An investigation of the concept of 'mediated art' within the context of Rosalind Krauss's notion of the Post-Medium Condition

Nicholas Crooks

207520722

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DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort, and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Signature: ………………………………………….

Date: ………………………………………….

Supervisor: ………………………………………….

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study will explore, using qualitative analysis, critical texts relating to visual culture and media theory. With regards to this approach, the study will focus on specific contemporary theories of visual culture and media, with the selection of a few selected artworks to support and highlight these key arguments. The study is rooted in visual culture, and media theory derived from visual culture. Thus the researcher's positions will be reflected in the study, in keeping with the nature of qualitative research.

This investigation will take as its basis a perception of art from the perspective of the medium, rather than from its content or material basis.

While the study focuses on specific theories, when it comes to discussing or analysing actual artworks, Foucault's ascending type of analysis will be employed as it provides a less generalised process of analysis, starting with the artwork and ascending to theory. The study will explore the critical theories of art critics and the positions offered by the artists and their work. In Foucault's view, this process is much more accurate than trying to impose a view or theory on an artwork (Foucault 1980: 92).

The study will employ two lines of enquiry: firstly, an investigation into art theories dealing with the post-medium condition, medium, media or mediation; and secondly, the exegesis, which involves the activities in the studio and current artworks of the candidate.

The approach to the research will involve a non-empirical philosophical, sociological and historical study. Towards this aim, the qualitative analysis will investigate and explore theory relating to visual culture and media. The study is grounded within contemporary discourse both in media studies and visual culture.

i. Preliminary literature study

The study will follow a line of enquiry that informs the idea of the Post-Medium Condition, using discussions from the following sources: Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (1964); Rosalind Krauss's *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (2000); Mitchell and Hansen's *Critical Terms For Media Studies* (2010); Mark Hansen's *Framing the Digital Image: Embodiment and the Aesthetics of New Media* (2002); W.J.T. Mitchell's *Art and the Disciplines: Some Indicators* (2009); Hansen's *Bodies in Code* (2006); Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility* (1935, in Jennings, 2008); Lev Manovich's *Post-Media Aesthetics* (2005); and W.J.T. Mitchell's *Art, Fate and the Disciplines: Some Indicators* (2002).

McLuhan's *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (1964) highlights the characteristics of the medium, emphasising that the content is subordinate to the medium. "The medium is the message" is a phrase coined by McLuhan, who analyses each medium to expose the form rather than the content. In his view, medium is "any extension of ourselves" or, more broadly, "any new technology" (1964: 11). Our communication and how we see the world around us is mediated by these technologies and their forms or structures. The introduction of any new technology will have psychic and social effects in that our senses and bodies are reshaped into a new technical form. As McLuhan (1964: 11) puts it, our new, reshaped self falls into a "narcissistic hypnosis" — a state that prevents us from seeing "the real nature of media". McLuhan's dictum, "the medium is the message", informs the definition of the medium throughout this study.

The main thrust of this investigation is based on Rosalind Krauss's notion of the Post-Medium Condition as set out in *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (2000). Krauss defines the Post-Medium Condition (PMC) by highlighting the work of the artist Broodthaers, who engages with the PMC in working with the moment of obsolescence, when a medium becomes outmoded, and in looking

at how these older obsolete practices interact with the newer practices, of which they constitute a layer (Krauss 2000: 53).

Mitchell and Hansen's *Critical Terms for Media Studies* (2010) examines notions of media and how they are viewed from a contemporary standpoint within the context of New Media. Mitchell and Hansen adopt a McLuhanesque view of the media/medium and the mediated, where these combine to form a singular notion, with a new understanding of our context as determined from the viewpoint or perspective of the media: "Rather than determining our situation, we might better say that media are our situation" (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: xxii).

In *Framing the Digital-Image: Embodiment and the Aesthetics of New Media* (2002), Hansen examines Walter Benjamin's famous essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility*, which is still pertinent to efforts to unravel the functions of media in culture and art. In today's culture, the aura has receded into the background, but the question of the medium still exists, despite claims that with digitisation, media have become interchangeable (J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin's notion of "remediation"), or that media is obsolete (Freidrich Kittler's "digital convergence").

Hansen references Krauss's essay, "Reinventing the Medium" (1999), where she discusses the demise of the aura across all the arts and dubs this the "Post-Medium Condition" (Krauss 1999: 289-305). Krauss was one of the first contemporary theorists to tackle issues of the medium, and Hansen actively engages with Krauss's notion of the PMC.

Hansen also deals with the theory of embodiment, as supported by French philosopher Henri Bergson. The process of embodiment involves the body working with media to make information perceptible. Hansen asks, however, what is "new" about the New Media, as a medium can only be reinvented once it has become obsolete (Hansen, 2006: 3) or, as Krauss puts it, dysfunctional. Hansen affirms that "the virtual belongs to the body and not to the technology" (2006: 6).

In W.J.T. Mitchell's *Art, Fate, and the Disciplines: Some Indicators* (2009: 1023-1030), he discusses approaches to the topic of art. He is concerned with current questions about the fate of disciplines in an age of interdisciplinarity, technology, and what may be seen to be the deskilling or the abandonment of traditional media. Mitchell asserts that an indiscipline has risen in the discipline of visual culture or visual studies, stemming from the incursions of semiotics, literary studies, anthropology, and film and media studies (2009: 1023). This study will investigate the so-called obsolescence of traditional disciplines and the fate of disciplines in an age of interdisciplinarity.

The candidate is aware that the notion of the PMC is complex, and part of this exploration is an attempt to unravel and clarify the surrounding discourse. The research will focus on various texts on media/the medium and mediation in an attempt to engage both with the medium and with Krauss's notion of the PMC. These texts offer a range of opinions and ideas that will be discussed and debated so as to dynamically explore the topic.

ii. The exegesis

An empirical study of the candidate's practical artwork and practice-based research will take the form of an exegesis that gives linage and linkage to the dissertation. Works of art in progress in the studio of the candidate at the Centre for Visual Arts (CVA) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Pietermaritzburg will be observed and documented. In this way, the candidate becomes both the researcher and participant. The data collected will be in the form of digital photos, notes and sketchbooks, with critical self-reflection to show the position of the artist's work in relation to its historical content. There will be an explanation of studio-based process.

The analytical objectives describe and explain the relationships between media theories and the candidate's work. A portion will be self-reflective, concerning materials and the candidate's particular way of thinking. Art-historical processes pertaining to materials, philosophy and disciplines will also be discussed.

1. In the candidate's exploration into different artistic traditions that mediate his work, these traditions and the materials used in the artworks are discussed, and reference made to their source.

2. The candidate will consider his work and processes within the context of the Post-Medium Condition. The thrust is to locate the study within the context of contemporary discourse, notably within the context of the Post-Medium. The particular aspect of the Post-Medium that the candidates' works reflects is that of the 'problem' of the notion of medium.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The study is an exploration of the dynamic nature of the notion of medium within art criticism and art practice. The point of departure in Chapter 1 is an examination of the concepts of "media" and "mediation", followed by a discussion of the traditional understanding of the medium as expressed in Clement Greenberg's notions of "pure art and "media specificity". In Chapter 2, the Post-Medium era is introduced, with particular reference made to Rosalind Krauss's (born 1941) theory of the "Post-Medium Condition" (PMC), Mark Hansen's (born 1948) investigation and criticism of Krauss's work, and Marshall McLuhan's (1911-1980) notion that "the medium is the message". A central aim of the investigation is to show that the notion of medium is both complex and dynamic. Even though Krauss, McLuhan and Hansen offer different interpretations of the notion of medium, they contextualise their ideas within historical and cultural circumstances.

To illuminate the argument, the work and ideas of the following contemporary artists will be investigated in Chapter 3: William Kentridge (born 1955), James Coleman (born 1941) and, to a lesser extent, Jeff Wall (born 1946). The study will investigate the effects of medium and art practice with reference to these artists. Kentridge and Coleman are pertinent to the study in that Krauss recognises both of them as artists who have "invented a medium" and thus, in her opinion, support her view on the PMC. In Krauss's argument, it is this process of "inventing a medium" that gives rise to the PMC. The study will investigate Krauss's criticism of Jeff Wall as an artist who, while upheld by others as a Post-Medium (PM) artist, does not fit into her conception of the PMC. Wall uses what Krauss calls a "signature format" and, she sets this "signature format" against Kentridge and Coleman.

In Chapter 4, the work of the candidate, Nicholas Crooks, will be investigated, as it relates to and engages with the ideas of medium specificity, immediacy and remediation. Moreover, the candidate's practical research will be discussed in terms of the layering of conventions, where a layering of the new media, namely the technology of the digital print, is superimposed over the traditional and now obsolete analog marks of painting

and drawing. Although the candidate's work does not fulfil the criteria of Krauss's PMC, it is investigated in terms of the Post-Medium. Furthermore, the investigation will expand the candidate's theoretical knowledge of the practice of art and in so doing will remediate the candidate's outlook. The candidate's practice-based research will investigate Bolter and Grusin's work on remediation and immediacy, as the candidate finds that these two research areas are pertinent to his practice and relate to terms of mediation that are discussed in this dissertation written in partial fulfilment of a Master's degree in Fine Arts (MAFA).

1.1 The concept of "media"

As a starting point, the study needs to explore the meanings of the word "medium", in particular how the concept of the medium relates to the notion of media and what role the notion of mediation plays in the operation of a medium or of media more generally.

The approach in this dissertation explores how the concept of media can be ambiguous with regard to its singular and plural forms, the forms in which it is presented, its technical platform and how it is viewed from varied theoretical points of view. This study will support the view of the media as a component of human existence, where the human is seen as a "biotechnical" form of life (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: ix). The study will make reference to the term media in the singular form, as something other than a simple accumulation of individual mediums.

1.2 The concept of "mediation"

The concept of mediation can broadly refer to the idea that there is something in between what we intend to do and how we do it. For instance, a Mesolithic man who is skinning an animal with a flint tool may believe the action is unaided by that tool. Yet the tool takes the role of mediating the action. Bernard Stiegler views this "co-originarity" between ourselves and techniques as having had a direct effect on our evolution as a species. We used tools to make other tools, giving rise to technics — the techniques of

invention. This also relates to the birth of human consciousness of mediation or a mediated action (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: xiii).

Among the definitions for mediation provided by the Oxford English Dictionary (Online Edition, 2010) are: "Agency or action as an intermediary; the state or fact of serving as an intermediate agent, a means of action, or a medium of transmission, instrumentally"; "The interposition of stages or processes between stimulus and result, or intention and realisation". Our technological inventions are extensions of ourselves; our competencies depend on them to such a degree that they have become part of our identity and, as such, are not separate from us. Mitchell and Hansen go on to say that we are "all practitioners of media studies, whether we recognise it or not" (Mitchell & Hansen, 2010: viii). Media such as newspapers and television are forms through which information itself is mediated.

1.3 The traditional notion of the medium: Greenberg's notion of a "pure art" and his popularisation of the term "medium specificity"

In order to establish the notion of medium in its accepted traditional paradigm and to illuminate Krauss's notion of a "different specificity", it is necessary to discuss Krauss's former mentor, Clement Greenberg (1909–1994), an art critic who can be located in the modernist era. Greenberg espouses the idea that works of art in their perfect expression are uncontaminated by the influence of other media, and refers to this as "medium specificity" (Greenberg, 1940: 269-310) suggests that

> "only by ... excluding from each art whatever is intelligible in the terms of any other sense [would the] arts attain the 'purity' and self-sufficiency which they desired ... Purity in art consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art ... The arts, then, have been hunted back to their mediums, and there they have been isolated, concentrated and defined." (Greenberg 1940: 304-5)

Greenberg also asserts that "It is by virtue of its medium that each art is unique and strictly itself" (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: 12), and argues for the importance of fine art as a way of resisting mass culture. For Greenberg, flatness determines the essential characteristics of painting and any canvas that betrays the least hint of spatial illusion violates the basic premise. The medium of paint would fulfil Greenberg's call for purity, a purity that was later seen as exclusionary and repressive, and was not sustained.

The term "medium-specific" means that an artwork is defined by the qualities of the materials used. For example, a painting is made up of paint and surface. This distinct materiality of artistic media is primarily defined by convention. But this convention can be challenged, as T. S. Eliot wrote in his essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent": "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone … you cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead" (Eliot 1921: 2). In order for a medium to have characteristic qualities, these must have been grounded in tradition, thus undermining Greenberg's notion.

In his 1766 essay "Läocoon", which investigates the limits of painting and poetry, Gotthold Lessing, the German philosopher and art critic of the Enlightenment, argues against the tendency to take Horace's *ut pictura poesis* (as painting so poetry) as prescriptive for literature. In other words, he objected to the approach to writing poetry that utilised the same devices as painting. Instead, Lessing asserted that poetry and painting had their own characteristics, and that for an artwork to be successful, it needed to adhere to the specific stylistic properties of its own medium.

Lessing's request for a distinction between media is taken up by Greenberg in his 1940 essay "Towards a New Läocoon", which scrutinises the "plastic" arts. An abstract painter focuses on the materiality of his medium, so an abstract painting achieves purity of expression in that its focus lies in its medium specificity. The painter frees himself from the constraints of subject matter and the painting communicates only its inherent properties. By not imitating nature, it escapes the conditions of sculpture, which projects the illusion of three-dimensional space. Greenberg sees the movement towards abstract as a gradual "surrender" to the flat surface (Greenberg 1940: 8). This obtuseness of

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understanding by abstract artists comes closest to identifying the essence of the art form and Greenberg's notion of medium specificity.

Greenberg maintains that music is abstract and therefore pure and not to be described in terms of other media. Medium-specific painting found its way through music. Russian painter and art theorist Wassily Kandinsky had a similar viewpoint, and in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (Bernstein 2004: 1)*,* he wrote: "With few exceptions music has been for some centuries the art which has devoted itself not to the reproduction of natural phenomena, but rather to the expression of the artist's soul, in musical sound." Painting, he wrote, should operate only within the processes specific to itself, as music does when it appeals directly to sensation.

Chapter 2 explores challenges to the traditional understanding of media and mediation presented here, and in particular to Greenberg's ideas about "pure art" and "media specificity". The work of Rosalind Krauss, Mark Hansen and Marshall McLuhan explores the problem of the notion of 'medium', and the shift to a Post-Medium era.

CHAPTER 2: THE POST-MEDIUM ERA

This section explores the Post-Medium era by specifically examining Rosalind Krauss's theory of the "Post-Medium Condition" (PMC), Mark Hansen's investigation and criticism of Krauss's work, and Marshall McLuhan's dictum that "the medium is the message". The notion of the medium is both complex and dynamic; however, even though Krauss, McLuhan and Hansen offer different interpretations of the notion of medium, they contextualise their ideas within historical and cultural circumstances.

2.1 Rosalind Krauss: The Post-Medium Condition

Rosalind Krauss, one of the most influential art critics and theorists in the Post-Abstract Expressionist era, was a disciple of the Formalist Clement Greenberg. Her greatest contribution to art criticism came when she broke with Greenberg, who, as a Modernist, saw medium as the most expressive feature of an artwork. She thought the newer artistic movements deserved a different theoretical approach as they emphasised aesthetics that focused on a theme or cultural and historical issues—and not just on the aesthetic purity of form. Greenberg's criticism looked very much to purity of form. Krauss wrote that by the 1970s, art had entered the "Post-Medium" age, in which the medium of a work became less important than its expressive power and historical context. Post-Medium art forms did not attempt to engage an audience through a medium (Wolf 2012: 1).

Although she broke with Greenberg, Krauss still values his assessments on how an art object is put together and sometimes uses his notions about medium as a starting point for her critical engagement.

Krauss's most valued analysis of post-1980 art is through the work of South African artist William Kentridge. Krauss's articulation of the idea of technical support is derived from

Kentridge's work, in which compelling ideas are mixed with erasure of drawings for film. His work highlights the fact that the narrative is not the most relevant aspect. In her essays "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition" (1985) and "Photography's Discursive Spaces" (1985), Krauss writes about this formalist commitment in strong terms, against attempts to account for powerful artworks in terms of residual ideas about an artist's individual genius Greenberg's legacy, according to Krauss and her followers, accounts for works of art through the use of public, verifiable criteria.

In Krauss's exposition, the Post-Medium Condition (PMC) in art practice occurs when an artist incorporates his or her own narrative into the artwork: the artwork successfully reflects "on its own practice, with relation to the past" (obsolescence), and involves an "acknowledgement of the medium-specific practices that are being replaced or combined". (Krauss, 2000: 10) Rather than the Greenbergian notion of the "medium-specific", Krauss argues for a "different specificity". For Krauss, a medium is no longer defined in terms of its material or physical support; "medium specificity" retains its legitimacy only as a "different specificity". Krauss locates the specificity of a medium not within a medium's material limits but rather in the medium's relationship to the "essence of art itself". (Krauss 2000: 10)

Krauss expands the notion of a medium's "physical support" to what she terms its "technical support", which not only acknowledges a medium's past practice (material limits) but also refers to the development of new aesthetic conventions that "reinvent" the medium by rethinking the idea of art itself. (Krauss 2006: 62)

> "as a way of warding off the unwanted positivism of the term 'medium' which, in most readers' minds, refers to the specific material support for a traditional aesthetic genre … 'technical support', has the virtue of acknowledging the recent obsolescence of most traditional aesthetic mediums … while it also welcomes the layered mechanisms of new technologies that make a simple, unitary identification of the work's physical support impossible (the support of

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for example film, the strip, the screen, the splices of the edited footage, the projector's beam of light, the circular reels?)." (Krauss 2006: 55-62)

Krauss's examples include the works of Ed Ruscha, James Coleman and conceptual photographer Sophie Calle. However, she is reluctant to include intermedia and installation in an "expanded field", but acknowledges the aggregate or composite nature of media. In substituting the word "technical" for "physical", Krauss upholds the material nature of a medium next to the immateriality of the digital media. She champions the idea of medium specificity in order to uphold the legitimacy of medium in individuating forms of artistic practice in the contemporary New Media environment. The electronic and digital realm prompted Krauss to re-examine medium as it challenges the "concepts of medium and its specificity in the name of convergence" (Ji-hoon 2009: 114-123). Krauss maintains that a "medium is not reducible to its physical properties", that its identity is circumscribed by its unique and proper artistic territory (Ji-hoon 2009: 114-123). For Krauss, a medium becomes a supporting structure marshalled by "expressive possibilities or conventions" (Ji-hoon 2009: 114-123). On the one hand, Krauss reaffirms the prominence of material support on which the idea of the modernist Greenbergian medium specificity rests, while on the other, she does not believe that there is any relationship between the medium and its physical characteristics. She looks instead at the importance of questioning a medium's constraints through artistic expression. In this way, the medium opens itself for interplay between "conventions" and "possibilities" (Ji-hoon 2009: 114-123).

Artists such as Coleman and Kentridge access the historical layers of medium in their artworks as a way of acknowledging and recognising past medium practices to demystify them so that they "escape the dictate of historical linearity" (Ji-hoon 2009: 114-123). The medium then, according to Krauss, becomes a supporting structure that pacifies the requirement for the material and technical specificity of medium specificity with the formal and conceptual diversity of artistic imagination.

In contrast to Greenberg, Krauss views the successful artwork as one that reflects "on its own practice in relation to the past and involves an acknowledgement of medium-

specific practices that are being replaced or combined" (Krauss 2000: 17). Krauss's theory takes on the aspect of the double negative. Hers is a negative take on the medium that promises to free itself from historical linearity. Post-Medium art does not focus on the specific technical nature of its media—but any production has a process-based "aggregate condition" (Krauss 2000: 17). This refers to a diverse universe with "discourses, institutions, physical support structures and their technological implications—in other words, both linguistic and non-linguistic elements" (Krauss 2000: 17). It is arranged like a machine but it is not a technological one. Here, it is not the medium that is under scrutiny, but the factors that lead to its individuation. Economic forces result in recording and consumption being taken into production and the artwork is evidence that a shaping process has occurred, "just as a footprint on soft ground is evidence that someone has walked there" (Hinderer 2009: 4).

Searching for the difference that separates the medium from itself, Krauss does not focus on the positive media specifics in her analysis but instead on a "different specificity". She does not necessarily tie this to photography, film or digital media but more generally to a shift in the experience of the medium as medium by understanding the negativity of both the cultural self-understanding and the availability of the technical or technological dispositive—each medium must be understood as a perpetually repeatable set of conventions (Hinderer 2009: 3). Krauss postulates that the effects of the digital media are so broad that they have undermined previous mediums to such an extent as to have rendered them dysfunctional.

2.1.1 Historical context of the Post Media: Krauss's three narratives

Krauss's three narratives are explored in *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (2000). The first narrative is on the rise of conceptual art in order to position the Post-Media historically. Krauss looks at abstract art as a paradox: it attempts to be purely medium-specific, yet obeys society's commercial discourse. Krauss realises that conceptual art relies on art theory and therefore "insinuates the art into the commercial discourse of self-promotion" (Krauss 2000: 15). Krauss uses the artist Marcel

Broodthaers, who engaged in his artistic dialogue or narrative in the late 1960s and early 70s, to examine these trends. Krauss positions Broodthaers "at" and "for" the complex of the medium (Krauss 2000: 15), citing his random objects as examples of the Post-Medium's fusing together of art and modern life.

It was announced by Donald Judd in his 1965 seminal essay, "Specific Objects" (Kellein 2002), that painting now becomes an object, just like any other three-dimensional thing. Nothing differentiates paintings and sculpture—the distinctness of either as separate mediums is over. Theorist Joseph Kosuth was to see this as a paradox, and a general, rather than a specific reduction. Kosuth asks: "What made Modernism specific as a medium, what is its essence?" This pursuit of its essence left art in the generic category of: "Art/at/large, or art/in/general" (Krauss 2000: 10). The aim of the modernist artist was now, Kosuth maintained, to define the essence of art itself. "Being an artist now means to question the nature of art. If one is questioning the nature of painting, one cannot be questioning the nature of art. That's because the word art is general and the word painting is specific" (Krauss 2000: 10). Kosuth saw art merely as taking the form of statements, where the physical object would transform into a conceptual condition. However, these statements would be art and not philosophy. The artwork would be subsumed and partially embodied by that higher aesthetic unity—art itself. Each work of art would be a partial embodiment of this "higher aesthetic unity" (Krauss 2000: 10).

Conceptual art's further claim was that by removing the material dross, the artwork was purified. Furthermore, as its production lies in the "theory/about/art", it is removed from its commodity form in which paintings and sculptures inevitably participate (Krauss 2000: 11).

Another paradox in this modernist history is claims of specific mediums—painting, sculpture and drawing—of purity. By being autonomous, they are nothing but their own essence and "disengaged from everything outside the frames" (Krauss 2000: 11). This paradox is clear in the very modes of production, with abstract art paintings "executed in serial runs" and industrially produced artworks embedded as a commodity (Krauss 2000:

11). The work and its status are interchangeable, and thus the work has a pure exchange value.

> "By abandoning the pure forms of production and allowing art to be produced by willingly pursuing various forms and sites, conceptual art saw itself securing a higher purity for art. In flowing through the channels of commodity distribution, it would not only adopt any form it needed but would escape the effects of the market itself." (Krauss 2000: 11)

Broodthaers commonly used an eagle motif that functioned as an emblem for conceptual art. On the cover of his magazine, *Studio International* (October 1974: Fig.1), the eagle represents a triumph; it is not the end of art but the termination of the individual arts as medium-specific. According to Krauss, the eagle activity performs this loss of specificity in the rebus, which spells out the "Fine Arts" on the cover. The eagle is "folded into the hybrid or intermedia condition of the rebus, in which not only language and image but high and low or any other oppositional pairings one can think of will freely mix" (Krauss 2000: 14-15). In this case, the eagle appears on the cover of a market or commercial art magazine (where the eagle does not escape the market or commercial operations served by the press); it becomes promotional material, advertising conceptual art, "according to which an artistic theory will function for the artistic product in the same way as the artistic product functions as advertising for the order under which it is produced" (Krauss 2000: 14-15).
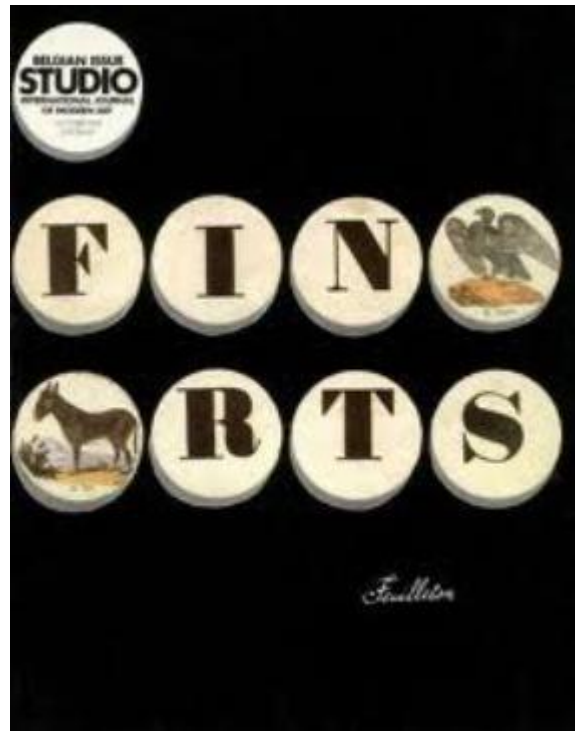
Figure 1. Marcel Broodthaers. Front cover of *Studio International* (October, 1946)

Figure 2. Marcel Broodthaers. Back cover of *Studio International* (October, 1946)

For Krauss, Broodthaers's art as theory "delivers art", especially art for which it is the theory, to "sites whose function is promotion" (Krauss 2000: 15):

> "In the intermediate loss of specificity to which the eagle submits the individual arts, the bird's privilege is itself scattered into a multiplicity of sites—each of them now turned 'specific'—in which the installations that are constructed will comment, often critically, on the operating conditions of the site itself. To this end, they will have a resource to every material support one can imagine, from picture to words to video to readymade objects to film. But every material support, including this site itself—whether art magazine, dealers' fair booth, or museum gallery—will now be level, reduced to a system of peer equivalency by the homogenising principle of commodification, the operation of pure exchange value in which nothing can escape and for which everything is transparent to the underlying market value, for which it is a sign." (Krauss 2000: 15)

There is a paradox, however, which Broodthaers never lived to see. Twenty-five years later, the eagle principle and its intended function of imploding the idea of an "aesthetic medium and turning everything equally into a ready-made, that collapses the difference between the aesthetic and the commodified", has itself become the new sign, the symbol for a new academy (Krauss 2000: 20). Today we exist within Marcel Broodthaers' mixed-media installation age where the global spread of mixed-media installation art announces a Post-Medium age, a Post-Medium Condition that traces its lineage to Broodthaers (Krauss 2000: 20). Yet Krauss had issues relating her PMC to intermedia art. This can be seen in the way she approaches Jeff Wall's work as nothing more than pastiche.

Krauss stresses, in her other two narratives, the increasing use of diverse and varied media that disallows Greenbergian medium specificity (for example, mixed and inter-media art), which negates the pure art of Greenberg's vision (Modernism). This second narrative ends with television and its embrace of various media in space and time, which

further diminishes the notion of "medium specificity". Krauss's third narrative traces Post-Structuralist theory and uses Jacques Derrida's "arguments for the individual's dependency on and constitution through external sources" (Krauss 2000: 32). Post-Structuralist philosophically represents conceptual art as it recognises interdependence and thereby acknowledges its intermediation. Krauss uses the arrival of the lightweight, cheap, portable video camera as an example that shatters the notion of medium specificity. Video art engages in an entirely new narrative.

> "Cinema is a unique art in that it is a combination of theatre and music, and possesses the attributes of painting and sculpture (motion, vision, time and space). It is comprised of the forms that preceded it and uses the strategy of pastiche. It is thus tied to other evolving artistic domains. This conception of film and the traditional notion of the "specific medium" of course precede Krauss and echoes Benjamin, decades earlier. Where he discusses not whether we are dealing with an art, but whether or not the emergence of this medium has not transformed the nature of all art." (Jennings 2008: 19-55)

Artists such as Richard Serra and Robert Smithson opposed Greenberg's Modernist ideas, which focused on medium specificity, but they were still nonetheless committed Modernists as they "focused on the nature of the cinematic medium itself", which "would be modernist to its core" (Krauss 2000: 24). These artists, however, were imagining themselves in a new kind of film, "one that focused on the nature of the cinematic medium itself" (Krauss 2000: 24). Many of these ideas were explored in film many years before, during its early development. One example is Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, referred to in Manovich's *Language of New Media*. This led to a later generation exploring the idea of the "apparatus", which included everything from the recording apparatus to the means by which it was recorded—the beam of light that projected the image and the audience receiving it (Krauss 2000: 24-25). These Structuralists saw how all of the techniques of film-making and film observation could be put together to show how their mutual interdependence or aggregate condition formed a model of how the viewer was intentionally connected to his or her world.

"The parts of the apparatus would be like things that cannot touch on each other without themselves being touched (Bolter and Grusin would call this remediation); and this interdependence would figure forth the mutual emergence of a viewer and a field of vision as a trajectory through which the sense of sight touches on what touches back." (Krauss 2000: 25)

Serra's problem was to try to find in the inner logic of events (the progression beyond the flat painting) the expressive possibilities or conventions that would articulate this field as a medium. For, in Krauss's view, in order to sustain artistic practice, a medium must be "a supporting structure, generative of a set of conventions, some of which, in assuming the medium itself as their subject, will be wholly specific to it, thus producing an experience of their own necessity" (Krauss 2000: 26). Serra engaged in the process of making the works, and the events that took place are understood as a form of series, not as a repetition of identical casts, for instance, but the production of different series that converge on a given point. As in his lead sculptural work, *Casting* (1969-1991), Serra was able to "see himself to be working as aggregative and thus distinct from the material properties of a merely physical object-like support" (Krauss 2000: 27).

Clement Greenberg sees Modernist logic as leading to a point where "the observance of merely the two (constitutive conventions or norms of painting—flatness and the delimitation of flatness) is enough to create an object which can be experienced as a picture" (Krauss 2000: 28). He dissolves that object into what he called "opticality", which is later renamed the "colour field". "Opticality", therefore, is "vision itself", according to Krauss. It is

"an entirely abstract, schematised version of the link that traditional perspective formally established between viewer and object, but it is one that now transcends the real parameters of measurable, physical space to express the purely projective powers of a pre-objective level of sight." (Krauss 2000: 29)

The challenge to painting was now not to understand its objective features, such as flatness of the material surface, but its aggregative or specific mode of address, and to

make this the new set of conventions (Krauss 2000: 29). "In the 60s, 'opticality' was also serving as more than just a feature of art; it had become a medium of art" (Krauss 2000: 30). This aggregative approach was an "affront to what was officially understood as the reductivist logic of Modernism—a logic and doctrine attributed to Greenberg himself" (Krauss 2000: 30). Greenberg never theorised on colourfield painting as a new medium, but rather spoke of it as "a new possibility for abstract painting" (Krauss, 2000: 30). Nor was Serra's "process art" adequately theorised; these new terms or behaviours in art—aggregative, process art—were overshadowed by Modernist ideas (Krauss 2000: 30).

The arrival of the portable video camera and its "televisual effect was to shatter the Modernist dream" (Krauss 2000: 30). Video art introduced immediacy and live broadcast, and the novelty of seeing oneself filmed. While many artists used this technologically updated media in decidedly narcissistic ways, Krauss recognises Serra's acknowledgement that "video was in fact television, which means a broadcast medium, one that splinters spatial continuity into remote sites of transmission and reception" (Krauss 2000: 26). He expresses this notion in his work, *Television Delivers People* (1973) (Fig. 3), a continuous message on a television screen.

27 Richard Serra, *Television Delivers People*, 1973.
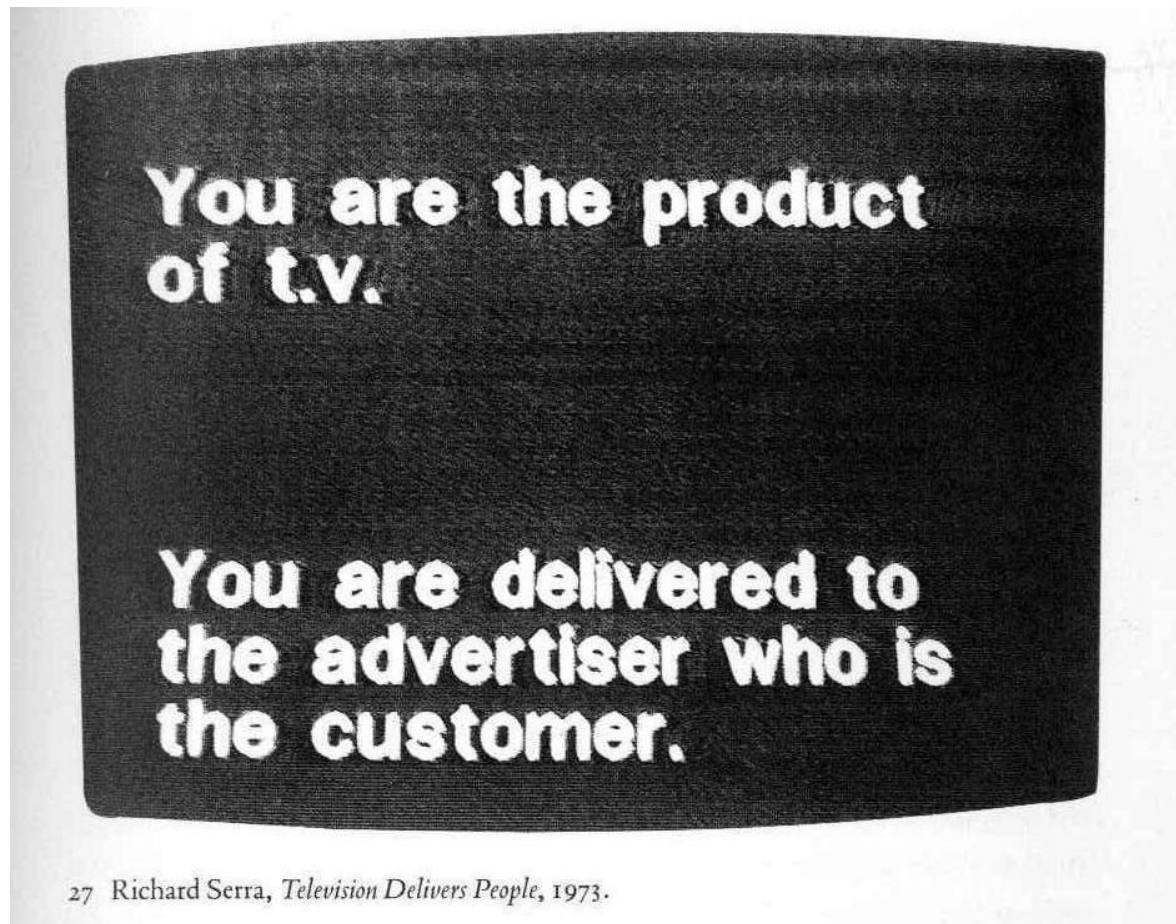
Figure 3. Richard Serra. *Television Delivers People* (1973)

As Sam Weber contends, television is both "here and there", "constitutive heterogeneity" (Krauss 2000: 31), a domestic object linked to one that is far away, "an object that exists through the momentary condensation of dispersed electronic signals" (Yue 2003: 1). Video's lack of coherence defeated Modernist theory, as it could not be conceived as a medium. Video was popular from the start and pushed the practice of the Modernist Structuralist film to one side. It had its own apparatus as a technical support that existed in heterogeneous activities, so it could not be classified as having an "essence or unifying core" (Krauss 2000: 31). Video brought about the end of medium specificity: "In the age of television, so it broadcast, we inhabit a Post-Medium Condition" (Krauss 2000: 32).

Krauss's third narrative looks at the resonance between the Post-Medium and Post-Structuralist theory—namely Derrida's argument for a person's dependency on and

creation through outside influences. Derrida stated that the idea of an "interior set apart from, or uncontaminated by, an exterior was a chimera, a metaphysical fiction" (Krauss 2000: 30). Nothing is pure in the visual arts, as purity is always already "invaded by an outside". In fact, this purity "could only be constituted through the very interjection of that outside" (Krauss 2000: 30). This was the argument mounted to scuttle the possible purity of an artistic medium, or the presumed autonomy of a given intellectual discipline. This argument, along with those of other Post-Structuralists, such as Michel Foucault, looked for an end to separation within academic faculties and thus a powerful support for interdisciplinarity in the art world (Krauss 2000: 33). The notion that there was something proper or specific to medium was already under attack and the high ground was given to practices of "rampant impurity", such as Fluxus or Situationist art (Krauss, 2000: 33). This challenge to the separation of disciplines leads into Krauss's notion of a "different specificity".

2.1.2 A "different specificity"

This section looks at Krauss's distinctions between Postmodern art (video installation and intermedia art) and art that embraces "different specificity". Krauss puts forward the promise of engagement in "different specificity". It is an idea that examines Post-Medium complexities through its inclusion of outmoded forms (Krauss 2000: 56). She sets up a "new artistic realm that allows for notions of art, art theory, and aestheticism involved with, but not indistinguishable from, capitalistic society" (Krauss 2000: 57). Krauss sees the medium as a "layering of conventions". As such, the ephemeral nature and mnemonic function of media are highlighted. This is not too dissimilar to Francis Halsall's notion of "systems aesthetics", whereby he reconstructs the notion of medium as no longer referring to Greenberg's notion of "medium specificity" (Halsall 2007).

Krauss documents a path of change from Modernism towards "pure" art forms—which Greenberg refers to in his discussions on "specificity"—and the Post-Medium, thereby highlighting both the negative and positive aspects of Post-Mediation (Postmodernism and "different specificity"). She compares Postmodernism (video installation and

intermedia) and "different specificity", judging the former as mere indulgence in capital enterprise and the latter as being able to save an artistic realm. Here she contextualises Broodthaers' work as it promises engagement in "different specificity". Krauss supports two artists as upholding the qualities necessary for her PMC. James Coleman and William Kentridge have not pursued "the international fashion of installation and intermedia work, in which art essentially finds itself complicit with a globalisation of the image in the service of capital" (Krauss 2000: 56). These artists do not water down the forms of traditional mediums and they embrace the idea of different specificity.

2.2 An exploration of Marshall McLuhan's notion: "The medium is the message"

The nature of the medium determines its power to shape how people interact with one another; it creates society's dynamics. The resulting change is the medium's "message", rather than the message being something dictated by its content. McLuhan's attempts to divert our focus from content to medium arose from his concern that our attention to content leads to a lack of understanding and even acknowledgement of the medium and all else around it (McLuhan 1964: 8).

McLuhan's work on communication theory is important to this investigation in that he links the technicity or medium to behaviour or human history. According to Friesner, before McLuhan, a medium was understood as being a simple container for the message that did not influence the message (Friesner 2005: 2). However, McLuhan saw media as including the "totality of technical, social, and aesthetic reality". As he viewed media as technical, his theory of technology was criticised as "technological determinism"; it was viewed as medium-specific and dismissed. But McLuhan's ideas appear to be coming to the fore again, thanks to theorists such as Paul Grosswiler, who re-evaluated McLuhan's work and addressed many of his critics.

Central to Grosswiler's analysis of McLuhan's methods is the idea of the media or cultural galaxy, an area of opposing forces that determine culture. This links McLuhan to Marxist theory (Friesner 2005: 2), but whereas Marxist theory uses modes of production in its

cultural analysis, McLuhan's stance is materialist in that he believes that the product determines culture. Man's technology aids his experience of the world. He is conditioned by it and it, in turn, is determined by the cultural galaxy, in which he plays a part (Friesner 2005: 2). Grosswiler's re-evaluation of McLuhan puts an end to the label of "technological determinism" assigned to him by cultural studies in the 1970s. Man is not defined by technology. On the contrary, writes McLuhan, the artist can sound the alarm about technology's effects. This consciousness, or "the 'early warning system' of art helps make people aware of the impact of technology, as artists, the 'antennae of the race', are several decades ahead of social and technological change" (Grosswiler 1998: 75).

Mitchell and Hansen, in their book *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, acknowledge McLuhan's contribution to media studies and the way he underscores the fundamental correlation of the human and the technical by conceptualising media as "extensions of man" (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: xii). McLuhan's theories concern the universal effect of technology on man in general and he examines the complex dialectics of technical inventions, and expands on the concepts of medium and the mediated artwork, echoed as integral aspects of Krauss's Post-Medium Condition.

For McLuhan, a medium is "any extension of ourselves", or more broadly, "any new technology", in addition to forms such as newspapers, television speech and language. "Media", as technologies, mediate our communication. McLuhan observes that any medium "amplifies or accelerates existing processes", introduces a "change of scale or place or shape or pattern into human associations, affairs, and action", resulting in… "psychic and social consequences"; this is the real "meaning or message" brought by a medium—a social and psychic message—and it depends "solely on the medium itself, regardless of the "content" emitted by it" (McLuhan 1964: 2-3). McLuhan's dictum, "the medium is the message", introduced in the first chapter of *Understanding Media,* can be extended to art production in that when a new medium is introduced into the life of a society, everything is affected by it, including the production of art (McLuhan 1964: 7). Mediation is implicit in the very act of media itself, defining how the producer is "alienated" from the product (Chakravorty 2012: 8). One can also look at the way the

medium impinges upon the receiving consciousness. McLuhan sees the medium as independent and self-operative. He hypothesises that if man understood medium specificity, societies would be able to control the effects of new technologies.

Media operate as extensions to the senses, according to McLuhan, but what occurs is simultaneous "amputations" of the senses they extend, so media must be seen not only as an aid to the senses (which can cause them to weaken or atrophy) (Plato. Phaedrus. 360 BCE), but also as tools that transform the nature of memory. (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: xvii-xviii). If mediums remediate, then what is new is also old and familiar. A medium cannot simply "mediate" or transmit. Remediation is based on McLuhan's idea that the medium is the message, in other words, the way we perceive information changes according to the way in which it is presented.

Mediation slips into remediation the instant that mediation takes place, where the older media are converted by the new, and represented as a different form of media. This is a relationship which constantly changes. As the new "converted" media emerge, they render the older media obsolete in that they can no longer be seen in the same light. We are left with a new message that carries the vestiges of the old but, in a sense, this destroys the old message—and the reconstituted, new message can be seen in a redemptive light (Chakravorty 2012: 3). When looking at a remediation within the newly emerged field of New Media, Bolter and Grusin pick up where McLuhan left off. New Media, such as websites, blogs, and digital video, both set boundaries and provide new opportunities for social relations. Bolter and Grusin seek to describe how New Media increase immediacy, mediate our senses and experience, and draw attention to the mixing (as McLuhan would say) of different kinds of media. Remediation has the logic of McLuhan in that it presents a constant remix of older media forms by newer ones and vice versa. Bolter and Grusin are in agreement with McLuhan when they state:

> "all mediation is remediation. We are not claiming this as an *a priori* truth, but rather arguing that at this extended historical moment, all current media function as remediators and that remediation offers us a means of interpreting the work of earlier media as well. Our culture conceives of each

medium or constellation of media as it responds to, redeploys, competes with, and reforms other media. In the first instance, we may think of something like a historical progression of newer media remediating older ones and in particular of digital media remediating their predecessors. But ours is a genealogy of affiliations, not a linear history, and in this genealogy, older media can also remediate newer ones." (Bolter, Grusin 1999: 55)

Not only are we mediated by the medium or technology of the day, we are affected by all forms of media, medium and mediation in a process of remediation from our personal site or what Hansen calls the body.

2.3 Mark Hansen: Remediation and embodiment

2.3.1 Remediation

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin claim that with digitisation, media have become thoroughly and bidirectionally interchangeable and they call this notion "remediation". (Hansen 2002: 1). Friedrich Kittler states, even more radically in his "digital convergence", that the media have simply become obsolete. Benjamin, in his 1935 essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility,* views the photographic as shorthand for reproducibility per se, and thus as the very source for the demise of the aura across all the arts (Hansen 2002: 2). Krauss extends Benjamin's contribution from the 1970s to today's digital arts and labels it the Post-Medium Condition (PMC). This is viewed in the light of how capitalism has imposed a universal exchangeability across all culture, and this exchangeability is an intrinsic element of today's technology. The ability of the digital for limitless inter-conversion of data, or the act of "framing pieces of the world through the camera's lens" (Hansen 2002: 2), allows digital technology to equalise things on a wholesale scale, hence the advent of the notion of a PMC. The claim is that today the pure flow of data need not adapt itself to the boundaries of human perception. If this is the case, what happens to the redemptive role of the aesthetic, where the act of framing

reality removes from the artwork the status of bearer of truth? Hansen states that this may leave the work's impact in the arena of experience, as an embodied experience (Hansen 2002: 3). As a way of coping with this overwhelming free-flow of data and to redeem the status of the truth, Hansen postulates that the body, as a kind of converter of the countless acts of framing, embodies experience. The creative role of the body can be seen as the source of a new aura, as the body becomes the resting place of experience and the site where it is actualised.

Hansen's embodiment plays a role in the exegesis of this paper. It is the embodiment of this overwhelming flow of New Media data that is remediated (in Bolter and Grusin's words, and according to Hansen) by the body, in an embodied experience, and then represented back onto the artwork by the artist.

Hansen has used Henri Bergson's ideas of embodiment, where Bergson considers the body "a centre of indetermination within an acentered universe" (Hansen 2002: 3), where the body selects and filters the images around it and, according to its own capacities. According to Bolter and Grusin, this is an endless cycle of remediation. Bergson sees a material flux universe that the body recognises, as it is in itself a material singularity (Hansen 2002: 3). The body is able to subtract from the endless flow of images those that are aggregate or part of the material flux universe or, to put it more simply, the actual, or the image. Always connects with the virtual; the actual exists although is not perceived; it is there but is not represented. The image is compelled to abandon something of itself when it is represented; it is always there but becomes virtual at the very moment it might become actual. (This paper finds the observation of Bergson compatible with Bolter and Grusin's remediation.) Its need to continue to exist and disappear in something, its obligation to continue itself and lose itself in something, even as a remainder of its actual image, causes it to detach itself from the image and attach itself to the body as a "centre of indetermination" (Hansen 2002: 5). Hansen states: "Beneath any concrete technical image or frame lies what I shall call the framing function of the human body or centre of indetermination" (Hansen 2002: 7). In this digital age, it is the precise and overwhelming exposure to image that destroys the stability of the technical image in any of its theorisations. Bolter and Grusin write that

there are no concrete theorisations, because the moment of mediation always becomes remediation. With the views of medium being so broad the 'problem' of medium or the notion of medium becomes the problem. The investigation into the Post-Medium condition can be drawn back, in the candidate's art practice, to the site of experience, or the body.

2.3.2 The body's role in art

"New Media" and embodiment, Manovich concludes,

> "change our concept of what an image is—because they turn the viewer into an active user. As a result, an illusionistic image is no longer something a subject simply looks at … The New Media image is something that the user actively goes into, zooming in, or clicking on individual parts with the assumption that they contain hyperlinks." (Manovich 2001: 183)

Hansen states that the "image" has itself become a process and, as such, has become irreducibly bound up with the activities of the body (Hansen 2002: 9). By making the image a process that is bound to the body, Hansen postulates that the image does not become obsolete; but is rather reconfigured. Hansen's theoretical project states that the image must be extended to incorporate the whole process through which information is made perceivable by means of embodied experience. He calls this the "digital image" (Hansen 2002: 9). The body then performs that original act of en-framing the image and must be seen as the source for all technical frames. These frames contribute to the body's haptic negotiation with information and are designed to help the body perceive information as it transforms it into images (Hansen 2002: 9). This process described by Hansen is ongoing in the candidate's art practice. The image is in a constant state of flux and at that same instance is fixed by the body only to repeat the process at the next change in the artwork.

2.3.3 Hansen's three narratives on New Media

Hansen explores this haptic process which the body goes through in three ways. The first—how the image comes to encompass the process of its embodiment—is about what Hansen calls the "digital-image"; the second investigates how the body gains a new function within the digital-image regime, that of filtering information to make images; and the third is how this function creates an "affective supplement" to the act of perceiving the image, that is, a haptic domain of sensation and the sensory experiencing of the "warped space" of the digital.

Hansen is important to this enquiry in that he tackles the question of "newness" of New Media. He finds, for every claim of newness, an exception can be found in some earlier artistic or cultural practice that already contains the characteristics questioned. These claims polarise into two viewpoints: the New Media has changed everything, or there isn't anything at all new about New Media (Hansen 2006: 3). McLuhan takes the latter point of view. If there is something new, what has become obsolete in order for it to expose itself? From Krauss's perspective, everything is new, because everything has changed with the advent of the digital—or it is the end of the medium as it was perceived. Hansen explores the materiality of media from the point of view of differentiation within the effective body: the "body's necessity increases in proportion to the de-differentiation of media" (Hansen 2006: 3). The digital can be seen as variable interfaces for rendering raw data "reality", whereas a framed picture can be a form of actual inscription or "reality". One seems to be a moving target and the other a static target. One is a still pond and the other is constantly being affected by things falling into it, causing ripples and change. The artist, on the other hand, must operate between the two. The artist chooses to realise aesthetic, conceptual or other aims, while understanding the selection of the material as supplemental to action on the artist's part and not specified by the data's material constraints. It is the body and its perceptions that inform medial interfaces, writes Hansen.

He also claims that due to the flexibility presented by the digital, the body is forced into constant recalibration, resulting in the framing function being displaced back into the body from whence it came. Hansen writes that it is this displacement that makes New media art "new" (Hansen 2002: 12). Hansen, by his own admission, with regard to his

embodiment notions, expands the concept of "medium" out of the McLuhan version, explaining the "refunctionalisation" of the body as it processes the information—"with the body … integral to an expanded concept of 'medium' and empowered through its potential for action, or, more precisely, for mobility within the 'space-time' of information" (Hansen 2002: 12). Hansen justifies his break from traditional McLuhan media studies and frames the need for his studies within the emerging "field" of New Media art. Hansen sees the digital image as problematic and for that reason breaks certain accepted principles of the disciplines of art history and media study to express the need for an aesthetics of New Media. One of the problematic areas of the New Media or digital age is its lack of essence or unifying core. It has a kind of discursive chaos that is not coherent (Hansen 2002: 14). It is out of this lack, or chaos, that Hansen and Krauss postulate—not from the position of medium in the sense of McLuhan—that:

> "a medium can only be reinvented once it has become obsolete, or, so long as it is new, the space separating its physicality from its status as a set of conventions remains invisible, and the medium, far from opening itself to aesthetic function, can only be a pale, yet faithful reflection of the universalising logic of capitalism." (Hansen 2002: 13)

The obvious lack of obsolescence within digital or New Media art would leave us in limbo, awaiting its obsolescence. Hansen associates the virtual with the body, not the technology (Hansen 2002: 31):

> "Suffice it to say that the virtual will be understood as naming the 'excess' constitutive of experience, the excess of life over any particular actualisation of it, and that the 'embryogenic' will demarcate the indelible traces of the embodied and, let me be so bold as to say, human origin of information, which ensures not only the coupling of information with human 'purposes' but also the coupling of media (technologies for rendering information as image) with specific human sensory modalities (effects)." (Hansen 2002: 37)

While Hansen and Krauss depart from the confines of the past and place digital art within the space-time of information, they still adhere to McLuhan in that the introduction of any new medium ripples through society and in doing so changes it.

2.3.4 Hansen's enquiry into Rosalind Krauss's Post-Medium Condition

Hansen explores Manovich's two (what he terms limiting) viewpoints of the framing that questions Krauss's PMC. Does Krauss's viewpoint have the ability to remove the "frame" from the digital image? Using Manovich's technical, theoretical standpoint, film, cinema, television and computer or laptop screen can all be seen as "framing pieces of the world through the camera lens", that is, even though the digital technology is new and has no historical precedent. The digital image is still, and remains, "bounded" by the rectangle framing of the cinema, and as long as it remains tied to the image-frame of the cinema, it will not be obsolete. "Cinematographic images", he writes, are too "efficient" to express "cultural communication", as they are always removed or displaced from their position. (Hansen, 2006: 51). Hansen sees Manovich as presenting a record and theory of the present, rather than thinking about the future. Hansen is looking for a more contemporary framing of the media and not an amplification of what came before, namely the important role Manovich accords the cinema as the leading cultural form that mostly determines the New Media:

> "100 years after cinema's birth, cinematic ways of seeing the world, of structuring time, of narrating the story, of linking one experience to the next, have become the basic means by which computer users access and interact with all cultural data. In this respect, the computer fulfils the promise of cinema as a visual Esperanto." (Hansen 2002: 21)

Manovich stresses that to view a computer screen, we take a position of immobility, much like we do in the cinema. We are drawn into a world of illusions, into a "datascape" behind the screen, so we spend more time in front the screen, thus extending the human computer interface or the cinematic condition of immobility (Hansen 2002: 22). Hansen sees this as a limiting the exploration of "New Media". (Note that McLuhan's standpoint

seems to align itself with that of Manovich.) Hansen takes note of Manovich's second, limiting position, as the cinematic metaphor is inadequate as a means of theorising the digital image. Hansen states that as Manovich sees New Media in cinematic form, they become constrained by the conventions of rectangular framing. This empirical observation stops Manovich from thinking further about the basic material significance of the digital (Hansen 2002: 22).

Hansen uses Lev Manovich's account for explaining the newness of the the New Media— its programmability—as it has no "historical precedent". Manovich furnishes "a record and a theory of the present". The question of whether or not the digital is a new type of media remains. It seems that, on the one hand, it is a New Media and on the other that it is just a type of entity in a database that is retrieved, run through algorithms and sent to an output device. But in Kittler's work, digital convergence will make obsolete the moment of perception (Hansen 2002: 2). As coined in McLuhan's writings, meta media made reference to new relationships between form and content when it came to the making of new technologies and New Media. McLuhan's idea described the totalising effect of media.

A new language or a break from the 'McLuhanesque' format of viewing the medium is an approach which critics have taken in order to perceive what is happening in the contemporary art world. In this sense, Hansen reconceptualises the meaning of medium.

2.3.5 Hansen's reconceptualisation of the meaning of medium

Hansen looks at Krauss's reconceptualisation of the meaning of medium. In order for Krauss's model to work, she reinterprets the word medium in her book, *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*,

> "by situating the reconceptualisation of the "medium" within the framework of a nuanced, expanded understanding of modernism. As an alternative to the Greenbergian orthodoxy, this account of Modernism proposes a concept of medium as aggregative and thus distinct from the

material properties of a merely physical objectlike support." (Krauss 2000: 17)

This "reinvention" of the medium, is made possible after the generalisation of the medium (or of art), as it focuses on the retrospective (re)discovery of conventions that derive from, but are irreducible to, a specific medium's physicality. A medium can thus only be "reinvented" once it becomes obsolete. As long as it is "new", the space that separates its physicality from its status as a set of conventions remains invisible and the medium can only be a pale reflection of capitalism's universalising logic (Hansen 2006: 13). According to Hansen:

> "At the limit, this understanding would seem to preclude us from doing art history in the present, and indeed, if Krauss cannot herself abide by this dictate, it must be said that the contemporary artists she champions—James Coleman, William Kentridge and Cindy Sherman—are all devoted to a sustained practice of media archaeology." (Hansen 2006: 13)

Indeed there is an attempt to explain our new digital condition. The pursuit to find a label for our condition will not stop and in an ironic way we all live within the condition but are not comfortable with it until the doctor tells us what we have. It is the comfort that the label brings that we are in pursuit of. The problem of the introduction of the digital medium is the pursuit of its label; it is what Krauss, Hansen and other theorists and artists are in pursuit of.

CHAPTER 3: THE POST-MEDIUM AND ART PRACTICE: A CRITICAL STUDY OF KRAUSS'S ANALYSES OF THE WORK OF WILLIAM KENTRIDGE, JAMES COLEMAN AND JEFF WALL

Krauss's concept of art in the Post-Medium Condition or of artists inventing a new medium is complex and controversial. She incorporates artistic periods of mixed medium, conceptual art, the cross narratives between mediums and conceptual art, and the artist's individual narrative, or—as Krauss puts it when referring to Kentridge—"the improvisational character of his discovery" (Krauss 2000: 4). Krauss may be easier to understand historically, as her relationship with art goes back to Modernism and Clement Greenberg and his medium specificity. It was during the period of the Post-Modern and conceptual art that she broke away from Greenberg and developed her ideas about different specificity. Krauss's PMC is not easy to define, although its subtleties and boundaries can be explored through her criticisms of the artists William Kentridge, James Coleman and Jeff Wall. Krauss distinguishes Wall as an artist who has a signature format but has not invented a new medium and who therefore does not follow her criteria for the PMC. This chapter evaluates Krauss's notions.

Central to the research problem is the contemporary notion of the medium; this exploration looks at contemporary artists whose work is able to reflect those notions.

3.1 William Kentridge

Krauss foregrounds South African artist William Kentridge's artworks and postulates that, with his use of erasure techniques and his stalking of the drawing, he has invented a new medium.

In order to historicise Kentridge's work and place it within the context of Krauss's "invention of a medium", it must be noted that ideas about the medium changing and moving away from "medium specificity" have been explored since the early twentieth century. Firstly, in 1915, Marcel Duchamp re-conceived objects as statements with "readymades". By bypassing the medium or the issue of specific artistic practice, the readymade arrived at the central question of the aesthetics. Then, in 1969, Joseph Kosuth expressed it in this way:

> "Being an artist now means to question the nature of art. If one is questioning the nature of painting, which is a specific medium, one cannot be questioning the nature of art. If an artist accepts painting (or sculpture), he is accepting a tradition that goes with that a medium. That's because the word *art* is general and the word painting is specific. Painting is a *kind* of art. If you make a painting, you are already accepting (not questioning) the nature of art." (Kosuth 1969: 8)

In his 1965 essay, "Specific Objects", Donald Judd wrote: "The best new work is neither painting or sculpture", but a paradoxical hybrid. This has been taken on as Conceptual art, installation or photography (Kellein 2002: 1).

Prolific American photographer Edward Ruscha (born in 1937) wrote that the photographer understands that mediums are a support for work. His use of the term medium can mean, for example, either the element in which colour is suspended, traditionally the oil, or it can be a technical support for the image, for instance a canvas for painting. It also suggests that the source of the "rules" comes from within the support (Krauss 2009: 142).

This movement away from Greenberg's medium specificity into general specificity is seen in all the movements from this period. Krauss's theoretical work arrives in the midst of these questions. She wrote in her essay, *A View of Modernism*, first published in *Artforum 11* (September, 1972) that since contemporary artists are often not medium-specific, a look at art practices requires a broader framework than traditional, medium-specific approaches. In her later article, *The Rock: William Kentridge's Drawings For*

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Projection (October, No. 92, Spring, 2000), Krauss comes closest to expressing the idea of technical support, as Kentridge's work mixes film, drawing, erasure and potent ideas. He is a "good example of how the narrative of a product is not simply what a work is about" (Ione 2011: 1). Krauss begins to look at what she calls the aggregate condition. The idea that a support or medium can be anything gives rise to her idea that a medium can be invented by an artist, or that an artist can devise a set of rules to form a medium. An art medium, traditionally, is a shared language developed over centuries of use. Artists' individual initiative or the invention of a medium within centuries of art practice is not an easily accepted notion. Kentridge's invention, according to Krauss, is a set of "rules" pertaining to his technique of erasure, where every mark or line can be modified and recorded by a frame of film. The blurred sequence is an image of the act of erasure.

Kentridge's work, however, is preceded by that of Robert Rauschenberg, who used erasure in his 1953 work, *Erased De Kooning*. The concept of Rauschenberg's work and the idea of iconoclasm (the destruction of images) are explained. He did not need to destroy De Kooning's art, but he wanted to make art out of art. By erasing a piece of high art, he was trying to show how subtraction could create something just as expressive (Lydia 2010:1).

If historical precedents are established during Krauss's postulations, what is it that Kentridge offers that artists such as Rauschenberg don't? The act of erasure as a form of art is not new. Is Kentridge's individual initiative to do with outmodedness? The difference may lie in what Krauss discusses with regards to Kentridge's work and not to Rauschenberg's. Krauss looks at Kentridge as stressing the improvisational character of his discovery of "Fortuna" (discussed in section 3.1.3), which one could argue is not missing from Rauschenberg's work, as it could quite easily be said that the erasure of the De Kooning was an improvisational expression driven by individual initiative. It is still arguable, however, from McLuhan's perspective, that Krauss cannot put forward the invention of a new medium until the obsolescence of the old; and by not defining what the old is, Krauss is looking at the nuances of a medium, not the invention of a new one.

3.1.2 Kentridge and outmoded technologies

Kentridge explains that his work evolved from necessity. A script he wrote for one of his early movie productions found no financial backers, so he drew the film himself, using charcoal on paper. This fortuitous event (for Kentridge) meant he could work on his own and didn't have to know any of the details of the film in advance. This event laid the foundation for his works: he does not have to storyboard his ideas, he can work on his own and does not feel obliged to work with or collaborate with professional filmmakers. (His first films were made in this manner, although his more recent ones are not.) His process starts with the desire to draw an object, or represent it with paper cutouts, white chalk on black paper or ideas appropriate to the medium (both the medium and the images are prior). At first he worked without crew, or any hi-tech digital animation with digital technicians and concentrated on charcoal and paper, with its imperfect erasure. (In the past 10 years, however, he has worked on major collaborative international projects that have involved various crews, high levels of production and hi-tech digital processes and technicians.) His images are captured with an outmoded camera (in this high-definition digital age, working with the digital medium, his work would simply be a digital effect) and this, plus the technique of erasure, provides a safe haven for Kentridge to work. His choice of an outmoded medium deals quite strongly with obsolescence and the ability of outmoded technologies to function as art. McLuhan deals strongly too in that currency of obsolescence but confines it to the technologies of man.
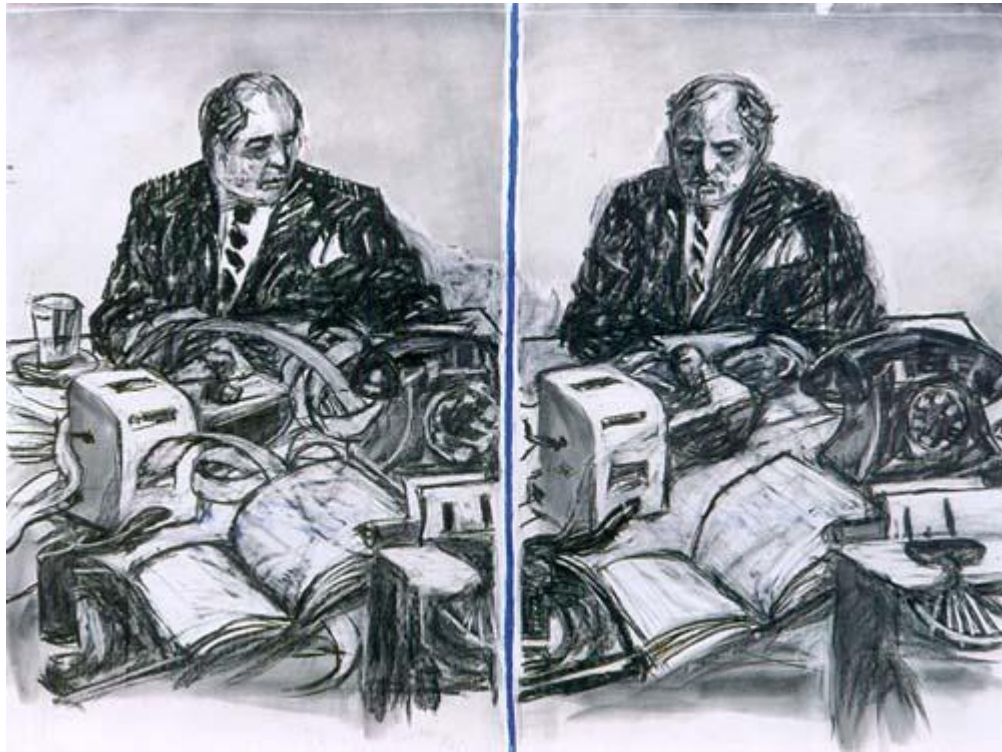
Figure 4. William Kentridge. *Stereoscope* (1998-99, charcoal on paper)

For Kentridge, coherence is found with these outmoded mechanical technologies, unlike electronic technologies. According to Krauss, coherence lies with the artist's ability to reinvestigate and therefore continually reinvent the medium. The manual or outdated can sometimes show moments of communication in a more coherent way than the modern electronic. Kentridge introduces obsolete technologies in his work. For example, he uses the manual telephone and adding machine image in his work *Stereoscope* (1998 to 1999) (Fig. 4). Kentridge says there is something "drawable" about the mechanical, but not electronic technology, and he finds a certain familiarity or reassurance in the old. This, of course, would be right down McLuhan's alley as he views outdated technologies as signposts along the road of human techno-anthropological development, and Kentridge would be remembering them because they represent those signs. Kentridge views objects in his art, such as the Bakelite phone, as having to do with the certainties of childhood. These outmoded technologies also represent to Kentridge the persistence of the older, a refusal to move upgrade and meekly accept its precepts or preoccupations, which are often mistakenly assumed to be the only ones appropriate

(Kentridge 2002: 5). McLuhan would agree that outdated or outmoded technologies are signs of obsolescence and contain historical significance. This paper would like to show that Kentridge, in his more recent works, has embraced modern digital technologies. Today's style and temporality of the digital is very much about and of the era of these technologies (Baker 2002: 1).

3.1.3 Kentridge's notion of "Fortuna"

Kentridge's notions of "Fortuna" and "stalking the drawing" relate to Krauss's redefinition of the medium in terms of the PMC. Kentridge's ideas and approach to animation are explored in terms of Krauss's subversion of the notion of "medium specificity" as "different specificity". Her articulation of the idea of technical support is shown in Kentridge's work, where he mixes film, drawing, erasure and potent ideas. It is a good example of how the work's narrative is not simply what it is about. Krauss discusses in her essay, "*The Rock: William Kentridge's Drawing for Projection*" (October, Number 92, Spring 2000), how an artist speaks through the activity of creation and uses a different language to that associated with the work. Kentridge names this "Fortuna" to describe how technical aspects of process open onto the conceptual, like improvisation. He compares this to speaking—as words are generated, new connections between thoughts emerge. This is a feedback loop: an opportunity to learn something, although this is true of many artists. Again, this exploration asks if it is important in Krauss's model that an artist persists with the same mediums, as with Kentridge, in order to achieve her criteria for a Post-Medium artwork or the invention of a medium.

Figure 5. William Kentridge. *Drawing for the film 'History of the Main Complaint'* (1996)

In Kentridge's *The Rock , Drawings for Projection*, he explains it is the traffic between two points—command and execution—that makes up the business of the play. It is this constant back and forth, the shuttling between movie and camera on the one side and the drawing on the other that constitutes the field of Kentridge's operation. The drawing on which he works is at all times complete and at all times in flux. Once it is photographed, he moves to the drawing on the wall to make minuscule adjustments to its surface and returns to the camera once more. Kentridge terms this "the rather dumb physical activity of stalking the drawing", working with no particular plan in mind and no director or film-maker's storyboard. This back-and-forth mechanical and meditational space is what the work is dependent on, as it is conceived through this process. The process in which drawings are gradually transformed through additions and erasures, occurring millimetres at a time, is recorded on film and it is their interconnectedness that becomes the "plot". This in turn is a technical space that is dictated by an "animation" process. This process is what Krauss deems one of the "aggregate conditions" of a Post-

Medium work and the result is an eight-minute film. Kentridge calls the process, which leads to and opens onto the conceptual, "Fortuna".

Krauss's definition of technical support in this instance is broad enough to include Fortuna, or what Krauss would term "aggregate condition", where her Post-Medium condition PMC is not directed at the technical specifics of the media but instead describes the general production or process employed. It includes the discourses, institutions, physical support structures and their technologies, both linguistic and non-linguistic elements and arrangements that cannot be confused with a technological machine (Hinderer 2009: 1). The medium is not the object of examination but is rather the factors that contribute to its individuation. Kentridge's work results from the dictates of his creative practice (Ione 2011: 2).

In Krauss's "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition", she writes:

> "I am using the term 'technical support' here as a way of warding off the unwanted positivism of the term 'medium' which, in most readers' minds, refers to the specific material support for a traditional aesthetic genre, reducing the idea of medium to what Michael Fried complains of as the basis of the 'literalism' of the art he rejects. 'Part of my argument with Clement Greenberg's reductionist, essentialist reading of the development of modernist art,' Fried writes, 'was precisely this case history in Minimalism of what happened if one thought in those terms.' It is an objection that Stanley Cavell seconds by dismissing 'medium specificity' as producing 'the fate of modernist art generally—that its awareness and responsibility for the physical basis of its art compel it at once to assert and deny the control of its art by that basis.' Both critics reject the version of modernist 'medium specificity' articulated by Greenberg. 'Technical support' has the virtue of acknowledging the recent obsolescence of most traditional aesthetic mediums … while it also welcomes the layered mechanisms of new technologies that make a simple, unitary identification of the work's physical support impossible. William Kentridge

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exploits (and brilliantly develops) the support of animation." (Krauss 2006: 55-62)

Krauss explains Kentridge's Fortuna as a process involving him in the seeming automatism of the process: "That same automatism strangely is enough to free him up to improvise. Kentridge characterises this as 'something other than cold statistical chance, and something too, outside the range of rational control" (Krauss, 2000: 3). Kentridge's analogy is that it is like a language deploying itself in the course of conversation, guided by habit: "I learned patterns of speech, our route formulations, by gambits and clichés" (Krauss 2000: 3). Kentridge thinks that much of what we do is preprogrammed, semi-mechanical, a form of automatism. So although we embark on a journey in a specific direction, there is also a sort of free association, which allows us, in midcourse, to take an entirely different direction, reaching an outcome we wouldn't have meant at the outset. As Kentridge puts it: "In the very activity of speaking, generated by the act itself, new connections and thoughts emerge" (Kentridge, *The Rock,* 69) (Krauss 2000: 3). In his view, this arrival from the unconscious of the unanticipated is nonetheless folded together with the routinised and programmed in the form of the Fortuna. "It is only when physically engaged on a drawing that ideas start to emerge … There is a combination between drawing and seeing, between making and assessing that provokes a part of my mind that otherwise is closed off." (Kentridge, Drawing from *Mine*, 1991: 68) (Krauss 2000: 4).

Kentridge's definition of Fortuna comes from his 1993 lecture entitled: "Fortuna: Neither Program nor Chance in the Making of Images", in which he states that Fortuna exists in the suspension between thematics and process, where neither is given dominance. When dealing with Fortuna, Kentridge places stress on the automatic and automatism, and the singularity of a process that arose from the graphic medium and his desire to track the graphic process, with film, of the work's evolution. It did not start with the cinematic problem of film animation; these works are a run-along recording of graphic drawings, generating the sense of a single work, a sort of derivative of drawing.

Kentridge announces his works as drawings for projection, before appending as a subtitle (*Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, 1989). Kentridge keeps his series exhibited in art museums and galleries, together with their constitutive drawings. To the artist, animation is a technical support and, as such, brings along with it, firstly, a set of material conditions—with its modes of commercialisation and need for industrial production and mass dissemination—and, secondly, the layers of social and economic conditions and forms of serial repetition that are found in its narratives and characters (Krauss 2000: 5). Kentridge's practice is a support or platform for a type of drawing that is extremely reflexive about its own condition and this aesthetic practice foregrounds the signs of the production. The Latin word *reflexio* means "to bend back on". A reflexive text foregrounds its authorship and production, acknowledging their status as representation. These artistic practices draw attention to the formal materials and processes of media construction, displaying both the tools of production (camera, microphone, and so on) and the physical objects, for example, a strip film. In Kentridge's "drawings", his foregrounding of the means and processes of production, the marks of his production are left visible in the shadow of the erasure and the emphasis is on dimensionality rather than depth. It is a critical reflection, activating the intellect of the viewer. According to Krauss, these clouds of charcoal, this graphic specific signifier, the weight of the drawing, drags against the flow of the film to open up the gap between Kentridge's medium and that of film itself, producing the specificity of the thing he is "inventing". It is the connection Krauss draws between specificity of a medium and Kentridge's Fortuna that explores the condition of the mediums themselves.

Kentridge's Fortuna relates to philosopher Stanley Cavell's automatism and Cavell argues that the problem posed by Modernism is a job that the artists must undertake; this undertaking "is no longer to produce another instance of an art but a new medium within it" (Krauss 2000: 5). He calls this "the task of establishing a new automatism" and adds: "In calling such things automatisms, I do not mean that they automatically ensure artistic success or depth, but that in mastering a tradition, one masters a range of automatisms upon which the tradition maintains itself, and in deploying them, one's

work is assured of a place in that tradition" (Krauss 2000: 5). Cavell substitutes "automatism" for "medium" (Krauss 2000: 7).

According to Krauss:

> "Artists do not … invent mediums. Carving, painting, drawing were all in full flower before there was any socially distinguishable group to call itself artists. But mediums then individualize their practice; they intensify the skills associated with them; and, importantly, they acquire histories. For centuries it was only within and against the tradition encoded by a medium that innovation could be measured, just as it was in relation to its reservoir of meaning that new ranges of feeling could be tested." (Krauss 1997: 5)

Krauss's PMC is "surrounded everywhere by media, which is to say the technology relayed image, the aesthetic option of the medium has been declared outmoded … Painting is a possibility we can barely remember; sculptures so far in the past … drawing seems obviously best left to computers" (Krauss 1997: 5). To summarise Kentridge in Krauss's eyes, he uses a form of convention that generates a continuing set of new instances that are spun out; and further, it recognises the need to innovate in the face of a medium freed from the guarantees of artistic tradition (Krauss 2000: 7).

The dissertation will tease out even further Krauss's nuances with regards to her PMC, by introducing artists Jeff Wall and James Coleman and her notions of signature format.

3.2 Jeff Wall and James Coleman: Krauss's notion of a "signature format"

The subtleties of Krauss's Post-Medium Condition can be shown by comparing the artworks of Jeff Wall and James Coleman. The arguments also contrast the comments of art critic Toni Ross with those of Krauss. Ross puts Wall squarely in the Post-Medium discourse, while Krauss considers Post-Conceptual artist Wall's work to be an example of the "signature format", which she sets against Coleman's approach of inventing a medium.

"Since the 1970s, Wall has been formulating his work in relation to his 'own' medium, namely the backlit photographic transparency. Wall did not invent his support (the backlit photographic transparency), it was taken from the commercial world of advertising or promotion, and imported into an artistic aesthetic context. The photo panel had no art aesthetic linage which can be traced and is singular as a support. By adopting it as a medium, Wall immediately puts a kind of aesthetic patent on it. This functions as the paradox of a 'medium' that can only be practised by one." (Krauss 1997: 8)

This commitment to a medium becomes a sort of exclusive language, which Krauss sees as the signature format and not the invention of the medium or an aggregate condition. Art critic Toni Ross places Wall's work well in the Post-Medium camp, and enforces this by showing how Wall combines codes of representational painting and documentary, photography that appropriates and mixes pre-existing pictorial genres. His work forms an indication of a Post-Modern attitude insofar as it dispenses with the Modernist idea of aesthetic specificity being embedded in the material properties of a distinct artistic medium (Ross 2002: 560).

Ross evaluates Wall's work in keeping with Post-Medium discourse. In his large-scale aluminium boxed, backlit photo transparencies, produced in the 1980s, Wall borrows from the format of illuminated advertising panels found in contemporary commercial urban spaces. These works are devoid of artistic credentials, although they are exhibited in a commercial medium and mimic the grandiose scale of museum paintings. These prints combine codes of representational painting and naturalistic photography. This mixing of pre-existing pictorial genres dispenses with Greenberg's Modernist idea of aesthetic specificity being embedded in the material properties of a distinct artistic medium. His works stages memories and traditions of conventions that have occurred historically to particular media. In this manner, they are colonised by the past. Wall's work presents the medium as a collective of stock codes and expectations rather than as an unchanging or inherent identity, and it is this that gives Walls work the qualities of the Post-Medium (Ross 2002: 560).

Critics view this illuminated advertising panel as borrowed from the society of the spectacle and, in a reflexive and critical manner, turned back against itself. Wall's panels block automatic reaction to photography by realigning it with the opacity of the modernist surface, namely the lightbox. Krauss sees the logic of Wall's work as commitment to a medium but, unlike Kentridge and Coleman (and although he has a "signature format"), he has, "by producing 'talking pictures', failed to engage that medium's specificity". This failure, Krauss suggests, "consigns his reworkings of old master art to nothing more ambitious than pastiche" (Krauss 1997: 29). This exploration finds it difficult to identify latent and obvious differences between the PMC of Kentridge and Coleman, and Wall's Post-Medium art.

Figure 6. Jeff Wall. *Dead Troops Talk* (1991-92). A vision after an ambush of a Red Army patrol, near Moqor, Afghanistan, winter 1986. Photograph printed on a transparent sheet of plastic and mounted inside a lightbox (2290mm X 4170mm)

Krauss uses James Coleman, another Post-Conceptualist artist, as an example of an artist who has "invented a medium". Coleman uses the photo novel (an adult comic book that is a worldwide phenomenon, that originated in Europe and is considered a degraded form of literacy) and the slide-tape (an international commercialisation of culture

through advertising) as two of his source "mediums". Both are commodified forms of support for the image, which the work itself attacks and demystifies. Coleman receives the same criticism as Wall when it comes to borrowing from the society of mediums such as the photo novel and slide-tape. He wants the medium to be understood as a positive source and to be looked upon with Roland Barthes's terms "obtuse meaning" or "third meaning" in mind.

This, according to Krauss, is what is lacking in Wall's work. Coleman studies film and uses the still as his point of departure. The still addresses everything that contributes to the main narrative (horizontal narrative), then seeks details that are "counter narrative" (vertical). This counter narrative is set reversibly against the forward drive, producing the effect of dissemination against the narrative form, which then changes the order of arrangements against the focalisation of the story. This counter narrative is only found in the still and Coleman claims this is not the same as looking at a photograph or the painting, as they don't unfold their contents against the rest of the story (the film itself). Coleman sees the still as a fragment of a second text that is to be read vertically. Krauss calls this the "obtuse meaning", which must be theorised. It is the sense of the signifier at play against, but not in service to, the background of the narrative (Krauss 1997: 13). She adds that this statement could summarise the difference between Wall's signature format and Kentridge and Coleman's invention of a medium—yet Krauss does not recognise any obtuse meaning in Wall's work and finds no counter narrative or vertical narrative in his use of frames or historical pictures.

This investigation finds it interesting to note that with regards to obtuse meaning in her postulations of inventing a medium, Krauss acknowledges Barthes in a footnote on comic books and photo novels, collectively spoken as programmes: "These arts are born in the lower depths of high culture … and present a new signifier (related to the obtuse meaning). This is acknowledged as regards the comic-strip" (Krauss 1997: 13).

Is "a new signifier" the same as a new medium, ask Barthes and Coleman. In their "still" and "photo novels", "there may thus be a future—or a very ancient past-truth in these derisory, vulgar, foolish, dialogical forms of consumer subculture" (Krauss 1997: 13). For

Krauss, the use of outmoded forms, evidenced in Wall's work, is not enough to invent a new medium. It needs to incorporate the obtuse meaning which, she claims, Barthes recognises in comic books and photo novels.

Figure 7. James Coleman. *Seeing for Oneself* (1987). Slide projection synchronised with a recorded narration

Krauss sees Coleman's fourth work, his 1987 *Seeing for Oneself* (Fig. 7) as an invention of a "medium", where he marries the mechanics of the slide-tape to the histrionics of the photo novel, thus not only erecting but reflexively acknowledging the "diegetic horizon" (diegesis is a style of fiction storytelling that presents an interior view of a world experienced by the characters in situations and events of the narrative, or telling and recounting, as opposed to showing or enacting). In some earlier works—such as *Slide Piece, Playback of a Daydream* and *Series of Images*—Coleman does not engage with the diegetic structure or story but works with perceptual problems. What happens, temporally speaking, when we see the same thing differently? What does it mean to

perceive different "aspects" of a visual datum? Krauss distinguishes between "continuous seeing" of an aspect and the "dawning of an aspect" (Krauss 1997: 15).

The film projection *Playback of a Daydream* works on the irony between the filmed image that continues, unchanging, through time, and the viewer's own perceptual flipping that causes two different images to come and go, now a duck, now a rabbit. This clearly points to Wittgenstein's "duck-rabbit". Wittgenstein saw this as a linguistic trap, seeing shapes as things or in our minds, and thus adding interpretation to perception. Coleman may have started with Wittgenstein's philosophical basis, or something like it, but he ends up with a four-fold permutation of two different forms of projection: the mechanical instrument's steady stare versus the psychological "projection" as the array changes within the viewer's perceptual experience, plus two different temporal registers—the ongoing present of the unchanging film versus the "*now!"* of the perceptual flip, or renewal.

In *Slide Piece*, instead of using a silent, projected loop of film, Coleman uses a slide-tape that shows the banal urban scene of a car and van parked near four gas pumps to the backdrop of apartment buildings, the ground floor housing various shops. As each slide changes, to show the same image, it is described by the same voice in different terms, with many changes of aspect. What we become aware of, while staring at the slide and listening to the painstaking narration, is the cognisant or temporal dilation of the present in which we are trapped; we are caught in a narrative that is not only going nowhere, but stubbornly, and through many changes, continues to go nowhere. Krauss writes that *Slide Piece's* "contribution to the philosophico-perceptual problem is the dawning of Barthes's 'diegetic horizon' (the invisible or implied meaning), although here its dawning is felt through a wilful suppression: the deadpan description precisely squeezing out, stymieing, repressing, diegetic drive" (Krauss 1997: 16).

In *La Tache Aveugle* (1979), another slide-tape piece with nine frames taken from the narrative film, *The Invisible Man*, Coleman acknowledges the diegetic dimension that seems to be built into the medium of the slide-tape by the fact that sequence implies development. The technical basis for Coleman's medium comprises the three slide

projectors he co-ordinates to show the very slow (the nine slides are displayed over eight hours) dissolve of the invulnerability of the invisible man. The extended time of showing suppresses the narrative expectations that the work seemed to provoke. *La Tache Aveugle*, in a sense, is obedient to the prohibitions of narrative that are deeply ingrained in the history of Modernism, but it covertly traffics with the diegetic by embedding its notion of the medium within the process of an unfolding (Krauss 1997: 17).

Coleman allows the diegetic horizon to stand forth in *Living and Presumed Dead* (1983–1985), with 20 characters in elaborate costumes arranged across the stage as if taking a curtain call, or a final bow. The visual field is as resolutely immobile as that of the slide piece. The narration or diegetic dimension is provided by the sound-track story that is delivered in an Irish voice, recounting the adventures of the hero in a mixed narrative and dialogue. The separation of the two dimensions of the work—the visual/static from the audio/temporal—is reinforced. The visual effects have nothing to do with the diegesis, as the work involves a co-ordination between two dimensions of permutation: the visual as the slide changes and a narrato-temporal one; the taped story of the continual deaths and reappearance of the character Capax produces a logic of dissemination rather than of closure. Again, this piece trades against the grain of the diegetic on the one hand (the fixedness of the lineup of characters, whose subtle changes defy immediate detection) while on the other, the verticality of permutation that unfolds within the horizontal nature of a story is subverted by the narrative's single-mindedness and drive (Krauss 1997: 20).

The resource that Coleman mines from the photo-novel is the "double face-out", evident in the works *Seeing for Oneself* and *Initials* (1994). It is a major grammatical component of his new "medium". The double face-out is particular shot that occurs in comic books when two of the characters have an emotional exchange and one experiences a strong reaction. In this "reaction shot", the instigator is in the background, "looking at the reactor" who fills the foreground. His back is turned to the instigator, and he faces out of the frame. This is advantageous to the photo novel, as both the "shot and reaction shot" are projected in a single frame. Coleman uses this to highlight the "impossibility of the visual field" delivering its promise of being either lifelike or authentic (Krauss 1997: 22).

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This double face-out is reinforced and gives extra gravity within the soundtrack of *Initials*, where the narrator reinforces this grammatical component with the poetic description of the convention: "Why do you gaze, one on the other ... and then turn away ... and then turn away?" This line is taken from W. B. Yeats's 1917 dance drama, *The Dreaming of the Bones*, where the souls of the dead are unable to depart this earth because of unabsolved crime (Krauss 1997: 23). The separation of the visual from the audio allows Coleman to acknowledge how his medium is constructed, with the double face-out's insistence on flatness, and the articulation of the temporality of the slide-tape's static seriality in lines such as: "Unfolding in a time, now; to having been present in a past, now" (Krauss 1997: 26).

Krauss explains the Post-Medium Condition by reviewing this piece:

> "In the pre-Post Medium days of Modernism, such an acknowledgement would have carried the assumption that laying the conditions of the medium bear a kind of transparent self-evidence—the unassailable truth on which unity (material, ontological) and autonomy are based—and that such self-evidence as a function of the viewer's powers of analysis is reflexive, re-empowering the viewer's own autonomy." (Krauss 1997: 25)

However, Coleman states that his "medium" is by its very nature shattered from within, so that we can come to any of its givens only to discover that it lies at an unmanageably skewed angle to the others, denying the transparency of the medium. Coleman's calls this "anamorphosis" (Krauss 1997: 26).

Figure 8. James Coleman. MIT project *Charon* (1989). Consists of a tape and slide projection arranged as a number of episodes

Coleman's MIT project *Charon* (1989) (fig. 8) is his most reflexive work. It not only stages the conditions of his own medium but produces the allegory of the photographer/author's paradoxical position of simultaneous alienation and absorption within the medium. The work is divided into 14 "tales". The first, *Charon*, shows the image of a crashed truck with the narrator explaining the story of the photographer. The image never changes. It just gets darker and darker, through a series of dissolves, and it is banal in that it is one of Coleman's stock photographs. The photographer identifies in an uncanny way with the accident pictured, since he stages it to duplicate one in which he was involved. Coleman's "medium" or photographic images, shown over the slide tape, relentlessly cycle dead images (the pose of the subjects is made rigid by the process of standing still) of the living through the apparatus of the projector, in a kind of compulsive technical repetition. Coleman's references to photography in the present to a vanished past—"unfolding in a time, now; to having been present in a past, now"—commits to

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death, that same medium, insofar as it is based on projection (Krauss 1997: 31). In the final frame of *Charon*, *Showroom*, where the photographer is setting up, shooting and dismantling interior decors for "Dream Homes", he takes unused elements for the pictures and places them in the "spare" room, where he rests after a long day's work. There he feels free to move about, unobserved; perhaps he rearranges the furniture, lies on the couch and dreams of the next day's Dream Homes pictures.

This imaginative projection, the permuted, off-the-static image set against the "diegetic horizon" of a narration that is never allowed to reach its destination, involves the "permutational play" of a signifier which, both real and imaginary, appears and disappears on the order of Barthe's third term. But it also appears and disappears to the rhythm of the apparatus of Coleman's medium, a medium that he has "invented" and which, in continually investigating its terms, he continually reinvents, both as a disruption of modernism's certainties and as a continuation of its hopes (Krauss 1997: 31).

For the purposes of this study, Krauss's postulation of the PMC is aligned with Bolter and Grusin's work on remediation as it has found that Coleman and Krauss deal with what Coleman calls anamorphosis, or a shattering of the medium from within, so that when we look at any of the medium's givens, we discover that it lies at an unmanageably skewed angle to the others, thus denying the transparency of the medium.

Bolter and Grusin state that "the medium is that which remediates" (Bolter & Grusin 2000). There is no passive medium, a medium cannot simply "mediate" or transmit. A medium by its definition (agency or action as an intermediary) remediates. By absorbing other media, it reworks, reconfigures and refashions them. Mediation is a multiplication process that mediates different processes within the media into a "plurality of mediums". Increasing technological dependency engenders an array of mediated interactions within social existence. The paradox of mediation is that it slips into remediation at the instant of its mediation. The older media is reshaped by the new and represented in a potentially different form, as McLuhan postulates (Bolter & Grusin 2000: 65).

It seems that the new medium and mankind have a relationship which instead of being in agreement is in constant unrest and until the arrival of the next new medium that disturbance will be ongoing.

CHAPTER 4: EXEGESIS: A REFLEXIVE STUDY OF SELECTED ARTWORKS AND THE STUDIO PROCESSES OF THE CANDIDATE

This empirical study of my practical artwork and practice-based research is in the form of an exegesis and self-commentary. The exegesis gives linage and linkage to the dissertation. Observations and documentation of works of art in progress within my studio at the Centre for Visual Arts (University of KwaZulu-Natal) were documented. The data collected is in the form of digital photographs, notes and sketchbooks. The study includes a critical reflective component that aims to position my work in relation to the 'problem' of the medium which is central to the contexts of this dissertation. Also included in this chapter is an explanation of studio-based process.

4.1 Theoretical overview

The exegesis considers my work and the processes in which I have engaged during the production of these works. Although the works have been made with awareness of the dialogues of theorists such as Krauss, McLuhan, Hansen and Mitchell, I have not attempted to align my work within the context of any one particular discourse. In broad terms, I involve myself in the context of today's mediated world, as partly espoused by McLuhan (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: x). Through various mediations, I select and present those portions of my mediated experience that are important to me in works of art. These works do not attempt to completely reflect the current art critic or contemporary notion of art. The notion of "mediation" is seen as a contemporary condition in art practice by most of the theorists mentioned (Krauss's notion of the PMC, for instance). The notion is integral to my work in that I engage in and make use of the "new" digital technology and traditional mediums.

My works do, however, reveal historical layering in that I have experience of multiple layers of media invention, innovation and obsolescence (I was born in 1960, calculators and television only arrived in my final years of high school and computers became mainstream in the 1990s, when I was in my 30s). These old conventions are contextualised within my work with the use of the traditional medium of drawing, using notebooks (not electronic), pastel crayons, pens, paint and images from the past. These pre-digital images represent the technological layers of my past. Kentridge uses images of outdated technology in his works and terms the use of these images as the persistence of the old and a refusal to move with the times. New technologies, Kentridge says, are sometimes mistakenly perceived to be the only ones appropriate (Artist's Questionnaire 2002: 6-97) and he sees the residue of the old as signs representing the redundancy of outdated technologies. These stand on the road of techno-anthropological history (a McLuhanesque viewpoint) (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: viii). Nonetheless, my having memories of obsolete media does not exclude me from engaging with and experiencing the present New Media world, with all its technology. The images in my artworks are steeped in memory or signs of the past, while I experience new and emerging technologies in my daily or occasional use of them and, as such, these artworks are a hybrid of my experiences. Although these artworks do not represent New Media art, the past and present, regardless of whether or not the mediums of the past or present are shown in the artworks, are in an obscure way represented through my experience or knowledge of them. My particular layering of history in my work appears perhaps in the mixed-media use of conventional media and the use of imagery. This is different to Kentridge, who uses the image of the rotary/analog telephone, for example, as both an image of outmoded technology, and nostalgia.

The artworks involve mediation between the pre-digital, conventional disciplines of drawing, painting and printmaking, and personal involvement in the New Media world of digital technologies (the World Wide Web, computer programs, industrial digital printers, etc.). Mediation of this nature is also reflected in thought processes that are layered in conventions both past and present, and which become embedded in the imagery,

processes and media comprising the artworks. This act of calibration and feedback with self in the world can be described with regards to Bolter and Grusin's ideas of remediation (Hansen 2002). So although these artworks do not reflect Krauss's Post-Medium Condition, they do echo Krauss's rejection of medium specificity.

Krauss comments that the increasing use of diverse and varied media, for example mixed and intermedia art, negates the pure art of Greenberg's modernist vision, so disallowing the Greenbergian notion of medium specificity. The artworks I discuss in this paper not only reflect Krauss's negation of Greenberg's notion of medium specificity, but also echo the ideas of the mixed media concept of Postmodernism (Krauss 2000: 31). My artworks cannot represent the era of the Postmodern, as the context is now New Media. My viewpoint is skewered in the New Media context and layered with technologies of my past. While the mixed-media aspect of my work echoes that of the Postmodern, my work (seen through Manovich's lens) has moved beyond the Postmodern because it includes the use of digital technology. Manovich suggests that with the digital platform one moves beyond mixed media (and the traditional notion of media) to incorporate the idea of post media. Manovich attempts to replace the old discourses of mediums, substituting the pre-computer concept of medium with new concepts of computer and net culture, thus forging his notion of a Post-Media aesthetic (Manovich 2005: 5).

McLuhan looks at this layering of media as a totality of technical, social and aesthetic reality (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: xxii). Media theorists such as Mitchell and Hansen review the dynamic role of mediation, where media are reintegrated into the larger social domain, and the domain of mediation within which culture and life actually happen (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: xxii). Both Mitchell and Hansen call this a "McLuhanesque" injunction to understand from the perspective of media (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: xxii). To illustrate the use of the layered media in Figure 9 (*The Ape's Progress. "I Control."*), the board on which the image is placed has been gouged, illustrating early mark making. Layered on top of that is acrylic paint, a further gestural mark, making iconic drawings with pencil and spills of paint precede the final digital print (originated with computer technology and printed on an industrial digital printer).

Figure 9. Nicholas Crooks. *The Ape's Progress, No. 3. I Control* (2011). Mixed media: digital imaging, acrylic and oil on superwood board (900mm x 900mm)

4.2 Mediation, mixed media and the digital platform

While I refer strongly to the tradition of painting and drawing, my practice does not adhere to the traditional identity of these media. Rather, I expand my practice to include the mediation of other media and processes, such as the incorporation of digital printed images that are conceived using digital technological processes and imagery. The use of the digital image within my work is important to the study in terms of how I access and manipulate content and process ideas. Mediation of this sort is seen as interdisciplinary in that it incorporates digitally produced images (which are appropriated, photographed,

manipulated and hand-drawn) with traditional oil and acrylic painted images. In this sense, the completed work on board or a paper can be seen more as multi-media than Post-Media.

An example of the layering of mediums can be seen in the paper scroll work (Fig. 10), where paint has been applied to the surface of the paper. In Figure 11, the digital print has been applied.

Figure 10. Nicholas Crooks. *Scroll*. Detail prior to printing (2010). Acrylic, marker pen, ink, pencil on paper scroll (1.5m x 10 m)
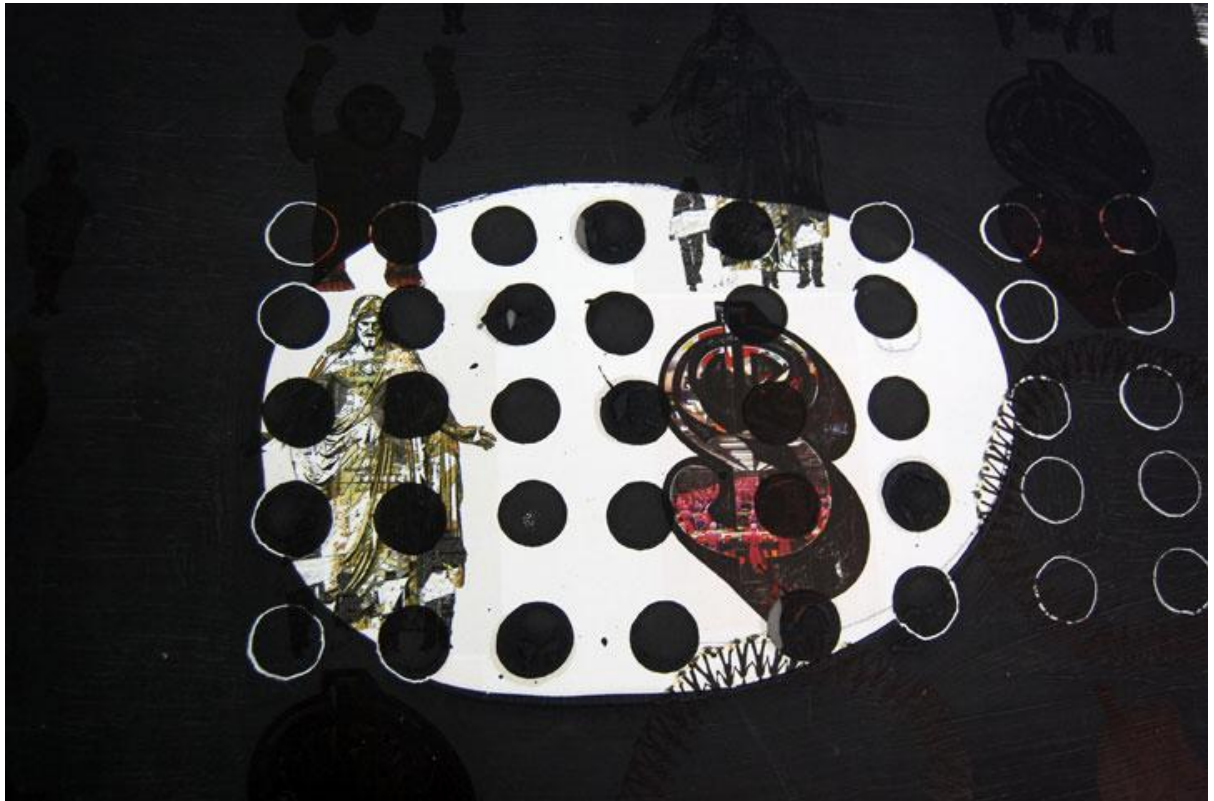
Figure 11. Nicholas Crooks. *Scroll*. Detail with print (2010). Digital print with acrylic, marker pen, ink, pencil, on paper scroll (1.5m x 10m)

While it does access digital technology, the finished work can be associated more with Picasso's early collages (*Still Life with Chair Caning.* 1912) than to Krauss's notion of a new medium.

4.3 Connection to modernism

While much of my work is mixed media on canvas, board and paper, the work clearly stretches beyond Greenberg's notion of medium specificity and incorporates engagement with digital processes. My works are still art objects that incorporate recognisable traditional media (painting, drawing and print). While my work does incorporate my own digitally manipulated, found and drawn images, once I have removed the digital images from the computer and transposed them via a digital printer onto the canvas or paper, the digital processes that have been used to make and process

the images no longer seem apparent; they become images printed onto board/canvas or paper. My manipulation of these digitally printed images, laid over scratchings, drawings and painting, has its precedent in the works of Duchamp and other early Modernists. While my work does not exemplify Duchamp's urinal, it does incorporate the "found" image (the urinal is a "found" object and is thus similar). Duchamp was probably the first artist to appropriate and manipulate imagery, especially the printed image, for example, his print of the Mona Lisa (LHOOQ). In this sense, my approach owes as much to Duchamp (if not more) as it does to Picasso. As the theme of my work is a narrative based on the development of man (as postulated by the American professor of psychology Clare W. Graves and developed by Don Beck and Chris Cowan in their book *Spiral Dynamics*), I have sourced as a means to express this narrative (found) images from the web. These downloaded images are manipulated using Photoshop and Flash, saved on to a memory stick and given to a printer. If these digital works, however, remained virtual, and were contained within a digital space by a computer, identifying the medium would suddenly become more complex. The image would then be made up of code/data—(but the way in which I decide to present them controls the way it is viewed and disallows it from the virtual). When it is contained within a digital space, while still in its digital form, its potential to be "something else" is open ended.

4.4 Different specificity

Reflecting upon Krauss's notion of a "different specificity" and in keeping with this notion, my artworks in relation to past and present media, due to their failure to present new medium, do not acknowledge the invention of a new medium. In Krauss's terms it isn't that my works are not inventing a new medium, as she describes Coleman doing. Using her ideology, the mixed-media/ interdisciplinary (offsite) nature of my work shows a layering of tradition, referring to a number of media both past and present, as is typical of Postmodernism (Wall). However, there is no "new" medium present in my work that replaces or makes redundant those traditional practices that my works acknowledge. It could be argued, though, that the notion of a "different specificity" is present in the

process of making my digital images. Rather the process (searching the web, downloading images, manipulating those images, digitally printing, using digital machinery) of developing the digital images for the works is submerged in the modern-day New Media technical aura. "In this way, medium specificity is continued through its subversion into a different specificity" (Krauss 2000: 10). The qualities of the New Media technologies are engaged with offsite, or off the artwork, and then transposed onto the artwork and as such are not apparent in the works themselves. It is this lack of presentation which drives the work into the arena of a "different specificity" or Post-Media. The works become mixed media once they are presented on board.

My work is often sequential in nature. I create narratives that explore an ongoing interest in ideological dichotomies. These sequential narrative works present the perceived dichotomy between the digital and traditional medium-specific methodologies. I may not be "inventing a new medium", as in Krauss's exposition, but there is a clear exploration, juxtaposition and integration of digital and traditional media.

1. While the digital images are no longer virtual, the digital process does leave traces in the presented work as follows:

- In the presence of the found and printed and photographic image (it is rare nowadays to use pre-digital techniques to create the printed photo or image) – it is also different in quality to the silk-screened image.
- The printed surface has clear digital qualities (photographic/found image with its pixelated printed dot, etc)
- Digital manipulations such as those done in Photoshop are recognisable. Photoshop is so commonly used that its tools and their effects have become recognisable characteristics of the digital platform.

2. The digital images are mediated art by the traditional medium of painting in the following ways:

- By extending and echoing the digital, hand-drawn manipulations that are already a part of my digital drawings.

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- In many works the painted mark remains a gesture rather than an image–and it intrudes onto, veils and at the same time emphasises the digital image. In this way, the painted and drawn analog gesture serves to make the printed digital images iconographic and central. So, the relationship between the painted gesture and the printed/digitally drawn/manipulated image is a point of interest.
- So, while my work may not be creating a "new medium" in the way Krauss claims Kentridge and Coleman are, traces of my digital processes (offsite) are evident in the presented work.

What I would call my offsite process (what is not obvious, for example, the digital and technological processes that I was involved in during the manufacturing of the prints) is what I postulate Kentridge is able to present to the viewer in his artworks.

4.5 Offsite process

Digital photos were taken of various items, or digital images were downloaded from the net and manipulated using Photoshop, Flash and digital programs and the resulting images were then printed onto prepared paper canvas or board, using an industrial digital packaging printer and the digital prints superimposed over the painting, drawing or canvas. The object of the exercise was to comment on the hegemony of traditional painting and drawing's visual authority with the superimposition of the digital. From a New Media, digital or Internet perspective, the world in which we live is altered by the new digital technology (this is supported by McLuhan, where the medium is the message itself (McLuhan 1964: 8). Hansen's "digital convergence promises to render obsolete the now still crucial moment of perception", leading to his notion of embodiment (Hansen 2002: 2). Krauss comments on the "entrance of all media into the digital age". (Hinderer 2009: 1). The digital/New Media has become part of the actual, part of the reality.

Although as an artist I have engaged in the digital activities offsite (by using the new technologies), once my works are digitally printed, they lose this virtual quality and the virtual is no longer part of the work's identity. New technologies have become part of the

process in the construction of these works and they can be categorised as having PM tendencies, even though most of my actions with the digital are offsite. Traces of my digital offsite processes are evident in the work and the digital image is mediated by traditional painted marks and gestures. New technologies force us to rethink the history of the media and how they transform society and these works conform to this layering of technologies as a reflection on human technological history through the medium.
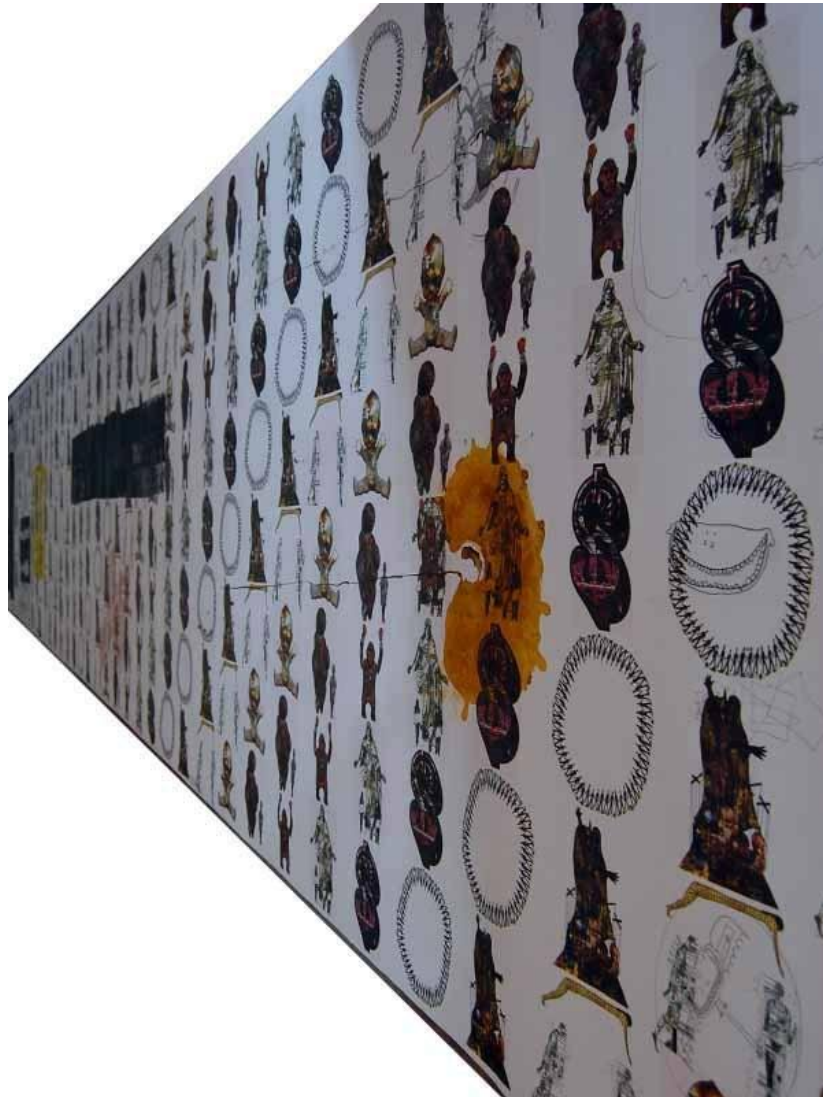

Figure 12. Nicholas Crooks. *The Ape's Progress, Scroll* (2010). Digital print on acrylic, ink, pencil on paper (Fabriano Academia 160g, 1.5m x 10m)

4.6 Immediacy of the analog and the technological mediated distance of the digital

Mark making, or art making (both digital and analog) is the expressive vehicle that communicates the process of my personal biological journey, a journey that is necessarily situated within the McLuhanesque social condition and all its psychological effects. These different forms of mark making, specifically painting, drawing and digital printmaking serve several purposes in my current works. The physical act of mark-making (often abstract and non-representational, see Fig. 11) allows me to enter into a personal dialogue; it is a way of thinking through, of negotiating, of clarifying this personal journey to myself, it becomes a personal language (these unconscious thoughts materialise in mark making and conform more with Bolter and Grusin's ideas of immediacy than the unconscious) (Bolter & Grusin 2000: 65). As a contrast between the unconscious/immediate mark making and a more cognitive approach to art, I purposefully make use of the New Media of digital technology and digital processes, as the representational images produced digitally contain more historical references for the viewer. For me, the introduction of any technology or medium gives extra distance (it becomes remediated) between myself and the artwork. As media do not simply "mediate", they act as "intermediaries", thereby remediating. It can also be understood that increasing technological dependency engenders an increasingly diverse array of mediated interactions. The paradox of mediation is that mediation "slips into remediation at the instant of its mediation. The older media is reshaped by the new and represented anew, in a potentially different form of media" (Chakravorty 2012: 2). It can be said that there is almost no act that we can perform which is not remediated. The digital to me is not direct or immediate, because it involves many layers technological mediation and it lacks the immediacy of the analog. (When I am using a pencil directly on paper, the mediating factors are the senses and the pencil). For me, use of the digital is a multi-mediated experience. The digital images I produce using Photoshop and other programs are more considered, they involve remediated contemplation, both through mediated thoughts and mediation of coded programs or systems of the computer. (As a 51-year-old not having grown up with digital technology, I have as my historical media

program a more analog-based history, so it may very well be that the new generation of the digital would find the digital experience more immediate- which could relate immediacy to competence?) These cognisant and mediated digital images are superimposed over the mark-making of painting and drawing, creating a dialogue where the digital New Media becomes part of the reality of the old analog mediums of drawing and painting.

4.7 Digital and analog

In my art the introduction of representational and / or figurative digital print forms as a medium is a means for me to carry on the conversation of how technologies layer history. Because of their representational nature the printed digital iconic images, the painted and gestural drawn marks in these works access points in history for the audience to enter into the artwork's journey, thereby relating to the technical evolution of mankind to my own metaphysical journey.

This dichotomy between my art and the viewer, with the work's obligation to communicate, will always be difficult, as the layers of society expand, with technological development expanding the mediation. McLuhan's layering of mediums (media should be defined as "extensions of man") (McLuhan 1964: 4) include any technology that is not found in our natural state. In his view, "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium" (McLuhan 1964: 8); the medium is thus specific through its effects, not it's content, and the introduction of each medium gives more distance between the aura or the authenticity. This distancing is experienced by myself in the creation of the digital images on the artworks, this "off-site" work or the gathering of information digitally and using digital technology occupies a certain personal technological mediation. The more direct representation of some embodied mediated experiences comes out in the more immediate or analog mark making, such as the use of pencils or paint. The artwork becomes the site where the digitally mediated "offsite" experience meets the immediacy of the analog. These artworks investigate and interrogate the dichotomy between the

digital (new) and traditional (obsolete) analog languages of painting, drawing, and printmaking.
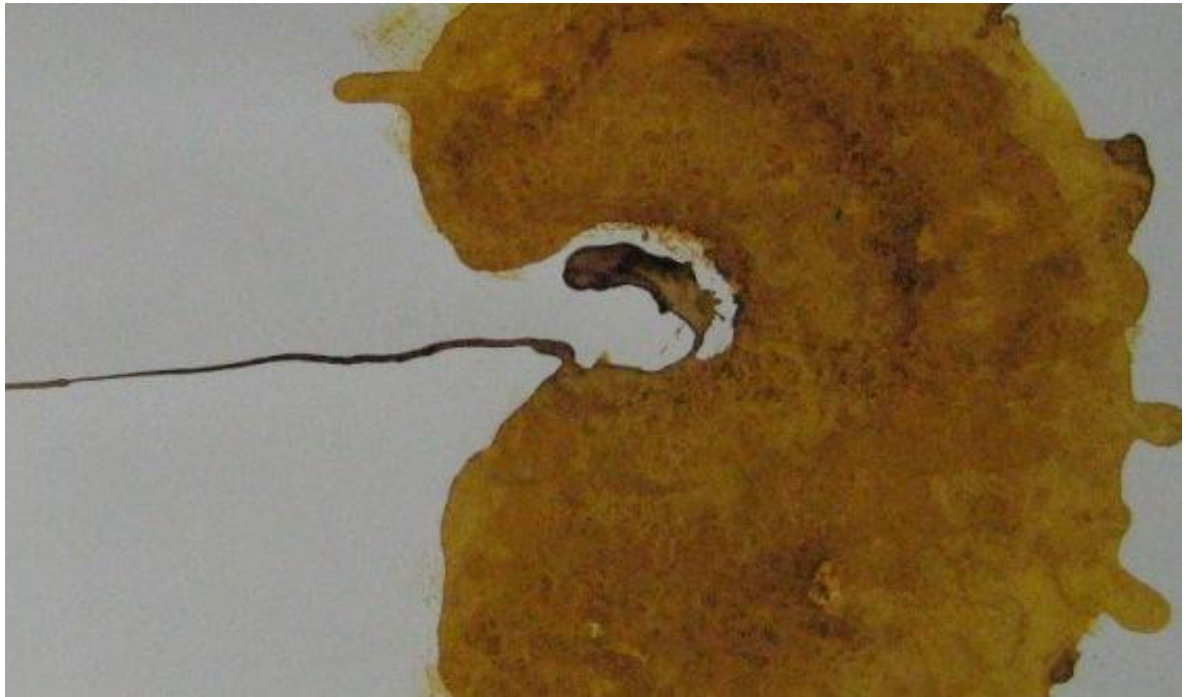

Figure 13. Nicholas Crooks. *The Ape's Progress. Scroll.* Detail prior to printing (2010). Ink on paper (1.5m x 10m)

Figure 14. Nicholas Crooks. *The Ape's Progress*. Detail of scroll (2010). Ink, acrylic, pencil and digital print on paper (1.5m x 10m)

4.8 The subject matter: a techno anthropological universe

The subject matter of my artwork is an attempt to cover a history relating to the trajectory of my life — and at the same time to identify with the evolution of the human race, as postulated by the American professor of psychology, Clare W. Graves. Graves tracks mankind's historic emergence from clans to tribes to networks and holograms and looks at eight belief systems based on mans' emergence (Beck & Cowan 1996: 4). The subject matter involves a constant re-evaluation of the biological, sociological, and psychological conditions of my life. There is an arrival at a condition that can broadly be described as divine discontentment, and it comes in the form of advancement of technology, where our reach always exceeds our grasp (life becomes an enquiry and not an answer). This divine discontentment can be aligned with my support of the idea of an ever-changing self within an ever-changing social technical structure. All of the points of reference, self and other, are constantly changing as new technologies are introduced

into society, and as I biologically age and go through different physical, psychological and sociological stages.

Figure 15. Nicholas Crooks. *The Ape's Progress, Scroll* (2010). Ink, acrylic, pencil and digital print on paper scroll (1.5m x 10m)

Figure 16. Nicholas Crooks. *The Ape's Progress* (2010). Detail. Ink, acrylic, pencil and digital print on paper (1.5m x 10m)

I continually engage with New Media offsite and express this in my work by superimposing print over the analog marks of painting and drawing. The narrative *Scroll* artwork, entitled *The Ape's Progress* (Fig.10) has its roots in the mixed-media works of early Modernists (for example, Picasso's Synthetic Cubist work, *Still Life With Chair Caning*, Duchamp's *LOOHQ* and Kurt Schwitter's *Mertz* collages). It also has precedent in the works of Robert Rauschenburg, a precursor of Post-Modernism. All of these artists experiment with appropriated (sometimes mass produced) printed images, which are then integrated with conventional artistic media such as drawing and painting. The painted and drawn marks retain both identity and presence, and co-exist with the digital images, gestures and prints. The conventional media that are present are not made redundant through the kind reinvention of media that Krauss espouses. The difference that can be found with the digitally manipulated images printed onto the work, is that

(once removed from their data stage), they were printed using more advanced machinery than, say, Duchamp would have used.

An observation that pertains to my artworks, with relation to Krauss's PMC, is that although as an artist I have a firmer grip of Krauss's notion and, offsite, engage actively with the digital, my works do not reflect her postulations. These have, though, influenced the way in which I approach my work, so my engagement with her ideas will have affected the outcome of my works. So, while they are not Post-Medium in Krauss's sense of the term (or I have not invented a new medium), I have in the process of creating them been engaged with and been influenced by her ideas, although this is in terms of Manovich's ideas of the Post-Medium—particularly with mediation of the digital.

Certain notions of McLuhan's obsolescence with regards to the different media used, such as drawing, painting and printmaking do occur. Some questioning occurs over more contemporary notions and applies to the use of New Media in art, such as: What does the new medium make old? What does it diminish? What becomes out of date? The question of how new technologies force us to rethink the history of the media and how they transform society are not explored in the work itself (Chakravorty 2012: 3).

4.9 How is the analog or old analog diminished or re-represented by New Media?

The visual images or icons in this work embody knowledge, or a history that relates to these symbols, and this embodied knowledge may not be shared by viewers who do not have the same social, cultural and contextual background. But the artefacts embody knowledge and this is layered, embedded and encoded through the relationship that man has with technology or the media. Specific examples in my work (see Fig. 10, *Scroll*) demonstrate the use of more realistic, digitally printed iconic figures such as the ape, Christ, a baby and recognisable gestural marks of paint and scribbles, all which have historical meaning in visual culture and art production. In visual language, all marks (indications of medium) have as their content a multiplicity of conventions that are reflected by their technologies. And each viewer will have different interpretations of

these icons and marks. Each of us have as our content a multiplicity of layers which become obsolete and out-dated at the moment we perceive and absorb the new. As our content becomes remediated, we are continually being changed through mediation.

Figure 17. The studio, 2010, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Centre for Visual Arts. Drawings, sketches and writing. Laying the foundation for the scrollwork, which will be digitally printed over.

4.10 The studio

The studio is at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Centre for Visual Arts. The site of the artworks' production is the studio table, which is 4.8 x 1.2 m wide. This is the site for several processes through which I engage with the artworks.

4.10.1 The studio-based practices (onsite process): mediation, remediation and embodiment

When in conversation with others or myself (thoughts), I allow visual interpretations in the form of drawings, doodles and writing to manifest on a piece of paper. Sometimes, in conversation with others, they may draw or make marks on it if they wish and the paper also picks up spills and accidental marks. In other words, I invite interaction with others around me to help mediate my work. The paper becomes a sign, a record of activity around it, set within the realm of visual language. Each sensory or mediated interaction that I have with others or objects has a provocative or remediated effect on myself, which deviates or layers the existing thoughts into a moderated self, and it is through this process that Hansen describes as embodiment that the image is transcribed into a visual image in the artwork (Chakravorty 2012: 2). In this way, in my view and in Hansen's ideology, I become outmoded at each new perception (through the process of remediation) and the artwork becomes a process that is not a wholly preconceived vision of something; it is an on-going conversation on a piece of scroll paper or board, which is remediated through drawing or painting, accidental spillage processes or an interaction with others and the local media. The artwork is a reflection of the changing self in the context of my techno anthropological situation. And although the digital is very much part of my world, there is little evidence of it in the work. The influence of the digital is embodied within me, according to Hansen. As such, I am changed by the digital, have been remediated by its influences, and these somehow or other show up in the artwork, whether conscious or unconscious—although it ironically loses this status at the moment of the completion of the mark-making and printing at its presentation.

This changing self or the body is not a passive player in the construction of artworks. Hansen sees digitisation of the image as a process and therefore one that is "irreducibly bound up with the activity of the body". There is an embodied experience that relates to all media. Hansen's theory of embodiment is supported by French philosopher Henry Bergson's area of perception, where Bergson calls the body "a centre of indetermination within an acentered universe" (Hansen 2006: 3). Bergson writes that the body selects from the many images around it only those that are relevant and so forms a perception.

It is the body or the individual that is affected through the media. This grammatisation translates the crux of our experience into something that can be shared, into some public language that others can relate to. Similarly, Hansen hypothesises that, through the digitisation process, the body, with various apparatus, makes information perceptible. Man is continuously developing new technologies or media (lithic tool or stone tools are replaced by the ideogrammatic or a character symbolising the idea of a thing, such as a stick figure. The alphabet, with its 26 letters, creates the conditions of expression and replaces the stick figure. Hansen asks what is "new" about the New Media (Hansen 2006: 3). A medium can only be reinvented once it has become obsolete, or as Krauss calls it, dysfunctional. Hansen affirms that the "virtual belongs to the body and not to the technology" (Hansen 2006: 6).
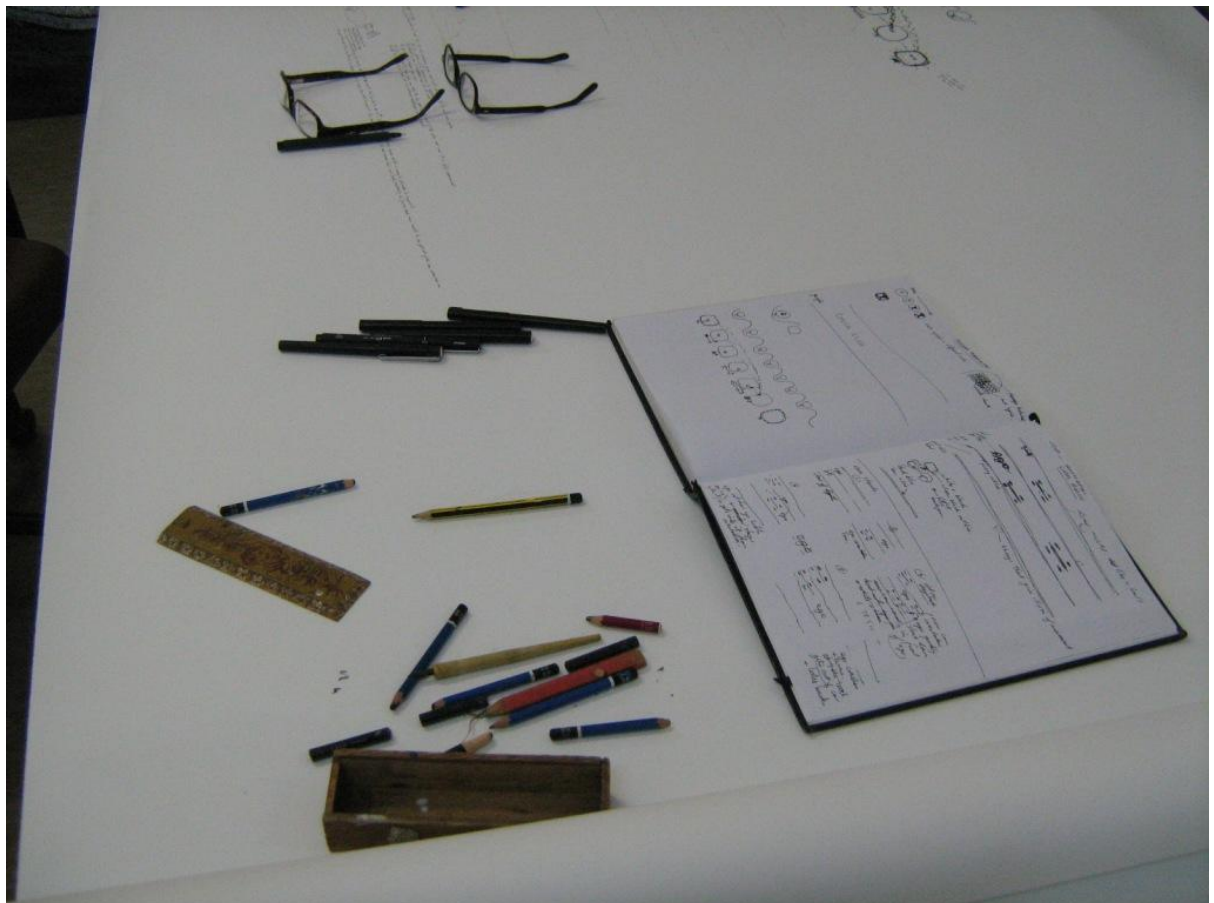

Figure 18. The studio, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Centre for Visual Arts, 2010. Notebook, pencils and pens lying on top of the scroll

4.10.2 Moving beyond medium specificity

Going against against Greenberg's reductivist theories of modern art, where the disciplines search for one defining quality at the core of their respective, this series of works is interdisciplinary and engages with mixed media.

Krauss traces, from the 1960s to the present, various paths leading off from a loss of faith in Greenberg's essentialist doctrine of medium specificity. One leads to practices that don't insist on any single, fixed centre to their medium, but that do attempt, in what Krauss sees in a decidedly Modernist fashion, to produce works to unify the medium's divided condition in one aesthetic expression. This describes my approach to art. She cites structuralist films, in particular those of Richard Serra, as examples of this kind of art. Another path leads to art that demonstrates "differential specificity". It is art that, like structuralist film, understands its medium as divided, but that, unlike structuralist film, counts it as peculiar and necessary to its medium. The work of Broodthaers, and more recently that of Coleman and Kentridge, is her examples of this tendency. Yet my works, due to their restriction as single identifiable objects, do not resemble the processes of these artists.

4.11 Conclusion of exegesis

At first observation (from Greenberg's perspective), my work appears as mixed media, the irony here being that it could be touted as such—were not for the McLuhanesque viewpoint, which is adequately described by Mitchell and Hansen in the introduction of their book, *Critical Terms For Media Studies,* with the expression "media determine our situation". As such, we are unable to ignore the introduction of the digital age, with its computer technology, that presented itself after the Modernist notion of mixed media. We are all influenced and afflicted by the medium of the past and the new "New Media". Our means of communication with cell phones and the web is pervasive, but it must also be remembered that past media were just as pervasive in their day. The artworks that I

produce have many layers, either through media, mediums or mediation, and all of these remediate themselves. The artworks contain, as it were, media artefacts.

While my work involves itself in pre-digital and digital technologies, it is the lack of the digital camera, computer screen, digital projection, etc., in the presentation of the artwork that leaves it in an ambiguous state. It is not New Media, or from Krauss's PMC, as it does not invent a new medium.

> Just as we should not assume that all artworks which use the technology of the Net belong to the medium of 'net art', it is a mistake to put all art objects which use — or, more precisely, form a layer on top of — interactive technology of modern computing into one category of 'interactive art'. (Manovich 2001: 5)

Manovich notes that it is too limiting to define New Media by the categories that are commonly used, such as Internet, websites, computer games, DVD, computer multimedia and CD-ROMs. He asks what happens to images and text that are created on computers and then printed on paper (Manovich 2001: 43). He wants to look at the effects of computerisation on culture as a whole, which is a very McLuhanesque standpoint, in that it is medium-based.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Ideas of what the medium is have altered. In artistic terms, they have moved from Greenberg's Modernist medium specificity to a collapse of this Modernist tendency when artists sought to contradict the medium specific nature of Modernism. The result was a non-medium specific, interdisciplinary, intermedia approach, exemplified by genres such as intermedia art, installation art, conceptual art, multimedia, and art involving video. These genres also typify many aspects of Postmodernism and have come to exist under the umbrella of the Postmodern. By the end of the 1980s, art practices began engaging with ideas of globalisation and the New Media and Postmodernism lost much of its critical resonance. In 1981, Krauss wrote an essay, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field,* in which she stated:

> "For, within the situation of post modernism, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium — sculpture — but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium — photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself — might be used." (Krauss 1985)

Eventually this became Krauss's Post-Medium Condition. This departure from the idea that a unique object can itself speak a unique truth, to one in which an object or objects is set in a cultural relationship to the system it is placed within, becomes an investigation into the modes and tropes of cultural relations. The medium as a set of conventions becomes distinct from its physicality. This can be seen in the work of artists such as Kentridge and Coleman, who create counter narratives that resist their "leaching of the aesthetic out into the social field in general" (Krauss 2000: 56).

Hansen asks what we are to do with art or the work of New Media artists, which merit the name "art" and moves the argument back to the role of the body within New Media art. Hansen calls the body "the requisite processing site of the self-differing, aggregative condition of the medium" (Hansen 2002: 15). The digital image is the amassing of

autonomous fragments, each manipulable independently of the rest, requiring bodily activity in order to produce an experience. The body is the site where this "diversity can be retained in a non-reductive aggregation" (Hansen 2002: 16). What Hansen is suggesting is that that the body is bound up with the rendering of the "digital image" and must be included in theories of what constitutes the "medium"; the body becomes the fabric of part of the work. Hasn't it always been? Artists have always been involved in their work with their bodies.

But this doesn't change the distance given by obsolete media. With the obsolete, one receives a different perspective; it is a universal one that comes with understanding, not the first position of involvement.

What is Hansen trying to say? We know that the body is the site for all human physical sensation and is the reason there is sensation at all. The body, however, becomes an impure site, as all sensory input are mediated by the senses, and through this mediation we end up with a mediated perception of the world around us (which includes McLuhan's standpoint of the medium). This perception through our sensory filters is the "map"; it is not the "territory". The information that is processed is, according to Hansen, embodied and the body becomes the place where varied media are concretised, albeit as a perception. This embodiment does not have to await future obsolescence of the digital as a medium; it can be absorbed and undertaken immediately, albeit, ironically through Bolter and Grusen's ideas of remediation. This paper would argue that this has historically always been the case with information received and embodied, although in the last century, the pace has increased and been amplified with New Media with the World Wide Web. Embodying information is what humans do and we processes or embody this information, which is mediated through filters of our experiences, culture, language, beliefs, values, interest and assumptions (O'Connor & Seymour 1993: 4), technical or media changes, and other filters. We have formed preconceived perceptions through our senses. In short, our experience is mediated or we understand from the perspective of media (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: xxii).

McLuhan would consider Krauss, Hansen, Manovich and any other art critic wishing to name New Media before their or its obsolescence, as reflective of their own contemporary postulations, for instance, Krauss's PMC. This paper would take the view that if you look at the material content and the speed at which the digital is delivered, there can be no doubt that the pace of the digital is faster or more immediate than any other medium since the invention of tools. The critics reflect that impatience of the new or New Media and their attempt to present the non-obsolete as obsolete is an attempt to understand that newness; they live in a world where each moment is new and it could be that which drives them to name that moment, as Krauss has done, as the PMC. Technicity is now advancing at such a rate that it supersedes the critics to such an extent that they must play catch-up with the advancement of technology. It is as McLuhan suggested — the technological advance stretches our reach beyond our grasp. "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a metaphor?" (McLuhan 1964: 60). "We create a technology that mediates our world." According to McLuhan, "machines are extensions of the human body …" and he sees our "… perception as a mediated perception, a function of medium … The meanings we arrived at are mediated by technology. (Meaning is not reducible to technology, technology transforms a meaning)" (Lochhead 1994: 1). McLuhan views the medium as technological and it is the form, not the content of the medium that affects society, viewing the relationship between man and technology or medium as inseparable. This relationship, when teased out, is reflective of Hegel's notion of the thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis, where the medium (thesis) is replaced by a new medium (anti-thesis), which has a transformative nature on both of them and produces a new message (synthesis). This is not a static process as it is reflected on all levels of human interaction. Although the invention of new technologies may be immediately felt by those that use them, because of the diverse nature of our societies, it can take generations or longer for society to experience the full social effects of a new medium. Bolter and Grusin's view of the medium can be seen as an immediate human response. Medium must at the moment of its inception (where inception is seen as immediate) appear as remediation, where man's drive for immediacy is replaced by the elusiveness of remediation (Bolter & Grusin 2000: 65). Techno-anthropological man's existence is not only mediated by the medium but also remediated at the moment of

conception, thus turning any act into an obsolete one. The relationship between immediacy and remediation serves a philosophical pursuit and an ancient quest for true immediacy, where immediacy is a fleeting and elusive quest of man's perception, where the moment of perception is stolen by remediation.

To revise the concept of medium: it seems to involve a lot more than the material support it is often associated with, as can be seen in a number of definitions of "mixed media". Today's concept of medium can move between parameters that mark out the concept, rendering some more important than others at various times. Thus, the emphasis on aspects that define medium can shift. At times, the technological aspect of the medium seems more important than the formal, thematic, and aesthetic aspects, or "distribution mechanisms" and "sociocultural uses" come to the fore. Mitchell captures this complexity when he fits this term with the following elusive description: "An image appears only in some medium or other — in paint, stone, word, or numbers". But what about media? How do they manifest and make themselves understandable? One could use a materialist answer and identify the medium as the material support in or on which the image appears but this seems unsatisfactory. "A medium is more than the materials of which it is composed. It is a material social practice, a set of skills, habits, techniques, tools, codes and conventions" (Mitchell 2005: 203). In terms of the position of the concept, Mitchell adds, "The concept of a medium … seems … to occupy some sort of vague middle ground between materials and the things people do with them" (Mitchell 2005: 204).

Under the umbrella of McLuhan, where we treat the message and the medium as having a far more symbiotic relationship, it is only when the contents of a medium are transposed onto a different medium that the original medium becomes perceptible. Looking at mediation within a broader sphere, it is a process or phenomenon that implies the need to bridge disagreement between two entities. When extrapolated further, mediation multiplies and itself goes on to mediate varied processes within the media into a "plurality of mediums" (Chakravorty 2012: 2). According to Hegel, the mediation process is necessary for man's comprehension of existence, as man is unable to perceive the complexity of existence (Chakravorty 2012: 2) and has developed through

the ages, agencies of mediation that have become more diverse (from speech to the web).

McLuhan's view that the media can no longer be dismissed as neutral or transparent, subordinate or merely supplemental to the information they convey (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: vii) is taken up by Mitchell and Hansen in their book, *Critical Terms For Media Studies.* From McLuhan's perspective, it is the power of the medium that changes the way individuals interact and determines how society will unfold. When art criticism is viewed from McLuhan's perspective, in its expanded form the media are not seen as separate and rest on the universal effect of technology on man. McLuhan sees technologies as stimulation for consciousness and that technology is heavily layered in our history, affecting the psychic and social complex. Mitchell and Hansen, write that McLuhan's "approach has a capaciousness that can encompass the multiple and historically disjunctive origins of the term media, as well as related terms like medium and mediation" (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: xi) With Mitchell and Hansen carrying the McLuhanesque banner, which encompasses humanity's technical evolution, it would seem pertinent that at each new postulation by an art critic, a parallel investigation of the technological medium takes place, where the emphasis of the "medium is the message" is foregrounded. This inclusive notion of McLuhan can be seen as a PM attitude, where he has stripped the Greenbergian notion of specificity from the agenda.

If the McLuhanesque message is in the driving seat (where the emergence of the collective singular media operates within the techno-anthropological universal that has structured the history of humanity) (Mitchell & Hansen 2010: ix), then the statement of the PMC is a misleading one, as the medium will never be post, after, over, or finished.

 Krauss could state we are living in a media heterogeneity but that is too simple for Krauss's notion. Apart from the misleading title of the PMC (from the McLuhanesque perspective), Krauss not only highlights the media heterogeneity but brings an awareness into art. The examples she uses of contemporary artists Kentridge and Coleman expressing a personal story or narrative in their work, redeems the work as an art object by the inclusion of this narrative. The inclusion of the narrative draws the work of art

back into the world, reminding us that it is not a separate or unitary element, as in the Greenberg medium specificity. When viewed from this angle, the work as object, or the work having its aesthetic specificity embedded in the material properties of a distinct artistic medium is permanently being redeemed by the artist's narrative, permanently being freed of its position as art. Jeff Wall's exclusion from the PMC by Krauss for, what she terms his "signature format" is his exclusion of the aggregate condition, where a third meaning is attached to the work. Coleman fulfils Krauss's aggregate condition by, for example splitting a "still" out of a reel of film. Coleman presents two narratives — the first or horizontal narrative in the work is the "still". By being removed from its context of the film, it creates a separate narrative. Its context is the film as a theoretical object, which the still destroys. Although the still is only a part of the film, it is a representation of the film's story. The counter-narrative, or vertical, is set to reverse the focus of the story in the artwork. This third meaning or counter-narrative arrives out of this conflict or change of arrangements between the… "obsolescence and redemptive possibilities within the outmoded itself" (Krauss 1999: 290). It is this third or obtuse meaning that is lacking in Wall's work, according to Krauss.

For McLuhan, the notion of medium has never slipped, for him "the medium is the message". Krauss, with her misleading title, the Post-Medium Condition, and its notions of hybridisation of the medium, clearly engaged in the broader picture of medium and its role in artistic practice. Krauss has lived through Greenberg's modernism and witnessed PM movements, and her comment on the aggregate condition or the third meaning in art has its subtleties. Her complicated and engaging ideas are provocative, and the investigation has been informative. Krauss's insights into medium, however specific, still do fall into McLuhan's notions of the medium is the message, where it is the medium media, or mediation, which determine the human position. This paper, although recognising Krauss's investigations and her noteworthy contribution to art history, cannot see a PMC. There is no condition of man that is separate to the medium in its singular conceptual form. Krauss's notion in the view of this paper merely supports McLuhan's in that she sees the medium and specifically, in her case, the New Media as changing the way we look at art forever. Which indeed it does, according to McLuhan. "A new medium

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is never an addition to an old one, nor does it leave the old one in peace. It never ceases to oppress the older media until it finds new shapes and positions for them" (McLuhan 1964: 278). Today the situation is exacerbated. McLuhan said, on *The Best of Ideas* on CBC Radio in 1967: "One of the effects of living with electric information is that we live habitually in a state of information overload. There's always more than you can cope with."

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Section 12: References — relevant unpublished research.

59. The study will refer to the documentation of the candidate's practice-based research that is relevant to the exegesis. This is in the form of written documentation, and photographic research. This documentation has taken place during the production of the candidate's practical research.