Developing a Methodology for Understanding Artistic Mentorship in Apartheid South Africa: The Case of the Polly Street Art Centre

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and has neither been submitted before to any other degree or examination at any other university, nor prepared under the aegis or with the assistance of any other body or organisation or person outside the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

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Name Date

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT

When the Nationalist Party government came into power in 1948, they set about establishing Afrikaner hegemony and destroying all institutions associated with British Imperialism. With the post-war industrial boom, increasing numbers of Africans moved from South Africa's rural areas to work in urban cities like Johannesburg, Pretoria and Durban, to mention but a few. To accommodate the ever-increasing number of black inhabitants, townships were built, but these lacked suitable recreational facilities, and hence the public halls were often used. One of these was the Polly Street Recreational Centre in downtown Johannesburg. This study investigates the role played by mentorship as a teaching methodology in art education at the Polly Street Art Centre from 1952 to 1965, the period during which black urban artists emerged. It explores the following key questions:

- What was the role of mentorship in art education for the black artists at Polly Street Art Centre?
- To what extent might this mentorship be understood as teaching and learning methodology during this period?
- Why was this teaching methodology at Polly Street Art Centre never properly engaged in academic research by mainly white scholars?
- To what extent is Cecil Skotnes hero-worshipped by white scholars as the sole crusader in the success of Polly Street Art Centre?

Through interrogation of available literature, as well as pre-existing and my own interviews with people closely associated with Polly Street Art Centre, I argue that mentorship as a teaching methodology has been ignored in favour of an understanding that reinforces the apparently formal academic teaching of art education.

INTRODUCTION

The origins, location and reasons for the establishment of Polly Street Adult Education Centre (later renamed 'Polly Street Art Centre') are very conflicting at best. Various scholars, historians and writers have contradicted themselves until Miles (2004: 10) put paid to this malice. Through her meticulous pursuit of the truth, she has consulted and engaged with "artworks, interviews, newspaper and magazine articles, two masters' theses, academic papers, municipal minutes, letters and fieldwork", to compile a compelling record of this place.

According to Miles (2004), the story started in 1948 when the liberal Johannesburg City Council started an Adult Education Centre for the Non-European Community. After the site was identified and renovations were made to the building, personnel were employed to implement the plan. The following year, in 1949:

> Polly Street Adult Education Centre was to provide cultural amenities for the non-European Community. Because of a number of organisations were using the hall and other rooms in the building for social and educational activities, the general consensus was that all activities should be co-ordinated under the auspices of the Local Committee for the non-European Adult Education in collaboration with the non-European Affairs Department of the City of Johannesburg (Miles, 2004: 16).

In an essay titled 'The Story of Polly Street Art Scene', David Koloane (renowned international artist, curator and writer) confirms that Polly Street Art Centre became the only institution to afford those wanting to learn "creative skills in the disciplines of music, drama, dance and fine art which were absent in the curricula of most (if not all) black schools with proper facilities and space" (Koloane 1989: 213). The classes began late in the evening at most of these centres (halls) to accommodate school children and working adults. Further, according to Elizabeth Rankin (2011), Polly Street was:

> not a municipal initiative; it was established in 1949 by a group set up the previous year to develop extra-mural education and recreation for black workers in the city (the Johannesburg Local Committee for Adult Education), chaired by Gideon Uys, (commercial attaché at the American Embassy). The project incorporated art as one of a wide range of activities as diverse as literacy classes, choirs, boxing and ballroom dancing, all organised by a salaried recreational officer (Rankin, 2011: 57).

Of significance to the study is how Koloane defines the composition and role the committee played; "[T]he committee itself was an autonomous body, comprising educationists, artists,

ministers of religion and representatives of various cultural organisations" (Koloane, 1989: 214). According to Esmé Berman, the local Committee was the "co-ordinating body" of the various groups and government (Berman, 1983: 231).

To make this argument, the study is divided into four chapters.

The first chapter is a review of published literature on art education in South Africa. Key to analysing the literature is to establish how often and to what extent mentorship methodology was used at the Polly Street Art Centre. Through the selection of books and monographs of artists associated with Polly Street Art Centre, the study interrogates and analyses the absence of any conceptions and understandings of mentorship at the Centre. It is crucial to establish the manner in which local scholarship has researched and written about this teaching methodology in relation to formal teaching methods in art education at Polly Street Art Centre.

The second chapter explores the complexity of the terms "mentoring" and "mentorship" in general, as well as more specifically in an art education context. Scholars do not agree on one unique meaning of these terms and, through a selection of definitions, the study prepares the reader to understand the position the author settles on in defining and using these terms. This vitally important methodology is explored and unpacked as the foundation to understanding the central question of the dissertation. Further to unpacking mentorship, it is linked to how this methodology was applied at Polly Street Art Centre from 1952 to 1965 by Cecil Skotnes and his volunteer teachers.

The third chapter brings together evidence gathered through pre-existing and own interviews conducted with people closely associated with former staff members and students at the Polly Street Art Centre. This information gathering is important in fully comprehending the gaps between the locally published literature and the information gathered from interviewees' accounts. While the literature has demonstrated how this methodology was used, writers of the books selected, however, seem to omit its mention, or simply ignore, or did not recognise that what was taking place at Polly Street Art Centre was indeed mentorship. This exercise is to make visible the extent to which this method was used at the Polly Street Art Centre by people who experienced it first-hand.

In the fourth chapter the findings of the study will be communicated to gauge the extent of the strength or weakness of this methodology as used at Polly Street Art Centre. Information from Chapter two, which defines mentoring and mentorship as teaching methodology, is synthesised with the information gathered from the published literature. This in turn is contrasted with interviewees' accounts. Drawing insights from the three

chapters, I derive conclusions that will determine the strength or weaknesses of this methodology as it was used at Polly Street Art Centre. Recommendations from the study are informed by the central hypothesis as pertaining to the use of mentorship at Polly Street Art Centre, as well as the suggestion that Cecil Skotnes is not the superhero that many South African scholars have purported him to be.

Furthermore, it offers an opportunity to understand the roles that former student graduates have played in promoting art education within the black communities, especially given that several of them went on to teach at community art centres using this methodology.

The study explores a moment in the transition of power from the Union of South Africa to the Nationalist Party governments in the mid-twentieth century. By way of introduction to this dissertation, I would like to provide background and context about colonial and apartheid education in South Africa for the following reasons:

- The colonial government did not clarify its stance on black education during its tenure. This failure to resolve education disadvantaged black people, as at the time access to education was mainly through mission schools run and managed by various churches.
- The end of World War II (WWII) resulted in an influx of European immigrants to South Africa who were running away from civil strife wrought by Nazism and Fascism, perpetuated by Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini respectively (Nettleton, pers com 2016).
- When, in 1948, the National Party ascended to power, apartheid legislation was introduced resulting in the segregation of races including education systems for the four main groups (Blacks, Coloured, Indians and Whites) in South Africa. Out of all of these groups, black Africans suffered and endured inferior education brought about by the 'Bantu Education Act No: 47 of 1953' that was implemented in 1957. The effect of this act on black Africans has been so devastating that generations later the consequences are still endured.
- The country transitioned from being agrarian to becoming industrialised, requiring both skilled and semi-skilled labour. Black rural migrants moved in numbers to urban areas looking for work opportunities, mainly in mining and manufacturing industries.
- Urbanisation brought about slums, hostels and townships, invariably requiring that recreational facilities be made available to the black urban dwellers occupying these spaces. A number of hostels mushroomed around major cities in South Africa, including Johannesburg, with limited facilities. Polly Street Art Centre was one of the only facilities for some time where art was taught to black

> city residents. In the townships, halls were used for various recreational activities, such as art, dance, boxing and weddings. In spite of all these various centres afforded similar activities, it is the Polly Street Art Centre that thrived at producing artists. This study will look at mentorship as it manifested from 1952 to 1965 at Polly Street Art Centre under Cecil Skotnes as the Recreation Officer.

The developments from the 19th century to the mid-20th century had profound impact on the lives of indigenous Africans. This is captured by Sack (1989) when he identifies that,

> by the 1930s the forces of industrialisation had led to the widespread urbanisation and erosion of ethnic identities. Living conditions were transformed and many social and cultural practices underwent enormous changes. And so capitalism, largely in the hands of the white settlers, which transformed the nature of existence, also led to the development of new artistic practices. The activity of fine art needs to be understood in terms of the newly evolving capitalist economy. The very fact that the greatest part of the wealth being generated was in the hands of the white community made it essential for the newly emerging black artists to look to the white middle class for their patronage (Sack 1989: 54).

South African education systems can be distinguished between the Union and apartheid periods. These periods have had serious repercussions for the development of education in general, and for arts education in particular. The drivers of education development from the Union period to apartheid eras comprised government and private institutions, where private institutions, especially for black learners were mainly run and financed by missionaries. But for the purpose of this study, I will briefly outline the Union and apartheid education policies, and in particular their respective failures to deal succinctly with the education question for the black population.

The eclectic nature of South African demographics since colonial times, and the socio-economic implications for each demographic, has constantly been a cause of inequality and discontent. Beginning with the Dutch, French and then English rule in the Cape, these differences have continued to bedevil the country's social relations. Traditionally, the government controlled the establishment and subsidy of public education, and the content taught in schools. But this regulation of content did not find favour with missionary education, hence the missionaries started their own schools and controlled the content taught therein.

Late Mission Education Under Union Rule

The positive impact of mission education on providing first generations of black people during the Union era with quality education is well documented – see Loram (1917), Brooks (1930), Beck (2014), Gaitskell (1981), and Stuart (1996). But the downside included children having to convert to Christianity before being accepted into mission schools. This brought about serious conflicts with the values of the indigenous populations, and was exacerbated by the missionaries themselves coming from different countries with different agendas for the advancement of their religious, economic and political interests. Black communities were divided into amakholwa (converts) and amaqaba (traditionalists who refused Christianity as a way of life). In *Native Education in South Africa* (1930), Edgar Brooks suggests that mission education had a particular focus, "for reading and writing enabling converts to read their bible, hymn-book and Catechism", but critics of this system claim missionaries were "making education 'literal' and 'academic' and failed to focus on 'industrial' education" (Brooks 1930: 12), thus denying the government industrial workers capable of generating most needed revenue to grow the economy.

In *Education of the South African Native* (1917), Charles T. Loram highlights challenges meted out to black South Africans by the Union Government, proclaiming the truth that still lives with us to this day:

> [I]t is too late in the day to expect Natives to build up a civilisation of their own, now that the European Government and European missionaries have to a great extent destroyed their primitive customs and beliefs. In the old days the individual Native had his small share in the making of tribal custom and laws; today his law is handed to him ready-made by the European Government (Loram 1917: 24).

This quote clearly highlights the beginnings of the inequalities black education faced from the onset of the colonial era. Education was defined first by colonial governments under the British rule, which set out to convert blacks and subject them to British culture. Institutions like Mariannhill in (KwaZulu-Natal), The Diocesan College Grace Dieu (Polokwane), St Peter's Secondary School (Rosettenville, Johannesburg), Lady Selbourne High School and Kilnerton Training Institution (both in Pretoria) are some of the mission institutions that provided quality education to black people. But when the Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 was introduced, some of these institutions closed down in protest, thus limiting highly needed access to education for black people.

In spite of all the developments in South Africa around the 1950s, an institution like Polly Street Art Centre opened its doors to aspirant black artists. It was led by Cecil Skotnes from

1952 to 1965. Cecil Skotnes, who is the focus of the study at Polly Street Art Centre, was born and raised by missionary parents who moved around the country preaching the gospel among various black poor communities. Could his approach to mentorship have any bearing to his early upbringing?

Education Under the National Party Rule

While the Union Government was a compromise between white Afrikaans and English speakers under the British Crown, there was much animosity between these two groups. The British fought and defeated the Afrikaners in two wars (1880 and 1899-1902), leading to the loss of land and disenfranchisement for the Afrikaners. A truce was achieved, but rather than abating, it reared its ugly head in the 1948 all-white election, won by the National Party under the leadership of D.F. Malan. The National Party set out to entrench Afrikaner hegemony, implementing policies that were contrary to both British colonial and mission education.

As the country industrialised, cheap labour was needed, and so black people found themselves victims of this new development. Debates abounded, revealing the reluctance of various Union and Nationalist Party governments to institute equal education and political enfranchisement policies for the black majority.

Charles T. Loram, in 1917, had already underscored this fact by quoting official Union Government policy on indigenous Africans, that, the "governing class in South Africa has decided that for the present, at any rate, there can be no talk of equality between the two races" (Loram 1917: 24). Such statements reveal the attitude of the ruling classes at the time: entrenching their philosophies, ensuring that an everlasting damage to South African education is perpetuated, with blacks being kept out of the mainstream empowerment that education begets.

According to Bernard Magubane, this was further entrenched in the two main objectives of the Afrikaner government under D.F. Malan, who stated that:

> to stablish their hegemony, they planned 'to exclude all black and brown persons, forming 80% of the population, from all centres of power; the other, to consolidate all Afrikaners, forming 60% of the whites, into a single power bloc'. As long as these conditions were fulfilled, Afrikaners would dominate the white minority and therefore the whole society (in Magubane 2006: 221).

J.G. Strijdom, who took over from Malan when he retired in 1954, reiterated this point by arguing vociferously in parliament for how the Afrikaner would achieve dominance over all South Africans when he said:

> Call it paramountcy, baaskap or what you will, it is still domination. I am being as blunt as I can. I am making no excuses. Either the white man dominates or the black man takes over … The only way the European can maintain supremacy is by domination … and the way they can dominate is by withholding the vote from non-Europeans. If it were not for that, we would not be here in Parliament (Strijdom in Magubane 2006: 221).

With the attitudes and approaches displayed above, any gains that had been made to benefit black people by colonial governments and missionaries were soon eradicated with impunity. The Nationalist government soon began a process to implement laws that ensured Afrikaner hegemony was implemented and entrenched in all government departments, with dire consequences for black people. Herman Giliomee underscores the positions of Malan and J.G. Strijdom as follows:

> During the 1950s the Afrikaners in growing numbers saw themselves as part of a Volksbeweging, a people on the move, putting their imprint on the stage, defining its symbols, making bilingualism a reality, adapting to an urban environment and giving their schools and universities a pronounced Afrikaans character (Giliomee in Freschi 2011: 21).

In her book *Between the Union and Liberation: Women Artists in South Africa 1910-1994,* Marion Arnold clearly articulates the challenge faced by black people as she tries to unravel the challenges that have perpetually besieged any attempt at resolving the education impasse over the demographics of South Africa. According to Arnold;

> Appraising the period between Union in 1910 and Liberation from white minority rule in 1994, it is apparent that South Africa embarked on a process of nation building that was flawed from the outset by hostility between English- and Afrikaans-speaking Europeans, and by black-white racial tension. Although the race issue had dominated South African life from the time of the European settlement at the Cape in 1652, after the 1948 election racial classification permeated and affected every level of political and social interaction. From 1950s the nationalist government systematically entrenched racism in legislation of a non-democratic society that promoted inequality and enforced separation (2005: 3-4).

It is this separation of races (Blacks, Indian, Coloured and Whites) that fostered the inequalities in all spheres of South African life. The Nationalist Party engineered an education system that put the majority of the population at the lowest rank, thus ensuring a supply of cheap labour from this pool of people.

Unbeknown to the Nationalist Party rulers was the intention of many immigrants that came to South Africa after WWII. These people came from Europe in search of a better life. The confrontation with apartheid policies in South Africa gave them a platform to fight the Nationalist policies, as they could not bear to experience what had previously happened to them in Europe, hence they volunteered to help black people get education (Nettleton, pers con 2016).

The immigrants brought different skills to the country that they shared with Polly Street Art Centre staff members as volunteers. People like Fred Schimmel (Dutch), Eduardo Villa (Italian) and Egon Guenther (German) were some of those who gave their time and skills in mentoring Polly Street Art Centre students.

Art Education Systems in South Africa

South Africa has gone through many phases of growth with regards to arts education. Special art schools, like the 'Roeland Street Art Classes' founded by William Foster in the Cape, emerged from the 19th century onwards with curricula drawn from European countries from whence settlers to South Africa, and their ancestors, came. This caused conflicts among white South Africans as each school tried in vain to exert its influence on art and culture against the other. Instead of establishing uniquely South African art curricula, scholars wrangled over which mother country was the best. This is further qualified by the incongruity between white and black school education. Walker (1929: 117) in Rankin (1989) and Gavin Younge (1988) attest to these observations as follows;

> The inadequacy may of course have existed chiefly in artists' perceptions of the facilities available and their belief in the superiority of art education abroad. Art schools had been established in South Africa from the later nineteenth century, a number dating from 1880s. The Cape Town School of Art commenced classes in 1880 (Walker (1929: 117) in Rankin 1989: 67).

But Berman puts the date even further back at 1864, naming the "Roeland Street Art School and Evening Classes, founded by William Foster" (Berman 1971: 2). And Gavin Younge contends that, "[t]he practice of segregated schooling in South Africa can be traced back to the seventeenth century when separate schools were first established for slave children. It is

hardly surprising therefore that when specialized art schools first made their appearance in 1897, these schools only admitted white students" (Younge 1988:18).

It was only in 1971 (more than 107 years later, if one accepts Berman's date) that the University of Fort Hare, in the Eastern Cape, opened art classes for African students, after many years of battling to undo the Extension of University Education Act No 45 of 1959, which separated tertiary institutions according to apartheid legislation. Though Fort Hare University's initiative was welcomed, the teaching staff were white and alien to the African cultures that the institution was meant to address. Many teachers who taught there were members of the Broederbond (Afrikaner Brotherhood), a secret, exclusively male and Afrikaner Calvinist organisation in South Africa dedicated to the advancement of Afrikaner interests (Giliomee 2003).

Rankin (2011) affirms the emergence of art schools in South Africa by observing the unfolding phenomena;

> South Africa lagged behind deplorably in formal art education. Ironically, it was one of the earliest countries on the [African] continent to establish art schools at colleges and universities, but these catered almost exclusively for the training of the white artists, even before this was decreed by legislation in 1959. As the century progressed, a few qualifications became available to the black students; correspondence courses through the University of South Africa (Unisa) (not the most satisfactory vehicle for studio art, and only an examining body until it introduced its own courses in 1974); a Fine Art Department for Indian students at the University College of Durban-Westville (UDW) established in 1963; and the fledgling courses started in 1971 in the Education Department at the University of Fort Hare (Rankin 2011: 53).

The extent of these inequalities was further instituted in infrastructure and funding models for the different school groups. White schools received a huge slice of the budget and resources as compared to Africans, Coloureds and Asians. This deliberate segregated social engineering, as fashioned in South Africa, was geared mainly to generate a class that was to provide cheap labour for the white businesses and industries from the beginning of the colonial period. The successive Dutch and English governments concentrated on entrenching their needs for maximising profits, hence the details on which their education focused.

Colonists and missionaries had established sound and quality government education policies that enriched the lives of black people. But Dr Hendrik French Verwoerd introduced Bantu

Education Act No. 47 in 1953, forcing African schools to fall under the Department of Bantu Affairs, which was under his authority. This could perhaps be construed to have had a positive impact in so far as thousands of African children entered schooling for the first time without having to convert to any particular religion, as prescribed by the missionaries. The downside to this, however, was the dire quality of education given to millions of African children, designed specifically to render them subservient to the white authority.

Up until this point in time, all education of Africans and teacher training had been in the hands of the mission schools. This had unsettled the Nationalists, alleging that 'communists were infiltrating the African minds'; hence they took a decision to introduce education based on apartheid's principles. Whilst it can be argued that the mission schools were discriminatory by ensuring that only the converted received education, the Nationalist Party, on the other hand, opened all schools and promoted for the first time the use of 'mother-tongue in education' during the first three years of schooling.

Dr Verwoerd, at the time of introducing the Bantu Education Bill of 1953, argued that missionaries had failed Africans because:

> they were strangers to the country's policy. Their curriculum and teaching methods "ignoring the segregation or apartheid policy, could not offer preparation for service within the Bantu community". The mission schools had created the idle hope that they (the Africans) "could occupy positions in European community in spite of the country's policy". Verwoerd went further to decree that "no school for Africans could be opened without consent of the minister of native affairs" (which fell under his ministry), thus usurping control of black education completely (Scher in Liebenberg and Spier 1993: 326).

This resulted in a decline in the quality of African education as teachers withdrew their services in protest against these measures. Scher, in Liebenberg and Spies (1993: 326), confirms "[t]he number of black teachers in training from 8 817 in 1954 to 5 908 in 1961 and the rise in the pupil-teacher ratio in black schools from 40 to 1 in 1953 to 50 to 1 in 1960. There was a corresponding deterioration in examination results. In 1953, 259 Africans obtained a matriculation pass; in 1961 only 115 could do so".

These dramatic changes were taking place during the period covered in this study. In spite of the protests by black educators, the Nationalist Party government continued entrenching its policies until 1994 when this system of education was brought to an end. For urban blacks, art education was offered by initiatives like the Polly Street Art Centre until it was

moved in 1970 from the city of Johannesburg (as per apartheid legislation) to Mofolo in Soweto.

To what extent is mentorship teaching methodology relevant to this study against this background of total and pointed inequalities amongst the theoretically contrived races created by apartheid legislation? Creativity is ingrained in most people. The creation of townships and hostels to house urban blacks necessitated that recreation facilities be made available for those populations. However, formal teaching at these sites was not going to succeed as:

- The National Party government was against it;
- No formal structures were available to cater for art activities, hence the use of public halls. The very same halls alternated with other activities and their usage time was limited;
- There was very limited budget contributed by the City of Johannesburg for the said activities, and it only allowed one salaried Recreational Officer to cater to all these needs;
- Due to these shortcomings, these centres survived through the services of volunteers that made teaching possible.

1. THE ABSENCE OF 'MENTORSHIP' IN SCHOLARLY WRITING ABOUT POLLY STREET

1.1 Introduction

This chapter is a literature review on selected South African publications with special focus on Polly Street Art Centre. In it, I will show the absence of mention being made or discussion of mentorship in the existing literature about Polly Street Art Centre. This absence is the central thesis of this research that establishes reasons why scholars and writers omitted to interrogate or disregarded this methodology that was used to impart knowledge to the students of this institution.

Almost all scholars and writers considered in this review acknowledged the important work done at the Centre, yet no one bothered to interrogate the methodology used to teach the students.

Another glaring challenge to unpacking this question is the lack of understanding conceptually that what took place at Polly Street Art Centre was indeed mentorship. Over the years, the word 'apprenticeship' has been associated with the work done when the master teaches his or her protégés, under his or her supervision, empowering them with skills that will enable them to start and sustain their own careers. Examples abound during the European Renaissance, when Leonardo Da Vinci and Michaelangelo would apprentice several students to assist in carrying out major commissions that they undertook.

Perhaps the political dynamics bedevilling race relations in apartheid South Africa (at the time of the establishment of the Polly Street Art Centre) blinded scholars and writers to appreciate and understand the methodology used at Polly Street Art Centre. In the beginning of the Centre's transformation from a recreational space to an art school, teachers were mainly immigrants, volunteering their services to a mainly black student population. Teaching took place at night as part of many other recreational activities for the upliftment and entertainment of urban blacks. As the results and reputation of the Centre grew, local artists also came in to lend a hand, thus growing the school to proportions the organisers never imagined.

To fully understand and appreciate the challenges black urban dwellers faced in trying to get an art education, it is important to briefly outline the challenges that led to mentorship as a teaching methodology at Polly Street Art Centre from 1952 until 1965 under Cecil Skotnes. Teachers at Polly Street Art Centre had limited choice but to adopt this methodology.

To better understand the conceptualisation and evolution of this methodology, this chapter will critically analyse the available scholarly literature on the Polly Street Art Centre, with a special focus on how it portrays teaching at the Centre. In writing this analysis, I have divided the literature into three categories that reflect the focus and approach towards the writing about mentorship at Polly Street Art Centre, with the first category addressing the activities that took place at the Centre through essays in books as well as in exhibition catalogues.

- Monographs and book chapters on the lives and works of the artists who either taught or were taught at the Centre, including *Cecil Skotnes* (1996) and Durant Sihlali's *Discovering My True Identity* (1989) and *Durant Sihlali: Mural Retrospective – Les Murales, 1960-1994* (1994). The first books to be published featuring information on Polly Street Art Centre were Esmé Berman's *Art and Artists in South Africa* (1971), Eddie de Jager's *Images of Man* (1972), Hans Fransen's *Three Centuries of Art: Fine Art, Architecture and Applied Art* (1982), Frieda Harmsen's *Looking at South African Art: A Guide to the Study and Appreciation of Art* (1985), and David Hammond-Tooke and Anitra Nettleton's (eds) *African Art in Southern Africa: From Tradition to Township* (1989).

- The institution and its activities, including Sheree Lissoos' *Johannesburg Art and Artists: Selections from a Century* (1986), Steven Sack's *The Neglected Tradition: Towards a New History of South African Art (1930-1988)* (1988), Elza Miles' *Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre* (2004), John Peffer's *Art and the End of Apartheid* (2009), and Elizabeth Rankin's contribution to *Cecil Skotnes* (1996) and *Visual Century: Art in Context, vol 2, 1945-1976* (2011).

- Essays in various book publications and conference proceedings that reference and interrogate the works of individual artists associated with the Polly Street Art Centre, including two conference papers, by Joyce Ozynski and Cecil Skotnes, from the seminal conference called to review the state of art in South Africa held at the University of Cape Town in 1979.

For the purpose of advancing the argument of how mentorship was reported on at Polly Street Art Centre, I will engage chronologically with the available literature sources. They vary as explained above, but it is important to note for how long mentorship methodology was never mentioned or acknowledged.

1.2 Esmé Berman's *Art and Artists in South Africa* (1971)

Berman's book *Art and Artists in South Africa* (1971, 1983) is mainly an illustrated biographical dictionary and historical survey of painters, sculptors and graphic artists. Almost all of those featured are white, with the exception of Gerard Sekoto, and only because his 1940 painting titled *Yellow houses* was bought by the Johannesburg Art Gallery in the same year. Berman (1929-2017) ignored black pioneering artists like George Pemba, Gerard Bhengu Kekana and Gladys Mgudlandlu, in spite of their outstanding works. Though she has included Sekoto as, in her opinion, the only black artist of note, she characterises his work as, "Colourful primitive work had been encouraged and exhibited in Pretoria and Johannesburg in the Thirties, resulting in sponsorship which took him to Paris to study and to settle permanently" (Berman 1983: 17). Berman displays ignorance about Sekoto receiving sponsorship and its intention for him to live in Paris permanently. This publication was followed, in 1975, by *Painting in South Africa*, which will be my focus here, as it has been revised extensively since 1975 and re-named *The Story of Painting* (1993). In her 'Authors Note', Berman states that:

> It came into existence as The Story of South African Painting, a narrative history conceived as an informal companion to the biographical dictionary, Art and Artists of South Africa, which I published a few years before […] but the course of art and the course of circumstances in South Africa have altered radically since The Story first appeared in 1975. Thus, the recent invitation from my publishers to update the narrative was more than welcome to me, because it offered me an opportunity to re-examine and revise the text, in the light of the perceptions and perspectives of the nineties (Berman 1993: xiii).

It is very challenging to ascertain what Berman is referring to when she refers to "perceptions and perspectives of the nineties". One can surmise that a lot of criticism was levelled at her writings and omissions of mainly black artists in her earlier publications, especially in *Art and Artists of South Africa* (1971) where, as mentioned, the only black artist mentioned is Gerard Sekoto, while his peers, like Pemba, Bhengu and Mohl were omitted. These omissions render her contribution to writing the history of South African art and artists as patronising and perhaps in line with the apartheid status quo of sanitising black history and their achievements. Notably, black people in South Africa, in spite of them comprising 80% of the national population, were not recognised as full citizens in their constitutions by the colonial (1910) and apartheid governments (1961). It was only after the 1994 democratic elections that black people enjoyed full citizenship as exemplified in the 1996 constitution.

With the advent of a new democracy looming on the horizon, Berman and her publishers saw an opportunity to make sterile material relevant by "re-examin[ing] and revis[ing] the text, in the light of the perceptions and perspectives of the nineties" (Berman 1993: xiii). Berman further justifies her revision of this publication by asserting that,

> in this new edition, the book has been transformed. Not only has it grown much larger; but it has also been completely redesigned. Indeed, it is in many ways a different publication from the one that first appeared … Painting in South Africa surveys the scene I had visited before; but it scans it from the view point of the last years of the 20th century; and from the distance of another continent, away from the distractions and the turmoil of the events of every day. It also takes the story forward (Berman 1993: xiii).

Her justification for re-examining and revising the book "from the distance of another continent" merits investigation about her scholarship during the apartheid period. She implies that her earlier works were in line with the status quo's thinking, hence the omission of black painters and their contribution to South African art. She only feels comfortable to bring them in once she is in the comfort of her new home in America. To what extent are we as black scholars to think of her sincerity when reading her work prior to the dawning of the new dispensation in South Africa?

In the chapter titled, 'The Quest for Identity', she interrogates the period of art production from the 1960s onwards, a period of heightened apartheid repression in the country. She ponders the question of individual identity in the midst of "a shrinking world, to expect the art of urban cultures to retain identifiable local features" (Berman 1993: 243). This rhetorical question is unnecessary as scholars everywhere agree that an artist is not an island, and South Africa as a country during the 1960s was no different. She further answers the question by saying, "naturally, South African artists desired to associate themselves with current international trends" (Berman 1993: 243).

Crucial to note is her failure to develop a critical narrative linking each institution or art association to significant outcomes, or her attempts to review the organic development of black art from the 19th century without critically commenting on its achievements. The chapter tells stories of a number of institutions and arts associations that evolved in South Africa. Credit is given to the 'New Group' of artists (mainly white artists) whom she attributes as key drivers of this wave of change, driven by Walter Battiss (1906-1982) and Alexis Preller (1911-1975). Further credit is awarded to the role played by Egon Guenther (an immigrant) on guiding and promoting the five members of the Amadlozi Group to seriously consider making art that referenced the continent, yet nothing is said about Polly

Street Art Centre, of which two members (Skotnes and Sydney Kumalo) were Polly Street teachers.

Students of Polly Street Art Centre engaged in public exhibitions and church commissions as far back as 1954-1960 and 1952-1969 respectively. Surely Berman knew about these, yet for whatever reasons decided to omit them. Perhaps their inclusion would have been inconsistent with her sponsors – the National Party line on segregation. Instead of acknowledging the positives that black artists achieved during the post-WWII period, she felt qualified to trivialise them:

> However, there was something happening in that quarter which could not be ignored. This was the unexpected appearance of Johannesburg figurative expressionism stemming from an emerging of black artists" (Berman 1970: 17). She further qualifies this, saying "such development was indeed a new phenomenon. For, with rare expectations, Bantu culture had never manifested a tradition of pictorial or sculptural expression and even Westernised black city-dwellers had previously displayed meagre interest in the visual arts (Berman 1970: 17).

Perhaps more pointedly, the truth of why Berman will not state her intention to exclude a section of well-documented exhibitions, commissions by black artists up to this period when the book was published, are her funders. Prominent in putting up the funds were the "State of Information and Department of Cultural Affairs" (Berman 1970: VI). At the time of her writing, the department of education was divided into 'Whites' and 'Bantus'. The Department of Cultural Affairs was responsible for whites only cultural promotion. Therefore, to highlight and appraise black achievement was not to be welcomed by her sponsors, something Berman would be wary to observe or her dream of seeing her hard work published would not have happened.

1.3 Edgar James de Jager's *Images of Man* (1972)

Edgar James de Jager was a professor of anthropology at the University of Fort Hare. His book *Images of Man* (1972, 1973, and 1992) documents and chronicles the evolution of the collection of work by black artists started in 1963 as part of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Fort Hare, which he headed. The collection and the book cover the period from the early pioneers of black artists to the 1970s, tracing black art through various stages of black African art history until the 1970s. Furthermore, they offer a chronology of the growth of black art institutions, like the Polly Street Art Centre and Rorke's Drift, and other artists not associated with these institutions, thus broadening the scope of recorded art production within the black communities.

De Jager explained the intention behind the collection: “it was started by the Department of African Studies (Sociology and Anthropology) in 1964, first as a kind of extension, but later also a reaction to its very old, extensive and valuable ethnological collection of South African indigenous tribal arts, crafts and artifacts” (De Jager 1992: np). This explanation makes it clear from the start that the intention was to scrutinise the post-WWII modernisation of black South Africans.

Up until the end of WWII, South Africa was an agrarian society. But the country took a turn as it industrialised, and more black people moved to the cities to seek employment. It is this interaction between whites (in the cities) and blacks (in the townships) that is the subject of de Jager’s collection, namely, how did black artists interpret the changes that took place? Social anthropology’s strength lies in the recording and documenting of ‘socio-economic and material culture’ developments of studied communities.

De Jager’s book has since been revised and republished in 1992, as the collection grew, bringing in new artists, especially the graduates of Rorke’s Drift (1962-1982). De Jager provides the reader with short biographical essays on the various institutions that trained black artists included in this vast collection. De Jager demonstrates no critical judgement as far as both the artists and institutions are concerned, except to highlight their importance in affording black South African artists opportunities to study during a time when there were few institutions catering for black people. He further cites his lack of critical engagement with the collection because of his training as an anthropologist. This self-reflection about his own limitations is a worthy observation as he did not want to compromise his profession by delving into art criticism.

De Jager’s essay on Polly Street is, however, riddled with inaccuracies, as happened with a number of studies about this epoch-making institution. Just like Esmé Berman (1971, 1975 and 1993) and Lissoos (1986), the focus in these accounts is on Skotnes and on the results the Centre produced. There is no mention of the valuable work other teachers and volunteer students did to ease Skotnes’s load as both teacher and Recreation Officer. The nine semi-permanent teachers who gave of their precious time and expertise are not acknowledged, which is unfortunate, as it would have been impossible for Skotnes to achieve such results without the assistance of these volunteer teachers and students.

Berman and De Jager pioneered the documentation of South African artists’ biographies, and the institutions where these artists were trained. Berman’s earlier publications concentrated on white South African artists, while De Jager focused on black South African artists. One might guess a the reasons for their differing approaches, choices and

interpretations: Berman was an art historian who began surveying South African art and artists, yet, sadly, she focused exclusively on white artists. De Jager was an anthropologist whose mission was to collect art as part of his work to preserve the art produced by urban blacks. Both contributed significantly in inspiring a younger generation of scholars to pursue the engagement and documentation of South African art as it evolved over the years.

1.4. University of Cape Town Conference: Joyce Ozynski and Cecil Skotnes

Neville Dubow (1933-2008), then Head of the Fine Art Department at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town, convened an art historian's conference in 1979. The conference was titled 'The State of Art in South Africa', and it looked at the challenges and impact that segregation had in the development of art education in South Africa when black people were excluded.

Both Cecil Skotnes and Joyce Ozynski presented papers in this seminal conference, arguing similar points about the lack of access to art education for blacks as being a disaster orchestrated by the state. They called on authorities to establish art schools in black areas if South Africa was to have an inclusive art culture. Ozynski brings up the point that Polly Street Art Centre was the first institution to introduce urban blacks to "studio painting and sculpture" (Ozynski 1979: 34). She laments, without giving reasons for its demise in 1975, as its success never materialised after community art centres were opened in places where only black people lived.

Crucial to note and against the resolutions of the conference was that art centres for black people had opened and continued functioning in Mofolo, Katlehong and Alexandra in Johannesburg and Rorke's Drift in KwaZulu-Natal. The University of Durban Westville and University of Fort Hare had established University fine art departments, albeit on segregated racial lines, which the conference rejected because they were poorly resourced.

Instead of alleviating the challenges wrought by the closure of Polly Street Art Centre and the limitations that the Extension of University Education Act No: 45 of 1959 brought, these art centres offered limited solutions. These centres were led and driven by graduates of former Polly Street and Rorke's Drift Art Centres respectively. The graduate teachers ensured they adopted and implemented mentorship teaching methodology. However, the limited expertise they acquired from their training also limited the art genres they could teach in their centres.

1.5 Hans Fransen's *Three Centuries of South African Art* (1982)

Hans Fransen's (1931-2017) *Three Centuries of South African Art: Fine Art, Architecture and Applied Art* (1982) is an ambitious attempt at documenting the history of art from the colonial period to the (book's) present. Though acknowledging what he calls "specialized studies" existing in the oeuvre of art history writing, he still felt he needed "to provide a broad art-historical context for the subjects which are dealt with in either purely technical or historical fashion", adding that the book "is designed to be of use to the interested, but non specialized public, and should also be a useful teaching aid, especially in the last years of high school and first years at university where it could be key to the more detailed studies, to which constant reference is made" (Fransen 1982: 7).

The book includes a chapter focusing on the Amadlozi Group in his quest to argue that this was the first group of artists to develop a "typically South African art" (1982: 355). This bold claim is not further substantiated as to what was meant by 'South African Art'.

Again, in this instance, the author acknowledges Skotnes for the success of Polly Street Art Centre without delving into how he achieved that. Surprisingly, he singles out Skotnes, Kumalo and Ezrom Legae as the only artists (out of the five Amadlozi Group members) who were consistent in "producing lasting and profound identification with Africa" (1982: 355). A critical error is made, however, to associate Legae with the Amadlozi Group, since he was never a member of this group, but a student of Kumalo and Skotnes. However, he makes two compelling observations about the "African character" of Skotnes's work: first, the "intimate contact with black artists", and second, "the interest in traditional African sculpture which was awakened in him by Egon Guenther" (1982: 356).

This raises a profound question in terms of mentorship at Polly Street Art Centre. Fransen is the first scholar to link the relationship of teacher and student to what is called mentorship. He acknowledged the cross pollination of ideas between educator (Skotnes) and students (Kumalo and Legae), but comes short of calling it mentorship. It is well documented that Skotnes began his career as a painter, but when working at Polly Street Art Centre he abandoned the technique in favour of wood carving. His whole oeuvre changed completely during the research and preparation of the decoration of the church of St Peter of Claver in Kroonstad that he did with Kumalo, partly because of the success he enjoyed as a wood-carver, and the wealth of experience gained when Skotnes accompanied Kumalo to Soweto as they looked for African symbols suitable for the church's painting and sculptures.

1.6 Frieda Harmsen's *Looking at South African Art* (1985)

Another book of significance in documenting the history of South African art is Frieda Harmsen's *Looking at South African Art: A Guide to the Study and Appreciation of Art* (1985).

She chronicles the emergence of art and artists in South Africa, paying special attention to art criticism by interrogating the use of art genres like painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, architecture, furniture and crafts.

Whilst bemoaning a lack of art criticism in South African art writing, she acknowledges the pioneering works of A.C. Bouman and Esmé Berman who, she offers, "have shown the way, but now we need criticism that rises to a more universal level, and which will provide insight, not only into our psyche of our culture and time" (Harmsen 1985: 304).

Her work is motivated by the shortage of "a book that would make our own art more accessible to South African pupils and students" (Harmsen 1985: np). Though she dedicates a chapter to the New Group, Polly Street is only mentioned in one paragraph, because according to her it "holds an undisputed position in our art history, but its own history has only been sketchily told" (Harmsen 1985: 37). She alludes to the lack of scholarship around the teaching at Polly Street Art Centre whilst appraising the success of the institution for its work in offering art education to black people.

It is concerning that thirty-three years since Polly Street Art Centre started under Cecil Skotnes to teach black art students, no scholar had deemed it prudent to study the methodology used. Suffice to say that many scholars acknowledged the Centre's importance as the first institution to train urban black artists in South Africa.

1.7 Sheree Lissoos' *Johannesburg Art and Artists* (1986)

Sheree Lissoos' *Johannesburg Art and Artists: Selections from a Century* (1986) is a catalogue for an exhibition curated to celebrate the centenary of the City of Johannesburg, as well as the 75th anniversary of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. A short, insightful introduction is given on each of the sections in the exhibition and the artists chosen for inclusion in the show. Lissoos chronicles the evolution of the 'mid-century' art scene in Johannesburg, culminating in the closure of the Polly Street Art Centre in 1965 when it effectively moved to Mofolo Art Centre in Soweto and finally collapsed under the Soweto student riots in 1976.

In an essay titled, 'The Developments Between 1946-1965: The Wits Group, The Amadlozi Group, The Polly Street and Jubilee Art Centres', Lissoos focuses on these groups and institutions as leaders in producing significant artists of this era. Of significance here is how the Wits and Amadlozi Groups are understood as pioneering a new art form that drew inspiration from Africa, rather than simply copying international art styles and movements.

Lissoos' essay on the Polly Street Art Centre, like so many others on the same topic, credited Cecil Skotnes for his role in turning Polly Street Art Centre into the formidable institution that it became. She is the first writer to acknowledge assistance Skotnes received from his volunteer teachers and students, when she highlighted "services offered by volunteer teachers" (1986: 45). She does not delve, however, into explaining what these services were and how they were offered to the institution. The extent of these "services" are neither elaborated on nor explained, nor are the persons who gave the services acknowledged. One can forgive Lissoos for not delving further into the teaching by the volunteers as her focus was on the exhibition celebrating the centenary and 75th anniversary of the City of Johannesburg and the Johannesburg Art Gallery respectively.

1.8 Steven Sack's *The Neglected Tradition* (1988)

Following on from Lissoos' 1986 exhibition, the Johannesburg Art Gallery further commissioned Steven Sack to curate an all-black artists' exhibition in 1988. According to Christopher Till (Director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery), the exhibition was a watershed in the history of black South African Art and Artists, as he observed:

> Is one that takes on an historic importance in re-evaluating South African art by tracing the development and influence of Black South African artists and for the first time documenting this development and influence through an exhibition and researched catalogue … [It] acknowledges that part of art history of South Africa that has been overlooked. This watershed exhibition continues the re-evaluation process and places these black artists in perspective, thereby correcting any distortion which may exist (Till in Lissoos 1986: 5).

This ground-breaking exhibition – The Neglected Tradition: Towards a New History of South African Art (1930-1988) – showcased, for the first time, mainly black artists in one exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery. This came amidst significantly relaxed apartheid policies in the country. The exhibition covered the growth of South African Black Art from the 1930s to 1988. In Sack's essays accompanying the catalogue, the story of various movements and institutions is narrated objectively, pointing out how these institutions gave black artists their first art education that was otherwise denied to them by the status quo.

Compared to Lissoos, Sack acknowledges the institution, its teachers, students and patrons for having a hand in elevating the work that took place at the Polly Street Art Centre. Sack is very careful not to praise Skotnes at the expense of the many people who assisted him to succeed. Important attributes that he acknowledges are, firstly, the accessibility of the Centre to both black and white artists who were for the first time able to interact freely in

sharing their expertise; and secondly, the apprenticeship of Kumalo, Louis Maqhubela and other artists received from professional practitioners like Edoardo Villa, Giuseppe Cattaneo and Douglas Portway respectively. The use of the word 'apprenticeship' could have been equated to mentorship, but was somehow misunderstood. However, this is an important attempt at acknowledging the methodology.

Sack further suggests that the methodology used at Polly Street was similar to that used by white institutions, but black students "were also encouraged to embark on their own projects at home" (Sack 1988: 15). A distinction is made between two different education systems where "White artists were given 3-4 year training, without the pressure of commercialism and market place, [while] Black artists were compelled to develop a marketable style very early on" (Sack 1988: 16). This insight has a lot to do with how most Polly Street Art Centre artists, especially after 1962 when the demand for black art was at its height, produced poor quality work. Sack ascribes this to the need for [Black artists] "to sell in order to survive" (Sack 1988: 16).

Finally, Sack contextualises the extent to which the limited teaching hours at Polly Street necessitated that the output of students' work focused on watercolour painting, sculpture and graphic art. The classes were held once a week on a Wednesday from 5pm to 9pm. Later, when the Centre had moved to Jubilee House in the centre of the city, Saturday classes were further introduced. This effectively resulted in the emergence of two main art styles: "Township Art" and "Neo-African sculpture", with the Township style further sub-divided into "accurate recordings of specific places in the township" and those of a more "generalized nature" (Sack 1988: 15-16). This distinction is evident in Durant Sihlali and Ephraim Ngatane's works as they accurately documented specific township scenes, and Kumalo and Legae's Cubist-inspired sculptures.

1.9 Hammond-Tooke and Nettleton (eds), *African Art in Southern Africa: From Tradition to Township* (1989)

This is one of the books that looks at southern African arts and crafts in broad perspective, elevating crafts to the level of art. The authors raise the argument of creative processes that a crafter goes through as being similar if not equally creative to the processes as an artist would. The book covers arts and institutions that helped bring to the fore those artists whom mainstream academic publications would have ignored, primarily because artists or crafters were rural or township dwellers.

David Koloane, in an essay titled 'The Polly Street Art Scene' covers the story of Polly Street far better than any other writer had previously. His essay is chronological and illustrated by

interviews with former Polly Street Art Centre students. Giving context to his argument, he brings salient quotes from published sources to highlight the challenges of publications, where scholars ignored looking at or understanding the deeper impact of what took place at Polly Street Art Centre. A case in point describes the tension between Skotnes and two students whom he deemed were not following his instructions of making works that were expressionistic in nature, namely Durant Sihlali and Louis Maqhubela, respectively. Sihlali's work, which he had done on his own at home was characterised as a "happy accident" (Koloane 1989: 218). Maqhubela captured his discontent thus:

> I was always at loggerheads with Skotnes on his insistence that black artists did not require any kind of tuition because of their natural ability to paint. What annoyed me most about this fallacy was that it did not seem to apply to white artists, but only to us blacks (Koloane 1989: 219).

Another very important revelation in this essay is the tuition received by other Soweto artists/students by Polly Street Art Centre students at their local youth centres, an omission by several white scholars. Sihlali, when asked if he was a beginner when he first attended classes at Polly Street Art Centre, answered thus:

> No I would not say all were total beginners, only one or two. You see there were recreation centres in the townships which were run by the N.E.A.D. All kinds of equipment for sport and other games were provided to the Youth Clubs which were part of the centres … I came to Polly Street from the Chiawelo centre in Moroka township where we were instructed by Alpheus Kubeka who had himself been to Polly Street in the later forties (Koloane 1989: 218).

1.10 Monographs: Durant Sihlali and Cecil Skotnes

The next category of literature looks at the monographs of Sihlali and Skotnes, two prominent artists with links to Polly Street Art Centre. It is unfortunate that out of so many outstanding artists graduating from this institution, only two have received such attention.

Durant Sihlali's *Discovering My True Identity* (1989), and *Durant Sihlali: Mural Retrospective – Les Murales, 1960-1994* (1994), edited by Elza Miles, are two monographs on the life and work of Sihlali. *Discovering My True Identity* (1989) is an autobiographical account of Sihlali's childhood experiences in rural Transkei. This is where he was sent as a young boy to live with his paternal grandparents. There are great insights into how this experience affected his emerging artistic interests, which were played down and discouraged as they were

perceived as women's chores, revealing how cultures can be a hindrance to artistic creative growth.

Sihlali has produced one of the most compelling bodies of work as a former Polly Street Art Centre student with his unique style. From the 1950s to the 1990s, Sihlali never followed or copied the Polly Street Art Centre's preferred expressive style, but continued documenting environments he had lived in. From the 1990s he began incorporating Ndebele mural design into his work, revisiting his passion for house decoration that he first encountered when living with his paternal grandparents in Cala in the Transkei.

Sihlali's father was of amaXhosa ethnicity, whilst his mother of amaNdebele. In the *Les Murales* (1994) catalogue, there is a focus on Sihlali's later works as an adult painter, linking this creative work to his Ndebele maternal lineage. These two cultures are explored in Sihlali's murals. However important these publications on documenting Sihlali's artistic development are, they are nevertheless silent on the period he spent at Polly Street Art Centre. This is disturbing as primary training and influences are important in locating and contextualising the artist and his work, an omission so prevalent with most monographs on the former Polly Street Art Centre graduates.

All white artists' monographs give out this background information without fail. How this failed to be included in two publications on Sihlali leaves one with a distinct impression that black artists are assumed to be 'natural' in their approach to art making, and therefore do not need formal art training, as is the norm for white artists. Sihlali's monographs showcase the achievements of the artist without framing him as a one time student at Polly Street. Teachers who mentored and trained these students at Polly Street for the important roles they eventually played in the development of South African art post-WWII are not mentioned, except for Skotnes. Yet a number of these former Polly Street Art Centre graduates went on to become great teachers in several community art centres, like Sihlali at Funda and Fuba Art Centres, and eventually in his papermaking institution that he started where he trained several tertiary students. These teachers, including Sihlali, took this methodology to great heights around the country wherever they worked or taught.

1.11 Elizabeth Rankin's *Cecil Skotnes* (1996)

Elizabeth Rankin contributes a chapter to the monograph, *Skotnes* (1996), titled 'Teaching and Learning: Skotnes at Polly Street', which is a compelling study of the role Skotnes played as a teacher and mentor at Polly Street Art Centre from 1952 to 1965. Rankin divides her essay into six sections, namely; (I) 'Teaching and Learning; (II) Skotnes at Polly Street'; (III) 'Skotnes the Teacher'; (IV) 'Early Years at Polly Street'; (V) 'Teaching Art at Polly Street'; (VI)

'The Development of Professionalism' and 'The Role of Polly Street'. In justifying this elaborate and consummate description of the role Skotnes played, Rankin attempts "to contextualise his achievements as a teacher within the broader history of the Polly Street Art Centre and its artists" (Rankin 1996: 65).

This study unpacks how the Centre "operated" (Rankin 1996: 65) as an institution, something many writers before her had omitted, choosing to concentrate instead on the products without examining the operations and role players within and outside the institution. Faced with the challenge of primary sources having been deliberately destroyed to avert scrutiny of the institution's work by the Nationalist Party apparatus, Rankin drew on personal accounts with the "multiplicity of voices", as she re-created the story of teaching at Polly Street Art Centre (Rankin 1996: 65), thus giving a more balanced account of the teaching at the Centre.

Building on the work of earlier writers and their lack of critically engaging the institution, the teachers and the challenges they operated under, Rankin uses former teachers, students and patrons in recreating a narrative of how the Centre functioned. She is the first to mention each volunteer teacher's role and their duration spent at the Centre. Just like Sack (1988), she attributes Skotnes's success to the "early experience of informal mentoring … to explain why Skotnes has had such wide influence and has been able to contribute to the careers of artists who were never officially his students" (1996: 66). She is the first writer to mention mentoring as a knowledge transfer of skills method. Unfortunately, her understanding of mentorship as teaching and guiding students also outside of the Centre does not go far enough, and there is a lost opportunity to bring this methodology to the fore for further interrogation by other scholars.

1.12 Elza Miles' *Polly Street* (2004)

Elza Miles took the baton from Rankin (1996) and critically engaged with and expanded on the nature of teaching at the Polly Street Art Centre in her book titled *Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre* (2004). To date this is the most comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the work that Rankin began in *Skotnes* (1996). Miles limits her work to four broad topics, as opposed to Rankin's six. They are (I) 'Historical background'; (II) 'Teaching at Polly Street'; (III); 'Career and studio work (1960-65)' and (IV) 'From Eloff Street to Mofolo'.

Like Rankin, Miles too draws her data from Skotnes, former teachers and students, as well as patrons and existing literature, and points out inconsistencies and omissions. In the chapter 'Historical background', she corrects the myth around the naming of the place (Polly instead of Dolly) as well as of the Centre's first occupants (it was a girls' hostel). She further

goes on to discuss the first three years of teaching at the Centre, from 1949 to 1951, thereby allowing the reader to understand the origins of Polly Street Art Centre and the groundwork done by earlier teachers (David Rycroft and Gideon Uys) and administrators (Solomon Maqambalala). Unfortunately, the section titled 'Cecil Skotnes: From Jabavu to Polly Street' provides a biographical overview of Skotnes's upbringing, and leaves out the crucial point raised by Rankin that his first job with the "Johannesburg Local Committee for non-European Education" was at Jabavu and Orlando where he worked as "supervisor" to the superintendent, a job Skotnes detested (Rankin 1996: 67).

In the chapter titled 'Teaching at Polly Street', Miles, like Rankin, highlights Skotnes's lack of "formal training in education", but acknowledges that he drew inspiration from his vast background of encounters with teachers like Joan Cousyn from Con Cowan Junior High School, a brief encounter with Austrian painter, Heinrich Steiner, in 1945 in Italy, just after WWII, a year spent teaching at the Johannesburg School of Art, and finally his formal training at Wits Art School from 1947 to 1950 (Miles 2004: 42).

Again, during this period of "Trial and error: the workshop situation" (Miles 2004: 36), Miles compares and contrasts classroom training against commissions received by the students. These commissions pushed the students to their limits as they had to apply what they had learnt in classes into practice, highlighting cooperation and an interchange of skills between teachers and students alike to ensure quality work was produced to the clients' satisfaction.

There is a marked failure by Miles when she does not point out that this period affected Skotnes's work equally. It is during this period that Skotnes too had a metamorphosis, from painting to woodcarving, as a result of Egon Guenther giving him carving tools and exposing him to Cubist and German Expressionist prints, and Rudolf Scharpf in particular.

Miles (2004), in her chapter 'Careering and studio work', as well as Rankin (1996 and 2011) and Sack (1988) have highlighted the challenges wrought by the success of the school and its students in the greater Johannesburg area. The student numbers grew exponentially, as did the popularity of the students' work with collectors. This came at the cost of the quality of the students' work, as Miles (2004: 36) notes Fred Schimmel's concern at the unfortunate state of affairs at the Centre:

> [H]e observed a shift of objectives among aspirant artists. They inclined more and more towards materialism. This can be attributed to the escalating achievements of artists like Sydney Kumalo, Ephraim Ngatane and Dumile Feni. It distressed Schimmel that artworks were repeated indefinitely for the sake of the sales.

Finally, Miles concludes the story of Polly Street Art Centre with the authorities moving it from Jubilee House in the centre of Johannesburg to Mofolo in Soweto, as the apartheid policies of 'separate development' were implemented. Although the book is a comprehensive account of the transformation of Polly Street from a 'recreation facility' into a sound art school, including narrating the roles played by individual volunteer teachers, she does not categorise the teaching methodology as mentorship, except to call it a "workshop".

Miles pays tribute to the impact the Centre continued to have on both its teachers and students, even after Skotnes and Kumalo had left. Missing in this extensive story of Polly Street Art Centre, however, is how the duo of Ezrom Legae and Bill Hart held the school together until the inevitable move to Soweto in 1975. Those ten years of activity at Jubilee House are lost, and we are not able to ascertain how teaching unfolded there. The book ends with the story of Polly Street's demise, just before the Soweto Uprising in 1976.

1.13 John Peffer's *Art and the End of Apartheid* (2009)

Another seminal work that touches on the story of Polly Street Art Centre is John Peffer's *Art and the End of Apartheid* (2009). The book is a study of selected South African artists. Through interviews with artists and an examination of their works, Peffer examines how they reacted to the apartheid system. In doing this, he focuses on Durant Sihlali's life and work as an example. After chronicling Sihlali's life movements from Germiston (an industrial town east of Johannesburg) to Cala (a rural village in the Eastern Cape) and back to Moroka township in Soweto, he contrasts that life with the cruelty of apartheid where Sihlali develops and works as an artist.

Peffer differs from other writers in the documenting of Sihlali's art education development by tracing Sihlali starting from Cala, paying particular attention to the period when Sihlali lived in Moroka with his parents. In the 1950s, Sihlali trained under Thabita Bhengu and later Alphius Kubeka. Bhengu was a social worker, whilst Kubeka was a painter and had trained at Polly Street under Gideon Uys in 1949. This early exposure to art training was to pit Sihlali against the newly employed Skotnes, who preferred an expressive style, to the previous teachers who were 'naturalist' in their approach to painting. The differing styles of Skotnes and Uys finally led to Uys resigning in 1957 (Peffer 2009: 193).

Peffer draws strong distinctions between the works of Sihlali and those of Kumalo and Legae, who were to later work as teachers at the Centre, before Kumalo and Skotnes left to pursue their professional careers. Sihlali rejected the "township art" label, "claiming instead

that he was a visual reporter, along the lines of Thomas Baines (1820 to 1875) and other landscape artists in South Africa" (Peffer 2009: 194).

1.14 Elizabeth Rankin's 'Art centres and workshops and their influence on the South African art scene' (2011)

Rankin's essay briefly sketches the rationale of why colonisers deemed it unnecessary to teach indigenous Africans art education. As a result, "informal art centres and workshops … played a decisive role in the careers of African artists in the twentieth century" (Rankin 2011: 53). Rankin then delves into colonial South Africa, highlighting the establishment of formal art institutions for whites at the exclusion of black people. This she ascribes to the colonial belief that "fine arts were considered markers of high European Culture" (Rankin 2011: 53).

Rankin then focuses the chapter, as the title indicates, pointing out that the exclusion of black people from white formal institutions in South Africa was legislated in 1959. This legislation ensured that no black people attended white institutions, unless the Minister of Education granted that right. The implications of this legislation resulted in the emergence of art centres and tertiary institutions for black people, but headed and run by white teachers.

She then turns her attention to each institution, and how teaching was conducted there. Using primary sources, as she did in her 1996 work, she then ascribes Skotnes's success at Polly Street Art Centre to the following:

> [W]ere it not for the fact that the Cultural Recreational Officer in charge of this project from 1952 was, fortuitously, an artist. Despite many responsibilities, Cecil Skotnes's own interest led to his particular commitment to the development of an art centre, and he stayed in the position until 1965, providing valuable continuity (Rankin 2011: 55).

Indeed, numerous scholars have credited Skotnes with the success of the Centre, but Rankin is quick to point to the challenges the volunteer teachers had "as classes remained sporadic because the volunteers had other work commitments" (Rankin 2011: 55). She, like Miles (2004) and Peffer (2009), further contrasts these shortcomings by pointing out that students formed groups in townships and taught each other, to counter the lack of contact time at the Centre. Classes were offered once a week, only on Wednesday. These revelations are fundamental in the understanding of how teaching at Polly Street Art Centre took place, within and outside of the formal class times.

1.15 Conclusion

All of the above publications (books by South African scholars and exhibition catalogues with researched essays) have similar challenges with regards to engaging the methodology used at Polly Street Art Centre. They are all dedicated to honouring the artists and their works in particular, a significant reminder of the institution's role in empowering black artists at the height of apartheid. While the institution is recognised, and Skotnes in particular, for empowering these artists (with skills and values characteristic of focused and serious artists), they do not delve into how mentorship was applied. Even those written by highly qualified art historians fail to engage with the methodology, a question that lingers on and is the focus of this study.

Ironically, Harmsen (1985: 301) contends that "the tradition of art teaching on a tertiary level – that is where skills are taught, not to provide amateurs with a pastime, but to train young people for a profession – has a surprisingly long history in South Africa", referencing and pointing to the beginning of informal training of artists by a professional to amateurs. This methodology is indeed, to a certain extent, 'mentoring' that this study is investigating. Perhaps the western notion of crediting the head of the institution for its success is a point in this regard. Chief Executive Officers of companies and big corporations are often elevated to a superior status for the success of their companies, ignoring the hard work done by their subordinates, as is the case with Skotnes and Polly Street Art Centre.

But the significance of the monographs on/by Sihlali and Skotnes is that they documented and showcased the careers of these artists as independent individuals whose styles and oeuvres differ significantly from one another. Unlike many formal schools who tended to produce a calibre of artists that share common styles, preferred media and choice of subject matter, this was not the case for graduates of Polly Street Art Centre. Could the many and culturally divergent volunteer teachers have been responsible for this?

The books by the authors reviewed above can be considered pioneering in scoping the emergent history of art in South Africa, dating back from the 17th century to the 21st century. They acknowledge the various influences wrought in this country by settler communities. Some are written for purely documenting in a chronological manner the evolution of art styles, movements, art genres, architecture and furniture, including institutions, and are prepared for art students both at schools and tertiary institutions. For an eclectic country such as South Africa with such diverse cultures, it is prudent that scholars of art history do indeed record these milestones. Understandable too are the omissions of serious engagements with black artists and institutions that opened the doors

for their education, as this took place amidst apartheid policies of segregation of communities based on race, and separation of amenities, thus ensuring inequality at all levels.

In looking through published records, several books and essays appear, but very few reference the methodology used at the Polly Street Art Centre. Going through the literature, three main categories of publications demonstrate how scholars in South Africa failed to acknowledge the methodology or deliberately misunderstood that what they related as 'knowledge transfer' was indeed mentorship. It was Harmsen in her (1985) book who first acknowledged mentorship taking place amongst the Amadlozi Group members.

It is only in 1988 that Steven Sack began, superficially, to engage with the teaching methodology at Polly Street Art Centre. This is understandable as his focus was to chronicle in an exhibition the development of black art from 1930s to 1988. Paramount to him was the institution where artists studied or were mentored without scrutinising the teaching methodology applied. Rankin (1996 and 2011), a formidable scholar who taught art history at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg for many years, produced numerous researched exhibitions and conference papers on art history, covering South African and European periods, as was the norm for scholars at such liberal universities like Wits. She only began to interrogate the methodology of art centres in her (1996) *Cecil Skotnes* publication, honouring and celebrating the 60th birthday of Skotnes as an artist, teacher and mentor. The publication, though important, as it shared light into how teaching by Skotnes and volunteer teachers took place at the Centre, does not mention mentorship as a teaching methodology.

It was only in 2004 that Miles dedicated a complete book to the story of Polly Street Art Centre. Though she dedicated a whole chapter to teaching at the Centre, she failed to recognise the teaching method as mentorship, and instead called it a "workshop". Be that as it may, that chapter nevertheless for the first time revealed the organic evolution of artmaking, especially by black artists in the country.

This western concept of praising the accounting officer for the success or failure of an organisation is unfair to the many people who assist the leader. It is well documented that Skotnes had an enterprising attitude that drew support from various sources. These included companies that donated art materials, and soup; media publicity, and patronage that bought students work at exhibitions. Further to running and teaching at Polly Street Art Centre, Skotnes was also responsible for two other institutions in Orlando and Jabavu, both in Soweto. All that needed serious logistical support, and a number of the white volunteers, including students, took on some of the teaching responsibilities. The fact that Skotnes

employed Kumalo in 1958 as an assistant (responsible for the art programme) before employing him full-time in 1960 is evidence that he relied on other people to help keep the Centre functioning successfully. He was therefore able to concentrate on other responsibilities as was demanded of him by the nature of his employment.

At this stage it is important to define what mentoring and mentorship are for the better understanding of this teaching methodology. The engaged literature above has not elicited the understanding by the mainly white scholars, mainly in South Africa. It is challenging to understand the reason for them overlooking this methodology as it manifested itself at Polly Street Art Centre. This next chapter will unpack what mentorship is in general, and how it was applied at Polly Street Art Centre under Cecil Skotnes between 1952 and 1965.

2. MENTORING AND MENTORSHIP AS TEACHING METHODOLOGY DEFINED

2.1 Introduction

Mentorship as a teaching methodology exists in numerous publications, a number of which focus on business and organisations, health professions, sports and teacher education. There is hardly any published material on this methodology in art education, though, except when the term 'apprenticeship' is used to explain the relationship between the art master and a juvenile student learning under the tutorship of that particular master. This is exemplified by Mr John Koenakeefe Motlhakana (Mohl)[1] (1903-1985) who mentored a number of artists in South Africa when he opened his "white Studio" in Sophiatown and later in Soweto. Amongst his most prominent students were Helen Mmakgabo Sebidi (b. 1943) and sanusi Credo Mutwa (b. 1921), who have gone on to make impressive careers in their own rights.

In South Africa, a number of scholars have acknowledged the work of institutions like Polly Street Art Centre, Rorke's Drift Art Centre and Johannesburg Art Foundation for pioneering art education for blacks. This took place against the apartheid education policies denying black South Africans education, and art education in particular. Of critical importance in their respective studies is the omission that these institutions used mentorship as a teaching methodology to impart skills to their students.

Key to their successes were the teacher's attitudes to teaching mature students who had no art education background, and who succeeded in imparting knowledge and skills to those students. Most of the former students from these institutions have gone on to be successful artists and teachers in their own rights. Finally, none of these institutions had a formal art curriculum as is the norm in formal tertiary institutions. Through the enquiry of this concept via various authors, it is hoped that mentorship will be understood. This understanding is crucial to making sense of what did take place at Polly Street Art Centre. Defining this concept is very important as clarity will help identify what is being discussed.

2.1 Defining Mentorship

A study conducted by Edwin Ralph and Keith Walker (2010) shares important light on how various professions understand mentorship. They conducted a workshop of different professionals during 'The Forum on Mentorship in the professions', which took place in

[1] Over the years writers and scholars accepted the bastardised surname of Mr John Koenakeefe Motlhakana as 'Mohl'. It is alleged that Germans could not pronounce his name, hence giving him this German-sounding name when studying art in the Academy in Düsseldorf, Germany in the 1930s.

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, June 17-19, 2010. The attendees were asked to define mentorship as it pertains to their professions. Below are five groups' responses. Each group presented their short definitions of mentorship (Ralph and Walker 2010: 22):

- a mutual relationship, formative or summative relational process by which mentor and protégé are paired in an apprenticeship model contextualised by the experience, compatibility, and needs of each party;
- working together to produce growth, professional development, and learning in the context of a relationship by guiding, navigating and nurturing;
- a relationship of trust, which facilitates mutual growth and understanding through modelling, challenging, friendly critique in working towards building capacity, common goals, and endeavours;
- a relationship of trust and respect, facilitating professional and personal growth, emphasising wisdom, firing passion, vision, coaching, mutuality, fun, caring challenge, and rigor; and
- a process by which a mentor's hindsight becomes a mentee's foresight.

Key words like 'growth', 'nurturing', 'mutual relationship', 'professional development', 'trust', 'capacity building', 'respect' seem to permeate throughout these groups that were randomly selected from different professions. Further to these descriptive words are expressions of the development of someone by an experienced person over a less experienced one. Another key feature is the duration of the mentoring process as a result of the goal of mentee being achieved. Common in these definitions is the concept of sharing: that implies a 'two-way process' of engagement. The coming together of (mainly adults) with the sole aim to share each other's expertise (one of experience and one of learning) renders both mentor and mentee learners in this journey. The mentor learns about communication, and the mentee about listening.

A more pointed definition comes from Michael G. Zey (1984: 7) in Kerry and Mayes (1995) when she defines mentoring as:

> a person who oversees the career and development of another person usually a junior, through teaching, counselling, providing psychological support, protecting, and at times promoting and sponsoring. The mentor may perform any or all the above functions during the mentor relationship (Zey in Kerry and Mayes 1995: 27).

Zey's point of helping a mentee through psychological support is very revealing. Because a lot of adult learners missed out on primary and secondary school education, and invariably on challenging and satisfactory careers, for one to take a step to correct the wrongs of the

past requires strong willpower, hence s/he will need to be encouraged and assured by means of protection and counselling. A point noted by Caroline Turner and Carlos Gonzalez (2015: 6-7) who characterised that psychological support and "understanding cultural differences is important not only for mentors … but also for mentees to strengthen their relationship", is that the process brings about a healing power that "mentors affirm and validate the experiences of their mentees" (Turner and Gonzalez: 2015: 7).

This is further echoed by Sinclair Goodlad in *Mentoring and Tutoring by Students* (1998), who defines mentorship in the following terms:

> [S]uccessful people have usually had someone behind them at critical points in their lives, encouraging, guiding, challenging, providing essential information, and helping them to keep focused and on track. These people are often referred to as mentors … The basic ideas are very old and very productive (Goodlad 1998: 4).

Finally, Richard Rossner (2017: 123) in Kenan Dikilitas, Enisa Mede and Derin Atay's (2018) *Mentoring Strategies in Teacher Education*, states that:

> mentorship involves experienced teachers or trainers helping less experienced, or more recently appointed colleagues with their development through observation, feedback, co-planning and being available to provide help (Rossner in Dikilitas, Mede and Atay 2018:228).

These definitions above confirm the common thread that runs throughout the understanding of the process of mentorship by various representatives of different professions. Most authors on the subject of mentorship do not agree on a common definition, but share common understanding that mentorship is about a relationship experienced by both the mentor and the mentee. It is dependent on mutual respect in providing essential information, challenging incumbents to discover their greatest potential over time, but dictated by the mentee.

The sub-text in these definitions above is the understanding that mentoring can happen in different contexts and by more than one person helping a mentee. Judy McKimm, Carol Jollie and Mark Hatter (2007) point out that mentoring can often happen as "support" between "colleagues" and "groups". They cite examples of "colleagues (peer support), line managers, counsellors, tutors/ teachers and groups, (e.g. action learning groups), work teams, friends and parents" (McKimm, Jollie and Hatter 2007: 27). In unpacking these two spheres where mentorship takes place, we acknowledge that 'peer support' is essential in assisting colleagues to master challenging concepts in the course of study, as it is important

for the 'line manager' in a company to assist in the integration of a new employee into the organisational culture until s/he is confident and able to work on his/her own.

Groups also play a significant role in helping their individual members gain useful insights, skills and confidence with a sole purpose of strengthening the groups' output in a given task. This is driven by the understanding that the strength of the group is as good as its weakest link. Therefore, members must help those who are weak for the group to perform at maximum capacity, acknowledging each other's potential.

Laurent Daloz (2012) points out the salient dynamic intricacies of mentorship and qualities mentors bring into the relationship. These are manifest and show themselves during the process of engagement, as he observes:

> Mentors, it seems, have something to do with growing up, with developing identity … Mentors generally have a wider role than do conventional faculty advisers. They may or may not teach classes, but they are inevitably engaged in one-on-one instruction and are consequently more concerned than regular teachers with the individual learning needs and styles of their students (Daloz 2012: 20-21).

Key to Daloz's observation is the difference between conventional advisers and the site at which mentorship takes place. Teachers and lecturers are trained educators who work within defined spaces. On the other hand, mentors are experienced individuals who pair themselves with needy adult students to help them realise their potential, mainly in the mentee's chosen field of learning. The site could exist anywhere, as long as both are content on achieving each other's goals (to guide and empower as in mentor, and to learn and improve self-esteem in the mentee).

Daloz further brings in the element of development as a key characteristic of the mentorship process in the relationship between mentor and mentee. He defines development as;

> Development is more than simply change. The word implies direction. Moreover, development seems to happen not in gradual and leaner ways but in distinct and recognizable leaps – in a series of spiralling plateaus rather than a smooth slope. Each plateau rests upon and represents a qualitative improvement over the previous one. It is good, I believe, to develop, and as teachers we cannot escape our part in this development (Daloz 2012: 23).

Quite often, a good mentoring relationship helps the incumbent tap into his/her psychological trap-door, cracks it open and allows new possibilities to manifest. The students may not be aware of their capabilities until someone they trust unlocks this potential through a number of techniques. Once the blockage is removed, the students gain confidence and pursue their goals, unhindered. Therefore, the development referred to by Daloz above can be seen when incumbents begin to demonstrate confidence, enhanced skills and value in what they do. This is captured by McKimm, Jollie and Hatter (2007: 2) succinctly below:

> Entering practice in any profession offers a major challenge to newly qualified practitioners. It is a formative period where the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired during a programme of education are applied in practice. It is a transition period which can be stressful as well as challenging as new demands are made upon individuals who are seeking to consolidate their skills. It is therefore a period when a practitioner is in need of guidance and support in order to develop confidence and competence.

2.3 Theoretical Framework on Mentorship

In the section above I have managed to define mentorship as advocated by various authors in scholarly literature. While none agree on a universal definition, they all agree on the importance of mentorship as a catalyst for bridging theory into practice. This is illuminated by Turner and Gonzalez (2015: 1) who point out that "there is no agreed-on definition of mentorship because the concept and practice vary within and beyond academic institutions and fields of study". And Bozeman and Fenney (2007) further elucidate that "[m]entoring theory is underdeveloped and likely to remain so, as studies of mentoring are conducted from multidisciplinary perspectives" (Bozeman and Fenney in Turner and Gonzalez 2015: 1-2). However, mentoring is critical in any field or discipline for introducing new recruits, entering professional work places and for adult learners needing skills for chosen fields. Below I will attempt to locate mentorship as it applies to various professions, especially health, legal, corporate and finally, in education, with special focus on teacher training.

Karen Johnson (1997) argues that there are two types of mentoring; informal and formal. She describes the informal as "often unplanned, a certain 'chemistry' emerges drawing two individuals together for the purpose of professional/ personal growth", while formal mentoring "is a more planned process, often organised by an employer or professional body" (Johnson 1997: 363). Johnson's differentiating between formal and informal mentoring confirms the dimensions this method of knowledge transfer takes in different professional services.

Barry Chazan in Kenneth Wain (1987), focusing on education, further categorises mentorship into three forms, namely as formal, informal and non-formal mentoring paradigms.

> [F]ormal education: the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary schools through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training (Wain 1987: 51).

Wain's emphasis is on structured programmes, developed for specific outcomes within a stated time frame. When applied to professional legal institutions, younger employees are expected to undergo specific mentoring programmes to orientate and gain experience as opposed to the theory acquired during training. This is done to help integrate new recruits into professional practice. The culture and ethos of the organisation is introduced to the incumbents as part of orientating them to the organisation. Organisations can ill afford employees who do not understand their vision and mission, which are key qualities that drive organisations to succeed. Reputation is very important in organisations, and directors go all out to ensure employees are inducted properly into the organisation's culture.

There is marked difference to informal education, which Wain (1987: 52) describes as:

> the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment – from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media.

The marked difference between 'formal' and 'informal education' lies in the authorship of the content and the process. Formal institutions are obligated by legislation to offer a qualitative programme, quality assured for expected outcomes, resources and environment within a defined time frame. On the other hand, in informal education, the mentee is the one who defines and drives the content and the duration of the relationship. The education takes place between an individual seeking to enhance his/her own learning from a recognised, respectable and experienced person(s). This mainly takes place around 'community colleges' where the focus is primarily to assist the individual to acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, which are key ingredients in any career. These have similarly been highlighted by Daloz (2012) above, when expressing the wider role mentors play as opposed to conventional teachers, pointing out the developmental aspect of the process in mentoring.

The third mentoring process is 'non-formal education', and is defined by Wain (1987: 52) as:

> any organisational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives.

There is, in essence, a very thin line dividing 'informal' and 'non-formal education', as both are predicated on the incumbent expressing a need for assistance by experienced personnel. A marked difference though is that non-formal education can be intentional, as well as not. Most people providing this service range from family members to work colleagues, with the goal being leisure or self-satisfaction. Neither lead to a certification or qualification or accreditation. Examples can range from 'swimming lessons' and 'soccer lessons', to 'voice training' for a novice musician.

From the above explanation, a clear distinction locates mentorship squarely within the 'informal' and 'non-formal' forms of knowledge transfer. It is prudent to point out that the key 'functions of mentorship', namely 'teaching', 'sponsoring', 'encouraging', 'counselling' and 'befriending', remain key. The profound difference is in the 'formal education', where a contract exists between the institutions and learners over agreed programmes that should, within a given time frame, lead to a qualification by a qualified authority.

Historically, Eugene Anderson and Anne Shannon (1995) in Trevor Kerry and Ann Mayes (1995: 26-27) identified four functions or concepts of mentoring, namely intentional, nurturing, insightful, and supportive and protective processes. The intentional process refers to the reasons and purpose the mentor has for his/her mentee, which is to assist him or her to realise their potential. This is achieved through nurturing the talent that lies dormant within the mentee. It is important to show sensitivity during this stage, as the goal is to allow the mentee space to find him/herself in this journey of self-discovery.

The journey can be characterised by numerous doubts and challenges, but the mentor's insights and experience will come in handy as s/he guides the mentee along. Key to the success of this journey is immense support and protection demonstrated by the mentor over his/her subject to ensure the goal is reached. Students require enormous support during the fragile stages of discovery. When in doubt, the student needs to know that s/he can trust his/her mentor for guidance without being judged (Anderson and Shannon in Kerry and Mayes 1995). But Anderson (1987: 29) has gone further to suggest that a good mentoring process should ultimately encompass the following:

(a) The process of nurturing, (b) the act of serving as role model (c) the five mentoring functions (teaching, sponsoring, encouraging, counselling and befriending, (d) the focus on professional and/or personal development and (e) the ongoing caring relationship.

Anderson and Shannon's earlier work focused on the historical concepts described, i.e. intentional, nurturing, insightful and supportive and protective processes. In this work they omitted to focus on 'distinct' and 'specific functions', especially "the act of serving as role model". When one scrutinises Anderson's five mentoring functions, the focus on professional and or personal development, and finally, the 'ongoing caring relationship' identified by Anderson (1987) and Shannon in her earlier work, one understands that the 'nurturing process' on its own encompasses the 'act of serving the mentee as a role model'. This is crucial in the early stages, as the two are learning to know each other before the functions of teaching, sponsoring, encouraging, counselling and befriending are carried out.

In this work, Anderson (1987) breaks down what actually takes place during the mentoring process. As a role model and experienced person, the mentor has to ensure that there is knowledge exchange, guided by the fact that the end product is a 'professional development'. For this professional development to grow further it needs to be encouraged and nurtured, even when the incumbent is confident to work on his/her own. The post-engagement process is even more important in supporting the incumbent not to lose focus and fail.

Above we have seen how the mentor engages the mentee on the journey to self-discovery. Alan Evans (2003: 17) in Frances Kochan and Joseph Pascarelli (2003) outlines the benefits mentors receive by mentoring a protégé. They include the following:

> (1) help young people and observe them grow and develop and achieve goals and realise their potential, (2) extend their own skills and experience, (3) plan and organise their own studies more effectively and (4) add depth and perspective to their academic studies.

It is true that to help someone grow and develop his/her goals in life is fulfilling, both emotionally and practically. A number of young and adult people miss out on formal education for various reasons. Their self-confidence, skill levels and human values, which are cardinal in developing a fully rounded person, are missing. Therefore, without mentors out there, these people will be lost in the mainstream of the country's economy. And more importantly, when mentors are engaged in this process, they get to think critically about their own work. As they teach, they revisit the best teaching methodologies entrusted to them by their own teachers. This allows them to 'extend their own skills and experience'.

At this point it is important to interrogate the mentoring processes so as to understand the benefits each offers, so that when deciding on one, s/he should be well informed of the consequences accompanying this choice.

2.4 The Mentoring Life Cycle

McKimm, Jollie and Hatter (2007: 7) identify and debate the "life cycle of mentoring", which they characterise as having four stages. Stage one comprises "initiation, orientation or courtship"; stage two deals with "getting established, adolescence, dependency, nurturing or honeymoon stage"; stage three is characterised by "maturing, developing independence or autonomy", and finally, stage four is about "ending, termination or divorce".

In stage one, a relationship is initiated between the mentor and mentee. There is a lot at stake, as the wrong start could collapse the relationship before it develops. Julie Hay (1995) characterises this stage as "about creating an alliance and consists of preparing for the relationship, forming a bond and agreeing a contract" (Hay quoted in McKimm, Jollie and Hatter 2007: 8). Serious questions have to be asked as to why both incumbents are entering into this relationship: what do they want to achieve and how do they intend dealing with challenges, should they arise? What is the intention of the mentor for the mentee? Has the mentor shared the goal with the mentee to the mentee's understanding and agreement?

As is always the case with new relationships in whatever the context, trust has to be gained by both parties. Each party has to open up to the other on many issues, softening tensions and allowing open and honest conversation to take place. This orientation is critical for settling the nerves and allowing each person time to reflect on the contract they are entering into. Gradually, as they learn about each other, gaining trust and confidence, they allow for the move to the next stage: getting established.

The 'getting established' stage is about setting goals or developing a roadmap that the mentee needs towards the achievement of his/her goal. It is mentee driven and allows the mentor to ascertain the tools needed to take up the challenge as the scene is set. Sensitivity and good listening skills are required to ensure the mentor understands what is required of him/her on this journey.

Hay (1995) sees this stage as when "the mentee gains awareness and understanding, identifies what part s/he plays in the events and recognises relevant trends and patterns of behaviours and ideas for development activities. It is important to remember that it is not

possible to tackle everything at once so prioritisation is imperative" (Hay quoted in McKimm, Jollie and Hatter 2007: 9).

The third stage is characterised by a two way process, that of "the mentor facilitating deeper learning by encouraging the mentee to reflect, to see things differently, to identify potential changes s/he might wish to make … increasingly the mentor will become devil's advocate, confronting, stimulating and challenging the mentee to take a different perspective, considering the merits of the various options … and devise a detailed plan of action whilst encouraging innovation and creativity" (McKimm, Jollie and Hatter 2007: 9). On the other hand, Hay (1995) believes the mentee should be "reviewing whether the mentoring is leading to the required results (i.e. appraising the content and outcomes) and mentoring relationship (i.e. appraising the process)". Hay also argues strongly that "the appraisal should occur at the end of each session and at the end of the relationship" (Hay quoted in McKimm, Jollie and Hatter 2007: 10).

Mentoring is a two way learning process between the mentor giving and the mentee receiving. The final stage of mentorship often culminates in emotional turmoil for both the mentor and mentee. The emotions are either good or bad: when they are good, the mentor feels elated as his/her endeavours have resulted in a realisation of the mentee's goal. They are bad when the relationship breaks down because of disagreements, lack of bonding and failure to achieve set goals. David Kolb (1994) posits that:

> Learning is at the heart of the mentoring process and it is important that both mentor and mentee understand the learning process. An individual gains experience through undertaking an activity. S/he then needs to reflect on the experience and then attempt to understand the experience through analysis and conceptualisation. The individual then makes choices based on analysing the implications of alternative options, decides on the next steps to take and undergoes another experience. Learning is thus cyclical and never ending" (Kolb quoted in McKimm, Jollie and Hatter 2007: 12).

Having understood the mentoring processes and the various cycles these take when entering into this relationship, it is prudent to scrutinise the types and nature of mentors that exist. Clear understanding of the types and nature of mentors will assist in comprehending why some relationships succeed or fail.

2.5 Different Types of Mentors

At this stage, it is important to look at the various types of mentors, and how each one adds value to the process of mentoring. Again the examples the literature uses are focused on business and organisations. Phillips-Jones identifies six types of mentors, identified as:

(1) traditional mentors, (2) supportive bosses, (3) organisational sponsors, (4) professional mentors, (5) patrons and (6) invincible godparents (Phillips-Jones in Kerr and Mayes 1995: 7). For the benefit of this study I will use three main models (to be discussed in 2.6), as Phillips-Jones six types are encapsulated in them.

A short definition of each type of mentor and their usefulness within an organisation will be explained. Traditional mentors are "usually older authority figures who, over a long period of time, protect, advocate for and nurture their protégés" (Phillips-Jones in Kerry and Mayes 1995: 26). These types are mainly found within big corporations. To ensure reputational growth of the corporation, 'traditional mentors' gear themselves up to ensure standards are high so as not to lose clients when someone retires. This is also evident in departments within tertiary institutions where reputation is highly valued. These mentors are good, but can be very intimidating to the younger incumbents who are expected to carry through the vision of the institution.

Supportive bosses "are persons in a direct supervisory relationship with their protégés" (Phillips-Jones in Kerry and Mayes 1995: 27). These mentors encapsulate the ethos of mentoring, which is to support the mentee. They differ from 'traditional mentors' in the sense that their approach is more caring and nurturing. They show empathy towards their protégés. The down side is that mentees could take advantage of their sympathy and fail to take decisive steps where challenges ensue.

Organisational sponsors "are top-level managers who see that their protégés are promoted within the organisation" (Phillips-Jones in Kerry and Mayes 1995: 27). A key difference from the two types of mentors above is that the 'organisational sponsors' use strategies appealing to their protégés to acquire skills so that their progress is accelerated. Incentives are key drivers to achieving good results. This type of mentoring is predicated on motivational incentives, which brings in competition within the departments. This method may not be suitable in some environments as it promotes greed as a value system rather than natural talent.

Professional mentors "comprise a variety of career counsellors and advisors" (Phillips-Jones in Kerry and Mayes 1995: 27). As is self-explanatory, these mentors understand the value of skills over competition. Most professions take time to muster the skills needed to perform in a chosen field. Patience and re-enforcing good behaviour at every achieved skills level drives

these mentors. The down side could arise out of 'professional jealousy' when senior professionals feel threatened by the rising star. But in many cases 'professional mentors' serve a good purpose in nurturing the skills of their incumbents.

Patrons "are persons who use their financial resources and status to help protégés prepare for and launch their careers" (Phillips-Jones in Kerry and Mayes 1995: 27). This is common when a promising young person cannot afford to carry out a skills training in a given field of expertise and therefore someone comes in and assists with resources. A good example is when a talented artist is assisted to record music and helped to launch their record, thus achieving his/her goal.

Invisible godparents "help protégés reach their career goals without their knowing it". "They make 'behind the scenes' arrangements and recommendations" (Phillips-Jones in Kerry and Mayes 1995: 27). In South Africa, because of the apartheid system, a number of 'invincible godparents' emerged to help mainly black and poor students to get education or training in a specialised field. The reasons why the godparents hide their identity are many, but what is important is the goodwill shown to the recipient. There are very few down sides to this mentoring type, except that the mentee never knows who the godparent is.

This brings us to discussing mentorship models as applied to various fields and, importantly, to adapt them to the case of Polly Street Art Centre. Most authors in business and legal disciplines make use of three models, whilst in teacher education four models have been agreed as being necessary.

2.6 Mentorship Models

It is prudent to look at the mentorship models as proposed and explained by Trisha Maynard and John Furlong (1995) and also supported by Bert Creemers, Leonidas Kyriakides and Panayiotis Antoniou (2013). Maynard and Furlong developed and grouped the models into three main components, namely (a) the apprenticeship model, (b) competency model and (c) reflective model. Creemers, Kyriakides and Antoniou expanded these models into four when applied to teacher training; they are (1) craft paradigm, (2) expanding the repertoire paradigm, (3) competency-based paradigm, and (4) holistic or reflective paradigm.

I will unpack each in terms of how they were applied in the case of Polly Street Art Centre. Subsequent to that I will link them to the six types of mentors as postulated by Phillips-Jones. On closer scrutiny, one can locate and align the six mentoring types into three conceptual model frameworks, namely, apprenticeship, competency and reflective models.

For the purpose of this exercise, I will exclude the four models developed by Creemers, Kyriakides and Antoniou because they do not fit comfortably into the study of Polly Street Art Centre.

2.6.1 Apprenticeship Model

The Hildergate Group (1989) quoted in Maynard and Furlong (1995: 18) in Kerr and Mayes (1995) defines 'apprenticeship' as:

> a long tradition going back to Aristotle that some skills, including many that are difficult, complex and of high moral and cultural value, are best learned 'by the emulation of experienced practitioners and supervised practice under guidance'. In the case of such skills, apprenticeship, they suggest, should take precedence over instruction".

Elizabeth Rankin (1996) is the only scholar in South Africa to classify the teaching methodology as used by Skotnes at Polly Street Art Centre as 'apprenticeship'. She describes the 'apprentice model' as "learning to see", which could describe the teaching process at Polly Street Art Centre from 1952 to 1957, when Skotnes and his volunteer teachers were exposing students to art techniques and materials. Rankin assures us that Skotnes, who had been trained formally at Wits University (1947 to 1950), soon abandoned this form of teaching at Polly Street Art Centre with "limited use of formal model and still-life studies", and instead embarked on "personal dialogues, of 'crits' about artworks, [which] seemed to him more fruitful than programmatic teaching" (Rankin 1996: 60). On the other hand, Elza Miles (2004), who has also written extensively on the Polly Street Art Centre, characterises this same period at the Centre as one "exploring plasticity of clay and significance of symbols" (Miles 2004: 29). The volunteer teachers acted as supportive bosses at Polly Street Art Centre. They came of their own volition and supported the students in their quest for education in return for self-satisfaction, the highest emotional goal for any educator.

This is reminiscent of traditional mentorship, as employed by artists like Da Vinci and Michelangelo with their protégés during the Renaissance period in Europe. These artists took in apprentices who helped prepare paints and canvasses for their master and in turn received free training in an informal manner, a process that benefitted both the master and trainee alike. The same model is used in the training of 'traditional healers' (izangoma), where a novice (ithwasa) will, through "mimicry, instruction and observation, learn critical skills" (Wreford 2008: 42) as s/he embarks on a journey to becoming a fully-fledged graduate sangoma.

2.6.2 Competency Model

The second stage of training in many fields is referred to by the Hildergate Group (1989) as the competency model:

> [L]earning to teach involves practical training on a list of pre-defined competences. The mentor takes on the role of a systematic trainer, observing the trainee, perhaps with pre-defined observation schedule and providing feedback. They are in effect coaching the trainee on a list of agreed behaviours that are, at least in part, specified by others (Maynard and Furlong 1995: 19).

Cecil Skotnes realised that, among the pool of students enrolled at Polly Street Art Centre, were those who were serious about learning and those who came to the Centre for various other reasons. He then separated them into two groups as per his observation and intention. In dividing students into two groups, Skotnes applied what is called 'practical training on a list of pre-defined competences' with the aim of focusing on identified areas of development, coaching and giving feedback. Embedded in these choices he made was the process of organising not only students but the content itself, and invariably applying professionalism, which was a crucial step if he wanted to see meaningful results in his efforts and those of his volunteer teachers.

Rankin (1996) highlights what could be construed as a contradiction to general mentorship in Skotnes allowing students to determine the choices of their subject matter. Skotnes did not give students "specific projects or imposed set ideas – only students' individual interests which they worked on imaginatively following their ideas. This was fundamentally different from what he learnt at Wits, where assignments were to be set and handed in" (Rankin 1996: 70).

He followed this with "personal constructive individual discussion of work done in class (crits) and work brought from home. He guided and encouraged students to improve their work rather than instructing them" (Rankin 1996: 70). Ezrom Legae, one of the brightest students, and later a teacher at Polly Street Art Centre points out that Skotnes

> never told students how to do something, but was rather intent on making people think with their eyes … Skotnes stressed the importance of sound technical training in a variety of media, although water-based paints were the most favoured" (Legae quoted in Rankin 1996: 70).

Skotnes's main concern towards competency at this stage of the students' development was teaching 'technical skills' rather than setting the agenda for the students to follow, as is the case with formal education institutions. He realised the danger of instructing students in this way because of their lack of art training before joining the Centre. Secondly, the atmosphere at the time was not conducive to prescribed exercises, because materials were limited and most students could not afford them. Finally, the level of literacy varied significantly from one student to the other, hence he encouraged 'individual interests' driven by the students themselves.

2.6.3 Reflective Model

Hildergate Group (1989) defines the reflective model as:

> a final stage of practical preparation in teaching, [where] trainees need to be encouraged to switch from a focus on their own teaching performance to a focus on the [students'] learning and how they can make it more effective … Supporting trainees in this more reflective process necessarily demands a shift in the role of the mentor. To facilitate this process mentors need to be able to move from being a model and instructor to being a co-enquirer. Those other aspects of their role may continue but in promoting critical reflection a more equal and open relationship is essential" (Maynard and Furlong 1995: 21).

Perhaps Skotnes understood his limitation in terms of teaching new skills to competent students at an institution with limited resources. He identified Sydney Kumalo as one of the competent students whose quest for further knowledge could no longer be fulfilled by the Centre. He then introduced Kumalo to the famous Italian sculptor Eduardo Villa (1915-2011) for further training in sculpture and foundry techniques. This insight by Skotnes echoes what Goodlad earlier pointed out about mentors, namely that "successful people have usually had someone behind them at critical points in their lives, encouraging, guiding, challenging, providing essential information, and helping them to keep focused and on track" (Goodlad 1998: 4).

The period 1958 to 1963 at Polly Street Art Centre could be defined as a 'reflective model' of mentorship due to the manner in which the Centre and the students had performed. The Centre exceeded its initial expectations as a 'recreational centre for urban blacks' and became an institution to be reckoned with. Numerous murals and commissions had been delivered successfully and professionally to clients. This achievement brought the Centre fame and fortune for the students. The enrolment of students increased significantly and, as

one of the reasons, the Centre had to be moved to a better and more accessible area of town, to Jubilee House in Eloff Street in 1960.

The Centre's reputation attracted the interests of art collectors who were uncomfortable doing business at its old premises because of the area's deterioration. Fearing the escalating apartheid repression, Skotnes and his administrators reflected on the survival of the institution going forward. The move was to secure the Centre's survival as there were not many art institutions training artists in the greater Johannesburg area. Finally, Skotnes had to reflect deeply on his future growth as an artist after his career took a turn for the better. He was able to move on knowing very well that the Centre was more than able to carry on the work under new management when he resigned to pursue a professional career in 1965.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have defined 'mentorship' as understood by various scholars and how it is used in different professions. Although most scholars disagree on a uniform definition of mentorship, they tend to agree on many aspects that comprise mentorship. These include but are not limited to 'nurturing', 'caring', 'mutual respect' and 'support'. And most of all, that mentorship is a two-way process where the mentor teaches and the mentee learns. Unfortunately the literature sampled did not discuss mentorship as it applies to the arts, but mainly to the legal, business, health and teaching professions. When referring to art education and training, 'apprenticeship' is a concept that is well known, though limited in its application. It is understood in the framework of one novice apprenticing with a master, and does not seem to allow for a group of people undergoing training with one master.

I have engaged the theoretical framework of mentorship as it applies to historical and modern concepts. Historically, it has been used and understood as taking place in formal or informal education systems. Although these concepts sound similar, in practice they differ. In formal education systems incumbents are engaged in a structured programme with expected outcomes. The terms are prescribed by the institution and the incumbents enter into a formal contract where the end goal is a qualification. On the other hand, the informal or non-formal education system could be short term. Both are driven by the needs of the mentee and are not confined to specific sites. Neither end with a qualification, but instead with skills and a feeling of satisfaction that the intended skills and knowledge have indeed been acquired.

Further to the understanding of mentorship processes, a critical look at their life cycles was engaged. These demonstrated clearly the challenges this methodology poses for both

mentor and mentee, since failure to understand any shortcomings could lead to an abrupt end to a rather useful and fruitful method of knowledge dissemination.

The chapter engaged the functions, types and benefits of mentors at length to demonstrate the usefulness and shortcomings of each type. It is important to understand mentoring processes as each case is different and needs to be approached differently. As advised by Anderson (1987), when pointing out the main functions of mentorship, namely nurturing, role modelling and the on-going caring relationship, Anderson reveals the importance of understanding the mentoring cycles and cautions about the dangers of psychological support and cultural differences. These are crucial, especially when mentor and mentee are of different races and ethnicities.

Finally, I have briefly demonstrated how the three concepts of mentorship models were applied at Polly Street Art Centre from 1952 to 1965 under Cecil Skotnes's leadership. These were apprenticeship, competency and reflective models. From the beginning of Skotnes's tenure at Polly Street Art Centre, all three models were put to good use. Each one was evaluated and discarded as needed, because once a milestone is achieved, there is no need to retain that model, and one has to simply move on. And Skotnes, as were his assistants, were adept at applying and evaluating each model, as has been shown earlier.

3. MENTORSHIP AT POLLY STREET ART CENTRE

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter one, existing literature was reviewed with the aim of establishing the conceptual understanding of mentorship as manifested in Polly Street Art Centre from 1952 to 1965. However, the reviewed literature showed an absence and lack of understanding and engagement of this concept in this regard, by both scholars and writers, mostly in South Africa.

Chapter two lead to the investigation of this concept in general, by scholars elsewhere. Though evidence showed differences in definitions and applications of this method in various disciplines, there was no published documentation of how this method applies to art education in particular. Yet examples abound as to how mentorship is applied in professions such as commerce, law, nursing, and teaching in general. Because of the absence and understanding of the concept of mentorship in the South African art-related literature, it became evident that I needed to embark on interviews to ascertain the level and understanding of this concept by people associated with Polly Street Art Centre.

This study suffers from a lack of original sources as a result of the time lapse, since the Centre was started in 1949 and finally closed down in 1975. Almost all the primary sources associated with the Centre have passed on, with the exception of Ben Arnold (who was too ill to be interviewed). To reconstruct the era under review, then, associates, gallerists, friends and students have been interviewed to shed light on their understanding of how mentorship took place there.

I embarked on interviews with people associated and familiar with what took place at the Centre. I posed and teased out mentorship as a concept in the history of Polly Street Art Centre to fill in the gaps left wide open in the written literature. There are two types of interviews I reference in this study; those interviews conducted by this researcher, and pre-existing interviews from sources like James Ambrose Brown, Relma Meneghelli and Neville Dubow.

I have to state that I had planned to interview current practising artists who were taught by some of the Polly Street Art Centre graduates, like Johannes Phokela, Samson Mnisi and Godfrey Mojadibodu. My attempts at soliciting information on how these former students of Polly Streets were taught proved very difficult, however, and when contacted, the information received from these artists was not useful for the purpose of academic study.

Through the assistance of Mr Warren Siebrits (former gallery owner, and writer), I made contact with Cecil Skotnes's daughter, Ms Pippa Skotnes, Ms Miriam Guenther (Egon Guenther's daughter) and Ms Relma Meneghelli (Vittorio Meneghelli's daughter). It was only Relma who was able to respond positively to the study. Other important sources, like Peder Gowenius, and Jack Grossert's son, John Grossert, alleged to be living in Durban, were also not contactable. I failed to locate Gowenius, despite attempts through the Swedish Embassy, and via art historian Phillipa Hobbs (who wrote a book on the history of Rorke's Drift and had access to Peder, and Ulla Gowenius before she passed on), and so was also unable to add valuable insights into their respective contact with Cecil Skotnes.

Due to the complexities embedded in the definition and understanding of mentorship in South African literature, and in art education in particular, Chapter one reviewed South African literature on the subject, looking specifically at mentoring and mentorship with specific reference to Polly Street Art Centre and the extent to which white academics and other writers engaged with this method of knowledge dissemination. There is a marked absence of scholarly work dealing with the specifics of mentoring at Polly Street Art Centre, which led to my investigation of people who had been associated with the Centre to share their understanding of how mentorship took place there. These included people like David Koloane, Patrick Mautloa, Linda Givon, and Anitra Nettleton. Another very important source of information was the website created by Pippa Skotnes of her father's work. In it I found valuable information on the (1996) monograph edited by Frieda Harmsen, with important contributions by scholars like Neville Dubow (who was the director of the Michaelis School of Art for over thirty years) and Elizabeth Rankin, to name but a few. The website also included a 1984 interview by James Ambrose Brown. Supplementary information came from various additional sources, which have helped to enrich this study.

These sources revealed how operations took place at Polly Street Art Centre, which is information that has previously been missed by many scholars and writers studying this institution. They also highlight the main protagonists who contributed to the professionalism of the Centre's staff and students alike; information that was not clearly articulated by Berman (1971, 1975 and 1993), Rankin (1996 and 2011) and Miles (2004). I wonder if these three scholars had access to these documents and sources during their research, and if they did, why they neglected to include or engage such critical information in their writings about the operations at the Centre?

When posing the question of why these scholars failed to engage critically with the use of mentorship at Polly Street Art Centre, several interesting answers were shared by the interviewees. The interviewees pointed to the consequences that apartheid policies had on the population at the time. There was fear of breaking the law, especially where segregation

laws were in place, like the Separate Amenities Act No 49 of 1953, Bantu Education Act No 47 of 1953, and the fact that Polly Street Art Centre was situated away from the city centre. Few white people were aware of what was going on at the Centre.

Another factor compounding this debacle was that any association by white teachers with black schools was frowned upon by the Nationalist Education Officials who monitored the implementation of the governments' policy on black education. However, the white liberals (who were opposed to the introduction of apartheid), continued to subvert the Nationalist Party policies, sometimes with severe consequences to their lives. Sheree Lissoos, curator of exhibitions at Johannesburg Art Gallery, ascribed this oversight by scholars to apartheid and its separate development policy, explaining that growing up under apartheid (as a white woman), you were advised to "look the other way and never get involved" (pers con 2016).

It is also important to highlight the fact that the Polly Street Art Centre was located in a far off place that was considered dangerous for many people, and white people in particular. A case in point is the incident Skotnes recounted, that "It was at the front door that the legendary Zulu boxer, Ezekil Dlamini (alias King Korn), was arrested after stabbing his girlfriend, Mama Miya, who took refuge in the building" (Miles 2004: 34). Art classes took place in the evenings when most people were going back to their homes or to their own recreational institutions. With segregation of all amenities, Polly Street Art Centre fell beyond the radar of many would-be interested ordinary white people unless they were interested and prepared to face up to the challenges the location of Polly Street Art Centre posed on their lives.

To unpack and understand how mentorship was applied at Polly Street Art Centre by the informants, the author interviewed four people associate with the Centre. They are Dr David Koloane, Professor Anitra Nettleton, Mr Patrick Mautloa and Ms Linda Givon. To unpack the methodology, the informants were asked to define mentorship as they understood it for themselves. I have then further analysed how best the methodology at Polly Street Art Centre was used.

3.2 Artist and Writer: David Koloane (b. 1938)

Dr David Koloane is a world-renowned artist and writer who attended classes at Polly Street Art Centre in the early 1960s. He later studied art under the tutelage of Bill Ainslie at the Johannesburg Art Foundation in 1974 and, upon Ainslie's death in 1989, Koloane started the Thupelo Art Project. Ainslie, just like Skotnes, was a dedicated artist, teacher and mentor who subscribed to informal teaching until his untimely death in 1989.

Koloane is worth quoting at length when he defines mentorship as:

> One who teaches students on a general level and not on a specific stylistic level; who empowers the artists with information and not a technical know-how, so that they can be able to choose their own individual way rather than follow one pattern. So a good mentor is the one that informs the artists about creativity without necessarily influencing them on one specific movement or stylistic tendency. He should provide students with sufficient general knowledge of the arts, not necessarily visual arts, but arts in general, and the thinking behind every artist's activity. I think it is a duty of every teacher or mentor to do that so that the student can form their opinions from that pool of knowledge and not follow blindly. To avoid producing copy-cats, good mentors expose students to a variety of sources to help them inculcate individual conclusions (pers con 2016).

Key to this rather long definition are the following concepts of; 'empowering artists with information', 'informing artists about creativity without necessarily influencing them on one specific movement or stylistic tendency' and 'exposing students to a variety of sources to help them inculcate individual conclusions'. These concepts advocated by Koloane sound true to the manner in which Polly Street Art Centre opened its students to a wide range of sources and information. These included a pool of nine volunteer teachers trained in different art disciplines and institutions, both locally and internationally. They also brought in a wide range of sources from their respective art collections, and included visits to the Johannesburg Art Gallery for visual stimulation.

This can be evinced in a variety of work undertaken by and with students in executing commissions, and through apprenticeships to established white artists, like Douglas Portway, Edoardo Villa, Egon Guenther and Vittorio Meneghelli, for at the end, many graduates of this institution did grasp the essence of art making as individuals rather than becoming 'copy-cats' of their teachers. Kumalo, Legae, Maqhubela and Ngatane are but a few outstanding examples of artists who founded their own individual styles. But again, it was unfortunate that the market forces interfered with this process, forcing certain students' post-1962 to mass-produce artworks in response to the market's demands.

3.3 Academic: Anitra Nettleton (b. 1950)

Professor Anitra Nettleton has taught art history and pioneered African Art courses at Wits University (at a time when no tertiary institution deemed it necessary) describes mentorship as:

> someone who helps a person to make a way through the difficult aspect of career he has chosen; who encourages them to find their own path and make their voices heard; who enables them to develop in a particular kind of way that could be through material help or introductions to other people. It can be through sitting and talking to a person and giving advice in all sorts of ways that mentorship happens. It has to happen on a one-on-one basis, and for you to be a mentor you have to have a relationship. You can't be an abstract mentor, you have [to be] person to person (pers con 2016).

Nettleton's emphasis is again on helping a person through difficult situations, helping that person in finding a path and voice to be heard. The black students of Polly Street Art Centre were denied art education by various apartheid legislations including the Bantu Education Act No 47 of 1953 and Extension of University Education Act No 45 of 1959. However, Skotnes and his volunteer teachers went beyond the call of duty to ensure these disadvantaged students received art education. This allowed them to discover their voices through personal expression in the media and styles of their choice. Further to elucidating this concept of mentorship, Skotnes introduced Kumalo and Legae to Villa, Guenther and Meneghelli, and their careers took off. Nettleton ventures to say that mentorship can be done through talking, and through introduction to other persons, and the success depends to a large extent on the development of a relationship between the mentee and mentor.

Nettleton further reveals discontent by white scholars in acknowledging the methodology used at Polly Street Art Centre as being 'art training', akin to that received by white scholars. She claims, "there was structured art training about art training. They were trained in a particular way, in a particular kind of methodology of art" (per con, 2016). This attitude of looking the other way and also being trained specifically, presupposes that white scholars not (physically) involved in teaching at Polly Street Art Centre, ignored what took place there and, to a certain extent, regarded it as being of inferior quality. What took place at Polly Street Art Centre was different from what happened in formal white tertiary institutions, and hence the methodology was ignored by scholars. Nettleton further points out that Polly Street Art Centre teachers were:

> teaching themselves, where they have formal classes of painting and drawing and design. There wasn't sculpture at the time. Skotnes wouldn't have taught sculpture at the time, but would have taught painting and design, and there were formal classes in life drawing, still life drawing and all those things, and you were taught techniques with paint, and aspects of design were taught as well (per con 2016).

This is in contradiction to what most of the scholars, including Sack (1988), Miles (2004) and Rankin (1996) have alluded to, and namely that sculpture was being taught at Polly Street Art Centre. Rankin revealed the apprehension Skotnes had when introducing sculpture early in his attempt to start the art school. The truth of the matter is the apprehension Mr Solomon Maqambalala (an assistant at Polly Street Art Centre) had on the teaching of sculpture which he associated with craft.This caution forced Skotnes to observe that "First attempts to introduce sculpture were scorned and I was told by one of the assistants at Polly Street that any attempt at sculpture would be considered tribal and that would be considered as part of a movement to send urban Africans back to the tribal areas" (Rankin 1989: 32). But later sculpture was taught especially after "Kumalo's relief panels representing the station of the cross for St Peter Claver signalled a direction that he could develop when he took up sculpture as his main interest" (Rankin 1996: 70).

Yet Nettleton contends that scholars, having been schooled in formal and structured methodologies of teaching art, which also led to a qualification, found what was happening at Polly Street Art Centre to be unimportant. Polly Street, initially, was never meant to be an art school until Skotnes, around 1955, took a decision to make it an art school. This is evinced by his resolve, described in an interview with journalist James Ambrose Brown in 1984, where he said, "Once I got it going I decided – no leisure time activity. It was to be an art school … and the right talent walked in" (1984: 6). This decision by Skotnes to turn a 'recreational centre' into an art school did not endear him to people like David Koloane (1989), and Steven Sack (1988), because they perceived the quality of education given to black students as being of inferior status to that of white formal institutions.

But putting aside the emotional differences of both Koloane and Sack, both misunderstood Skotnes's intentions in setting up Polly Street Art Centre as he did. The political dynamics of the time were against education for black people. The Non-European Affairs Department (under which Polly Street Art Centre administratively fell) consistently cut funding for the Centre's activities. As a result, Skotnes could not afford to hire qualified permanent staff who were capable of giving courses that would have led to a formal qualification. Instead he opted for a "workshop model" Miles (2004: 36) where students would be trained in art techniques that the Centre could suitably afford under the circumstances.

Two critical interventions are ascribed to have influenced Skotnes to carry out this 'workshop model' at Polly Street Art Centre, namely the interventions by Jack Grossert and Peder and Ulla Gowenius. According to Esmé Berman, Jack Grossert (Inspector of Arts and Crafts) convinced Skotnes not to teach black students the same way as white students because they would lose their 'innate creativity'. Grossert, in his (1968) PhD thesis, argues strongly against black students being given art instruction as happens in white schools.

His doctoral thesis quotes Arthur Lismer, then the director of the Art Education Programme at the Toronto Museum of Art, who visited South Africa in 1934 and 1937 to attend the New Education Fellowship Conferences in Cape Town and Johannesburg respectively. According to Grossert**:**

> Lismer makes a number of succinct remarks following on his close observation of Bantu students at work in the schools. He considered that the Bantu peoples, generally speaking have been too suddenly plunged into western or European environment and way of life, since they have not developed the same attitudes which have motivated the European world and its peoples, and they do not look upon the world of appearances in the same way. He observed that the Bantu mind seemed to work best in a communal fashion and not in an individual and personally conducted expression of visual and objective realism (Grossert 1968: 141).

This notion of generalising and stereotyping black people is reminiscent of colonialists and anthropologists who claimed to know better and authoritatively 'what black people are' and how they think. Selby Mvusi (1971) in Edgar de Jager (1992) dispels this myth when it comes to creativity by black people as being different from any other nationality. For him the creative process is the same everywhere:

> Form-content interpretation in any art are by-products of individual artists' projections of personality consciousness as a statement regarding the social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances of the people to which the artist belongs at any given time. Both the personality and the circumstances of the people are reconciled in the artist who, in turn, projects the former in personal terms. This happens regardless of whether or not the artist is conscious or unconscious of his environment in this respect. The artist is the people whether he or the people know it or not … artists are never apart from people. Meaning is realised and resolved in varying degrees of identity (Mvusi in de Jager 1992: 40).

Nettleton points out that Peder and Ulla Gowenius's influence on Skotnes has resonance with their training at Konstfack in Sweden where they studied before embarking on their journey to establish Rorke's Drift Art Centre in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands in 1960s.

> Peder Gowenius studied at the Konstfack in Sweden, one of the leading arts and crafts institutions, and he came to South Africa to teach at Rorke's Drift. At Konstfack they had this philosophy of 'free art'. You'll come into a painting studio and you'll be given paints, paper, canvas or whatever, and you were told to express yourself. It

> was much more about expressing yourself through your artwork or mark making – whatever imagery you have chosen – and then they will talk to you about how you were realising what it was you were trying to say through your artwork. Free art really was a much less structured process, so at Polly Street someone like Durant will come in and paint, and he might or might not get a positive response from Skotnes (pers con 2016).

It is important to factor in these observations when trying to understand the teaching methodology and the controversies it raised for both admirers and critics of Skotnes at Polly Street Art Centre. These observations also confirm to a certain degree why Skotnes divided his students into two groups, i.e. so that he could advance and intensify the training of those who met his expectations, especially Kumalo, Legae, Ngatane and Maqhubela. Nettleton believes that Skotnes tapped into this teaching philosophy, which on the one hand was promoted by Grossert and Gowenius because of their strong beliefs in not disturbing the innate creativity of black students. On the other hand, it was criticised by both students (Maqhubela and Sihlali) and teachers alike as patronising. Suffice to say this methodology was also implemented at Rorke's Drift, Johannesburg Art Foundation, and later at Thupelo workshops conducted by David Koloane in the mid-late 1980s.

3.4 Artist: Patrick Mautloa (b. 1952)

Mautloa is very important in this study as he is one of very few surviving students and practising artists trained at Polly Street Art Centre, who later also studied and worked at Rorke's Drift Art Centre in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands in the early 1970s. Mautloa benefitted immensely at the Rorke's Drift Art Centre, as this institution adopted the same method of 'free art' practiced at Konstfack where Peder and Ulla Gowenius (who started the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) Arts and Craft Centre) had studied. The couple had visited Polly Street Art Centre in the 1960s before settling into their task of establishing an art school at Rorke's Drift.

The down side for purposes of this study is that Mautloa began attending classes at Polly Street only in 1969 when both Kumalo and Skotnes had left. The Centre had by then moved to Jubilee House in Eloff Street in the centre of Johannesburg. The positive side is that in spite of Skotnes and Kumalo having left the teaching at the Centre, the methodology and quality standards had been maintained by their successors. The new Eloff Street site was more accessible to many students and art patrons than the original Polly Street had been. At the time of Mautloa being there, the staff comprised Ezrom Legae as art teacher and Bill Hart as administrator). Mautloa describes mentorship as:

> Generally speaking, it is teaching by example, where the teacher works with students giving them intermittent crits, as opposed to academic or didactic instruction with the aim to build confidence into the students. It is the best approach, though it can be characterised as guiding (pers con 2016).

Mautloa's emphasis focuses on 'teaching by example', demonstrating and showing that you know what you are talking about. It is not clear if Skotnes ever demonstrated his expertise in teaching students formal still life drawings in the early years that he characterised as "trial and error" (Miles 2004: 36). But Mautloa concurs with the giving of criticism on the works of students. He sounds a warning that this methodology could be construed as guiding without critical distance and care, thus defeating the aim "to build confidence into the students" (pers con 2016).

Mautloa, though appreciative of the methodology used at Polly Street Art Centre, confesses that "whilst this method was used at Polly Street, the resultant outcome of works carried a certain style that imitated Gerard Sekoto" (pers con 2016). It should be highlighted here that Sekoto's *Yellow Houses* (1940) painting was the only work by a black artist owned by the Johannesburg Art Gallery at the time. It served as inspiration to many young aspirant artists. The imitating of that style was meant to generate quick sales by the new breed of artists who graduated from the Centre in the 1960s through to the '70s, an observation that Sack (1988), Rankin (1996) and Miles (2004) have made in their publications. Miles (2004: 36) notes Schimmel's perception "that artworks were repeated indefinitely for the sake of the sales. Yet he understood the motivation".

What comes through strongly in these three definitions of mentorship offered above, is the description of mentorship as a caring relationship by a knowledgeable person who goes out to help a struggling person. This is done through giving the mentee sufficient general knowledge of the arts in order for the person to navigate him or herself through difficult career choices. There needs to develop a strong relationship between the mentor and mentee, with the end goal being of building self-confidence. Therefore, it would be correct to characterise mentorship as being symbiotic.

3.5 Gallerist: Linda Givon (b. 1936)

Linda Givon returned to South Africa after a short stay in England only in 1965, when Kumalo had left the Centre, and Skotnes was preparing to leave to pursue a full-time professional artist career. This is the period when Hart and Legae were running the Centre. Of great significance to this study is the intimate relationship Givon had with these artists as she managed their careers. She was able to win them over from Guenther, who at the time

was exhibiting them in his gallery, partly because of his controlling and domineering style on the careers of these artists. Skotnes too confirmed the controlling attitude of Guenther when he observed that:

> And then he (Guenther) made a statement which came out of the blue after seeing some of my paintings and I cancelled an exhibition on his suggestion. 'Suggestion' may be a slight word because he is very Germanic in his abruptness, but it seemed right to me to cancel it (Skotnes interviewed by Neville Dubow 1996: 112).

This is further confirmed by Warren Siebrits that Skotnes's relocation to Cape Town from Johannesburg was largely due to the controlling nature of Guenther (pers con 2017). Givon was concerned about the nature of and relationship between these artists and Guenther, whom she recognised was misdirecting their careers, including his forming of the Amadlozi Group. Givon felt uncomfortable in how Guenther insisted that they work in the German Expressionist mode. She felt these artists should pursue their own feelings devoid of external pressures and influences. Indeed, once they were managed by her, their works changed, and spoke to their own feelings and issues pre-occupying them. They developed their individual styles and continued to inspire many young South Africans.

Given the apartheid times under which these artists socialised and worked, Givon believes that Skotnes was a shining light in the lives of these two black artists. He without fail discovered their "dedication and strengths of their characters, including the strong feeling of their media in which they worked" (pers con 2016). Just as Daloz (2012) has pointed out about mentorship, Skotnes understood the importance of opening opportunities for Kumalo and Legae by introducing them to Villa and Guenther respectively. Givon further insists that the three became more contemporaries than mentor and mentee, which most academic writers have overlooked to mention. Givon is certain that each of these artists learned more from one another as contemporaries, carving their careers at the time of heightened apartheid. She acknowledges the mentorship roles played by Egon Guenther on Skotnes and Villa on both Kumalo and Legae.

Givon highlights the fact that Skotnes cherished continuity at the Centre, as he had to delay his departure until he was convinced that the new caretakers were indeed suitable to carry on the work of the Centre, fostered by the new incumbents (Hart and Legae). The rapid growth of student numbers and the quality of their work improved significantly under Legae and Hart rather than deteriorating. But she is quick to point out what Nettleton, too, recounts, which is that Skotnes was himself more controlling about what the students should do.

Whilst acknowledging the work and results achieved by Skotnes, Givon points out that Kumalo taught Legae more than Skotnes could have, taking into account the multifaceted nature of his work as a 'Cultural Officer' for three centres spread far and wide. She claims the two were very close and socialised together, as both lived in Soweto. However, she points out that the two artists were of different personalities. Kumalo was more conservative and introspective, as opposed to Legae who was easy going and more concerned about issues of the day. She believed that both men were possessed by spirits as their works were invocative of their calling, as depicted in their oeuvres. These assertions have also been acknowledged by Mautloa and Koloane (pers cons 2016).

In the case of Polly Street Art Centre, scholars have credited Cecil Skotnes with the success of this institution. Skotnes has been described as the teacher, the mentor, the fundraiser and the administrator, roles that demanded exceptional skills and resources both emotionally and physically. This raises numerous questions about the industriousness of Skotnes to achieve so much, with little credit given to his assistants. The answers lie in Skotnes's upbringing.

Skotnes's background points to his parents' evangelical work in communities they served, experiences at Con Cowan Senior Secondary School, his encounter with Austrian painter, Heinrich Steiner, and eventually his experience at Wits Art School. Throughout these experiences Skotnes received immense encouragement in his quest for his personal learning. It became imperative that he too should empower other people in return. Nettleton points out the importance of and value of mentoring process that:

> If you're going to teach someone, you have to come close to them. If you're going to teach someone you're going to learn from them. Otherwise you're not going to be able, you can't teach. Establishing a relationship is important in teaching. Once you do that you're going to learn from some people (pers con 2016).

Skotnes also worked at Orlando and Jabavu centres, apart from Polly Street Art Centre, where he really got to know black people intimately, coupled with his vast experience growing up within impoverished communities where his parents ministered. Hansen makes two compelling observations about the "African character" of Skotnes's work: first, noting the "intimate contact with black artists", and second, "the interest in traditional African sculpture which was awakened in him by Egon Guenther" (1982: 356).

From there Skotnes was able to give of himself without expecting much; a quality that endeared him to the volunteers as well as the students themselves. They wanted to learn, and he was willing to do all he could to ensure he met their expectations. This has been

acknowledged by authors Sack (1988), Rankin (1996 and 2011) and Miles (2004) that Skotnes approached various stakeholders for assistance to help supply his institution's and students' needs, which the Johannesburg Local Committee for Non-European Adult Education could not afford him.

This relates to the successful manner in which he recruited volunteer teachers who made significant contributions to the success of the Centre. The suppliers of art materials added to the sustainability of the programmes at the Centre and ensured that students were kept challenged with various materials in their quest to learn about art making. The media popularised the Centre's activities, thus drawing a continuous supply of new, talented students. Institutions as well as patrons supported the showcasing of students' work through exhibitions and purchases, thus planting the seed in the minds of students that art can be a career.

3.6 Volunteers at Polly Street

It is important to contextualise the reasons why most of these immigrant teachers gave of their expertise to helping black students receive art education, denied to them by Nationalist government policies. Nettleton surmises that the volunteers came from Europe, running away from the Nazi and Fascist onslaught of Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy, to find a better life in South Africa, but that apartheid was not known to the majority of them.

Faced with increasing apartheid oppression of black people, volunteer teachers took it upon themselves to help empower the students so that their voices could be heard through the medium of their choices. Today we look back at the body of work produced by those students and appreciate the challenges this country has gone through. The diverse skills and cultural backgrounds of the various volunteer teachers ensured that they drew from a vast well and, as Nettleton posits, that their intentions were genuinely to assist the students to find their paths during their quest for self-realisation. The volunteer teachers at the beginning of Polly Street Art Centre risked their lives and faced personal harm as well as imminent arrest by apartheid police for giving education to black people, as it was against the apartheid education policies implemented in 1957. The Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 was only implemented in 1957, and as a result, many teachers opposed to it left the teaching profession.

Nettleton points out the trauma and disappointment meted out to these immigrants when they observed how apartheid policies affected the majority of black people, hence their subversion of the policies.

> Europe was in a terrible state after the war (WWII). Immigrants who came from Europe came to seek a better life. They came not dreaming that apartheid would be like it was. They came with very different and much more liberal attitudes. They had been trained in a different way from the British system. Many of them had a kind of quest for Africa, they were looking for this alternative to what lead to ghastly, terrible war in Europe. They all came out of Europe in which racial segregation and discrimination led to their migrating. I think it was for them a means of being part of Africa, in which they recognised the injustices; they all recognised the injustices of the system (pers con 2016).

Based on this revelation the immigrants, when confronted with apartheid, decided to fight it head on. They had seen how Fascism and Nazism had destroyed their lives in Europe and felt obliged to subvert the apartheid system's encroachment in South Africa. On the other hand, there was a local group of artists who also volunteered their services. They were loosely known as 'The Wits group' (Cecil Skotnes, Christo Coetzee, Nel Erasmus, Larry Scully, Cecily Sash, Giuseppe Cattaneo). Nettleton singles out Cattaneo as one who went further to familiarise himself with the injustices apartheid imposed on black people;

> Giuseppe Cattaneo, who worked in the mines for a while, he learned fanakalo[2] and he made friends with black people, was very conscious of the injustices of the South African system. I think when you understand better awareness, it kind of explains why they might have been there in whatever kind of outlet to try and assist, therefore. And their liberal ways were based on an alternative to what the war had done to their lives. They wanted to be part of Africa that was devoid of barbarism and discrimination experienced in Europe (pers con 2016).

The patrons, too, valued the service Skotnes was giving to the urban blacks against the apartheid education policies of the time. The support given by the various stakeholders to the good cause for Skotnes and his students hold traces of what mentorship is, as defined by informants earlier. They continued to support Skotnes materially in his pursuits and invariably he was able to continue to encourage students to do their best. This mutual reciprocity bore fruits as the students began earning money from their artworks, something they did not envision.

[2] Fanakalo is a language spoken in the mines between employer and employees due to the diverse languages miners spoke from the SADC region.

Pre-Existing Interviews

3.7 Mentoring Relationships: Skotnes and Kumalo

It is widely acknowledged that Skotnes trained and mentored Kumalo as a teenager arriving at Polly Street in 1952. Skotnes characterised their relationship as unique, owing to age differences. Skotnes claimed Kumalo "was a man of about 22 and I was 26 so there wasn't a great deal of difference. We sort of blundered on together" (Skotnes interview with Brown 1984: 6) but the true age of Kumalo was 17 and not 22 as Skotnes alleges. Kumalo came to the Centre with a standard eight certificate qualification, considered better educated than most of his peers. Coincidentally, Skotnes had the same qualification when he began his studies at Wits in 1947. Based on his literacy levels, Kumalo invariably stood above the rest of his black students and, coupled with his serious nature and abilities, he appealed to Skotnes. When Skotnes divided the students into two groups, Kumalo was one of those identified as being serious and talented.

Skotnes, in an interview with James Ambrose Brown in 1984, confirms what Koloane already mentioned about Kumalo being an outstanding artist in his own right. Skotnes captured the moment thus:

> … so there was nobody and I had to start again. Once I got it going I decided – no leisure-time activity. It was to be an art school. And the right talent walked in at the right time … as is want to happen! And trust the Roman Catholic Church of St Peter the Claver who were happy to commission works for their township churches. This gave the beginnings of professionalism to people like Kumalo and Ngatane. When asked further to explain Kumalo's talent, Skotnes concurs that "the first sculpture find … Kumalo was the first very serious artist and that's how he turned out to be a very great influence on the younger generation of black artists (interview with Brown 1984: 6).

1958 proved a turning point for the relationship between Kumalo and Skotnes; first Kumalo lost his father and needed a job to earn an income. Skotnes immediately employed him as assistant art teacher, thus alleviating Skotnes's heavy burden amongst other duties he carried at the Centre. The Catholic Church in Kroonstad gave Kumalo his first commission with which Skotnes assisted entirely, thus elevating their status further from just teacher and student.

During the several months it took to research symbols for the decoration of the church, Skotnes accompanied Kumalo in the township. This cross-pollination of ideas allowed for

equal measure as both mentored the other where their skills lacked. After the successful execution of the commission, Skotnes realised the shortcomings the Centre had with regard to its students. He then introduced Kumalo to the Italian immigrant sculptor Edoardo Villa, where Kumalo extended his skills in moulding and casting. At Villa's studio Kumalo was exposed to numerous examples of works, which he imbibed, taking his skills to new heights. Skotnes recounts the point at which Kumalo's fortunes changed after the Catholic Church's commission:

> And then he started making sculpture. He made the *Stations of the Cross*. I took photographs of these and showed [them] to Edoardo Villa and Villa immediately said, ja, let's do something for him. By then Kumalo had been given a job with the N.E. Affairs Department. As assistant to me. The art and music was growing. I was head of music side, too. I spoke to Will Carr and said, if you agree a friend of mine will train the guy two days a week. He said sure, but don't tell me or anybody else! So twice a week he went to Villa and Villa taught him how to cast and discipline. As soon as his first big exhibition's and big commissions the fact that you could actually earn money was enormous drive for others. Then we had an influx of talent (Interview with Brown 1984: 6).

This interview demonstrates succinctly the mentorship principles of helping someone achieve a successful career. It shows Kumalo's professionalism in the execution of the commission. This led to more opportunities in the form of further education and training at Villa's studio. This encounter in Kumalo's career was to inspire more aspirant artists and gallerists. Skotnes, too, fell under the spell of Egon Guenther. Skotnes later acknowledged a significant change in his work during the research period where his work began to incorporate African influences. Brown (1984: 9) quotes Skotnes in their interview, describing how African influences on Skotnes's work concretised:

> [T]hey started when researching shapes for Kumalo's first commission. Shapes to bring an African quality to the work because obviously the bishop was looking for an African to paint his church in an African township. We found all sorts of shapes and symbols.

During this period of research, both mentor and mentee opened up to each other as the process required that they discuss what they wanted and why it was important. Skotnes's western epistemology was tested and he had to turn to Kumalo for assistance. Kumalo, on the other hand, welcomed the opportunity to educate his mentor about his culture and certain symbols he found amongst his people. Both grew their knowledges, and trust

cemented, as Nettleton (2016) identified that, to learn from someone, you have to "come close".

The outcome of this union brought success for Skotnes who excelled in wood carving with an African expression. On the other hand, Kumalo's assimilation of Cubism paid off. Ezrom Legae was a student of both Skotnes and Kumalo. A point of departure and a profound observation made by Koloane, Givon and Mautloa is that the independent development of Skotnes and Kumalo's professional work was driven mainly by professionals outside the Centre, namely Guenther, Meneghelli, Villa, and to a certain degree, the various art commissions that required specific interpretations of themes when executing them.

This observation is captured by Skotnes as follows:

> At that point I met Egon Guenther, yes, I was painting up to this point. Guenther gave me some tools after looking at my painting. He was a man with enormous ability to spot things and he had known many of the 20th Century German painters so he had a very good eye for certain aspects. He had come from Germany with an enormous understanding of German Expressionism and graphics-woodcuts. Anyway he was right, you see. He established a little gallery later on and I stayed with him right up to until the late 60s (Interview with Brown 1984: 7).

Skotnes further reiterated his gratitude to Guenther, and other people who helped him to reach his goal as an artist, "[l]ike Couzyn in the Early Years, Guenther was another watershed for me … an enormous knowledge … I am ever grateful to him. I think that people find someone … there is always someone to help them on their way" (interview with Brown 1984: 8). This last sentence demonstrates Skotnes's understanding of the mentoring process beyond doubt and how he, too, extended that kind generosity to other needy students and artists throughout his life and career.

Villa mentored Kumalo in sculpture, and Skotnes was mentored by Guenther in woodcarving, and their careers took off. Once they had acquired special skills, they were able to pass them on to the Centre, thus growing the skills base for their students. The students observed these developments between Skotnes and Kumalo with keen interest. It was no longer about being trained as artists, but developing professional careers further to the point of self-sufficiency. On the one hand, Kumalo being socialised within the white art establishments of the time elevated his status amongst many black, younger artists, a

motivation for many to recognise that discipline and dedication are essential in taking their careers seriously.

The literature does not explain the mentoring that took place between Kumalo, Legae and Villa. Legae joined Polly Street in 1957, and in 1958 Kumalo was the sole teacher responsible for art classes there. Whilst we know that 1958 is also the same year that Kumalo and Skotnes executed the mural at Kroonstad, it does not say which students in particular assisted in the process. However, the important revelation is that after Kumalo had completed the panels of the *Stations of the Cross*, Skotnes arranged for him to apprentice twice weekly at Villa's studio. Warren Siebrits (author and current owner of Villa's house) disputes most of the confusion that occurs in books that Kumalo began sculpture classes with Villa in 1958. Siebrits bought the house Villa lived in until his death in 2011. The title deed shows that the house was only registered to Villa in August 1959, thus proving beyond any doubt that Kumalo (who successfully completed the mural in Kroonstad the previous year) could not have interrupted his commission to attend Villa's studio. He could only do that in the late 1959. But Linda Givon, a gallerist who managed the careers of Skotnes, Kumalo and Legae, confirms that Kumalo was indeed Legae's teacher (pers con 2016).

Both lived in Soweto and socialised together outside of class. They too attended Villa's studio to execute the casting of their sculptures. When Egon Guenther formed the Amadlozi Group, he selected only Kumalo and continued mentoring Legae. Their friendship continued further as they rubbed shoulders with the white artists at the height of apartheid that benefitted their skills and production. They had access to better studio facilities and mentors.

3.8 Mentoring Relationships: Kumalo and Villa

Skotnes, in an interview with Brown (1984: 9-10) reveals the relationship between Kumalo and Villa:

> Finally because he was intelligent and educated – Sydney was in matric when he left school – and he'd worked with Villa and seen lots of books. He began to acquire books himself and when he met Guenther and had his first very successful exhibition he saw African stuff for the first time … Guenther had a small, select collection. West African Art. And of course the socio-political thinking of a man like Sydney would make him look for his roots. And through him this has now happened all over the place. So there was a cross pollination between he and myself … as previously between Guenther and myself … so my European background and meeting Guenther, there was no hurdle (obstacle) to finding my way in an African medium …

> an African way. And being a woodcutter by virtue of the grain of wood and technique you tend to get a sort of Cubist quality. And that of course is very tribal. The influences were readily available and readily accepted.

Skotnes confirms the most important assertion that he too was mentored by Guenther. And coupled with his exposure to European art in Italy, plus his education at Wits University, it was easy for them to understand each other, but when forced to abandon painting for wood-carving to assimilate African ways of expression, it became a challenge and forced him to appreciate African art more.

Two fundamental things happened to Kumalo at this time of engaging with a master sculptor (Villa) and professional art industry (exhibitions and commissions). Koloane points out that Kumalo had a sharp and keen eye to learn when he incorporated aspects of Henry Moore, the British sculptor (1898-1986) in his earlier work. This was largely due to the availability of resources at Villa's studio. Kumalo became a skilled sculptor and a confident teacher to his students at the Centre, an observation supported by Skotnes when confirming that Kumalo acquired his own books. This gave him an advantage over other students, as the books opened his knowledge of other art genres that many students could not access. This was reinforced by his having had access to better facilities and prestigious galleries where he showed and sold his works.

The ripple effect of these phenomena are that Kumalo became the role model for many young black artists. They enrolled at the Centre in numbers to emulate his successes and better their lives in the process. The Centre's status grew as students engaged in political work. Polly Street Art Centre had by then moved to the centre of town and was close to various modes of transport. The '60s were times of turmoil politically and the students took that into their works and commented through their graphics as best they could.

Students produced works that captured the spirit of the times. This is credited partly to the ease with which Kumalo related to the mainly black students, both in language and culturally. Notable artists who emulated Kumalo as a teacher and professional artist are Durant Sihlali, Louis Maqhubela, Ezrom Legae, Ephraim Ngatane, and Julian Motau. All went on to teach at various places using the same method to reach a wider student base in the townships where they lived.

Coupled with these interventions, Kumalo, Skotnes, and Villa were to join the Amadlozi Group, which further entrenched their working relationship. Koloane and Mautloa assert that Kumalo's Church of St Peter the Claver commission required a variety of skills that ordinary black artists did not have. But the pairing of Skotnes with Kumalo fostered new

ways of seeing, thinking and working. This strengthened their relationship as they grappled with what would be the best symbols to represent the ideas they were exploring, and Villa's input was very important to the success of these commissions. The skills that Skotnes had gained as a draughtsman after leaving school came in handy when the commission came their way.

3.9 Mentoring Relationships: Guenther to Skotnes and Kumalo

It has to be borne in mind that Guenther had given Skotnes carving tools and introduced him to the German Expressionist movement, 'Die Brücke', especially the work of Rudolph Sharpf (1919-2014). Die Brücke were known for their assimilation of African printmaking techniques that strongly appealed to Guenther. On the other side, Guenther introduced Kumalo to Cubism which, too, was assimilating African expressionism. Both these movements were doing well in Europe, and Guenther wanted to recreate this phenomenon in Africa as he believed artists had to produce work with "lasting and profound identification with Africa" (Fransen 1982: 356). Miles (2004: 48) further confirms Guenther's persistence in influencing Skotnes's career: "Egon Guenther's occasional visits to Polly Street Art Centre often developed into informal discussions in which he shared his perceptions on art and professionalism with the artists working there".

Whilst Guenther brought awareness to Skotnes and Kumalo about exploring and producing African inspired work, he also supported their initiatives by exhibiting his protégés in his gallery. This was not just about giving direction in artmaking, but also about opening up opportunities for artists to sell their works, an act that benefited both parties.

Nettleton goes further to highlight the intentions of Guenther's involvement with Skotnes, Legae and some white Amadlozi group members. She asserts that:

> Egon Guenther's interventions, however, led to the recognition and commercial success of black African artists who worked as modernists. It is no coincidence that the work of contemporary black artists was more widely accepted at the same time as the historical arts of Africa were exhibited as art in the apartheid state. In early 1960s Guenther introduced the work of Sydney Kumalo … to the public, then Ezrom Legae … and Ben Arnold. His particular taste in modernism is reflected in their work. They found African sculpture in his collection revelatory and inspirational and were encouraged to specialise in sculpture because that was the form that Guenther thought would be most in tune with their Africanness (Nettleton 2013: 754).

Hazel Friedman (2011) appraised the success of black artists being included in major exhibitions, even by the apartheid government, who clearly never supported their education. These artists were mentored by a white gallerist (Guenther) and entrepreneur (Meneghelli). Freidman argues that both Guenther and Meneghelli pushed for the production of the type of art produced by Skotnes's students and Amadlozi's white members because of their fascination with African primitivism or African modernity. This art, she contends, was inspired by the successes of Cubism and German Expressionism, positing that:

> The impression is of a pre-1976 South African Art discourse dominated by an intellectually sophisticated, ideologically circumscribed coterie of white, middle-class artists – a bohemian bourgeoisie, if you like – fuelled either by Eurocentric liberalism or Afro-primitivism. Working either in figuration or abstraction, these artists were intent on emulating international modernism or traditional African styles without confronting the harsh socio-political realities of racial segregation and political oppression (Friedman in Van Robbroeck (ed) 2011: 27).

The Wits group, whose members were graduates of the newly opened Fine Arts department, including established artists like Walter Battiss, Alexis Preller, Hannes Harrs, Larry Scully, Gordon Vorster, Christo Coetzee, and Nel Erasmus, were leading proponents of this modernism.

The quest for focusing their work on African idioms was precipitated by their acceptance that they were Africans and had to separate themselves from Europe by exploring their inherited new world. Their mood is characterised by Skotnes when asked by Battiss of his adherence to African idiom:

> The colours of Africa, but, as a European, I see the sensitive, bleached colours and the pale ochres rather than the strident, saturated primaries. I do large work because of the massiveness of the landscape. My creation runs parallel with that of contemporary, disturbed African art because the African and I are nicely caught in the same mesh of circumstances. I do not take from the African directly, nor does he take from me. What actually happens is that the black artist and myself, a white artist in Africa, are driven by the same artistic compulsions in parallel channels (Skotnes quoted in Harmsen 1996: 17).

The close working relationship between Villa and Kumalo and his assimilation of what Sack (1988) called 'Neo-African Sculpture' attracted the organisers of international exhibitions. Nettleton posits that:

> Kumalo and [Legae?] were thus distinguished from other black artists whose works recorded aspects of urban life in a simplified impressionist naturalism, and were exhibited on the South African Academy's annual exhibition from 1930 to 1950. They are also different from those who used expressionistic and exaggerated forms, detailing trauma and suffering of black people, something that Guenther recognised, that Meneghelli endorsed, and that both promoted from 1964 onwards (Nettleton 2013: 754).

Whilst Guenther is acknowledged for his support of the works of both Legae and Kumalo by exhibiting them in his gallery, Nettleton shares light on the extent to which Guenther had control over the two artists' art production. Guenther controlled the quality of the work by Kumalo and Legae. Guenther required that Kumalo and Legae "bring work to his house to get a crit – if he deemed it bad, they will smash the work" (pers con 2016). It was this behaviour that prompted Givon to remove these artists from Guenther, as she felt he inhibited their 'free expression'. Nettleton also brings up the point that Guenther was not interested in the business side of art, but was interested in "introducing African aesthetics, derived from Africa, transformed into modern African expression, hence he formed the Amadlozi Group" (pers con 2016).

Whilst the point of control is understood in the context of quality control of the artists' work, why is it a problem to critique and push students' work to new heights? Could what Guenther did to these artists not qualify as controlling their work to be produced at a certain level of professionalism? There is an expectation from mentors to their mentees to up the game, hence I think the word control is too harsh.

Nettleton further insists that the three became more contemporaries than mentor and mentee, which, as mentioned previously, most academic writers have overlooked to mention. Givon asserts that they learned more from one another as contemporaries, especially when they left the Amadlozi group in 1964, carving their careers independently of Guenther's control. In spite of these misgivings, Givon acknowledges the immense importance of the role Guenther played in developing the careers of these artists, albeit with reservations. Just like Miles (2004) and Rankin (1996), she acknowledges the mentorship roles played by Guenther on Skotnes, and Villa on both Kumalo and Legae. Yet she does not connect mentorship with Skotnes and Kumalo and Legae. To them it seems

mentorship takes place when someone helps another artist outside of a class situation. Rankin (1996) confirms this:

> [T]his early experience of informal mentoring may well help explain why Skotnes has had wide influence and has been able to contribute to the careers of artists who were never officially his students. Skotnes developed confidence in the ability to guide other artists in a positive way, and had the personality and powers of persuasion to make his intervention effective. He was also generous in sharing (Rankin 1996: 66).

3.10 Mentoring Relationships: Kumalo and Legae

Throughout all the sampled literature there is no one scholar that credits the mentoring relationship between Sydney Kumalo and Ezrom Legae. Legae joined Polly Street in 1957, just a year before Kumalo was employed to teach art classes full-time.

Among all the accolades received by Skotnes in his work teaching at Polly Street Art Centre, stand two disagreements about his approach to teaching. The first is the challenge of styles used by his predecessor, Gideon Uys. Uys was a musician and watercolour painter, who further acted as the Local Commercial Attaché of the United States of America, and who taught at the Centre from 1949 to 1951. Another teacher who was disgruntled with Skotnes's approach to teaching was Fred Schimmel, who was an architect by profession, but had an interest in art.

Skotnes also had heated arguments with Durant Sihlali and Louis Maqhubela. Sihlali began art classes in the 1950s under Alpheus Kubeka, who had attended classes at Polly Street from 1949 to 1951. Both Sihlali's teachers were naturalist painters, steeped in observational work. This contrasted with Skotnes's expressionistic style of execution, which Sihlali ignored, thus leading to conflicts between them.

3.11 Conclusion

The study has indeed unmasked the mystery surrounding how mentorship took place at Polly Street Art Centre from 1952-1965 when Cecil Skotnes was in charge. Through the use of both current and pre-existing interviews, I have been able to reconstruct the manner in which mentorship took place at the Centre. Informants such at Koloane, Nettleton, Mautloa

and Givon have laid bare the goings on at the Centre. Further to their insight, they have defined the concept of mentorship and demonstrated how Skotnes and his assistants used it at the Centre. Skotnes benefitted and advanced his career, and repayed his sponsors Guenther and Meneghelli with fashioning the institution to suit their preconceived ideas of what African art should be.

Nettleton's scholarship and interest in what took place at the Centre has ensured that we learn about the contradictions of an unstructured versus a structured curriculum synonymous with white institutions, drawing out clearly the distinctions between the two, and pointing out why white scholars had no interest in Polly Street Art Centre's teaching methodology. The roles played by immigrant teachers, and particularly Peder and Ulla Gowenius, who encouraged Skotnes to assimilate the methods used at Konstfack in Sweden where they graduated, were important in shaping that methodology. This also brought in insights around the many walk-in artists and teachers who played significant roles in Skotnes's life as he tackled the direction his institution had to take.

Not many writers have been explicit as to who was behind Skotnes in supporting his work at the Centre. Interest was shown by Egon Guenther and Vittorino Meneghelli in the Centre, as they supported students with materials and guided the art production at the Centre. This they did through exhibiting both Skotnes's and his students' work internationally, thus exhibiting strong elements of mentorship for him and his promising students.

Skotnes's historic rise and success, from childhood to graduate of Wits University, and then taking up the position at the Polly Street Art Centre, we have also learned was due to a number of internal stakeholders as well as immigrants who introduced different skills sets that were lacking at the Centre and, at first, out of Skotnes's reach and understanding. We have also understood that the apartheid policy of segregation ensured that many white scholars at the time looked the other way and, to a certain degree, the unstructured teaching programme at Polly Street Art Centre had them feel that it did not warrant their inquiry, hence they neglected to study it.

Critical information has been shared through the pre-existing interviews conducted between Skotnes with Ambrose Brown (1984) and Neville Dubow (1996). Skotnes shares his trials and tribulations at the Centre, pointing out the protagonists who helped him get the teaching going whilst he was taking care of other more demanding tasks, such as mobilising financial and material support for his students. These interviews have been the catalyst for new insights beyond the absence of written records both in scholarly literature and published articles. Without these interviews the study would have been poorer, and possibly never unravelled what really happened at the Polly Street Art Centre.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The objective of this study was to establish the strength or weakness of mentorship as practiced at Polly Street Art Centre from 1952 to 1965 under the leadership of Cecil Skotnes. To be able to do this effectively, Chapter one investigated the concept of mentorship and how it was understood and reported by South African writers and scholars alike. The investigation found that mentoring, or mentorship, was not understood as a teaching methodology by mainly South African writers. The only author to ever mention mentorship was Elizabeth Rankin (1996). However, her observation and understanding of mentorship only considered Skotnes teaching artists who were not registered students at Polly Street Art Centre, like Lucky Sibiya and, to a certain degree, Dumile Feni. These artists visited Skotnes's studio on several occasions to solicit advice, hence the acknowledgement.

Further investigation revealed the understanding of mentorship as teaching that happens in informal institutions like Polly Street Art Centre, as opposed to formal institutions. The extra steps taken by Skotnes in not only teaching content, but also sourcing students' materials and commissions for his students, was considered going beyond the call of duty. In formal teaching institutions, students pay for their art materials and further negotiate individually with galleries to show their works, clearly showing independence from teachers in executing their education and careers.

This led the research to look into formal literature to understand concepts and definitions of mentorship. In Chapter two the study looked at the multi-meaning and approaches of mentorship in various disciplines to establish the broad understanding of this teaching methodology. What critically came out was the revelation that mentorship is not a once-off event, but a process that goes through various stages, underpinned by trust, friendship and mutual respect between mentor and mentee. The relationship does not end with the mentee achieving his or her goals, but goes on to survive hardships that emerge over the years, as exemplified in the relationship between Kumalo and Skotnes.

Because most of the people associated with Polly Street Art Centre have passed on, the study engaged current and pre-existing interviews to try and reconstruct this phenomenon as it happened at Polly Street Art Centre. In Chapter three, the interviewees gave a different understanding of this methodology through their respective articulations, and demonstrated, through examples, how it happened both inside and outside the Centre. Inside the Centre the mentorship was selective and symbiotic – selective as in when Skotnes favoured certain students, like Kumalo, Legae, Ngatane and Maqhubela as serious students,

as opposed to those to whom he paid less attention towards their artistic development. Secondly, it was symbiotic, as it happened between Skotnes and Kumalo, and Skotnes and Egon Guenther and Meneghelli.

At this stage I will show how mentorship happened at Polly Street Art Centre both internally and externally, highlighting the protagonists behind the methodology.

4.2 The Outcome of the Study

The study has shown evidence of events and people who mentored Skotnes from very early in his life until he turned professional. Evidence also shows that he reciprocated by helping other needy people. His illustrious life is a testament to how he understood the concept and functions of mentorship without calling it that by name. Below, I will demonstrate how external and internal forces shaped Skotnes's understanding of mentorship.

4.2.1 Roles Played by his Missionary Parents

To Skotnes, caring and mentoring of other people began very early in his life. The mentoring influences on Skotnes can be traced back to his missionary parents who went about not only preaching the gospel, but caring for impoverished communities. They inculcated in him a sense of caring for people who were underprivileged. These lessons were to play a significant role as the young Skotnes grew and encountered similar situations.

4.2.2 Schooling Years at Con Cowan Junior Secondary School

It was at Con Cowan Junior Secondary School that Skotnes's talent was discovered and nurtured by Joan Couzyn (who was his sculpture teacher). These early beginnings ensured he was guided towards a career that was going to introduce him to other needy students later in his life. On completion of his schooling, Skotnes was further introduced to a mechanical draughtsman's office. There he spent over eight months training in this specialised technical aspect of design, a skill that would come handy when executing commissions with Kumalo. Mautloa postulated earlier that black artists faced serious challenges when it came to executing commissions due primarily to their lack of technical skills and training.

4.2.3 Encounter with Henrich Steiner: The Painter

Skotnes, just like all young white men at the time, were required to undergo military training and to serve in the South African Army. When WWII broke in 1939, white volunteer

soldiers were called upon to take up arms against Germany. Skotnes volunteered and was sent to Europe, and at the end of the war stayed behind to imbibe European art in Florence. His exposure to European art had a profound influence on him deciding to pursue art as a career. Skotnes had a chance meeting with an Austrian painter, Heinrich Steiner, who assisted him with his painting, giving valuable advice. Later on in life, Skotnes credited Steiner for cementing his love of art, a gesture he would emulate throughout his life.

4.2.4 Training at Wits

On his return to South Africa, Skotnes took advantage of the scholarships awarded to ex-soldiers to acquire skills so they could integrate back into civilian life. Skotnes enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand's (Wits) newly opened Fine Art department in 1947, and graduated in 1950. The ambience and camaraderie at Wits assisted him to settle and acquire the skills he so needed. After graduating at Wits, Skotnes visited England, and returned from Europe in 1952. He then accepted employment at the Polly Street Art Centre as a 'Recreational Officer', responsible for Jabavu and Orlando centres too, an experience that was to test him both as an artist and administrator. Fortunately for Skotnes, the earlier encounters enumerated above had prepared him sufficiently to face up to the challenges that Polly Street Art Centre was to throw at him.

4.2.5 Appointment at Polly Street Art Centre

Skotnes was appointed as Cultural Recreational Officer at Polly Street Art Centre in 1952. His duties were "facilitated development of music section … and administrator, responsible for organized culture and recreation for black people living in Johannesburg… more of his time was spent in the townships then in Polly Street, and much of it after working, when people were free to take part in recreational pursuits (Rankin 1996: 68). This also proves beyond doubt that Skotnes relied on other assistants in carrying out tasks at Polly Street Art Centre. Rankin points out what many scholars have overlooked in reference to the goings-on at the Centre. It was Kumalo who taught art classes more than Skotnes. "After his appointment as Art Organiser in 1958, Sydney Kumalo was available much of the time for students, although he, like Skotnes, had responsibilities in the township, art was his sole portfolio, so he had more time for teaching" (Rankin 1996: 72).

On arrival at the Centre, he was lucky to receive support from the outgoing staff members, who comprised of David Roycroft and Gideon Uys (who taught at the Centre from 1949-1951). This support ensured that Skotnes settled well into his new job, helping him avoid pitfalls emanating from the transition from the Liberal Johannesburg City Council to the Nationalist Party apartheid-aligned Council as a result of the 1948 all-white elections.

Through various legislative acts, the Nationalist Party immediately instituted Afrikaner hegemony, with serious repercussions for the country, and for black people in particular. Skotnes needed people with insight into the complexity of the issues wrought by the changes in government policies. Therefore the assistance and support given by Roycroft and Uys was invaluable to him. He drew on both his previous experiences and those shared by the two teachers to set up a thriving institution.

It was very important for Skotnes to have gotten the kind of support he did whilst establishing himself in this new job. The role played by Uys is characteristic of the role of 'traditional mentors' to their new recruits, as described previously and articulated by Anderson (1987). The experience provided by Uys allowed Skotnes to understand the workings of the previous teachers so that he could make a sound assessment before launching his own method of teaching.

Skotnes had no teaching qualification and very limited teaching experience when taking up the position at Polly Street Art Centre in 1952. He had only taught art classes at Johannesburg Art School for one year previously. Faced with an informal teaching and learning environment, the experience from his predecessors was to be invaluable for him going forward, and the support given to him at that stage of his life proved to be very important for him to settle down and institute his own ideas.

To ensure Skotnes got maximum support, Gideon Uys and Reg Rawlings (treasurer of the Local Committee for Non-European Adult Education) embarked on fundraising on behalf of the Centre. This was precipitated by the dwindling annual grants offered by the hostile apartheid Nationalist Party-aligned Council. The Liberal-inclined out-going 'Local Committee for Non-European Adult Education' ensured the survival and continuity of the Centre by countering these efforts by sourcing funds independently. This is another example of 'supportive mentorship'.

It should be noted that there were only a few students at the Centre when Skotnes took over from his predecessor David Roycroft in 1952. Skotnes worked patiently on establishing confidence with the students, who in turn understood the value of patience and trust. This was reciprocated by the volunteer teachers who, through their own skills, encouraged and nurtured students to continue with their training. Training alone would not have given the students sustenance, but the support given to the Centre by patrons (who bought artworks and encouraged the students) went a long way to reinforce the long-term discipline required for art production.

Sponsors like Matthew Whippman supported the Centre with frames and paper. Relma Meneghelli (daughter of Vittorio Meneghelli) confirms that her father "supported the Centre with monetary donations … wooden panels to be used by students in their projects and was a frequent visitor there (email with author 2017). If these men had not done this, the Centre and its activities would have suffered or, at worst, closed down. This would have denied black students a much-needed art education. This led to successful exhibitions and media publicity received by students (through magazines like *Zonk* and newspapers like *The Star*), which added more impetus and drive to the early years of the Centre, from 1952 to 1957.

Skotnes realised early on in his career that he was able to inspire and challenge students and broaden their general knowledge about the arts by taking them to the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG). It was at JAG that the students encountered more examples of art genres. Further to all the above, group exhibitions and art competitions were organised in places like Wits University, and in galleries, as well as in libraries around the city, and different public spaces. Media coverage and positive comments emboldened the students to do well in their chosen careers.

At this point it should be reminded that the Centre offered art classes only once a week, but that students got support and encouragement from other sources. These were Soweto-based teachers like Alpheus Kubeka and Thabatha Bengu, who had trained at Polly Street in 1949. They conducted art classes in the township where a number of soon-to-be Polly Street Art Centre students encountered art teaching for the first time. These interventions ensured there was continuity for students who would otherwise only have attended Polly Street Art Centre once a week, before Saturday classes were introduced at Jubilee House when the Centre moved to the centre of town in 1960.

4.3 Trial and Error

The period beginning from 1952 to 1955, which Miles (2004) characterises as 'trial and error', is a period when Skotnes was trying to find his way. As explained earlier, Skotnes had very limited teaching experience when arriving to start his job at Polly Street Art Centre and began experimenting with his accumulated skills. Faced with challenges of resources and erratic attendance by students, coupled with extra demands on him by his work at centres like Orlando and Jabavu, Skotnes needed help. He soon recruited several volunteer teachers to come on board and assist him.

At this stage of Polly Street Art Centre's artistic development, Skotnes had no clear direction as to where he was taking the Centre. On the one hand he talked of making the Centre an

art school against its initial 'recreational' purpose, and on the other hand he was quoted as saying "we do not encourage professionalism here. It is purely spare-time activity" (Miles: 2004: 92). Yet he boasts that, "when [an] exceptionally gifted young person comes here we set about arranging for his general education and special studies as far as necessary" (Miles 2004: 92). These contradictions lay bare the desingeniousness of scholars in attributing all the success of the Centre to one person. They further point to the uncertainty that Skotnes had regarding the direction the school needed to take until the intervention of other people who helped Skotnes with the professionalisation of the Centre.

4.4 The Roles Played by Volunteer Teachers in Assisting Skotnes at PSAC

To further bolster Skotnes's confidence and relieve him of his heavy load as 'Cultural Recreation Officer' responsible for two other centres (Jabavu and Orlando in Soweto), Skotnes received assistance from nine white volunteer teachers. All had received art training and understood the importance of art education in general. The roles they played, both at the Centre and to Skotnes in particular, are characteristic of 'supportive bosses and professional mentors'. In spite of the important supportive roles they played, the literature does not mention how they carried out their teaching, except for Schimmel's account where he went around talking to students about their works (Miles 2004), and is a theme also taken up and expanded on by Mautloa, who attended classes late in 1969 when the Centre had moved to Jubilee House under the tutelage of Ezrom Legae and Bill Hart.

The literature only mentions the names of the teachers and what medium they taught, which is not enough to explain fully their involvement or impact. From 1952 to 1960 art classes were held once a week on a Wednesday from 5 in the evenings till 9 at night. Detail that is missing is, how often each teacher taught, and whether there were any scheduled days or times for them to engage the students. This information would help to clarify how the work load was shared.

More revealing evidence is shared by Rankin (1996: 72) when she contended that Skotnes made use of "experienced Polly Street artists like Ephraim Ngatane and Ben Arnold to assist unofficially, to walk around and talk with students about their work if they were at the studio". Again Skotnes reiterateded the immense help and impact the employment of Kumalo had on the Centre, when declaring that "Kumalo was to all intents and purposes in charge, taking responsibility for classes and forming a nucleus of the group of serious students in the 1960s" (Rankin 1996: 75).

Nettleton contends that many of the volunteer teachers were driven by the need to subvert the apartheid system as meted out to black people in South Africa. Most of them came from

Europe and were not fully aware of the apartheid policies and how they affected the majority of black people, hence their subversion of the policies.

4.5 Walk-in Advisors

As Skotnes's confidence grew and the reputation of the Centre spread far and wide, occasional 'walk-in advisors' came to the Centre to give him special advice. In spite of the tensions experienced by Skotnes with some volunteer teachers, he was able to take advice from individuals like Walter Battiss, Jack Grossert, Guenther, Meneghelli and Peder and Ulla Gowenius. They were not part of the volunteer teachers, but occasionally dropped in to share their experiences. Skotnes tapped into this well of knowledge and experience whilst teaching at Polly Street Art Centre, especially during the period of 'trial and error'. Perhaps the turning point for Skotnes was his encounter with Egon Guenther in 1954, and Guenther's subsequent support to Skotnes and the school that changed Skotnes's idea of where he wanted to take the school as his own career changed.

4.5.1 Walter Battiss (1906- 1982)

Walter Battiss was an art teacher at Pretoria Boys High School and would occasionally drop in at the Centre to encourage both Skotnes and the students. This encouragement can be viewed as support for what Skotnes was doing, especially when considering that Battiss was one of the established artists of that time. Battiss was another of those artists who had, after visiting Europe, changed his art to focus on African themes, who Miles (2004: 70) refers to as being "considered the champion of Bushman expression", and that Nettleton characterises as "modernist formal abstraction of a figurative kind, based on European modernist traditions and on familiarity with historical African forms" (Nettleton 2013: 754).

4.5.2 Jack Grossert (Inspector of Arts and Crafts)

Grossert as an Inspector of Arts and Crafts for black schools occasionally visited Polly Street Art Centre to give suitable advice to Skotnes's teaching methodology for black students. Koloane in Hammond-Tooke and Nettleton (1989) quotes Esmé Berman that Jack Grossert convinced Skotnes not to teach black students the same way as white students because they would lose their "innate creativity". Influences highlighted to him by the Canadian Scholar Arthur Lismer, who visited South Africa and gave lectures, early in the 1930s.

4.5.3 Peder and Ulla Gowenius's Influence on Skotnes

In 1961, once the Centre had already moved to the centre of town, to Jubilee House, Peder and Ulla Gowenius paid Skotnes a visit. They were the graduates of Konstfackskolan, a Swedish Institution "whose curriculum included design in a wide range of arts and crafts and had an industrial emphasis involving practical internships" (Hobbs and Rankin 2003: 15). This institution is well-known for its promotion of 'free art', as explained earlier by Nettleton, and confirmed here by Peder: "I belonged to a small but steadily growing group of people who questioned the concept of art … In short we despised a culture only for the rich and artists selling only to the highest bidder" (Hobbs and Rankin 2003: X1). Peder later explained their teaching methodology when starting Rorke's Drift Art Centre, and their intention in teaching art to their students: "[W]e wanted to empower our students to take charge of their own lives. We spoke of the importance of language and expression. We encouraged them and our co-workers to become more confident and to trust their own abilities" (Hobbs and Rankin 2003: XIV).

This was complimented by the arrival of Bill Ainslie from then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), who shared the same beliefs in art training. Ainslie later established the Johannesburg Art Foundation and it, too, operated without a formal curriculum. David Koloane, who knew both Skotnes and Ainslie, concurred that they had great respect for one another and shared ideas occasionally (pers con 2017). These institutions have been trailblazers for teaching art to black people and all of them did not have formal curriculum, yet produced what Koloane calls "ambassadors of South African Art" (pers con 2017).

4.5.4 Egon Guenther

A chance meeting between Skotnes and Guenther in 1954 resulted in significant changes to Skotnes's appreciation of both his career as an artist, and of art in general. Obviously, Skotnes at this stage had known about art throughout his life until acquiring a degree. What he did not know, however, were his strengths, or the direction he should take, until this chance meeting with Guenther. This meeting had a serious impact on Skotnes, and changed his life for the better. Skotnes rediscovered his strength as a printmaker, but also set his sights on turning the Centre towards a new path. This path was partially directed by Guenther, whose quest was for the establishment and production of African art steeped in African expression. This realisation by Skotnes ensured that he selected a few students that could carry out this expression and invariably channel the Centre towards professionalism.

Guenther also ensured that he directed Skotnes's career and selected students who ascribed to his philosophy of what African art should be by exhibiting them in his gallery.

This mentoring by Guenther did not only end at his gallery; he further introduced them to Meneghelli, who formed and financed Amadlozi Group exhibitions overseas.

4.6 Commissions, Completions and Art Exhibitions

For Skotnes to fulfil his long-term goal of turning the 'recreational centre' into an art school, he drew on his previous training and skills. He divided students into two groups and intensified training to the promising ones. Not so long into his appointment, the Bishop Gerard van Velsen of the Church of St Peter the Claver in Seeisoville, Kroonstad, offered the Centre its first commission work for their township churches. This gave the beginnings of professionalism to people like Kumalo, Arnold and Ngatane.

The positive effect of this exercise was to take mentorship to another level as both Kumalo and Skotnes changed roles. When the first commission was offered to the Centre, Skotnes appointed Kumalo to do it. This process resulted in the two doing research in the township together, looking for African symbols that would assist them to achieve the desired effects requested by the Bishop. For the first time Skotnes learned from his student, as his western epistemology was tested to its limit.

Immediately after the successful completion of the commission, Skotnes persuaded Edoardo Villa (Italian sculptor) to apprentice Kumalo twice a week in his studio. It was Skotnes's realisation of Kumalo's "exceptional giftedness", and his anticipation of more commissions to come, that had him identify that new skills were needed. This resulted in all three artists (Skotnes, Kumalo and Villa) working and exhibiting together in the Amadlozi Group, created by Guenther and Meneghelli. What started as a teacher and student relationship grew on into a long-lasting friendship between Skotnes and Kumalo.

This began to achieve the results of the hard work all the teachers of the Centre had toiled for against a hostile Council. Skotnes had scoured venues to showcase students' works in municipal libraries and Wits galleries. Patrons reciprocated his efforts by buying students' works. This led to students gaining more confidence, and the goal of establishing an art school was soon realised. And a more fitting credit to this phenomenon is the realisation by Skotnes "that the numbers working at the Centre (by this time Jubilee) expanded dramatically as these successes attracted widespread interest. With the increasing commercial aspirations of artists at the Centre, it was used more and more as an ongoing workshop, making space and materials available for the production of art" (Rankin 1996: 74).

It is important to look at the methodology that Skotnes used to achieve this mammoth task of changing a recreational centre into an art school. Having met Guenther and subjected himself to his controlling mannerisms, Skotnes applied the same principles. He divided students into two groups and began selective mentorship, as mentioned above.

4.7 Controlling of Skotnes (Symbiotic Nature)

Most writers describe Skotnes as a teacher, mentor and a 'role model' who elevated black art and put Polly Street Art Centre onto the South African map. Evidence abounds from mainly white scholars about Skotnes's achievements as a role model to his students, albeit those whom he favoured and who toed his line. This point is amplified by Nettleton when she points out how Skotnes pushed for a specific style:

> At Polly Street Durant will come in and paint, and he might or might not get a positive response from Skotnes. Skotnes really wasn't interested so much in that kind of practice/instruction and that comes across clearly in that article [by] David Koloane on Polly Street. It is structured and depends to a large extent on the kind of generosity of the teachers (pers con 2016).

Whilst we acknowledge Skotnes as a role model at Polly Street Art Centre, evidence shows that he was not embracing of all his students. We cannot ignore the fact he was selective of which students he supported because of his idea of what art should be. Nettleton justifies this accusation and observation of Skotnes's behaviour:

> I think Skotnes was a mentor – much more of a mentor to some members of Polly Street than others – so particularly those whose work he promoted very strongly, arranging for Kumalo to work with Villa and arranging for Kumalo and Legae to be exhibited through Guenther's gallery (pers con 2016).

This is also confirmed by Anthony Krell (1972: 37, 42) in Miles (2004: 90), who argued that "both Skotnes and Guenther deliberately forced the members of the Centre into an African idiom of expression". It has to be said that Skotnes's behaviour did not go down well with some volunteer teachers, as well as some students. But when Kumalo took over the teaching of art classes from 1958 to 1964, more students enrolled, and seemingly did not suffer Skotnes's ire. Miles (2004) confirms this change of attitude in her chapter titled, 'The Crucible'. The expression and focus of students' themes took on a different metaphor once Kumalo took over, as opposed to Skotnes and Guenther's expressive abstraction that they so promoted.

But in spite of these shortcomings by Skotnes the man, students continued working at the Centre, supported by other teachers who did not share Skotnes's personal preference in artmaking. Miles (2004) refers to Schimmel's displeasure at the manner in which Skotnes insisted that students execute work in the style he favoured: "Contrary to Skotnes' more 'academic approach', Schimmel taught intuitively. When their different emphases confused some of the aspirant artists, Schimmel decided to resign" (Miles 2004: 36).

Skotnes had inherited an institution that was almost on its knees when he joined, bogged down by erratic student attendance, which invariably affected the volunteer teachers' morale, until Skotnes decided to turn the 'recreational centre' into an art school. It is this decision and its timing that can be credited for what turned the fortunes of the school to good.

Beginning by dividing the students into two groups allowed for the intensification of instruction to the 'serious' group, with measurable results. Amongst these inspirational tactics was to offer students group exhibitions, followed by being selected to work on commissions the Centre received and executed. The financial rewards received by the hard-working students propelled them towards professionalism and social standing. This approach was also extended to Kumalo, Legae, Ngatane and Maqhubela in getting access to well-resourced and equipped white artists' studios and galleries.

Nettleton brings another dimension to what Skotnes's intentions were when professionalising the teaching at Polly Street Art Centre:

> Skotnes had very clear views of what he expected African art to be. There were different things happening there as well, and I can only say this from looking at what came out of Polly Street, and from listening to what people like Kumalo and others said at the time. Skotnes was more interested in more abstract and more expressive forms than the naturalists, and tended to favour people like Kumalo and Legae to some extent. He was interested in Sibiya, but Sibiya went on to train with Skotnes after, and he didn't have to train at Polly Street. And that was the kind of background to why they went the workshop method (pers con 2016).

Through his friendship and mentorship with both white artists and immigrant entrepreneurs, and being well aware of the pioneering work his institution was doing, Skotnes singularly pursued his dream. The dream of being the first artist and teacher to produce black professional artists' post-WWII came to fruition.

Nettleton further sheds more light on who was behind Skotnes's push for a particular kind of art expression. It was his friendship with the German goldsmith and gallery owner Egon Guenther and Italian businessman Vittorio Meneghelli. These two men are credited with driving the professionalism of art production at the Polly Street Art Centre.

> I am not saying Skotnes was unduly disingenuous, but the first point, he had decided he was going to push for a particular kind of production, which was a particular kind of production in which artists could attain professional standing and be exhibited in art galleries. So he encouraged people like Louis Maqhubela to move away from the figurative form. He encouraged the kind of abstraction that you find in Legae and Kumalo while they were in Polly Street; he thought he could deal with people like Motau and Dumile, when Dumile wasn't part of the workshop, but that kind of very expressive form of drawing, because they all fitted within his kind of understanding of professional artists of what made African modernism (pers con, 2016).

Further evidence of this is supplied by Skotnes himself in an interview with James Ambrose Brown (1984) as he describes struggling to establish meaningful programmes at Polly Street Art Centre and juggling his own professional art practice. In this interview, Skotnes shows how Guenther and later Meneghelli played significant roles in him achieving professionalism at a personal level as well as for the Centre. Skotnes was personally influenced in his art practice and in how he specifically drove what Nettleton characterises as "a particular kind of art production" by Guenther. In the interview with Brown (1984: 7), Skotnes asserts that:

> At that point I met Egon Guenther … yes, I was painting up to this point. Guenther gave me some tools after looking at my painting … He was a man with an enormous ability to spot things and he had known many of the great 20th Century German paintings so he had a very good eye for certain aspects. He came from Germany with an enormous understanding of German expressionism and graphics, woodcuts. Anyway, he was right, you see … then finally I began to exhibit little woodblocks. But it all began there. I am ever grateful to him.

As both Skotnes and Kumalo's works improved and gained more traction with both patrons and gallerists, Guenther and Meneghelli formed the Amadlozi Group to further explore their ideal African art ethos.

4.8 Formation of Amadlozi (Guenther and Meneghelli)

The formation of Amadlozi as a group has been misunderstood by many writers and scholars, as well as the intentions of its founders. This was indeed a continuation of

mentorship of talented individuals, who otherwise would not have attained such success without the material and financial support given by Guenther and Meneghelli. In an interview with Brown (1984: 8, 11), Skotnes corrects this narrative by pointing out that it was Meneghelli who started and financed the Amadlozi Group:

> [T]hen I met Vittorio Meneghelli, an Italian businessman who had as his hobby a shop called Totem. He was an enormous collector of all sorts of things … [had] a great interest in all sorts of art … Meneghelli introduced me to the intellectual fleshpots of Europe. He was a highly intelligent man and very generous. He put together a little group of people, with Guenther, but he was the driving force. The group was called Amadlozi which means 'spirits of your forefather'. Vittorio set up a series of exhibitions throughout Italy, starting in Rome. It featured myself, Edoardo Villa, Giuseppe Cattaneo, Cecily Sash and Sydney Kumalo.

This information is also testament to the extent to which Skotnes and Kumalo's mentorship was driven by outside persons/patrons at Polly Street Art Centre. The two immigrants had extensive knowledge and resources to uplift (and to a certain degree influence) the standard of art production, not only at Polly Street Art Centre, but in the country in general. Looking at the composition of the members of the Amadlozi Group, they were a very talented and highly educated lot who were destined to influence the direction of art making in the country. This is confirmed by Relma Meneghelli:

> The Sundays were filled with intellectual discussions between the guests. There were art lovers, artists, art collectors, academics and intellectuals, and the discussions went from art movements that were at the fore in Europe during those times, and back to the local art scene wherein all of the artists were involved, transforming these ideas and discussions and influences into their own interpretations through their art.
>
> Cecil Skotnes was at all of these wonderful get togethers and loved the camaraderie and food prepared by Paolina Meneghelli, but more than anything absorbed the influence of Vittorio's dissertations on art, form and more than anything, his ideas on what made art, "Art". Vittorio was often at Skotnes' home when Cecil would ask him for his opinion on a new project, and the two were the greatest of friends sharing a common love (email to author 2017).

This is reminiscent of Koloane's understanding of mentorship, where different stimuli are used to inspire and broaden the knowledge of an incumbent. Skotnes benefited immensely

during these sessions outlined by Relma Meneghelli. Upon receiving and understanding the depth of mentorship by his protégés, Skotnes, too, endeavoured to share with Kumalo. He introduced him to white professional artists and gallerists to broaden and improve his oeuvre.

This he did for two main reasons, first, it was to broaden Kumalo's skills base, as the Centre could not inspire him further. Secondly, he needed him to carry out Guenther's vision of establishing African artists who could deliver on the African expression, partly inspired by Cubism and German Expressionism. Frieda Harmsen (1985: 1) postulates that the formation of the Amadlozi Group was:

> to promote South African art overseas, but also to underscore the significance of the African prototype and atmosphere. It stood as pointer in the development of South African art, leading towards a new understanding and appreciation of artistic style and language. In that way it helped break the barriers of what had been the hidebound Eurocentric attitude of the majority of South African art patrons.

This observation by Harmsen has been echoed by Anthony Krell (1972), Rankin (1996), Miles (2004), Friedman (2011) and Nettleton (2013) as the deliberate intentions of Guenther and Meneghelli to influence the direction that South African art was to take because of their strong belief in what African art should be. Examples abound of how they personally got involved through discussions, sponsorship and finally exporting these works to major European cities like Rome and Florence.

South African writers did not ascribe the symbiotic relationship by Guenther and Meneghelli as mentorship. Defining this methodology in Chapter two has implicitly shown that the actions of the two indeed constituted mentorship. Secondly, there has been a failure to associate Skotnes's actions towards his students, selective as he was, as an application of mentorship, a teaching methodology that has been used as far back as the Renaissance. One wonders how the political situation in South Africa contributed in its neglect.

All the people who assisted Skotnes through his life invoked in him the sense of ensuring he reciprocated by helping others in their quest to find their true calling and to have their 'voices heard', as articulated by Nettleton. The intention of the apartheid state to deny black people education was, to a degree, broken by the Centre's many volunteer teachers and patrons. It was the first time that urban blacks received an arts education post-WWII. The graduates of the Centre went on to teach in community centres, thus defeating the Nationalist Party policies on black education in South Africa.

4.9 Role Modelling in Mentorship Outside of Polly Street Art Centre

Mentorship as a knowledge dissemination tool can best be understood through role modelling. Be it Skotnes, volunteer, or walk-in teachers, or patrons and sponsors like Guenther or Meneghelli, they all possessed exceptional knowledge they were willing to impart to their protégés as and when needed. In turn, the graduates of Polly Street Art Centre took this methodology further to other centres where they taught. Starting as early as the mid-1950s, Kubeka, Ngatane, Sihlali and others began teaching students attending Polly Street Art Centre, and those not attending the Centre, on Saturdays in Soweto, primarily because they understood the importance of reinforcing the skills taught during the Wednesday classes, thereby taking the concept of 'role modelling' to new heights.

Soweto students acknowledged the limitations of the contact time between themselves and Polly Street Art Centre teachers. They therefore formed support groups in their townships, valuing those teaching approaches used at the Centre and ensuring they reciprocated by initiating their own projects that would be taken back to the Centre for feedback. This was to augment and reinforce the skills learnt at Polly Street Art Centre. According to Patrick Mautloa and Muziwakhe Nhlabatsi, there were five main groups formed around Soweto, namely in Mofolo, Zola, Kwezi/Meadowlands, Orlando and Dlamini. These were run mainly by Polly Street students who attended regularly as their protégés were very young and school going. Miles (2004: 96, 113) confirms the beginnings of township groups as early as the 1950s:

> Ngatane, Sefuti and Sihlali became friends while studying at Polly Street Art Centre. In 1955 Ngatane and Sefuti joined Sihlali's weekend artists' group, which included John Hlatywayo, Louis Maqhubela, James Salang and Samuel Motsoene. Maqhubela recalls that Sydney Kumalo occasionally joined them … They concentrated on recording their environment using watercolours. When the group broke up in 1960, Sihlali and Ngatane carried on until the mid-sixties.

Gradually, a coterie of former Polly Street Art Centre students emulated Skotnes by being role models in their own right. The pioneers of this movement were Alpheus Kubeka, who taught at Chiawelo Art Centre in 1951; Durant Sihlali taught at Funda Community Art College in Soweto and Fuba Art College in Johannesburg; Ngatane "also taught at Chiawelo and from home and Legae, (after leaving Polly Street Art Centre) was director of the art programme of the African Music and Drama Association (AMDA) from 1972-1974" (Miles 2004: 113). Another of these pioneers is David Koloane who studied at both Polly Street Art Centre and Johannesburg Art Foundation and later started the Thupelo Art Project (1985) and Fordsburg Art Studios, which are still going strong to this day.

They became good teachers and excellent practising artists. Because mentoring is a life-long process, Skotnes's former students continued socialising and exhibiting together, thus ensuring support for each other post-Polly Street Art Centre. They ensured that they demonstrated to young students that their careers were very important and required discipline. Miles (2004: 113) summarises it thus: "[T]hey were successful artists who exhibited in leading galleries. In turn, their students assimilated and transformed what they gleaned from their mentors [the only time she mentions the word] and inspired other aspirant artists".

What sustained and grew Polly Street Art Centre were the behaviours of both Skotnes and Kumalo as practicing artists. They continued teaching and producing artwork, and participated in solo and group exhibitions. Even when receiving requests for commissions, Skotnes led his students through research stages. The process of research, analysis and selection before they finally executed finished products fits well into the notion of role modelling. This gave both teacher and students' confidence in the sharing of challenges during the research and execution processes. This approach ensured that serious students pursued self-realisation in learning, assisted by group crits of their work. The students' confidence grew as they developed the language to articulate their ideas.

Kumalo also saw first-hand what discipline meant when he was exposed to artists such as Edoardo Villa and Amadlozi Group members. Another important challenge that faced both Skotnes and Kumalo was their growing sense of responsibility as teachers, administrators, art makers and family members. The manner in which they carried out these responsibilities in and outside of the Centre was to have an important effect on their graduate students, as they went on to later instil the same discipline in their own students.

Skotnes never failed to highlight the influence that Kumalo had in the black community of artists. "Kumalo was the first very serious artist and that's how he turned out to be a very great influence on the younger generation of black artists" (interview with Brown 1984: 6), a point made also by Miles (2004) on the successes enjoyed by Kumalo, Ngatane and Legae. This is further confirmed by Koloane that, "Kumalo would collect artists around Soweto in his Kombi mini-bus and take them to socialise" (pers con 2016). These sessions were very important inspiration for younger artists to meet and discuss issues pertinent to their needs. They discussed the business of art and how galleries worked, including the pricing of artworks, and more emphatically, how discipline is required of a professional artist. "His humbleness was highly appreciated within the black community as he was the first sculptor to enjoy success during the apartheid period" (Mautloa, pers con 2016).

Encouraged by a constant supply of materials, Skotnes and Kumalo allowed students to experiment without financial constraints limiting their learning experience. Applying the 'workshop model' allowed for group counselling, as each student was encouraged to talk about his artwork. Coupled with positive media coverage, the students' confidence grew. In the case of Kumalo, Skotnes and Legae, their friendship grew beyond the Centre as their professional careers took off in leaps and bounds. At one stage all three were represented, first by Guenther, and later by the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg under Linda Givon.

4.9.1 The Ongoing Caring Relationship

Skotnes continued to care for his students by occasionally bringing them in and ensuring he opened up opportunities for them through numerous commissions and group exhibitions. He also ensured that patrons were invited to show support by buying the work of students. This can be seen in the way he related to and advanced the careers of Kumalo and Legae within the institution. Outside of the Centre, artists like Lucky Sibiya, David Mogano and Dumile Feni were allowed in Skotnes's studio in spite of the fact that they were not registered Polly Street Art Centre students.

The research by both Elizabeth Rankin (1996 and 2011) and Elza Miles (2004) demonstrates how these values were reciprocated by the students, who confirmed in interviews how the teachers sponsored, encouraged, counselled and befriended them on their difficult journeys to becoming renowned artists. However, these accolades have been unfortunately attributed by most writers and scholars on Polly Street Art Centre to Skotnes alone.

The appointment of Kumalo as assistant teacher at the Polly Street Art Centre had numerous positive consequences for the Centre. As a black person, coming from a similar cultural, socio-economic and political environment, Kumalo related easily to many students. Kumalo came to Polly Street Art Centre with a Standard eight/matric qualification, which most students did not have. This gave him an advantage over other students who were basically illiterate. Again, in explaining concepts, he spoke the students' language, which invariably eased their understanding.

In interviews, both David Koloane and Pat Mautloa agree that the professional manner that Kumalo displayed in and outside of the Centre appealed to many students. He was one of two artists (the other being John 'Mohl' Motlhakana) to build big houses in Soweto, which became an inspiration to young artists. His unassuming character allowed many artists to approach him for advice. His social standing within the art fraternity also created envy for many. During apartheid, for a black person to be seen in the company of white people was rare. For Kumalo, this was his life, as both galleries and art patrons sorted out his work. In

spite of his newly found status, Kumalo did not forget his less fortunate colleagues and students. When he left the Centre, Legae, formerly Kumalo's student, took over. It seems that Kumalo had done sterling work in teaching Legae, since the Centre's success and growth did not diminish.

After both Skotnes and Kumalo had left, Legae and Hart took over the running of Polly Street Art Centre. The fundamental teaching methodology, established by Skotnes, Kumalo and other volunteer teachers, continued to be practiced. As a result of this continuity, more graduates came out of the Centre and continued to impart the teaching of art education in townships and other institutions, as has been noted elsewhere.

4.10 Conclusion

There has been a failure by South African art scholars to understand mentorship as a 'knowledge transfer teaching methodology' that has been in existence for centuries, as has been demonstrated by pairing new recruits with a senior and knowledgeable person in various professional industries, including the legal fraternity, and teaching and health disciplines. This methodology has been known in the art circles as apprenticeship as early as the European Renaissance when Da Vinci and Michelangelo mentored many apprentices during their many commissions that the Medici family hired them to execute.

With reference to the situation at the Polly Street Art Centre, we have witnessed how the volunteer teachers, black township teachers, patrons, immigrants and professional artists played a significant role in assisting Cecil Skotnes to manage his heavy schedule of running three centres – in Jabavu and Orlando in Soweto, and Polly Street Art Centre in Johannesburg.

Firstly, the roles that various teams played ensured that Skotnes settled down into his new job, and they supported him with the essential skills he needed to execute the work he had started. Throughout Skotnes's life he had been encouraged, mentored by other people, until he himself realised the importance of mentoring others that did not have the means to enhance and improve their careers alone.

The gamble to turn the Centre into an art school paid significant dividends. Volunteer and walk-in teachers came in numbers to assist and give art education to black students. The black students also reciprocated by showing great enthusiasm for learning and by delivering quality projects when called upon. They further went on to organise themselves in Soweto townships to teach each other, thus growing the interest and shared resources. This ensured that a movement was developed and sustained.

On the other hand, Relma Meneghelli's revelation of the Sunday dinners at her father's home sheds significant light on who stimulated and inspired Skotnes to do what he did and why. Skotnes realised that, for him to succeed, he had to take his students along with him. He exposed them to white patrons and artists for their growth. Again, those selected few did not disappoint at the opportunities given to them.

Of great importance is how Skotnes's graduates went on to implement and extend the mentorship programme wherever they found themselves, like David Koloane with Thupelo Art Project, Durant Sihlali with Funda and Fuba Community Art Centres, and Ephraim Ngatane and Ezrom Legae at Chiawelo Art Centre. The graduates of Polly Street Art Centre, just like those of Rorke's Drift and Johannesburg Art Foundation, have gone on to produce significant works that no black tertiary institution (with formal education syllabi) could have equalled.

This study has not been able to ascertain why scholars concentrated on Skotnes and not on the volunteer teachers and their contributions. The lack of records and accounts of the contributions made by the volunteer teachers, with the exception of noting that they taught various disciplines, has seriously compromised the study.

The characterisation of the teaching at Polly Street Art Centre as a 'workshop model' minimised the perception of the effects that the volunteer teachers had on both the Centre and the students because the 'workshop' focuses on the convenor and not on support staff. The nature of the reporting and writing about the Centre perpetuated a one-sided narrative, with the exception of the few newspaper and magazine articles that gave accounts of how the actual teaching took place.

This study has also demonstrated that 'volunteerism' as a process is not generally about self-aggrandisement, but about caring and giving of one's skills and expertise. Because they had been trained and socialised differently to the local white teachers who either supported or overtly defied apartheid, the lack of acknowledging the volunteer teachers who worked at Polly Street and why they felt obliged to assist black people has not thoroughly been explored in the literature. Neither has the fact that the immigrant teachers were not overtly worried about being praised, but rather the effectiveness of their involvement was what mattered most to them, and the results.

The absence in the literature of mentioning the work of the 'White Studio', started by John 'Mohl' Motlhakana, first in Sophiatown and later in Soweto, is condescending scholarship. It was Motlhakana who first gave tuition at his studio to such prominent artists like Credo

Mutwa, Helen Sebidi and Lucky Sibiya, but the literature has excluded them from all accounts. Not much has been written either about the serious outcomes of such interventions by Ngatane, Legae, Sihlali and Kumalo of their work teaching their colleagues in Soweto. All credit is given to Skotnes and Polly Street Art Centre.

The study should further investigate the following:

- The role and philosophy of the Scandinavian countries on education in South Africa, with special attention on art education. The roles played by graduates of the Konstfackskolan in Sweden, and the impact it had in the establishment of institutions like Rorke's Drift Art Centre in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands and the Johannesburg Art Foundation in Johannesburg.
- The role and impact that Professor Jack Grossert had in the teaching of art to black schools in South Africa, and how his ideas impacted the decline of art education within black schools in general.
- To what extent the graduates of Polly Street Art Centre and Rorke's Drift Art Centre have influenced the teaching of art at Community Art Centres around the country.
- How can mentorship as a teaching methodology be used to re-introduce art education within black schools successfully, today, since at this moment art education in black schools is non-existent?

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