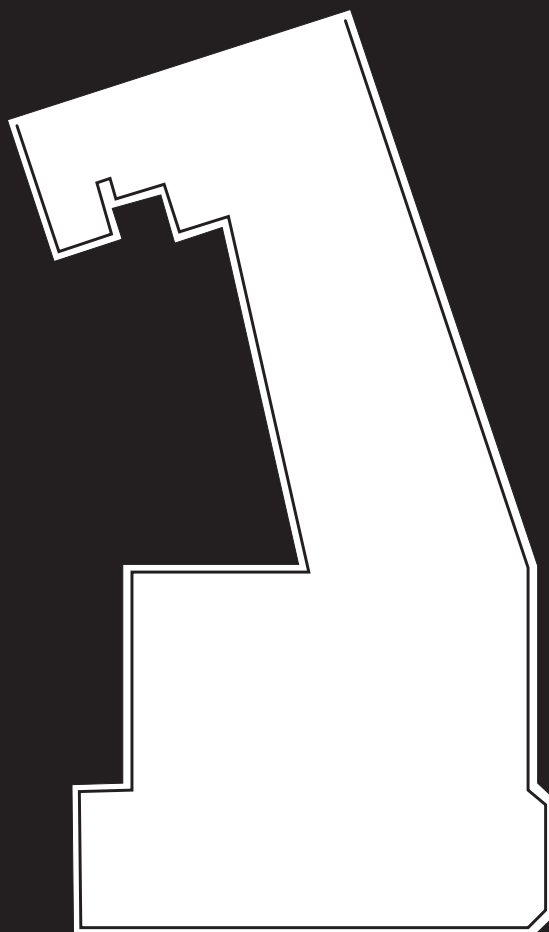




Untitled (cnr Bertha & Juta Street, Johannesburg)





Untitled (cnr Bertha & Juta Street, Johannesburg)

a mixed media exhibition by Johan Kritzinger

Thursday 24 November 2005

a one night show

5th Floor
IFS Insurance Building
62 Juta Street, Braamfontein
Johannesburg (Cultural Arc)
South Africa

cnr Bertha & Juta Street, JHB 

crn Harrison & Fox Street, JHB 

cnr Commissioner & Harrison Street, JHB 

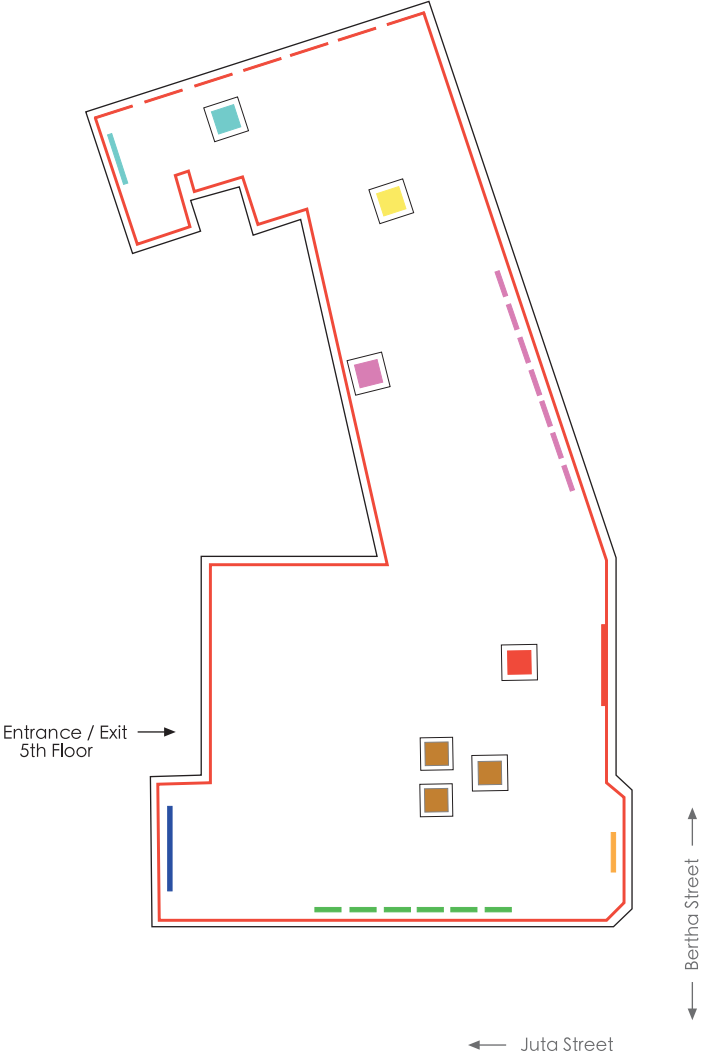
cnr Carr & Quinn Street, JHB 

cnr Miriam Makeba & Jeppe Street, JHB 

cnr Commissioner & Von Wielligh Street, JHB 

cnr Banket & Goldreigh Street, JHB 

cnr Hospital & Kotze Street, JHB 



introduction

This catalogue is the final component of the, 'Untitled' (cnr Bertha & Juta Street, Johannesburg) show. This catalogue has been developed as a means for me to further expand on the conceptual frame of each work in relation to the body presented, as well as to the actual historical context. In opening, each work can broadly be defined as a personal exploration of a specific site within the city of Johannesburg, with each work titled to the actual street location and position within the city. In this way, the catalogue serves as a map or navigation tool with which to navigate my personal relationship to the city of Johannesburg, which is the place of my birth and origin. This catalogue and the format of a 'book' serve the utilitarian purpose of being a easily distributable version of the show.

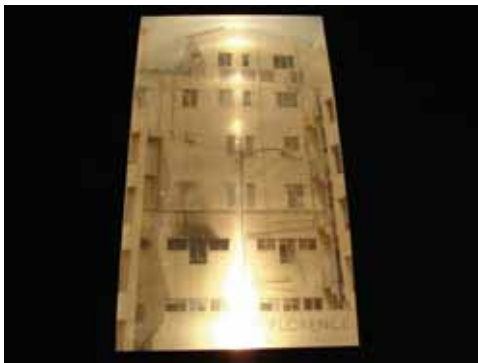
The work within this show investigates the overly obsessive contextualization of the self and the mapping of a system of responses to places that for some reason held importance to me. This importance was either related to an obscure fascination with a place or the constant encountering of a place along the routes of my everyday travels within Johannesburg. My conceptual approach was based on an initially empirical attitude that triggered intuitive responses to each place. For the most part, the responses functioned as an attack or a challenging of the ideas that these places have come to represent, whether physical or social in nature. One could say that I have developed a primarily skeptical view of existing structures and contexts. The only way for me to engage with these places resulted in the taking of ownership of the investigated sites. I hereby place myself in a position to deconstruct and reconstruct each site to my own ends, or to reconstruct it in such a way as to reveal flaws of its own making. The dichotomy of 'outside and inside', 'self and other' is imploded by the extension of self. Some of my key ideas and interests relate to: Site-specific research and investigation, the formation of connections / associations based on personal / physical responses, public / spatial practice, navigation / exploration, and multi-disciplinary practice.

In relation to the final site of the show, it is important to distinguish that this show did not take place in the context of a formal gallery, but was rather housed in an empty commercial office space. This reflects my notions of existing on the periphery or border of the art world. The decision to produce a show despite this, reveals an insight into my personal attitude and motivational system. I knew that it was the right time, and the show had to be presented.

My choice of using mixed media for the execution of each work is based on the idea of not wanting to fall into a trap of being associated with a specific medium. I was criticized by a fellow artist that my final execution was lacking skilled craftsmanship, and yes, it probably was. It is not in my current interest to master any specific medium; I rather enjoy the freedom of being 'a Jack of all trades'. I was however concerned about achieving a conceptual integrity. I rather intended to display my interest in sensitivity to context and place in relation to the sense of self.

In closing, this show was intended as a farewell tribute to Johannesburg. The show marked a conclusion to my interests in production about and around the city, and was one of the last public showings of my work prior to my departure from Johannesburg. It also marks an important development in my production, as it has allowed me to broaden my artistic interests. A Cape Town based artist recently asked me why Johannesburg-based artists always make art about Johannesburg? So, in conclusion it can be said that a one-night show is as much an opening as it is a closing, that one nightstand on the eve of a much-needed departure.





Untitled (cnr Bertha & Juta Street, Johannesburg). Multiple exhibition installation and detail views

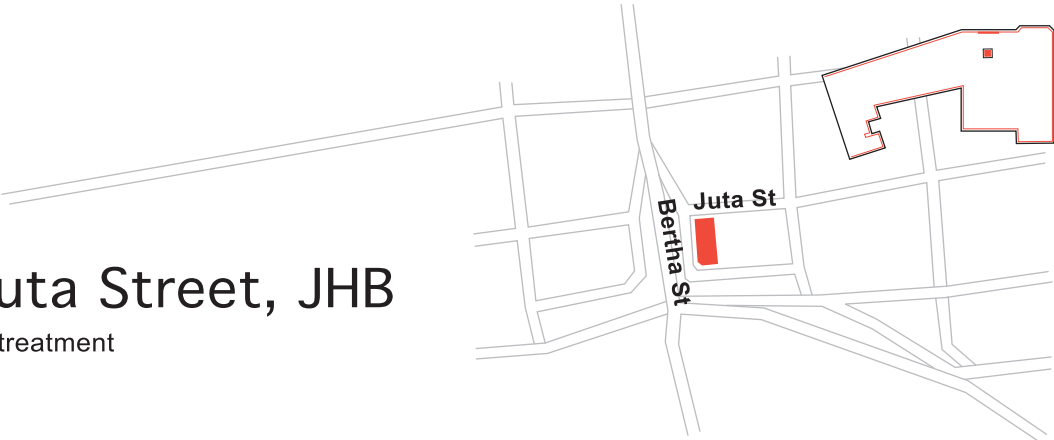


cnr Bertha & Juta Street, Johannesburg. Installation and detail views of spatial treatment



cnr Bertha & Juta Street, JHB

White sheeting plastic: Spatial treatment
60m x 1.5m *(197' x 5')
2005



“cnr Bertha & Juta Street, Johannesburg” is the first work that a viewer would encounter upon entering the site and more specifically the piece which contains all the other works, as well as the audience. The work represents the title of the show and is the title of the work that is a treatment / adjustment to the exhibition space. The title refers to a physical location, introducing the viewer to a process of navigation.

The space that was utilized for the show is located in Braamfontein, over looking the Nelson Mandela Bridge to Newtown. The building is the former IFS Insurance building, of which the 5 story high building is predominantly empty and neglected office spaces, apart from a copy shop located at the ground level and a couple artist studios on the 3rd floor. The building is also strategically positioned on the proposed Johannesburg Cultural Arc, a route of defined cultural wealth within the inner city that will soon be enriched with the largest public art project of the city’s regeneration scheme.

The work within the building is principally a spatial treatment that emerged out of two simultaneous needs which address the same aspect of the space. One need emerged from a utilitarian approach,

while the other emerged of a conceptual approach to the space. Basically, the entire periphery of the space is covered with large windows, which limits the available wall space for 2 dimensional works and provides a full peripheral view of the city and Braamfontein. The work then functions in duality, as a utilitarian solution to generating needed wall space (repurposing the commercial office space into the format and aesthetic of a gallery), as well as functioning as a conceptual limitation to the inherent view that the building provides. Large rolls of white sheeting plastic were used to cover the windows and the only view left to the viewer was a Southern view towards the inner city. The Southern view was intended as an inversion of the historical migratory view away from the city towards the north.

The space as a piece offers two distinct views of the inner city. One view is based on the idea that each of the separate works within the show represents a specific view and interpretation of a site / location within the inner city and the other view is that which is directed towards the physical actual city. A double-bladed sword.



cnr Bertha & Juta Street roof view (south). Pre-installation view of space. Nelson Mandela Bridge. Proposed map of the Cultural Arc (JDA)



cnr Harrison & Fox Street, Johannesburg. Installation and detail views





cnr Harrison & Fox Street, JHB

Fabriano paper, soft pastel, charcoal, cotton thread, acid based tape and internal lighting system
 210cm x 110cm *(7' x 4')
 2003 - 2005

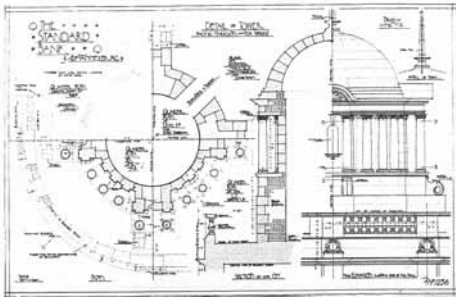
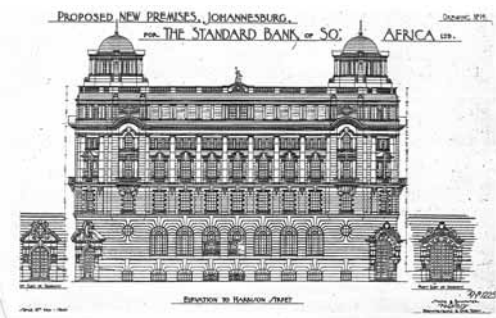
The place being represented in the work, is the Standard Bank Building, which is located on the corner of Harrison and Fox Street in the Marshall Town area of the inner city. The building was erected 1906, within the high capitalist financial sector of the old mining region of Johannesburg. Today, this entire area of town is part of the city's redevelopment district. Over the past 100 years, the building has been redeveloped and refurbished multiple times in an effort to preserve it against the passage of time. As a result, the building appears as an unaffected symbol of power in the heart of a city ridden with crime and poverty.

This work, however, is an attempt to investigate the dynamic and constant struggle between deterioration and regeneration that exists throughout the greater Johannesburg inner city area. I have utilized the representation of this specific site as an example of what is happening around the building in the greater context. Another very

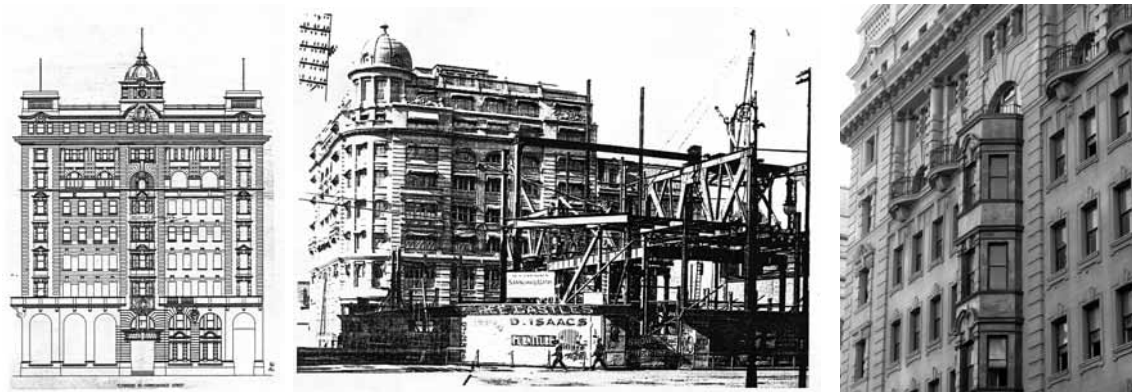
important motivation to utilizing a representation of this building is based on a criticism of the capitalistic ideological motivations that this particular place imbues.

The medium and materials have been used in such a way as to try to capture and embody the observational findings. I have used acid-based tape on the reverse of the work as a structural foundation to the reconstructed drawing with the intent that over time, with the help of a light / heat catalyst, the work itself will begin to show signs of its own deterioration. The attention of the viewer is directed towards the assemblage and construction of the work as a channel towards understanding the meaning.

As such, this work can also be considered a 'vanitas' scene, in that it examines the inevitability of death and the shortness of life, whether one is referring to ideas of structure, ideology or self.



images from - Johannesburg Style, Architecture and Society 1880s-1960s



images from - Johannesburg Style, Architecture and Society 1880s-1960s

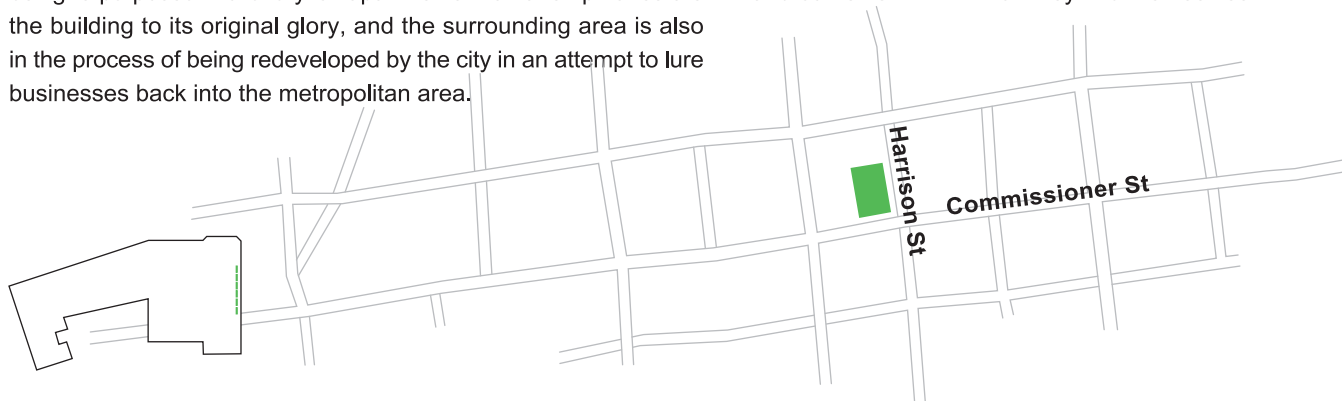
cnr Commissioner & Harrison Street, JHB

Series of 6 prints
 Linocut print on Fabriano paper, glaseline and cotton thread
 *(2' x 1') 60cm x 42cm
 2005

The specific site being explored in this work is the Corner House building, which historically housed the richest mining magnates and was one of the first skyscrapers in the old Johannesburg (built around 1903). It was also one of the first buildings in Johannesburg to utilize the steel frame design, called 'The American Principal' which developed out of New York City. Due to social change in the inner city in the mid to late 80's and the constant migration towards the north of Johannesburg, the building was emptied and mothballed. The area was left to social decline, resulting in high levels of crime and other illegal activity. Despite the decline in the social and physical environment surrounding the site, the exterior of the 'Corner House' building has remained in pristine condition.

Today the building, which is located in the Marshall Town area, is being re-purposed into luxury loft apartments in an attempt to restore the building to its original glory, and the surrounding area is also in the process of being redeveloped by the city in an attempt to lure businesses back into the metropolitan area.

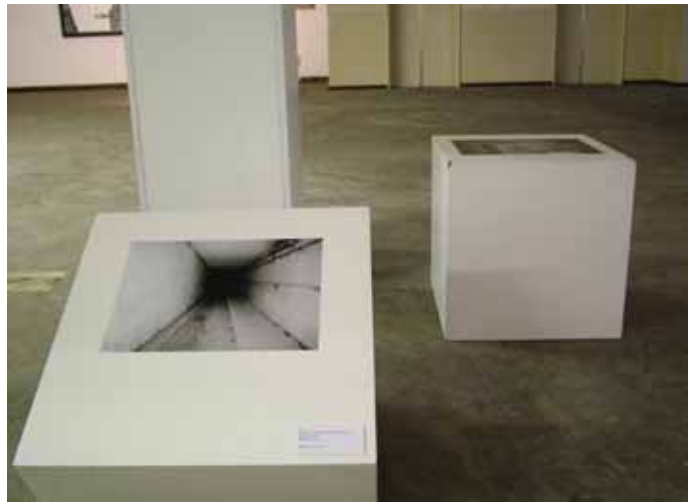
This work is a look at the site, and is composed of three specific elements over a series of six prints. The distant and imposing structure of the Corner House building forms the static backdrop, with a prominent 'solid' column that frames the foreground, and an erratic translucent form that drifts over the composition through the series. The solid column is actually the column of the Standard Bank building and implies a spatial relation between the work and the two buildings. The translucent form is the visual stylization of a defect in my personal field of vision. This defect obscures an accurate observation of the specific site and as a result, projects this defect upon the perceived structure. In my realization that my subjective view is tainted with defects, I assume that the symbols of power and place around me are also tainted with defects that might be closed out of public observation, but underlie the histories and contexts within which they find themselves.





crn Commissioner & Harrison Street, Johannesburg. Installation and detail views





cnr Carr & Quinn Street, Johannesburg. Installation and detail views



cnr Carr & Quinn Street, JHB

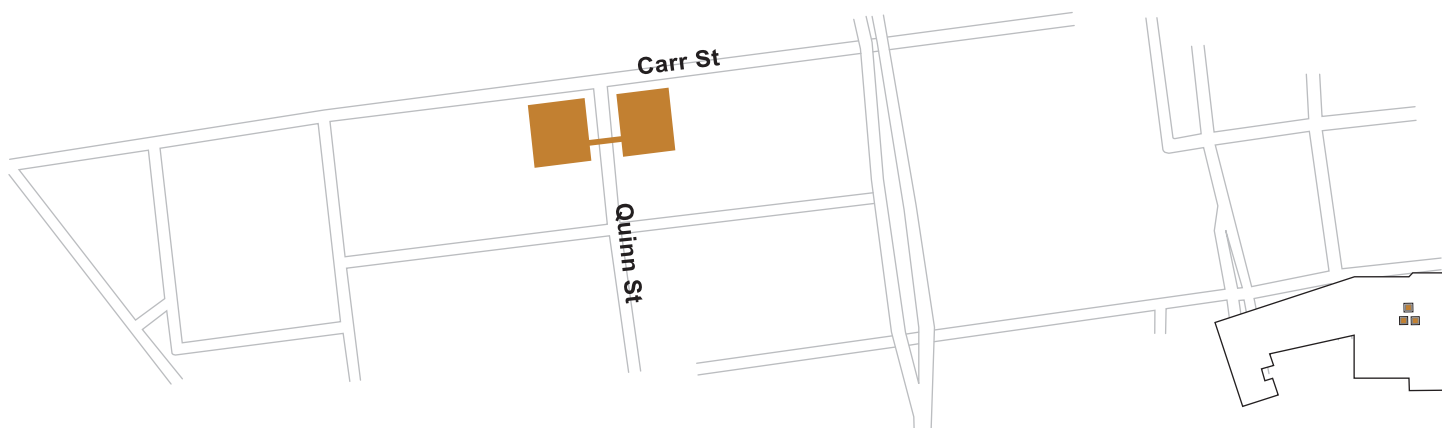
Series of 3 prints (selected)
Photographic print mounted on plinths
2003

This work was extracted from a selective body of photographic documentation that grew out of an urban exploration project. This work is mapped to the buildings located on either side of Carr & Quinn Street. Quinn Street marks the furthestmost western border of the Newtown Cultural Precinct, which is part of the Johannesburg City urban renewal program. The buildings were the old premises of Premier Milling, with the old office building on the eastern side of Quinn, and the actual old mills were located across the street but are connected with an aerial walkway. Both buildings have been neglected and abandoned but the old offices have been redeveloped into new office and entertainment spaces.

The exploration was documented in black and white film using a disposable style camera. The idea was to create photographic evidence that embodied the spontaneous quality of exploration.

The key frames of reference are, accessing 'no go' areas, the spirit of adventure and exploration, and the attempt to capture documentation of what seems an inherently 'foreign' landscape.

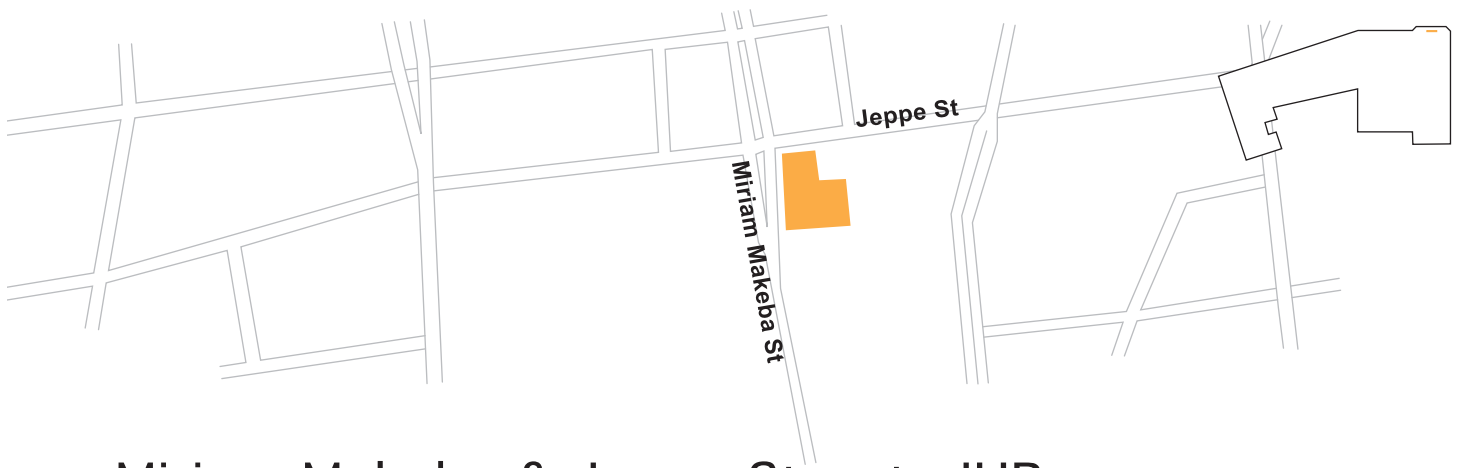
The three selected prints were presented on white plinths in the orientations of the camera and scaled down in height / spatial relation to each other based on their proximity during the actual documentation experience. This was an attempt to recreate and solidify the space and experience of the exploration. The full series of photographs was published in a separate book titled, cnr Carr & Quinn Street, Johannesburg, in early 2006.





crn Miriam Makeba & Jeppe Street, Johannesburg. Installation and detail views





cnr Miriam Makeba & Jeppie Street, JHB

Digital ink jet print on archival paper, cotton, thread, frame and nails
 62.5cm x 44.5cm *(2' x 1.5')
 2004 - 2005

The Turbine Hall is the site of interest with this work and is also located in the Newtown Cultural Precinct. The building has been listed as a landmark and also a heritage site by the Johannesburg city Council. The building was built sometime around the 1920's and is considered one of the finest examples of industrial architecture in Johannesburg. The Turbine Hall was home to Johannesburg's first coal-fired power station but eventually it became inoperative and the city's electrical department moved out its offices. The building was 'mothballed' and has remained dilapidated and neglected for the last 20 years.

In late 2004, after negotiations with the city and the property owners, AngloGold Ashanti finalized their decision to move its global headquarters into a portion of the Turbine Hall. The city also indicated a desire to develop a new art gallery in the other portion of the building.

My response to the site emerged out of another urban exploration project in 2003 and again in 2005. The early project was an exploration of the interior landscape of the abandoned building,

whereas the later exploration was from the perspective of the outsider looking in on a building that was being stripped and repurposed into a functional space. I selected one image from the earlier interior images and one of the later exterior images to construct the final work. The work became a reconstruction of the site that revealed the fragile and shifting nature of the building. These references were then heavily worked; drawing, burning drawings, re-drawing and finally scanning images to further manipulate the images before assembling the piece into a construction. An emphasis on 'building materials' was used to recreate the piece. The importance of the framing of the piece related to the controversy aroused by the roomers of the Johannesburg art gallery's move to this site away from its position in Joubert Park. The controversy is linked to the idea that if the Museum did move from its current historical and purpose built building, into the new 'hip' Newtown area, it would be a final and lethal blow in terms of the abandonment of the deep inner Johannesburg city. The Johannesburg Art Gallery has not moved and apparently will not be moving out of the inner city.



Documentation from urban explorations of the old Turbine Hall building

cnr Commissioner & Von Wielligh Street, JHB

Jelutong wood, hook & eye clips, gut and digital print mounted on plinth
60cm x 60cm x 200cm *(2' x 2' x 6')
2005

The Carlton Centre Building was the tallest office building in Africa, measuring 223 meters above street level, it has 50 floors, with a viewing deck on the 50th floor. The viewing deck is targeted at tourist interest and is appropriately titled, 'Top of Africa'. The Carlton Center is a skyscraper and shopping centre located in downtown Johannesburg. The building was completed in 1973, about 2 years after the World Trade Center in New York and this construction played an important role in the notion that Johannesburg was the 'New York of Africa'.

This piece is a simple deconstruction of a building as a symbol of power. The building can be seen as a structure that embodies the idea of western Modernism or International Style architecture. One

of the attributes of International Style was that the design solutions were indifferent to location, site, and climate. In this way, the building made no reference to local history or national vernacular and was a complete disregard of the African context. The building still has a very prominent and overarching view of the city, and in that way remains a point and position from which the western world constructs ideas of Africa from a safe distance.

I have deconstructed the building to the point that it is an exploded view. A striking resemblance and reference to the World Trade Center is implied and has a lot to do with my distant but relevant relationship to America, as well as my interest and plans to travel to New York City in mid 2006.



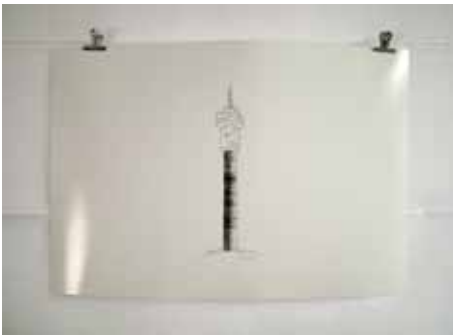
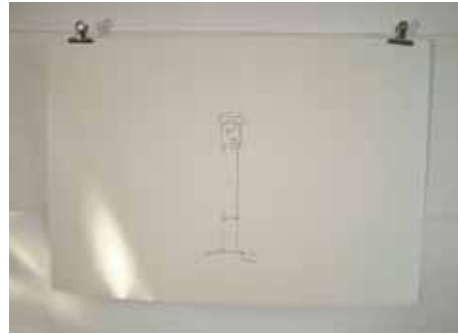
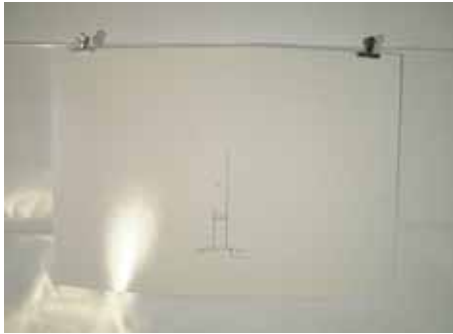
Views and detail images from Carlton Center, 'Top of Africa'





crn Commissioner & Von Wielligh Street, Johannesburg. Installation and detail views





cnr Goldreich & Banket Street, Johannesburg. Installation and detail views

cnr Goldreich & Banket Street, JHB

Stop-motion animation and printed stills, inkjet on archival paper
55 sec animation and *42cm x 29.7cm prints *(1' 4" x 1')
2005 (The Hillbrow Tower Project, 2003 - 2006)

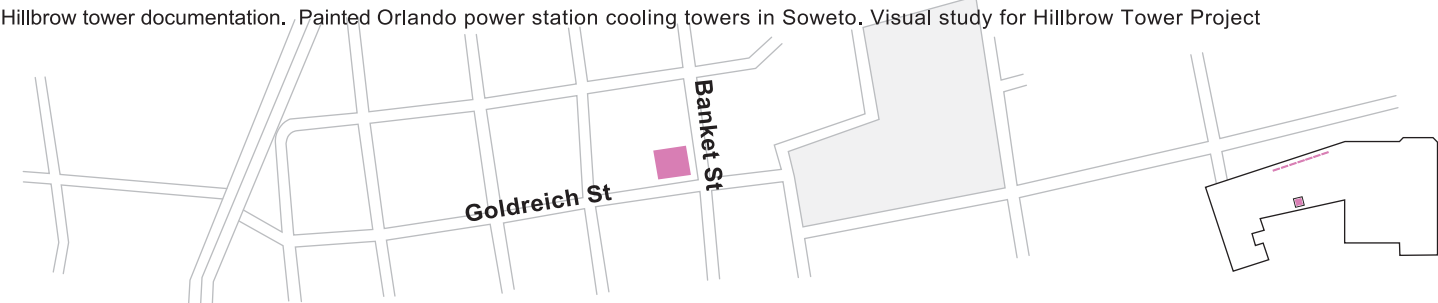
The construction of the Hillbrow Tower in Johannesburg commenced early in 1968, and was completed three years later in 1971. The top of the tower rose to 269 meters above the street level of Hillbrow, which marked the tower as being the tallest structure in Africa. The height of the tower was needed to ensure that skyscrapers being erected in Johannesburg would not interfere with the microwave signal. The signals from the tower move in straight lines, which means they need to be transmitted in a clear, unobstructed line of sight between stations. The Hillbrow Tower was closed to the public on 1 January 1981, as it was identified as a strategic point for terrorist attacks against the Apartheid Regime. The Hillbrow Tower is the most recognizable landmark / icon of the city of Johannesburg. Today Hillbrow is also one of the most degraded and neglected areas of in Johannesburg and the greater context of South Africa. Hillbrow is a poverty-stricken area that is plagued with high crime rates and many high-rise buildings plagued by inhumane living conditions.

My personal interest in the Hillbrow Tower emerged out of the

drawing of connections between the 'Tower' and myself. The most direct connection being that I was born in Hillbrow and therefore connect with the 'Tower' as a vertical marker of my personal origin. My Initial response and approach was primarily based on the documentation of the tower from various directions, distances and at various times. This documentation was an ongoing practice until my departure from the city in March, 2006. The concept that emerged was inspired by a road trip through Soweto Township, where I was exposed to the painted old Orlando Power Station Cooling Towers. These huge painted surfaces inspired the idea of utilizing the external surface of the Hillbrow Tower for artistic intervention. I then met with a group of like-minded individuals, and developed very extensive research, as well as conceptualized a full turn key regeneration program linked to the realization of the original tower project. A proposal was developed, but nothing emerged and eventually the building was branded with the Telkom corporate logo, a telecommunications corporation that controls a monopoly within the South African telecommunications industry.



Hillbrow tower documentation. Painted Orlando power station cooling towers in Soweto. Visual study for Hillbrow Tower Project





Detail views of Workshop participants in progress

I continued production on a personal level until 2005, when I shared the idea with Christian Nerf, another Johannesburg-based artist. Christian was busy setting up a Workshop at his studios and invited me to participate as a project manager. We brainstormed on possible routes and finally established what both of us would like to have as an outcome of the process. The workshop was a very successful process and over the 3-day period the project was introduced to over 50 local and national artists at various levels of their careers. A large format (6m x 1m * 20' x 3') heavily layered mixed media painting of the Tower on paper was one of the major outcomes. This large painting was rolled up and stored for later use.

The animation and stills that were utilized in the, “cnr Bertha

& Juta Street, Johannesburg” show were developed out of previous drawings and the rolled up ‘Tower’ artifact that emerged as a result of the workshop. The animation follows the narrative of the maturation and development of a structure that became the surface of creative flare, which eventually crumbles and collapses. Maybe even a prophetic view of my own birth, life and ending.

As an extension and continuation of the project after the exhibition, in February 2006, I flew down to Cape Town with the intention of installing the large format ‘Tower’ painting in the public domain. It would not make sense to install the tower in Johannesburg; it would have more social value if installed somewhere where it would be less expected. There has always

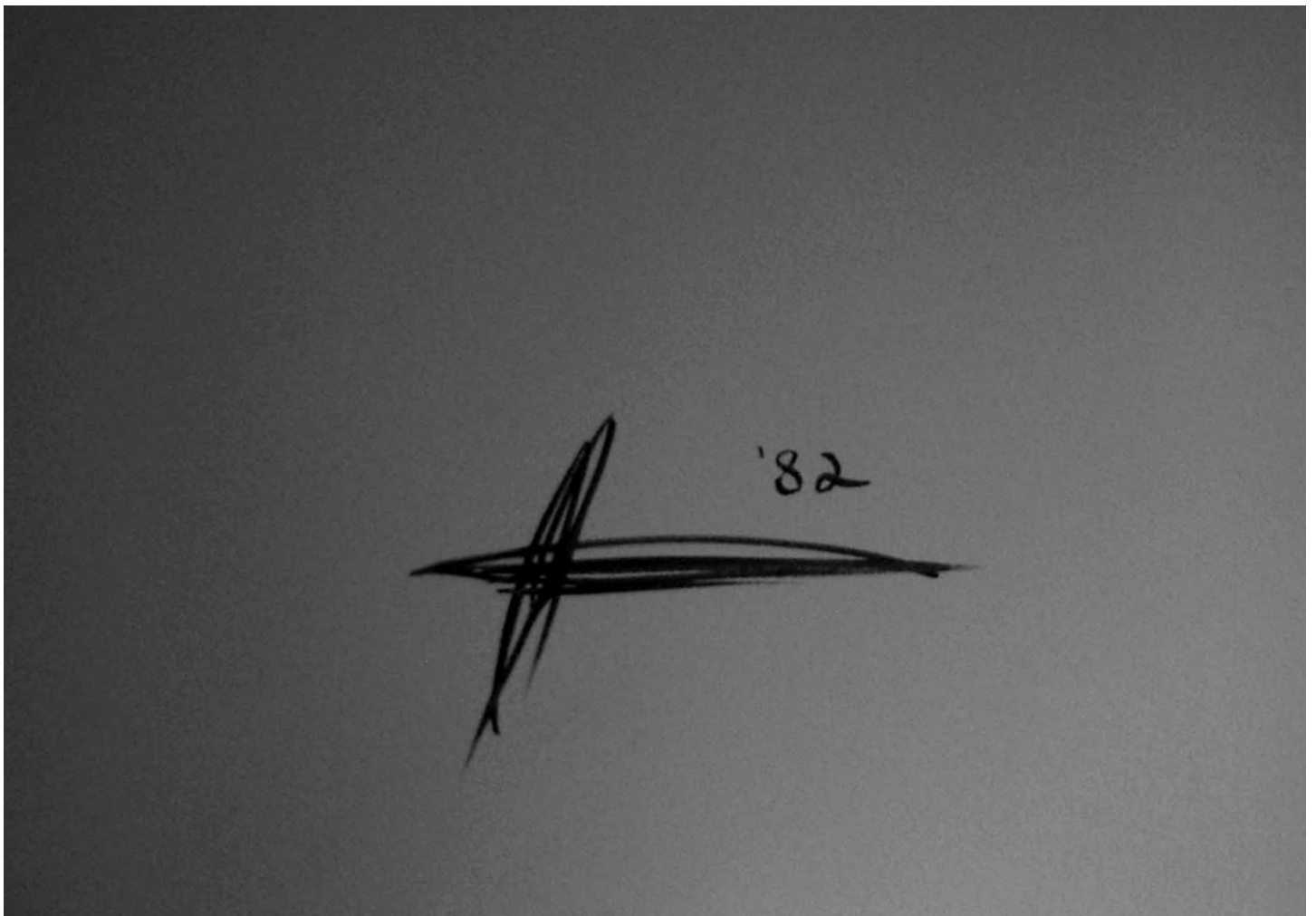


Installation views of Tower cut-out on bridge, Cape Town 2006

been an undercurrent of tension between Johannesburg and Cape Town, which set a more interesting and critical condition in which to continue the project.

I immediately began location scouting and was drawn to what appears to be a symbol of engineering / architectural failure, the highway off ramps that end in mid-space that hover above

and around the city. An interesting relation is that the Hillbrow Tower was seen as a symbol of engineering / architectural achievement. After planning and preparing the needed materials, the 'Hillbrow Tower' was installed illegally in Cape Town, on the 6th of February 2006 at Noon, where it remained for several months until it was washed off by the summer rain.



crn Hospital & Kotze Street, Johannesburg. Installation and detail views



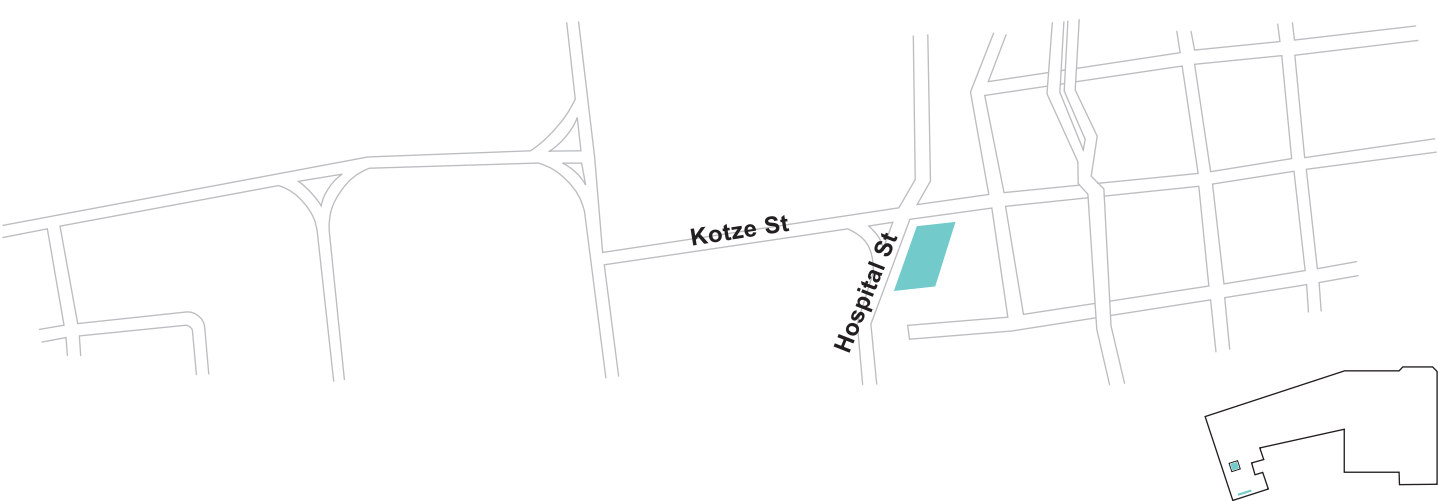
cnr Hospital & Kotze Street, JHB

Overhead projector, ink jet print on transparency and acrylic paint
1982 - ...

This work relies visually on the projection of an image of the place of my birth, the Florence Nightingale Clinic, in its current state. The image that was utilized in this work was shot in 2004 when upon passing the building, I noticed that a room on one of the floors had burned out. I documented the building and immediately began to identify and romanticize that the specific room was the actual place in which 'I' was born.

This work also marks the climatic point at which my work reflects my statement of production, whereby the site is completely embraced as an extension of self and I further extend that view to any space where the work is projected. This is also ironically the last work that

the viewer encounters when navigating through the entire show. The image is projected onto a wall and where the name of the clinic on the actual building had been painted out, I have signed the wall and dated it to the year of my birth. It is important to note that the signature is however not on the image of the clinic, but on the wall where the work is projected. This implies a further investigation into the effect of the extended self on an environment, as a result of birth. Not unlike the territorial 'tag' of a graffiti artist, I make my mark as an affirmation of my being 'here'. This particular work is intended to extend throughout my life and travels; I hope to continually encounter new spaces and even social structures that I might in turn utilize as further extensions of self.





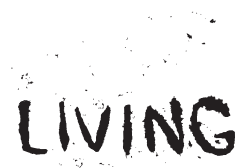
Thursday 24 November 2005



Thank you to everyone who has supported me through the realization of this project and beyond. It is only through the support and assistance of others that I have been able to complete any of my work. Special thanks to Ross and Don for helping me secure the space and assisting in coordination, Michael for assistance throughout, Christian for all the support on the Hillbrow Tower Project, Thomas for helping out on installation, Zander for his bathroom printing press and wooden spoon technique, Nicola for financial and moral support, My friends who have always been very much a part of what I do, and to my Family for being the foundation of everything I am. The show could also never have existed if it was not for those who came out to experience the show.



the trinity session



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