her own life story in his/her own way, which includes his/her choice of mechanisms and devices to use when recounting personal historical events. By "locating voice", I refer to an individual's ability to choose a personal narrative to tell, be it a family story or a historical account of the self through existing and/or imagined future social contexts. The devices and mechanisms chosen in the telling of a personal story enable the individual to locate a personal perspective and history within various contexts, such as social setting, family history, and national and global history. However, the author of the introductory text in *Selves in Question* acknowledges that there are other forms of presenting personal and collective auto/biographies, such as music, painting and photography. The mechanisms and devices individuals use to tell their personal and collective narratives heavily rely on the process of trying to understand the personal self and its actions in the world.

The introductory text to *Selves in Question* text aims to unpack and explain many forms of narrative and auto/biography, and explores how these variations

contribute to the creation of both personal and collective identities, especially in the South African context. The TRC was identified as a useful case study to illustrate how *Selves in Question* problematised and unpacked the various manifestations of narrative and auto/biography arising from the process of providing testimony by both "perpetrators of injustice and their [victims]" (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 4). The TRC largely focused on personal verbal and the written types of auto/biography provided by both the perpetrators and victims.

> Placing ourselves in relation to others also means ranking ourselves in existing status hierarchies. By implication, our auto/biography accounts mobilise collective action (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 2).

During the TRC process, perpetrators and victims occupied interchangeable but distinctive places within social hierarchies. Before providing testimony to the commission, perpetrators still occupied positions of power over their victims. Equally, the interchangeability within social hierarchies occurred when the perpetrators were in the process of testifying to the commission, where power would sometimes shift to the commission's panel and at other times to the victims, who would be consulted when a perpetrator asked for amnesty for his/her crimes. The process of providing testimonies at the TRC allowed individuals, through the telling of a personal narrative, to have the agency to question and challenge various subjects, such as apartheid, racism, religious doctrines and belief systems, and to mobilise collective action. Here, an individual's ability to decide, create and shape different identities of the self was based on his/her decision and ability to tell different stories at different times. In addition, the individual and collective stories had a way of reinforcing, dispelling, and/or discrediting other stories, at other times reinforcing their own ideas, authenticity, and reality of narratives.

1.3 Development/constitution of a personal and collective narrative

A personal perspective results in the development of a personal narrative dependent on both the real and imagined accounts of personal and collective narratives of the self. The narratives we tell of ourselves influence the perceived stories about ourselves. Kellner (2000) writes that the TRC hearings were personal accounts in the form of narratives that bore witness to apartheid atrocities. Kellner points out that personal-account narratives can be compared to stories, and stories border on fiction. Emphasising that, he argued, the danger is that apartheid could potentially be remembered as a fictional narrative (Kellner, 2000: 207; as cited in Gierstberg *et al*, 2000). The process of creating a narrative allows an individual to associate the self with and disassociate the self from others and other actions, such as commenting on and criticising regimes of

power, ideals, ideas, and ways of living. The self, in the context of storytelling, enables the individual to cross boundaries of both private and public selves to engage with both the private and personal selves. Both the private and public selves allow the self to associate with private personal views and opinions, and engage in debates about subject matter that discuss, criticise and comment on issues relating to collective identities (Coullie *et al*, 2006:2). Benhabib puts it as follows:

> From the time of our birth, we are immersed in a 'web of narratives' of which we are both the author and the object. The self is both the teller of tales and that about whom tales are told. The individual with a coherent sense of self-identity is the one who succeeds in integrating these tales and perspectives into a meaningful life story (as cited in Coullie *et al*, 2006: 3).

Coullie makes a reference to a child being born into a family where the child's personal narrative already has many other stories, from the family and parents, about the child that came before its birth, and with each breath a person takes growing up, a new story is created. The stories about the child (through the views of others) prior to the child being born, together with the child's personal stories (the telling of a story of the self), enables the successful integration of collective unity and personal independence in the telling of a personal narrative. Our subjectivities in narratives are influenced by our families, individuals around us and societal settings, which in turn are influenced by what opinions others have about us.

Some of the TRC findings with regards to "the experience of families" (De Villiers, 1998: 367) speak of difficulties in capturing the individual experience through personal testimony with regards to measuring "the impact of gross human rights violations on the family system" (De Villiers, 1998: 367). This is especially the case when the family members, often mothers whose children had been killed, "gave testimony on behalf of their deceased loved ones without articulating their own suffering" (De Villiers, 1998: 367), in which case the primary victim drew attention away from the trauma experienced by the family (De Villiers, 1998: 367).

The TRC's findings illustrate the importance Coullie's problematising of the presented autobiographical narrative of the self. She does this by highlighting that an individual has the ability to imagine the self in one way and simultaneously have contradictory conversations about the self. The viewpoints of, and conversations about, the self are affected by what information is included and excluded in the "overall representation" of the self (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 3).

1.4 A collaborative relationship

An individual has a private self and story that no one but that individual knows. At the same time, an individual has a public self: the personality of the self and story that is known by other individuals. Lastly, an individual is part of a collective of selves through a shared common narrative with other individuals. Narratives come about as the result of collaborations between private, public and collective selves. (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 12) Mechanisms and devices used to present these narratives, such as oral storytelling and writing, also create collaborative relationships between private selves, public selves and collectives. By creating collaboration between the oral narrator and the writer narrator, through the retelling of the oral narrator's story, the writer narrator must write it in such a way that it will be as easily received by the intended readers as the oral form. Therefore, some form of editing of the original story occurs, creating divergence. This is where there is huge potential for both the oral and writer narrators to agree and disagree about the presented narrative, and the point at which the agreement or disagreement occurs about the presented story. It can thus cause presented and represented narratives to take new and different directions.

In the case of the TRC process, where perpetrators of violent crimes told their testimonies to both the commission and the victims, different narratives had the power to influence and facilitate possible reconciliation between perpetrators and victims. Perpetrators of violent crimes hoped to gain amnesty from prosecution, and forgiveness from the commission and victims respectively. In other cases, the narratives could make it even more difficult for reconciliation between the victim and the perpetrator.

Coullie *et al* use Athol Fugard's family memoir, *Cousins* (1994), to illustrate how some individuals prioritise family relations in the telling of their personal stories, whereas other individual narratives from authors, such as Albert Luthuli in *Let My People Go* (1962), are used to foreground their relationship to the state. These two examples do not, however, mean that Coullie *et al* disregard other personal narratives that contextually foreground relationships between the individual's nation and the global community. The examples Coullie *et al* refer to are important as they highlight that individual identities are influenced and formed by the relations we establish with other individuals. To question the self, one has to present oneself through the framing of the social world in a measured, contemplative manner. When personal narrative accounts are being told and are subsequently placed within larger collective narratives, they have the ability to shape an individual's history, family history and collective history, and therefore personal narrative accounts play a role in moulding an individual's life stories.

> The view that our identities are constituted in the contestation between accounts we offer of ourselves, and accounts others give about us, is informed by the arguable assumption that auto/biographical accounts are comparable. While this assumption is relevant to all auto/biography, it is particularly evident when a self intimately connects his/her auto/biographical account to that of other individuals or collectives. This applies to family memoirs … It applies equally to memoirs of political movement (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 6).

Coullie, referencing Gillian Slovo's *Every Secret Thing (1997),* states that the extent and nature of such disjunctions are illustrated by a kind of memoir of a family deeply steeped in the anti-apartheid struggle (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 6). According to Coullie, the creation of personal identity results from an individual being aware that personal narratives exist within one's personal life stories and in the narratives of other individuals. In the process of an individual acknowledging that other individuals influence his/her personal stories, the individual can decide to compare and ultimately relate his/her personal stories to other individuals' personal stories. This process of acknowledging the origins of one's personal narratives and situating the personal narratives in relation to other individuals is significant in highlighting that collective auto/biographical narratives create a sense that they can be shared based on the experience of being individuals in a collective. On the other hand, individuals in a collective may or may not agree on the points of similarity and departure from one another's narratives, as each individual's similar yet different and divergent viewpoints do not always guarantee the proposed representation of the actual events of their shared narrative.

> The stories told to the commission were not presented as arguments or claims in a court of law. Rather, they provided unique insights into the pain of South Africa's past, often touching the hearts of all who heard them (De Villiers, 1998: 112).

The verbal delivery of a personal narrative was a significant process during the TRC in that the commission's guiding policy placed emphasis on the fact that the it "explicitly recognised the healing potential of telling stories" (De Villiers, 1998: 112). The commission's guiding legislation acknowledged that it was particularly important that, in the South African context, value continued to be attached to oral tradition during the process of storytelling. All this is significant in that by telling their stories, both victims and perpetrators gave meaning to the multilayered experiences of the South African story. These personal truths were communicated to the broader public by the media.

The verbal delivery of a personal narrative can involve the process of providing testimony, psychobiography, oral history narration and praise singing (*izibongo*). The written narrative can be delivered using parameters such as autobiography, biography, memoirs, journals and letters. In some cases, the public delivery of a personal and in other cases a collective narrative involves either or both written and verbal accounts. In addition, the process of conducting interviews is used to gain insight into the influences of published personal memoirs and narratives about other authors, resulting in the unearthing of different modes of delivering the personal narrative of another individual and a collective one. The various mechanisms individuals use in the process of presenting and representing narrative become filters and metaphors for locating individual and collective voices. This is important, as argued by Rory Bester in 'At the Edges of Apartheid Memory'.[3] He postulates that the TRC process depended on a "retelling and re-enactment of narratives of apartheid-era violence", and that the whole process was "driven by the performance of individual witnesses" (Bester, 2000: 11).

1.5 The exploration of freedom within the confines of oppression

In my exploration of freedom within the confines of oppression, I discuss how stories have been told within the context of the South African history, highlighting how autobiographical narratives were used as agents of protest against the apartheid government. This reveals how some autobiographical narratives that were presented were subsequently banned, while other narratives were able to avoid banning during apartheid. The impact and history of apartheid, colonialism and settler missions within the South African context played a huge role in the reading and presented types of both personal and collective autobiographical narratives.

The introduction to *Selves in Question* emphasises that the apartheid government largely prohibited life/personal narrative writing in its different contexts unless the author(s) found creative ways of telling protest auto/biographical narratives that would be perceived as acceptable and avoid the censorship of the state. This introduction also suggests that even though democracy has been achieved in South Africa, the popularity of the personal narrative writing has gained in both audiences for and producers of narrative, along with the reception of the various collective narratives. *Selves in Question* posits that the history of personal narrative writing in South Africa is particularly complex to unpack, so the

[3] Rory Bester. 2000. At the Edges of Apartheid Memory. In John Peffer and Lauri Firstenberg (ed). *Translation/Seduction/Displacement: Post-Conceptual and Photographic Work by Artists from South Africa*. New York: White Box Gallery.

published manifestations of the narrative are heavily dependent on the acknowledgement of many historical factors and contexts that shape both the creation and reception of auto/biographical narratives.

2. SANTU MOFOKENG: LAMPPOSTS AND INVOICE

2.1 Background

Mofokeng was born on 19 October 19 1956 in Johannesburg, and began taking photographs as a street photographer at the age of 17. He was mostly concerned with weddings, birthday celebrations, tombstone unveilings, and the mundane existence of the township folk. He later became a quality tester for Adcock Ingram, and joined the Afrapix collective in 1985, after which he worked for Institute for Advanced Social Research. It is during this period that he continued with his more intimate project of documenting township life (Mofokeng, 2005: 220).

In 1982, Mofokeng began a long-term project he called "Metaphorical Biography". He divided the enormous undertaking into smaller, more manageable chapters or photo essays such as: *Train Church, Soweto: Going Home, Chasing Shadows, Black Photo Album/Look at Me* (Mofokeng, 2005: 221). In the early 1990s, Mofokeng changed his methods of looking and began to solicit the participation of the communities in which he worked. This led to Mofokeng showing juxtaposed public and political images alongside private and personal images and those of the township life, in an exhibition titled *Distorting Mirror/Townships Imagined* (Mofokeng, 1998: 44). The exhibition afforded Mofokeng the opportunity to re-examine the images he produced for the public in the media, and contrast them with those he had taken as a street photographer; the private and personal images were those that people chose to value, treasure and conserve. That was when he realised that the new approach would ultimately make the images from the *Distorting Mirror/Townships Imagined* exhibition part of communities' and families' histories (Mofokeng, 1998: 45).

The methodology employed by Mofokeng for the *Distorting Mirror/Townships Imagined* exhibition motivated him to further explore the histories of photographic representation. This is evident in his subsequent project, *Black Photo Album/Look at Me,* which comprised urban middle and working-class black family portrait images that dated from as early as the beginning of the 20th century. According to Mofokeng, the images were like lost treasures and traditions he found in the course of the research for the project. Mofokeng also mentions he experienced the images as enigmatic, possibly because they were

characteristically made using the gesture, props and clothing of Georgian and Victorian portrait painting. He admits, upon reflection on his upbringing, education and knowledge, that prior to his research, he was unaware of both these photographs' existence and the fact that such images could have been taken as early as the beginning of the century in South Africa (Mofokeng, 1998: 45).

For Mofokeng, photography of the past was largely associated with representations exposing the horrors experienced by black South Africans under the apartheid regime; an interrogation of photographs similar to the images in *Black Photo Album/Look at Me* was often overshadowed by protest photography. The medium was dominated by groups of photographers who chose to use the medium of photography as artists in opposition to the policies of the apartheid regime while exposing its brutality.

In this chapter, I argue that Mofokeng's practice is an eloquently complex metaphorical auto/biographical narrative, with the 'Lampposts' text in *Taxi-004: Santu Mofokeng*,[4] together with the *Invoice* exhibition,[5] implicitly and explicitly providing a glimpse of the complexity of Mofokeng's practice. In these examples of writing and exhibiting, Mofokeng uses and exploits the written text in conjunction with the photographic image (photographic text) in the process of telling his own auto/biography. I will be using '*Lampposts*' essay and *Invoice* to highlight Mofokeng's use of the written text together with the photographic text to problematise his own biographical and autobiographical narrative that also speaks to a collective narrative.

2.2 Lampposts as auto/biography

Taxi-004: Santu Mofokeng starts with a series of untitled photographs running over about 25 pages, back to back, in no chronological order; the list of titles/captions of the photographs appears only in the form of a list of at the end of the book. Mofokeng wrote the first essay in the book, titled 'Lampposts', which provides brief detailed biographical accounts of specific events he experienced from childhood to his becoming a photojournalist. The text includes a brief description of what lampposts are – Mofokeng describes them as strong even though they suffer abuse and are mostly ignored by pedestrians and drivers. Mofokeng adds that lampposts make a noise from time to time when they are hit or abused. One of the described lampposts is very close to Mofokeng's childhood house, just outside his gate. He tells of how the lamppost provides escape from the house, and how evening is regarded as a chance to play games. There are

[4] *Taxi-004: Santu Mofokeng text by* Santu Mofokeng and Sam Raditlhalo.
[5] *Invoice* is an exhibition that took place at Iziko National Gallery in Cape Town in 2007, and at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg in 2008.

games specifically played at dusk. There is a specific timeframe allocated for playing – 15 minutes before 8pm, after which he and all the other kids rush back home to listen to stories on radio. The radio was a regulator of time, more than any parent could be. During the time Mofokeng was growing up, the streets had electricity to light the lampposts, but his house and probably many others in the surrounding area didn't (Mofokeng, 2001: 25).

That the text for 'Lampposts' is written through a personal perspective highlighting experiences lived during apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa is important in understanding the relationship between text and image in Mofokeng's oeuvre. With this form of writing, Mofokeng manages to insert and affirm the importance of his personal voice in understanding the issues he subsequently raises through the subjects he photographs and the narratives that are consequently foregrounded. Raditlhalo's essay also considers Mofokeng's lived experiences rather than describing or explaining the photographs included in the book.

Among the experiences included in 'Lampposts' is Mofokeng's description of a letter from his son Kano. The letter has two sides. One side explains how Kano is trying to behave, because, according to Mofokeng, Kano was grounded. The other side of the letter shows a drawing of Noah. Kano had spent a weekend with Mofokeng, and his father had taken him to work with him that weekend. He left Kano with some colleagues as he made his way to photograph the 1987 NUM mineworkers strike. When Mofokeng returned, Kano was gone. After waiting for some time, he realised Kano was not coming back and started a frantic search around the building. He then took the search to the streets of Johannesburg; after not finding his son, he ended up sleeping on a bench at Park Station.

One of the union members told Mofokeng that he saw Kano with a man named Rasta, and later confirmed with other members that Rasta had taken Kano to a house on the East Rand. Mofokeng called a friend to drive him to the East Rand to help him search for Kano. In Mofokeng's mind, he thought Kano had been kidnapped and his body mutilated to be used for muti. His search was unsuccessful, but on his trip back to Johannesburg, Mofokeng noticed Kano at a petrol station. He went straight back to Rasta to ask why he took Kano without asking permission. Rasta apologised, but Mofokeng proceeded to beat him up badly, and in Kano's eyes Mofokeng became the invincible hero who saved him.

The collaborative relationship here occurs when Kano, Mofokeng's son, draws a picture of the biblical figure Noah to try to reconcile with his father after acknowledging that he might have done something to deserve being grounded. At the same time, Kano praises his father through the metaphor of Noah. On the other hand, Mofokeng's retelling of the disappearance of his son becomes a

healing mechanism tool for Mofokeng. The retelling of Kano's disappearance highlights the importance of individual testimonies, which contributed to the narrative of Kano's rescue.

2.3 *Invoice* as biography

Invoice[6] comprised a selection of Mofokeng's photographic works from 1982 to 2007, accompanied by captions and an introductory text written by the artist with the same title as the exhibition. The introductory text to the exhibition introduces the photographic images, as a:

> kind of statement, an account of events, people and places in a pictorial narrative; a bill duly rendered in a selection spanning 12 years before and after apartheid.[7]

The exhibition included photographic essays, or parts thereof, such as *Chasing Shadows, Bloemhof, Distorting Mirror/Townships Imagined, The Black Photo Album/Look at Me, Landscapes of Trauma* and *Township,* to name but a few. It was a significant exhibition through which Mofokeng asserted his individual voice. This voice was expressed in his inclusion of personally written texts that acted as a mode of inserting and asserting his own subjectivity. As such, Mofokeng's presentation of both image and text suggests his personal narrative, history and subjectivity inform his photographic approach. Motivating my research is a drive to understand the significance of subjectivity and autobiography as mode through which Mofokeng engages with historical and social issues in contemporary South Africa.

The writing of the introductory text to *Distorting Mirror/Townships Imagined* is unlike the texts for the other photographic series in that it is considerably denser; there is plurality, juxtaposition and poetry within the text. It is not merely an account or a description of the photographic essay, but writing that promotes and validates the project while at the same time problematising and questioning it. Reading the statement that accompanies the photographic images gives no indication of a finished project. This plurality is demonstrated throughout. The *Distorting Mirror/ Townships Imagined* photo essay also marks the start of the photographic series *The Black Photo Album/Look at Me 1890-1900*.[8]

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[6] *Invoice* is an exhibition that took place at Iziko National Gallery in Cape Town in 2007, and at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg in 2008.
[7] An introductory wall text written by Mofokeng for the exhibition *Invoice* at Iziko National Gallery in Cape Town in 2007, and the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg in 2008.
[8] Published in: *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art 4*, Spring: 54-57.

Mofokeng mentions that the project was at first conceived under the working title of "Side by Side", and looks at various ways of representing people, especially the people of Soweto and their environment. Mofokeng points out that although *Distorting Mirror/Townships Imagined* attempts to circumvent two dominant ways of representing the township life – suffering and living – by making comparable examples with other cities within South Africa and around world in search of a workable solution (Mofokeng, 2011: 46). The artist claims that *Distorting Mirror/ Townships Imagined* is his attempt to "disregard the prevailing conventions and taboos in the medium of social documentary photography" by exploring the possibilities of collage by incorporating images people choose "to value, to treasure, to conserve: ultimately to show or display". It is the kind of quality of the images that ultimately gives a very particular kind of representation of 'township life', which for Mofokeng is more real than the dominant representation of township suffering (Mofokeng, 2011: 46).

This can be explored through an analysis of two of the two images below. *Golf in Zone 6, Diepkloof, 1987* is an image of five boys holding golf clubs; all of the boys are looking down in various directions, and are in motion. They look like they are in search of something. What immediately comes to mind is that, they have lost a golf ball and are looking for it, as suggested by the caption. The other startling observation is that the boys are not on a proper golf course, just an uneven patch of field filled with weeds and poorly maintained grass, which also seems to be far removed from the surrounding houses in the background. At a glance, the boys seem to have chosen a secluded area where there is no chance they will break people's windows. The boys' faces are also not clearly visible, but whatever they are looking for has somehow halted the game. The viewer is led to assume that all the boys are searching for their golf ball. It is imperative for them to find the ball to continue the game




Figure 1 (Left) Fairways, Golf in Zone 6, Diepkloof, 1987
Figure 2 (Right) Cricket in Rockville, 1989

In contrast, the white attire worn by the boys in the image, dominates the photograph *Cricket in Rockville, 1989*. It seems they are in the middle of what appears to be a fun and exciting game compared to the photograph of the boys in

Diepkloof searching for a golf ball two years earlier. Without their captions, both images depict the struggle for something in different contexts. In addition, compared to the photo of the boys in Diepkloof looking for their golf ball, the image of the boys playing cricket in Rockville depicts fun and joy, and a sense of purity represented by the mostly white clothes they are wearing. This photo's mood is lighter; it is more jovial and uplifting.

Mofokeng's images are difficult to quantify or neatly summarise, as on occasion "his photographs offer lyrical snapshots of the ordinary drama of being" (O'Toole, 2005: 92). *Fairways, Golf at Zone 6, Diepkloof, 1987* is beautiful, and yet complex in its depiction. O'Toole describes this as the unordinary banality of township life, leaving many unanswered questions (2005: 92). O'Toole's reading of the photo differs from mine as he claims that the image invokes feelings of joy, content with the fact that these young boys are able to venture out and play sport even though it was taken at the height of apartheid. I, however, read the image of these boys as invoking feelings of loss and sadness. I agree with O'Toole when he notes that the photo invokes feelings of sadness when you realise that these boys do not have a proper fairway on which to play golf. As a result they have to keep looking for probably the only ball they have on a supposedly imagined 'fairway'. Yet they play golf in a way that depicts normal township life, a life with and without struggle, where struggle and adversity are portrayed implicitly and subtly.

3. SANTU MOFOKENG: SELECTED WORK

This chapter looks at Mofokeng's written and photographic works. I specifically look at selected works from *Rumours/The Bloemhof Portfolio*, which offer insight into Mofokeng's complex way of working. I hope to highlight the works' complexity by showing how Mofokeng uses both photographic images and written text to reconfigure the meaning of the photographic document. The reconfiguration of the document is based on the context of the photographs read alongside written text. In addition, juxtaposing images from different photographic series could create new but similarly linked narratives.

I have been always intrigued by how Mofokeng's work problematises and yet successfully uses the relationship between photographic images and written text in terms of Jacques Derrida's notion of the "supplement". According to Derrida, "what is supplementary can always be interpreted in two ways", and often plays between presence and absence (Childers & Hentzi, 1995: 296)[9]. Here I refer to the presence of both the materiality of the photograph on photographic paper, and the photograph in place of the actual subject it represents in its original state. By absence, I refer to both the lack of a fixed illustrative formal quality of an image, and a descriptive written text in the form of the captions accompanying the photographic images.

3.1 Rumours/The Bloemhof Portfolio

Vaalrand Shack, Bloemhof, 1988 is one of those photographs that I argue represents sublime beauty. I experience it as beautiful; there is a sense of pride in the photograph brought about by the swirling clouds that seem to create a vortex in the sky, and I would argue that this photograph fully represents Mofokeng's personal style and way of seeing the world.

Here I look at subjectivity in representation. Of concern is the complex supplementary relationship between photographic images and written text based on the meanings and associations they awaken in us when presented. I attempt to highlight the moments at which meaning and associations emerge from the experience of the creator(s) of both the photographic images and written text (MacDougall, 2006: 1). In this attempt to find meaning, I will search for ways to categorise the associations.

[9] Taken from 'That Dangerous Supplement', a chapter from Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, and summarised in *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary Criticism* (1995).

Creative storytelling for Mofokeng came in the form of an assignment that took him to the town of Bloemhof. Mofokeng relates his frustration waiting in a taxi for six hours while it filled up. Mofokeng's constant complaining resulted in him being booted out of the taxi around midnight in Klerksdorp. While walking with his luggage and camera equipment, Mofokeng managed to find a new taxi, only to find out that the passengers were the same ones from the taxi he was kicked out of. After the passengers told the new taxi driver about Mofokeng being kicked out of the previous taxi, he decided to take a detour so he could pick up Mofokeng. Eventually Mofokeng arrived in Bloemhof in the early hours of the morning; he found a BP garage and asked the attendant if he could sleep in a disused truck till dawn.

According to Mofokeng, Bloemhof is a summer grain-producing rural town that also has a small diamond industry. Mofokeng likens the town to other towns throughout South Africa, and goes on to illustrate its similarities in layout and architecture. Mofokeng notes that a closer inspection of Bloemhof reveals its arrangement along racial lines. Indians are on the outskirts of the town, while Boitumelong township (which means "place of happiness"), just out of town, is mostly populated by black farm workers who compete for work around town. Mofokeng worked on a farm 23km away from the city centre, recording the lives of tenant labourers. The Maine family took Mofokeng in, and he details the background and history of the family members.

Apartheid created harsh and brutal living conditions for black South Africans, and this context motivated people to write auto/biographies that detailed the daily injustice of their living conditions, such as Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* and Albie Sachs's *Jail Diary* (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 20). The English language enabled the narratives to be accessible to a wider community, but this also made these published personal and collective narratives vulnerable to the apartheid government for scrutiny and possible banning. Coullie points out that this meant many of the black writers' auto/biographies ended up being banned by the apartheid government, suppressing people's narratives and their identities. Writing about personal life became a language for voicing protest against the harsh and brutal living conditions of black South Africans imposed by the apartheid government (Coullie *et al*, 2006: 21).

The dawn of democracy in South Africa in particular has meant a questioning of collective and individual narratives. One such context is when the missionaries started seeing the value in telling the stories of indigenous people in their own languages in an attempt to tell authentic narratives in the social contexts of the indigenous people they encountered. But the problem with such a context is that, as much as it was noble of the missionaries to recognise and tell the stories of the indigenous people they encountered, much of the narrative was lost in

translation because of language barriers. Eventually, indigenous people in South Africa began to find ways of telling their own life stories in the same medium as their settler counterparts, books, and life writing gained more popularity, with some authors also using travel writing to incorporate their individual stories and elevate their own narratives.



Figure 3 Vaalrand Shack, Bloemhof, 1988

In *Vaalrand Shack, Bloemhof, 1988* Mofokeng has made an ordinary shack/home into a place I wish I were familiar with, a place I wish I had the opportunity to see, a life lived in such a barren landscape, where a solitary tree is the only sign of life. The beauty of the photograph's various shades of black, white and grey is disrupted by the rectangular shape of the shack, with similar undulations in the far distance on the right of the photograph, suggesting that beyond this tranquil, rather carefully chosen view, other things exist outside the frame of the photograph.

The image has remnants of life in and around the shack, but there are no people in the photograph itself. Life is represented by the shack and the solitary tree; the barren land is somewhat haunting and filled with sadness. This and the lack of vegetation somehow allude to deprivation, and seem to point to a fundamental sense of lack or hopelessness in the image. This is further emphasised by the corrugated iron dwelling, where a sense of heat and discomfort are accentuated by the materials from which the structure is built. Simultaneously, the image emphasises that the roof is held down by stones and small boulders.

The image splits the focus into three spheres: the shack, the tree, and the sky. They exist within one image and yet seem to occupy their own spaces independently of one another. Together, they create an evocative emotion. Without the caption, my initial thoughts were of a yearning to see or imagine the inside of the shack, and an appreciation of the sky and the weird and wonderful constellation of the clouds above the shack as the sky consumes most of the image. It's a dreamlike landscape that leaves unanswered questions, where the mind loses itself and the imagination runs wild wondering where the place could be, and particularly what form daily life takes in such a barren landscape.

With *Vaalrand Shack, Bloemhof*, *1988*, Mofokeng manages to poeticise the image by the use of tonal contrast: the shack symbolises everything that is geographically constrained and fixed, while the very bright landscape suggests the possibility of free movement and the presence of a wandering spirit, as there are no artificial boundaries or structures apart from the shack itself. But at the same time, the shack symbolises a grounding place; its constrained location makes it a good starting point for wandering the free-spirited landscape. In this photograph, Mofokeng is able to create intense dynamics between the static and the mobile; the landscape is set in motion by the dramatic sky, which holds the promise of possibilities and adventures that lie beyond the horizon, while at the same time the shack represents a feeling of physical inhibition. John Berger puts it as follows:

> It is seeing that establishes our place in the surrounding world. We explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. This relationship between what we see and what we know is never settled (Berger, 1972: 7)



Figure 4 Near Springbok (*found in 004: Santu Mofokeng not dated)*
Figure 5 Near Springbok (*found in 004: Santu Mofokeng not dated)*

Referring to Berger's words about seeing and understanding what we see, the image *Near Springbok* depicts a deserted and figuratively empty landscape. In

looking at the photograph one has a feeling that all geographical boundaries and meanings have partially vanished, and there is a sense that although the viewer is set free, that freedom is not absolute. The photograph at first glance could be taken anywhere in the world. With regards to the actual location, Mofokeng insists on giving a location a reference point to which one can have the exalted experience of being free, which in this case is *Near Springbok*. He refers to a named place, but only "near" that place, setting it somewhere out there, preventing the viewers from setting themselves completely free in the imaginative landscape. This use of location, grounded by the word "near", establishes the conditions of where one can go and be free, especially in that the history of the landscape is relatively unknown to first-time viewers of the image. The undefined location enables these examples of Mofokeng's landscapes to become spaces of continued negotiation between the subject and its surroundings.

Near Springbok is an example of how text grounds the photograph; without the title, the photograph could be imagined to have been taken anywhere in the world. As a result, a whole new way of looking at this photograph could be established solely on the basis of its title. The title provides a context that is governed by a history of the named place, the politics of representation and history that accompany the origins of the place, and its visual history (Damsbo, 2003: 16). It is interesting that a photograph in these terms conjures up the visual history that dictates how it is read at a later stage. Thus Mofokeng is able to open other fields of negotiation through imagining the self in the landscape, demonstrating that he is constantly "aware of the conflicts of the historical past and the present" (Damsbo, 2003: 16) with his meticulous eye. Mofokeng's meticulousness is also seen in how he chose to represent *The Black Photo Album* photographic series. By choosing to have more than one type of supplementary text to accompany the photographs, he gave a broader background to the images.

The image of a man and a horse titled '*Maine Talking to his horse*' is a very simple photograph that depicts an older man and a horse. In the accompanying text to the photographic essay that the titled '*Maine Talking to his horse*' is part of, Mofokeng mentions that he found it hard "to represent, in any meaningful way, people who have ceased to be just tenant labourers, farm workers" (Mofokeng 2011: 46). The reason provided by Mofokeng was that, for him, the people represented in his photographs had become friends and had taken him into their confidence. By taking into account the context provided by the accompanying text to the *Rumours/ The Bloemhof Portfolio* series, and the caption for the photograph, a reading of the photograph's narrative becomes more complex. It raises questions around the identity of the man in the photograph, how he had come to acquire and own a horse when he was just a tenant farm labourer, and also the relationship between Maine and his horse that is unique and individual.



Figure 6 Maine Talking to His Horse, 1988



Figure 7 Sunflower Harvests, Vaalrand Farm, 1988

Sunflower Harvest, Vaalrand Farm, 1988 is an image that directly speaks to the narrative of the farming community in *Bloemhof*. It shows farm labourers working, and on the left shows a light-coloured person pointing. This detail makes direct reference to the apartheid structure of working and race classification as overtly visible and apparent. The farm labourers' position is further re-enforced by the following statement from Mofokeng:

> On the question of democracy, I cannot help but recall the old Nat [National Party] slogan, when prime minister [Hendrik] Verwoerd was laid to rest, which resounded across the country thus: "*Laat die blikke en die sappe raas, die wit man bly baas* [translated by Mofokeng as follows] Let loudmouths and the opposition shout, the white man remains boss" (Mofokeng, 2011: 46)



Figure 8 Afoor Family Bedroom, Vaalrand, 1988

Afoor Family Bedroom, Vaalrand, 1988 is intriguing in that there is a chicken in the bedroom. The clue that talks to the room as a bedroom in the conventional sense is somewhat hidden, and only visible upon closer inspection. The image of the chicken in the bedroom is similar to the image from the *Chasing Shadows,* titled *Offertory/Shrine, Motouleng Cave*, where the chicken is more prominent as the lights shine on it. The image further emphasises the abject poverty and conditions of living, highlighted through the depiction of the young-looking

figure in a room that seems to be dark, with the only source of light coming through the door.

The images in the *Rumours/Bloemhof Portfolio* are a combination of images that show an intimacy between the photographer and the people in the photograph, and images that seem out of place as they present striking landscapes that are devoid of human interaction.

4. BODY OF PRACTICAL WORK

> *I had been considering the idea that any single photographic image has the potential to produce a diversity of effects, that more than one story/time can be told. Sometimes a laughter effect. Sometimes an economic story ... I had been thinking with any still photographic image there isn't just one time. On the contrary, there is a plurality of time* – Yve Lomax (1994: 39).

4.1 Different moments, different perspectives

I have always been fascinated by the photographic moment: the moment before the photograph is taken, the actual moment the photograph is taken, and the moment after the photograph is taken. Firstly, I am particularly interested in how the moments before and after the 'immortalised' photographic moment are accounted for, represented and subsequently interpreted. I also have a fascination with the stories of photographers. Generally, portrait photographers tell a story of the person in the photographic portrait or people captured in the photographs, whereas landscape photographers usually tell a story about the concept that inspired their photographs.

The first time I interviewed Mofokeng about his photography, I was captivated by his articulation of his concept, especially in 'Lampposts'. I was initially conflicted and confused about to how to read the images he presented in his book alongside the essay. To me, the title of the essay suggested there would be images in his photographic series that directly reference the title and the contents of the essay, but it was more about Mofokeng's autobiography and life events. The images in *Taxi-004* held, in my estimation, something other than a direct relation to the essay. But on subsequent re-reading of 'Lampposts' and looking at the images again, I found that the title of the essay could be seen as a metaphor for both Mofokeng's autobiography and the photographs presented. The 'Lampposts' text together with the photographs in *Taxi-004,* and the introductory text, titled 'Invoice', together with the images accompanying the exhibition of the same title, is articulated by Geoff Dyer in *But Beautiful: A Book About Jazz* when he says:

> Photographs sometimes work on you strangely and simply; at first glance you see things you subsequently discover are not there. Or rather, when you look again you notice things you initially didn't realise were there (Dyer, 2012: 11).

I find that, since my first encounter with Mofokeng's 'Lampposts' text and the accompanying photographs, I have been (partly subconsciously) on a quest to find and represent the text in my own photographic works and videos, in addition to trying to emulate a way of telling multilayered stories through a single photographic image, and trying to find a way to represent a photographic moment that encapsulates the actual photographed moment, the moment before and the moment after the image has been taken.

4.2 Spaces and places

At this point of the report, I emphasise the methodology of my practical work as an engagement with everyday public spaces. Of particular interest are spaces that act as intersections between private and public life. My explorations focus on the phenomenon of people's movement through these spaces, and places at particular times of the day that make up, and reflect on, our everyday landscapes. Through highlighting the sequence or rhythm of life over time, these spaces/places are shown to be significant in that they tell the story of people, events and places.

I see these places/spaces as highly charged because they reflect urban congestion; they are places that are often invested with high emotions, and are usually contested at certain times of the day, such as early mornings and late afternoons, mostly by motorists and pedestrians negotiating their way in and around the cosmopolitan environment of Gauteng. This congestion is explored in relation to the quietness of these spaces during late weekday mornings/evenings and weekends.

By using photographic still images and a sequence of manipulated photographic still images rendered in time-lapse video footage, in parallel as visual recordings of the public spaces and people, I explore how these mediums record, capture, construct, intervene, and diffuse narrative, both independently and together. They reflect on ordinary, everyday spaces as warehouses of private and collective memories. The intention is to investigate how the photographic still image and video footage, presented simultaneously, influence the way of seeing with our eyes and interpreting with our minds these ordinary, everyday spaces.

The fundamental nature and foundation of these places and spaces, represented in my photographic images and manipulated time-lapses, speaks to the idea that places and spaces act as catalysts that enable individual and collective human interaction, and subsequently the creation of individual and collective narratives.

The individual and collective narratives are evoked by memories and encounters with the places and spaces. The interaction with the places and spaces by

individuals varies from a one-off fleeting moment to an ongoing interaction. Whatever their nature, the spaces and places are, in most cases, recognisable to individuals and/or collectives that might see and use them. The intrigue and opacity of other people's lives and spaces are evoked through the decision taken to present the photographs alongside manipulated time-lapses. The intention is to generate ruptures produced by my own observations of the real story.

For me, figures 22 and 23 are images of spaces and places, forms of landscapes that WJT Mitchell argues:

> exert a subtle power over people, eliciting a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify. This indeterminacy of affect seems, in fact, to be a crucial feature of whatever force landscape can have. As the background within which a figure, form, or narrative act emerges, landscape exerts the passive force of setting, scene, and sight. It is generally the 'overlooked', not the 'looked at', and it can be quite difficult to specify what exactly it means to say that one is 'looking at the landscape' (2002: vii).

I identify with Mitchell's words, where the images I use speak to both the landscape and the contents within the photographic frame. Mitchell's description of the power landscapes exert on people is emphasised by the type of spaces and places that make up the photographic and video landscapes in my work.

Mitchell succinctly provides an elaboration of space and place where he quotes Michel de Certeau:

> Who divides the 'field' between space (*espace)* and place (*lieu)* in terms of a whole series of binary oppositions? Place is associated with 'stability', 'the law of the proper'; and the specific, definite location, by contrast, exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. This space is composed of intersections of mobile, elements … In contradistinction to the place, it has thus none of the univocity [unambiguousness] or stability of a 'proper' [formal qualities of an image] (2002: vii).

In short, space is a practiced place. Geometrically defined by urban planning, the street is transformed into space by pedestrians. Similarly, the act of reading the

space informed by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e. a place constituted by a system of signs.[10] In addition, according to Mitchell:

> space and place make an attractive dialectical opposition in ordinary language as well. Space has connotations of abstraction and geometry, while place resonates with particularity and qualitative density (2002: ix).

This dialectal opposition that Mitchell outlines has been the most intriguing aspect of Mofokeng's practice, and one to which I have always been drawn. In the use and occupation of the spaces and places I have chosen to photograph, I have similarly always grappled with the contestation that Mitchell articulates as "the expression of power in the landscape as a manifestation of law, prohibition, regulation, and control" (2002: x).

For me, Mofokeng's 'Lampposts' essay transforms space into a place that becomes something alluring and magical, apart from serving a basic function of controlling and providing light to the street. Because the eyes forever keep wandering through the landscape and frame of reference through the viewfinder, and the totality of what is before me cannot be committed to memory, the lamppost as provider of light acts as a metaphorical means of revelation. This enables the continuous discovery of new pictures within pictures: the golf course photograph is such an example where the accumulation of golf balls on the fairway becomes, on the one hand, a metaphor of some sort of failure, that a lot of balls failed to find the hole, and foregrounds questions around the golf balls, particularly whether there were some balls that did land in the hole. But how does anyone distinguish their own ball from the others' once the balls land on the fairway? Is the landing position of a particular person's ball relevant? Does someone pick up the balls? When?

The combined sequences of images of the places and spaces I represent contain traces and memories of earlier activity and occupation of the places and spaces. In addition, these traces and memories are forever suspended in the process of becoming within the places and spaces. The location and setting of the spaces and places in the actual exhibition are not explicitly given, but rather implicitly suggested. This results in the audience's projecting their personal familiarities on to the places and spaces by drawing on their own memories of familiar symbolic features within each photographic still image and time-lapse.

The photographic still image's ability to emphasise its own finiteness and the looped time-lapse ability to invoke the notions of infinity is where I see the two

[10] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

speaking to each other. The photographic still image emphasises the finite factual moment, drawing on the tradition of documentary photography and the representation of time. Similarly, the time-lapse has the ability to emphasise the infinity of time through the aesthetic quality of the presented fictional moving images; and vice versa, the constant dialogue between fact and fiction, finite moments to infinite moments. Drawing on De Certeau's differentiation between places and spaces, the still photographic image equates and stands to represent the qualities De Certeau refers to when he talks about the notion of place, which represents the finite, stable moment. The time-lapses, in contrast, represent all the qualities of mobility and infinite moments De Certeau outlines as being specific to the notion of spaces.

The sequence of photographic still images and the time-lapse presented together in an exhibition space become a series of continuous and consequential moments about the represented places and spaces. These moments in the photographic still images become finite, stable moments, whereas moments in the time lapses are an accumulation of a sequence of photographic still images that transform to transient, infinite moments. The finite and transient moments are problematised and elucidated by the presentation of spaces and places that are familiar to people, where the familiarity of spaces and places becomes a metaphor within or for personal stories.

4.3 Choosing a site

I first decided to take all my photographs on each site in the evening. I found the evenings to be the most appropriate time because of the subtle changes in light. Some of the places, such as Rand Airport in Germiston, required permission from the owners and/or management. For other spaces, such as Makhulong Stadium and the new police station in Tembisa, I chose to stand a certain distance away from a controlled area so as to avoid having to ask for permission. For spaces such as the Oakmoor train station in Tembisa, permission was granted only if I agreed with the conditions set by management, the most common proviso being that I would be provided with an escort to guide me around the premises.

Because most times I had to agree with the terms, it was rather difficult to be free in the space, because on one level, I had to continually be polite and converse with my escort, and answer questions about what I was doing, the duration of my project, its purpose, and in what context my photographs were going to be presented. The time spent conversing with and explaining myself to my escorts made it very difficult in spaces such as Rand Airport, meaning that I had little time at my disposal to do exposure tests for the time-lapses. Time was cut short on one level by the fact that the firemen would be knocking off work three hours after my arrival, at about 9pm, which meant that my note-taking

during my exposure tests, for the most part, had to be as detailed as possible because of the limited time. Embracing the conversations with my escorts also, however, allowed me the opportunity to develop a relationship with the firemen at Rand Airport and the security guards at Oakmoor.

The benefits of the relationships formed with the various personnel allowed me to give shorter notice before I arrived, and over time they would on occasion be more willing to stay a few hours later after their shifts had ended. The generosity of the firemen and security personnel would allow me to at least reach an acceptable minimum number of photographic still images for a reasonable time-lapse sequence. The reason for taking most of the photographs in the evening was twofold. I initially wanted to have a series of still photographic images that showed a transition of time. But I also wanted to show the transition of time subtly when I played back the sequence of images of each of the sites. The challenge was to find and implement a technique that would enable me to manipulate and represent a sequence of photographic still images in video format while subtly showing a transition of time in what seems to be a single photographic still image. I wanted to be able to use the photographic still images to produce traditional printed photographic images as well.

My selection criteria for the choice of sites included whether the sites had been built for general public use, but were privately owned; and whether they had varying usage and access requirements for the general public while also acknowledging that almost any site in Gauteng is potentially privately owned, but still accessible to the general public.

The following sites where photographed: Runway 2, Rand Airport, Germiston; Runway 1, Rand Airport, Germiston; Vodacom Golf Village, Bedfordview; Atlas Road off-ramp, (R24), Near Boksburg; the new police station, Tembisa; Thari Enthso Park, Tembisa; Rhodesfield Gautrain Station; Eastgate parking lot, Bruma; Makhulong Stadium, Tembisa; and St Gemma's Primary School, Tembisa. Sites that did not become part of the final exhibition included St Barnard Stadium, Kempton Park; and the Wits University rugby stadium. The sites were chosen because of their evocative lighting.

4.4 Accumulating and collating the still photographs

I identified the sites based on the lights present at night. This often happened purely accidentally, and I would go to the sites on consecutive days, sometimes over several weeks, looking for an opportune time when the lights would be on. For example, lights were used sparingly at Makhulong Stadium in Tembisa compared to at the Vodacom Golf Village in Bedfordview, where the lights were on all week. At some spaces such as the Atlas Road off-ramp, Thari Enthso Park,

and the new police station, the intention was to spend more than five hours on site, but often weather conditions did not permit this. On random days and times, all of the lights along the R24 highway would be off for up to two weeks. I would spend between five and seven hours on each shooting evening trying to obtain at least 1 200 photographs to enable a final rendered sequence of about 2 minutes and 40 seconds. The final number of photographic still images and time spent on each site also depended on the exposure times for each photographic still and the interval time between each photographic still image.

After I had obtained a sequence of images, I would grade them in Adobe Photoshop to create a uniform exposure and grade across all images, and the next step was to resize them in Adobe Lightroom. There were three reasons for resizing the photographic images. One was because the original images where four times larger in length and two times larger in height than the required high-definition format. The second was that the file size of each image was too large, which would not have been ideal for rendering a video file and would have slowed down my computer when processing large amounts of data. The last reason for resizing the images was the raw format in which the images were taken would not have been effective to use with the image sequence-manipulation application such as Adobe Lightroom.

I then imported the image sequence into Adobe Premiere Pro to create a contained sequence to determine the flow of the video, the duration, and the point of view. The sequence was used as a test to see if a reshoot was required, and to determine the level of complexity of movement that would need to be masked out or kept. From the sequence, I chose sections in the images to selectively remove in Adobe Photoshop, and reimported the edited images back into the contained sequence in Adobe Premiere Pro. I then edited the contained sequence in Adobe After Effects to mask out sections of movement within the contained sequence and keep other sections of movement untouched.

The process of using Adobe Photoshop and After Effects was time consuming, because if I neglected to retouch just one photo, I would need to go back to the beginning by retouching the images in Photoshop and reimporting them back into Adobe Premiere Pro. When I was able to play the sequence in Adobe Premiere Pro, I had my first engagement with the activity in the frame, and, consequently, an understanding of the level of complexity present. The Adobe Premiere Pro sequence was also used as a test for whether a reshoot was required and whether the movements recorded would need to be masked out or retained, after importing the sequence to Adobe After Effects. Finally, I sent the sequence back to Adobe Premiere Pro for minor colour corrections and rendered it into the final time-lapse. In most cases I would have to redo the workflow if something was not right or a section was not masked properly.

The final product explores how the mediums with which I engage record, capture, construct, intervene, and diffuse narrative both independently and together, reflecting on ordinary, everyday spaces as warehouses of private and collective memories. I find the intention relevant in articulating the curatorial decisions in putting up my exhibition, *Lamppost*. I believe I found my own voice of articulating and partly answering my curiosity around the photographic moment, particularly in what comes before and after. While allowing the concept and theories behind each presented photographic landscape to develop through the images and videos presented simultaneously, I created my own individual narrative and a collective narrative.

4.5 Between stasis and movement

The photographic still images together with the manipulated video time-lapse in resultant *Lamppost* exhibition question the relationship between the static and the moving images at face value. Even though, for me, the photographic still images and the manipulated time-lapses occupy their own spaces, inherently, through the nature of the presentation of the photographic images and the time-lapses, questioning their relationship is unavoidable.

The exhibition was curated in such a way as to not have two distinct and unintentionally separate exhibitions in the Wits Substation; the space is divided to two sections – a large space downstairs with a staircase leading to a smaller area on the upper level. As I had seven videos and 10 photographic prints, I could have easily separated the images from the videos to create two completely different spaces by presenting videos in the bottom section and the photographs in the top. But that would have split the exhibition into two distinct halves that did not cohere as a whole, and in the creation of the work there was never an intention to separate the two. The decision to have photographic images next to time-lapses on television screens was driven by the supplementary dialogue that each video could have with a photograph of the same site, as well as those of different sites and time-lapses. It was important for videos placed nearby photographs of the same site to be shown only if they were from a different angle and point of view. The exception was the video and the photograph of the Makhulong Stadium, where I felt that the photographic still image was as powerful as the video, and I wanted to show both no matter what. Yet when I was placing the works in the exhibition space, I forgot to show the photograph of the Makhulong Stadium. As a result, the photographic still image and the video were not placed next to each other. An implicit dialogue was created for the photograph of Makhulong Stadium through the placement of the photograph upstairs and the video downstairs, which enabled the viewer looking at the video to see the photograph from the corner of their left eye. Some locations were

represented by the videos and photographic still images. Another exception was the inclusion of the images of a rainy Rand Airport in contrast to the late-night time-lapse view of the same place.

The resulting exhibition installation, I suggest, became not just a conversation starter about the transition of time and the intrigue of people's movements in these various spaces and places, but a conversation starter for familiar yet foreign sites in people's personal stories and connections with the spaces and places. The decision to use monitors rather than larger projection screens was guided by a desire to invoke a sense of intimacy associated with the photographic still images: ultimately the video sequences were collections of sequences of still images made to move. The intention was to make the viewer feel the extended time beyond the still image while also appreciating the aesthetic qualities of the still photographs.



Figure 9
Runway 2, Rand Airport, Germiston
1 200 photographs rendered into a sequence
Duration: 2:40
2013



Figure 10
Atlas Road off-ramp (R24)
1 200 photographs rendered into a sequence
Duration: 2:40
2013



Figure 11
New Police Station, Tembisa
1 200 photographs rendered into a sequence
Duration: 2:40
2013





Figure 12 (left)
Thari Enthso Park, Tembisa
1 200 photographs rendered into a sequence
Duration: 2:40
2013

Figure 13 (right)
Thari Enthso Park, Tembisa
Pigment ink on cotton paper
Paper size: 77.6cm X 58cm
2013



Figure 14
Gautrain Station, Rhodesfield
Pigment ink on cotton paper
Paper size 77.6cm X 58cm
2013



Figure 15
Eastgate Parking Lot, Bruma
Pigment ink on cotton paper
Paper size: 77.6cm X 58cm
2013





Figure 16 (Left)
Vodacom Golf Village, Gillooly's, Bedfordview
1 200 photographs rendered into a sequence
Duration: 2:40
2013

Figure 17 (Right)
Vodacom Golf Village, Gillooly's, Bedfordview
Pigment ink on cotton paper
Paper size: 77.6cm X 58cm
2013

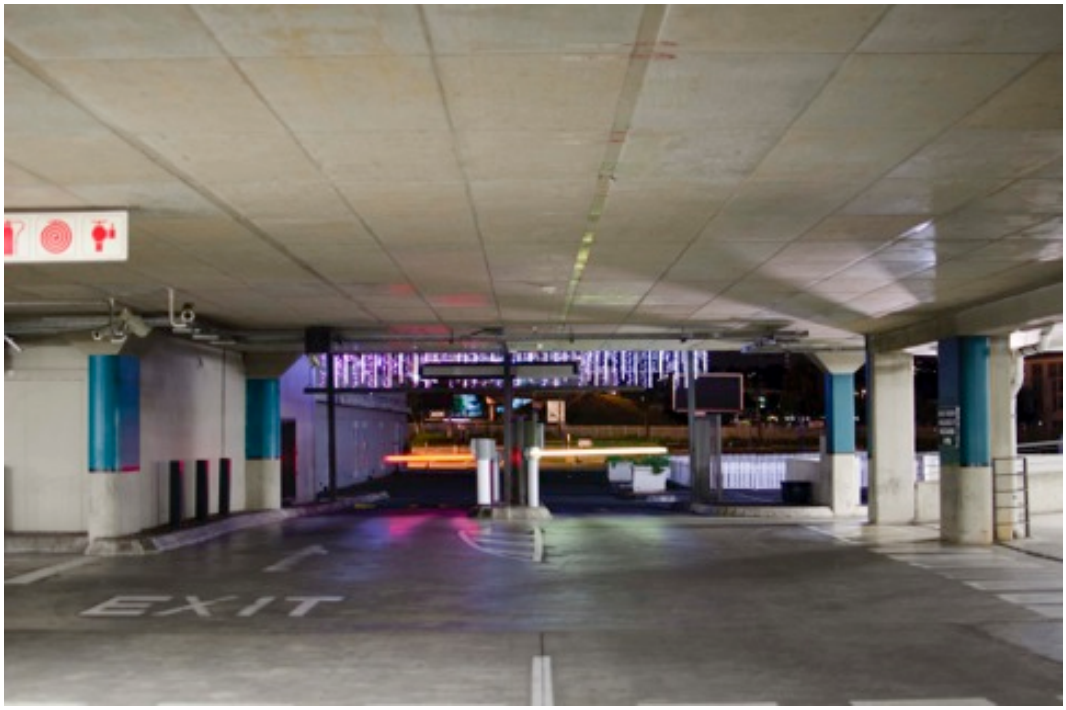
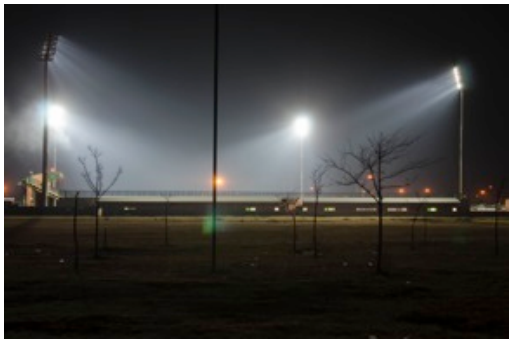


Figure 18
Eastgate Parking Lot, Bruma
1 200 photographs rendered into a sequence
Duration: 2:40
2013



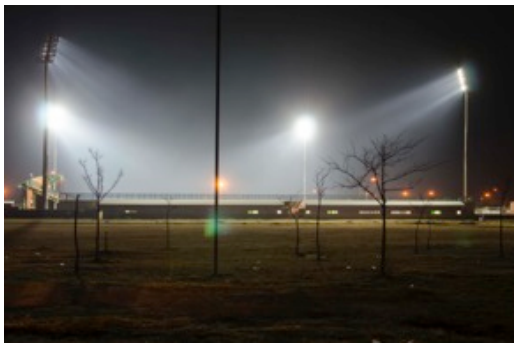


Figure 19 (left)
Makhulong Stadium, Tembisa
1 200 photographs rendered into a sequence
Duration: 2:40
2013

Figure 20 (right)
Makhulong Stadium, Tembisa
Pigment ink on cotton paper
Paper size: 77.6cm X 58cm
2013



Figure 21
St Gemma's Primary School, Tembisa
Pigment ink on cotton paper
Paper size: 77.6cm X 58cm
2012



Figure 22
Oakmoor Train Station, Tembisa
Pigment ink on cotton paper
Paper size: 77.6cm X 58cm
2010



Figure 23
Oakmoor Train Station, Tembisa
Pigment ink on cotton paper
Paper size: 77.6cm X 58cm
2010



Figure 24 (Left)
Runway 1, Rand Airport, Germiston
Pigment ink on cotton paper
Paper size: 77.6cm X 58cm
2013



Figure 25 (Right)
Runway 1, Rand Airport, Germiston
Pigment ink on cotton paper
Paper size: 77.6cm X 58cm
2013

4.2 LAMPPOST EXHIBITION INSTALLATION VIEWS

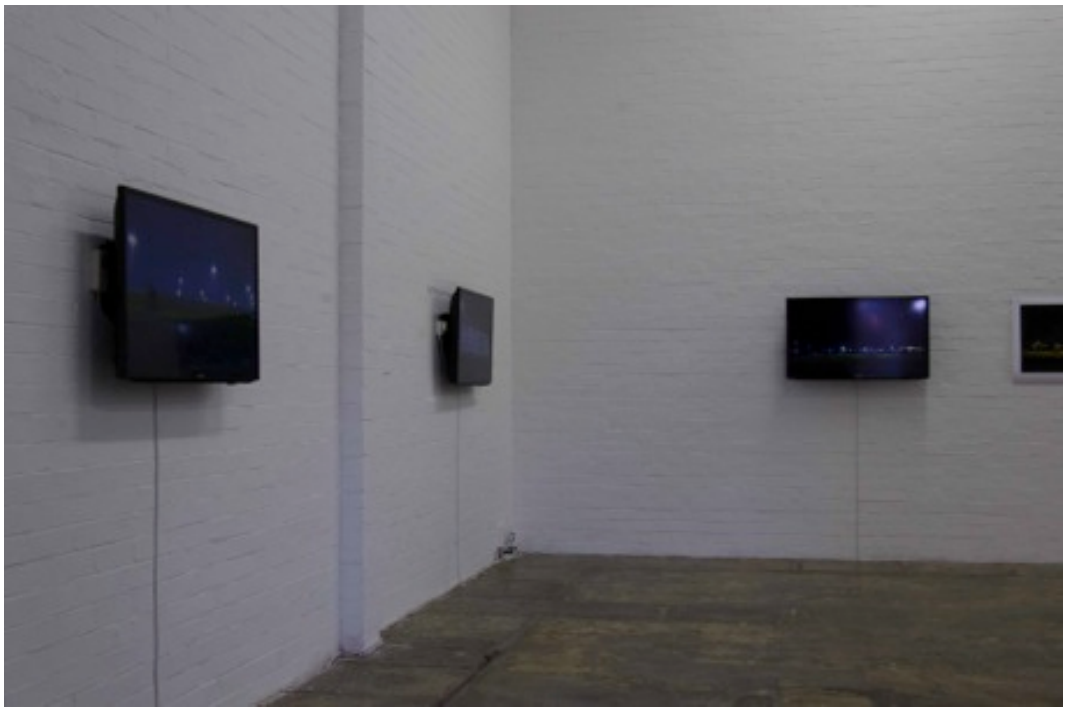


Figure 26
Lamppost installation view
2014



Figure 27
Lamppost installation view
2014



Figure 28
Lamppost installation view
2014



Figure 29
Lamppost installation view
2014

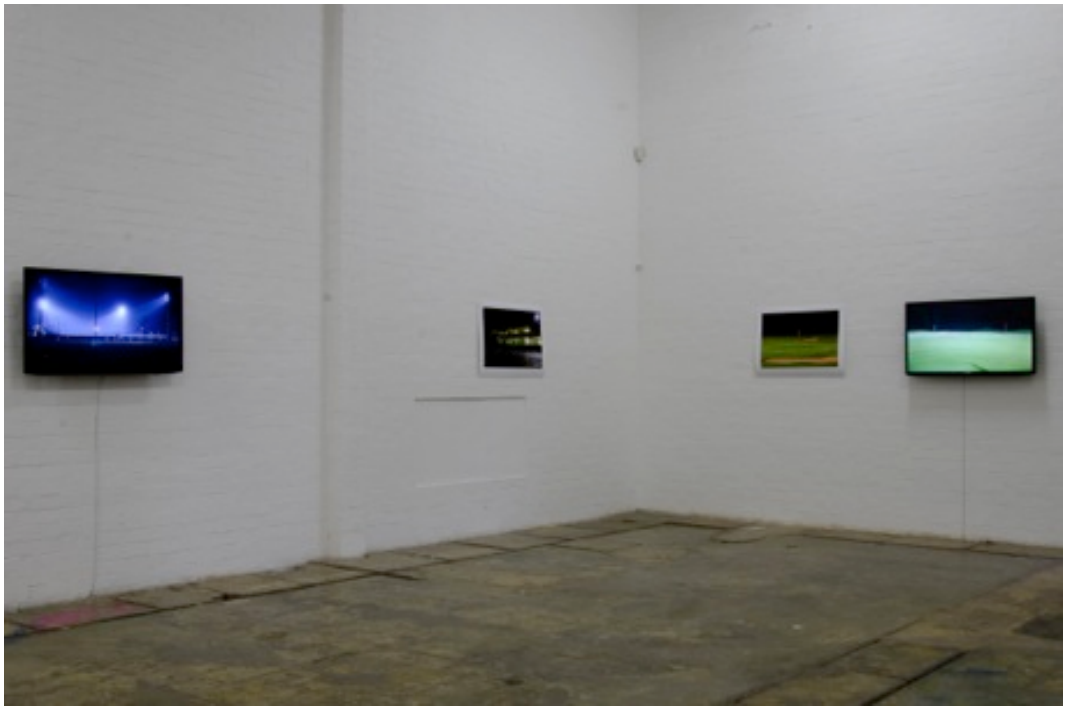


Figure 30
Lamppost installation view
2014



Figure 31
Lamppost installation view
2014



Figure 32
Lamppost installation view
2014

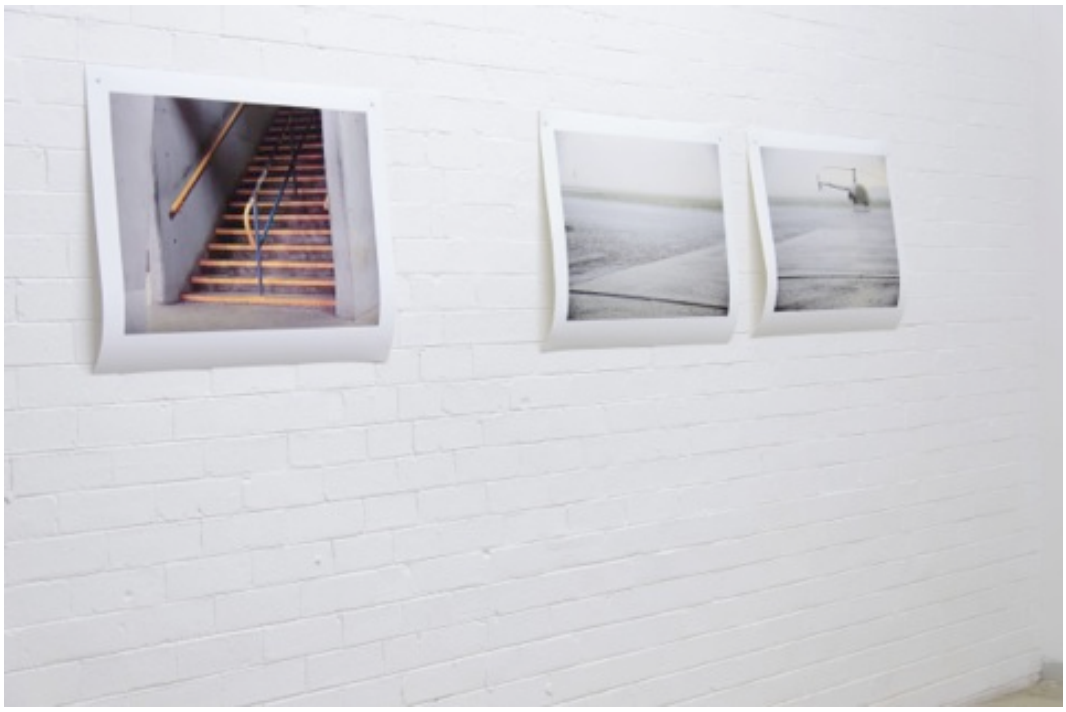


Figure 33
Lamppost installation view
2014

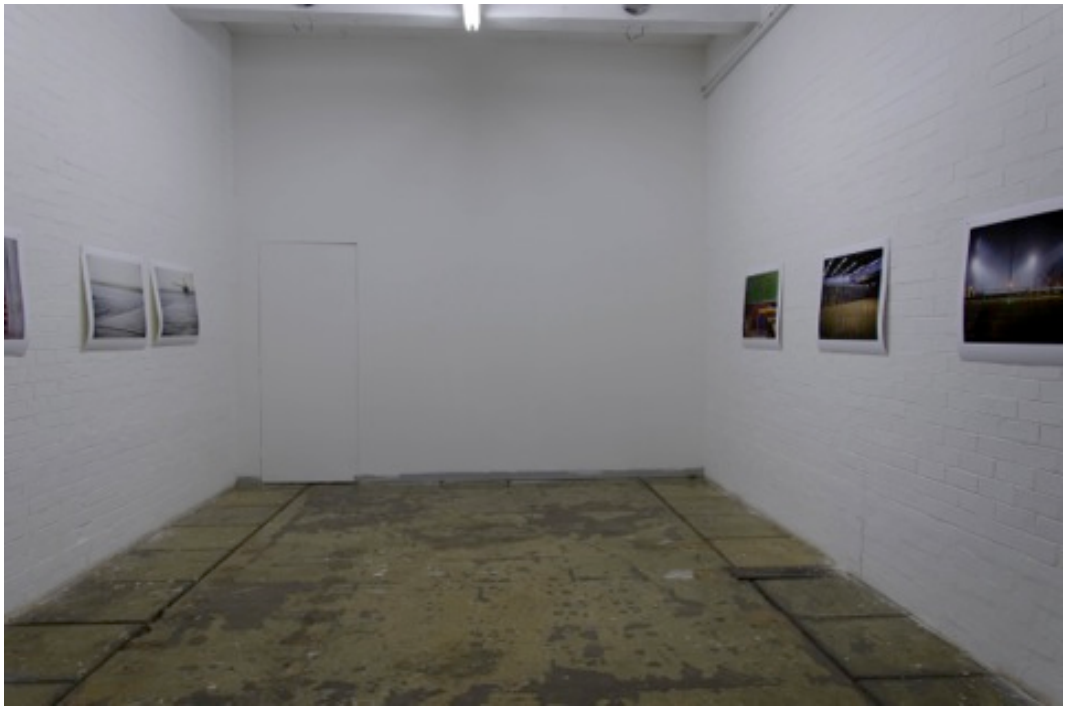


Figure 34
Lamppost installation view
2014

CONCLUSION

This study's results further solidify my own interest in the camera, written text, photographic text and video not only as vehicles for personal reflection, but also as tools for fostering multilayered narratives and narrative development. I have come to understand that using photographic still images alongside written text promotes the supplementary nature of the autobiographical narrative through personal reflection. This study illuminates ways in which photographic still images and written text supplement each other in the creation of narratives.

For Mofokeng, the text itself is often not explanatory of a particular photograph or of the photographic essay. He suggests that both the wall and introductory texts mimic the "persuasiveness – the indexical 'truth' of photographs without in any way having to be 'truthful' or indexical" (MacDougall, 2006: 148). As a result, for Mofokeng *The Black Photo Album* serves to represent the contemporary narrative of the people presented in the photographs.

Mofokeng's more traditional landscapes are mostly defined by the absence of human presence, especially in the photographs *Aus/Luderitz, Namibia, Near Springbok,* and *Vaalrand Shack, Bloemhof*. As viewers of these images from a formalist point of view, we have a clear sense of openness, projecting ourselves into the spaces. Mofokeng's photographic projects span a number of years. He revisits the same places time and time again, and the resultant body of work thus seems to have life of its own, representing the same narrative over different years. The frequent visits to the landscapes suggest there is never an end point to the series of photographs about a certain theme or landscape, but there is always a beginning.

The stylistic formalist techniques Mofokeng uses enable him to play with what he represents and how he successfully allows the viewer to create a point of departure in making a narrative within the image. He achieves this by consistently not having people in most of his landscape photographs, yet using the caption to remind the viewer of the place's significance in both world history and personal history. In addition, the use of black-and-white photography removes much of the photo's specificity regardless of when it was taken. The image enables Mofokeng to present current time in conjunction with time past. This formalist way of photographing works for him as the viewers of his work find a connection with the image, because he allows them to start anywhere in constructing a narrative from or around the image of the landscape presented. And there is no right or wrong point of departure for making a personal narrative, as the narrative I create in my head is partially guided by the provided caption. Therefore, whether the viewer has a physical, emotional,

literal experience of the place or knows it only through this mediated experience, their narrative is valid and worthwhile. My study proposed to analyse Mofokeng's use of the photographic text (image) as supplementary to written text to examine and represent narratives of historical change. In Peffer's words, Mofokeng's "projects … focus on the ways meaning is rendered according to different modes of photography … and the different settings for its consumption [art galleries … history books] (Peffer, 2000: 33).

My research provides additional insight into Mofokeng's artistic production and contribution to "the postcolonial dimension of contemporary African art" (Enwezor, 2006: 23). The significance of Enwezor's assessment is further unpacked in his article titled 'Structural Analysis of Narratives', in which he expresses the opinion that it is not tradition but the artist who not only decides what the work of art is, but also controls its narrative. He goes on to say that the idea of the artist as the one who controls narrative was propagated by conceptual art, whereby the physical fabrication of art could ostensibly be replaced with "linguistic description", where the artist subjectively critiques tradition (Enwezor, 2003: 80).

In the case of Mofokeng's artistic production, the "linguistic description" of the photograph, as asserted by Roland Barthes, is a referent that operates as a sign that needs to be read within the context of its creation and use within or outside of that context. In *Elements of Semiology*, Barthes defines photographic images as "substances of expression, and as everyday objects, used by society in a derivative way to signify something, and yet their essence is not to signify" (Barthes, 1964: 41). He goes on to say that what is "signified" is what can be "utterable". This refers to the process associated with the explanation of signs through speech and written text, in which the written text is the tool prevalent in Mofokeng's artistic production (Barthes, 1964: 43).

Patricia Hayes's observation of Mofokeng's work in *Night, Shadow, Smoke, Mist, Blurring, Occlusion and Abeyance* (2009)[11] is somewhat similar and more directly related to that of Enwezor. My own take on Mofokeng's work is appropriated from Enwezor's opinion on "linguistic description"; in my case "linguistic description" in the form of written text can be employed as a supplementary tool to the physical art product.

Photographic practice pushes one towards a contemplative attitude. During the course of this research paper I sought to understand how my use of photographic still images alongside video mediated my experiences and

[11] While recognising Mofokeng's ability to control narrative, Hayes writes that "one of the visual jokes Mofokeng likes to play is to represent things that may not be what they seem, that unsettle, using the underpinnings of photography to rupture normality and expectation" (Hayes, 2009: 70).

prompted reflection. The resulting work of the various landscapes is largely improvised. The result of my practice, in some ways, makes the photographs seem contrived because the encounter in a gallery setting becomes strangely similar to a real-life experience, equivalent on some level to the scene depicted in both the photographs and the videos.

The photographic moment is confined to a specific time; the contained moment within any photograph forever acts as an access point to the narrative of the moment. Video also contains moments that are contained within a specific time; the video momentarily continues a collection of singular moments. Some of the spaces and places represented project a sense of stillness, and others project a sense of movement of time. There is a concurrent process of the happening; the event being depicted is continuing in that there is more to what is captured in a photographic still image. There is a sense of ephemerality, of time fleeting, in what you see, that it's not all there is to it: something is shown but not everything. Some aspects of the photograph persist well after the photograph, and at the same time a sense of repetition is evoked by what is depicted in the photograph and in the video. The referents of the photograph stand individually, and together they create the fluidity and stillness that is imbued in the image.

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