Action through Aesthetics: Philanthropic Art Initiatives in South Africa during the Apartheid

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ACTION THROUGH AESTHETICS:
PHILANTHROPIC ART INITIATIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE APARTHEID

by

CALLIE CRABB

Under the Direction of Dr. Kimberly Cleveland

ABSTRACT

South African artists played an expansive philanthropic role throughout the stages of the apartheid movement. Their artwork ranged from reflective to pro-active and reconciliatory. Although many scholars argue that South African artists were agents of social change, scholars have not drawn a connection between South African art history and philanthropy. Philanthropy is a platform from which artists can serve as catalysts within society. This thesis argues that South African artists acted philanthropically through their work to challenge the destructive social mores enforced by apartheid.

INDEX WORDS: South Africa, Apartheid, Philanthropy, Agency, Social mores, Relief, Improvement, Reform, Art
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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the course of apartheid (1948-1994), South African artists used art as a form of agency to express social and political beliefs in an effort to produce local, national, and global change. However, scholars rarely view South African artists’ contributions through visual arts and advocacy as philanthropic, nor have scholars analyzed works of art from a philanthropic perspective. This paper addresses the confluence of philanthropy and South African art history by examining established forms of philanthropic action, as outlined in Elizabeth Lynn and Susan Wisely’s “Four Traditions of Philanthropy,” and their connection to South African artists and art initiatives during apartheid. The “Four Traditions” of relief, improvement, reform, and civic engagement are platforms from which artists engaged in political and social advocacy in an effort to create change for the disempowered.

This paper first provides an historical context, including a timeline of the major social, political, and art historical developments in South Africa from the 1950s to the present. Chapter One then develops a framework for the connection between South African artists to theories of social mores, agency, and philanthropy. Through their connection to social responsibility, artists act as agents when civically engaged. According to social anthropologist Alfred Gell’s *Art and Agency*, art also acts as a social agent when either the artist intends for it to function as such or the viewer receives it as an agent. As a result, we may understand social action with intent for positive change as philanthropic. American philanthropy scholars Robert L. Payton and Michael P. Moody define philanthropy as voluntary action for the public good.¹ Elaborating on this definition, I provide an understanding of its various functions in society using the “Four Traditions of

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Philanthropy,” as established by Lynn and Wisely. The traditions include relief, improvement, reform, and civic engagement. In this chapter, I briefly explain the characteristics of each tradition and function within the context of South African society.

Chapter Two analyzes the characteristics of relief and improvement seen in the Polly Street Art Center and Rorke’s Drift, two community art centers established in South Africa during the preliminary stages of apartheid. The chapter begins by providing historical and social context for the Polly Street Art Center in Johannesburg and Rorke’s Drift in KwaZulu-Natal. I then reiterate the characteristics of relief as understood by Lynn and Wisely, a form of “charity” that alleviates human suffering without addressing the conditions that create suffering. I also discuss improvement, the maximization of human potential by helping those who are willing to help themselves. I relate the characteristics of relief and improvement to the mission and motivation of the art centers, including direction provided by the Heads of the Centers, the monetary benefits to the artists, and the impact the centers had on society. The art centers represent the tradition of relief by providing students with employment opportunities that satiated monetary need, including opportunities to work on commissioned pieces and participation in art shows that resulted in greater exposure and profitability. The centers represent improvement for black South Africans by providing the opportunity to further their education and expand their careers. The Centers empowered students, whose artwork precursors the social advocacy to come.

Chapter Three evaluates the connection between social reform and the agency of artists and art initiatives during the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, when internal resistance and political opposition to apartheid increased. This chapter delves further into the notion of art as agency. Art

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3 Ibid., 105.
and artists, as agents, serve the disempowered through the tradition of reform, in which individuals serve as catalysts for change on several social levels. Chapter Three connects characteristics of reform to the actions and work of graphic artist and activist Thami Mnyele (b. 1948). Mnyele’s art reflects the social and political ideals of the Black Consciousness Movement and the African National Congress (ANC). Mnyele’s martyrdom is the highest form of philanthropic action. Afrapix, a documentary photographers’ collective established in 1982, complements Mnyele in his activism. The photographers and political activists involved in this collective not only produced socially relevant work, but were also involved in underground political organizations and grassroots cultural organizations. Finally, I evaluate Culture in Another South Africa (CASA). Held in December of 1987, CASA was an international conference that involved over 300 South African artists and that raised international awareness about the events taking place in South Africa. The conference encouraged foreign political interests and gave South African citizens an international voice against apartheid. Mnyele, Afrapix, and CASA are examples of catalysts for change at the local, national, and international levels.

Chapter Four examines the relationship between the fourth philanthropic response of civic engagement and South African art and architecture after the abolishment of apartheid in 1994. As the South African government attempts to build a “New South Africa,” civic engagement becomes extremely important. The chapter explores Constitution Hill, the site chosen by the Court for the new Constitutional Court building. Once an apartheid-era prison, Constitution Hill exudes a history of injustice, making the site a prime location for dialogue around human rights. Following an analysis of the site, I provide an overview of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, including its historical significance, political goals, and vast art collection. Constitution Hill, the Court building, and the art contained therein encourage civic engagement, the nurturing of con-
versations and relationships among ordinary citizens to build more reflective and resourceful communities. The Constitutional Court reflects the democratic state through various symbolic associations with human rights and the advancement of human liberty and dignity. I connect the symbolic associations of democracy to a local and national dialogue around community building through an analysis of community programming, architectural ornamentation, and the subject matter of three works of art in the Court’s collection.

I am well aware that the philanthropic framework of this thesis has not yet been applied to art historical theory. My intention is to introduce a new perspective and encourage dialogue around these distinct and currently separate fields of study. An emerging academic field, philanthropic studies is heavily rooted in American history and tradition. Therefore, global application proves somewhat problematic due to vastly different economic, political, and cultural beliefs. However, I think there is something of value in applying concepts of philanthropy to art. I encourage the reader to speculate this somewhat narrow model in an effort to broaden the application of these two fields.

4 Ibid., 107.
1 MAKING CONNECTIONS: ART & PHILANTHROPY

South African artists played an expansive philanthropic role throughout the stages of the apartheid movement. Their artwork ranged from reflective to pro-active and reconciliatory. Although many scholars, including Gavin Jantjes, Judy Seidman, Philippa Hobbs, and Elizabeth Rankin, argue that South African artists were agents of social change, scholars have not drawn a connection between South African art history and philanthropy. Philanthropy is a platform from which artists can serve as catalysts within society. South African artists acted philanthropically through their work to influence the destructive social mores enforced by apartheid.

While deeply rooted in American history, philanthropic studies can be applicable globally. Leading scholars Robert Payton and Michael Moody encourage international application as stated in their book *Understanding Philanthropy* (2008):

> Many of our examples come from the United States, and even some aspects of our theoretical perspective are surely influenced by the American philanthropic context that we know best…But ultimately we believe the understanding of philanthropy we present here will allow people immersed in other traditions and people practicing philanthropy in other societies to take philanthropy seriously in their own neck of the global woods.\(^5\)

The unique and complex history of South Africa offers an interesting case study. Social and political oppression provided a breeding ground for activism and social change for the disempowered. Scholars Elizabeth Lynn and Susan Wisely provide an applicable framework for philanthropic action through the “Four Traditions” of relief, improvement, reform, and civic engagement.\(^6\) These “traditions” are apparent through the responses of people within and outside of South Africa to the political, social, and economic structures of apartheid. *Understanding Philanthropy* and “The Four Traditions,” the main philanthropic sources used throughout this study,

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provide a lucid and comprehensive introduction to the key concepts of philanthropy. These publications are fundamental sources for the field of philanthropic studies.

Analysis of social mores and agency provides a basis for understanding the motivation behind philanthropic action. William Graham Sumner’s theory of folkways (beliefs) and social mores (societal conventions) is applicable to the construction of the apartheid system and later desire by some to dismantle it.\(^7\) Alfred Gell’s theory of art and agency connects social mores with individual action. Artists and art objects can serve as change agents for destructive mores.\(^8\) Social action on behalf of the artists who seek positive change is philanthropic action. Therefore, the actions of the agents (artists, activists, voluntary associations) of South African history that sought to abolish apartheid were philanthropic. Relief, improvement, reform, and civic engagement highlight ways the agents sought change through philanthropic action. I should clarify, however, that these assumptions are based on Western notions of “right” and “wrong” and allow for no relativism.

Lynn and Wisely’s “Four Traditions” provides a framework for subsequent chapters that explore the role South African artists, art, and art associations played in producing local, national, and global change. Art and, most importantly, artists (since art is the secondary agent to artists as it is the product of an intention, according to Gell) served as powerful tools for reform. Art provided artists relief from monetary hardship. Art centers improved social conditions through education and increased means of productivity. Artists encouraged reform through challenge of mainstream notions of art and political activism. Art influenced civic engagement through the encouragement of discourse in a new democratic nation. A philanthropic connection not only

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8 Ibid., 113-116.
deepens the understanding of art as catalyst, but also diversifies the language we can use to describe artists’ intent or impact.

1.1 A brief history of South Africa

The history of South Africa is rooted in colonialism, the mentality of which persisted for centuries. The Dutch East India Company settled in Cape Town in 1652, and slowly expanded into the northern and eastern cape over the next century. The Dutch imported slaves from other parts of Africa and southern Asia and forced the South African Khoikhoi and San into indentured servitude. The British arrived in 1806, and established permanent control over the Cape Colony. Although the British ended slavery in 1834, segregation and inequality continued. Historian Nigel Worden suggests that the overlap between race and class continued for so long that discrimination and segregation became tradition, and Europeans felt the social structure was “God-given.”

This mentality would continue into the late 20th century.

The rise of industrialization in the late 19th century and the need for cheap labor further encouraged segregation and inequality. The Mineral Revolution began in the late 1860s with the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and later gold from the Witwatersrand. In the beginning, both whites and non-whites enjoyed mining profits. Eventually, however, greed dominated and large companies such as de Beers Consolidated Mines monopolized the mining industry. The companies controlled the work force through pass laws, which were booklets that documented a non-white’s authorization to move in and out of white areas, and through fixed contracts, though in practice employers only enforced these rules for blacks.

10 Ibid., 84.
11 Ibid., 45.
increased which led to cheaper wages and on-site living compounds for blacks. The mining industry flourished into the early 20th century.

The 1930s and 1940s brought both a depression with the fall of diamond prices internationally and a ‘Second Industrial Revolution’ with the Second World War, which in turn resulted in an influx of rural whites and blacks to urban areas. A war-driven shortage of white workers and demand for cheap labor increased employment opportunities for blacks. However, the influx of workers resulted in overcrowded urban areas. To clear the city center slums, the government enacted the Slums Act of 1934 and constructed townships for non-whites on the outskirts of the urban areas. Townships were overcrowded and unsanitary breeding grounds for disease, crime, and poverty. In the early 1940s, blacks began to strike against poor working and living conditions. They gained some traction through relaxed urban restrictions, government recognition of black trade unions, and government provision of social welfare (for all races); however, their success was short lived.

The apartheid movement began in 1948 with the establishment of the Afrikaner driven National Party. Afrikaners are Afrikaans speaking descendants of the Dutch colonizers. Colonization by the British in the early 19th century, defeat in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, and competition with Africans and the British for jobs in the early 20th century instilled a longing for power in the Afrikaners. This eventually led to the policy of apartheid.

The construction of apartheid during the 1950s resulted in various laws dividing the South African population by race. The Registration Act classified people into four racial categories: white, colored, ‘Asiatic’, and ‘Native.’ The National Party Government prohibited ‘Mixed mar-

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14 Ibid., 96-102.
riages’ and sex between whites and all other South Africans. Residential segregation became comprehensive and compulsory as the government saw fit. The Natives Resettlement Act allowed the state to remove non-whites to townships, by force if necessary. The state enforced segregation in all public amenities and school systems (K-12 to university). The Bantu Education Act brought non-white school systems under the control of the Department of Native Affairs, which implemented a set curriculum that prepared non-white students for little more than manual labor. Various laws restricted the formation of ‘communist’ organizations, representation of non-whites in town councils or rural areas, and labor strikes. Squatting was illegal. The State implemented restrictions on living in towns or visiting towns, and all non-whites had to carry a pass reference book containing an employer’s signature, authorization to be in an area, and tax certificates.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, government and mission funded community art centers formed in response to limited recreational and educational opportunities for blacks. Urban and rural centers such as Polly Street Art Center and Rorke’s Drift Art and Craft Center provided non-whites, and blacks in particular, an alternative education from that offered by the Bantu Education Act. Not only did the Centers offer education in the arts, they offered students practical education about marketing and selling work. Polly Street and Rorke’s Drift encouraged a movement of community art centers that flourished throughout the 1970s and 1980s. They became breeding grounds for social advocacy.

In 1955, the African National Congress (ANC), in conjunction with the Congress of Democrats, the Indian Congress movement and the South African Colored People’s Organization, launched the National Congress of the People, and established the ‘Freedom Charter.’ The charter was in direct opposition to apartheid. It claimed that South Africa belonged to all who lived
there, demanded that all apartheid laws be set aside, and equality be established. Division between the Africanists and Charterists within the ANC merely hindered their cause. This resulted in the formation of the PAC, or Pan Africanist Congress. The PAC called for radical action against apartheid legislation, such as the refusal to carry passes, whereas the ANC encouraged subtle action, including anti-pass marches.¹⁵

ANC and PAC responses against apartheid legislation resulted in tightened control by the government during the 1960s, which led to the ‘second phase’ of apartheid. The Sharpeville shootings of 1960 were a dramatic turning point. A peaceful march by ANC and PAC members through the Sharpeville Township to the police station alarmed white police officers. This led to a massacre of sixty-nine marchers and left 180 wounded. In response to the march, the police force was increased and officers had the powers of solitary confinement and detention without charge. The State implemented further restrictions on employment, and property ownership in townships, and wages remained low despite the industrial economic boom and growing foreign trade. The banning of political organizations such as the ANC and PAC drove members underground and resulted in a guerrilla army. By the mid-1960s, many activists went into exile abroad or were imprisoned.

In 1969, Steve Biko became president of the newly established, all-black South African Students’ Organization (SASO) and laid the groundwork for a grassroots movement. Inspired by political events and philosophies of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, SASO established the Black Consciousness movement.¹⁶ The movement was philosophical rather than an active political program. Black Consciousness encouraged Africans to realize that the blackness

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¹⁶ Ibid., 128.
of their skin was a deliberate, ‘God-given’ trait.\textsuperscript{17} Blacks should embrace their color, culture, religion, and value systems and “rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude.”\textsuperscript{18} Over time, the government restricted Biko from publishing or disseminating his ideas.\textsuperscript{19} Ultimately, the police arrested and murdered Biko in 1977.

Under the guidance of Biko, SASO sought to change the attitudes and minds of black, colored, and Indian South Africans in an effort to encourage political action and change. The philosophy of the Black Consciousness movement further encouraged the social realist style prevalent in community art centers. Independent funding for community art centers in the 1970s allowed for more “political mobility,” unlike state funded centers in the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{20} Many artists embraced their black identity and produced socially relevant works. Black Consciousness philosophy was an attempt to shift the traditional beliefs of the South African community in order to encourage a reformation of mores.

The mid-1970s marked an upsurge of political activity and protest. In 1976, students marched through Soweto in response to the newly found decree that Afrikaans, a language that most blacks did not speak, become the language of instruction in black schools. Police reacted with force, resulting in an uproar of attacks, counter-attacks, raids, class boycotts, and school burnings. The event not only shocked the nation, but garnered international attention. Images of the shootings flooded foreign television screens, revealing for the first time a picture of the situation occurring in South Africa.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Worden, \textit{The Making of Modern South Africa}, 132.
Strikes and protests against apartheid legislation began to occur nationally and internationally. Activist groups spoke out against the tyranny of apartheid. International governments, including Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United States, among others, became hostile toward the South African state with threats of sanctions.\(^{22}\) As a result, the South African State enacted the policy of ‘total strategy.’ The government implemented minor social reforms in order to quell national protests and ease international concerns. Some of these reforms included an easing of pass law restrictions, increased funding for African education, and increased tolerance for multiracial private schools. However, loosened social restrictions did not signal a shift in political control. The government significantly increased police and armed forces.

The uprisings in Soweto and other areas around the country affected the activities of artists as well. Many artists joined activist groups or began their own collectives. A resistance aesthetic formed. Unlike previous styles that were socially aware, resistance art was both socially and politically aware. Subject matter became blatantly political as seen in the work of Afrapix photographers discussed in Chapter 4. Artists engaged not only locally and nationally, they began dialogues internationally through conferences. Their artwork and participation in the international dialogue encouraged international interest in South African affairs.

Throughout the 1980s, boycotts and rebellions against apartheid legislation continued and eventually led to the collapse of many local governments, but the central government’s army was too strong to overcome. However, the tactics of ‘total strategy’ were failing. The government’s attempt to establish African urban councils and tricameralism, which consisted of three race-

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 135.
based chambers, fell below the people’s demand for equality and democracy. The disenfran-
chised slowly gained traction.

Artists joined forces in various voluntary associations, using their art to call for change. In
1982, photographers Omar Badsha, Lesley Lawson, Paul Weinberg, Biddy Partridge, and
Mxolise Mayo established a collective known as Afrapix. Their documentary style photog-
raphy challenged mainstream notions of the ‘politics of representation.’ International art con-
ferences, including the Culture and Resistance Cultural Conference (Botswana, 1982) and Cul-
ture in Another South Africa (Netherlands, 1987), disseminated the message of inequality and
oppression found throughout the South African state through South African artwork.

International disdain economically and socially isolated South Africa. Receiving impressions
through newsfeeds and global art conferences, international condemnation of apartheid grew
with intensity. Foreign banks called in their loans, causing the rand to collapse. The United
States and European Community nations disinvested and established economic sanctions. Na-
tional and international pressure on the South African government increased. Prime Minister
Pieter Willem Botha’s uncompromising strategies slowly divided the Nationalist Party. In 1989,
Botha experienced a mild stroke, which encouraged the Cabinet to force his resignation.

After the resignation of Botha, Parliament began heavy reforms. It no longer banned activist
organizations, including the ANC, PAC, and South African Communists Party, released political
prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, and repealed the Land Act, the Population Registration

and-architecture/afrapix.
25 Ibid.
Act, and other major apartheid laws. Reform, however, did not build trust. The National Party lost to the ANC in the democratic election of 1994.

The inauguration of Nelson Mandela in 1994 marked the beginning of the ‘New South Africa.’ The new government implemented a constitution in 1996, considered one of the most liberal in the world. Mandela stressed the importance of an all-inclusive nation that safeguarded gender and individual human rights.

Despite complete government reform, the nation was in a precarious social and economic state. The collapse of the rand left inadequate state financial resources and already high tax rates. International trust grew slowly. Although international governments removed economic sanctions, foreign investors were less inclined to contribute to a country with a poorly trained workforce, flooded mining industry, and high crime rates. Socially, the nation was on the road to improvement, but a new constitution and set of laws did not change widespread or pervasive social views on desegregation and equality overnight.

In an effort to move beyond South Africa’s recent past, Archbishop Desmond Tutu established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1995. The commission granted amnesty for political crimes committed between 1960 and 1994, provided the individuals and political parties responsible give a full testimony of their actions. The TRC received mixed reviews. Some South Africans felt it was too soon to dredge up the past. Others hoped it would allow the nation to put the past behind them. The TRC was not completely successful in reconciling the state. Some individuals never received reparations and felt the offenders did not receive adequate punishment, if any at all. Various offenders refused to provide all evidence for the claims against them and denied all guilt.

27 Ibid., 150-151.
28 Ibid., 160.
National artists have reacted strongly to the TRC and the ‘New South Africa’. Contemporary artists, including Penny Siopis and Sue Williamson, have confronted the confusion, sadness, disappointment, fear, and insecurities felt by the citizens of a new democratic nation. Artists have not only confronted emotion, they have explored the possibilities that come with starting over. They have challenged the viewer, crossed boundaries, and shocked in an effort to make a connection and inspire emotion. Artists have been important activists in rebuilding the nation.

In 1999, the ANC won the majority once again, and the nation elected its second democratic president, Thabo Mbeki. He encouraged an ‘African Renaissance’ through the launching of GEAR, Growth Employment and Redistribution. His goal was to lift South Africa from poverty and alienation. Although economic reform was slow to develop, international relations improved. The Commonwealth of Nations readmitted South Africa after the abolishment of apartheid. South Africa has since joined various international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization and International Monetary Fund.

Focus on national and global citizenship has generated an interest in heritage preservation and exploration of identity, place, and community in the 21st century.  

Public memorial sites, monuments, and museums in urban areas commemorate and memorialize the past. In 2004, the government opened the new Constitutional Court in Johannesburg. Erected on the site of an apartheid prison, the Court utilizes art and ornamental structure to symbolize and inspire dialogue around equality and human rights. Through museums, government buildings, and public art, the democratic government has employed public space to engage citizens in the national effort to create a ‘New South Africa.’

1.2 Social mores, agency, and philanthropy

In South Africa’s recent past, artists have played an active and important role in cultural and political developments. South African artists have utilized their art to speak out against corruption and inequality in an effort to change existing societal beliefs, or mores, in response to local, national, and international events.

Mores are the customs, conventions, or practices set forth by a particular society. According to sociologist William Graham Sumner, mores weave throughout the character of a society, dictating thought, action, and standards upheld by individuals within that society, i.e. normative behavior.31 They are beliefs that develop into systems. On a governmental level in a democratic nation, mores are laws that govern society, put into place by the beliefs held by the majority. On an individual level, mores are the actions of the individual based upon his or her personal belief system. These actions may include going to church on Sunday to uphold his or her Christian beliefs or protesting segregation because he or she believes inequality is unjust.

The notion of mores begins with an understanding of folkways. Folkways are the beliefs passed down from ancestors, encouraging the way individuals or society thinks about a given situation. Sumner suggests that folkways, since embedded in tradition, are “true.”

Folkways are the “right” ways to satisfy all interests, because they are traditional, and exist in fact. They extend over the whole of life... The “right” way is the way which the ancestors used and which has been handed down. The tradition is its own warrant. It is not held subject to verification by experience...In the folkways, whatever is, is right.32

Individuals, governments, and societies make inferences about the “truth” or “right” of folkways. They then construct conventions or customs, known as mores, by which an individual or society is expected to act. For example, monetary subsistence has become a basic human need in most modern societies. Over time, communities and individuals develop certain conventions for ob-

31 Sumner, *Folkways and Mores*, 59.
32 Ibid., 28.
taining monetary subsistence and the majority (or those in power) determines which conventions are socially appropriate. In other words, power relations in the creation of normativity can, and do, alter these supposed folkways by dictating what “is”. In South Africa during the 1940s, business owners and farmers needed a cheap labor force and were, therefore, responsive to the National Party’s stand on apartheid. Many historians suggest that apartheid was, “a more ruthless system of labour control.”33 The National Party inferred that apartheid was an appropriate response to the basic human need of monetary and economic subsistence.

If based on Western notions of “right” and “wrong,” constructed mores have positive or negative impacts on society. Since mores dictate societal welfare, taboos form. Sumner divides taboos into two classes, protective and destructive.34 Protective taboos preserve the rights of individuals and their safety, whereas destructive taboos repress or exterminate individual rights.35 Regardless of whether the taboos of a society are protective or destructive, the mores, which were once malleable, become fixed and rigid. Tradition overcomes “cognitive awareness of the constructedness of the more” by providing assumed “truth” and answers to the questions of life. Instinctively cooperating in established mores (good or bad) “is a sign of ease and welfare when no thought is given to [established] mores.”36

The “truth” or “rights” of tradition coerce and restrict newer generations. Because tradition feeds mores, government or society leads newer generations to believe that the mores are “right.” However, multiculturalism, globalism, technology, and remnants of colonialism have resulted in the introduction of alternative mores. Differing mores may exist between individuals, classes,

34 Sumner, Folkways and Mores, 31.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., 79.
subgroups, or countries. Subgroups may overlap differing subgroups, which may result in a compromise between the groups. However, when outsiders shame a society for their mores, changes to current mores may occur. Alternative mores that are compatible with current systems transform more easily. Changes that go against current systems “require long and patient effort, if they are possible at all.” Fortunately, for societies with destructive taboos, mores have a life cycle. “They seem to grow up, gain strength, become corrupt, decline, and die, as if they were organisms.”

When an individual or group of people disagrees with established mores, individuals or groups utilize agency to encourage a shift in current thought, which may result in larger societal change over time. As mentioned previously, apartheid was a system of mores established to provide economic stability for the ruling class of whites. The exploitation of race persisted since the arrival of the Dutch; therefore, the ruling class more easily accepted racial exploitation as an established tradition. However, individuals of newer generations (across class and race) became aware of the corruption in the system of mores, through either international dissidence or the realization or shifting of personal beliefs over time. Once individuals realize corruption is present, they may react against established norms. South African artists in particular employed agency through their art to react against norms in an effort to change or shift societal perspective about apartheid.

Agency is the initiation of a causal sequence by a person or thing with intent or will for the resulting action. The result is not the product of the “physical laws of the cosmos,” but pre-

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37 Ibid., 39.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 94.
40 Ibid., 78.
scribed by the agent. Therefore, agency is causal. According to social anthropologist Alfred Gell’s *Art and Agency*, there is an interchangeable relationship between the agent and the patient. The patient is the recipient of the agent’s action. For there to be a patient, there must be an agent and vice versa.

Gell argues that objects, things, or in this case art can act as secondary agents. To be more specific, the art object, known as the ‘index,’ permits “the abduction of agency.” The viewer infers the artist’s intentions or capabilities from the artwork. The artist serves as agent. The art object is the secondary agent, and the viewer serves as patient. However, there is no literal translation of the artist’s intent, as there would be with language. Therefore, the art object is limited to abduction. Gell provides a helpful example of art object as abduction.

The stipulation I make is that the *index is itself seen as the outcome, and/or the instrument of, social agency*. A ‘natural sign’ like ‘smoke’ is not seen as the outcome of any social agency, but as the outcome of a natural causal process, combustion, so, as an index of its non-social cause, it is of no interest to us. On the other hand, if smoke is seen as the index of fire-setting by human agents then the abduction of agency occurs and smoke becomes an artefactual index, as well as a ‘natural sign.’

Gell suggests that the index, or art object, is only of interest as an agent when the artist’s intent is for the artwork to encourage a specific outcome. The artwork is not considered an agent if the outcome is of “a natural causal process” that is of no relation to the intent of the artist. Therefore, if an artist’s intention is to change established social mores, the artist and his or her art acts as an agent. This thesis explores community art centers, artists, artists’ groups, and public art initiatives that intentionally act as change agents in the community. I am aware that this is a nar-

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42 Ibid.  
43 Ibid., 17.  
44 Ibid., 13.  
46 Ibid.
rowly defined version of agency, and do so in order to highlight the connections to social mores and philanthropy.

As social mores became more destructive throughout the history of apartheid, oppressed citizens, including artists, began to look for ways in which they could become agents for positive change. Philanthropic action seeks positive social change. By understanding the actions of some artists as philanthropic, we gain a deeper understanding of how art and artists serve as catalysts, or agents, within society.

According to leading scholars on philanthropy, Robert L. Payton and Michael P. Moody, philanthropy is “voluntary action that advances a vision of the public good, as moral action that intervenes in the lives of others so as to make the world better through human effort.”47 In other words, philanthropy is voluntarily doing something positive for society. Although philanthropic intentions may not always be purely altruistic, the individual or group receiving the action should be the ones to primarily benefit from the agent.

Some functions of philanthropy are associated with the intent of the agent who wants to change social mores. As established previously, social mores are a set of standards or conventions based upon the traditional beliefs of a society; however, it is possible for mores to be positive or destructive. Agents respond to social mores (positive or destructive) in an effort to produce a change. If the intent of the agent is to produce positive change, the action of the agent is philanthropic.

Philanthropy is a moral action.48 According to Payton and Moody,

People are acting morally when they presume to come to the aid of others as an act of mercy, or they intervene voluntarily to improve the quality of life and advance the public good. To

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48 Ibid., 96.
act morally is to act with regards to and for others, beyond one’s concern for oneself, particularly when that action is voluntary.\textsuperscript{49}

Therefore, philanthropy is moral because it is voluntary action for the betterment of individuals and society. It also serves as a platform to implement moral imagination, or imaginative ways people can express their moral beliefs through positive action, and enhance society’s moral agenda through reciprocity.\textsuperscript{50} Reciprocity encourages those who receive to “give back” or really to “pay it forward” by doing something positive for the next person; therefore, encouraging moral action throughout society.\textsuperscript{51} As stated previously, I recognize, however, that this view of morality is based in Western notions and may not always be temporally and regionally normative or applicable.

Folkways (traditions) and social mores determine morality and encourage moral agendas. According to Sumner, “The morality of a group at a time is the sum of the taboos and prescriptions in the folkways by which right conduct is defined.”\textsuperscript{52} Traditions and social mores of a current society strictly determine morals. Nevertheless, morals can be humanitarian in nature, having “respect for human life, horror at cruelty and bloodshed, sympathy with pain, suffering and poverty.”\textsuperscript{53} “Ideal” (although decidedly Western) humanitarian mores are present only when man has acquired enough space and time to ponder. He no longer feels crowded by his fellow man, and the “competition of life becomes easy and kindly.”\textsuperscript{54} The moral imagination is the “ideal” humanitarian set of mores and expressed through a specific response to problems in society.\textsuperscript{55}

Although inspired during times of stability, morality resurfaces in the social mores of various societies and social situations throughout time. Graham states that man only feels humanitarian

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 97.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 96.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 118.
\textsuperscript{52} Sumner, \textit{Folkways and Mores}, 29.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Payton and Moody, \textit{Understanding Philanthropy}, 97.
morality when he has everything that he needs, when “life becomes easy.” This would insinuate that the oppressed does not have time for morality. This is not the case. Graham continues to argue that there is consistency in the mores.\textsuperscript{56} Regardless of the varying beliefs or mores throughout the world, differing societies are all seeking better adaptation to satisfy basic needs, and humanitarian morality consistently resurfaces.\textsuperscript{57} Morality consistently resurfaces through memory, passed down through generations as are traditions. The oppressed may not have the time to develop an “ideal,” but they do have a memory of that ideal, learned through their ancestors. Therefore, the oppressed can have a moral imagination, which in turn sparks desire for philanthropic action.

Based on notions of morality, philanthropic action is voluntary and culminates in various forms. Voluntary action can be in the form of giving, service, or association. We understand this action as philanthropic by viewing it as relief, improvement, reform, or civic engagement, also known as the “Four Traditions.”\textsuperscript{58}

Once an individual becomes an agent for change, he or she acts through voluntary giving, voluntary service, and voluntary association.\textsuperscript{59} Through voluntary giving, the individual provides money for his or her “cause.” Volunteering time and talents is voluntary service. Voluntary association is organized action through grassroots organizations or nonprofits.

Voluntary giving is contribution through money, property or other objects. Voluntary action in this function does not consist of the giving of time. In fact, individuals who donate have the ability to distance themselves from the cause or organization to which they give.\textsuperscript{60} An example

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 39.  
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 4-5.  
\textsuperscript{58} Lynn and Wisely, “The Four Traditions of Philanthropy,” 203.  
\textsuperscript{59} Payton and Moody, \textit{Understanding Philanthropy}, 40.  
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 41.
of voluntary giving includes the funding provided by investors or individuals for programs at
community art centers.

Voluntary service is the giving of time or self to benefit individuals or the community. By
giving time or self, one must invest personally in the cause. An example of voluntary service in-
cludes artists producing resistance art for protest marches or activist publications. The artist in-
vested in a cause they believe in and received little or no compensation for their work.

Voluntary association is the organization of a group of individuals in the form of grassroots
associations, organizations, or nonprofits. The association establishes a mission and develops a
set of goals and objectives. They have philanthropic programs and must adapt to changes within
society. Examples of a voluntary association include Afrapix photography collective or grass-
roots activist groups. Associations provide a platform through which individuals can become civ-
ically involved.

Voluntary giving, service, and associations may take form in four distinct traditions of phi-
anthropic action. Elizabeth Lynn and Susan Wisely’s “Four Traditions of Philanthropy” are dis-
tinct ways in which philanthropists cultivate a connection with society. Each tradition has its
own set of principles and purposes. Relief is a form of charity that alleviates human suffering.
Improvement provides opportunities for individuals willing to help themselves. Social reform
identifies and solves public problems. Civic engagement builds relationships and discourse
among citizens, encouraging the community to reflect on and solve its own problems.

The “Four Traditions” is a way of viewing philanthropy. When a person acts philanthropica-
ly, he or she may do so by voluntary giving, service, or association. The “Four Traditions” are

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 44-46.
63 Ibid., 45.
64 Lynn and Wisely, “The Four Traditions of Philanthropy,” 203.
ways to understand his or her action as being philanthropic. As we analyze the principles and purpose of each tradition, the artist will serve as an example for each. The scenarios provided are only a few examples from South African history, and later chapters expand upon these. As stated previously, notions of American philanthropy and distinctly Western morals and concepts of normativity are the basis for these comparisons. The model contains flaws but is the only model for comparison. If applicable, this theory will engage art historians and philanthropists in a new discourse.

Rooted in traditions of benevolence, relief provides the immediate needs necessary to alleviate a person’s suffering. Those providing relief address only the immediate problem, such as lack of food or shelter. Lynn and Wisely describe relief as “responsive to those it serves rather than actively trying to shape or lead them.” Unfortunately, this method does not address the cause for suffering. It merely satiates the immediate need of the sufferer.

Local artists in Johannesburg volunteered their time at community art centers to provide relief to black artists. Under the restrictions of apartheid legislation, blacks faced economic difficulty through unemployment. Volunteers provided free food and supplies during art lessons, as well as positions for blacks as assistants on commissioned works. Although the volunteer provides temporary subsistence, he or she does not address the root of the problem, the inequality of education and lack of job opportunities for blacks. Nor does the volunteer teach black artists how to overcome their situation.

The tradition of improvement provides individuals in need with opportunities for personal and civic enhancement. Improvement provides the tools necessary for an individual to overcome their situation. However, success is limited to those willing to take initiative and with the

65 Ibid., 104.
66 Elza Miles, Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre (Johannesburg: Ampersand Foundation, 2005), 16 – 40.
67 Ibid., 105.
proper skills to succeed. Occasionally, forms of improvement offered are inaccessible to certain societal groups, due to social, legal, or economic reasons.

The volunteers at community art centers donated their time for the improvement of educational inequality by not only offering free art lessons, but also by teaching the students how to use their new skills to improve their lifestyle. During the lesson, volunteers taught black artists how to market and sell their work in order to make a living. However, this form of improvement was ineffective when government laws restricted student access to the art centers.

The third tradition of reform actively identifies and solves a public problem in order to promote social change. Activists of reform rely on ingenuity, experimentation, and innovation to solve social problems. Although activists seek to make a positive change on behalf of the public, they do not always listen to the needs and requests of the public.

South African artists acted through reform by finding a particular problem at the root of inequality and voluntarily sought to create change by creating new perspectives about the problem through the artwork. The problem was within the apartheid movement and government restrictions placed on educational institutions for blacks. However, this problem was much too broad for an individual to tackle. Therefore, artists created political art that spoke to the Black Consciousness movement and inspired the black community to seek the improvement they deserved by first respecting themselves. Artists did not involve the community in their artistic process, however. Artists produced what they thought was representative of black pride. The community may or may not have found their work inspirational.

The fourth tradition of civic engagement “strengthen[s] relationships and nurtur[es] conversations among citizens, in order to build…‘more reflective and resourceful local communi-
ties.”  Once an initial dialogue to establish needs occurs, the tradition of civic engagement may result in the traditions of relief, improvement, and reform depending upon the desires of the community. The importance lies in building a relationship between members of the community. The downfall to civic engagement is that it is prone to more talking than action and may have a slow turn around.  

Some post-apartheid artists who promote civic engagement begin by talking with men and women of various ethnicities throughout the community about their experiences during apartheid. The artist produces work in response to the feedback he or she receives and exhibits his or her work in a public space. The artist’s intent is to encourage dialogue around inequality and human rights. Ideally, the dialogue continues beyond the space. Depending upon the needs of the citizens, they collectively determine an appropriate response to begin rebuilding a new democratic nation.

Each tradition of philanthropy has distinct strengths and weaknesses. As we explore South African art and art initiatives, the characteristics of each become apparent. Although chapters are by tradition, the traditions often overlap. A community art center may function as relief and improvement, as seen in Chapter Two. Art may advocate for reform while also engaging the community in discussion around advocacy. The possibilities are endless. Subsequent chapters provide only a few examples of many.

Although South African artists have not labeled their work philanthropic, the characteristics outlined in “The Four Traditions” and the connections between social mores, agency, and philanthropy provide a framework for discussion. By examining the relationships between South African art initiatives and philanthropic traditions, this thesis bridges the gap between two distinct

69 Ibid., 108.
70 Ibid., 109.
fields of study. Analyzing South African philanthropy from a cultural perspective differs from traditional research on international involvement and monetary giving to Africa. Introducing concepts of philanthropy to the field of art historical research provides a new perspective on the relationship between art and society and a richer understanding of the way art and artists serve as catalysts. It also provides art historians with a more diverse language to describe artists’ intent or impact. This thesis not only reflects a global philanthropic perspective, but also provides the field of philanthropy with examples of its application to the arts.
2 RELIEF & IMPROVEMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY ART CENTERS

Philanthropic traditions of relief and improvement are reflective in the community art centers established during the 1950s and 1960s in rural and urban South Africa. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 severely limited educational opportunities for non-whites and, therefore, reinforced their subordinate role in the labor force. The development of community art centers, such as Polly Street and Rorke’s Drift, addressed the growing need for supplemental education in art and employment training for aspiring artists in black urban and rural communities. The art centers served as agents for philanthropic action by providing opportunities for voluntary giving, service, and association. A manifestation of the centers’ philanthropy was their role in providing “relief” by helping attending artists fulfill basic needs such as food, housing, and employment. Art centers also fostered “improvement” by empowering individuals through educational, professional, and emotional development.

2.1 A brief history of education in South Africa

Throughout South African history, education for blacks suffered from destructive mores of white-led government forces. The arrival of British colonizers on the Cape in 1806 led to the first formal educational system with the creation of mission schools. They were social control through the “Anglicization” of Afrikaners and the “civilization” of non-whites. Mission schools remained racially mixed until urbanization and industrialization in the late 19th century led to competition over jobs and economic opportunities. In an effort to exploit an uneducated

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71 Formal education for whites throughout the 19th century was restricted to the Cape. Outside of the Cape, limited funds restricted education for Afrikaners, and formal education for blacks was nearly non-existent. Walter R. Johnson, “Education: Keystone of Apartheid,” Anthropology & Education Quarterly 13, no. 3 (Autumn 1982): 215.
72 “Anglicization” referred to the use of English as the language of instruction in the school systems, which resulted in a “near extinction” of Dutch as an instructional language. Ibid.
black work force, whites demanded segregated school systems. In 1892, British authorities promoted segregated education and severely limited funding for black schools. By the 1930s, black schools were overcrowded and understaffed. Only 30 percent of black children attended school due to a severe shortage in facilities. Therefore, mission societies became responsible for the education of non-whites and bore 90 percent of the costs for education.

The rise of the Afrikaner National Party in 1948 further stratified education for whites and non-whites. The Manifesto for Christian National Education (CNE) encouraged Afrikaner cultural imperialism through centralization. CNE encouraged a Christian education that “willed separate nations and peoples” and encouraged “non-equality and segregation.” In 1953, the Bantu Education Act brought all non-white schools under the Department of Native Affairs. The government restricted independently formed mission institutions, effectively lowering the standards of education for blacks. Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, Minister of the Department of Native Affairs and later Prime Minister in 1958, openly expressed his desire to limit “native” education:

> When I am Controller of Native Education I will reform it so that the natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans is not for them. There is no place for him above certain forms of labour. Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life – according to the sphere in which they live.

Along with notions of white superiority, the curriculum encouraged notions of “retribalization” by emphasizing the importance of tribal culture. “Retribalization” offered additional opportunities for Afrikaners to limit education for blacks. Racial and cultural segregation reinforced Afri-
kaner Calvinist beliefs that they were the predestined, “Chosen people,” who must remain racially pure and culturally distinct.  

The Nationalist Party obtained control of all educational institutions by 1953 with the enactment of the Bantu Education Act. Black schools remained overcrowded and understaffed, while also lacking essential textbooks and supplies. Language also served as an impediment. Primary schools utilized native South African languages, whereas secondary schools taught English and Afrikaans without preparing students for the shift. The government controlled the curriculum and imposed tuition on parents of non-white students, even though schooling for whites was free. As a result, the majority of blacks dropped out before secondary school. These destructive social mores enacted by whites limited blacks’ knowledge, skills, and communication, which forced them to assume subordinate positions in society.

Local governments and missions, many of whom were not in favor of the Nationalist Party’s policies, funded recreational or educationally focused community development programs in response to the lack of education and rising unemployment rates for blacks created by the Bantu Education Act and other apartheid legislations. However, the government’s desire to control all forms of education limited community development programs managed by local governments. Funding for these programs and activities was severely restricted. The Nationalist Party required missions to receive formal approval to provide educational opportunities and required missions to function within the parameters set forth by the government.

80 Ibid., 59-60.
82 Blacks typically earned one-sixth of a white worker’s salary in the same sector. A black miner typically made R18 per month and the cost of education in 1967 began at R17.25 per year, per child in lower primary school and up to R65 per year, per child in high school. Ibid.
worked discreetly or under the guise of a government approved institution to provide more substantial educational programming while avoiding regulations set forth by the government. Strict government control resulted in the termination of many developmental programs due to violations of apartheid legislation.

Many community development programs catered to the need for arts education in township communities and often resulted in the formation of community art centers. The lack of art education in schools was not surprising given the controlled and disparaging educational systems prevalent in South Africa during the 1950s and 1960s. Black South African artists of the 1930s and 1940s were autodidactic. They received some encouragement from established white artists or missionaries; however, formal education in the arts was non-existent, as was the ability to create professional networks with other black artists. Only a handful of black artists became successful on the national and international art markets due to lack of guidance and formal instruction. In the early 1950s, local governments and missionaries realized community art centers could “generate employment, provide recreational facilities and...foster and even revive creative traditions within the black communities.” The centers filled a creative vacuum and sparked a black arts movement.

2.2 The Polly Street Art Center

One of the two leading community art centers during the 1950s and 1960s, the history of The Polly Street Art Center spans three decades as it transitioned into the Jubilee Center and later Mofolo Art Center. Coordinated under the Local Committee for non-European Adult Education, Polly Street served as a recreation center for the black communities in Johannesburg in an effort

86 These artists include Gerard Sekoto, George Pemba, Gerard Bhengu, John Mohl, and a few others.
to keep “youth off the streets.” The City Council of Johannesburg remained part of the United Party and opposed the apartheid policies of the National Party. As a result, the city council provided a building and funding for Polly Street. From 1949 to 1951, recreational officer David Rycroft and assistant Solomon N. Maqambalala, along with various art teachers, established the groundwork for an arts education through classes on watercolor painting, oil painting, and drawing. The Art Center gained its reputation under the guidance of the artist Cecil Skotnes from 1952 until 1965. Skotnes expanded the program to include the history of art, techniques in clay, and education in career development and the art market. He also relocated Polly Street to Eloff Street in 1960 at which time the Center changed its name to Jubilee Art Center. In 1969, the Art Center moved to Mofolo Park and became Mofolo Art Center. Despite changes in location and administration, former students returned as instructors. Polly Street closed in 1975 due to political unrest and social instability.

The arrival of Cecil Skotnes at Polly Street in 1952 marked the beginning of a significant transition for the Art Center. Although the music program flourished under Rycroft, interest in the visual arts dwindled and supplies were minimal. Skotnes approached local business owners about investing in the arts. Thrupp’s, a food market, donated soup. Spicers offered paper. Rand Picture Framers donated much needed art materials, provided in-store discounts for artists, and imported specialty items for the Center. The store proprietor, Matthew Whippman, even provided an exhibition venue for artists in the store’s basement. Donations created financial support for the art programs at the Center, which allowed free attendance for black artists. Tuition-free programming was essential, given the artists’ poor work and home environments. Access to

89 Elza Miles, *Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre*, 16.
90 Ibid., 33.
91 Ibid., 33.
92 Ibid.
materials and proper studio space was also crucial, as small, four-roomed houses in townships offered little space for artists to work. Connections to local investors not only provided funding for the programs, but later provided employment connections for the art students. Polly Street’s reputation over time attracted commissions, which provided the most talented artists at the Center economic stability.

After establishing a financial and educational foundation, Skotnes worked to raise attendance. He immediately began to market the free art program through radio commercials and flyers in local schools. As further enticement for attendance, Skotnes offered free meals to students and scheduled the art classes around pass law curfews. Fortunately, for the black student artists, the Center was on the edge of town and Skotnes had a positive relationship with local authorities. On many occasions, Skotnes bailed out black artists arrested for violating curfew or being in a white location illegally. Skotnes’ sensitivity to the basic needs of the black community increased attendance tremendously.

Polly Street’s willingness to address some of the students’ basic needs encouraged attendance and was crucial to the success of the Center. Primarily a recreational center, Polly Street provided the local black community with a healthy and safe communal space in which they could play sports, make art, and host events. The art program offered impoverished individuals free art materials, training, and food. Artists, who were poor or unemployed, received temporary employ-

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94 Ibid., 218.
96 As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, laws required all non-whites to carry reference books at all times. Non-whites needed employee signatures to be in white areas, and unless they had special permission, could not be in white areas after 10 PM. Ibid. 34
97 Townships were located on the outskirts of urban areas. Many blacks had to travel long distances in and out of the urban areas for work. The Centers proximity to the edge of town near a mining area was probably convenient for black artists. Since the Center was located in a white area (the building donated by the City Council, which is managed by whites), laws required blacks to have certain permissions to be there for employment. The location of the Center and Skotnes’ relationship with authorities provided the Center and its’ students some leniency with the law.
98 Elza Miles, *Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre*, 34.
ment through commissions that assisted in economic subsistence. Student artist Sydney Kumalo worked closely with Skotnes on commissions from St. Martin de Porres in Orlando West, St. Peter Claver in Seeisoville, and Oppenheimer Tower in Jabavu. The experience expanded Kumalo’s portfolio and later provided him with private commissions. By first alleviating basic needs, Polly Street could then focus on improving the lives of artists.

Skotnes provided serious artists with more exposure to various artistic styles, histories, and opportunities by dividing members into two groups: serious painters and sculptors, and a group of leisure-time artists. Skotnes developed a rapport with local librarians, gaining access to the public library, where he guided small groups of serious, committed students through the art historical reference section. Skotnes and the officer of adult education, Mr. Coetzee, coordinated student exhibitions in the foyer galleries. During class, Skotnes encouraged the students to explore a variety of techniques, mediums, and styles without a set curriculum. He introduced them to various Central and West African art forms and Oceanic art. He also exposed them to European artists, including Picasso, Käthe Kollwitz, and Ernst Barlach. Church commissions provided opportunities to educate students on an array of African and European religious symbolism.

Commissions at St. Martin de Porres and St. Peter Claver are examples of how students combined different Christian and African religious motifs and styles. The ceiling decorations painted by Skotnes and Kumalo at St. Peter Claver contain symbolic Christian iconography of the fish and bird as well as a broad range of African iconographic images, including elephants, crocodiles, cotton seed, and antelopes (Figure 1). The Church of St. Martin de Porres commissioned Kumalo to sculpt a number of crucifixes. Kumalo represented Christ with “African fea-

99 Ibid., 42.
100 However, on one occasion, a librarian who firmly adhered to policies of separate development promptly denied access to Skotnes and his students. Ibid., 50.
101 Elephants represent the Zulu totem animal. The Bakwena people use the crocodile as a totem animal. Cotton seed represents cotton used for woven cloth. Antelopes are symbolic of Baule masks. Ibid., 54.
tures,” stark, stripped, and emaciated to represent “universal” suffering (Figure 2). The artists not only expanded their artistic techniques, but also deepened their understanding of Christian and African religion through the relevance and meaning of iconography.

Skotnes’ personal artistic style incorporates African sculptural motifs with Expressionist or Cubist designs that some scholars say influenced the “African-ness” in his student’s work (Figure 3). Scholars, including Sidney Kasfir, question the intentions behind Skotnes’ emphasis on styles of Primitivism, which insinuates a further “retribalisation” of blacks. Student artist Durant Sihlali, a watercolorist who painted realistic township images, commented on Skotnes’ preference for modernism, “You see, [Skotnes] was encouraging a particular direction among the students which was that of painting in an expressionistic manner…I don’t think he had much interest in my kind of work.”

Skotnes’ students’ use of generic African symbolism and artistic styles, though reflective of modernist Primitivism, did not mirror the arguably negative connotations of white artists’ work. Students found pride in their African heritage and did not “refer to African forms because they thought of them in any sense as less advanced than European art forms.” Their newfound pride and respect for their race and heritage instilled a sense of confidence to express the emotions surrounding their socio-economic plight.

Kumalo intersected the expressive figurative tradition of various African art styles with the western figurative canon, best seen in his sculptural pieces (Figures 2, 4). Kumalo embraced the abstraction, expressionism, and modernist styles encouraged by Skotnes. However, he did not depict the naïve African. His works exude emotions felt by most blacks at the time.

102 Ibid., 63-64.
Combing Hair and Praying Woman depict pain or suffering through distorted features and shadowing created by deep incisions (Figures 4, 6). Praying Woman portrays a slender female figure with her arms crossed at her chest. She looks up in despair as though asking God or the spirits to relieve her from disparity (Figure 6).

In contrast to Kumalo’s “neo-African style,” Sihlali worked in watercolors and firmly believed that his images should be faithful to reality.106 His paintings expose the reality of living in the townships and are a blatant commentary on unsatisfactory social conditions, including the crowded, derelict slums (Figures 7, 8). His work often fell into the category of ‘township art’ and did not always align with Skotnes’ preferences. Art reviewers often criticized ‘township art’ as a novel form of social realism that played into the desires of the art market.107 The market, which consisted mostly of whites, assumed a patronizing, paternalistic role in consuming ‘township art.’ Eventually, black artists with varying degrees of talent flooded the market causing prices to decline. Regardless of the skepticism faced by Sihlali, his work was extremely popular and his subject matter exposed varying audiences to the lives of blacks during this time.

In addition to a diverse studio and art history curriculum, Skotnes also encouraged professional development. His connections with the local community provided artists with opportunities to exhibit in galleries, have their work published in magazines and newspapers such as Fontein, Zonk, and The Sunday Times, and work on commissioned pieces. Polly Street artists exhibited in a range of locations from basement galleries such as Whippman’s to mixed national competitions such as Artists of Fame and Promise.108 Polly Street organized various exhibitions over

108 Artist Louis Maqhubela received first prize in the Artists of Fame and Promise. He was one of the first black South African artists to break the racial barrier and achieve international success in a racially mixed competition. Part of his award included a three-month professional development trip to Europe. Hammond-Tooke and Nettleton, African Art in Southern Africa, 219.
the years and a few local, commercial galleries contacted individual Polly Street artists to display their work. As Polly Street’s reputation grew, local churches and businesses approached Skotnes, seeking recommendations for black artists. Skotnes selected and guided students through commissions as mentioned previously. Many black artists found jobs as instructors at other community art centers throughout South Africa from the professional development and instruction they gained at Polly Street. Artists Sydney Kumalo and Ezrom Legae returned to teach at Polly Street. Other artists, including Louis Maqhubela and Ephraim Ngatane, had sell-out exhibitions.

2.3 Rorke’s Drift

The mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) Art and Craft Center at Rorke’s Drift in KwaZulu-Natal, also known as Rorke’s Drift, reflected the philanthropic nature of the Swedish culture in the early 1960s. With a stable, post-war Social Democratic government, Sweden developed an interest in international social and cultural development. The Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) established mission schools, hospitals, and cultural initiatives such as Rorke’s Drift in underdeveloped countries and urban South Africa. In 1961, the ELC Art and Craft Center began as a small occupational therapy program at the Ceza Mission Hospital under the leadership of Swedish missionaries Peder and Ulla Gowenius. The program’s success led to a lack of space, which required relocation in 1963 to a former Lutheran theological seminary at Rorke’s

109 Many of the commercial gallery owners interested in the works of Polly Street artists were local white artists with connections to Skotnes. For example, Helen de Leeuw, a local ceramist and owner of Helen de Leeuw Galleries, met Skotnes through her brother-in-law Gideon Uys, former Polly Street art instructor. Egon Guenther, who also owned a gallery and exhibited Polly Street work, met Skotnes at the Craftsman’s Market. Guenther not only exhibited student work, but occasionally lectured on art and professionalism at the Center. Miles, Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre, 47-48. Hammond-Tooke and Nettleton, African Art in Southern Africa, 225.
110 Elza Miles, Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre, 60.
111 These artists were extremely controversial in the local community due to the content of their work. Often termed ‘township art,’ which is discussed later, locals felt the work did not live up to a professional aesthetic standard. Hammond-Tooke and Nettleton, African Art in Southern Africa, 225.
112 Philippa Hobbs and Elizabeth Rankin, Rorke’s Drift: Empowering Prints (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2003), 13-14.
Drift. CSM continued to fund the Center and Peder’s salary. This allowed arts and crafts education to flourish under the guise of an established mission center. In alignment with the goals of CSM, the mission of Rorke’s Drift was to train “advisors to develop crafts to achieve patient rehabilitation, together with the potential for economic improvement, particularly for women.”

Although primarily an organization for economic improvement for artists, Rorke’s Drift initially provided relief to rural communities. Similar to Polly Street, Rorke’s Drift offered food, opportunities for economic subsistence, and lodging. Rorke’s Drift, however, began charging tuition in 1969 in order to set a higher standard for students. Tuition covered the costs of room and board, materials, and other expenses not covered by mission funding. Teachers at Rorke’s Drift considered the fee relatively minimal given the quality of the program. The Center provided opportunities for students to sell their work through galleries and craft markets to assist with tuition and provide some economic stability for the students. Regardless of the fee, the Center continued to receive a high number of applications. A teacher at the Center commented, “Educational opportunities for Blacks were scarce in those days, and so the word got around that two years of virtually free training was to be had at Rorke’s Drift.” Many students received scholarships from community organizations, such as the Union of Jewish Women, Black Consciousness organizations, and the Black People’s Convention, among others. Although tuition

113 Ibid., 25.
114 All educational organizations required government approval under the Bantu Education Act. Well established in South Africa at the time, the CSM offered some “protection” for the Art Center from the government. The Goweniruses were not Swedish missionaries; however, the CSM hired them under this title so as not to create suspicion from the government. Ibid.
115 Ibid., 24.
116 Ibid., 80.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid., 81.
limited participation to students who could afford to attend, Rorke’s Drift provided an all-inclusive environment for enhanced education.

The Rorke's Drift mission to address economic discrepancies led to a heavy focus on ‘useful’ arts, consisting of textile production, pottery workshops, and printmaking.\textsuperscript{121} Although the Center later incorporated fine arts, the Goweniuses assumed that the international art market was most interested in craft art, which guaranteed income for the students.\textsuperscript{122} The “homecrafts” movement was extremely popular in Sweden during this time. Inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe during the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, “homecrafts” encouraged the preservation of traditions while incorporating improvements for progressive modernism through craft production.\textsuperscript{123} This movement may have influenced Peder and Ulla Gowenius’ program structure and content, as well as encouraged gender specific workshops. Women often learned weaving and fabric painting, while men typically created fine art. Men and women worked in ceramics, but techniques were usually gender specific. The Center required that students cycle through a number of craft and fine arts classes to provide them with well-rounded portfolios.

Rorke’s Drift emphasized printmaking in particular due to its craft connection through carving and its connection to fine arts. Peder introduced printmaking in 1962 as a way to engage males and provide design inspiration for female weavers, since weavers never repeated designs and the tapestry workshop was highly productive.\textsuperscript{124} Student Azaria Mbatha became a highly successful printmaker. His works are widely diverse with no uniform approach or standard visual language. He often combines Western and African motifs. This may be a result of the teacher’s

\textsuperscript{122} Hobbs and Rankin, \textit{Rorke’s Drift}, 20.
\textsuperscript{124} Hobbs and Rankin, \textit{Rorke’s Drift}, 31.
non-interventionist approach. Teachers developed techniques and encouraged individual expression. *Cain and Abel*, one example of many biblical references in Mbatha’s work, depicts narrative through linear design (Figure 9). Horizontal lines define the land while separating each register. Foliage and sacrificial smoke rising from the altar draws the viewer’s eye upward as it describes the story of *Cain and Abel*. The print served as inspiration for a tapestry woven in 1976 (Figure 10). Mbatha’s works gained him a scholarship to study in Sweden from 1965 to 1967.\(^{125}\)

The work of student artist Dan Rakgoathe incorporated an “African spirituality.”\(^{127}\) *Spirit of Creation*, inspired by Muziweyixhawala Tabet’s *Untitled*, depicts an organic silhouette of the heads and bodies of humans, birds, snakes, and other animals emerging from a centrifugal point (Figures 11, 12). Displayed is a spiritual moment “where people actually hear voices.”\(^{128}\) His religiously inspired works were universal in nature and did not explicitly reference his social or political situation. Rakgoathe’s range of experiences at Rorke’s Drift led him to teach at the Jubilee and Mofolo Art Centers.

The Center offered various professional opportunities and organized exhibitions locally and abroad in London and Stockholm for the work of fine arts students. Rorke’s Drift received various textile commissions, which students fulfilled. The Center also encouraged students to submit textiles to international exhibitions.\(^{129}\) Gowenius enhanced international opportunities by establishing a cross-cultural exchange between South Africa and Sweden. Black students received scholarships for further training in Sweden, and Swedish art teachers rotated in and out of the

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125 Ibid., 39.
126 Ibid., 60.
127 Ibid., 71.
128 Ibid.
The intention was for the recipients of the scholarships to return to Rorke’s Drift as teachers in order for the Center to become self-sustaining. Many scholarship recipients, such as Mbatha, did return to the Center to teach. Regardless of the intent, an international education provided graduates with advanced education and guaranteed employment with Rorke’s Drift upon their return. Students trained at the Center often found employment as occupational therapists in the mission hospitals, as weavers or artisans at local craft workshops, or as professional artists.

Peder Gowenius was outspoken against apartheid and encouraged political discussions among students and teachers at the Center. Students such as Cyprian Shilakoe included antiapartheid references in their works (figure 13). His etching In Prison contains coded references to Nelson Mandela, a political prisoner at the time. The etching includes an obscure portrait of Mandela, who stands in a cell among other prisoners. However, the title is the only clear reference we have to the setting and the political innuendoes are indirect. By addressing the socio-political situation of blacks and providing a safe place for dialogue and expression, Rorke’s Drift encouraged agency and empowerment among its students. The beliefs and goals of Gowenius enhanced his desire to empower students. He asked, “How do we make oppressed people aware of their situation, of their own strength, creating an interest in their future and a commitment to the concepts of self-reliance, freedom and independence? Thus, the philanthropic intentions of the Goweniuses remained rooted in the desire to create self-reliance among a group of oppressed peoples, and their philanthropic action resulted in an educational institution that allowed blacks the opportunity for gainful employment and an outlet to protest oppression.

130 Hobbs and Rankin, Rorke’s Drift, 60.
131 Over time, the Center received attention from the government and the visas of many Swedish art teachers were restricted. Therefore, consistency in instruction was lacking due to the rotating number of instructors.
132 As a result, he was deported from South Africa in 1970. John Peffer, Art at the End of Apartheid (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 33.
2.4 Philanthropic Connections

Examination of “community arts” and the role that community art centers in South Africa typically played reveals that the centers were philanthropic organizations. In her analysis of South African community art centers, art historian Lize van Robbroeck characterizes “community arts” as serving the “needs of materially and culturally deprived sectors of the population.” She expands her definition to incorporate community artists as “activists working with underprivileged sectors of the population… [who] encourage artistic and political action to achieve social change.” Payton and Moody emphasize that philanthropy is “manifest in action,” an intervention in the life of another to benefit the individual and advance the common good. Robbroeck’s characterization of “community arts” and community artists contains the manifestation of action through “serving” and “working.” By fulfilling the needs of deprived individuals, community arts and artists provided a beneficial service to society that proved to be philanthropic. As noted in the introduction, this model contains flaws as its concepts are based in Western tradition. Philanthropic intention and action has the potential to fall within a “salvage paradigm.” I recognize this problem; however, it will not be addressed in this paper.

The organizational structure and funding of community art centers provided opportunities for the manifestation of an individual’s philanthropic action through “voluntary giving,” “voluntary service,” and “voluntary association.” Although community art centers were not technically nonprofit organizations, they relied heavily on funding from private institutions in the same way as nonprofits. Initial funding for most South African art centers came from local governments.

134 Ibid., 8.
135 Ibid., 10.
136Payton and Moody, Understanding Philanthropy, 28 and 35.
137 Not all South African community art centers were structurally organized or funded in the same way. However, this paragraph addresses the prominent similarities for conciseness.
or missions; however, the need for private investors was essential to stability.\textsuperscript{139} Private donors invested in the centers by “voluntary giving” of their resources. Local business owners and white artists who were interested in the work of the centers usually provided money or supplies.\textsuperscript{140} Some local artists not only funded the centers, but also donated their time teaching.\textsuperscript{141} Volunteering emphasized their personal investment in the cause. This form of philanthropic action was “voluntary service.” The community art center as an organization with a mission, philanthropic programs, fundraising efforts, and staff (albeit minimal) functioned as a “voluntary association.” The art center was a resource not only for deprived individuals but also for individuals seeking an outlet for the donation of gifts or time for a cause in which they strongly believed.

As voluntary associations, Polly Street and Rorke’s Drift addressed socio-economic problems in the black community caused by destructive social mores established by the government. The Centers’ mission to change or alleviate problems made the Centers an index for agency. Philanthropic intent manifested not only in the Centers’ mission, but also in the goals and desires of the program directors. The directors served as agents through the Centers and affected the black art students, who were recipients of the action. With the assistance of funding from private donors and the voluntary service provided by art teachers, the art programs provided much needed training, education, and employment opportunities for black students thereby fulfilling the intent of the Centers and program directors.

Serving as agents for change in the community, Polly Street and Rorke’s Drift were distinctly philanthropic in the functions of relief and improvement they served. The philanthropic tradition of relief responds to the most basic needs of society.\textsuperscript{142} Relief alleviates suffering without explor-

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} Elza Miles, \textit{Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre}, 33.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 18-21.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 104.
ing and resolving the causes for suffering. Polly Street and Rorke’s Drift fulfilled immediate needs of food, housing, employment, art supplies, and studio space. The root of socio-economic problems for non-whites during this time is debatable, but apartheid legislation was at the core of these issues. However, the Centers were not involved in legislative reform. Rather, they explored solutions for unemployment and inadequate education through improvement. The philanthropic tradition of improvement seeks to “maximize human potential” by providing opportunities for individuals to better their lives.\(^{143}\) Polly Street and Rorke’s Drift provided arts education and training that assisted black artists in finding and maintaining economic stability through art, enhancing their cultural lives, and providing an outlet for repressed emotions and anxieties.

The work of Cecil Skotnes and the success stories of Kumalo and Sihlali represent the opportunities for improvement the Polly Street Art Center provided. Skotnes recognized the potential for black students to succeed in local, national, and international art markets, thereby fostering their talents and energy. Not only did the Center provide a foundation through art historical education and studio techniques, the programs prepared artists for careers through professional development and exposure. According to Lynn and Wisely, improvement “has many inviting qualities that insure its continued vitality. It allows us to express gratitude for special opportunities we have received by extending the same opportunities to others. It emphasizes individual responsibility and encourages individual initiative.”\(^{144}\) As mentioned in Chapter 1, reciprocity, or “giving back,” is an underlying principal of philanthropy.\(^{145}\) In addition, the Center’s communal environment nurtured dialogue, connection, and engagement. The empowerment and encouragement artists received at Polly Street led most into successful careers and instilled a desire for reciproc-

\(^{143}\) Ibid., 105-106.
\(^{144}\) Lynn and Wisely, “The Four Traditions of Philanthropy,” 106.
\(^{145}\) Payton and Moody, Understanding Philanthropy, 118.
ty, or need to give back through an extension of similar opportunities, as seen with Kumalo and Sihlali.

The opportunities at Rorke’s Drift reflected the beliefs set forth by American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Although referencing American economic structures and the opportunities in such, he believed that those who “lift themselves up” would do so utilizing “ladders” set forth by caring members of the community.\(^{146}\) Although the philanthropist is essential in providing for improvement, the individual must take responsibility for his or her situation and decide to use these “ladders” to help improve their lives. The students at Rorke’s Drift took action by finding scholarships or other monetary means to attend the art school. The Center then provided opportunities for improvement through an advanced education, professional development, and marketing opportunities for their work. The tendency for students to return to Rorke’s Drift as teachers or art therapists reflects serial reciprocity, the act of “paying it forward.”\(^{147}\)

In addition to enhancing the students’ socio-economic situation, Rorke’s Drift addressed emotional development through open dialogue and creative outlets. As a response to the social inequality created by industrialization and capitalism, Robbroek states,

> Part of the political agenda of community arts is the empowerment of individuals who, it is felt, have been systematically disempowered by the radical division of labour under advanced capitalism…Central to the empowering process is the repossession of public discourse, which has been monopolised by state institutions.\(^{148}\)

The Center’s nurturing of dialogue around the emotions and inequality of apartheid further developed the lives of individuals. Empowering students merely enhanced the professional and technical education by instilling confidence and nurturing reciprocity. While, instilling a sense of social agency within the students reflects the third philanthropic response of reform. Social re-

\(^{146}\) Lynn and Wisely, “The Four Traditions of Philanthropy,” 105-106.
\(^{147}\) Payton and Moody, Understanding Philanthropy, 108.
form encourages social change through the act of defining and solving problems. Although the students did not specifically advocate for change through their work, they began to recognize problems within the current systems and discussed these through open dialogue at the Center. The work of Shilakoe in particular was a precursor for the social advocacy that was to come. Peder Gowenius, however, was outspoken against apartheid, which led to his deportation in 1970.

Although influential in the advancement of black art and the socio-economic situation of black artists in South Africa, Polly Street and Rorke’s Drift reflected the weaknesses displayed by the philanthropic traditions of relief and improvement. Relief, though highly beneficial in addressing pressing needs, does not address the conditions that created the problems and can instill a sense of passivity to current situations. Polly Street and Rorke’s Drift addressed issues of studio space, supplies, employment, and basic needs such as food and housing. They did not politically advocate, however, for the improvement of townships or labor rights impeded by apartheid legislation, which were most likely at the root of these problems. Students at Rorke’s Drift were encouraged to discuss these problems and teachers welcomed socially and politically encouraged subject matter. Critics such as art historian Sydney Kasfir, argue that the Centers reinforced notions of “retribalisation” through the encouragement of “township art” or native crafts. Some students did succumb to exploitations of black art by the South African art market and became passive to their socio-economic situation. The art students’ desire to make a “quick buck” merely reinforced notions of inequality and degradation. However, the Centers’

150 Peffer, Art at the End of Apartheid, 33.
152 Kasfir, Contemporary African Art, 97.
focus on improvement encouraged feelings of empowerment or agency in the students, which limited tendencies for blacks to succumb to notions of inferiority.

Improvement, though extremely influential in providing opportunities for progress or advancement, tends to benefit the “well-situated and highly motivated members of the community.” Providing opportunities for enhancement is less influential if certain groups of people cannot access them. Although Skotnes tried to address issues with curfew and pass laws, Polly Street’s location in the white section of town restricted access for some members of the black community. Some black artists endured harsh repercussions, including jail time, for being in a white area after curfew or beyond pass regulations. Tuition policies at Rorke’s Drift limited many students who could not afford to attend and who were unable to obtain scholarships. Some students had to drop out mid-program, because they could no longer make payments. Lack of access to the Centers impeded certain groups in the community from attending and, therefore, restricted the community development potential of Polly Street and Rorke’s Drift.

Although the Centers displayed a few weaknesses, Polly Street and Rorke’s Drift greatly influenced the black arts movement in South Africa by providing centers for relief and improvement for urban and rural black artists. Their influence sparked an influx of community art centers in the 1970s and 1980s, centers that became breeding grounds for political art, activism, and the dissemination of Black Consciousness ideology. Community art centers served as agents for social change by first addressing the basic needs of the community. Through educational, monetary, and emotional improvement, art centers transferred agency to the students and empowered them to better their lives and those of others in their community.

156 Hobbs and Rankin, Rorke’s Drift, 80-81.
Figure 2.1: Sydney Kumalo, Ceiling decorations, 1957. St. Peter Claver at Seeisoville, Kroonstad.

Figure 2.2: Sydney Kumalo, *Crucifix*, 1957. St. Martin de Porres at Orlando West.


Figure 2.3: Cecil Skotnes, *Mural*, 1970. Paint on incised wood panels, 213 x 611 cm. Standard Bank Corporate Art Collection.

Figure 2.4: Sydney Kumalo, *Woman Combing Hair*, 1969. Bronze.

Figure 2.5: Sydney Kumalo, *Nude Coming Hair*, 1964. Pencil drawing.

Figure 2.6: Sydney Kumalo, *Praying Woman*, 1960. Bronze, 94cm. Schlesinger Collection: University of Witwatersrand Art Galleries.

Figure 2.7: Durant Sihlali, *Slums, Zondi Township*, 1957. Watercolor, 42 x 58.6 cm.

Figure 2.8: Durant Sihlali, *Burning old clothes*, 1964. Watercolor.

Figure 2.9: Azaria Mbatha, *Cain and Abel*, 1964. Linocut, 38.3 x 69.4 cm. Durban Art Gallery.

Figure 2.10: Weavers unknown, *Cain and Abel* (after Azaria Mbatha’s *Cain and Abel*), 1976. Tapestry, 1600 x 3000 cm. Ian Redelinghuys collection.

Figure 2.11: Dan Rakgoathe, *Spirit of Creation*, 1975. Linocut, 390 x 490 cm. Gauteng Legislature collection.

Figure 2.12: Muziweyixhwala Tabete, *Untitled*, 1962. Linocut, 395 x 300. Peder Gower collection.

Figure 2.13: Cyprian Shilakoe, *In Prison*, 1969. Etching, 34.3 x 31.8 cm.

3 SEEKING REFORM THROUGH ART

As frustration grew among anti-apartheid activists and other oppressed groups in South Africa over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, philanthropic response through relief and improvement were no longer sufficient to create social change. Social reform, which intends to catalyze change, took a proactive role in identifying and solving public problems. Artists and activists became “cultural workers” who used art as an outlet for the dissemination of political ideas and goals.

As agents, many artists sought to uplift, mobilize, and establish equality for non-whites in the 1970s and 1980s. Artist and political activist Thami Mnyele visually defined the beliefs set forth by the Black Consciousness movement. His work encouraged solidarity among non-whites and stimulated resistance at the Culture and Resistance Festival in Botswana (1987). The photography of Afrapix members Omar Badsha and Paul Weinberg emphasized the strength, hope, and resistance seen through survival. Their work challenged the viewer to become conscious of the current political situations and stand up for equality. The Culture in Another South Africa Conference reflected the social activism of the 1970s and 1980s and created a space for civic engagement by encouraging open dialogue around the necessary steps toward a democratic state.

3.1 Thami Mnyele

Born in Alexandra Township near Johannesburg in 1948, Thami Mnyele embraced his interest in art and politics in his twenties. In 1971, he joined Mhloti Black Theater, a cultural troupe that performed militant plays, read American protest literature, and performed at student led

Black Consciousness events.\textsuperscript{160} His participation in Mhloti prompted his involvement in politics and the political subject matter of his art. Wally Serote, poet and friend, encouraged Mnyele’s artistic talents by having him design the covers of three poetry books. Over the course of the next few years, Mnyele sought formal art guidance through lessons with artist Bill Ainslie and one year of study at Rorke’s Drift. However, neither experience allowed him to express his true desire to liberate his people.\textsuperscript{161} Though brief, his formal training did expose him to international trends and professional artists.

Through his involvement in the Black Consciousness (BC) cultural movement in the 1970s, Mnyele used his artwork to engage the community. Art historian Judy Seidman outlines the broad principles underlying the BC movement:

\begin{itemize}
\item Express yourself, produce work about your own community, your own experiences;
\item Use your community’s styles and traditions of expression, your people’s artistic and cultural vocabulary;
\item Define your audience as your community – look at who your message is written for, who actually receives it.\textsuperscript{162}
\end{itemize}

The artists of BC aimed to depict black life through the lens of their own people, negate the slave concept that the black man is good only if the white man says so instilled through colonialism and apartheid, expose racism, and, most importantly, create proud black people who believed in themselves.\textsuperscript{163}

The style of Mnyele’s work in the 1970s reflected BC’s goals to uplift the black audience, echoed the political atmosphere of the time, and encouraged a readiness for action. These characteristics often caused Mnyele’s artwork to be categorized as “cultural work” by art-makers in-

\textsuperscript{160} Clive Kellner and Sergio-Albio Gonzalez, eds., \textit{Thami Mnyele + Medu: Art Ensemble Retrospective} (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2009), 16.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid, 49.
volved in the BC movement. “Cultural work” encompassed images that reflected repression or struggle, linked to political commitments, or provided a voice for common experience. “Cultural workers” were agents. The intent of their work was to empower the viewers to make a change or prepare themselves for what was to come. Artists were to “fuel the spiral of change.”

Mnyele’s *Things Fall Apart*, 1977 reflects the goals of BC and “cultural work” (Figure 7). Drawn one year after the uprisings in Soweto and in the year of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko’s arrest and murder, *Things Fall Apart* reflects a moment just before drastic change. Mnyele depicted a surreal, cracking landscape with a small barren branch protruding into the clouds. A woman projects from the clouds, and a pot slips from her grasp. She watches as the pot falls, but her face does not reveal emotion. Her heavenly position makes her role ambiguous. Did the pot slip, or has she dropped the pot purposefully? Is she concerned, distraught, eager? The title *Things Fall Apart* references WB Yeats’s poem “The Second Coming.” Mnyele inscribed two lines from the poem on a 1976 version of *Things Fall Apart* (Figure 8):

> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold:  
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

Nigerian author Chinua Achebe chose the same lines for his internationally-lauded novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), which Mnyele read while working as an illustrator at SACHED, South Afri-

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164 The term “cultural worker” originated in the 1920s for artists whose work emphasized the political struggles for socialism in eastern Europe, Cuba, China, and the Soviet Union. After the 1976 uprising, many South African artists adopted the term to describe their politically driven work. The Culture and Resistance Festival in Gaborone reinforced the concept of “culture as a weapon of the struggle” in 1982. Pissarra, ed., Visual Century: South African Art in Context, 105.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
can Committee for Higher Education. Achebe’s novel chronicles the conflict between an indigenous African society and its colonizers and the adaptations that must take place.

Executed after a frightening police interrogation concerning Mnyele’s activities with the BC movement and the death of Steve Biko, *Things Fall Apart* poses a question to the community. Mnyele describes his decision to depict a moment just before disaster by asking: “If you walk in the street with your girlfriend and she is stabbed by a thug, how would you express your strong feeling in art? Would you show the hand raised or the woman lying on the ground?” As apartheid legislation worsened, Mnyele uses his art to question if the community should wait for disaster to occur or seek to provoke positive change before it is too late. If this philanthropic model is applicable, Mnyele aspires to create civic discourse and encourages social reform through a visual provocation of these important questions.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Mnyele became active in the ANC and a member of Medu Art Ensemble, an exiled South African grassroots initiative in Gaborone, Botswana. He described Medu’s role as a place where “…an artist concretised itself: the role of an artists is to learn…to teach others…to ceaselessly search for the ways and means of achieving freedom. Art cannot overthrow government, but it can inspire change…” Medu members openly debated politics, established ‘charterist’ beliefs, studied revolutionary artwork worldwide, examined South African struggle photography, and met with other exiled organizations. Driving factors in Medu artwork were the community’s participation through understanding and interpretation of the work and that the work must serve a function, for “…the existence of ‘art for art’s sake’ was

170 Ibid., 105.
173 Ibid.
never there in… Africa traditional societies…action should be undertaken because it is useful.”

In 1982, Medu hosted the Culture and Resistance Festival and *Art for Social Development* exhibition in Gaborone. Mnyele developed the logo for the Culture and Resistance Festival, which is perhaps one of his most memorable posters (Figure 9). He also designed and drew the *Art for Social Development* exhibition poster (Figure 10). Mnyele’s opening speech for the exhibition not only crystallized the attitudes formed within South African society, but also expressed his (and Medu’s) philanthropic purpose:

> The theme of this exhibition is ART TOWARD SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, but I must hasten to ask, what art? Whose social development? The act of creating art is not different from the act of building a bridge – it is the work of many hands. Therefore art is social...This means that art is part and parcel of the rules and laws which govern societies. So, the fact that in South Africa the majority of people are engaged in a struggle for liberation means that art and cultural workers cannot be divorced from this process. 

The exhibition set out to instill optimism and inspire action among the South African and international communities. Grassroots art initiatives formed throughout South Africa because of the conference, including: Silkscreen Training Project, CAP Media project, Afrapix, among others. Various organizations demanded posters, graphics, and banners to advertise their cause.

Mnyele’s involvement in the Black Consciousness cultural movement, the ANC, and Medu provided an outlet for his artwork to encourage active social reform and a public discourse, thus reflecting the fourth philanthropic tradition of civic engagement. Civic engagement encourages community involvement and feedback:

> The philanthropist is one who, given many gifts…chooses to give back to the community in which he or she was nurtured. Giving back requires a certain social engagement. Art-

174 Ibid., 89.
175 Seidman, *Red on Black*, 105.
176 Ibid., 91.
177 Ibid.
ists play the role of philanthropists when, on a limited basis, they open their ears and eyes to the concerns of the community around them.\textsuperscript{178}

Community significance was evident in BC ideals and the principles of Medu.\textsuperscript{179} Mnyele’s artwork and political activism put community first in an effort to inspire and create social change through empowerment. Unfortunately, however, his life was cut short when he was murdered by the South African Defense Force in a raid on resistance forces June 14, 1985 in Gaborone.

3.2 Afrapix

The Culture and Resistance Festival’s call for artists to participate in the liberation struggle spurred the use of “struggle photography.”\textsuperscript{180} This photojournalism genre included mostly black and white images that condemned the apartheid system and raised national and international awareness of the situation in South Africa.\textsuperscript{181} In 1982, \textit{Staffrider}, a nonracial South African literary magazine published “Bringing the Struggle into Focus,” an article by Afrapix member Peter McKenzie. This article outlined the importance and role of photography in the apartheid era. McKenzie emphasized that photographers were responsible for establishing democracy by awakening the “sleeping consciences of those who haven’t yet realized their oppression and the danger of non-commitment to change” through shocking images of injustice and the display of “hope and determination of all committed to freedom.”\textsuperscript{182} This article was one of many that consisted of a “call to action” for artists.

Photography collectives were the primary organizers of photographic activity in the 1980s, and Afrapix’s, which was formed in 1982, was the most influential. Afrapix was a multiracial

\textsuperscript{179} Kellner and Gonzalez, eds., \textit{Thami Mnyele + Medu: Art Ensemble Retrospective}, 89.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 219.
photographers’ collective started by a small group of political activists. Their goal was to produce images that “overc[a]me the blind spots resulting from an internalized apartheid ideology. To see what had not hitherto been seen; to make visible; to find ways of articulating, […] a reality obscured by government propaganda and the mass media.” The collective collaborated with the United Democratic Front (UDF), an anti-apartheid organization that coordinated church, student, community, and trade union organizations in opposition to tricameralism and other apartheid legislations. Afrapix provided photographs of the current political situation to organizations under the UDF umbrella and to international and national media outlets. Usually, publishers did not credit the images in order to protect the photographer.

In addition to documenting the current social and political situation, Afrapix established a photography-training program for youth, especially for young black photographers. The slogan “Each one teach one” emphasizes the mentorship aspect of the program. One member of the collective would teach visual literacy and technical skills to one student. As a result, the students gained valuable skills and increased the amount of documentary photography produced and disseminated. The training program not only reflects improvement through its youth education, but also reinforces social reform by infiltrating mass media with images of the struggle in order to encourage engagement by raising the level of awareness and promoting action. Due to Afrapix members’ wide range of talent and education, the level of skill and quality of the photographs varied. However, impact and dissemination of antiapartheid ideals was more of a concern than image quality.

185 Ibid.
186 John Peffer, *Art at the End of Apartheid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 254.
187 Ibid., 241.
The photography of Afrapix co-founders Omar Badsha and Paul Weinberg was extremely influential in advocating for social reform. In addition to involvement in political organizations, Badsha and Weinberg exhibited their images at conferences and gallery shows and published their work in various media outlets, pamphlets, and books, including *South Africa: The Cordoned Heart* (1986).

Published in conjunction with an art exhibition by the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, *The Cordoned Heart* consists of 136 photographs by 20 photographers, which exposed acts of resistance and the causes and conditions of poverty. The collection expands beyond a mere display of the human condition, as demonstrated by Badsha’s recollection of the concept for the publication:

> We don’t want pictures of starving children. We want to show apartheid as poverty, as the system, and not the stereotype of starving black children as apartheid…We wanted to show that the system itself was wrong and rotten and poverty was one of its consequences…we want to break the stereotype of this country that a lot of people were projecting.

Although many of the images represented the depressing reality of the apartheid regime, the collection displayed resistance through its subjects’ ability to adapt and survive.

Paul Weinberg’s *BMW Workers on Strike* (1984), part of the Asinamali (“We have no money”) series published in *The Cordoned Heart*, displays the emotions of a repressed group speaking out against inequality (Figure 11). The photograph shows a group of black workers peacefully striking against inadequate pay. Faces express various emotions, the most prominent being

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188 The Carnegie Inquiry was a study funded by the American based Carnegie Corporation. The corporation donated money to research poverty and development in South Africa from 1967 and 1982 and led a Second Carnegie Inquiry from 1982 to 1984. The study employed a number of urban, black South Africans to perform the research and publish papers on the study. However, the corporation did not link the research to development programs in order to break the cycle of poverty. Some black researchers did move on to establish their own development organizations. Newbury, *Defiant Images*, 244. “Voices from South Africa,” Carnegie in South Africa, accessed November 30, 2012, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/oral_hist/carnegie/special-features/second-inquiry-poverty.html.


190 Ibid., 253.
hope, excitement and even joy. The image appears with a brief essay written by Weinberg and Badsha on the formation of COSATU, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, in 1985. The impact of unions progressed throughout the 1970s, as wages rose without severely affecting employment and caused a shift in power relations between workers and management. These efforts culminated in the creation of COSATU, which became the largest trade union in South Africa. Through photography, Badsha explored the emotion surrounding union activity. BMW Workers on Strike reflects the empowerment felt by individuals when they stand up against economic injustice and encourages its viewers to take action against such inequalities.

Omar Badsha’s Imijondolo series published in 1985 and an excerpt published in The Cordoned Heart reflects the impoverished settlements just outside of urban areas. Built without formal guidance or infrastructure, the settlements consisted of poorly designed shacks, self-dug sewage pits, and lacked natural water or plumbing systems. The areas were breeding grounds for typhoid and cholera. Eventually, the government intervened, tearing down many of the settlements, and constructing small sites with basic infrastructure. However, government sites were limited to those with pass rights for the area. Therefore, thousands of illegal residents were vulnerable to eviction. Badsha’s images Teacher with a Class of Eighty Pupils and Neighbours in Shembe Village reflect the ordinary events that continue to occur regardless of disparate conditions (Figures 12, 13). In Protest Meeting against Removals and Attorney Representing Inanda Squatters Addressing Meeting of Residents through an Interpreter, he also shows the residents fighting for their rights through removal protests (Figures 14, 15). The photographs depict the realities of poverty without turning the viewer into a voyeur or objectifying and dehumanizing...

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192 Ibid, 100.
193 Ibid.
the subject. Rather, the images show “the dignity of the people in the adversity of poverty, and
how they are enduring what is happening to them.”\textsuperscript{194}

These images are only a sampling of the works published in \textit{The Cordoned Heart} and
Afrapix publications; however, they provide insight into the artistic style and political goals of
‘struggle photography.’ In an interview about the Carnegie Inquiry, Badsha states, “our main
concern was to mobilize people, politicize them, and arm them.”\textsuperscript{195} He continues by telling a sto-
y about a group of young, white high school girls who visited the exhibition. Unlike most chatty
school groups, the girls went through the exhibition in silence, shocked by the photographs and
text.\textsuperscript{196} This story emphasizes the ability images have to educate or “wake up” an unconscious
society. Photographs of the ‘struggle’ reflected disparate conditions but also inspired hope
through the subject’s personal resistance.

3.3 Culture in Another South Africa

In 1987, the Culture in Another South Africa conference (CASA), which was a follow-up to
the Culture and Resistance Conference held in Gaborone in 1982, took place in Amsterdam in
the Netherlands. The South African Department of Arts and Culture, the Mass Democratic
Movement, and the Dutch anti-apartheid movement hosted CASA to bring together exiled and
non-exiled writers, artists, and musicians to debate the significance of culture in South Africa.\textsuperscript{197}
Artists had discussed culture as resistance at the Culture and Resistance Conference five years
earlier, generating resistance activity. CASA took the next step by opening discussion for creat-

\textsuperscript{194} “Voices from South Africa,” Carnegie in South Africa, accessed November 30, 2012,
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/web/digital/collections/oral_hist/carnegie/special-features/second-inquiry-
poverty.html.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{197} Pissarra, ed., \textit{Visual Century: South African Art in Context}, 256. Willem Campschreur and Joost Divendal, eds.,
ing a cultural infrastructure as a nonracial society.\textsuperscript{198} South Africans needed to unite against apartheid through consensus and a well-developed plan of action. In addition to open debates, the ten-day conference served as a platform for expression of political beliefs and goals through plays, art exhibitions, musical events, and literary performances.\textsuperscript{199}

Thirty-two South African photographers contributed to CASA’s exhibition \textit{The Hidden Camera}, the title of which references the use of photography during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. The images displayed at the exhibition were similar to many of the photographs published in \textit{The Cordoned Heart}, some done by the same artists, including Badsha and Weinberg. However, the photographs in \textit{The Hidden Camera} focused on political resistance or violence more so than the humanized images of daily life seen in \textit{The Cordoned Heart}. Weinberg’s \textit{Workers Leaving May Day Meeting Find Riot Police} demonstrates the violence and sense of urgency the exhibition and conference imbued (Figure 16). South African writer Nadine Gordimer reflected on the development of culture in South Africa:

\begin{quote}
The new culture the people of South Africa are striving to build, under ugly and dangerous conditions, is based on the people’s culture, a democratic culture, and is extended to everyone without exclusions by colour, race or class. For the people of South Africa, against apartheid, we must learn to use art for its true revolutionary purpose the discovery and regeneration of the human world: which is freedom.\textsuperscript{200}
\end{quote}

The urgency for political engagement and change fueled debate and discussion at the conference, resulting in a plan for action.

CASA coordinators compiled the debates and discussions into a working document on resistance culture, known as the CASA Preamble and Resolutions.\textsuperscript{201} The document outlined the “guidelines to the culture of a democratic and non-racial South Africa, in which culture will be

\begin{flushright}
\textbf{\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 209.}\textbf{\textsuperscript{199} Campschreur and Divendal, eds., \textit{Culture in Another South Africa}, 9.}\textbf{\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 180.}\textbf{\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 209.}
\end{flushright}
accessible to all.” The guidelines ranged from establishing the languages of the country as English and Afrikaans to an implementation of the ANC’s Freedom Charter and the expectation that arts and politics are inseparable.

Though focused on efforts to provoke social reform, the actions encouraged by the artists and artworks discussed in this chapter involved engagement by those who are suffering and meet some of the criteria of the fourth tradition of civic engagement, which is discussed further in Chapter 4. Civic engagement is a distinctive tradition that engages the repressed in solving their own problems, as we see in the culmination of the Preamble and Resolutions. Over 200 exiled and non-exiled South Africans came together to openly discuss the needs and desires of the community. As a result, they established a working document that expressed a consensus, which helped to solidify the community and strengthen their fight for democracy.

In the “Four Traditions of Philanthropy,” Lynn and Wisely emphasize that societal circumstances greatly influence human destiny, and therefore philanthropy must change the circumstances. If this model is globally applicable to the arts, it can be argued that political artists and grassroots arts organizations sought change through advocacy and social reform. Through art, they educated and empowered their viewers, encouraging their audiences to engage in the struggle. However, the artist did not always work “on behalf of” the public, as is often the downfall of social reform. Black Consciousness and Afrapix ideals encouraged community involvement in the production of work. CASA created a forum for the exchange of ideas and culture. Therefore, artists encouraged civic engagement, the fourth tradition of philanthropy.

202 Ibid.
204 Ibid., 107-108.

Figure 3.2: Thami Mnyele, *Things Fall Apart*, 1976. Pencil drawing, 61 x 64.5 cm per quadrant. Standard Bank Collection.

Figure 3.3: Thami Mnyele, *Culture and Resistance*, 1982. Silkscreened by Medu.

Figure 3.3: Thami Mnyele and Gordon Metz, *Art towards Social Development*, 1982. Lithograph printed by Medu.

Figure 3.4: Paul Weinberg, *BMW Workers on Strike*, Pretoria, 1984. From the *Asinamali* series in *The Cordoned Heart*.

Figure 3.5: Omar Badsha, *Teacher with Class of Eighty Pupils*, Amouti, 1982. From the *Imijodolo* series in *The Cordoned Heart*.

Figure 3.6: Omar Badsha, *Neighbours in Shembe Village*, Inanda, 1983. From the *Imijodolo* series in *The Cordoned Heart*.

Figure 3.7: Omar Badsha, *Protest Meeting against Removals*, Inanda, 1983. From the *Imijodolo* series in *The Cordoned Heart*.

Figure 3.8: Omar Badsha, *Attorney Representing Inanda Squatters Addressing Meeting of Residents through an Interpreter*, Verulam, 1983. From the *Imijodolo* series in *The Cordoned Heart*.

Figure 3.9: Paul Weinberg, *Workers Leaving May Day Meeting find Riot Police*, May 1985.

4 INSPIRING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AT CONSTITUTION HILL

With the abolishment of the apartheid system in 1994, South Africa began a long journey to reconstruct a national identity and build a new democratic nation in which civic engagement has an integral part. Lynn and Wisely recognize the importance of civic engagement as “investing resources in strengthening relationships and nurturing conversations among citizens, in order to build, ‘more reflective and resourceful communities.’”205 The South African government has embraced cultural diversity and encouraged discourse on human rights in an effort to move the nation toward unity.206 In 1996, the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in Pretoria issued the “White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage,” a document outlining the government’s view that art, culture, and heritage promote discourse, reflection, and healing. The paper declared that not investing “in the arts, culture and heritage would constitute grave short-sightedness on the part of the government and a failure to recognize the healing and recreational potential of arts and culture in a period of national regeneration and restoration.”207 The new Constitutional Court building, erected in 2004 on Constitution Hill, reflects the significance of art and space as a conduit for engagement.

The history of Constitution Hill is drenched in negativity and injustice, which made it a prime location for the reparation and optimism heralded by the new constitution and Court. The South African Republic constructed the Old Fort Prison in 1893 in an effort to control “foreign-

ers” in the town and mines through intimidation.\textsuperscript{208} The Boer government surrendered the prison to the British army in 1900 during the Anglo-Boer War, at which point the prison transitioned into a location to torture and punish Boer soldiers.\textsuperscript{209} From 1902 until 1983, the prison complex grew to include the Women’s Jail, the Awaiting Trial Block, Section Four, and Section Five. The complex housed men and women of all races throughout the era of apartheid, including the most prominent political leaders in the country’s history.\textsuperscript{210} Prisoners included Mahatma Ghandi, Nelson and Winnie Mandela, Fatima Meer, and Albert Luthuli, among others. The site lay abandoned from 1983 until 1996, when newly appointed judges declared it the site for the new Constitutional Court building.

The Court’s decision to build on the site of the Old Fort Prison was not a difficult one. Practically, the location was ideal for accessibility and urban regeneration.\textsuperscript{211} Justice Albie Sachs, an anti-apartheid activist and former political prisoner, explains the symbolic connection between the purpose of the new constitution and the site as a natural conversion of negativity into optimism:

Constitutions usually follow on disaster and cataclysm, and they are there to prevent the repetition of injustice and to embody idealism and hope. That was the other theme of Constitution Hill. It wasn’t simply a place of incarceration and humiliation, although it was that too. It was a place where everybody locked up everybody. Boers locked up Brits, Brits locked up Boers, Boers locked up Blacks. It was also a place of solidarity, where supporters and families brought food and books and clothing to prisoners from various political and cultural backgrounds over the decades, where political prisoners met and planned the transformation that was to follow. And so that mixture of the denial of rights and the striving to achieve rights was embodied in the memories and records, the experiences of a whole generation still alive. So the Court as a whole agreed, with a range of emotions from passionate enthusiasm to “we can go along with that”, to Constitution Hill, the Old Fort, being the site.\textsuperscript{212}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{209} Ibid.
\bibitem{210} Ibid. Prisoners included Mahatma Ghandi, Nelson and Winnie Mandela, Fatima Meer, Albert Luthuli, amongst others.
\bibitem{212} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
Even within times of turmoil, the site served as a location for philanthropic involvement. Supporters and families brought items of relief to prisoners through donations of books, clothing, and food. The solidarity of the political prisoners encouraged the advocacy and social reform that would come upon their release. The Court’s willingness to reinvent the site without disregarding its multifaceted history served as a symbol to the people of the possibility and hope of rebuilding a nation.

Should this philanthropic model be accepted, it can be argued that the Court’s desire to build an environment of inclusivity aligns with the characteristics of civic engagement set forth by Lynn and Wisely in the “Four Traditions.” The authors emphasize the importance of building relationships between citizens. Civic engagement may include advocacy work, provide relief, or offer opportunities for individual improvement, but the focus is engaging citizens in conversation to determine their needs and desires. An analysis of Constitution Hill, the Constitutional Court, and the work of artists within the Court’s walls reflect civic engagement on various levels.

4.1 Constitution Hill

The Old Fort Prison complex was once a brooding presence in the city. Harsh reminders of the apartheid regime exuded from the old stone walls. The complex consisted of four buildings segregated by race and gender. The Old Fort housed white males. Built outside the rampart walls in 1904, Section Four, commonly known as “Number Four,” housed “natives” or black male prisoners. Political prisoner Sipho Sibiya described “Number Four” as “a very scary place, like going down a mine. When the police car arrived at the reception, you used to go deep, deep,

deep into the earth.” Built in 1910, the Women’s Jail housed white and black women in segregated areas within the Victorian style building. The Awaiting Trial Block housed black males waiting to go to trial. Cells throughout the complex were overflowing with prisoners during the reign of apartheid, until the government relocated inmates to a prison just outside of Soweto in 1983. The revitalization of the Old Fort Prison in 1996 by the Constitutional Court led to the site’s transition into a city precinct known as Constitution Hill.

The conversion into Constitution Hill required a few site adjustments to accommodate the construction of a Court and reintegration into the city grid through a north south, east-west access route. As a result, the Competition Brief for the new design of the Court building required that the Awaiting Trial Block be demolished and the four Awaiting Trial stair towers remain to mark the footprint of the building (Figure 1). Architects included debris, such as bricks and prison bars, from the demolition in the design of the Court. Considered a national heritage site, the remaining buildings on Constitution Hill were converted into museum spaces and contain permanent and rotating exhibitions.

Exhibitions and programs offered at Constitution Hill encourage civic engagement and the use of a newly developed communal space. The lekgotla program coordinates public lectures, seminars, debates, and workshop series that explore themes such as injustice, human rights, the constitution, and democracy. Based on the Sotho/Tswana word lekgotla, the program’s goal is to facilitate “nonhierarchical dialogue that is conducted in the form of a public gathering to decide...”

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218 Ibid., 39.
219 Madikida, Segal and Van Den Berg, “The Reconstruction of Memory at Constitution Hill,” 19.
on matters of group and social importance.” Program participants have the opportunity to explore their role in a changing democratic nation.

Mapping Memories, one lekgotla program at Constitution Hill, serves as a healing and reconciliation process for former prisoners. During on-site workshops, ex-prisoners reacquaint themselves with the prison, flagging and photographing spaces associated with positive and negative memories. Most of the participants have never used a camera before; therefore, the process of looking through a lens and reframing space provides new insight. They then return to the studio to draw their experiences. Drawings consist of the layout of a prisoner’s cell, torture experienced while imprisoned, or narratives, including mealtime or the illegal exchange of items between prisoners (Figure 2, 3, 4, 5). Documentation through photography and drawing not only exposes emotion; it provides distance through the distraction of learning a new form of expression. Some participants record their own oral histories to accompany their drawings. The process is usually extremely emotional as it brings to the forefront suppressed memories of torture, sexual and gang abuse, and other forms of trauma from incarceration. Participants work individually and with groups. Some former prisoners involve their family and friends in the healing process.

Mapping Memories also deepens the meaning of the site for visitors, both South African and international tourists, who may or may not have personal connections with the history of the prison. Constituencies consist of former prisoners and their families, teachers, students, heritage professionals, and new audiences. Facilitators collect and translate materials from the workshops into lectures, seminars, and exhibitions. Curators Lauren Segal, Clive van den Berg, and

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220 Ibid.
221 Ibid., 23
222 Ibid., 22.
223 Ibid. Psychologists are on site, though rarely needed.
224 Ibid., 19.
Churchill Madikida published initial recordings and materials in the book, *Mapping Memory*, in 2006.\(^{225}\) Documentation of personal tragedy promotes an exchange of knowledge and encourages empathy and dialogue around human rights.\(^{226}\) Tours of the Old Fort, Number Four, the Women’s Gaol, and Constitutional Court are also offered to deepen the interactive experience.

The program’s goals coincide with Lynn and Wisely’s definition of civic engagement as an opportunity to form relationships, dialogue, and action around common concerns.\(^{227}\) Constitution Hill has become a safe, public space where citizens can explore their past, connect with others, and work together to promote reconciliation. *Lekgotla* programs facilitate dialogue and increase awareness. For example, “dialogue *lekgotla*” consists of an informal discussion facilitated by a guest speaker with a group of students.\(^{228}\) Conversations may center on current challenges young people face in post-apartheid South Africa. Curators hope that the Mapping Memories workshop will encourage former prisoners to “take pride in sharing and legitimating their memories within the new political context.”\(^{229}\) They begin doing so through visual expression, including photography, drawing, and sculpting, during the workshop. Through closure and healing, ex-prisoners are able to connect and actively participate in the cause for human rights. An expansion beyond discourse into activism reflects the third tradition of social reform. Seeking justice is at the heart of human rights advocacy and work; it is also the driving principal of the tradition of reform.\(^{230}\)

Through engagement and reform, prisoners become resources and examples for citizens who may not know how to reconnect.


\(^{226}\) Ibid., 21.


\(^{229}\) Madikida, Segal and Van Den Berg, “The Reconstruction of Memory at Constitution Hill,” 21.

4.2 The Constitutional Court

In 1996, the Court judges initiated an international design competition for the building, upon affirmation that they could break ground on Constitution Hill. Their request specified the use of “material that would represent openness, participation – the democratic value of public participation – warmth, welcome to all.”\(^{231}\) The winning architects, Janina Masojada and Andrew Makin of OMM Design Workshop (Durban, SA) and Paul Wygers of Urban Solutions (Johannesburg, SA), articulated this request brilliantly.

Inspiration for the character and design of the building derived from the Court’s newly adopted logo by artist Carolyn Parton (Figure 6).\(^ {232}\) The logo depicts a group of racially obscure people standing beneath a large tree. The tree is firmly rooted in African soil and the people represent the “right to protection under the law.”\(^ {233}\) The logo rests on a plaque that bares President Nelson Mandela’s inaugural speech in South Africa’s eleven official languages, reinforcing their equality.\(^ {234}\) The plaque hangs just behind the large copper and brass doors leading to the Court Chamber (Figure 7). Justice Albie Sachs emphasizes the logo’s importance and philosophy:

> In traditional African society, disputes are often settled by the elders of the community who gather under a tree for this purpose. The limitations of the old patriarchal structures in many African societies notwithstanding, this way of solving problems is transparent and community-oriented. Happily, gender equality is now firmly entrenched in the Constitution and women play an active role in judicial proceedings. “Justice under a tree” presupposed openness, the equal dignity of all participants in the conversation, respect for different voices and a core of humane principles underlying the proceedings. It turned out that the philosophy encapsulated in the small brass logo of the Court was to animate the resplendent building that is now the Constitutional Court of South Africa.\(^ {235}\)

The architects skillfully and coherently reiterate the logo’s ideology of openness and equality through the building’s architectural design and ornamentation.

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233 Ibid., 17.
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid., 19.
The Constitutional Court building rests between the four Awaiting Trial stair towers on Constitution Hill (Figure 8). The Court’s outer layer consists of the Foyer, the Court Chamber, the Auditorium, and an exhibition space (Figure 9). The inner layer contains the Library, 14 Judges’ Chambers, and judges’ conference rooms and meeting spaces (Figure 9).

The materials used for construction were not only monetarily practical but also gave heed to the region, climate, and culture. The architects selected cast concrete as the predominant material and surface throughout the building, as emphasized by the curved concrete wall at the main entrance (Figure 8). The building’s use of cast concrete, the chief characteristic of South African construction, provided a range of employment opportunities for local citizens and was cheap and easy to construct. The concrete takes on an organic form throughout the space as seen in the curvature of the exterior wall and the tree-like columns in the Foyer, lending to the theme of “justice under a tree” (Figures 8, 10). The leaves of which are represented by wire chandeliers in the form of canopy leaves (Figure 11). The simple, yet artistic use of concrete represents a dismissal of the impractical, grandiose aura taken on by many court buildings. Architects also utilized bricks from the demolished Awaiting Trial Block to construct the Great African Steps leading to the Court’s entrance, a few walls in the Foyer, and the curved walls of the Court Chamber (Figures 8, 12, 13). The re-use of the bricks symbolized a respect for the past as well as the openness and honesty of the Court.

The architects considered the importance of informality, accessibility, and transparency when designing room layouts and elevations. The large glass walls and screens of the Foyer provide shelter and visual access to guests before they enter the building. A natural extension of the por-

237 Ibid.
238 Law-Viljoen, Light on a Hill: Building the Constitutional Court of South Africa, 59.
239 Ibid., 69.
tico, the Foyer maintains an outdoor feel through abundant natural light, visual access to the Court Chamber and Administration Wing, and sunken floor plan. Unlike most administrative buildings that require you to walk up into the space (toward a God-like figure), the Court building brings you down to earth in amphitheater form. The Court Chamber reiterates the amphitheater design by placing the judges at eye level with the counsel. Behind the judges’ heads is a ribbon of glass at ground level outdoors (Figure 13). The feet of passersby bring the “judges and counsel down to earth,” equal under the constitution, while also sending a message of transparency.  

The architects extended the notion of transparency, or openness, in the design of the Administrative Wing. The use of glass, balconies, and open space allows the public to see judges walking along galleries or having tea and vice versa. Architectural details, including security gates to judges’ chambers and sunscreens, promote an aura of transparency architecturally as well as provide an allusion to the nation’s past. The “collection” of security gates is sensitive to the location of the Court on a former prison site. Each gate is unique and provides an organic, artisan quality to an otherwise mundane necessity (Figure 14). Sunscreens, designed by Patrick Rorke and Lewis Levin, shield the west elevation of the Court from harsh afternoon sunlight without darkening the space. The pivoting square plates are personal histories of the people living and working around Constitution Hill, a constant reminder of the “lives of people represented by the Constitution.” Architect Janina Masojada describes the Court as “real, less institutional, less bureaucratic and more an extension, for both the workers and the public, of everyday, normal human existence. That’s what generates and defines what the building is. Not the starting point

240 Ibid., 75.
241 Ibid., 147.
242 Law-Viljoen, Art and Justice, 44.
243 Ibid., 57.
of a style, but the starting point of human interaction.” The building’s design promotes engagement and reiterates the importance of equality through transparency.

To promote trust and encourage civic engagement, the judges and architects recognized that the Constitutional Court must exude an atmosphere of inclusivity. The eight-meter high wooden doors stand as a welcoming point into such an environment. The doors contain carved panels of words, numbers, and sign language representing the 27 rights outlined in the Constitution, which artist Andries Botha also inscribed in Braille on the brass door handle (Figure 15). Individual carvers signed each panel to emphasize the collaborative effort. Recognition of individual and human rights sets the tone for Court. The creation of space that emphasizes equality, honesty, and inclusivity provides a platform for discussion. “In form and content it extends an invitation to dialogue, it says talk to me, let’s sit down and reflect.” The Court encompasses Lynn and Wisely’s understanding of civic engagement by seeking out and incorporating the voices and perspectives of the citizens in order to facilitate informed change and provide for a better future.

### 4.3 The Constitutional Court’s Art Collection

In addition to strong architectural design, the Constitutional Court’s art collection speaks to the Court’s ideology and encourages civic engagement. The collection consists of about 200 works most of which were donated by the artists or purchased with donated funds from international organizations. Unlike most government or corporate buildings, the architects integrated the artwork into the design of the building. The collection includes an array of subject matter

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244 Law-Viljoen, *Light on a Hill: Building the Constitutional Court of South Africa*, 147.
248 Ibid., 22.
and themes, because the Court did not conduct a curatorial process for obtaining the works. However, this method reflects the Court’s openness to public opinion and expression through verbal and visual means.

Judith Mason’s *The Man who Sang and the Woman who Kept Silent*, one of the most well-known works in the collection, affirms individual human right and dignity (Figures 16, 17, 18). The work, a triptych, commemorates the death of Phila Ndwandwe and Harald Sefola. Their killers confessed the murders during the Truth and Reconciliation Trials, admitting to their victims’ bravery. Security police kept Ndwandwe naked for weeks during interrogation before knocking her unconscious and shooting her.249 To preserve her dignity, Ndwandwe fashioned panties out of a blue plastic bag.250 Security police abducted Sefola for his involvement in the ANC and electrocuted him to his death.251 Sefola sang *Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika* while being tortured.252 In honor of Ndwandwe’s death, Mason assembled a dress out of blue plastic bags with the painted inscription (Figure 16):

> Sister, a plastic bag may not be the whole armour of God, but you were wrestling with flesh and blood, and against powers against the rulers of darkness, against the spiritual wickedness in sordid places. Your weapons were your silence and a piece of rubbish. Finding that bag and wearing it until you were disinterred is such a frugal, commonsensical, house-wifely thing to do, an ordinary act…at some level you shamed your captors, and they did not compound their abuse of you by stripping you a second time. Yet they killed you. We only know your story because a sniggering man remembered how brave you were. Memorials to your courage are everywhere; they blow about in the streets and drift on the tide and cling to thorn-bushes. This dress is made from some of them. *Hamba kahle. Umkhonto.*253

250 Law-Viljoen, *Art and Justice*, 123.
252 Law-Viljoen, *Art and Justice*, 123.
253 Law-Viljoen, *Art and Justice*, 123.
The dress swings from its hanger in the breeze as a constant affirmation of the “dignity of human life.”\textsuperscript{254} Although the work is a reminder of loss, betrayal, shame, and individual human rights, it is a testimony to the strength of individuals.

Two oil paintings accompany the dress along the exhibition gallery wall. \textit{The Man Who Sang and the Woman Who Kept Silent 1} depicts the blue dress swaying in the foreground while a dog-like beast rips pieces of it in the background, trapped in a fence-like grid (Figure 17). The beast represents a tearing at Ndwandwe’s dignity, which remains intact. \textit{The Man Who Sang and the Woman Who Kept Silent 3} illustrates three blazing braziers in the foreground, representative of Sefola and his two comrades (Figure 18). The blue dress floats in the middle ground with a lit mug. The beast growls ominously in the background, once again captured in the fence. Justice Sachs describes the final piece as “a warm glow, the sense of reconciliation, of coming to terms with the terrible pain of the past. The predator trapped in the fence, keeping it at bay, the dress soaring.”\textsuperscript{255} The triptych represents the process of healing. The dress represents recognition, strength, and release. The braziers move toward reconciliation. The three works give the viewer hope for the nation’s future.

The Women’s Group in Khayelitsha, Cape Town contributed fourteen versions of \textit{Body Map}, the products of a community outreach program led by the AIDS and Society Research Unit of the University of Cape Town and Médecins Sans Frontières.\textsuperscript{256} Similar to the Mapping Memories program on Constitution Hill, HIV-positive women traced the history of the virus’ effect on

\textsuperscript{254} Ibid., 127.
\textsuperscript{256} Law-Viljoen, \textit{Art and Justice}, 164.
their personal lives and bodies through drawings (Figure 19). The process helped women come
to terms with having HIV. 257

*Body Map* encourages the viewer to connect with the stories of these women. Negative per-
ceptions of HIV and AIDS often lead to degrading attitudes towards victims. 258 The goal of this
collection is to encourage viewers to re-evaluate their perceptions and attitudes towards others
through an emphasis on equality and human rights. The works also recognizes the Court’s action
to improve HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention.

*Body Map* and *The Man who Sang and the Woman who Kept Silent* are only two examples of
many in the Court’s vast art collection that address current and historical examples of human
rights cases. The collection also contains political works by South African artists Jan du Toit,
Kim Berman, Sue Williamson, and David Golblatt. Works by artists John Baloyi and Cecil
Skotnes are celebratory. Regi Bardavid and Cecily Sash explore emotion. Donated works by
Dumile Feni and George Sekoto are also included. Regardless of subject matter, the artworks all
express the human right of expression and engagement. Artists who chose to donate their works
to the Court made a statement that they wanted to be involved in the effort towards a ‘New South
Africa.’

Lynn and Wisely recognize that civic engagement, though reflective and meaningful, can be
a slow process to fruition. They explain that, “civic engagement suffers from the perennial fru-
trations of democracy. It can be slow, contentious, prone to more talk than action, and difficult to
render into measurable outcomes.” 259 Although this may be true as seen in South Africa’s slow
road to reconciliation and recovery, meaningful discourse around common problems is invalu-
able. It leads to personal connection and empathy towards others. Through this philanthropic

257 Ibid.
258 Ibid.
model, Constitution Hill and the Constitutional Court reflect the willingness to set an example for its own people and the international community in striving to spur such discourse and connection.
Figure 4.1: The remaining stair towers of the Awaiting Trial Block. Angela Buckland, *Building Democracy* series, date unknown.

Figure 4.2: Sketch from Mapping Memories workshop at Constitution Hill.

Figure 4.3: Cell drawing from Mapping Memories workshop at Constitution Hill.


Figure 4.4: Painting from Mapping Memories workshop at Constitution Hill.

Figure 4.5: Sketch from Mapping Memories workshop at Constitution Hill.

Figure 4.6: Carolyn Parton, Constitutional Court logo, 1995.

Figure 4.7: Andrew Lindsay and Myra Fassler-Kamstra, large copper and brass doors leading to the Court Chamber, 2001-2004.

Figure 4.8: The Constitutional Court
Angela Buckland, *Building Democracy* series, date unknown.

Figure 4.9: Early architectural sketch. Date and artist unknown.

Figure 4.10: Foyer of the Constitutional Court.
Angela Buckland, Building Democracy series, date unknown.

Figure 4.11: Walter Ottman, wire chandelier, 2001-2004.

Figure 4.12: Great African Steps on Constitution Hill
Angela Buckland, Building Democracy series, date unknown.

Figure 4.13: Chamber Court
Angela Buckland, *Building Democracy* series, date unknown.

Figure 4.14: (left) Security gates leading to the Chambers of Justice Johann van der Westhuizen. (right) Security gates leading to the Chambers of Justice Tholakele Madala.

Figure 4.15: Andrew Verster and Andries Botha, wooden entrance doors, 2001-2004.

Figure 4.16: Judith Mason, *The Man Who Sang and the Woman who Kept Silent* 2, 1995, mixed media, c221 x 70 x 45 cm.

Figure 4.17: Judith Mason, *The Man Who Sang and the Woman who Kept Silent 1*, 1995, oil on board, 166 x 122 cm.

Figure 4.18: Judith Mason, *The Man Who Sang and the Woman who Kept Silent 3*, 1995, oil on board, 190 x 160 cm.

Figure 4.19: Victoria, *Body Map*, 2002, digital inkjet print on paper, 74 x 41 cm.

CONCLUSION

According to Lynn and Wisely, at the core of philanthropy and the “Four Traditions” is the “vision of human connectedness,” the desire to shape beliefs and values in order to bring people together.\(^\text{260}\) Artists have the potential to serve as catalysts for “connectedness.” Their work has the ability to represent the artist’s voice, can raise awareness of social or political situations, and encourages dialogue among others. Art has the ability to create change.

The South African artists and art highlighted throughout this paper are only a few examples of many that potentially express philanthropic action through relief, improvement, reform, and civic engagement. Congruently, South Africa is not the only case study to which this theory may be applicable. By realizing the connections between art history and philanthropy, we may develop a better understanding of the importance art plays in shifting social mores and deepening “human connectedness.”

\(^{260}\) Lynn and Wisely, “The Four Traditions of Philanthropy,” 103.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


