

# **ANDRIES BOTHA: CREATIVITY IN A CONTEXT OF CHANGE**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This dissertation has not been, nor is it to be submitted for any degree or examination in any other university.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this text I consider Andries Botha's work over the period 1977 to 2007. I particularly look at Botha's creative response to the period of change in which he has worked and at his own considerations of works of art as acts of creative citizenship and private creativity.

The text is based largely on interviews with Botha wherein he discusses his intentions and gives insight into the character of his creative imagination. In light of the interviews I write on individual works in detail, giving attention, to a certain extent, to chronology. During the late 1970s Botha was particularly concerned with establishing a sculptural language that would be expressive of his experience as a South African creative artist in the time of turbulence in the country and of paradox in his own circumstances as liberal thinker and inheritor of a conservative Afrikaner Nationalist background.

Botha's creative output has been considerable. He commenced his career in a period of waning modernity and an increasing presence of Postmodernist culture. In his works of the 1980s he makes use of conceptual means – installation, assemblage, multiples, technology and unusual materials to express, through myth and allegory, his understanding of aspects of the human condition. The many associations, aesthetic, historical and political, regarding land, in a South African and in an international context, also became his concern. He sought to look at the affects on selfhood in the wake of apartheid, considering particularly

the Afrikaner male and indigenous women, with especial reference to KwaZulu-Natal. He has been particularly interested in the effects of the abuse of power in a local and in an international sphere and in the situation of subaltern peoples in the aftermath of domination.

When Botha commenced studies at the (then) University of Natal, the prevailing philosophical attitude was Humanism, and his attitude to social responsibility is often markedly humanistic. His own thinking regarding his creative work coincided in many aspects with Marxist aesthetic. A development of Postmodernist thinking occurred in South Africa with the writing of *Die Sestigers*, who had had large contact with French philosophical writing of mid-twentieth century. Botha's challenge, as was that of *Die Sestigers*, was to take cognisance of international thinking and at the same time to work creatively within an experience of the South African locale.

Botha's reading of Merleau-Pontys' writings on phenomenology influenced him to respond to the immediacy of experience and record that response in his work. Largeness is a distinguishing feature of his art which I discuss in connection with the character of the sublime, as perceived by Burke. The character of *duende*, as seen by Lorca, is also distinctive to Botha's art and is used by him creatively to effect catharsis. He shows responsibility in his creative citizenship and in his private creativity in understanding and meeting the changes of the time.

## INTRODUCTION

Andries Botha is an artist working in a period of acute change. He is also an artist working in two spheres – that of European western thought and the sphere of his own locale. The influences of the two bear upon his work in significant and observable ways. His choice of structure and conceptualisation are frequently discernibly shaped by western thought but at the same time impelling inward creative forces give his work an unexpected thrust and charge. My text is set to explore the continuing flux of development and change within these two spheres and the way in which Botha responds in his creative work to these processes of change.

Botha is situated as an artist in a period of complexity in the world and in his locale and these complexities are to a certain extent the subject of his art. Events in an international context, major changes in thinking, in power and economic control as well as the displacement of peoples over the area of continents have inevitably impacted not only on the world but also on South Africa. In addition, huge change has taken place in South Africa, presenting a constantly shifting set of realities.

Botha was born in 1952 and began art training in 1971. Immediately, his early life was set in a political sphere, his family background being Afrikaner Nationalism. Commencing studies at the then University of Natal he came in contact with radical black political aspirations and sympathised strongly with these. He was aware of conflicting loyalties, those involving his convictions regarding black nationalism and those concerning issues of consanguinity. The presence of conflicting loyalties created disturbing pressures in his life

and the themes connected with these have in many ways continued to be subjects in his art, inspiring his investigations into the nature of power, possession, oppression, patriarchy, and the effects of these on individuals, on the nation and on the land.

In his creative expression his work is highly personal yet, to a certain point, inevitably positioned within prevailing paradigms of western thought and within that sphere of influence on structural developments in art.

I refer to a present situation. Writers on Poststructuralism within the late Marxist context of the 1960s not only influenced thought in western countries, and also inevitably in global arenas, but also instigated challenges to established tenets regarding the arts. These developments bear some influence on Botha's art both in its construction and in its conceptualisation. For example, questions concerning rulership and control arise from Foucault's examination of power and institutional structures and Botha has aligned himself with the questioning of power structures in South Africa and elsewhere in the world during its history. He has also concerned himself with examining the validity of those things which are established and honoured by societies.

Possibilities for deconstruction and conceptualisation enabling artists' expression of wider areas of thought and of insights into complex issues in the contemporary world have been opened partly by Derrida's examination of the nature of meaning. Within the area of structural development in the arts his investigations into the concepts of 'centre' and 'structure' and his probing into the arbitrariness of the processes by which meaning is established initiated Poststructural approaches. Repercussions on the arts are clear:

without an established centre or structure, rhetoric gives the power to communicate. As writing distances the reader from the truth, dialogue uses metaphor and analogy, giving presence and immediacy as preferable to representation and absence. Rhetoric is thus preferable to an object that signifies only itself. Consequently the idea of artistic autonomy (as presented in late modernism) is in conflict with rhetoric, forming an aporia, or deconstructive event. Thus the Postmodern shift from an accepted and dominating episteme gives rise to the Poststructural and Deconstructive theories - prevalent from the 1960s on - introducing the use of rhetoric, metaphor and analogy. In art, conceptualisation, installation, use of multiples, repetition and the found object are analogous to these constructs.

Although Botha makes use of processes of deconstruction and of conceptualism he does not necessarily emphasise the idea of 'dematerialisation' a concept to which Derrida's investigations would seem to lead. Firstly, his interest in phenomenological philosophy instigates in him an acute concern with the immediacy of situations. The circumstances of his life, his early companionship with peers at the level of schoolboy gang camaraderie, his necessitated close relationship with labour and labouring people in his early life and in early post-adolescence, bring his essential experience close to everyday life. Respecting labour, he sees the valid creation of art as achieved through labour and, in fact, the labour intensiveness of his works gives them substance and materiality.

The concept of labour is important to Botha within a South African context where he identifies with South African labourers. He read Marx at university and, through American academics, came into contact with the ideas of the Frankfurt School. The

Frankfurt School philosophy, largely influenced by Marxism, proposes the concept of art as expressed through labour. Consequently, although Botha's works can in many ways be called conceptual they do not partake, to any great extent, of current perceptions of 'dematerialisation'.

Corroborating much of Botha's own belief, the essence of Marcusean teaching is the concept that art should convey meaning that is communicable to society and that is important to society. With his individual works Botha has made use of the means of conceptualisation to communicate matters of social import. He has also engaged directly with South African society in his promotion and sponsorship of individual artists and writers, in the sponsoring and support of venues for community art projects and also in creative projects directly involving his own local communities wherein individuals benefit economically and personally from participation.

Freudian discourse, from its inception in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, inducted a way for increasingly more overt approaches to sexual practice as the century progressed. Marriage, parenting and family structures were now viewed in a different light and thought regarding established roles of male and female revised. In addition Lacan's investigations into human psychology gave rise to questioning of accepted views of sexuality, of kinship structures, and of gender roles. Within this paradigm Botha explores the nature of patriarchy, its influence on patterns of power, and its effect on kinship formations. In light of new perceptions of male and female sexuality he investigates a potential realization of the balance of male/female elements in relation to the general society. He looks into the accepted order of society in regard to family, seeing this as a basis for security and



identity, for nurturing and individual maturation but he also explores possibilities of greater complexity in interactions between the individual psyche and the social order. He especially examines the male role in regard to its exercise of power but also in its array of other potentials.

His interest in the individual in relation to a wider societal organization is largely the inspiration of his community creative projects. Similarly he sees individual identity as having its inception, nurturing and maturation within a possessed, secure, and settled locale. Form and materials in his work reflect the influence of his close identification with South Africa as the place that has formed his identity. Some of the main considerations in his work have been those concerning home, identity and family. In these considerations he expresses his understanding of the recognised norm of family as being acceptable and beneficial to society and yet discloses his critical perceptions of the many social failures of the construct. His concern for the individual and the individual's sense of identity have lead to preoccupation with the concepts of ownership, possession and dispossession of the land which in his conceptual vocabulary parallel the formation of identity. Consequently in his work he has expressed concern for historic and present vicissitudes regarding the land, seeing it as closely connected with an individual sense of being and relationship to society.

Botha came into confrontation with the conservative Afrikanerdom which formed his background firstly, in his choice of vocation. Secondly, the University of Natal which he attended in the early 1970s was liberal in its outlook and while there he read widely in world literature. His reading of works by *Die Sestigers*, in which he was particularly

interested, opened to him a viewpoint that, because it was particularly Afrikaans in conception, was both liberating and affirmative of his own position as an Afrikaner and liberal thinker. His prevailing interest in the cause of black enfranchisement brought him into a place of extreme divergence from his background during the years of apartheid rule.

*Die Sestigers* can be seen to be part of a general movement taking place in the 1960s and 1970s that involved the questioning of state and political structures and of accepted societal norms, especially those seen to be restrictive. These attitudes were in part influenced by circumstances I have already mentioned. Some of these writers spent time in France and the movement may generally be seen to have had beginnings in the existential philosophies current in France from early in the century. In addition, during the 1960s and 1970s Foucault's *The Order of Things*, Derrida's *Post Structural Treatises*, and Lyotard's *the Postmodern Condition* were published, all deeply examining and questioning the *status quo*. Said's *Orientalism* challenged western perceptions of so-called *exotica*. Barthe's later *Simulacra* (1982), establishing the unreality of many social perceptions, especially influenced young South African students living in Europe.

Botha's reading of *Die Sestigers'* works is a further indication of the dual sphere of influences in which his creativity exists. *Die Sestigers'* writing, though shaped in many ways by European models, largely shows a choice of South African characters, venues, situations and circumstances. In addition, the startlingly innovative way in which the writers approach their subjects would have had a freeing effect on Botha's compositional and conceptual ideas for his sculptures. Moreover, importantly, the sensitive understanding of Afrikaner identities and of Afrikaans people in their locale as well as the

revelation of 'unmasked' realities of South African life would have been meaningful to Botha interested as he was in his background and locality.

Botha's work relates both to his locale and to a world inheritance of art. In facing the complexity of the subject matter he must necessarily deal with he makes use of allegory and narrative to convey meaning. A particular quality of his work is its substantiality that yet incorporates subtle suggestions and references allowed by the processes of conceptualism. For example, in consideration of the intricacies of developments in two changing domains of influence, that of western thinking and that of life in South Africa, he expresses such insubstantial entities as entropy, hyper-reality, history, archive, memory, contemplation, time, and others, in material forms that are remarkable in their plasticity.

Botha's works are set in a specific period of human development and he has engaged with discourse, attitudes and events of his time. His work essentially presents in allegory a number of explorations seeking resolutions, many of his conclusions and stances being paradoxical, in keeping with the nature of the era. In many ways his situation is exemplified in that of *Die Sestigers*, Afrikaans South African artists, seeking to discover in shifting areas of local and global discourse, a base and individuality that could give substance to creative expression.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **CRITICAL, THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL DISCURSIVENESS SURROUNDING BOTHA'S WORK**

Looking back at three decades of Botha's work from the vantage point of the first decade of the twentieth-first century it is possible to gain a clearer view of his production and a greater understanding of his perceptions and interpretations of events. In his work he has centred on events - socio-economic, historic, political - in his own country, South Africa, but has also engaged in world matters. In this sense he has worked within a web of rapid and extreme global and international change.

His early University years were spent in a time of passing Modernity with its 'grand aim of the modern state to create and administer a rational society' (Seidman, 2004:197). Modernism, emphasising social integration and a 'legislative spirit' (as described, for example, by Foucault), is considered to have passed into Postmodernism, seen as a culture that has posited no absolutes as guide to social behaviour in what has become a world culture (Seidman, 2004:197). Postmodern culture is perceived at early twentieth century as affirming a non-central splintered order of social life with areas of communication that allow for ongoing mediation within a climate of socio-political divergences (Seidman, 2004:197). The affect of Postmodernist attitudes in South Africa, and elsewhere, is that a condition of uncertainty exists with no neutral standpoint to which to appeal. Vestiges of a style of western rule remain but a condition emerges which, although ostensibly following the 'Modernist pattern', reflects the negotiation, ambiguity and uncertainty

characteristic, observably, of Postmodernist thought but that engages in even further dislocation and change. J. L. and J. Comaroff write, ‘the modernist states put in place with ‘decolonisation’ - themselves a Weberian ideal type always more idealized than typical, always more the object of aspiration than accomplished fact, even in Europe - can no longer hold in the face of gathering lawlessness’ (2006:vii). The western thinker, in fact, sees previously ruled societies emerging from what may very frequently be seen as tribal structures endeavouring to adjust to notions of western thinking.

Botha has reflected in his work aspects of passing mutations in this period of philosophical and actual change but has maintained the human condition for the most part as a central and influential concern. This concern has led him into sympathy with certain reviews and reassessments of the critical philosophy of the Frankfurt School especially through his friendship with Becker, Dean of the Chicago Institute of Art. I will deal with Botha’s connection with this philosophy in some detail to correct possible misunderstandings of the Frankfurt School approach and to point out several of its essential principles that correlate to Botha’s work. Although Botha does not subscribe to any particular theoretic viewpoint, his connection with the Frankfurt School philosophy is indicated in his work in certain critical criteria located in the western tradition – although South African subject matter has primary sway - and that hold to the same intellectual tenor. For example, his attitude to the social role of art, central to the aesthetic philosophy of the Frankfurt School and its followers and revisionists, is of major importance in his production and is also at one with his giving centrality to the place of humanity and the individual human lot. His forms reflect a consciousness of the intellectual content of western art but qualities in his work also reflect the complex and frequently frantic, vehement, and irrational nature of his

locale and of this era. These qualities, for example, are evident in his experimentation and the role of violence in his creativity, echoing Lukacs' concept of the reflection of the hectic in his aesthetic philosophy. The presence of the more classically conceived elements combined with reflections of the violent create an arresting tension in Botha's work.

Two major influences appear to dominate current thinking. One could be seen as the need for societies previously controlled by western powers to find meaningful individual and community social life. For example, western culture has in many ways dominated cultures and identities alien to itself by placing them, consciously or unconsciously, in positions subordinated to 'its own system of self-discipline and domination' (Morris, 2001: 128). It has been perceived that the dominance of western culture has left in many areas a sense of indeterminate identity. Those parts of the world experiencing change in cultural attitudes have in many instances also of necessity experienced alterations in traditional means of subsistence that leave them in a state of insecurity and poverty. This abjection persists in the face of world capitalism and can be seen as the second influence dominating present concern. In a new phase of globalization the previously dominated societies have become areas for further expansion in regard to financial control. Controlling disciplines (once found necessary by imperialism) are now practised in favour of world monetary interests and are effected by non-government organisations and bodies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Morris, 2001:128).

Botha uses his art to deal with the challenging and opposing elements existent in world cultures. His interest has been expressed in addressing crucial issues in the contemporary

world - the restoration of historical memory and the building of collective identity in the aftermath of loss. He has also concerned himself with the contemporary predicament of misplaced peoples, their loss of assured self-hood and of secure and meaningful locations. The possession and use of land is a continuing interest that has particularly concerned him; he says, 'If we consider territory and humanity as cultural metaphors then one could argue that our human desire for ownership is revealed in the character of the land we occupy, a body that is a measure of our wilfulness expressed as conflictual history and mutated geography.' (Botha, 2003b:3).

Botha especially looks at the role of the male in commandeering territory, pursuing aberrant control, using political power plays and implementing militarism in order to manipulate land ownership. In his consideration of the use of land he is particularly concerned for the function and structure of family, for secure, familiar location and the concept of home. He extends his examination of family into thinking regarding masculinity, the role of the father and the nature of male behaviour. In his work *Afrikaander: circa 1600* (2006) fig.80 he reconstructs in the form of a museum display the inter-generational relationship between father and son, taking the example of his own relationship with his father.

In his art Botha has been concerned with the immediacy of events but also with their historicity. He is influenced by popular imagery but also makes reference to historic works of art. In his interest in immediacy he interprets incidents from his surroundings and locale using materials taken from there; he also refers to the solemnity of past history and its record using appropriately interpretative techniques and materials. He is interested

in human relationship but has explored the possibility human harmony existing in achieving an inward balance of opposites.

In much of his work Botha makes reference to the conditions left in the wake of the rule of various western powers, a situation currently examined in its many aspects. Schwarz notes that colonial domination has been present in the world for thousands of years (2000:4) and sees the rise of European dominance from 1500 to 1950 as decisive in forming present world events (2000:2). To Botha this history has been the instigation for examinations of human communal and individual experience.

Botha uses the circumstance of past western rule in his locale - KwaZulu-Natal - as a metaphor for universal conditions. His concern for the Kwazulu-Natal history arises from the actual nature of events there. During the period of dominating western rule in South Africa what can be seen as 'civilising' forms of violence, that is, seizure of land and imposition of culture, were carried out through bureaucracy and warfare. Apartheid rule, from mid-twentieth century on, tended to enforce the high ideals of Enlightenment in a modern state whilst being involved in incidents of brutality in attempts to maintain order. The last two decades of the twentieth century saw the end of apartheid, a restrictive power, in South Africa and a period that led up to full enfranchisement. Once the restrictions of apartheid were lifted many African people, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, engaged in violent strife involving power struggles and the reopening of previously hidden feuds. These brief statements refer to the social transition that is the context of much of Botha's creative direction in the period here under review. In his work he has investigated the forms of violence whereby the individual or state - by weapons, bureaucracy or



manipulation - robs others of their material or psychic goods.

A current questioning of western rule, now that it is in a state of diminishment, does not merely reflect on the oppression of one constituent by another, though elements of such oppression did exist (and Botha looks at these). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin writing in 1995 refer to a positive entity, a productive mixing of local and imperial cultures emerging from the problems, tensions and contestations of that era. The term so frequently used - 'post-colonial' - itself is fraught with ambiguity and complexity because it comprehends a vast variety of not only cultural experiences but the existence of economic and political structures and practices (Ashcroft, *et al*, 1995:10). Careless use of the term gives rise to generalisations that lose the complexity of the actual situation (Ashcroft, *et al*, 1995:2). To these authors the term comprehends the impact of western domination in its material aspect and in the multiple nuances of everyday living - everywhere in the world - responses often hidden and unseen but representing the ongoing processes of imperial influence.

Botha's concern with the importance of family life and the role of the father is evident in his six piece work of 1996, *What is a Home ...?* figs.51-56. In his *Bloodlines* Portfolio (1998) fig.63 he refers to family life as it is torn apart by internecine violence and he frequently uses the concept of 'Home' as metaphor for the dislocations of current society. In this regard Botha does not examine the particular effects of western rule on subjugated societies but the universal tragedy of family life destroyed by ideological or physical violence. His attitude is similar to but distinct from that explored by Tiffin in a comparable context where she sees only the destructiveness in a particular comparable situation (2001:374-388).

Looking at the difficult and complex climate left in the wake of declining western rule Botha is interested in affirming the dignity of peoples - as for example in his work *Migrations: Prayers* (2001) fig.71. Here he expresses the tragedy associated with the attempts of abject peoples to find other places that seem to promise the chance of a better life, a hope that tragically proves a mirage. Familial patterns, beliefs, traditions and many lives are frequently lost in these attempts. Botha's *Ungayithenga inhlizyo nomongo wami* (*You can buy my heart and my soul*) (2006) fig.81, commissioned by the Belgian government, presents a herd of nine life-size elephants - mature, adolescent and infant - carried out with strips of wood bolted on metal armatures. With this work he comments on the exploitation of natural enclaves and the corruption of perceptions of wild life through development of the curio industry. A perception is that this misuse and degradation has come about through past imperialist attitudes and present values placed on materialism and capitalism. Botha considers this preoccupation with the wild to be 'a panacea': the conqueror presumes that 'wildness can be contained, civilised and taken back to the ballrooms of the First world as a trophy.' (Statement published by Botha, 11 Jan. 2007).

Botha works in a period of increasing research into archival resources and an augmented knowledge of past history. His interest in the record of history is evidenced in his works. For example, metaphors suggesting time, archive, the passage of history play a role in *A History of monuments ... and wounds that are forgiven* (1996) fig.55 where the basic structure implies - at once - a wave bearing settlers on the sea and a page of archive that records their story. Most of his works comprehend the idea of history and an example is the work *History has an aspect of oversight in the process of progressive blindness*, (2006) fig.79 that points to the weight of the decisions that people take and the influence they

have on future generations.

Discussing the complicated fabric of what can be termed a post-colonial situation, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin refer to many of the subjects Botha deals with in his sculpture - 'migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourse of imperial Europe' and see such discourses as involving 'history, philosophy, and linguistics and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being.'(1995:2). For example, Botha's process work *Tangencya* (2005) fig.69 was inspired by a perception of the slave trade he experienced while standing at the 'Gate of No Return' at *Maison des Esclaves*, Goree. The work is intended to include the creative expressions of artists from those Southern African nations that had been under colonial rule (Botha, 2004:4). In connection with his *Amazwi Abesifazane* project (2001 -) Botha refers to the importance of land to the dispossessed, seeing his 'site of investigation (as) African land which has become a metaphor for conquest and ownership, a laboratory sample to be analysed as a Post-colonial fragment.'(Botha, 2003a:1).

With the *Ungayithenga inhlizo nomongo wami* (*You can Buy my Heart and my Soul*) (2006) fig.81 work Botha also expresses an indictment of the debasement of peoples. It is not only natural sites and wild life that are tainted but people themselves who, adopting a stance of abjection in a climate of expanding capitalism, sell their hearts and souls for gain. Views of development in the previously western ruled areas show changing perceptions. The peoples there are no longer the exotic 'other', or producers of interesting artefacts, as sought by dwellers in the metropolises, they have become those who seek asylum or hang on

the fringes of capitalist wealth eking out a living often by illegal means.

In his work Botha echoes Appiah's perception of Africa as an 'agonist' from which 'Postmodernism may learn' ([1993]1999:69). For example, he engages with the privations and suffering of individuals in his locale, in the women's embroidery project (2001 - ) that addresses the healing of trauma after the 1980s/1990s violence in KwaZulu-Natal; and in the *Bloodlines Portfolio* (1998) fig.63 that refers to atrocities revealed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Botha considers that his work is based on feelings of compassion and it can be seen to be in keeping with Appiah's proposal ([1993]1999:69) of a Postmodern art that identifies with the experience of Africa in the Postmodern era maintaining a 'powerful engagement with the concern to avoid cruelty and pain ... the concern for human suffering, for the victims of the post-colonial state.'

Botha's work has many of the features which writers could term 'Postmodern.' On the other hand he departs from what is understood as Postmodern in many significant ways. In these departures from the understood Postmodern his art is, firstly, extremely affective evidencing a compassionate insight into individual and subjective plight. Secondly his art is very focussed in regard to objective meaning and projects a positive view of humanity suggesting that humanity has a potential for harmonious relationships. His work involves a passion that commits itself fully and is not consistently or wholly ironic. He does, however, in his work, exhibit such features as could be called 'Postmodern' as the use of allegory, dream, ambivalence, gender consideration, reviews of entrenched familial and societal roles, the use of imagery, sounds and movements achieved through technology, and the use of installations and multiple pieces.

Although he was schooled in a modernist western art tradition Botha struggled to establish a formal sculptural expression that incorporated his art training as well as his own perceptions of his experience and locale. This balance of tensions is a feature of his work, comprehending personal experience and also using training while avoiding the particular pursuit of any established style. In this he did not see Postmodernism as by-passing or failing to embrace cultural production other than western as many African critics did. For example, Appiah calls Postmodernism, a term that many art critics have assigned to the period, 'Euro-American' and sees it as 'a way of making creative space' in relation to the hegemony of the modern' ([1993]1999:55). Botha characteristically makes use of a variety of approaches evidencing Appiah's view that the essence of what is called Postmodern lies in the variety of approaches and 'multiplicity of distinctions it can validate'. Botha deplores the commodification of art, whereas Appiah, like Jameson, sees Postmodernism as embracing commodification. Both Appiah and Jameson see Postmodernism as rejecting the modernist state of opposition and claim to exclusivity ([1993]1999:54). In developing his art Botha shed many of the inhibitions of modernist art. He freely uses his art to express condemnation of western dominations and land control. Similarly, Olu Oguibe (1999:28), resorting to metaphor, likens Postmodern western control of culture to colonial rule that controls subject peoples through bureaucracy and land survey.

Thus the spheres in which Botha works should be understood to be, firstly, an historic period termed 'Postmodern' and secondly a specific locality, South Africa. He responds to both theoretical and material changes which are seen as influences in his art. His early work is rather located in what Becker refers to as the 'seventies when the cultural world of

America was in constant upheaval and many of us were humanists, modernists, and Marxist/Leninists all at once.' (1994:113). Although he began working against a background of what can be seen as emerging Postmodernist theory Botha describes his early work, *Man in Chair* series and *Man in Cage* figs.2-5, that deal with abuses during the rule of the apartheid state as 'hot' and 'passionate' (Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). These particular marked features of his art have very little, if anything, of the cynicism and *ne plus ultra* approach of Postmodernism, or its *fin de siecle* vagueness and pessimism. On the contrary his work is optimistic because he expresses through it care for humanity and a hope for its destiny. His own outlook confirms this perception because he sees compassion as being a central inspiration of his work and basis for any social role his art may play. Theoretical Postmodernism is merely one of the historic developments that pass through his experience.

### **Representation and imaging in the current world**

Much of Botha's particular means of imaging the current world and the role of political engagement is paralleled in Jameson's proposal of the use of allegory. Botha works with multiple subjects that equate with the fragmentation of the present era creating charged conceptual landscapes to image dynamically the unseen forces at play in historic and personal circumstances.

Because of its manifold complexities Jameson perceives a problem with representation of the current social world. The multinational global capitalist system (seen by Jameson as

present in the current age), its practices in producing, methods of working, and its networks of energy are invisible so the hazards (as discerned by Jameson) integral to it are not apparent (Jameson, 1992:2). Jameson's observation is that present representative elements are already known, fully ideated. Media images presented to us do not really move our understanding, being 'prepackaged', expected. To him a re-emergence of allegory meets the problem of finding a form that will fit current circumstances, presenting a fresh way of resolving components. Allegory can image global occurrences on a scale that comprehends irregularities, minutiae and particularised landscape with a flexibility that reflects the fact of their continually becoming emphasised or under emphasised in the current age (1992:5). Pursuing the theme of allegory, Jameson sees the unconscious comprehension of a current world system (a 'geo-political unconscious') as a way of reshaping the traditional narrative into a tool that can give form to the global 'landscapes and forces' that we face in existing confrontations (1992:50). The combined features of thought and dynamic presentation in Botha's work meets this challenge.

Jameson sees 'cognitive mapping' (a term borrowed from Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 1960) as closely linked to allegorical thinking. He envisages it as a means by which contemporary people come to understand the urban areas they inhabit, an overlap between personal and social areas, connecting our path through a local environment with our understanding of the general and critical features of the planet. What is of significance in our current situation is the play of psychic and social conditions in both local and global political contexts, and the contrast and connection between global complexity and local specificity. The individual understanding, through such processes, is placed in a global distribution of cultural power. 'Cognitive mapping', as imagined by Jameson, is to be

seen as a mapping or scanning of a world polity thus obtaining an empowering comprehension of it (1992:xiv).

From the vantage of an opening twenty-first century it is evident that Botha's early production, but particularly his developing and later work, is within a 'global distribution of cultural power' and comprehends and images the functioning, visible and invisible, of a world system, or 'social totality'. He particularly uses mapping as a means of indicating the emotional and intellectual content of historical events. For example, maps seen by him in the Vatican Museum inspired the work *KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: 1896-1999* (2000) fig.68 where he uses mapping to indicate the impact on the land of historic incidents, battles and treaties. In the *Truth and Reconciliation Portfolio (Bloodlines)* (1998) fig.63 he makes use of maps to imply an indictment of state control of land and housing to the disadvantage of lower income groups. The same work shows a map in overlay that is marked to indicate projected assassinations. He thus asserts a powerful implication in the human drama of the situation. .

Jameson sees film as one of the available creative technologies that can meet the need for means to represent global reality. Cinema, in his opinion, can combine imagery from the past, artistic traditions and the most contemporary forms. It is 'permeated at every level by practices and paradoxes of marketing' (1992:xiii). He sees cinema as a transit place for the crossing of cultural and economic elements, an output of the 'most sophisticated forms of industrial development.' Botha makes use of the technologies of photography, video and film in recording nostalgic incidents relating to his themes or selected incidents of extreme intensity reflecting emotional data. He is fascinated by film and its capacity to



present drama and narrative through images, to transpose time and space and to create movement, sensation and altered states. All his work, in its dramatic vision and formal structure, shows the influence of cinema. He is also deeply interested in the electronic image and what it can effect. His work of 2000, *KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: 1896-1999* (fig.68) includes three video pieces using archival material as metaphor to emphasis the content. *Terrain: Spaces of Ownership and Dispossession* (2003) fig.78 is specifically inspired by the television record of destruction in the 9/11 incident - the bombing of the Twin Towers in New York, the merging of supposed 'entertainment' with stark reality providing the idea of a new hyper-reality. Botha comments, 'a new media-hyped reality becomes the subject of this work.' (Botha, Comments on this work, 2003).

How are the violent realities of warfare covered in the media communication of the current world-system? In a part of Botha's project to bring psychological healing to women suffering trauma after the KwaZulu-Natal violence during the 1980s and 1990s, a woman (Londiwe Xulu) describes how men carried round a decapitated head in a plastic bag to see to whom the head belonged and who the kin were. Florence Mdlolo, who took part in the same project, describes how she entered a dwelling during the time of the violence and saw what at first appeared to be rice on the floor; it was the spattered brains of a victim, one of the occupants of the house that had suffered an attack (Mdlolo, 2004: unpaginated). Botha's formal and conceptual resolutions expressed through form and in response to violence should be seriously noted. In connection with his *Terrain: Spaces of Ownership and Dispossession* (2003) fig.78, he notes how 'television images of destruction continually bombard the passive space of domestic interiors where reality is confused with entertainment' and how this provides him with the opportunity to use the idea of a new

‘hyper-reality’. The work becomes a ‘metaphor of tragedy and insecurity’ in the face of our ‘failed logics’, logics that ‘our scientists would suggest as supreme.’ (Internet statement by Botha: 2003).

### **The role of violence in Botha’s creativity**

Most of Botha’s art deals with violence that may at first not be apparent. In his early work he deals with restrictive legislation, incarceration and torture during the apartheid era. In later works he looks at the appropriation of land by western government, the inherent force of masculine-emphatic paternalism, the veiled coerciveness of religious hierarchies and the harm one human personality can do to another. However I am not referring only to violence contained in the subject matter that is chosen by the artist but to the quality of violence that should appear in the formation of art that deals with that particular type of subject matter.

Burke’s concept of the Sublime is relevant here. Morris writes that Burke ‘sought to ground hierarchal society in the aestheticized political truth deriving from natural passions.’ (2001:182). Such passions would be positive, in the social sense, underlying such directions toward social improvement as sympathy, love, well-placed ambition. These passions should be joined with virility, energy, and respect inspired by awe in order to preserve the robustness of a society, to safeguard it from effeteness on the one hand or violent decline on the other. To Burke the experience of the Sublime was not necessarily the actual experience of great terrors (pain, danger, fear) but rather the evocation of the

sources of such terrors. When viewing objects evocative of such terrors we derive an extreme delight. 'The sublime crushes and forces an awesome admiration.' (Morris, 2001:182). Burke, in response to the French Revolution, distinguished between the sublime in imagery and in ideas and the destructiveness of actual violence. The work of art is distanced from the violent object but yet inspires passions valuable to society.

The particular value of art - and here specifically Botha's art - is that it is distanced from the actual violence it deals with and presents a source of inspiration valuable to society, a record that stands outside the general social commentary, the artist being at once an observer and recorder of events. The artist's wisdom, sensibilities and capacities determine the value and effectiveness of the work. The extent and magnitude of the content should be equalled by the force and power of the work of art. However in its finality the work of art dealing with violence does not project the negation or destructiveness inherent in the event, although that may be the content of its subject. The work of art gives to events a record of lasting positive value, the record of the artist's perception and creative power, terrible as many of the recorded events may be. The work of art, if its subject is violent, should manifest sufficient force to confront the negativity of the content with an object whose power and vitality give a lasting valid, meaningful and valuable record.

Creativity itself, in its power and the force with which it must wrest the form of actuality from extraneity, must of necessity be violent. In this way creativity is eminently able to produce the social opposite and antidote to violence. I refer to the explanation of the Spanish term *duende*, given by the Spanish poet, Garcia Lorca (1971:127-139). The

explanation becomes the more relevant when I say that *duende* is a principle that Botha, as creative artist is particularly interested in. Lorca quotes the composer Manuel Torres: ‘All that has dark sounds has *duende*.’ (1971:127). Lorca explains: ‘These ‘dark sounds’ are the mystery, the roots thrusting into the fertile loam known to all of us, ignored by all of us, but from which we get what is real in art.’ Lorca mentions Goethe as defining *duende* as a mysterious power that everyone feels but that no philosopher has explained (1971: 127).

Lorca states, ‘Thus the *duende* is a power and not a behaviour, it is a struggle and not a concept.’ He refers to an old guitarist who said: ‘The *duende* is not in the throat; the *duende* surges up from the soles of the feet.’(1971:127). Lorca concludes that the *duende* is not a ‘matter of ability, but of real live form; of blood; of ancient culture; of creative action.’ (1971:127). He sees it as the ‘spirit of the earth’ (1971:127). Describing the path of the artistic career he says: ‘every step that ... an artist takes toward the tower of perfection is at the cost of the struggle he maintains with a *duende*.’ (1971:128). Botha’s early (and continuing) struggle to find a sculptural ‘language’ that exactly expresses his creative vision reflects the essence of this comment.

Lorca states that in seeking the *duende* ‘there is neither map nor discipline. All one knows is that it burns the blood like powdered glass, that it exhausts, that it rejects all the sweet geometry one has learned, that it breaks with all styles.’(1971:129). During Botha’s years at University the modern style was prevalent and a reflection of modernist approaches in formality and concepts. Exploring radical new methods, he set out to determine a path for himself, largely based on his experience of events in South Africa. His initiation of the use

of unusual materials, techniques and selection of content can be compared to Lorca's description of Goya's art in its manifestation of *duende* which compelled Goya 'master of greys, silvers, and of those pinks in the best English paintings, to paint with his knees and with his fists horrible bitumen blacks.' (1971:129). Lorca continues, 'The appearance of the *duende* always presupposes a radical change of all forms based on old structures. It gives a sensation of freshness wholly unknown' (1971:131).

Botha's art manifests *duende* as its unique and distinguishing feature. This statement brings me to a return to the theme of violence and creativity. From the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century there has been a particular interest in conceiving revolution or violent political activity as creative. The revolutionary writer and thinker, Georges-Eugene Sorel, 'inspired by Bergson's *elan vital*, aimed at a philosophy of creativity designed for 'producers' and polemically directed against the consumer society and intellectuals, both groups, he felt were parasites.' (Ahrendt, [1969] 1972:132). Sorel's thinking was influenced by the Marxist belief that revolutionary activity in itself could create a new society and that 'the emergence of a new society was preceded, but not caused by, violent outbreaks, which he likened to labour pangs that precede but of course do not cause, the event of organic birth.' (Ahrendt, [1969] 1972:132). Frantz Fanon, whose writing and thinking were influenced by Sorel and ultimately, clearly, by Marx, writes of the practice of violence which 'binds men together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part in the great organism of violence which has surged upwards.' ([1961] 1968:85-93). Ahrendt argues that, in light of comparable statements by Marx, Sorel, Fanon and others, violence can be seen as an element of life. Where life exists we have struggle and unrest: 'Is not violent action a

prerogative of the young?’ she asks, ‘Therefore are not praise of life and praise of violence the same?’ (Ahrendt [1969]1972:132).

According to Lorca *duende* has a further essential character, that is, the vitality of death: ‘*duende* does not appear if it sees no possibility of death ( and it) likes a straight fight with the creator on the edge of a well.’ (1971:136). Lorca sees the *duende* as wounding ‘and in the healing of this wound which never closes is the prodigious, the original in the work of man.’ (1971:136). In this view of creativity Lorca sees the struggle for expression as a ‘fight to the death’: the ‘*duende* likes the edge of things, where the wound is, and at which point the forms merge into a desire that is greater than their visual expression.’ (1971:136).

*Duende*, according to Lorca, has a sacred dimension: in Southern Spain ‘the presence of the *duende* is followed by shouts of ‘*Viva Dios!*’, a profound, human, and tender cry of communion with God through the five senses.’ (1971:131). Lorca states that the people of Andalusia recognise the *duende* with unfailing instinct when it appears (1971:127) and likens the experience of it as being ‘baptised with dark water.’(1971:136). I mention this aspect of *duende* especially because Botha’s art is markedly concerned with aspects of the metaphysical and dimensions beyond the natural.

Sartre, introducing Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, takes up a romantic approach to revolutionary violence: ‘irrepressible violence ... is man recreating himself, it is through ‘mad fury’ that the wretched of the earth can recreate themselves as men. ([1961]1973:18) Ahrendt states that the idea of man recreating himself is strictly within the tradition of Hegelian and Marxist thinking and ‘is the very basis of all leftist humanism ... according to

Hegel man 'produces himself through thought, ... for Marx ... it was labour, the human form of metabolism with nature' that enabled humanity to 'recreate' itself.' (1965:91). The concept of revolution is consistent with Botha's work since he supported the revolutionary intentions of the African National Congress, not necessarily in the sense of violence but in the sense of obtaining power and authority. Arendt sees action and the change caused by it as an essential and inevitable part of human life: 'Events, by definition, are occurrences that interrupt routine processes and routine procedures, only in a world in which nothing of importance ever happens could the futurologist's dream come true.' (1965::86) The existential view of action is that it is valuable, energy in itself is valuable, anything that *is* is valuable.

Fanon advocating revolution in erstwhile colonised nations also sees that world movements, action and change have their own patterns of vitality and growth. He envisages that once the people made rigid by control are freed, master and previously dominated can 'become brothers', the two cultures now able to 'affront each other, enrich each other', a particular positive value and enrichment emerging from the times of change ([1964] 1980:43,44) and even violence being a cleansing force ([1961]1973:74). Action can express itself in energy and in violence and inevitably in change. Violence can have many faces. It can have a certain social sanction, for example, in the instance of revolutions instigated by oppression, as glorified in the writings of Fanon and Sartre. Violence, however, obviously has a negative side and that is the more emphatic and known side. Considerable violence was displayed in KwaZulu-Natal in its recorded history and in South Africa during the period of transition with which much of this study is concerned.

### **The contemporary theoretical context and Botha's perception of a social role in art**

By the later decades of the twentieth century western and other critics were aware of the passing of what has been termed Postmodernist aesthetic and also of its inadequacies in the face of the contemporary human situation. Becker (1994:125) describes 'the appropriation, pastiche, sometimes parodic cynicism characteristic of the postmodern period' as leaving a vacuum since that period has passed. Dick Hebdige, satirising the complexities of Postmodernist theory, concludes, 'I cannot escape the conviction that something else, something deeper is at stake ... in the broader streams of social life and practice ... words like 'love', and 'hate' and 'faith' and 'history', 'pain' and 'joy', 'passion' and 'compassion' - the depth words - it is in the very nature of the human project that those words and what they stand for never go away.' (1999:121/122).

Botha shows a concern with the plight of humanity and current society. In an early address (Newcastle Art Society, 1988) and in a later one (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila, 2006:12) he clearly states that he sees his creative work as fulfilling a dual role: 'The creative act has two clear identities - the private act of creation and the act of creative citizenship.'

Much of Botha's art is politically engaged - and he had from the beginning of his career dealt very passionately with social injustice and certain abuses of the apartheid system and he also dealt later with abuses of Imperialist government as recorded in historic documents. However within the bounds of this engagement his desire is to create what he



describes, in his address (2006) in Manila, as Beauty. The beauty (as he terms it)) that he is interested in creating is involved with his perceptions and understanding of the passage and impact of history, of the geographic structure and appearance of South Africa, especially as he has intimately experienced it, of the activities and condition of people surrounding him. Speaking on the topic of Beauty he says,

‘I am increasingly drawn to an idea that our subjectivities are definitively shaped and formed by the outer and inner landscapes we occupy. In my case I live within the historically loaded landscape of South Africa ... My perception of all that constitutes order, balance and the aesthetics that inform the shape and substance of these influences are, for better or worse, the beauty and drama that is history ... Beauty then also becomes an acknowledgement of this historical cadence, it is an intimate indices (sic) and reading of our own responses to this survival text, how individuals remain positively committed to loving and being able to socially construct a personal and collective of hope.’ Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila, 2006:1.

In his talk to the Newcastle Art Society (Newcastle, Kwazulu-Natal) early in his career - 1988 - Botha refers to the role of the shaman in certain societies, one who could benefit a society because of a particular gift in understanding the human lot. Botha goes on to broaden this early view, but the perception constitutes a general principle - the concept of the artist serving society by his gifts. For example, Lukacs’ view of the social role of the artist is interestingly comparable to Botha’s outlook. Lukacs (Kiralyfalvi, 1975:58) sees the artist as being responsible to society because he is an ‘individual with a special set of sensitivities and experiences and is also representative ... of mankind.’ In Lukacs’ view the artist communicates reality but each communication and expression ‘depends on the breadth, greatness, and depth of that world, which as the material of reflection has accumulated in the subjective, and which determines the expression both directly and indirectly.’ (Lukacs, 11,306 quoted by Kiralyfalvi, 1975:58). While this quotation might

be dismissed as merely located in 'Marxist aesthetic' I wish to point out that the concept is very close to Botha's notion of the societal role his own art should play. In fact, the concept is central to art that intends to carry the artist's responsibility to society.

Central theoretical approaches appear to have influenced Botha during his creative career up till the present. From the late 1980s Carol Becker became a particular friend of Botha's and her circle of writers and critics corroborated and confirmed much of his own thinking. During the late 1990s questions frequently asked were 'Who is the audience of art?' or 'What social role should art play?' Writing in 1994, Becker saw a 'great deal of confusion about where art fits into society, what function it serves and where its emphases should be placed.'(115). She answered these questions in part by revisiting the Frankfurt School 'those intellectuals whose historical and philosophical mission was to make sense of the senseless modern world.' (Becker, 1994:115). The aesthetic of the Frankfurt School was of course largely based on Marxist aesthetic philosophy. Through reference to it Becker repositions and proposes an aesthetic outlook that coincided with much of Botha's thinking.

The connections are clear. Botha's years at the then University of Natal (1971 - 1976) would have been strongly influenced by Humanist thinking then prevalent at the University; he read Marx and was especially impressed by the humanity of his approach. (He was also amazed at the misconceptions arising around Marx's writings through stereotypical and superficial interpretations). Botha's centralisation of Beauty in his work is supported in Marxist aesthetic thinking.

Becker selected Marcuse as the follower of the Frankfurt School whose work she would revisit and she had worked closely with him as a graduate student at the University of California, San Diego. She states, 'At the core of Marcuse's theory, for example, is the issue of 'the Beautiful', a concept that Marcuse understood to be a 'locus of controversy' appearing often in reformatory programmes as something intended to be reconstructive of nature and society (1994:123). She explains that 'the 'Beautiful' for Marcuse is sensuous and preserved in aesthetic sublimation' and the 'autonomy of art and its political potential resides in this seriousness.' In this way Beauty does not preclude political and social significance from creative work but rather can be highly subversive, especially in conservative and hidebound societies that reject art that 'resonates with originality and strong formal properties.' (Becker, 1994:124).

The nature of politically engaged art as viewed in this context needs definition. According to Marcuse 'The potential of art lies only in its own aesthetic dimension.' (1978: xii-xiii in Becker, 1994:120) consequently the value of political art would always be restricted because it primarily expresses a mental idea rather than an idea that is adequately formally embodied. Becker states, 'The notion of making politically useful work often leads to a desire to simplify not merely the form but the content as well ... this may result in a heavy-handed, almost insulting condescension that alienates the audience rather than engaging it.' (1994:127). If art is only 'protest art' it will presently atrophy and be remembered only, if at all, as a mental reference to a passing condition. As a further elucidation of this viewpoint concerning political expression in art I quote Gramsci: 'fighting to reform culture one comes to modify the 'content' of art and works to create a new art, not from the outside (by professing a didactic, moralistic or prescriptive art) but from deep within,

because man is totally altered when his feelings, his conceptions and the relationship, of which man is the necessary expression, are themselves altered' (*Quaderni del carcere*, quoted in eds. D. Forgacs and G. Nowell-Smith, 1985:201).

The essential core of Marxist aesthetics is that it sees art as potentially uplifting. This view is maintained by critics known to Botha. For example, Becker writes in her review of Marcuse, 'Fundamental to Marcuse's understanding of the possibility of human liberation was his belief in the imagination - its regenerative abilities to remain uncolonized by the prevailing ideology, to continue to new ideas, and refigure the familiar.' (1994:114). Ruby Rich, a colleague of Becker's writes, 'The arts offer a secular form of transcendence, an aesthetic healing of cultural abuses, a formal solution to societal disequilibrium' (1994:243) and sees the continuing 'belief in art's powers' as 'an enduring sign of optimism' (1994:246).

In his talk on Beauty (*Beauty at the Curatorial Edge Conference*, Manila, 2006:13) Botha writes, 'Reintegrating artistic sensibility into the social space creates a larger canvas for the artist. The necessity to bring artistic sensibility in from the symbolic fringe to impact on and influence other narratives that define public sensibility (exists). Conflating these two arenas creates a more integrated and larger idea of artistic citizenship. Fine-tuning the individual relationship between the private and the public will create a huge diversity of energies for renewal.' He continues, 'our current notions of aesthetics and beauty can and will be expanded as a consequence of broadening our terms of reference for individual creativity.' (*Beauty at the Curatorial Edge Conference*, Manila, 2006:13). The concept of art as having a potentially uplifting function in society - through beauty of form conveying

values important to humanity - is part of the Marxist aesthetic. This is explained by Baxandall and Morawski in their study of Marx's aesthetic approach. Marx admired classical Greek art and perceived it to be enduring because of its 'formal harmonious attributes' and because of its marked social function: 'by its own specific means' it 'expressed the whole significance of its own society'. Its content was important to humanity because it expressed 'the highest human values' and thereby offered 'a tremendous affirmation of humanity ... The cognitive and the fundamental human values mingle and are both dependent ... on the adequacy of form to the embodied values.' ([1973:36].).

Again in his talk on Beauty (*Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila, 2006)

Botha writes,

'I have chosen to position beauty as a product of human deliberation and creativity, that which attempts to distil or enchant our emotional and human sensibilities, that which you feel and see interpreted by the creative process into an acceptable human gesture which informs our experiment as integrated to our vision as a species. Our deliberate commitment of our time (labour) to a process that will embody our thoughts and our gestures into social, historical space, presents the essential laboratory which formulates my understanding of beauty' (*Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila, 2006:2).

His statements are in keeping with Marxist aesthetic that deals with value placed on the human spirit. Gramsci, agreeing with Rossi, sees humanism (much of humanist principle can be seen as forerunner to Marxism) as aiming at the 'integral education of the human spirit. Above all it rehabilitated the human spirit as the creator of life and history.' (*Quaderni del carcere*, quoted in eds. Forgacs and Nowell-Smith, 1985:234). This quality of the human spirit and its expression in creative work forms a particular focus in the aesthetic critique of Humanism and - significantly for a consideration of Botha's work - in

that presented by Marx and his later followers.

Marxist aesthetic is also relevant to Botha's work in its theory of *reflection*. Kiralyfalvi points out that the Marxist theory of Reflection is essentially 'anthropocentric' and 'this-worldly' and is able to achieve the unity of seemingly contradictory elements of reality.' (1975:58). Writing of his work *Final Journey* (1984/5) fig.22, a work of woven grass, Botha says, 'in order to re-present an approximation of a state of delusion, I often employ a number of simultaneously contradictory narratives.' (*Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila, 2006:3). Many of Botha's works refer to a variety of states and perceptions of reality. His work of 2000, *Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, 1896-1999* (fig.68) refers at once to a human state and the land and its history. He says: 'seeking appropriate metaphors which conflate the surface of the body as a residue of memory and time with that of the physical landscape necessitated seeking a material equivalent that would be suitably visceral as an archival document to hold both markings and archival information as a parchment of skin.' (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge*, Conference, Manila, 2006:17).

Botha's work and perceptions are very close to an Aristotelian aesthetic, itself close to Marxist aesthetic, in his use of *mimesis*, or Reflection, combining elements drawn from reality to form significant metaphors. Lukacs sees art as consisting in the 'accurate reflection of the total process of objective reality, because (being) is not static, it is an historical process (Kiralyfalvi, 1975:59 quoting Lukacs, 1968:125). Mimesis in Botha's work takes on this quality; he records movement of thoughts, perceptions and historic processes using details that refer to actuality but that in their context become metaphorically evocative.

To Lukacs action is important as an essential element of *mimesis* (or reflection). Action involves time and space and these can be seen as the natural human environment (Lukacs, 1,648). Kiralyfalvi explains Lukacs' position here: 'in the visual arts ... the portrayal cannot be only of the movement, the finished work must contain in itself factors of movement (1975:60). These kinds of factors of movement occur in Botha's work. For example, he uses the metaphor of waves to suggest the 'passing of history'; digitalised clocks and dripping water indicate the passage of time and inbuilt disintegration denotes the transitoriness of matter.

Lukacs sees being, or reality, as a process and as a totality, and aspects of reality - essence and phenomena - as part of that totality: as a primary requisite the artist is to recognise that both - essence and phenomena - are part of objective reality, their relationship dialectical, and not 'mere products of the human consciousness.' So Kiralyfalvi explains (1975:59) that the 'improbable, fantastic, and grotesque particulars in works, for example, by Aeschylus, Dante, Cervantes, and Goethe ... are seen not only as acceptable but as necessary by Lukacs' Marxian theory of reflection.' Botha's frequently makes use of the grotesque in his work: (for example, with *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1991) fig.38. Botha shows an abased form that is opposite to a rising form - the abased form representing to him the abasement of Nebuchadnezzar in the Old Testament record. The animal approaches the sexuality of the woman in *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) fig.47 and in the small bronze variation of its theme, *Icons and other playthings* 1991 a small abased man rides the animal. The fallen 'bull' in *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37 is abased like the lower figure in *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus ...*

(1990/1991) fig.38 and it appears to be violated from behind by a crouching man.

Marx saw the motives behind capitalistic production as promoting the alienation of people from the higher values of art and full enjoyment of their own lives: 'Each person tries to establish over the other an *alien* power ... and the power of his *money* declines exactly in inverse proportion to the increase in the volume of production;' (from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* quoted by Baxandall and Morawski, 1973:61). Marx explains his view of the deprivation of essential enjoyment in lives dominated by a capitalist style of production, 'The less you *are*, the more you *have*, the less you express your own life, the greater is your alienated life - the greater is the store of your estranged being.' (from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* quoted by Baxandall and Morawski, 1973:61).

Botha's projects, his acts of 'creative citizenship' that involve community participation are intended to address the 'alienation' perceived by Marx. The purpose of *Tangencya*, for example, is that an art important to humanity should be accessible to it. The 'alienation' between groups of people because of cultural difference or geographic distance or theoretic divergences can be dealt with by creative and imaginative acts. Ruby Rich expresses current questions regarding 'audience': 'Art is part of the community but what part, and which community? What is art, anyway, and who wants it and why?' (1994:230). Botha's concept of *Ubuntu* is relevant here. He sees his own 'truth and being' as being fundamentally expressed and defined by the embrace of the other. In the context of the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* (i.e. I am because you are) ... 'we find embedded a place for the individual to become an integral component of the collective': he sees this place as



an opening for 'personal imagination and individual creativity ... to ensure that the private and the public become a necessary part of how we expand into the future.' (Botha: Paper at the *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila, 2006:12).

### **Botha's political alignment**

Botha entered the University of Natal as a student in the early seventies. At this time political events in South Africa were coming to a head. Botha came into contact with the Black Consciousness movement largely through NUSAS, although his contacts would seem to have been mainly with young blacks involved with the issue of labour. Botha comments, 'But the young blacks I met were ... they were young guys that through the network came onto the city campus. You know NUSAS was then the sort of white student sort of representative ... left of centre sort of representative. And through NUSAS students slowly got exposed to young blacks ... 'I would say political intellectuals' (Interview with Leigh, 2006). He continues, 'They came from *de facto* the African National Congress and then the sort of emerging labour movement ... the labour movement wasn't fully developed because it was only in the '80s that the labour movement actually developed. But they certainly were labour representatives and spoke about labour and the organising of labour as being an important part of the future of South Africa.' (Interview with Leigh, 16 Sept., 2006).

Botha found the contact with the young blacks affiliated to the labour movements - later established as FOSATU (1979) and subsequently as COSATU (1985) - to be a watershed experience for himself. He believed that their vision 'far transcended the kind of limited

political narratives that we were exposed to ... it was a great ... almost immediate lesson in human politics for me.’(Interview with Leigh, 2006). For the first time he had met with black intellectuals on a footing where the blacks were not in a position of servility - ‘for the first time I had an opportunity to engage with people that were truly well founded and equal to you.’(Interview with Leigh, 2006). Furthermore it is clear that he could relate to the circumstances and aspirations of the young men. His father was a blue collar worker on the South African Railways, he himself had had to undertake hard physical labour in jobs on the railways and the docks in order to fund his university studies, and he had undergone privation and hardship in adolescence.

Botha’s identification with the black labour movements is in keeping with contemporary events. The black labour movements were an outcome of difficulties festering over decades, possibly centuries, say, since the beginning of white contact with blacks. From the early 1970s and during the 1980s these movements became a particular challenge to the apartheid state. In 1973 a wave of strikes took place in Durban and subsequently throughout South Africa. The strikes marked a change in South African political and social history (Pampallis, 1991:247). Blacks felt themselves in a position to challenge the restrictive laws defining their role in society and in the economy. Botha’s connections and sympathies at this time were clearly with such movements. There was actually much sympathy for black aspirations at the University of Natal at that time among white staff and students. (Richard Turner, lecturer in Political Science, wrote challengingly on participatory democracy in South Africa. He was assassinated in 1978. During the 1960s and later, academics and other sympathisers in the Province were put under banning orders). However Botha clearly found much of the academic attitude unsatisfactory and

not sufficiently effective, in his perception, to bring about the meaningful changes he envisaged.

The movements in labour at this period were co-existent with the Black Consciousness movement. Although white liberal thinking was highly supportive of black aspirations, yet to many blacks, mere thinking and attitudes were not enough. An aim of Black Consciousness was to encourage blacks to be independent of what was seen as white patronage (Pampallis, 1999:239-243; Johnson, 2004: 163/4). The Black Consciousness philosophy found its expression in many different groupings but its beginnings can be traced to the University Christian Movement that was launched in the late 1960s.(Pampallis,1991:242,3) and actually the Kairos Document committed many Christian denominations to full and active support of black aspiration. One of the main issues of Black Consciousness was to create a sense of identity among blacks. Botha states, 'Reclaiming an authentic version of history would suggest a visible self must be identified as part of the Public Self. This cultural endorsement of the individual as an element of the collective authenticates personal identity and paves the way to eradicate the indignity of Post Colonial invisibility.' (Botha, November, 2003b:2).

One of Botha's particular interests as artist is to explore self-hood - self-identity, and through that the identity of others. His own position in South Africa at the outset of his career was complex. His father was a worker on the South African Railways, an occupation that was generally considered as 'low class': (we might note that this was an appellation inherited from the British class system). He was an Afrikaner, a people experiencing a certain rejection by English sections of the population that largely populated Natal at that time. His father was a Nationalist, one whose beliefs were

repugnant to Botha's increasing insights into social justice and identification with the deprived and marginalised. Afrikaner Nationalism was at that point - mid 1970s - at the height of its authoritarian powers whereas Botha sympathised with the disenfranchised. Botha came from a background that applauded what were seen as markedly 'masculine' pursuits whereas his aim was to become a sculptor and in his work he reviews concepts of masculinity. He was poor but wished to attend a University. His early life had included considerable privation. Coming from an Afrikaner Nationalist background he attended a 'white liberal' university. In a way these complexities equipped him to identify with many of the complexities and anomalies of South African society and understand them in depth.

The death of Biko in 1977 was followed by an outcry. There was intense protestation on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the then Natal University. Botha had entered university in 1971 and graduated in 1976. In an interview with Leigh (16 Sept., 2006) he says of the death of Biko, 'it was for me the final outing ... it was almost as if the reasonableness of the Afrikaner nation ... or the South African white nation was finally outed ... the mobilisation against black intellectuals and political figures ... and the crude and brutal manner in which it was done was for me really a watershed.' Botha was politically aligned to liberation movements but as he says, 'I don't really believe that at the time and even subsequently that I am *per se* a political animal. I'm more of a human animal ... as a human being what is always so shocking to me is that people ... were not responsive to the sheer human abuse that was taking place on such a vast scale in South Africa.' (Interview with Leigh, 2006). The humanity of the situation struck him, the annihilation of the personal, the destruction of identity. In an interview (Leigh, 16 Sept., 2006) he says, 'I mean I believe you can brutalise a person. You can wound their body - they can heal from

that - but when you wound them in terms of ... their psychological vision of themselves ... I believe that is constituent to genocide. You know you destroy people psychically and spiritually and I think that was the pervasiveness of the apartheid state.' The issue Botha takes up - and is evidenced in his work - is primarily, as he says, not political but one of individual self-hood and the essential humanity of people.

Land was a sphere of contestation. Gavin Younge, one of Botha's teachers at University, stated, 'The struggle is over the land - food, wealth, politics, and the way things shake down after that. (Williamson, 1989: unpaginated). For much of the twentieth century South African government sought through massive expenditure and intervention, to achieve their own aims, largely to promote white farming and its food production. African settlements - outside the reserve areas allotted to them by the 1913 Land Act on land for which Africans held title deeds predating 1913 - were obliterated. During the peak period for such removals (i.e. the 1950s) over three and a half million people were removed from the land they owned and with which they identified. In all these acts the fundamental, common and shared humanity of the groups was not considered. Regarding the contestation of territory and loss of place to the dispossessed Botha sees the 'sense of place' once defined, as being the place 'from which all our other relationships with the world are contextualised and implemented.' (Botha, 2003:a3). My point is that one of Botha's main concerns in his consideration of South African history and his presentation of it in sculpture is the value of personal and individual human identity.

In his works of the late 1970s Botha comments with passion on the practice of detention without trial and the implications of incarceration and torture. With a series of works

dealing with the subject, *Man in Chair* and *Man in Cage* (figs.2,3,5) Botha showed life-size figures carried out in fibre glass, clothed in actual fabric and set in twisted, agonised positions. In these works he endeavours to escape the expectations of then internationally accepted styles and engage with the specifically South African subject matter with which he was passionately involved.

In an interview with Leigh (16 Sept., 2006) Botha says, 'So prior to '76 I really began to develop very early about my second year university ... I began to develop this uneasiness. Although it was very early and I hadn't formed it properly my political self really started to come into focus when the state itself mobilised overtly against black South Africans and that really cast me into a state of insecurity about South Africa.' Apart from his emotional reaction to the political conditions of the time Botha's response (Interview with Leigh, 2003) was fundamentally to the results the resistance to black claims would ultimately have on people - say, white people. 'White people themselves were in a siege with themselves, because philosophically, spiritually, emotionally, politically they could not even begin to embrace' - (I complete this thought) - the identity, the cultural identity of another. Again Botha's prime concern is with the value of human identity regardless of race or other constructed perceptual boundaries.

A major development in the political situation in South Africa was the uprising of black school children in Soweto in 1976. Social and economic changes added to the changes in perceptions of culture and identity initiated by Black Consciousness. ( Johnson notes the 'electric effect' that the news of the Portuguese revolution and the victory of guerrilla movements in Angola and Mozambique had on South Africa, 'suddenly it was clear that

white power could be overthrown, that revolution was not a dream but a credible reality.’(2004:165). Botha’s work, *Still Life* (1996) fig.56 commemorates the shooting of the young black, Hector Peterson, who was among the protesters. Characteristically Botha’s response is an emphasis on the human pathos of the situation - innocence destroyed by violence. This work was done for Aime Cesaire’s birthday celebrations and was bought for Martinique.

As I have discussed through the course of this introduction the drive behind much of Botha’s work is connected with political events in South Africa. I single out a few salient works that particularly mark this choice of subject matter. The work, *Dromedaris donder!... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37 reflects aspects of Botha’s concern for the situation in the country at mid-1980s. The name *Dromedaris* is of course the name of the ship that brought Dutch settlers to the Cape at mid-seventeenth century. The large helicopter shape that precedes the procession in this multiple is a reference to the surveillance helicopters that patrolled the black areas during the nation-wide State of Emergency declared by the Nationalist government in 1986. The shape is also a reference to the phallus, here a metaphor for the dangerous misuse of male power that Botha perceived as controlling the nation at that time. Botha was deeply moved by the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission initiated in the late years of the 1990s. His *Bloodlines Portfolio* (1998) fig.63 is based on incidents recounted during the proceedings. With his *Amazwi Abesifazane* project (2001-) Botha intends to address the trauma of women involved in the violence in Kwazulu-Natal during the 1980s and 1990s as a result of strife between factions and political parties. His *Tangencya* project (2004-6) fig.69 is designed to encourage the creativity of disadvantaged peoples in the previously

colonised regions of Southern Africa.

### **The implications of ‘immediacy’ and Botha’s interpretation of the ‘soul’**

In referring rather emphatically to the influence of the aesthetic philosophy of the Frankfurt School, which to a certain extent I believe shapes much of Botha’s art and in part my perceptions of it, I do not in any way wish to imply that Botha - or I - have adhered to any particular aesthetic viewpoint. I wish particularly to refer to aspects of Botha’s art that clarify that it is not to be categorised. For example, with the work *Dromedaris donder!... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37, Botha introduces the small striding lead figure to give the viewer a challenge, a consideration outside the classical concept of composition. Botha notes, ‘I don’t want my sculpture to rest easily on the viewer. I want there to be little movements within it that they feel uncomfortable with, that challenge the classical notion of balance and composition. But for some emotional reason I find that those elements are critical to the restlessness within the work. It’s never quite complete. ... There might not necessarily need to be that link whereas we’ve always been taught it had to be there.’ (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The presence of *duende* in his art is an element that cannot be quantified. The early maquettes (figs.11,12,14-19) that prefigure later works, for example, the gelaton maquette, fig.15, that prefigures *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37 have no classical form but simply set out concepts - ‘a collision of thoughts like a singular human element captivated within this whole cascading of history.’ (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

Botha read extensively and avidly while at the university. His reading of Merleau-Ponty



established his continuing attitude of responding to the immediacy of experience uninfluenced and unshaped by previous knowledge or preconceived theory. For example, Merleau-Ponty rejects the presupposition (imposed in this instance by psychologists) that dominates the intention of the word 'being' thus forcing it to come into consciousness as an already established 'psychic fact', turning our understanding of 'being' from the actual grasp of consciousness and the immediacy of experience (1962:59). Botha emphasises that his work is not to be understood 'linearly' or 'didactically' but rather reflects his experience of a total present reality.

Continuing to refer to his understanding of 'immediacy' and 'perception' Botha says of Fritjoff Capra's *The Turning Point* which he read at university: 'it was influential for me because it raised my consciousness about some things. ... it was simply about the nature of reality ... there is a highly subjective component attached to our perceptions of all things ... And suddenly that shifted my reality, it broadened me to understand how complex the notion of perception was and that was something that really influenced me for a long time. ... It made me understand the wonder and the complexity of human perception.' (Interview with Leigh, 1999). In connection with the influence the book had on him Botha continues, 'My life has been a series of trials and tribulations, emotional Sisyphean tasks which I've had to take on to reach deeper levels of understanding of my own limitation because I think arrogance is a most terrifying thing where the ego and arrogance ... steal from you the capacity to see and to perceive the breadth and vision of other peoples' humanity. Because your own perception of your own life and requirements is so overwhelming that you cannot see the world beyond yourself.' (Interview with Leigh, 1999).

Botha explains that his readings in Capra brought to his attention 'the notion of binary opposites and of masculine and feminine'. (Interview with Leigh, 1999). Botha's interest in establishing fresh considerations of masculinities and femininities is not only connected with current considerations of gender but is also concerned with Eastern concepts of balance between principles. For example, the 'Odalisque' in *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) fig.47 is seen by him as a celebration of an emerging acknowledgement of the female role in western society (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007). In Botha's works *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1) fig.38, and *Ikhukhula (The Flood)* (1993) fig.62 for example, he makes use of the notion of the balance of opposites. The balance of abstractions of the notions of female and male play a role in these works. Capra states, 'One of the principle polarities in life is the one between male and female sides of human nature ... Western society has traditionally favoured the male side rather than the female.' ([1975]1983: 147). Capra examines the idea of the balance of opposites as a solution to human disharmony. He writes, 'Opposites are abstract concepts belonging to the realm of thought, and as such they are relative ... The awareness that all opposites are polar, and thus a unity is one of the highest aims of man in the spiritual traditions of the East.' ([c.1975] 1983:145). He sees the unity of opposites as a concept of dynamic balance - 'It is never a static identity, but always a dynamic interplay between two extremes.' ([c.1975]1983:146).

Botha's readings of Capra also influenced his vision of reality in the sense of comprehending a dimension beyond the material. For instance, Capra deals at depth with the notion of 'soul' and the importance of a metaphysical dimension (2002). Speaking of *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37 Botha says, 'I have tried to ...

understand what this sculpture is about and the best equivalent I have found is that the sculpture essentially is about the pathos, insecurity and darkness that exists within one person's soul.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). The use of the word 'soul' is often contemporaneously questioned. However Botha says, 'I understand that within the academic discourse people may be suspicious of the word 'soul' because it can be misused ... but it's quite clear to me that the business of creativity deals with something much more than empiricism, so we do have to search for additional meanings ... to define the deeper intentions of how creative expression works.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

In his *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers* (1991) fig.39 Botha uses a helix-shaped object that emerges from the mouth of the central collapsing figure. It could be compared to the breath or 'soul' emerging from the dying sacrifice. Capra writes, 'In the languages of ancient times, both soul and spirit are described with the metaphor of the breath of life. The word for 'soul' in Sanskrit (atman), Greek (psyche) and Latin (anima) all mean breath: the same is true of the words for spirit in Latin (spiritus), Greek (pneuma) and Hebrew (ruach). These too mean breath. The common ancient idea behind these words is that of soul or spirit as the breath of life... describing cognition as the breath of life seems to be a perfect metaphor.' (2002:32). Botha commenting on the helix in *Sondebokke, Slagoffers, Seges en Sluipmoordenaars* (1991) fig.39, says that he sees it as one of the essential forms of life, beautiful in 'rhythmic form'. It is important to him that no one meaning is attached to it. In this context it suggests to him that that which is within that is not resolved issues outwardly (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

Many of Botha's works contain representations of a further or metaphysical dimension.

For example, his set of works for the *Human Structures* exhibition (1984) figs.21-25 contained two boat-shaped works, *Resurrection* and *Final Journey*, figs.22,23, referring to the 'spiritual journey' the soul takes in early Egyptian belief. He speaks of the fish-shaped figure created in armature form in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27, 'as a 'kind of embalmed human being ... about to be launched off into the stratosphere' (Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). He describes this figure as 'silvery' and many of the figures in armature in their transparency are used to suggest the idea of another dimension; for example, in *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers* (1991) fig.39 the figure in armature is referred to by Botha as a 'zephyr-like angel/fish' and as a 'linear, translucent diaphanous element'; he says, 'it is obviously not inconsequential that it is high ... the upper space being used by me, as a delicate, lighter more spiritual quality.' (Ferguson and Leigh, 1991).

Botha sees two entities as 'petulant': i.e. sexuality and Afrikaanedom or Afrikaaner identity. In an interview (Kasseler Kunstverrein, Balkenhof and Winzen, 1998) with Botha and Marlene Dumas, Botha speaks of 'nakedness' which for him 'has to do with vulnerability.' He is 'always interested to see how the viewer discovers eroticism and whether he or she becomes defensive or moral about it. Often', he says, 'even intellectuals respond in a moral way, unable to see nakedness in a direct way.' He is always 'so amazed by people being so focussed on the genitals. I've been interested in eroticism but in another sense of the word. I think of it as a kind of heightened state of awareness in our human discourse ... the greatest charisma we have is our capacity to be excited by other human beings.' Marlene Dumas then remarks 'I asked you once, Andries, what you find erotic. And you said, 'Someone who can surprise me.'

Speaking of his work *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus ...* (1990/1) fig.38 Botha discusses any element in it that can be referred to as 'sexual': 'Sexual' has in time become so decontextualised as subject and as commodification. Sexuality is merely one inherently integrated force within discourse ... although it may be a petulant and potentially disturbing force. I don't single it out as a separate entity but it is definitely inherently there as an integrated element, as a discordant unresolved element inherent within an illogical condition being called human.' Sexuality is 'petulant' as it cannot be ignored but must always be there wanted or unwanted (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

Botha's work of 2006, *Afrikaander circa 1600* fig.80 deals primarily with his relationship with his father but it has a secondary intent to create a museum diorama that brings to the public gaze the idea of 'Afrikaander'. Botha says of the work, 'So in a way, the Afrikaander is being looked at ... So I think looking at this particular work and certainly the works I have done subsequently I am at this point in time looking at 'Afrikaanders' because it sits very petulantly in our historical discourse.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

Botha refers frequently in interviews to his use of dream and intuition. In connection with his work, *Dream Sequence* (c.198(4?)) fig.10 Botha states that he is dealing with 'dream sequences' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The head of a man, (a self portrait) lies on pillars in a horizontal position that suggests it is dreaming or in meditation. Speaking of his work *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37 Botha says, 'If I don't engage the intuitive I feel that I lose fifty percent of my potential. My

sculptures are so complex that my rational mind is taxed to its limit just to make them work. And if I don't serve that rather pedantic rational mind with the kind of magic of my imagination and my intuition I don't see where the substance of the works can lie.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

Botha sees the presence of the Afrikaner in South African historical discourse as 'petulant'. The presence of a certain dynamic, or that which can be better described as *duende*, in Botha's work can perhaps be seen to be much influenced by his readings of *Die Sestigers*, writers in whom he was very interested. His assimilation of the raw directness of their revelations of South African life and of their innovative creative approaches, inspired by current developments in western writing, are evident in his sculpture. A sense of disturbance and disquiet is carried in the substance and texture of *Die Sestigers'* writings that are expressive of the sensitivity and vulnerability of the Afrikaner in South African society at the period and apparently from many years before. The writers convey certain feelings of alienation and insecurity in a land which is essentially their own and in which their experience is rooted. Botha expresses a similar questioning of security of tenure, even of habitation, and, in his explorations of the theme of 'home', conveys a desire for roots. In *Die Sestigers*, as with Botha, one is aware of the demand of a response from two spheres of experience creating tensions and matter for creative expression.

## CHAPTER 2

## **EMERGENCE OF FORMAL AND STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENTS IN BOTHAS ART**

As discussed in the previous Chapter my investigations relate to two spheres of influence that in their changes impact on Botha's creativity - the influence of his locale and the prevailing formations and paradigms of contemporary thinking. Okui Enwezor, speaking of a South Africa emerging from 'the insomniac night of apartheid' says, 'Dialectically, what one encounters within this scripted and representational presence is a nation seeking a new identity, and thus new images, new geographies, boundaries with which to ballast its strategic and mythological unity.' (1999:378).

The challenge for many South African artists, white and black, from mid-twentieth century on was to escape 'the iconography of the European Enlightenment' as Oguibe terms it. (2004:58 ). A black artist whom Oguibe discusses (Mancoba) finds himself in what may be termed a post-colonial situation, as does Botha. The challenge here as Oguibe states it, was 'the relocation of colonial desire from the exclusivist and supremacist sites of Enlightenment aesthetics to the territory of African forms and paradigms.' (2004:59). Botha, working within two worlds, sought to retain what was valuable in the European heritage while at the same time investigating possibilities relevant to South Africa: 'I accepted much of the European cultural perspective into my work as valuable, walking a tightrope in resisting submission to a compelling and seductive European value system that could absorb and assimilate individuality and yet seeing unmistakable worth in those aspects of European culture that are part of a South African heritage and can only be

dispensed with loss.' (Interview with Leigh, 13 July, 2008).

His experience of South Africa in itself, its geography, history and culture, was a vital source in Botha's art. Colin Richards writes of the specific nature of such experience, making clear the necessity of finding a form of expression applicable to its particular nature: 'The power of culture in South Africa lies in the vital bond between symbol and substance, the imagined and the material. Ideals mix with blood. It is a volatile power. The sanitary aesthetic distance so characteristic of western aesthetic discourse does not have, in the African sun the easy life it might promise elsewhere.' (1999:369). Much of Botha's early striving to find a sculptural language was not only directed toward understanding and adapting the innovative forms being introduced at the time but to finding a satisfying expression of his experience of such a South African culture as Richards defines.

Botha necessarily was called on to understand and work within certain dimensions of experience – the experience of a resonant reality and revolutionary change in South Africa and the experience of complex developments in thinking, equally resonant and revolutionary, in an international sphere. In the early 1970s as Botha commenced training for his career as sculptor the concepts and forms of modernism were moving into spheres that, escaping modernism's waning emphasis on form, moved into imagery, structures and methods that would be more appropriate to an age marked by its fragmentation, discontinuity and turbulence.

South African art from the 1970s to the present reflects the movement, from the 1960s on,



away from late modernism in international art. The development of conceptualism, particularly, enabled the introduction of innovative style and form in Botha's sculptural approach.. The introduction of new forms into South African art took place significantly during the early 1970s. I refer to such events as may have impinged on Botha's actual experience as an artist in the place where he lived and worked. One such place was Durban, in KwaZulu-Natal. Evidences of radical change began to appear in South African art, for example in the *Art South Africa: Today* exhibition of 1971 at the Durban Art Gallery. In various works artists began to assert departures from an accepted formalism to the introduction of concepts and approaches more expressive of perceptions of an increasingly traumatic situation in South Africa and of disrupted states in the world. Malcolm Payne's assemblage *Swing* received the top award while Gavin Younge and Andrew Todd won secondary awards and Jean Powell an award. The significance of these awards is that the works involved conceptualisation, photographic and illustrative imagery, 'protest' themes and processes of installation. *The Swing* was not a direct expression of criticism of South African politics at the time but nevertheless suggested in the swing's arrested and twisted motion, a stoppage of that which is natural, innocent and happy in everyday life, a child's pleasure. The work also alludes to segregation in children's playgrounds, a current political issue. Gavin Younge's several works indicted current society using Pop metaphors: *Revlon Happenings Peach Blush* and *Revlon Happening Natural Wonder*, both in lacquer on canvas. His *Hansard Series 18*, carried out in silkscreen, held a political reference in its picturing of police dogs. Andrew Todd's work was catalogued as an 'environmental work', *Situation 11*. He also submitted a sculpture *I, We, Them, Those*, that, as the title suggests, was not intended to be representational. Jean Powell presented a large empty crate with an assortment of rubbish in it. Its intention was

obviously to pronounce a criticism on present culture indicating a perceived corruption in materialist consumer society. Other works that similarly made political or social comment using innovative approaches were Cliff Bestall's serigraph and collage works, *A Working Class Hero is Something to be Against* and *Behind and Along the Fence*. Paul Stopforth produced two assemblages, *Bill of White Rights* and *Department of Conservation for the future of pinkness*. The titles all suggest political commentary.

Commenting on this exhibition Neville Dubow, the critic and then head of the Michaelis Art School in Cape Town, noted a change in technical approaches and in the introduction of a more challenging subject matter than had occurred generally hitherto in South African art: 'there is a solid core of works that are technically interesting and artistically valid and which, moreover, find it possible to make reference ... to the less pleasant realities of South African life.' (Cape Times, 28 August 1971). Dubow also makes critical reference to the current widespread acceptance of the art of late modernism and how change and departure from it appear in the art of this exhibition: 'Abstraction came to be regarded as the sign of the *avant garde* ... it came to offer a fashionable haven for those who preferred to hedge their modernity with comfortable obscurity.' (Cape Times, 28 August 1971).

The move away from late modernism was partially instigated by the number of significant shifts in world power focusses, in changes in thought, and in the impact of events with international bearing. Such an event was World War 11. The period saw a movement toward a liberation of individualism that could be seen as a turn toward a new romanticism. Writing coming out of Europe, for example Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*, his *Madness and Civilization*, his *Discipline and Punish*, and other works

challenged the impersonality effected by implementation of Enlightenment systems and instigated a questioning of the *status quo* of accepted social norms and entrenched power structures: Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* explored and made clear the subtleties in changing cultural patterns. Writers and artists in a mood of encounter pursued the challenges in literature, film, visual art and theatre production. In South Africa the group of Afrikaans writers called *Die Sestigers* typify this break from literary traditions and herald the beginnings of an introduction of Postmodernist attitudes into the literary culture of the country. Their work had a strong influence on Botha's sculptural formation.

The marginalisation of the object as subject for art gave rise to new approaches through conceptualisation: new forms of visual art were introduced, for example, performance art, environmental art, and body art. In his early student work Botha made use of body casting techniques, casting life-size figures in fibre glass figs.1-3, and at a later period carried out environmental art, for example the commissioned work at Nieuw Bethesda, *Home, Land, Desire* (2001) fig.77. The modes and processes of conceptualism were a liberating agent for him, opening possibilities for those explorations of identity, history, memory, experience that distinguished his work. In addition, conceptualisation in art permitted an imaginative creative accommodation to the condition of the times, art becoming a connecting link between the viewer and a cultural context. Botha makes use of imagery from popular culture in allegorised works and particularly addresses current concerns.

Botha has particularly used the approaches of installation and assemblage which can be seen as aspects of conceptualism and means of addressing the complexity of the cultural climate of the period. Current philosophical approaches looked into those subtleties that

defined a closer appreciation of the cultural nature of the age and these explorations are reflected in the character of the visual formations used.

Derrida's challenge to accepted ideas of centre and structure mirror the complexity and recondite nature of the contemporaneous and show our context as presenting not one fact in one situation but rather a simultaneous composite of thoughts, impacts, insights, situations and impressions. Botha, particularly makes use of the device of many levels of meaning and constructions of narrative in overlay, a device also used by *Die Sestigers*. Derrida's examination of the understanding of meaning includes neither preconceived centre or structure. A field exists, not firmly fixed or established where the self is without boundaries of reference. Consequently the artist seeks to discover and establish an identity within a changing context. Within this paradigm the installation or the assemblage is a structure the meaning of which exists in a set of associations. A meaningful relationship between the objects and the full representation exists, the object not necessarily having the association it has in everyday experience. The installation or assemblage may consist of a proliferation of objects, perhaps banal in themselves, but contributing to the total meaning of the work. Botha makes use of both assemblage and installation, reflecting many levels of conceptualised association in individual works and in groups of works.

Significant features that arise out of conceptualism are the character of the sublime and the use of allegory. The critic, Crowther, sees conceptualised art as having aspects of the sublime (1995:10) and therefore (as explained, for example, in the interpretation of the sublime by Burke) having social significance. In the light of such explanation, we can see that many features of Botha's art can distinguish it as concerning the sublime. His

intention from the beginning of his career was to create work that was socially meaningful, consequently it is important to understand the nature of the social significance of the sublime in art. For example, the vastness and complexity of many conceptual works causes a sensory 'shock'. Burke conceives of an encounter with the sublime in art as causing a particular experience. Viewed from a position of distance (of safety) the actual shock of vastness vitalises us in the assertion of our capacity to receive exceptional stimuli. An inspiration to societal and moral conduct is inherent in this experience in that it enhances our sense and appreciation of our human capacities and vitality.

It is important in connection with Botha's art that Burke's perception of the term sublime is understood to mean 'that which is meaningful to society'. I therefore go on to explain Crowther's approach to the understanding of the term sublime in connection with its significance to society. He (1995:11) sees Kant as envisioning a moral element in the sublime and quotes him as defining the sublime as that which is 'absolutely' and 'beyond all comparison' great. That is, the sublime is expressive of the powers of the intellect and, according to Crowther's reading, there is only one thing within our experience that can satisfy our conception of such greatness - our rational powers. (Crowther uses the term 'rational' in this context: 'We come to *feel* the scope and superiority of our rational being'(1995:11)

Such powers being beyond nature can comprehend, through thought, ideas such as infinity. As we cannot through our senses comprehend the true sublime we can all the more appreciate the potential of our capacities for thought. The immense power of exceptional phenomena or works is not taken in by perception or imagination but by comprehended

ideas, that is, such ideas as may be creatively used in conceptual art.. The fact that such comprehension is not possible at a sensory level clarifies to us the range of our rational capacity giving us a sense of the vitality of that capacity.

Many of Botha's works have the character that Crowther designates as sublime. For example, Botha's *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37 evidences that scale and presence that convince of a communication of a violent interaction with the viewer, assaulting the comprehension to awake it to an increased understanding. Other of Botha's works, for example, *alleenspraak in Paradys* fig.47, the fourth version of *Baptism for the Fallen ... and those taken darkly* fig.46, and *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers* fig.39 (two dated 1991, the second dated 1996) also exhibit the power to alert the understanding to an increased and more vital capacity. Works of the late 1990s, for example especially *Embarkation* fig.54 and *A History of Monuments ... and wounds that are forgiven* fig.55 (both dated 1996) are created with a magnified expression in size and in conceptualisation that effect in the work attributes of the sublime. The effect is the more present here as the total work that includes these examples consists of six units that contribute fully to a whole that has the character I have discussed. Botha's later work, *History has an aspect of oversight in the process of progressive blindness* of 2004, fig.79, has, in its largeness of concept and in its impression of a progress of history, an enveloping quality that gives an overwhelming sense of the oppressiveness of the process of time. Similarly, his work dedicated to his father, *Afrikaander circa 1600* (2006) fig.80 has, especially in the skin-covered figure, a sense of an enlarged presence of historic generation.

In these capacities the works I have mentioned can arouse the viewer to a sense of those

'moral passions' envisaged by Burke that I refer to in the contextualisation of Botha's work in my Chapter 1. Burke sees the character of the sublime as working toward social amelioration through the inspiration of positive passions such as sympathy, well-placed ambition, love. Through the power of the experience of the sublime such passions would be invigorated, bringing about a robust society free from effeteness and free from decline through an abandonment to uncontrolled violence. In the sublime the expression or content may be violent but it is contained in such a way that it is distanced from the viewer, and can thus be contemplated at length and its value absorbed. In fact, the distinctive character of Botha's work is his expression of a robust immensity of shape and conceptualisation. For example, Crowther (1995:11) perceives the Kantian concept of the sublime as a balance between a perceptual and imaginative surcharge and its containment within rationality. In conceptual works of great complexity the laden presentation of images and signs can be understood as concept or idea and our capacity for insight is invigorated as we are struck by our noetic power to thus create and find meaning. Botha's works I have referred to in the foregoing paragraphs do compound a multiplicity of considered and cogent details within a larger formation of considerable impressiveness in accumulated minutiae and overall force.

Largeness or complexity in a work cannot qualify it to be termed sublime, rather in terms of Burke's or Kant's perceptions of the sublime, the work should relate in moral content to a present social context. This outlook is in concurrence with Marxian approaches to art and those of Marcuse and the Frankfurt School which I have already mentioned and which play a marked role in Botha's creativity. Conceptual work requires 'mediation of a sense of what is important, problematic or even dangerous in our broader contemporary scheme

of interests'. (Crowther, 1995:17). As we consider Botha's works we may become aware that most contain the character of sublimity and all relate markedly to their times. For example, his *Bloodlines: Truth and Reconciliation Portfolio* (1998) fig.63 eminently relates to its times and has images of power that wash or cleanse the mind to realisations of both horror at the enormity of the events and to compassion, forgiveness and pity.

Postmodern thinking reflects a concern with the dissolution of the conscious selfhood. Crowther sees the art of Postmodernism (1995:17) as restoring 'some notion of an authentic self.' Botha is particularly concerned with the establishment of a sense of selfhood in the individual. Currently the impact of the media, simulacra, as perceived by Baudrillard, events themselves, and displaced cultures and societies threaten to dissolve a sense of individual security. Botha in his creative work explores the relationship of the individual to a broader society. The materiality of his works gives the essential embodiment of that which we understand as human, creating a stability for that concept within a field of interrupted experiences. In this way the conceptualised work, or even the sublime work, can return the viewer to considerations of essential humanity in its capacity to effect such notions of moral regeneration as Burke envisages, as discussed above. Botha's conceptualised art presents an exploration into meaning calling on the viewer to exercise such noetic capacity as Kant proposes in connection with the sublime. In his search for meaning in human experience Botha attempts to establish a repositioning of self within a current context of change.

The character of Botha's work includes an understanding of the sublime as sculpturally communicative in its massiveness and in its capacity to exist as morally regenerative. His



use of allegory especially enables an expression that can comprehend these aspects of sublimity that are telling in our society. He works within a field of powerful personal sensibilities and creative drives, understandings of contemporary events, and attention to developments in thinking. These circumstances create a platform for allegorical formations and concepts. Conceptualisation in art allows for and incorporates the use of literary suggestion in the presentation of narrative and allegory with 'references to other images and representation'. (Chandler and Lippard, 2000:49). For example, concepts such as time, entropy, memory, and distance are presented in the conceptual work. This range of possibilities has been particularly exploited by Botha in his use of technological and sculptural potentials. In allegorical and narrative presentation Botha frequently avoids the frontal vertical sculptural design in his work using a more complex formation of units. (However, late works, *Afrikaander circa 1600* (2006) fig.80 and *History has an aspect of oversight in the process of progressive blindness* (2004) fig.79 have a more frontally presented format.)

Several aspects of the sublime as detailed by Longinus can be seen in Botha's allegorical work: the inherent cognitive power of the mind to apprehend and express constructs of magnitude, an expressed understanding of the powerful effects conveyed by the movements of history, an accumulative expression moving suddenly from the simple to the overpowering thus startling and making great claims on the viewer; intense emotion; the importunate driving of the past into the present; the manifestation of exceptional difficulty in carrying out the work (1926:13-69). In addition, concepts expressed by Burke (1939:50-54, in Crowther, 1995:10)) as evincing the sublime are also evidenced in Botha's work: extreme darkness expressing depth (for example, in the shadow caused by the

complex three-dimensionality of the work) and, similarly, radiance expressing light. Further, Burke requires the sublime work to have a grandeur of scale and to contain elements of the sacred and transcendental. Botha's works have qualities that express a reverence for aspects of life and indicate further sublimated contemplative dimensions.

The character of Postmodernist art is that it problematises, 'its inner dynamic based on critical and theoretic debate that continues to inform it and make it meaningful.' (Hopkins, 2000:2). 'Problematic' denotes the ideological and theoretical processes by which Postmodernist thought engages with the wide range of cognitive content presented by contemporary life. Hopkins refers to the age as 'profoundly sensitive to historic formations for cultural fragmentation.' (2000:2). Fragmentation, disjunction, incompleteness, dispersal, can be seen to characterise Postmodernist art. In keeping with Derrida's interrogation of meaning, Barthes' text in *Elements of Semiotics* (1967), explores those salient aspects of Postmodernism, spatial dispersion and insubstantiality of meaning. Again, the text refers to a multidimensional space, a space wherein varieties of concepts collide or meld, and established notions can be pervaded by shifting theories and ideologies.

The Duchampian model presents a new relationship between artist and viewer. Owens refers to the 'centrality which postmodernist art assigns to the reader/spectator.' (1992:75). The modernist idea of artist as hero is dispensed with in Postmodernist attitudes. Lacan's proposal of a mirror stage in human development undermines the established concept of a specific central individual human subjectivity thus challenging any idea of artistic autonomy. The viewer approaching the Postmodern work becomes immersed in a world constructed from the artist's mental imaging.

The return to the metaphysical, the problematic, the discursive and to representation as engagement with cultural issues, especially invited the reemergence of allegory. Colin Richards remarks of the years after apartheid in South Africa, 'This attempt to clear a place within immediate political pressures bespeaks another art-cultural trend that attempts to shift focus from physical to metaphysical place.' (1999:365). Olu Oguibe notes that in the late twentieth century 'the project of memory became a preoccupying one, especially in art but also in other areas of culture.' (2004:90)). Among his allegorical works Botha has particularly engaged with the notion of memory, as, for example, in *A History of monuments ... and wounds that are forgiven* (1996) fig.55 where he emphasises the idea of historical memory. Oguibe remarks on the 'Search among artists for a new medium to encode memory, because the engagement with memory no longer requires or relies on the presence of medium (museum, public memorial, landmark) but on the medium's ability to structurally and topographically encode the fragility of memory and our consciousness of its fragility. (2004:91). He notes the 'unreality' and the 'treacherousness', 'vulnerability to power' and the 'frailty' of memory (2004:92). Relevantly to South Africa, Oguibe says, 'Conceptual engagement with the nature of memory occurs most among artists within cultures and societies whom meaning has failed in the past, whose collective memory has suffered repression or threat of displacement or obliteration.' (2004:92). Botha's project *Amazwi Abesifazane* (2001-) deals with the suffering of women who achieve catharsis through relating memories.

Many of Botha's works deal with memory and he makes use of the allegorical method to convey his intentions there. In his engagement with social issues he makes use of allegory

exhibiting his propensity to express these as poetic. Owens proposes allegory as 'the projection of the metaphoric axis of language onto its metonymic dimension' and refers to Roman Jakobson's definition of this projection as the 'poetic junction' (1992:57). It is on this basis that I refer to aspects of Botha's work as 'poetic'.

A feature of allegorical presentation is its concern with soberness and matters of importance, requiring thought and deep reflection. Benjamin speaks of the 'melancholy gaze' (1977: 183/4 in Owens, 1992:55).

If the object becomes allegorical under the gaze of melancholy, if melancholy causes life to flow out of it and it remains behind dead, but eternally secure, then it is exposed to the allegorist ... it is now quite incapable of emanating any meaning or significance of its own; such significance as it has it acquires from the allegorist.

The quotation refers to two aspects of allegory; that melancholy constitutes a dimension of allegory and that the allegorist extracts meaning from the object. In extracting meaning from the object the allegorist takes the object's image from it and makes it something other, allegory essentially consisting in one text existing bivalently in and through another. In keeping with the attitudes of Postmodernism, as discussed in the paragraphs above, the contemporary allegorist makes use of issues and incidents that are culturally significant interpreting them according to his imaginative creative insights in formal expression. Benjamin identifies the melancholy gaze with the temperament of the artist who works with allegory and connects the work of the allegorist with a desire to preserve that which is historic, that which is past but significant. (1977:223). In this pursuit of the recollection of earlier times melancholy will inevitably assert itself. Botha is particularly concerned with historic circumstances, history, archive - as are several other South African artists - the South African past being singularly redolent of and laden with historic memory. Botha's

work in general has had a strong character of gravity and his reference to the past and even to present events is heavy with solemnity.

Features of Botha's work can be seen as characteristic of the nature of allegory. Aspects of transience, in accord with the historic overtones with which allegory so often deals, and the eroding powers of nature to which site-specific works are left, link with the notion of transitoriness and entropy so significant in Botha's work and, of course, in his site-specific works. Allegory is consistently 'attracted to the fragmentary, the imperfect, the incomplete' (Owens, 1992:55) and it is seen to be the 'common practice of allegory to pile fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal.' (Benjamin, 1977:178). Angus Fletcher (1964:278-303 in Owens, 1992:56) likens what he sees to be the accumulative method of allegoric structure to 'obsessional neurosis'. Botha's works are highly complex and he states that it is his own intention to work intuitively, to depart from the expected and to invite ambivalent viewpoints.

A further aspect of allegory that frequently occurs in Botha's work, according to Owens, is irony: 'irony itself is regularly enlisted as a variant of the allegorical; that words can be used to signify their opposites is in itself a fundamentally allegorical perception.' (1992: 62). Botha enlists irony in the creation of large, complex works that involve an incongruity between the expectation aroused and the criticism or indictment contained in the intended meaning.

Important to allegory is that it comprehends interest in spatial and temporal structures, the nature of conceptualisation particularly allowing expression of these processes. Botha has

especially expressed concepts of time and space in his work. Owens writes, 'Allegory concerns itself, then, with the projection – either spatial or temporal or both – of structure as sequence' (1992:57) regarding this expression as the 'the epitome of counter-narrative'. (1992:56). Although Botha deals with narrative, allegory actively works to check narrative in stasis, assisting it to fulfil its expressive function, as in Botha's allegorical works.

Botha demonstrates in his work the ability to express concept as integral to formal presentation. Northrop Frye writes of the allegorical work, 'genuine allegory is a structural element ... it has to be there ... and cannot be added by critical interpretation alone.' (1969:54 in Owens, 1992:54). As Owens comments, the allegory has to be *within* the work of art, it cannot be appended *de facto*, 'a rhetorical ornament or flourish'. (1992:54). This is eminently the character of Botha's allegory – the concept is fully expressed in the form although content may be fragmentary, dispersed, discursive and disjunctive.

Characteristically, Postmodernist debate has concerned itself with such issues as gender, patriarchy, identity and race. These issues have featured in South African art discussion with a special emphasis on historic difficulties concerning race, but including problematic matters, inherited from antecedents, regarding patriarchy and gender.

In general South African art and discourse have been greatly influenced by a received racial history and a cultural politics that particularly engages with that. Marion Arnold writes in 1996, 'content is never completely subservient to style, and South African art can never be free of the ways in which race and gender shape consciousness shape and

influence expression.' (36). Es'kia Mphahlele writing for the South African section of the 1993 Venice Biennale says,

We are racial and ethnic enclaves, each race trying to survive the other even though, ironically, we are manacled to each other ... Gradually, tentatively, black and white are being drawn together by circumstances beyond our control, the latter group displaying agonising self-consciousness about the search for commonality of cultural interests. (1993:14).

This extreme self-consciousness becomes obvious in the debate published as *Grey Areas: Representation, Identity and Politics in Contemporary South African Art* (1999). An aspect of the contributions to *Grey Areas*, somewhat overlooked in the heat of debate, perhaps unintentional but nevertheless unnecessary, is the persistent 'moralising' tone. In her contribution Marlene Dumas writes, 'what is wrong with South African art in general is its moralizing attitude.' (1999:129) and Marion Arnold refers to 'the note of 'self-righteousness' in the *Grey Areas* text (1999:37). Colin Richards speaks of the 'heat ventilated in contemporary debate' (1999:165) and there were of course emergent issues of importance. One gathers from the publication that in that political climate – 1999 – concerned people felt a certain relief, as though of a responsibility or debt discharged, in representing blacks. Enwezor saw the white artists, rather, as choosing to represent blacks at a 'point of abjection ... repeatedly represent(ing) the black subject at the liminal point of his defeat.' (Dumas, 1999:113).

Writing shortly after the demise of apartheid in South Africa, Colin Richards observes 'Historiography doubtless plays a role at many levels in the construction of a South African identity. Going the way of available historical narratives we find a discordant clash of voices: indigenous, settler, liberal, British, Afrikaans, radical. Some are patently

nationalist, some are not.' (1999:353). Envisaging a South African art that reflects the nature of its particular cultural construct and in order to understand the significance of Botha's use of allegory and of features of the sublime in his work it is necessary to know the South African background to which they particularly relate. Giliomee makes the statement that 'history' is one of the 'main victims' of South Africa's founding election of 1994 (1994:4) and explains that history at this stage, was seen in a 'linear fashion' and in press and media no attempt had been made to appreciate the fact that there had been a 'historic quest for democracy' in South Africa. No effort had been made to look at incidents in the course of South African history where leaders had considered and investigated possibilities of full enfranchisement. The general meaning lying behind the 1994 election was assumed to be, and presented to be, that up to that point whites had stubbornly resisted any thought of full enfranchisement.

The nature of perceptions of past leaders continues to be relevant because the complexity of the South African situation persists in spite of a fully enfranchised electorate. The period of heightened opposition to apartheid can be seen as part of a historic process and not necessarily as a culmination point where a solution is arrived at within a linear development of history.

Botha's attitude towards Afrikaner hegemony and strong reaction against it – an attitude shared by many others at the time – may have been influenced in an exaggerated way by current media output that supported a particular anti-Afrikaner point of view. Consequently Botha's works dealing with the oppressiveness of apartheid can be seen rather as expressions of concern with violence contemporaneously occurring in society and



to be reflective of inner conditions of turmoil and anxiety. I refer to the Dionysiac formations of, for example, *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8), fig.37 to the interior dreamlike and fantastic presentation of *Dwase Drome van Boesmans en Ministers* (1987) fig.28 and to the crushing depressive content in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27. Similarly, the twisted contorted figures of his late student years *Man in Chair* and *Man in Cage* figs.2, 3, 5 are expressive of torture and Botha's feelings regarding the horror of torture rather than referring to a particular political situation. Botha's graphics (fig.63) based on revelations coming out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission interviews can be seen as his response to enactments of violence rather than to be politically orientated. The use of allegory is particularly marked in the large and varied forms of the *Dromedaris* work, fig.37, commenting on the rule by masculine power evidenced at the time, whereas the various absurdities inherent in that rule are allegorised in the *Dwase Drome* work, fig.28. The *South African Elegy* fig.27 is an allegory of Botha's own inner reactions to the events of the times.

The large scale of these works, together with the power of conceptualisation, complexity, the power to communicate a certain violence that is yet contained, distinguish them as having a sublime character. They have the character of *duende*, force or power, as discussed earlier. Consequently these works that I have singled out from Botha's output reflect the enormity of the time in such a way that we may contemplate it, be violently assaulted in our senses, but at the same time made aware of events on such a scale we might not otherwise have been able to embrace rationally. Similarly, the huge scope of Botha's project, *Amazwi Abesifazane* (2001-), allegorises the exceptional range and trauma of an historic event that included extreme violence and great widespread human suffering

over an extended period. The character of the sublime exists in the scale of the undertaking and in the assault on our senses by the vastness and content while the work yet presents us with of an event of magnitude to be considered and contemplated. As Longinus proposes we are surprised and shocked by the adjacency of minutiae (that is, the stories of the women) to the vastness, that is, the wide range of the total project. Here Botha uses allegory to present a current South African condition and his creative capacity enables him to feature the sublime in the work.

I have used the word Dionysiac in regard to Botha's sculpture and in my Chapter 1 have spoken at some length on the character of *duende* in his work, let us say a strong force or power of expression that departs from the Apollonian, often expressing itself in twisting and dynamic forms. I here ally the term 'demonic' with Dionysian, a characteristic occurring in much of Botha's work and also in the writing of *Die Sestigers* who had considerable influence on Botha's formation as a sculptor. Botha had read Afrikaans at university and read extensively in *Die Sestigers'* writings. Their writings represent a change in Afrikaner thinking, a revelation of inward experience that belied much of the stereotypical view of Afrikaner identity and sensibility. In their work they reflect part of that cultural conglomerate that Colin Richards refers to as forming current South African society

In looking at any influence *Die Sestigers* had on his work it is necessary to review that consideration within the compass of Botha's South African cultural, social and political setting, the background of his locale and determinant of his identity. His bitter rejection of Nationalist Afrikaner politics – especially in his student and immediately post-student

years, say, 1977 to 2000 – is combined with his strong attachment to his background (and with a more recent growing appraisal of an Afrikaner heritage of leadership.) During the late 1960s and early 1970s Botha and others were questioning their relationship with Europe, and, more broadly, with the rest of the world. Consequently *Die Sestigers'* writing especially appealed to Botha as it seemed to him very redolent of South African circumstances. He was looking for a role model that was not European and at that point such a model seemed to be provided in *Die Sestigers* (Interview with Leigh, 2008).

*Die Sestigers'* writing seemed to Botha to place him in an intellectual system that was tied to his background at a time when he was searching to discover his personal positioning. Their writing formed a basis, it seemed to him, from which he could work creatively and which served him as a yardstick against which to measure the images and viewpoints of modernity that were flooding into the media (Interview with Leigh, 2008). He found the success of modernity at this period particularly enticing as the international media brought the best thoughts and productions of an expanding western modern culture and he sought to discern how the apparent richness of this matter could be particularly relevant to his work. Botha sought to create a language that would define his South African experience as part of a global experience and to create a language and expression that would reflect changes in aesthetic developments in the world as well as in his essential experience of his locale.

Botha's struggle to express in his work an alertness to two worlds of experience is similar to *Die Sestigers'* action in creating an innovative writing that would relate to their own locale and yet make use of the dynamic structural and stylistic means to be found in

contemporary writing. *Die Sestigers'* writing can be seen to have influenced Botha's work very strongly in viewpoint and in composition and expression. Their writing reflects a new approach to perceptions of South African - especially Afrikaner – life and 'testified to a fresh start in Afrikaner prose.' (Kannemeyer, 1993:101). They particularly escape from the tradition of an imaged 'simplicity' and 'staidness' of the rustic Afrikaner. For instance, Kannemeyer writes, 'By contrast to earlier prose writers who had identified themselves with earlier traditions, the 'Sestigers' identified strongly with literary and intellectual movements in western Europe and America.' (1993:102). Kannemeyer sees them as influenced by French existential writings, for example those of Camus and Sartre, by the psychological findings represented in the works of Jung and Freud, and by various literary forms and expressions that departed from those traditionally appearing in Afrikaans writing – Durrell's use of multiple narrators, Nabokov's sexual explicitness, Woolf's 'stream of consciousness', Kafka's expressions of terror at an alienating bureaucracy, Waugh's cold irony (1993:102).

Many of the features existent in *Die Sestigers'* work appear as influential to Botha's sculptures. For example, the sense of disturbance, stress and disquiet would seem to play a Dionysiac role in the formations of certain of Botha's sculptures and appear to be at one with particular distresses within his own temperament at the time he produced the works. Much of *Die Sestigers'* writing is involved with mental, social and situational suffering. For example, Kannemeyer refers to the terror of the main character in Rabie's *Mens-alleen* (1963) and his battle against 'superhuman forces' surrounding him in an unfeeling and horror-filled world (1993:102). Dolf van Niekerk's novella, *Die son struikel* (1960), deals with a character whose behaviour is determined by incidents from his past, who feels he no

longer has place on earth, fears life and experiences great loneliness (Kannemeyer, 1993:103). Chris Barnard's *Dwaal* (1964) deals with an 'absurd, usually bleak world' where characters wander aimlessly, their experiences often issuing in hallucination (Kannemeyer, 1993:103). Etienne Leroux' first novel, *Die eerste lewe van Colet* (1955) 'traces the growth of a boy from childhood to early adulthood, frequently focussing on sexual experiences. From his earliest years, he is aware of the good and evil which dominates his life'. (Kannemeyer, 1993:106). Such reading would have had resonance in Botha's student years.

Andre Brink refers to the Theatre of the Absurd in his *Bagasie* (1965) and makes use of limited stage scenery and meaningless disconnected dialogue and action to convey, as Kannemeyer says, 'something of the plight of modern man in his loneliness, confusion, lack of security and fear (1993:116). The Theatre of the Absurd had considerable influence on *Die Sestigers'* writing in its emphasis on confusion and hopelessness. For example, in Becket's *Waiting for Godot* the derelicts wait for a Godot (a name suggesting God) who never comes.

A further feature in *Sestiger* work is the idea of entropy, transience, impermanence and decay. For example, Breytenbach, in his *Die ysterkoei moet sweet* (1964), expresses fear of decay and death: 'the fear of death, the motif of transience and the idea of decay dominate' (Kannemeyer, 1993:140). Decay, entropy, transience are frequently themes adopted by Botha in his work. For example, his *Surface area is equal to the land multiplied by time* (2002) fig.76 shows a cow's udder shape that slowly drips to destroy that which is beneath it; in his *Meditations on Migrations: Prayers* (2001) fig.71 water

erodes a represented idol and *Meditations on Power* (2001) fig.70 incorporates a similar use of water as eroding factor.

A striking feature to consider in *Die Sestigers'* writing is their expression of a sense of alienation from their own locale. This circumstance is surprising in a people who have expressed association with and affinity for the South African land. One of the main characters in Andre Brink's *Die mur van die pes* (1984) is an Afrikaans writer who is exiled in France. Breytenbach, himself an exile, uses themes of exile. His *Bruin reisbrief* (1981) 'deals with a return to Southern Africa, the evocation of landscapes, the casual and fleeting encounters with the land of his birth, the ambiguous feelings of love and hate, and the eventual return to Europe.' (Kannemeyer, 1993:143).

However, it is more in their new viewpoints on life that *Die Sestigers* had fullest influence on the work of Botha and of many young artists at the time. Repercussions on Botha's work are evident in the large view he takes of existence and his concern with the intricacy of human nature and the complexity of the human lot. Kannemeyer comments that *Die Sestigers* – avoiding the 'geniality and local realism' of earlier Afrikaans writing (1993:102) – set out 'to convey something of the human being's uncertain course on the voyage of discovery through the universe.' (1993:101).

The idea of 'peregrination' or 'going on a journey' that involves a spiritual or psychic discovery of self is used by Botha and many of *Die Sestigers*. For example, in Etienne Leroux's *Sewe dae by die Silbersteins* (1962) the young man is to meet his fiancée's family but encounters incidents of self discovery. A similar development appears in Botha's four

pastel drawings (figs.27,28,29,30) called *The Carol's Bar Series* (1987) that Botha describes as a 'sort of Rake's Progress' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) and that involves disturbances of the spirit. The theme of 'peregrination' appears in Botha's *Embarkation* (1996) fig.54 where a symbolic patriarch, the artist's father, travels in a boat into a South Africa that is in process of political and cultural change. The 'peregrination' here also involves the artist's complex, sometimes distressing but increasingly tender journey into a life-long relationship with his father.

Other 'peregrinations' occur for example in Chris Barnard's *Mahala* (1971) where the journey takes place in the character Delport's conscious mind, fluctuating between a past, a present and a future. The journey involves a boat. The Ambassador, a character in Brink's *Die Ambassadeur* (1963), goes on a quest to break from the system of normalcy he considers 'false' to discover something real. His journey involves two scenes from Dante's *Divina commedia*. Botha's *Embarkation* (1996) fig.54 carries a reference to Dante on a boat in the underworld (Interview with Leigh, 1991) and it is interesting that two other *Sestiger* writers refer to Dante's *Divina commedia*. An earlier Afrikaans writer, D. J. Opperman, uses the theme of 'peregrination' in the poem, *Digter*, where he refers to Afrikaans exiles after the Anglo-Boer War who make, in a small ship, an imaginary journey of yearning for the fatherland. In *Nagwaak by die ou man* Opperman refers to 'continuity of the generations and man's responsibility to his forefathers'. (Kannemeyer, 1993:73). Botha's *Human Structures* exhibition of the mid-1980s uses ship images to refer to the journey to a further life and to the ultimate human destiny *Resurrection* and *Final Journey*, figs.21- 22, and his *Afrikaander c.1600* (2006) fig.80, refers to generational cycles and filial commitment.

Botha requested Adam Small to contribute to the catalogue for his exhibition for the Grahamstown Festival Standard Bank Young Artist Award (1991). Small's writing largely deals with the abject situation of the coloured people and the effects of apartheid. In conveying his meaning, Small turns to Biblical reference using, for example, the plight of the Israelites in Egypt as illustrative of the situation of the coloured people in South Africa at that time. Botha's sympathies at that stage would obviously have lain with Small's creative expression. Botha's *Human Structures* exhibition (figs. 21-24) uses the imagery of ancient Egypt to represent the human passage from death (or a further metaphysical state) and considerations regarding a final human destiny. Small mentions Botha's use of Egyptian imagery in his contribution to the catalogue.

Comparatively to Botha's choice and method of symbolic presentation, some of *Die Sestigers* sought to investigate and represent in their work 'the unfathomableness of man's nature' showing a 'preference for the symbolic, the pre-rational personality and anti-hero, the individual heavily charged with mythic significance' (Kannemeyer, 1993:102). In the period when he was particularly concerned with the exploration of allegorical presentation, say, 1991 and 1996, Botha comes close in visual sculptural expression to the literary presentations essayed by *Die Sestigers*. For example, in his presentation of symbolic figures in *Baptism for the Fallen ... and those taken darkly* (1991) fig.42, *The Dance* (1996) fig.53, *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers* (1991) fig.39 and *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) fig.47 Botha looks at the character of incomprehensibility in human nature, at human irrationality and capacity for failure and bathos and creates symbolic figures, 'mythically charged', expressive of these things.



*Die Sestigers* began to employ fresh stylistic techniques and these invited experimental approaches to sculpture. For example, fractured syntax, such as appears in Breytenbach's poetry, techniques of 'collage' and experiments with typology, can also be seen reflected in Botha's use of differing textures, cut-out shapes, printed typefaces (as for example in the *Skin* works of 2000 figs.65,66,67,68) and in the printed metal plates in *A History of monuments ... and wounds that are forgiven* (1996) fig.55, *Home* (1997) fig.58 and *Oranje, blanje, blou* (2001) fig.73. Many of *Die Sestigers* (for example, Adam Small and Breytenbach) used colloquialisms as Botha uses popular images and catchphrases, for example, in *White Skin Blue* (1999) fig.65.

Like some of *Die Sestigers*, Botha makes use of the extravagant, incongruous and outlandish, as for example in *Dwase Drome van Boesmans en Ministers* (1987), fig.28 and the *Carol's Bar Series* (1987) figs.31-36. Kannemeyer writes of Jan Rabie's 'existential thrust and surrealistic imagery and world' and sees him as linking 'the fantastic, grotesque, gruesome and bizarre' (1993:102). Breytenbach also uses associative links, fantasy, symbolism, the grotesque and fragmented syntax in his writing. (Kannemeyer, 1993:140). In addition, Rabie presents a 'constantly changing reality' (Kannemeyer, 1993:102) as Botha does in response to his understanding of phenomenological philosophy.

Botha's choice of elaborate titles also echoes the ambiguous but suggestive titles employed by *Die Sestigers*. Again many of Botha's themes either consciously or unconsciously draw on, or coincide with *Sestiger* choices. For example, the theme of 'Paradise' appears in

*Diepe grond* by Reza de Wet, an illusory paradise, presented as referring to contemporary attitudes in South Africa. One of Karel Schoemann's works, *Die hemeltuyn* (1979) also refers to illusory lifestyles in a late 1930s South Africa and includes the ex-patriate 'peregrination' theme. In *'n Ander land* (1984) Schoemann uses an idea from Dante, that of Beatrice in the *Paradiso*. Breytenbach's *'n Seisoen in die paradys* (1976) is a diarised record of the writer's visit to South Africa with his wife but also turns into a 'journey' into his youth with a search for human and artistic meaning.

Like Botha, *Die Sestigers* make extensive use of classical reference for allegorical purposes. For example, Etienne Leroux, in his *Hilaria* (1959), sequel to *Die eerste lewe van Colet* (1955), makes use of reference to the Eleusinian Mysteries and the rebirth of Cybele and Atys. In *Een vir Azazel* (1964) he uses the names 'Demosthenes' and 'Hercules' and employs elements of classical Greek tragedy in his presentation. Leroux combines in *Die derde oog* (1966) two versions of the Hercules myth. Again he makes use of a 'journey', this time into the city, which Leroux likens to Dante's descent into hell. In *Isis, Isis* (1969) Leroux makes reference to the mutilated Osiris. Schoemann too makes use of the reference to Dante's descent to the underworld. In his *'n Ander land* (1984) his main character, Versluis, uses his copy of Virgil's *Aeneid* to direct his course, while a secondary character assumes the role of a Charon figure. Brink, in *Lobola vir die lewe* (1962), makes use of a 'Dantesque framework' (Kannemeyer, 1993:115) to support the transformation of the heroine.

In contrast to the 'paradise' ideas, several of the *Sestigers* refer to Hades-like themes, suggestive of a recoil from venality. For example, in Leroux's *Die derde oog* (1966) the

character, De Goede, makes a 'journey' into the city which is represented as a descent into hell. The idea compares with Botha's view of one of the *Carol's Bar Series* (1987) fig.34 which he sees as representing a 'sort of Hades'. Kannemeyer refers to the Oita centre which De Goede visits as having a 'a glorification of transient values, ducktails, sex goddesses ... (reflecting) contemporary life in all its perversity.' (1993:111). In his *Onse Hymie* (1982) Leroux refers to the 'flesh palace' a 'microcosm of modern, more specifically, South African, society.' (Kannemeyer, 1993:113).

Apart from these detailed incidents of comparison Botha shows in his compositional and conceptual approach many of the features made use of by *Die Sestigers*, for example, with certain complexities of structure. Brink makes use of five different narrators in *Die Ambassadeur* (1963). Kannemeyer observes that the characters' 'narratives have no apparent chronology, but are, instead, random impressions of their experiences, while past and present are experienced as of the same temporal status.' (1993:115). This feature is close to the complex structure and overlap of themes Botha makes use of in his sculpture, for example, in his *History has an aspect of oversight in the process of progressive blindness* (2004) fig.79 with its suggestions of different temporal states. Kannemeyer refers to Brink's *Houd-den-bek* (1982) where cross-references 'Like mirror images reflecting one another ... build up a microcosm, while certain scenes recounted by different speakers resonate through the novel.' (1993:118). Leroux, in his novel, *Na'va* (1972) draws on a whole complex of allusions which collectively makes the cycle of creation, destruction and rebirth the structuring dynamic of the work.' Kannemeyer's view of this work compares with Botha's allegorical sculptures of the early 1990s where he deals with the notion of creation and rebirth.

A feature that is difficult to understand frequently occurs in *Die Sestigers'* writing – a sense of alienation. For example, in Schoeman's novel, *Op 'n eiland* (1971), a South African writer living on a Greek island with his wife and small son is visited by a South African who lives in Amsterdam and later by a woman who lives in Paris but is travelling in Europe. The main characters cannot understand the language of the islanders but 'remain strangers ... encapsulated in their loneliness ... in the image of human loneliness which it presents, this novel is a landmark in Afrikaans literature.' (Kannemeyer, 1993:129). Many of the novels deal with expatriates who wander about the world finding no place as home. It is possible that this circumstance echoes Botha's own preoccupation with the notion of home, not simply because of the early difficulties in his life, but as an Afrikaner whose identity is uncertain to himself.

The theme of inheritance and responsibility to other generations is strong in Afrikaans writing (for instance, see Kannemeyer, 1993:73,129). Botha is particularly concerned with the concept of patriarchy and the characteristics I have alluded to in regard to his conceptual expression are typified in the way in which he addresses the subject in allegory. The subject of patriarchy can be seen to concern him personally, because of his deep affection for his father, thematically, as part of current theory and patriotically or socially, since patriarchy has had a marked influence on South African social development.

Michael Kauffman writes that 'Masculinity is power. But masculinity is terrifyingly fragile.' (1987:13). The opposite side of the coin of Botha's indictment of oppressive male power is the finding that men in the current age are very vulnerable. In an interview with

Leigh (1999) Botha expresses the notion of an alternative concept of masculinity, the development of a more nurturing and protective role.

Botha has been greatly challenged in his attitude toward Afrikaner masculinity, perceiving the Afrikaner male/hero/leader archetype as both praiseworthy and tragically flawed. Positioning himself as Afrikaner he takes up a certain responsibility for his people and for society and looks at Afrikaner masculinity within a changing South African context. Recognising Afrikaner values he also senses a tragic failure in spite of heroic potential and many heroic efforts. The misdirected male role, one of authoritarian patriarchy, is seen by him as having been a threatening one, damaging to South African society. His intention in his work regarding the Afrikaner is to resuscitate and restore values through the indictment of what he understands to be a tragic confusion. He looks at the contradictions inherent in the situation, a pride in heritage sabotaged by failures in reality. (Interview with Leigh, 2008).

The Afrikaner Nationalist ethos, against the background of which Botha grew up, can be seen as the result of a particular social development. For example, Giliomee sees a 'national mythology' formed by the Afrikaner community in the aftermath of the turn of the nineteenth-century Anglo-Boer Wars as Afrikaners strove to achieve a sense of national wholeness. A basic difficulty was a misunderstood notion of Calvinism. Chapman speculates, as has already been mentioned, how the isolation of the Trekkers led to distorted religious perceptions: (they) 'shaped themselves into narrow patriarchal communities, in which Calvinism was warped into a folk religion entertaining notions of an Elect.' (2003:79). With the ascendance of Afrikaner nationalism in the early decades of

the twentieth century the dangerous idea of 'chosen race' emerged. Attendant on these fantasies was the myth of the Afrikaner male. The Calvinist churches, supporting state mythologising, furnished the idea of the Afrikaner male as sustaining a puritan ethic, an attitude which did considerable harm as it imposed an ideal which it was impossible to maintain, that repressed real feelings, and, because of that, led to aberration (du Pisani, 2001:157-167).

While Botha is intensely supportive of his South African background he was yet able to create in his work *KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa 1896-2000* (2000) fig.80 a compassionate representation of the plight of the Afrikaner Nationalist man fallen from power in a post-apartheid South Africa. He could not have envisaged at that stage the complete decline of the Nationalist Party nor that its leader would have been absorbed into the A.N.C. His exhibition of 2007, *(dis)Appearance(s)* begins to suggest support for a redefining of Afrikaner identity, a desire, one senses, as particularly situated in his love for his father. His works concerning the Afrikaner male, for example, the *Skin* series of the 2000s figs.65,66,67,68, show both compassionate insights as well as an indictment of the assumption of oppressive power. His attitude to his father, a central concern in his life, is allegorised in *Afrikaander circa 1600* (2006) fig.80 wherein he explores the role of a potentially tender fatherhood, considering his own tender relationship with his father.

It has been necessary to examine both international and local influences on Botha's work as both of these impinge largely on his development as sculptor. The influence of *Die Sestigers'* writing on his work is important as it particularly reveals that part of his conceptualisation that relates to a South African background and to an element of especial

richness in his allegorical works. Richards has referred to South Africa as a locale where 'Ideals mix with blood.' (1999:369). This aspect of *duende*, a fierce deep force, is present in Botha's work reflecting the cultural, geographic and historic nature of South Africa, whereas the allegorical method he makes use of is a European construct and conceptualism an international development. Together these features shape the development of style, form and concept in his work.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **ENTERING INTO A SCULPTURAL LANGUAGE**

My Introduction and preceding chapters propose that Botha's whole creative output and individual works are not the result of one or more specific influences. Rather they are the outcome of a number of processes - experiences, responses to stimuli, reading, temperament, capacities - and the other intricate range of incident and phenomena that shape a life, choices, gifts, career and commitment to art. I am particularly interested in what Botha has to say as he has envisaged and formed the work of which I have drawn an intimate knowledge from a number of interviews. From the beginning of his career to the present he has maintained a steady desire to express a certain range of concepts - the South African locale and its history and a compassionate perception of those events - often tragic - that impact on human life.

Botha's determination to master a sculptural language that would express his concept of local events and of a more general human history forms the chronology and substance of his work. I wish to record and investigate that development of consciousness and creation over a period of thirty years. Botha's art exists on a basis of intellect, beauty and emotion and of exacting technical labour. It is both intuitively and rationally created. My intention is to look not only at individual works but to see the whole body of his work as a single development. In spite of change coming through technical associations and new experiences his work remains homogeneous representing one drive to create - from a series - one creative, though varied entity. Through a series of notions and impressions occurring and worked over and contemplated during the period of time under consideration, drawings, maquettes, sketches have contributed to an output of small works, notations, large works, installations and multiples formally and conceptually linked into an



expressive continuum

The artistic milieu in KwaZulu-Natal in the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Botha embarked on a career as a sculptor, was one of active and original creativity. He entered the then University of Natal in 1971. It is important to acknowledge the emphasis on formalism in teaching at the then University of Natal Fine Art Department and the interest on modernism. During the 1950s and '60s Professor J.C.W. Heath and his wife, Jane Heath, Senior Lecturer in Painting, both graduates of the Royal College of Art, had set a high standard of drawing in the Department and also been influential in introducing a pronounced interest in modern art. The writings of Wilenski, Lhote and British formalist writers, for example Clive Bell (who wrote 'the secret of all art ... is sensibility to the profound significance of form': *Art*, 1987:185), were promoted in the Department. The interest in formalism brought about an interest in other cultures. For example, Professor Heath had amassed a valuable collection of African art and with his lectures created interest in Egyptian art, Roman wall painting, Aztec art, Assyrian art, Cycladic art as well as art of the European tradition, pointing out underlying formalism.

During the 1970s new staff introduced new approaches. Professor Aidron Duckworth brought current ideas from America, changing the course of teaching in the Department. Botha states, 'Aidron Duckworth ... completely shook the School of Fine Art out of the nineteenth century and flung it into the twentieth century screaming.' (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006). Mike Taylor, a teacher from Australia, added to the new emphases, teaching 'flat painting' as advocated by Clement Greenberg. Raymund van Niekerk had been trained in art history at the British Courtauld Institute and brought a type of

documentary precision to the teaching of art history. He introduced current ideas from Britain that placed less value on formal emphasis in art and turned to the art of German Romanticism, Victorian history and anecdotal painting and Pre-Raphaelitism, for example. He also departed from the comfortable 'Mediterranean ethos' of Modernism turning to less comfortable aspects of life as, for example, exemplified in the work of Francis Bacon and Lucien Freud.

Botha had undoubtedly benefited from the heritage of formalism at the University of Natal Fine Art Department, as had many other students who later led distinguished careers, for example, Jeremy Wafer, Clive van den Berg, Virginia Mckenny and others. Aspects of the poetic in Botha's work, his command of form, his use of references to European master works and works of memorable form from other cultures would unquestionably have been learnt by him from the teaching at the Department at that time. Students coming from the Department at that time often displayed a mastery of drawing that would certainly have come from drawing disciplines taught by the Heaths and subsequently by lecturers Derek Leigh and Jinny Heath. The departures from modernism and formalism introduced by Duckworth, van Niekerk, Taylor and new appointments to the staff, for example, Gavin Younge and Lucas van Vuuren, would have led Botha to assess the teaching offered, to weigh up and explore possibilities. The introduction of ideas from America and from contemporary trends outside South Africa would have added a new vocabulary in concepts, images and techniques. The return to the Department in the early 1970s of Lucas van Vuuren who had trained at the Royal College, United Kingdom, and had been teaching in California, United States, brought Botha in touch with current technology, for instance, in the use of lasers and also with techniques in body-casting figs.1,2,3. Botha

was always adventurous with techniques and materials and had made himself very well read. Both these factors forwarded his discovering a sculptural 'language'.

Botha's own account of his introduction to University life expressed by him in an interview (with Leigh, 15 May, 2006) is graphic and meaningful. He states that he did not wish to become too self-conscious in constructing a narrative of his experiences and of what had influenced him at that time but wished to resurrect in his account that which had actually occurred in his feelings and that had possibly modified his thoughts and developments at that time. His statements are not necessarily what is 'expected' but rather give an account of actual feelings. 'I arrived at University with a romantic idea of what an artist could be as I had no formative experience of what constitutes a notion of being artistic. ... When I arrived at University I was in a state of shock. Everyone looked foreign, sounded foreign': he found the milieu a 'completely alienating environment.' (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006).

In interview (Leigh, 15 May, 2006) Botha refers to the background from which he had come to enter University - 'a very working class environment with a complete and total absence of any aesthetic training whatsoever ... the influences in my formative years were certainly popular white street culture, working class culture, nothing literate whatsoever.' In the interview he refers to 'just the visceral, sensual experience of being alive and living within a peer group of young people with whom you shared experiences.' The peer group formed in its 'street' activities an escape from what was seen as a limited adult environment (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006). In retrospect, Botha sees experience in the peer group as 'forming the imagination', in that adolescent period before he entered university.

The bond between the members of this group was, for the most part, their common experience of highly dysfunctional home environments. Botha says that these home environments 'did not serve as places of nurture ... learning ... or teaching. The boys learnt outside those environments and consequently rejected those environments - the religious ones, the social ones, the normative ones, the loving embrace of a family.' : to Botha the peer group, as seen in retrospect, constituted 'essential family' (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006). Botha sees this 'strong bonding' with young peers persisting as a social support group up until his entrance to university. It should be noted at this point that Botha's mother had abandoned the family, himself, his sister and father when Botha was a boy of six and consequently patterning a life for him that would depart from the norm in many aspects.

Botha's idea of becoming an artist seems over optimistic when his circumstances are considered. He knew nothing of art; art had not been a subject at the George Campbell Technical High School, Durban, which he attended, his attempts at art at primary school had been sternly crushed - he was caned for producing a drawing of a boy's head reflected in glass that the master could not believe was Botha's own work. His one experience of art was seeing reproductions of Michelangelo's sculpture in a book in a friend's house during his adolescence. This trigger was enough. His extraordinarily disciplined and determined character focussed on commitment to a vision that he was to follow through. He refers to this commitment as a 'choice', or 'the choice' and speaks of the 'profound conviction and strength that underpinned that choice' in the face of what we can see as serious odds. He had seen the reproduction of Michelangelo's work and decided quite simply, as he says, 'That is what I want to do.' He wanted to be not only an artist but a

sculptor (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006).

It is clear that Botha's entrance to university was hindered by both cultural and financial difficulties. He lived with his single working class father (his sister placed with foster parents) and because of 'other deeper, more fundamental interests' - referred to above - he was not an exemplary scholar. There was no chance of funding by his father or through a scholarship. Understandably his father was very opposed to his undertaking a career as an artist and it was not a choice likely to be approved by a conservative working class Afrikaner at that time. (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006).

He had had no knowledge of how to go about achieving his goal: 'I had no counselling as to how I would achieve that. I just thought somewhere in the back of my mind that the place in which I would do that would be the University.' (Interview with Leigh, 2006). He had absolutely no knowledge of a University or a Fine Art Department or of how either would function: they existed entirely outside of his sphere of reference and experience. In order to fund his studies he worked for the South African Railways and Harbours (that also employed his father) and had been working at the docks for a year and a half when he entered the University. As he says, 'he was unprepared for what he calls the 'class schism' - 'I was inferior and unable to deal with the intellectual demands at that University context.' (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006).

Botha describes the ceramist, David Walters, as being one of his first friends within the University milieu - the first person that 'vaguely looked like me.' (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006). The friendship offered support to Botha and was greatly valued by him;

together they were able to discuss what they saw as the 'expected role' of the artist as opposed to what they felt as 'innate conviction.' (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006). He both respected and was critical of van Niekerk - 'I was against his kind of pretentious Eurocentricity.'; however van Niekerk did impart to him an idea of 'intellectual excellence and thoroughness and the importance of reading and ... scholarship' (Interview with Leigh, 2006). Botha particularly admired Prof. Norman Martin for holding to a 'range of value systems' such as 'need to underpin all creativity' involving loyalty, authenticity and a lack of posturing around 'that kind of European pretentiousness': what Botha particularly prized in Martin was that he valued 'that robustness of engaging the local text.' (Interview with Leigh, 2006). He describes Martin as a 'great human being' and it is likely that he related to him closely because he was in sympathy with Botha's interest in experiencing what is immediate and direct. Martin was interested in a 'local text', as Botha says, something that Botha innately was concerned with and wished to find a means of establishing in his own art.

Botha's response to his tutors shows a degree of understanding and maturity. He formed a friendship with the lecturer Lucas van Vuuren with whom he shared - although van Vuuren was his teacher - a type of youthful camaraderie. This friendship was helpful to Botha as it put him at ease in the vitality of exuberant drinking and talking that is so much a part of student life. Botha mentions other teachers that were of importance to him at that time - Gavin Younge, Derek Leigh, Jinny Heath, Henry Davies (who taught sculpture) and Hilda Ditchburn who lectured Ceramic and whom Botha greatly respected, taking ceramic as a minor for his degree. He saw these teachers as contributing to what he considered in retrospect to be a 'very, very fine tertiary education.' (Interview with Leigh, 15 May,

2006).

Although Botha experienced a considerable intellectual enrichment at university he maintained a certain derisiveness in regard to what he observed as ‘pretentiousness’ and he refers to ‘referencing’ and ‘cross-referencing’ to impress. He states that he was quite often at variance with his tutors. He describes his ‘intelligence as developing with a certain clarity’ and states that he was ‘comforted’ by this. He learnt, as he says, ‘the joy of books’, and ‘forced’ himself ‘into hours and hours of disciplined reading in the library’ and ‘slowly but surely ... began to understand the value of that type of pedagogy and thinking and the ideas that stemmed from the rich ... western tradition of intellectual thought and the generation of ideas.’ (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006).

Botha acknowledges in retrospect a dualism in his experience at this time. He found the academic environment of learning ‘far less interesting ... than the actual experience of living’: however he does also acknowledge that he is the ‘product of a very, very fine European tradition.’ (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006). In his art we can see the interesting influence of this duality. Because he was interested in the ‘street and its environment’ he was able to be sensitively aware of what was happening socially and politically at that time and to be conscious of the situation in South Africa which he saw to be ‘alive and fragmenting’. His reading at university was voracious and inspired a burgeoning intellectual engagement that was to continue to enrich his career. His university reading included Marxian and other philosophies his understanding of which he adapted to his ‘street’ experience, that is, an experience of actual contemporary socio-political currents. Although he may not have been particularly interested in learning

‘about’ art he did nevertheless respond to art of the past of all cultures and formal and conceptual references to these frequently occur in his work.

The influence that was probably the most important to Botha and that in many ways gives form to the major part of his creative expression was his meeting with young black intellectuals in the labour movement during the mid-1970s. For the first time he encountered thinking concerning politics that engaged issues of identity and discussion that espoused the possibility of a South African democracy that would consider the humanity of all. This experience formed the basis of Botha’s creative thinking. He himself began to consider that, as he says, aesthetic thinking, or creative thinking could not be seen as separate from a moral engagement, or ethical engagement, with humanity (Interview with Leigh, 15 May, 2006). To him this was the key to contemporary aesthetics both in South Africa and globally where many peoples were suffering material and spiritual loss with an increasing culture of materialism and dehumanisation; in many ways it is also the key to understanding Botha’s art. His university training had emphasised Europe and America as referencing points for excellence. But he found engagement with the real politic of South Africa ‘intoxicating and invigorating’ and wished to achieve work that would closely express his actual concern and experience. He began to be involved with what was then known as ‘underground politics’. When he left university he persisted in creating an aesthetic that brought together an idea of social conscience with aesthetic purpose.

The 1971 *Art South Africa Today* exhibition, held the year Botha entered university, signalled a significant breakthrough in the liberation of concept and technique in art and made a greater range of options visible to young artists. It was the fifth of the biennial *Art*



*South Africa Today* exhibitions organised by the South African Institute of Race Relations in conjunction with the Natal Branch of the Association of Arts and the Durban Art Gallery, then under the direction of Jill Addleson. Jo Thorpe represented the Institute of Race Relations. The judges were Esme Berman, Neville Dubow and Walter Battiss. Six hundred and fifty works were submitted, one hundred and nineteen chosen and eleven prizes allotted. Top prizes were allotted to *Goat Sculpture* by S. Raphela, *Jangling Kinetic* by Andrew Todd and *Iron Swing* by Malcolm Payne. Many critics saw the exhibition as showing 'biting political comment' - 'Five of the eleven winning artists obviously portray the political scene in the country with startling awareness and savage indictment. (Jill Gowans, *Daily News*, August 1971). Dubow saw the work as escaping the 'awkward self conscious aping of New York and London' and developing into an 'understanding of the means of contemporary art and a fresh awareness of how these can be related ... to the social circumstances of this country. ('*Cape Times*, 28 Aug., 1971). On the other hand, Hans Hallen saw most of the work as 'derivative', the works lacking in 'that tautness that binds meaning to medium.' (*Daily News*, 27 Aug., 1971). Pertinent to Botha is what Dubow described as 'a solid core of works that are technically interesting and artistically valid and which ... find it possible to make reference ... to the less pleasant realities of South African life.' (*Cape Times*, 28 Aug., 1971).

The exhibition showed a number of young artists with new ideas and techniques and included works by Gavin Younge, Cliff Bestall, Norman Martin, Patrick O'Connor, Paul Stopforth and others. Gowan especially noted Stopforth's assemblages of 'policeman with dog, gun, holster, war bandages and mutilated birds is extreme in its savage comment.' (*Daily News*, August 1971). Formally, the breakthrough was in many ways a reflection of

world wide developments in art but nevertheless introduced a greater variety of possibilities and a vibrancy to South African artists and viewers. Pertinent to an examination of Botha's work is the introduction of diversity in techniques in the exhibition, for example, Stopforth's use of assemblage.

Although the 1971 *Art South Africa Today* exhibition was coincidental to Botha's entry to University it is likely that his involvement with adaptation and adjustment to the University milieu (as described above) absorbed most of his attention and he was possibly made more alive to the potential of art to be used as political comment by the conference organised in Cape Town in December 1979 (*State of Art in South Africa*) which I refer to later.

Botha's first bold essays in sculptural form under University tutelage were body-casts figs. 1, 2, 3, 5. The technique was regarded as revolutionary at the time, Natal being unique in its use, and the idea of using the human body for casting was contentious to many, working up a media scandal. For Botha the method had a completely different importance. In a talk to the Newcastle Art Society (Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, 1988) he explains that from the beginning of his commitment to sculpture he had thought that in order to be a sculptor it would be necessary for him to sculpt the human figure: 'I thought that if I wanted to be a sculptor I had to be able to make the human figure. I had to use the figure as a vehicle for expression.' He was helped by Van Vuuren who taught the techniques of body-casting then popular as, for example, in the work of Duane Hanson.

For Botha, body-casting was a means of 'making an immediate impact from the human

body ... it brought an immediacy to the work ... we were exposed to the immediate referencing of the body (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007). He began to experiment with possibilities as to how he might use the re-representation of the human body in this way. His first essays were body-casts of young women fig.1 which he used to form 'lyrical compositions of the body' rather than to express any conceptual content. He saw how he could use these casts as 'metaphors for referencing our humanity' and to 'communicate our humanness.' (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept, 2007).

As Botha was welding a style personal to himself South Africa was embroiled in political struggles that involved the whole nation. Continuing with body-casting techniques Botha began to make post-university works intended to express his fervent concern regarding the detention without trial, torture and imprisonment being practised by the state. With his *Man in Chair* series of 1977, figs.2,3, the *Men* are metaphors for what Botha perceives as 'the tortured relationship' with which 'white collective humanity had entered into with itself' because of the state leadership and its inhuman policies (Interview with Leigh, 2007). He began to reflect the 'sub-text' of stories filtering through of torture and imprisonment. What he wished to convey was not merely physical and material suffering but psychic and mental suffering. What he is showing is a metaphor of that which 'lies between the victim and the perpetrator, speaking between that space.' (Interview with Leigh, 13 September, 2007).

To Botha it is important that the representation of the outward form is expressive of that which is being experienced within. Thus The *Man in Chair* series figs.2,3 consists of figures in agonised positions. They are mainly body-cast figures with actual clothing cast

in resin fibre glass fig.3. The works include found objects, leather and wire. Some examples have arms and body parts shown as disjointed and broken, thongs like stitches in the body, legs ending in dwindling stumps clamped to the chair with leather strips, the body white as though life is sucked from it fig.2. The figures stretch back as though in agony. Botha comments that he stole a friend's wife's false teeth to place them in a mouth to give an appearance of anguish. As the series developed he began to add colour fig.3 to enhance the drama of the presentation. Some in the series are modelled in clay and then cast. One work fig.4 is carved from a block of polystyrene, a technique which allowed a greater expressiveness that he would make use of in later work. One in the series, which Botha refers to as 'more decorative', shows just a penis through the transparent surface of the chair.

Allied to the *Man in Chair* series figs.2 and 3 is *Man in Cage* fig.5. Here the artist's language becomes much more experimental and the man is broken up in multi-layers of materiality (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007). The *Man in Chair* figures figs.2 and 3 and *Man in Cage* figure fig.5 are represented as crying out, metaphors for the inner personal trauma that takes place in times of greatly stressful events (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007).

The series did meet with criticism. Rankin, who, however, has always been especially supportive of Botha's work, wrote of the series that their 'macabre emotiveness was somewhat gauche, with a directness demanding an overt response from the spectator': she also noted that 'critics drew comparisons with Paul Stopforth's sculptures of political prisoners of the late 1970s, although the works had obvious stylistic differences.' (1991:6).

Botha said that these body-cast works (figs.2,3,5) were ‘young’ works, ‘emotionally hot and passionate works and I didn’t know of any other way in which to deal with these issues other than dealing with them directly in a figurative sense without being ashamed of overtness.’ (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

In hindsight we can see the *Man in Chair* series figs.2,3 and *Man in Cage* fig.5 as expressive of the sense of anguish and dislocation many were experiencing in South Africa at that time. They also show Botha wrestling with his intention to represent the human figure as metaphor, struggling to express strong feeling and to work in participation with human and political events through his sculpture. His own opinion of the *Man in Chair* series figs.2,3 is expressed in an interview with Ferguson and Leigh in 1991: ‘I wished to make my art relevant to my living experience in South Africa and this particular work responds to my own sense of awareness and awakening in a political sense to what was happening in the South African environment.’ Rankin notes that Botha at this time became aware of ‘a growing community of South African artists pursuing a political agenda’ and might have been stimulated by the *State of Art in South Africa* conference organised by the Michaelis School of Art, University of Cape Town, December, 1979, which he attended and at which the role of artist was discussed (1991:6).

At this point Botha began ‘to take figurative language a step further’ (Interview with Leigh, 13 September, 2007). He began to combine modelled objects, manufactured and found objects, selecting certain objects that seemed to have inherent in them that which he could use to communicate ideas. Botha explains, ‘African wood carvers often say that the piece of wood contains the metaphor’ - similarly a found object may communicate a

suggestiveness that the artist may harness to bring into the figure (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007) He began a series of reclining figures suggesting male and female qualities. He found a ploughshare in a scrapyard and joined it to a modelled torso of a man to suggest in metaphor the masculine function of cutting and ploughing into the earth to sow the seed. A reclining modelled female torso is bound with metal to callipers. A yielded female buttocks shape has sharp shear like points bound to it with wire.

Botha explains that he found it necessary to revisit the representation of the female figure. - such as he had expressed earlier in the graceful compositions of body-casts of women, the outward appearance of the body. He now looked more closely at actual feelings and responses to the human body. With these works he refers to the female elements as 'threatening but inviting within his own contested post-adolescent views around sexuality.' (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007). The works give a sense of defensiveness and offensiveness.

These works, of the male and female reclining torsos, were exhibited in 1981 and at the same time Botha began a number of works in varied media and sizes concerned with the notion of contemplation and continued this experimentation for the next few years. One of the first of these works is *Contemplation Series* (1981), a triptych fig.6.a,b,c using ceramic and bone contained in three transparent perspex boxes, The broader box shows a modelled bust of the artist in white ceramic; on a shelf above the head lies a sarcophagus-shape (that could also be a fish shape) in white ceramic. In a narrower box, a shelf at the upper level holds a modelled white ceramic head of the artist lying on its side as though in sleep; suspended from it in the lower part of the box is a pendant of bone shapes. In the third box

a modelled head of the artist is tilted up, held with wire that ends in a set of ceramic fragments. In each case the modelled head of the artist wears a swimming cap signifying that the artist, or man represented, is a swimmer in the stream of life. (Interview with Leigh, 13 September, 2007). Botha refers to the notion of 'dream' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) in connection with this work and the artist's dreaming head, lying on its side similarly to the head here, occurs in the later bronze, *Dream Sequence* (1984) fig.10. Here, and in the bronze, the idea of 'dream' signifies the artist's preoccupation with those contemplations that were absorbing his attention during the early 1980s.

Botha at this point particularly wished to work with ceramic and investigate its possibilities. Remarking on *Contemplation Series* fig.6a,b,c he remarks on the importance with which he regards material and the manipulation of material. He says, 'They (the Triptych components) were executed by me as I began to get excited ... by the authority I began to have over using material and experimenting with material as a way of finding or establishing a conceptual equivalent.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). In the work he combines bone and ceramic using modelling and casting techniques to form a 'simple, quiet, meditative work.' (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007). The ceramic itself has a particular fragility that suggests the fragility of human existence, a theme that recurs in Botha's art. The bone also refers to a 'deep-seated response' in human experience, a part of our bodies that is contained in our bodies but continues to exist after death, a record of a life that was.

The emphasis on a highly contemplative mood at this time is related to Botha's increasing reaction against the overwhelming and permeating ethos of life in the contemporary South

Africa. Bombings, suppression, incarceration, political assassinations, strife, violence and death awoke him to a profound sense of mortality which found a full expression in the *Human Structures* exhibition of 1984 figs.21-25.

*Contemplation Series* fig.6a,b,c is intended to be an equivalent in meditation on the human body to the meditation on the form of the human body in the grass sculptures exhibition, *Human Structures*, of 1984, figs.21-25. The containment of the bone and anatomical elements in the boxes suggests the body as contained in a particular space related to its units of measurement. *Contemplation Series* (fig.6a,b,c) and other connected works at this time - for example, small bronzes and maquettes that I will deal with presently - and the *Human Structures* exhibition figs. 21-25 are related to thoughts concerning human destiny. They have to do with, Botha says, 'the idea that we live, but we also die: these works have to do with the journey between the subliminal point of being alive and being somewhere else.' (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007). The whole notion of the validity of dream, subliminal and subconscious states forms a conceptual base for his work of this period.

1982 marks a rather different development in Botha's work as he began to experiment with resin in combination with metal and other materials. This series departs somewhat from the contemplative works that began with (figs.6a,b,c)*Contemplation Series* (1981) figs. 6a,b,c and its themes which would be more fully developed in the works of 1984. The resin series is more severe in form to begin with but later becomes more decorative. For example, Rankin remarks that Botha's works 'From around 1982 ... began to move away from overt expressionism' and took 'on a more 'aesthetic' quality as they became increasingly abstract. The possible political references remained, but they were more



conceptualised in a refined and far less directly emotive way.’ (1991:6). Botha began to produce a series of works in a vertical format, a series called *South African Documents*, fig.7 where he exploited the use of the transparent box as container. Rankin sees his deployment of frames in his choice of format as ‘reminiscent of Giacometti’s work.’ and also notes that Botha’s *Documents* series fig.7 bring to mind ‘comparisons with Michael Goldberg’s conceptual assemblages’ (1991:6).

*South African Document - Urban Labour* (exhibited 1982) fig.7 in the series presents a variation on the theme of the human body, here given political connotations. However the reference to the human body lies in the verticality of the structure, containing cast aluminium forms in three narrow transparent resin cases one above the other, and in certain metal elements suggestive of the body - ‘vestigial head and feet ... any emotive content suppressed, except perhaps, in the indication of bared teeth.’ (Rankin, 1991:6). Rankin also notes the reference to labour in the mattress of the migrant labourer enclosed in the grid at the top of the work and the gravel chips suggesting road work in the resin block at the base (1991:6). Botha notes of this work, ‘It is a comment on those people who work on the road, living in hostels. I was watching people working at the side of the road and was beginning to know a part of their life. I had friends that lived in the Dalton Road Hostel and I used to visit them.’ (Interview with Leigh, 2007).

Botha refers to their being four or five works in the ‘perpendicular’ series, now lost. These, he says, were ‘more contemplative, lyrical, understanding movement, lyricism, poetry in referring to the environment.’ They contained ‘reference to movement, beauty, light, dark’ and were not involved with a ‘political text.’ (Interview with Leigh, 13

Sept.,2007). Rankin states that Garth Claassen, who was a student with Botha, explained that Botha had employed an intricate building-up of fibre-glass strips in the mould for the resin casting, though these were not observable in the final work (1991:6). Rankin suggests that Botha's involvement in the Community Arts Workshop in the 1980s had placed him in close contact with black artists deprived of formal teaching and would have turned him away from an easy solution to a 'successful' mode of production - he had had some commercial success with this series - and caused him to see how 'contrived' the *South African Documents* series fig.7 was although it fitted in with contemporary South African mainstream endeavours in art and 'aspirations to internationalism.' (1991:6).

It is possible Botha found the techniques he was developing at that period too decorative and lacking in challenging content. For example, he says in interview (Ferguson and Leigh, 1989), 'What particularly bothered me about these works, at the time, was that they were becoming very ... visually decorative.' He is referring especially to *Dancing Figure* (1984) fig.8 a work with which he continues his use of the vertical format in cast resin. But he calls this work 'much more lyrical than the *South African Documents - Urban Labour* piece.' (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007). He sees the work as presenting 'a dancing, moving figure, which is in a way ... a response to the beautiful lyricism which I saw in the Bushmen paintings.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). To give the effect of rhythm the vertical line of the format is curved and ends in two gracefully curved bone pendants and continuing the rhythmic movement a flat, rounded bone - a rhino hip - crowns the work. Botha intends that the viewer will infer an awareness of Bushman referencing between spiritual and material worlds. A small vagina shape is set within the base of the resin body. Small pieces of coloured resin are made to appear to float

upwards from it as though suggestive of a fertilising action embedded in the resin body of the work that resembles clear glass and is encased on either side by pieces of filigreed metal.

In continuing his criticism of the work of this period, and this work in particular, Botha says, 'They did not have that grounding, that earthiness that I was looking for'; he wished to 'keep on looking at material as a valid way of actually dealing with certain emotive realities.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

*Dancing Figure* (1984) fig.8 continues Botha's explorations of the use of resin in vertical format and reflects his desire to 'push the medium of resin to its furthest limits.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989) The theme of the work is linked to the *Contemplation Series* triptych (1981) fig.6 with its notion of bone as a pointer to mortality. In this way the work, although it leads Botha into seeking a more rigorous form of expression, is connected with his preoccupation at the time, looking into thoughts concerning 'man's destiny' and 'the idea that we live but that we also die.' (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007). The use of animal bone and the inference to be drawn regarding Bushman beliefs also indicate Botha coming closer to referencing local and indigenous themes and materials.

At this period (through the 1980s) Botha carried out a number of smaller works and maquettes in bronze, mixed media, wire, wood - many of which were precursors of future larger works and many of which had themes related to the *Human Structures* exhibition of 1984 figs. 21-25. For example, *God Dog* (1984) fig.9 is a small bronze that carries the idea

of the sarcophagus as container of the body at loss of human consciousness. It consists of a little running dog-like animal near a sarcophagus shape on a disc supported on a shallow base. A fish-like shape surmounts the sarcophagus. Botha sees the animal as a god acting as a guard over part of the subconscious. In the work he wishes to contain the idea that the ancient Egyptians had of a guardian - present from the moment consciousness was lost - and of other presences, guardians of the consciousness in subliminal state. He states that that 'guardian would be god and expresses the idea that god would guard you and then that god would not always guard you. Implicit in the idea that you would be guarded and safe is the idea that you would not be guarded and safe' (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007). This concept is echoed in later works where Botha expresses a perception of the insecurity inherent in any situation.

A bronze called *Dream Sequence* (1984) fig.10 shows a dreaming head - of the artist - lying horizontally on a series of pillars. Near it on a base a sarcophagus-shape rests on a plinth. This work also relates to issues underpinning the *Human Structures* exhibition (figs.21-25) and it is notable that the dreaming head is close in structure to the horizontal head in the *Contemplation Series* triptych fig.6a,b,c mentioned above and also wears a swimming cap indicating the wearer as a swimmer in the stream of life. The notion of dreaming here is linked to the formal investigations Botha was making at this time into that subliminal space between living and dying (Interview with Leigh, 2007).

Several particular motifs or elements recur in Botha's art with consistent meaning and make their appearance in the maquettes of the 1980s. The light ascending figure and the tortured mound of woven sticks or 'worm' shapes occurring in maquettes at this time

intimate concepts concerning - speaking very generally - enlightenment and chaos. For example, a small maquette of this period (fig.11) worked in ceramic and bone shows a pile of ceramic 'worms' with a light bone shape ascending from it. Botha calls the ceramic pile a 'tortured mound' and refers to the bone shape as 'a little figurative element diving into the chaos' (Interview with Leigh, 2007). A related small work (fig.12) on a slight base combines ceramic with bronze and repeats the idea of a 'tortured mound' of ceramic 'worms' and places this implication of chaos next to the meditative shape of a fish-like form or sarcophagus. Elements appearing in the small maquettes of this period occur in larger more developed works of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The 'tortured mound' is echoed in the abased figure in *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus ...* (1990/1991) fig.38 and the little figurative element is echoed in the ascending (or, diving) figure of the same sculpture. *Familiar Memories* (1984) fig.26 has a large 'tortured mound' as base to an ovoid shape, the unit being accompanied by a light elegant shape that stands separately. *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27 has a tortured tower-like shape that stands at the head of this processional work. In each of these cases the 'mound' of elaborately woven elements represents a situation of chaos whereas a light element appearing in the work intimates some idea of contrast, relief or enlightenment.

Another distinctive element that recurs in Botha's work is the bull. A bronze in the Durban Art Gallery collection (1989) fig.13 shows a bull, or ox-like animal, stretched out on its stomach, its legs thrust out behind and before. From between its forelegs issues a lithe armless figure, a helix-shaped emanation discharging from its mouth. Arched backwards over the bull's back is a graceful figure, its feet resting on the bull's hindquarters, its head - enveloped in a halo-shape- resting on the bull's head. In its hands

it holds a fish-shape. The work clearly refers to the 'bull-leaper' of Minoan art. Here the bull stands for darkness, the leaper for the overcoming of darkness. Botha refers to the 'bull' as coming through into his work over and over 'as a symbol of sacrifice ... it is an ancient metaphor ... but it is also as Picasso used the bull ... in the Spanish context as the manifestation of darkness within a human soul.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). Botha also refers to the contemporary running of the bulls in Pamplona where the contest of man with bull echoes the action of the bull leaper overcoming the darkness symbolised in the bull. Botha refers to the figure (ascending, or diving) in *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus ...* (1990/1) fig.38 as 'Minoan' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989) clearly referring to the 'bull-leaper' in Minoan art and its significance as a metaphor in his work.

A complex set of references exists in this bull-leaper work (fig.13). One in the set of references is the helix shape that frequently occurs in Botha's work. It stands as a powerful symbol signifying the essential expression of the force of life. Feminine shapes and fish shapes generally signify spirituality to Botha. (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The helix and fish shapes with the connotations I have detailed occur in *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers* (1991) fig.39, in *Untitled* (c.1990/1) fig.40, the drawing for fig.39, in the bronze *Some Thoughts on Loneliness* (1991) fig.48, and in a pastel for the *Carol's Bar Series* (1987) fig.36. Fish shapes occur in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27 and markedly in *Baptism for the Fallen ... and those taken darkly* (1991) fig.42. The bull appears in the pastel for the *Carol's Bar Series* fig.36, in *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) fig.47 and in the bronze, *Icons and other playthings* (1991).

Two small maquettes in wire (figs. 14, 16) prefigure *Dromedaris donder!... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37; as does a small carving in gelaton (fig.15) showing clearly the stretched out bull, or ox-like animal, and the violating, or supporting, figure behind and the helicopter shape that is also meant to suggest a phallic form. These elements suggest, as in the larger work, the darkness, contained in the bull, and the oppression imposed by masculine force in South Africa (as symbolised in the phallus shape). The gelaton maquette is close to the larger work it prefigures - the bull, ox, or animal shape, is presented as only the forepart of an animal, the hinder part being absent, its place taken by the violating figure. The bull is also to Botha explicitly symbolic of Afrikanerdom. Its presence is not necessarily 'dark' but also suggestive of the unknown and certainly in the *Dromedaris* work (1987/8) fig.37 a presentation of pathos or blind suffering.

A number of small maquettes of this period continue to reflect Botha's concern with the militarism and violence practised by the state at this time. One bronze (fig. 17) consists of a flat platform with a central rising phallic shape like a shell used in artillery - both the idea of militarism and the male power that exerts it are conveyed. Such themes reflect Botha's response to personal meditations and to events in the country at that time. Many of the themes - male aggressiveness, violation, suffering, deception, submission, conquest, ambivalence - become evident in the large complete work *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37.

It is important to note that the maquettes of this period contain specific elements that refer to repeated metaphors in his work. It is important to understand what the metaphors stand for and what meaning they have in the work. For example, (fig.18) a maquette (which the

artist dates at 1986 i.e. at the same time he was working on *South African Elegy* fig.27), was presented for a competition that the artist did not win. It shows variations on themes introduced in the maquettes mentioned above and also introduces other elements. On a round base a central phallic shape, that could also be an artillery shell, rises as a vertical. On the ground is an adaptation of a fish-like shape (similar to that in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27). A graceful figure that could be interpreted as feminine rises from a plinth. She is close in form and stance to the ascending or diving figure in *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus ...* (1990/1) fig.38 and to the woman who leads the procession of *Embarkation* (1996) fig.54. On the circular base is a conical form with a tilted dish attached, that closely resembles the surveillance instrument in the bronze *... a delicate moment in history* (1991) fig.50. For clarity I will briefly detail the significance of the reference. The phallic, artillery shape refers to male violence and militarism occurring in South Africa at that time. The fish shapes and feminine shapes refer to relief from those aspects, a quality of grace. The surveillance instrument denotes the onlooker. This detailing is simplistic and I merely offer it as a view of the complexity of the piece.

A further maquette, (fig.19) roughly shaped, shows developments in ceramic - an adaptation of the bull/ox/animal shape presents large buttocks grovelling toward a cone of coiled 'worm' figurations nearby on the same roughly shaped base that is surmounted by a halo shape. The halo shape appears again in *Dwase Drome van Boesmans en Ministers* (1987) fig.27. The grovelling shape appears in the bronze *Fear of the Gods* (1991) and the arched raised female figure from *Fear of the Gods* closely echoes the ascending, diving figure from *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1) fig.38.



At this point Botha had accumulated a number of meditative and formal notations regarding subjects important to him. Many of these were simply visual concepts arising from subconscious and intuitive impressions associated with this series of connected subjects. However each of the recorded impressions played a part in works developed later. In interview (Ferguson and Leigh,1989) Botha states how he saw these small maquettes as serving a similar function to drawings, yet as three-dimensional 'drawings' that could be worked through to major ideas. For example, he sees many of the forms of *God Dog* (1984) fig.9 being repeated and developed in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27 and also sees in *God Dog* fig.9 the beginnings of his multiple works - 'I begin to look at the possibility ... of more than one work related to another in ... a multiple series where you can set up ... an installation type of situation.'

In 1981 Botha made an apparent departure from the series of connected works he had been engaged in. As Rankin has pointed out (1991:6) Botha may have been influenced by the types of materials used by the African artists working in the Community Arts Workshop with which he was closely involved. His work *Sweet Toring* (1981) fig.20 is a tower form of metal and woven wattle coated with wax and sand. The significance of his usage of these methods and materials is that they are local and indigenous. At this time work by South African black artists, carvers and sculptors was being exhibited and generally made more publicly visible. African artists had exhibited on the *Art South Africa Today* exhibition as early as 1967. Such work was also being bought by private collectors and public galleries and it is very likely that Botha had seen such work. .

The title, *Sweet Toring*, is a pun. Rankin notes Botha's introduction of 'bilingual puns' in

his titles at this stage (1991:7). Here the title has a number of connotations referring at once to the 'sweetness' or pleasure of sexual experience (as the materials used and particular shaping of the work would suggest) or, has been proposed, to the 'sweat' engendered in 'building a tower'.

I have noted an 'apparent' departure from the series of concepts he was developing at this point. However the 'phallic' aspect of *Sweet Toring* fig.20 is related to the several small maquettes occurring through the 1980s that deal with the idea of aggressive masculinity in the climate of state oppression in South Africa at the time by means of phallic representation. This representation with the same intent is carried through overtly in the large work of the late 1980s, *Dromedaris donder!... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37

The tower structure has a number of connotations. I will make the suggestions clearer by referring to Rankin's comments on *Horing Toring* (1984) fig.21 a tower-like structure that appeared on the later exhibition - *Human Structures* (1984) figs.21-25 - drawing inevitable inferences from viewers. She says, 'While such analogies may operate for the artist at a subconscious level, they seem to be reinforced by a title like *Horing Toring* ... with a play on the ambivalence of the words horn/horned/horny in English, suggesting a deliberate reference to sexuality, a pervasive theme in his work.' (1991:7). She refers to his use of the bilingual pun in the title ('one of Botha's first to use bilingual puns'). Botha speaks of this form as 'archetypal', that the most essential views of ancient traditional creativity 'have seen primal creative force as a phallic symbol.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). Rankin notes that Botha referred to works on the exhibition as, 'spiritual vehicles' containing his philosophical ponderings at that time (1991:7).

If the tower structures are seen as ‘spiritual vehicles’, as Rankin quotes Botha as saying, then they are at one with the themes he was exploring in the earlier 1980s regarding mortality and the passage from life to death. These themes reach a very full development in his works for the *Human Structures* exhibition of 1984 figs.21-25. This particular exhibition marks an important point in Botha’s development because of the size and impact of the work, revealing him as an artist able to achieve meaningful work on a monumental scale, because of the use he was able to make of local and indigenous materials and techniques thus referencing his locale - as he had sought to do for some time - and because of the content of the work reflecting a process of thinking and association regarding subject matter important to human life.

With his *Human Structures* exhibition (1984) Botha considerably amplifies his innovative use of local organic materials and weaving techniques figs.21-25. He had known the Drakensberg locale from pre-adolescence and had often visited it. On a particular visit he noted local people at work building a traditional hut with materials from the area and was struck by the sculptural potential of the techniques and materials used. The materials and techniques were actually close to those he had already used in the *Sweet Toring* work (1981) fig.20 but the great possibility the hut structure offered was the envelopment of space, considerable space, through the use of armature and weaving. Further, the indigenous nature of materials and technique met Botha’s need to relate his work more closely to his passionate interest in South Africa.

The *Human Structures* exhibition works (figs.21-25), according to Botha (Interview with

Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007) are the meditations on *form* equivalent to the meditations on the *body* presented in *Contemplation Series* triptych of 1981, fig.6a,b,c both being reflections on the passage between life and death. The *Contemplation Series* fig.6a,b,c makes repetitive use of a shape that could be a fish and could be a sarcophagus and this shape appears in many of the 1980s maquettes. The *Human Structures* exhibition figs.21-25 includes several very large works that reflect a sarcophagus shape similar to a fish-shape. In all these instances the reference is to the journey by ship (in sarcophagus form) from one life to another, (the strong reference, of course, being to ancient Egyptian art and beliefs). For Botha the fish stands for spirituality. Referring to the works representing fish/ship/sarcophagi - for example, *Final Journey* fig.22 and *Resurrection* fig.23 - Botha states, 'I remember having a very interesting dialogue with architectural students about the process of assimilation and transformation ... I think it's important to see how similar in retrospect this work is to the Egyptian sarcophagi and to a fish made simple.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

The *Human Structures* works figs.21-25 were meant, as the title suggests, to be metaphoric containers - ultimately, of the human body. In a talk to the Newcastle Art Society (Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, 1988) Botha explains that when he was overseas he saw an Egyptian sarcophagus in a museum of antiquities and it seemed to him to be the perfect vehicle for a soul or spirit to travel in. He saw this as the very kind of enclosure in which he himself, on death, would like to make that journey 'into the spiritual world'. Rankin writes that Botha actually states that he was aware 'that the tradition he was utilising took its origin in creating structures to enclose and protect human forms, and the works retained that meaning for him.' (1991:7). She recounts how Botha would often lie on the ground and

have his own body outlined to indicate how the coverings of grass or other organic materials would make a hollow to contain the human form (1991:7).

Adam Small adds a further insight to the nature of the *Human Structures* works figs.21-25, 'The recurrent sarcophagus, or sarcophagus-like structure ... is a kind of measure of the form we call human.' (1991:15). He also affirms Botha's communication to the Newcastle Art Society, that the sarcophagus shape he saw in the museum was a shape he would like to get into - in the face of the 'overwhelmingness of it all'. Small writes, 'we feel helpless, 'there is the aspect of fear ... of wanting to hide away, or to be hidden away.' (1991:15). Small refers to a conversation he had with Botha: 'When people feel scared or anxious, they cover themselves' and in his essay for Botha's 1991 exhibition catalogue he gives additional meaning to the fish/sarcophagus concept, 'the fish-like form of the sarcophagus grows on one and a symbolism of death becomes a symbolism of life as well.' Botha's meditations at this stage concerning life and transition to death embrace notions of personal insecurity, the security of containment, considerations of further dimensions, and of hope existent within overwhelming situations that happen. The bronze *God Dog* (1984) fig.9 has obvious connections with *Human Structures* figs.21-25 in its Egyptian reference, in its inclusion of sarcophagus and fish forms and in Botha's expression of insecurity in regard to it: 'Implicit in the idea that you would be guarded and safe is the idea that you would not be guarded and safe.' (Interview with Leigh, 2007).

Rankin notes that Botha referred to works in the *Human Structures* exhibition figs.21-25 as 'spiritual vehicles reflecting his preoccupation with a philosophical debate about the nature of life and death - the beginning and the end - genesis and apocalypse.' (1991:7). This philosophy may well constitute the focus of the exhibition. However the works

differ considerably although all are carried out in materials occurring in the Drakensberg area using traditional hut-building techniques. Some of the works refer to death, for example, in his talk to Newcastle Art Society (Newcastle, Kwazulu-Natal, 1988) Botha explains that he saw a person, possibly involved in an accident, lying covered by a sheet - 'it had associations for me of burial mounds ... I was thinking of the spiritual implications of what happens to you the moment you die.' In the same talk he refers to a work on the exhibition called *Seed* as resembling a human body wrapped around with a skin which he sees as a seed, the joining 'of the living form and the promise of a new life.' On the other hand *Journey Through Time*, fig.24 likened by many to the simple and smooth shape of Brancusi's sculpture, actually reflects the form of a local woman carrying a bundle of firewood on her head, a familiar sight in the area. The work on the exhibition that Botha saw as 'celebratory' is *Force of Victory* fig.19 which refers to the *Victory of Samothrace*, Botha remarking that he 'links back, balancing his obsession with contemporary phenomena ... relating them to art historical contexts.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). This work affirms Small's observation of a 'symbolism of life' in the works (1991:15).

To complete these works Botha travelled every weekend for several months in early 1984 to the Drakensberg area to spend time learning the necessary techniques, obtaining materials and working with local crafts people. Rankin (1991:7) records how Botha had met a local family of crafts people through the ceramist Fee Halsted - the Ntshalintshali family living on the Berning farm in the Winterton area. Maviwa Ntshalintshali was a master-builder and the women, Myna and Agnes Ntshalintshali, the headman's wives, were skilled weavers and thatch makers. They were assigned to help Botha for a regular

wage.

Unfortunately Botha failed to record the crafts peoples' names when the work for *Human Structures* was exhibited. The omission was unfortunate and reflected needlessly badly on Botha who had actually worked with the local people in good faith, sharing simple living conditions with them, accepting them as fellow creative artists and exhibiting great respect for their accomplishments. A question also arose here of 'cultural appropriation', i.e. that Botha had 'appropriated' other people's cultural property. This question is highly debatable as the larger part of human art and culture consists of 'appropriation'. The question would be less contentious in the current South Africa where all are considered South African and distinctions between 'tribes' are theoretically removed.

Rankin notes that the *Human Structures* exhibition figs.21-25 was well received partly because its approach was fresh and new, partly because it 'appealed to a strongly felt need for a South African iconography' and partly because the formalism of the works could be addressed in the same way as modern abstract sculpture (1991:9). In contrast, she sees Botha's subsequent works as different, not 'operating in a modernist aesthetic ... but fundamentally paradoxical', mixing rural techniques with industrial materials, 'monumental in scale yet detailed and cumulative in form ... comic and narrative in some aspects yet implying an epic seriousness.' (1991:9). She suggests the term 'Postmodern' applied to the later works does not 'really solve their difficulty or provide access for the viewer.' (1991:9). Actually the number of small maquettes and bronzes (figs.9,11-19) being produced in the period preceding and contemporaneously with and after the *Human Structures* exhibition figs.21-25 indicate the numerous ways in which Botha was going to

enter into the use of a sculptural language that would reflect the many-sided quality of his vision, the complexity of his experiences and perceptions and the protean aspects of his developing techniques.

Botha's work *Familiar Memories* (exhibited 1985) fig.26 can be seen as positioned in approach, concept and technique between the *Human Structures* works figs.21-25 and the new works expressed in multiple units he was about to embark on. With *Familiar Memories* fig.26 he continues to make use of the techniques and materials made familiar to him while learning with the local crafts people in the Drakensberg. The work is interesting in that it is clearly a multiple, consisting of two units. One unit makes use of the elaborate interwoven base initiated in earlier work and that becomes a metaphor for chaos in his work. Above it is an ovoid shape that Rankin sees in a possible metaphoric reading as suggesting 'new life' emerging from the 'chaos of unformed creation' or as from a 'flaming funeral pyre.' (1991:7). Botha relates how as a young boy on the farm he had noticed the intricate forms of the woven-log enclosures used to keep animals in. These forms inspired the woven-wood base of *Familiar Memories* fig.26, the memory taking on a form (Talk to Newcastle Art Society, Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, 1988). Clearly one side of the sculpture has to do with past memories connected with youth and familiar remembrance of his farm experience that, given the difficulties of his adolescence, might also have held a degree of chaos. In this suggestion of chaos the base is an equivalent of other expressions of chaos in the shape of coiled or composite heaps in Botha's work., as for example in *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1) fig.38. As in *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus ...* (1990/1) fig.38 a light unit is presented in balance with the heavy unit. Woven in thatching grass it here provides an elegant formal foil to the heavier base. Botha notes 'In



relationship to the big movement and mass of writhing forms there was a very quiet little spiritual form standing next to it.' (Talk to Newcastle Art Society, Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, 1988).

Many aspects that he developed in the *Human Structures* exhibition figs.21-25 led Botha into a succession of large works profound in concept and striking in design. The techniques and materials used in the *Human Structures* exhibition figs.21-25 and the huge step forward in conceptualisation and formal construction on a large scale together with the notion of presenting works in 'dialogue' with each other as the viewer passed through the exhibition was carried forward into three large works in the late 1980s and introduced a creative mode using multiple units that persisted in his work. I have already stated that the concept of 'multiple' in Botha's work began in many ways with meditations expressed in the small maquettes of the early 1980s, for example, *God Dog* (1984) fig.9.

In 1986 Botha embarked on an ambitious multiple *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27 using methods and techniques deployed in the *Human Structures* exhibition figs.21-25 that would enable him to express more tellingly matters that had consumed his thinking through this period - his concerns regarding the state of the country and his own emotional conflicts at the time. He began to use a mixture of organic and industrial materials and to exploit, as I have said, earlier formal solutions. For example, to him the work was a logical extension of the form he had created in *Familiar Memories* (1984/5) fig.26 - a multi-piece work to be enclosed in a given space inviting the viewer to participate in the dialogue thus provided.

Rankin states that the title of the work, *South African Elegy* fig.27, 'refers to a lament for the dead' (1991:9); at least it suggests that Botha wished to convey a sense of lamentation and gravity. The animals and the implied human emotion are intended to serve metaphorically as indications of a climate of conflict. The work is presented as processional beginning with a contorted mound or tower (symbol of chaos) surmounted by a bird of prey that looms over the creatures of the procession. The twisted animal shapes echo the running restless shapes of the *God Dog* (1984) fig.9 animals with that bronze's sense of troubled insecurity (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The animals here are intended to be blind and grovelling, submissive to an overruling domination. Beyond the animals in the procession, a departure in terms of materials but not in concept, is a fish-like or semi-human shape carried out in metal mesh in contrast to the other units in the composition that are worked mainly in organic materials. Botha sees this fish/human shape as a type of 'embalmed human being', a possible indication of hope, 'about to be launched off into the stratosphere away from the ... cataclysm of grovelling animals.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). The whole movement of the sculpture is meant to suggest a 'dramatic event of cataclysmic proportions' that has passed over a place leaving 'a sediment behind.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). At the end of the procession a dome-like shape recalls the covered encapsulated plastic flowers placed in cemeteries. Here the whirlpool shape indicates the whirling turbulence that is to come in a future situation. The work refers not only to Botha's perception of the state of the country but also reflects the same state of turbulence within himself. He comments on the work, 'There is no kind of rest in this cycle. The work becomes a kind of symbol about myself in many ways.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

The bird of prey in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27 appears again in Botha's work *Dwase Drome van Boesmans en Ministers* (1987) fig.28. Rankin refers to Botha's use of bilingual puns in his titles and says this title 'can be loosely translated as *Foolish Dreams of Bushmen/Coloureds and Politicians/Ministers of Religion.*' (1991:9). Botha comments that the title has all sorts of puns; that the work has to do with ritual; that it has to do with a sense of absurdity and that he sees it as a 'joyful sculpture with a 'sense of satire' taking its 'reference points from Bushman art, from Pretoria ... and from what ever lies in my dark subconscious.' (Talk to Newcastle Art Society, Newcastle, Kwazulu-Natal, 1988). An important point to consider in regard to this work is that it is, as Botha says, 'dream-like'; it arises from the sub-conscious and is presented as a procession of characters that appear in the semblance and order that might occur in a dream. Botha speaks of the 'front plastic figure' with its 'bustle of Victorian dress' and to the 'dream-like sequence of the black, woven plastic bird sitting on the face of this animal ... an ominous thing.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) In an interview (Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) Botha expresses his particular interest in his use of materials in this work in which he 'begins to look at the possibility not only of rural culture but of urban 'rural' culture as well' - meaning by the latter term the creative work of people coming from rural areas to live and work in the cities. He refers to the creative potential of such industrial materials that he now chooses to use while still considering as sculptural media the accepted 'noble' materials of western tradition. He sees the 'transient materials' as 'lending a sculptural vigour to the works' and a 'beauty... as you see them in combination with one another.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

The content of the work, expressed through visual metaphors of dream and fantasy, is an

acrid observation regarding a particular historical point in South Africa. Botha says the work fig.28 has a kind of cynicism looking at the 'foolish hopes and dreams of 'Bushmen' and ...of 'Ministers', a play on the word for the religious and the political leaders of South Africa.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). Botha intends to convey an indictment of many Christian attitudes at the time and explains that he intends conceptually to link into a 'religious iconography' but that formally the 'rhythm of the figures links into the lyricism ... I noticed in Bushman painting.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

He uses an audacious selection of materials to convey a sense of the outrageousness of the subject and it is particularly at this point that he begins to use a wide range of 'throw-away' materials. In this case their use is intentionally impudent, as for example in the use of black plastic garbage bags to fashion the leading figure that should be seen as 'heroic' at the head of the procession. The religious figure - intended confusedly as Mary (leaving Nazareth) or Jesus (entering Jerusalem) - has a 'halo' made up of reflectors. Botha describes this person as 'a little stylised person riding on the back of this ... two-footed cyclops animal' and he sees the work as 'difficult to translate literally ... a subconscious attempt to try to encapsulate what is in a sense a pathetic and tragic journey.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

Botha's drawings figs.29-36 are an important part of his work. Often lost in the form of notations and sketches as impressions set down for sculptural work, often of varying size from small to very large, and varying in media - ink, conte, charcoal, pastel - they nevertheless, like the maquettes of the 1980s, form a part of Botha's ongoing creativity.

His early drawings during his university years show renderings of the human anatomy, life-class work. Rankin (1991:7) recounts how Botha met with an accident in 1983 that severed the tendons and nerves of his right hand. He disciplined himself through the use of the hand in pencil drawing to produce a series of drawings which he exhibited in 1983. He used himself as model and Rankin notes the 'intensity of detail' and 'sharp-focus realism' in the mode of drawing he learnt from van Vuuren. Rankin notes 'a sensuality' which gave the drawings a 'strongly narcissistic flavour' but also remarks that the works indicate a 'renewed search for personal identity.' (1991:7).

Looked at in view of his comments regarding *South African Elegy* fig.27 dating from three years later (1986) - 'because in my own private world the consciousness of the implications of conflict began to gain ascendance' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) - the drawings would seem to reveal continuing crises in Botha's personal experience. Rankin explains how pressures in Botha's post-university life connected with conflicting political loyalties caused him to spend some time abroad where he visited museums and looked at art in England and France (1991:4). This time spent did not resolve difficulties. Returning to South Africa he took a Higher Diploma in Education and began teaching, eventually taking up a post at the then Natal Technikon. During this time he exhibited regularly.

The pencil drawings of 1983 figs.29,30 reveal a passionate personality and are carried out in a technique that is intense and highly controlled. That there is a certain degree of catharsis in the drawings is evidenced in comments made by Botha in interviews. For example, Botha says of the drawings 'The work is always partly cathartic. I don't believe

any artist escapes the need to excise, or exorcise something within themselves' and continues, 'I think to a certain extent it's because I was trying to understand something I was personally going through.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). In a talk to the Newcastle Art Society (Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, 1988) Botha talks of a crucifix he saw in Rouen. The feet were at eye level and Botha relates that in the battered wooden piece the 'whole crucifix and all that feeling I had for the Christ figure had meaning in the feet ... So I did a drawing of my own feet.' This drawing fig.30 does 'communicate a sense of intention and passion' through its intensity and by 'establishing emotional disquiet.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). Drawings he made after his trip to Europe and the drawings exhibited in 1983 have to a certain extent, in the posture of the figures (eg.fig.29) and sense of disturbance, something of the *Man in Chair* figures figs.2,3 of the late 1970s and possibly recapitulate similar considerations. He had seen the Michelangelo *Slaves* in a French Museum and possibly a sense of the artist's frustration in his drive to achieve and the feeling of being presently 'bound' in attempts to achieve that ambition might penetrate these works. However it is necessary not to 'read' into the works as Botha states that he used himself as model out of convenience as he was unable to afford a model at this stage (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

Drawing remained essential to Botha's work in relation to his sculptural works. In 1987 he exhibited a series of drawings called the *Carol's Bar Series* (1987) figs.31-36. This consisted of two black and white pen drawings figs.31,32 and four pastel drawings in colour figs.33-36 both highly expressive of his concerns at the time and importantly prefiguring later works. As in the maquettes of the 1980s figs.11,12,14-19, Botha uses these drawings to meditate on and pass under consideration certain conceptions and visual

impressions connected to themes arising from memories and consciousness of importance to him.

In a pen and ink drawing *Preliminary Drawing for Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987) fig.31, Botha deals with the idea of procession and the kind of relationships he was beginning to think about that would appear in the completed sculptural work. Drawings like this form 'stations of contemplation' for what he wishes to effect in the final three-dimensional work. A second pen and ink drawing *Demoina: After the Flood* (1987) fig.32 bears relevance to two later works, not necessarily to the *Dromedaris* work, although elements relevant to that do appear - for example, the helicopter as phallic shape and surveillance instrument. The ideas of fish and water - as they occur in the *Demoina* drawing - actually relate more strongly to *Baptism for the Fallen ... and those taken darkly* (1991) fig.42 (and its variations figs.43,45,46) and to the 1996 works *Embarkation* fig.54 and *A History of monuments ... and wounds that are forgiven* fig.55.

The colour pastel drawings figs.33,34,35,36 are the equivalent in boldness of the sculptures of the late 1980s. They are obviously drawings made by a sculptor and emphasise form and theme. In interview (Ferguson and Leigh, 1989) Botha explains that the four colour pastels relate to 'dreams' that he 'wished to exorcise' about Carol's Bar in Durban, a place he kept going back to and that he saw as an 'acropolis of decadence'. Formally the pastel drawings are very interesting: and can also be seen as notably interesting within the context of Botha's conceptualisation at this point. Botha sees them as 'in a sequence ... and not very different from the multiple pieces' reflecting what he has to say in the multiples: the four drawings are like 'an installation almost like a *Rake's*

*Progress* looking at various stages of progress from outside to inside.’ (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). The idea of ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ is of importance in Botha’s work and occurs frequently. On the outside, superficially, the bar appeals to people as a place of entertainment. To a deeper exploratory and more compassionate understanding it is infused with destructiveness. Botha explains, ‘the simplicity ... drew me to it ... on the other hand I was able to face a kind of Hades ... a physical manifestation of a kind of lost world.’ (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

I will just look briefly at the pastels in relation to Botha’s multiple sculptures of the late 1980s and to later works. One pastel fig.33 shows a naked ‘white’ man - actually pink - and wearing a white mask and bishop’s mitre running down a street and holding a ‘weapon’ that appears also as a jewelled, perhaps ecclesiastical, staff. On the ground before him is a blood red man outlined in yellow as in the site of an accident. In the foreground is a black man in ordinary street clothes with a white face. One side of the street has the ‘luxury’ entrance to a bar or emporium; on the other side is a forbidding fence. The ‘bishop’s feet have an unpleasant coating as though covered in mire. The entrance to the ‘bar’ has a ‘classical’ facade supported by ‘Doric’ columns fitting Botha’s description of it as an ‘Acropolis of decadence’ (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1990). The pretentious facade is in sharp contrast to its bright turquoise colour, the ballooning pink awning, like a woman’s dress, scarlet columns, chequered approach and scarlet interior. The idea of a woman's dress suggests a brothel and has an echo in the sculpture, *The Dance* (1996), with the upturned scarlet underside of the dancer’s dress. The pastel drawing of the interior of Carol’s Bar fig.34 depicts the sleazy ‘Hades’ Botha refers to.



A third drawing fig.35 shows figures within the Bar or on a shabby dance floor, a mocking personage in a jester's hat appearing in the foreground. Although the presentation generally suggests seediness, the idea contained in it has been translated into the bronze *Some Thoughts on Loneliness* (1991) fig.48 that intimates certain higher metaphysical possibilities. However the theme also appears in the large sculpture, *The Dance* (1996) fig.53 that examines seductiveness and manipulation in the 'dance' between the sexes.

The fourth drawing fig.36 contains various elements relevant to Botha's three-dimensional work of this time and later. The foreground is occupied with the twisted bull. According to Botha the bull is a symbol of sacrifice, and, as Picasso used it, 'a manifestation of darkness within the human soul' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). It is also to Botha a reference to Afrikaner identity (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007). The bull lies on a platform of contorted 'worm-like' shapes, a concept connected with chaos in many of Botha's representations. In the background a man in a swimming cap appears in confrontation with an apparently armless personage. The swimming cap designates the man as a swimmer in the river of life and the two figures in confrontation represent the self at war with self. Above the fallen bull is a flaming whirling helix. I have already referred to the significance of the helix in Botha's work.

The significance of the pastels is intended to be inferred and not to be understood didactically. One looks at the general impression communicated through colour, form and content and the images are not explicitly referential. The brilliant 'neon' colour and combination of fantastic images gives a sense of hallucination. In my dissertation for the

M.A. degree I refer to the pastels as follows; 'the *Carol's Bar Series* (1987) ... would appear to be expressive of images surfacing from the subconscious as deeply significant indications of the artist's unconscious and dream world.' (Leigh, 2001:112). The degenerate world of the bar refers to sexual immorality and through that to a disintegration of the individual, an interpretation supported by Botha's saying that he sees the series as 'a kind of *Rake's Progress*' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). He also states that he sees the series as an 'installation' as though the pastels represented a set of sculptures and we may infer from the imagery that the purport of the pastels occurs in the multiples of the late 1980s and later. For example, the work, *Dwase Drome van Boesmans en Ministers* (1987) fig.28 has much of the fantastic, dream-like hallucinatory quality of the pastels.

In this series the disturbed forms of black and white personages displaying mingled bodily reference - white face, white mask - can be understood to allude to the troubled racial situation in South Africa at that period fig.33. The naked ecclesiastic with mired feet presented in conjunction with the lurid bar entrance, sanguine body outline and fleeing black man suggests an indictment of current church attitudes in the confusion and violence of the period fig.33. Generally the images of the actual interior of the bar fig.34 suggest a place of extreme sordidness while the compassionate gaze of the artist distinguishes sadness and pathos in the hopelessness of people seeking satisfaction for human emotion there. The pervading redness and browns give a sense of a claustrophobic enclosure in which desire is repetitively unfulfilled. The presence of the swimmer and the bull (fig.36) with the helix suggests a life struggle with the kind of subjects presented in the 'bar'. The helix suggests the notion of a life force to be extracted from a recognition and

understanding of the content the pastels present.

I see the pastels figs.33-36 as presenting Botha's considerations concerning issues of sexuality and gender, issues of race, his own racial identity, thoughts concerning violence and political turbulence in the country, questions involving religious institutions and beliefs. I see these considerations as playing a role in the multiples of the late 1980s and Botha continuing to search for sculptural equivalents for them in the works of the 1990s.

The work, *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37 is the multiple in which much of Botha's ponderings of the decade come to a head and find expression. The work was carried out with the express intention of entering it for the Cape Town Triennial competition exhibition. Botha states, 'Of course I would have liked to win the competition. So I was going to make a sculpture that blew people's socks off.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989). On the other hand he wished 'to imbue a work with an enormous amount of love and care that would somehow elevate it' simply by an appreciation of that manifestation (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

The work combines several elements that Botha had deployed in the previous maquettes and finished works of the 1980s. For example, the bull, or ox-like animal, appears as the major figuration in the work - fallen, yet emanating a sense of grandeur. Behind him a figure in woven wattle crouches, violating or supporting the animal in an ambiguity that occurs frequently in Botha's work. This figure also displays the naked buttocks that occur in maquettes, (fig.19) in bronzes (for example, *Fear of the Gods* (1991) in a pastel in the *Carol's Bar Series* fig.33 and in the abased figure of *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus ...* (1990/1).

fig.38. In each case a disgraceful action is inferred. A light leading figure heads the procession that the work presents. A huge helicopter shape in metal and brass rises into the air from behind the fallen bull figure suggesting at once a voyeur-like surveillance and a repetition of the phallic shapes Botha used in maquettes figs.15,17,18 of the 1980s as reference to the domineering role of masculinity in the current South Africa and its predilection for violence.

Rankin says of this work, *Dromedaris donder!... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37, 'the work cannot be read as a linear narrative. The content is as complex as the forms, with interwoven themes and multiple metaphors. There is no sense of a comfortable unity in form or meaning.' (1991:9). Botha says of the work, 'I have tried and tried to understand what it is that this sculpture is about and the best equivalent I have is that the sculpture essentially is about the pathos, insecurity and darkness that exists within one person's soul.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

The work clearly has political connotations and the title obviously refers to the *Dromedaris* that brought Van Riebeeck and European culture to the Cape in the seventeenth century. Otherwise the work contains subconscious reference to Botha's considerations of the time. As Botha and Rankin state, the metaphoric content is complex. The bull as connected with Afrikaner identity, the political strife in the land at the time, Botha's questioning of Afrikaner patriarchal rule and dominance, his striving to understand his own identity - especially in relation to events in the South Africa - the sense of surveillance, the sense of betrayal or double identity in the crouching figure may all be seen as indirect reference to Botha's attempt to state through inference the

complexity of issues at that time affecting national and personal life.

In terms of Botha's entering into a sculptural language *Dromedaris donder!... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37 begins his practice of presenting complex concepts in convincing powerful form to be understood by means of inference. It is also important that Botha expresses these forms through materials and techniques that he learnt and experimented with over the decade and that are related to his locale. For example, the rubber used in the weaving of the bull reflects his immediate surroundings - motor car tyres, the *izimbadada* made and worn by local blacks, doormats. In this work he persists with the use of woven wattle and also uses metal and wire. On the other hand - in the dualism I referred to earlier in this text between the learnt and the experiential - the majesty in the bull figure can be seen to refer to majestic grand figures of western or other past art.

At this point Botha was much in command of this type of complex presentation. He says at the time, 'I feel that the way I am developing as a sculptor is that as I become more in command of the formal aspects of my work I can challenge and come to grips with works that are more physical and more demanding and that kind of natural progression leads me to make works that are increasingly complex.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

## CHAPTER 4

### UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN CONDITION THROUGH MYTH

## AND ALLEGORY

Botha's sculpture from 1977 to 1997 is directed at the situation in South Africa as seen through his personal experience. As he worked to achieve a sculptural language he also worked to gain a mature understanding of conditions in South Africa and also of those universals that affect the human condition. From the end of the 1980s he began to work more closely with his perception that much of what exists universally is also that which exists locally and within the individual.

This period, the two last decades of the twentieth century, in South Africa was a period of extreme psychological tumult in the lives of many white people and especially among Afrikaners as old established loyalties to family and background were challenged by convictions of the necessity to espouse a wider belief in humanistic ideals. The younger generation of Afrikaners encountered many restrictions from an inherited background. Chapman (2003:79) explains how Boers of the Trek in an effort to protect their identity 'shaped themselves into narrow, patriarchal communities, in which Calvinism was warped into a folk religion entertaining notions of an Elect.' This particular ethos became entrenched with the growth of Afrikaner Nationalism from the early twentieth century on. This divide was profoundly felt by Botha. In an interview he says, 'How do you as a particular member of a culture or subculture ... negotiate your identity when you can no longer identify with that which you held as being your home? What forms of profound loss have been taking place and what will you gain ... to replace that? ... this idea of trying to negotiate those terrifying terrains where there is nobody to assist you other than your

deeper and profound sense of conviction that you have levels of rightness and wrongness within you sets up that tension.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

He begins to look into various metaphoric means, one of them myth, to establish the perceptions gained from his ongoing struggle to understand the South African condition and his own inner conflict. For example, his pen and ink drawing *Demoina: after the Flood* (1987) fig.32 is connected with the KwaZulu-Natal floods of 1987, an expression of extreme natural violence. Botha relates the idea of Flood to the subjects he deals with in much of his work of the 1990s. The violence in the theme of Flood, reflects the extreme psychological distress that faced many people in South Africa at that time, and is Botha's choice of metaphor to convey both national and personal crisis.

Because Flood is also connected with ideas of cleansing, redemption, and salvation, Botha uses the metaphor as a means of catharsis to alleviate the unbearable nature of the South African situation, as he perceives it, making it evident to the viewers' empathy. He explains the complex set of emotions that moved him in making the *Demoina: after the Flood* (1987) drawing fig.32. In an interview (Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) Botha says of the drawing that he had been walking down the pier in Durban and had seen a fisherman pull a beautiful fish from the sea. It lay gasping on the pier and he felt 'an enormous compassionate feeling for this beautiful thing which was in the process of dying.' He was struck by the pathos which, as with the 'grovelling animals in the Tatham piece' (i.e. *South African Elegy*, 1986, fig.27) he used as a symbol or metaphor in the drawing. Botha explains that he was greatly impressed and also influenced by Jackson Hlungwane's sculptures of fish, and the strength and energy in their form. However in his own work he

uses the fish with a different intention from that which is apparent in Hlungwane's work. Botha's intention is to use the fish as a 'carrier of spiritual message': he says, 'What interests me in the fish is a symbol, as we will discover in my later work ... strangely enough as a female symbol.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) This light fish-like form appears in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27 as Botha says as a 'kind of embalmed human being' The fish form also appears with comparable extra-dimensional intent in earlier works (as I have mentioned - *Contemplation Series* (1981) fig.6a,b,c, *Dream Sequence*, (1984) fig.10, maquettes of the 1980s figs.11,12,14,19 and significantly in *Baptism for the fallen ... and those taken darkly* (1991) fig.42, in variations on that work figs.43,44,46 and in other works.

I refer to this drawing and the incident to which it is connected because it is a prelude to the works of the 1990s. The incident that inspired the *Demoina* drawing, the idea of Flood and its mythical and historic associations drew Botha into referencing its associations to convey meaning. The idea of water as a carrier of people, actions and momentous events occurs in *History of monuments ... and wounds that are forgiven* (1991) fig.55. Water moves around the *dramatis personae* in *Baptism for the Fallen ... and those taken darkly* (1991) fig.42 where a woman emerges from a fish form. These works of the 1990s possess a solemnity in presentation commensurate with the content.

Botha's considerations developed with new insight from the early 1990s - although the *Carol's Bar Series* (1987) figs.31-36, as I have suggested, indicates in visual expression, if not in verbal formulation, evidence of subconsciously apprehended insights. In an interview ( Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) Botha states that with his major sculptures of 1991



he began to consider that works of art produced in South Africa at that 'particular era were prescriptive of and responded to the notion of a nation in crisis, almost as if apartheid was the *raison d'être* of the whole movement.' It was ironic that during this period 'political protest' works were shown in carpeted, perfectly lit, air-conditioned, 'state of the art' commercial galleries. Although the four major works that Botha created in 1991 are intended as monuments to those whom he perceived had given their lives and energies to the cause of justice, it is at this period that Botha arrives at a further expansion into his perception of the South African condition. He states his insight that darkness can lie ultimately in the human being not simply in a political system. In connection with the works of 1991 he says, 'I say this for me, that beneath the horror and the circumstances of apartheid, perhaps lay a far more enduring universal, human darkness that was a recurring theme in humanity. ... I began to structure a series of works that began to examine perhaps underlying mythological themes.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991).

In the four major works of 1991 he began to examine his perception 'that perhaps South Africa is not that unique, that apartheid is merely a manifestation of a darker side of humanity that appears cyclically in civilization.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). In trying to examine the deeper-lying conflict that he had perceived he began to consider other related issues such as notions of balance and of opposites, male and female, masculine and feminine, physical against delicate, brutal as opposed to spiritual. In the introductory work to the four major works of 1991, *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1991) fig.38, Botha deals with these kind of concerns. In the work he also refers to earlier formations, for example, the light figure set above a heavy massive figure, the light figure leaping off from it.

I discussed the configuration of a coiled mass with a light figure ascending from it and its implications in my third chapter when dealing with Botha's maquettes of the 1980s figs.11,12,14-19. I also referred to Botha's 'bull-leaper' bronze of the 1980s fig.13. The concept is that the enlightening element overleaps its antithesis. It is interesting that Rankin speaks of an early work of Botha's (1989), a small bronze, 'an enigmatic group with bull-leaper, reminiscent of Minoan rituals.' (1994:94). With reference to *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus ...* (1990/1991) fig.38 Martin writes, 'out of the darkness an antithesis is born - a dancing figure, light and seemingly weightless. The composition and balance contradict classical rules and transport the viewer to the Minoan civilization and the grace and daring of young acrobats who somersaulted over the back of a bull.' (1991:22).

Botha understands that a message is inherent in the materials that are chosen to depict ideas, the whole dynamic of the cycle of invention and re-invention as not only a conceptual concern but particularly a formal concern. It is important to be aware that for Botha 'concept formation ... happens intuitively. It's not necessarily just a rational pursuit of themes and ideas. Sometimes it's a thing which you arrive at in a dream-like way.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1989).

In *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1991) fig.38 he introduces a new material - ironwood, *hardekool*, *mzumbithi* or leadwood - to convey the nature of the bowed down figure to express its 'physicalness and ancient quality' the essential quality of the wood being its 'texture ... tortured, and slow and enduring.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The strips of wood are bolted onto the metal armature giving a feeling of brokenness in the

crouching figure, a formless heavy mass.

Botha sees the bottom figure of *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1991) fig.38 'ploughing into the ground in a blind sort of way as the manifestation of brutality... physicalness - and the delicate arabesque, Minoan-like... diving figure at the top is the counterfoil to that physicality.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). He sees the meeting point of the ascendant figure ('a delicate sort of tumbling figure') and the abject figure as a poignant, tense moment where the 'two emotions ... the tensions of those opposites would actually speak about the inherent chaos which underlay all of human behaviour. And I think that's what that work tries to do.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). In *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus....* (1990/1991) fig.38 he intends to deal with the 'darker side of humanity that appears cyclically in civilisation'.

Botha explains that the base figure 'despite being physical and brutal is also female ... the displaying of gender becomes an irrelevant thing when actually considering humanness.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The work is not about gender but about a penetration into the understanding of opposites and the possibilities of a point of balance between these. Although Botha states the two representations here do not directly stand for 'male' and 'female' antinomies yet we can understand them to stand for concepts that could easily represent aspects of sexuality whether expressed by men or women. We could understand the work to show aspects or propensities of humanity through the presentation of opposites. Botha's concept of opposites is close to Fritjoff Capra's idea of the balance of opposites as a solution to human disharmony. For instance Capra sees the unity of opposites as a concept of dynamic balance - 'It is never a static identity, but always a

dynamic interplay between two extremes.’ ([c.1975]1983:145). Again Capra states, ‘One of the principle polarities in life is the one between male and female sides of human nature.’ ([c.1975]1983:147).

In reference to the title he has chosen Botha says, ‘in the beginning were the contesting forces of light and dark, of chaos and order. And out of the mass of the meeting point of those two come the possibility of life.’ The title, *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* refers to the notion of ‘beginnings’ in a philosophical discourse. Comparably, in interview with Rankin (1991:7) Botha had stated that his *Human Structures* (1984) works figs.21-25 had to do with ‘the nature of life and death - the beginning and the end - genesis and apocalypse.’ The title *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* would seem to have a similar purport and Botha has here adapted that notion to the Christian discourse (Interview with Leigh, June 2007).

Botha has also attached an additional meaning to the work connecting it to Nelson Makhuba’s *Nebuchadnezzar*, a sculpture that he particularly admired. Nebuchadnezzar, a Babylonian king who boasted of his great achievements was caused by God, because of his *hubris*, to eat grass like an animal until he acknowledged God as the author of all power (Daniel 14:30-37). It is noted that there is ‘a strange form of madness ... lycanthropy wherein the sufferer imagines himself a beast.’ (*The Universal Bible Dictionary*, undated: 331). Botha has interpreted the incident in terms of personal experience at the time. He had been ‘haunted ... by the theme of Nebuchadnezzar - not necessarily as a Biblical character’: Botha saw the theme as a person haunted by his past ‘So there was no way of his escaping the inevitability of the brutality of his own personality.’ (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The abased figure is intended to

carry this meaning.

In trying to understand the confusion of the South African situation at the time and of wider universal conflict, even conflicts within himself (possibly such as are common to humanity) Botha proposes this work as a move towards pointing out the nature of - not an answer to - the problem of chaos, in order that the viewer may come to an understanding of warring entities in the human condition.

The second considerable work in this group of four is *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers* (1991) fig.39. Botha translates this title as *Scapegoats, Assassins, Sagas and Victims*. Rankin sees this work as ‘strongly reminiscent of Michelangelo’s late images of the deposition’ and says, ‘Botha acknowledges the importance of the Michelangelo prototype here ... The monumental sacrificial figure is weighty in its construction of shaped and formed leadwood shards, but founders on buckled legs, like Michelangelo’s Christ in the *Pieta* for his own tomb’ (1991:12). Botha states (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) that he has been influenced in shaping this work by Michelangelo’s *Pietas* and especially mentions the *Rondanini Pieta* (c.1556-1564) although the *Palestrina Pieta* (c.1556) is very close to the *Sondebokke* work fig.39. Botha also mentions that he was influenced by Renaissance *Depositions* and the *Deposition* in tempera in the National Gallery, London, attributed to Michelangelo is very comparable. Botha explains (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007) that as a student he had perceived the figures surrounding Christ in such works as ‘preying’ on the collapsing figure, drawing something from it. This idea of the supporting figures ambivalently supporting and violating a heroic figure occurs again, for example, in *Dromedaris donder!... en ander dom*

*dinge* (1987/8) fig.37. He sees the front central figure as the obvious sacrificial element in the work and the 'dramatic moment' in the sculpture as being this 'crumbling, decaying figure' which is 'about to buckle' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991).

The choice of material is at one with the theme. Botha, speaking of the central collapsing figure explains that he had to find the appropriate material to express 'the physical, psychic gravity of this crumbling figure.' He chose leadwood and used the bolting technique he had employed in the abased figure of *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1991) fig.37. As in the Renaissance Depositions the central figure is surrounded by accompanying personages that here play roles largely expressed by the materials and techniques used to create them. They are not necessarily 'saintly' personages. The figure behind, like the figure supporting the bull in the *Dromedaris ...* work (1987/8) fig.37, has an ambivalent role, at once appearing to support the crumbling figure and to undermine its strength, or, as Rankin suggests, to 'couple with' it (1991:12). This personage is fashioned in open work armature in keeping with Botha's idea of the inward personality being expressed on the outside. Rankin refers to the 'play on binary oppositions ... in exterior/interior.' (1991:12). This character is shown with a flying cape that appears bat-like, its legs are black and thin, its character is deceptive, its 'outer' material being - the wattle - enclosed in an armature that should be inside. The third supporting being is expressed in armature - a winged being, similar to the fish/human shape in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27 - and here the lightness of the metal work and the shape of the figure suggest a benign metaphysicality.

Botha sees the work as multilayered. Firstly interior/exterior is his concern, in regard to formal and to conceptual aspects of the work, of the idea of inside and outside, that which

is obvious on the surface and that which is inside. For example, the helix shape that comes out of the central figure's mouth is significant of something that was within the being that now comes outside. The emphasis given to the helix in the composition of the work denotes the importance Botha attaches to the concept. In interview (Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) he refers to a need on a formal level to make specific reference to that which lies on the surface, the 'physicalness' and that which is inside 'which is more dark and mysterious, which I will refer to as the spiritual.' It was then necessary to find formal equivalents for these in the placing of armature and materials, and in the arrangement of the work in terms of mass and line. Botha makes special mention of the technical plays in the work. The 'angel' appears in armature alone; the 'spy' figure includes gauze and an outside armature, whereas the collapsing figure consists of ironwood strips bolted onto an internal armature. The placement is used to support the meaning intended to be conveyed through these entities.

A further conceptual element in the work is the notion of sacrifice. As Botha states (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991), 'the work is actually trying to look at the historical issue of sacrifice ... not only sacrifice in terms of the narrower sense of the word - the physical sacrifices that have taken place within the particularness of the South African situation - but the quieter ... spiritual sacrifices that are taking place throughout the whole discourse of human civilization.' In this work he is questioning the strength and weaknesses of sacrifice, the weighing up of the price paid in relationship to the rewards gained. He deals with layers of gravity and deception, inward and outward aspects of behaviour, the value - in terms of reference to the theme of sacrifice - of that which can be seen and that which is hidden and unseen.

A very large drawing, *Untitled* (shown on the *Images of Metal* exhibition, illustrated in the catalogue and dated c.1990) fig.40, is in many suggestions, close to the *Sondebokke* work fig.39. The shadowed silhouette of two standing women in an attitude of mutual comforting fills the foreground on the right from top to bottom. Centrally, a dead, naked man has a winged being moving into his shoulders from behind as in the *Sondebokke* work fig.39. Behind this group is a robed figure, perhaps a cleric referencing the running, naked cleric in the *Carol's Bar Series* pastel (1987) fig.33 and in general Botha's indictment of some Christian attitudes at this point. These figures diminish in a perspective to the left and are set within an entablatured interior suggesting, through reference to characteristic European architectural features, Botha's criticism of western cultural attitudes, (repeated in his work *Meditations on Power* (2001) fig.70. Behind the cleric is a small group of two struggling men, one standing over another prostrate on the ground. The concept is that the personality wars with itself. In the left lower corner is a large fedora hat, a masculine symbol and a symbol of Afrikaner Nationalist authority, which Botha frequently uses in his sculpture and in graphic work, for example, *Minister, Minister, waar sal jy skuil* (1991) fig.41. Just below the hat is a helix. The drawing is enigmatic and gains an especial suggestiveness from the chiaroscuro techniques used. In the drawing Botha intimates notions of human life, death, destiny. Elements suggest relationship, death, masculinity, violence, questions of sacredness, within an area the solemnity and particular space of which imply distinguished architecture of the past, historicity, a mausoleum, a place of interment with sacred rites. In other words I see it as a place of human history, a place of human archive. Many of the individual elements recur in Botha's work. For example, the struggling men are similar to the two contending



figures in the *Carol's Bar Series* pastel, fig.36 where the helix also appears: the more general references occur though his work in succeeding years.

The third work in the allegorical series of four is *Baptism for the Fallen ... and those taken darkly* (1991) fig.42 and was worked simultaneously with the *Sondebokke* piece fig.39. It is Stage 3 in a work of 4 stages, the first two being smaller bronzes, the last stage being the monumental bronze commissioned by the Johannesburg Art Gallery as an outdoor piece. Elements are carried over from previous works, for example, the idea of water and Flood and the fish symbol. Botha refers to the 'metamorphosis of the fish' carried out as he worked on these two works almost side by side (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). He states that whereas in the *Sondebokke* work fig.39 he deals with sacrifice, in *Baptism for the Fallen ... and those taken darkly* fig.42 he deals with ideas of Redemption and Flood, not necessarily referring to a Judaeo-Christian Biblical context but rather to a general background of myth. He uses layers of historical metaphor and sees flood as a cleansing agent, 'one discovers that there is always a Flood which arrives at a point ... of spiritual crisis. ... something that destroys on the one hand, but also purifies on the other hand.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). What can be understood as obvious Biblical references are, of course, those to Noah, to the Noahic Flood and to Jonah and the Whale.

Continuing the play with techniques and materials ( to suggest meaning) that he made use of in preceding works he here presents the trench-coated man lying in the 'sea', worked in metal, outlined with an external metal armature. The fish and the feminine body emerging from the fish are worked in armatures of metal. The man is locked in the 'sea'. The fish is

covered with soda can lids that in their myriads become transformed catching the light to give an iridescent effect that moves, apparently, with the sinuous movement of the fish.

The work has a very distinct rhythmic movement that emphasises the idea of water and flood. Botha remarks, 'the lattice work, almost the lace-work of the armature in the sea ... leads to the rhythm within the water and the linear aspect of each piece of grass actually adds to the movement of the whole sea.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The thatching grass and the lines of metal that delineate and bound its movements suggest waves. The total effect is one of ebb and flow, the highly suggestive elements - the man's drowned state, the woman's transformation, the fish, the grass - are a drama that is completely achieved by the waves, importance is absorbed into their action as human action is part of the ebb and flow of time.

Botha does not draw any conclusion. The man lies in the sea and the woman is in the fish's mouth. He says, 'There is no clear relationship between the two (i.e. ethereal woman/fish and male figure). I think that is where the strength lies. It is the balancing or the difficulty of resolving that metaphor which gives the piece its poignancy. Is the figure being devoured, or is it being coughed out? ... It's affirmative. But I'm not exactly sure. I would like to keep that ... difficulty in the work.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991).

The next work in the narrative is *alleenspraak in Paradys* (translated *soliloquy in Paradise*) (1991) fig.47. This work continues elements in preceding works but also develops new directions based on intimations in earlier works. Botha says of this work, 'It

has to do with the ancient ritual of the relatedness and the complex relationship between men and women ... I thought it appropriate to deal with it as a ritual ... not in a narrative, didactic way but in a poetic way.’ (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991) and he remarks that every time one begins to look at this relationship one ends up with the complexity of it rather than the resolution of it.

Again, Botha does not draw conclusions but merely presents the actualities of variation and complexity as he sees them. In view of the artist’s consideration of ‘binaries’ the title suggests that in the potential relatedness between male and female elements (as exemplifying a larger human harmony) an element is missing. ‘Paradys’ can be seen as an underlying reference to the Garden of Eden. A balance between the female and male elements in a ‘Paradys’ is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Therefore the ‘*soliloquy*’ takes place in a ‘Paradise’ that is incomplete. Botha states that he here understands that particular ‘lack of resolution to be the foundation principle of chaos ... So as I said at the beginning I think this exhibition tries to find the underlying causes for chaos, for joy, for sensuality, rather than the superficial ones.’ (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991).

*alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) fig.47 is processional and the figures follow that rhythmic form. In a sense the work contemplates gender considerations as culturally defined. The standing figure on the right in metal armature and aluminium shirt waves a metal veil and has a red neon heart that lights up and turns off. The figure is often taken for male but is of indeterminate sex. The female shape lying on the floor is one example where Botha makes a clear reference to gender, remarking that he ‘constantly makes reference to previously referenced historical representations therefore the work also contests historical

narratives'. (Interview with Leigh, June 2007). Here the idea of 'odalisque' is contested. Botha explains his use of the reference - in a work by Manet, a black maid, with a cat nearby, waits on a white odalisque: here a white person waits on a black-coloured odalisque. The animal bows to the woman in a position that approaches her sexuality (Interview with Leigh, 2007). Marlene Dumas remarks in Interview (1998), 'Oh yes, I understand how the animal sniffs at smells, at the woman in Andries' sculpture. I grew up on a farm. Andries and I share this relationship to the earth, we don't find certain things dirty that some city artists might find dirty.'

He comments on the work in an interview with Leigh (1999): 'I feel that loss of the unitary self which is made manifest in the capacity to yield yourself to another person, that kind of complexity leads to great confusion and sorrow.' What Botha is trying to avoid in this work is that which has been crystallised. Influenced as Botha is by Merleau-Ponty's approach to phenomenology he reflects in his sculpture an intense drive to see more deeply into immediate perception. As he says, he sees his life as being the taking on of a series of 'Sisyphean tasks' in order 'to reach deeper levels of understanding': wanting to understand his own limitations more deeply he says, 'arrogance is a most terrifying thing where the ego and the arrogance you guard against ...steal from you the capacity to see and to perceive the breadth and vision of other people's humanity.' (Interview with Leigh, 1999). I mention these thoughts because they indicate the intensity of the struggle necessary to arrive at the considerations that inspired his works at this time. Commenting on (fig.47) *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) he says, 'I think love is always spoken about as the simple kind of connectedness of opposites. I think love is a more profoundly, deeply emotional sense of loss that takes place because the attachment of profound connection to another

person holds the risk of loss attached to it.’ (Interview with Leigh, 1999). Botha’s attempt here is to look into things, not as formulated preconceptions, but as a series of constantly overlaying and intercepting perceptions of reality never finally stated.

Botha here is looking at an ideal, potentially real. He explains his vision in this particular work: ‘I think when that energy flows between two people something profound takes place ... not necessarily, in a limited sense, solely a relatedness, as I said between a man and a woman. It’s a relatedness between the idea of masculine and feminine ... the nature of that giving/taking, yielding/submitting. That compassionate and gentle relationship that profoundly charges a relationship that sets up ... the essential moment of what we would describe as our humanness.’ (Interview with Leigh, 1999). Consequently we can see *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) fig.47 as dealing with, in part, an attempt to look at the potential of a reconciling yieldingness, tenderness, a giving openness and vulnerability within the human condition that is very rare because the human being is naturally self-protective. The opposite, as Botha sees it, of this yieldedness is chaos. Botha sees chaos, in respect of this sculpture, as an ‘aberrant energy’. (Fig.47) *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) can thus be seen as a very mature attempt to consider the forces within human nature that work within the possibility of that vulnerable yielding and tenderness that could be the reality of a human condition.

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology rejects the idea of experience as scientific knowledge in favour of experience as immediate cognizance. In an interview (Leigh, 1999) Botha states, ‘I would like to believe that my work is rooted in reality, in life... all that complexity which carries with it certain nuances of the kind of complexity of perception I was talking

about. I think reality is not a static element, it evades understanding and analysis. I like to think that my work presents many, many complex and inverted meanings which I think is closer to reality than the analysable and didactic.' (Quoted also in Botha's Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila, 2006).

Five small bronzes accompany the four large works of 1991 and play on variations of and give further insights into several of their concepts and motifs. (*The Fear of Gods* (1991) fig.49 quite clearly relates to *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1) fig.38 but here the face of the abased figure is given distinct features: Botha says this is a result of a medium that invites greater detail, i.e. wax cast into bronze. He here identifies features, while he avoids particularisation in the larger works. The bronze clearly has reference to the bull-leaper fig.13 in the poised lifted figure, rising above the abased figure that presents buttocks in the position that appears in maquettes of the 1980s figs.11,12,14-19, for example, as I have already discussed.

Two of the bronzes relate to *alleenspraak in Paradys* fig.47 these being *...a delicate moment in history* fig.50 and *Icons and other playthings*. In *... a delicate moment in history* fig.50 Botha develops the idea of the attendant in *alleenspraak in Paradys* fig.47 but here he is male. The wax cast into bronze medium allowed Botha to examine the potential intimacy of concept in these small works, here - 'the delicate moments, the unheralded moments, the private moments ... in a personality, let's say ... the private moment of being male. The pathos of being male.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The privacy of such moments can be contrasted with such public expectation of the male as 'Hunter' or 'Military Giant'. Botha sees the pathos in that contrast. The dead

rabbits the man holds (a reference to the work of Joseph Beuys) are a pathetic trophy while the piece of technology is like a surveillance instrument in this moment of human vulnerability.

Botha partially continues the concept of *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) fig.47 in *Icons and other playthings* (1991). It was his original intention to include in the larger work the Quixote figure, now riding the gender-less ox/cow animal in the bronze (however he judged this would too greatly 'threaten' the large work's 'attendant'). Like the Nebuchadnezzar idea, Cervantes' Quixote had remained a subject in Botha's thoughts for many years. Here the Quixote figure has a windmill on his back that is both a reflection of the Quixote story and, as Botha says 'a very strong ... obvious Afrikaans land-based element.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The animal, more aggressive than in the larger work, approaches the 'odalisque', here shown more open-legged than in the larger work, but who yet restrains the animal by her gesture. Certain elements that can be seen as reference to aspects of Afrikaans society - the ox, the windmill - bring an immediacy into the work by referring to an actual society known to Botha.

Botha (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007) pays special attention to his interest in Cervantes' characterisation of 'Quixote', seeing the eccentric noblemen as representing concepts outside the 'meta-narrative' but that nevertheless, because of his commitment to them, should be taken cognizance of. The suggestion is that the meta-narratives of our time have frequently proved to be flawed and that perhaps we should be more alert to the 'more tender, albeit even deranged gestures' within our society. He sees Quixote as embodying 'very interesting human gestures of persistent lament about the meta-

narrative.'

Cervantes' work *Don Quixote* is a Spanish and a world classic. It deals with irony with the adventures of Don Quixote, a decaying nobleman who, following an outdated idea of chivalry, rides a broken-down steed and tilts at windmills i.e. impossibly idealistic tasks that he undertakes unsuccessfully. He idealises a serving girl whom he sees as the exalted maiden of chivalry. His romantic ventures are as unsuccessful as his undertakings in the real world. He is accompanied by a peasant companion riding a donkey who acts as a down-to-earth foil to Quixote's flights of fancy. We can compare Capra's reference to his 'research that transcends the narrow confines of current academic disciplines, research which I often explore uncharted territory, sometimes going beyond the limits of science as currently understood and trying to push those limits outward into new areas.' He explains that his research was 'still far too controversial to be supported by any academic institution': it was difficult to see where it would lead 'but in the end, if everything goes well, one can discern a consistent pattern of evolution in one's ideas and understanding.' (1989: Preface).

The idea of man as a 'pathos-ridden epitome of masculinity - the chivalrous fool' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991), as Botha sees Quixote, also occurs in ... *a delicate moment in history* fig.50. Several issues touched on here regarding masculinity, Afrikaner identity and Afrikaner patriarchy, are developed in the larger series of works of the late 1990s - (Figs.52-56) *What is a Home ...?*.

The bronze *Some Thoughts on Loneliness* (1991) fig.48 is interesting in that Botha



considers it allied to the *Sondebokke* piece (1991) fig.39. The *Sondebokke* (1991) work fig.39 deals with sacrifice whereas this work deals with a very tender relationship between a man and woman. The *Sondebokke* (1991) fig.39 work shows a central suffering figure, a bewitching betraying figure, and a comforting figure (or being). Presumably this work then incorporates the idea of potential betrayal in relationships, of potential suffering, potential destruction of comfort. Botha sees this work, the bronze, as showing 'a relationship between the two that is very, very gentle and tender ... it never struck me as being sexual' despite the fact that the 'female component is quite clearly naked and the male component is quite clearly clothed.' (Interview with Ferguson and Leigh, 1991). The work is also very closely allied to the drawing from the *Carol's Bar Series* (1987) fig.35 showing a man and woman dancing in a seedy dance hall. On the table is a helix shape (that echoes the one that comes out of the mouth of the sacrificial victim in *Sondebokke* (1991) fig.39 and in the charcoal drawing, *Untitled* (c.1991) fig.40 suggesting a value, a potential metaphysical quality or tenderness in these two figures' relationship. The man is dressed in a clothing style characteristic of the 1930s or '40s and refers to Botha's experience of cinema masculinity, expressed in such persons as Humphrey Bogart, for example (Interview with Leigh, 2007). Several elements in this work are carried over into *What is a Home...?* (1996) figs.52-56 - for example, the type of masculine dress used in *The Trials of Male Courtship* (1995) fig.52 and *The Dance* (1995) fig.53 which similarly shows a couple dancing but with an element of deception and betrayal indicated in details of the dress.

In the series of works carried out at the end of the 1990s Botha continues to use images from European art mixed with materials and images that reflect the immediacy of his

experience of his environment. He uses a set of six units to make up one work - *What is a Home...?* (1995/6) figs.51-56 - and picks up on themes touched on in earlier works, particularly ideas emerging from the 1991 bronzes, and enters into debate with questions surrounding Afrikaner Nationalist political life, the father/son relationship issues and the issue of patriarchy so pronounced in Afrikaner life at this period. These works reflect not only Humanist and contemporary concerns with male dominance, gender, political justice but also the complexity of Afrikaner involvement within the South African condition.

With the work *What is a home without a father?* (1995) fig.51 Botha sets a direction for the six unit piece. He sees the work as part of an epic work where he tries to look into the 'complexity of yearning, longing, deconstruction, reformulating' that is attendant on this period in South Africa. Banality in this particular piece hides a far deeper seriousness. It is a wall piece and Botha takes the 'type of kitsch objects to be found in the average South African home' and uses them to reflect on the country's domestic life with a certain nostalgia and to become metaphors for wider historic events. 'The sets of wall display ducks transform into decoy ducks, into flying ducks and eventually into ducks that hang up in butchers' shops.' (Leigh, 2001:115-116). The work is actually an expression of nostalgia, desperation and sadness. The objects are not commercially or aesthetically valuable yet express an idea of 'home'. Botha comments (Interview with Leigh, June 2007) 'The flying ducks are popular narratives ... it's a sense of migration ... they are constantly moving. They are never static but what is most important ... they have continually remained in my memory of my working class background.' He sees them as having the same value (in context) as a purchased Picasso might have for a richer man. Flying into the distance they become a haunting although banal symbol, becoming the

more tragic by the fact that they are reproduced by the artist and 'embalmed' in lead. They appear later as decoy ducks floating amongst the crucifixes in *Embarkation* (1996) fig.54; crucifixes also appear in the undergarments in the skirted figure of *The Dance* (1995) fig.53 as a symbol, within that context, of deception. 'An idea of death and destruction enters in. The ducks become metaphors for a tragic moment perceived by the artist, and reflect the stages of a perceived tragedy being played out in history.' (Leigh, 2001:116).

In display, *Trials of Male Courtship: or, to Touch or Conquer* (1995) fig.52 would be installed on the wall opposite *What is a home without a father... ?* Fig.51.

'It takes certain elements of masculinity - shoes, coat, bedroll, funnel, bucket - and creates emotional points of reflection around them, contemplating the history of the kind of icons that define masculinity. The horse refers to a metaphoric play on the collapsed and erect phallus. ... The work speaks about the male dilemma in face of expectations of masculinity... (and) ... reflects his own perceptions of rites of passage as man, political activist and artist.' (Leigh, 2001:116).

The work carries through the problematic circumstances intimated in the large works of 1991; but it has less reference to European images than occurs in those works; it is more a direct reference to personal experience - the images drawn from everyday life. I also see a close relationship with *Some Thoughts on Loneliness* (1991) fig.48 and the work that is a part of *What is a home... ?* (1996), that is, *The Dance* fig.53. There is the same air of conventionally expected masculinity - the heavy boots, the hat, the assertive pose - but once again underlying complexities are expressed. For example, the tender man of (fig.48) *Some Thoughts on Loneliness* (1991) and the extreme of masculinity expressed in *Trials of Male Courtship* (1995) fig.52 meets with deception and betrayal in *The Dance* (1995) fig.53. Botha sees *Trials of Male Courtship* (1995) fig.52 as having 'several major moments', the focus being particularly on the cultural manifestation of masculinity - 'on

the one hand tragic, and on the other hand heroic and on the other hand tender. So it's looking at maleness within the context of a much larger work.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

In *The Dance* (1995) fig.53 Botha investigates more fully those matters of deception, betrayal and sacrifice referred to in *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers* (1991) fig.39 and *Some Thoughts on Loneliness* (1991) fig.48. *The Dance* fig.53 is one of the pieces that in the six piece display would stand centrally between the two wall installations. Electrifying in colour, shape, detail, and movement, robust and vibrant, the work nevertheless has negative implications. The skirted figure's red shoes, posture and slit skirt are seductive, but the red inner skirt is sewn with small gold crosses, indicating deception and a false presentation. These dancers are more splendid than - but nevertheless close to - the dancing couple in the fig.35 of the *Carol's Bar Series* (1987). The vibrancy is a declaration, the bright colour and power of the work making a statement. The use of the gold crosses initiates speculations as to whether the artist sees religious ideas (implied by the crosses) as a barrier to sexuality or to indicate that the skirted figure pretends a respectability - piety - it does not possess. It can be questioned if the scarlet under-dress and shoes carry the implication of 'scarlet woman' or are simply colours, or if the figure's exposed shapely leg is an attractive part of the dance or a gesture of seduction. They dance on a metal plate. The circularity of the base and their embrace and movement suggest the 'Dance of Life' but the mood is not easy; ideas continue to revolve around 'the underlying causes of human chaos', deceptions in human relations; shiny metal and garish colour suggest that clash in relations that is different from the harmonious balance Botha proposes in, for example, *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1987) fig.47. The circularity and the

whirling movement of the couple suggest the universality of what is presented, the 'way of the world'. The kind of exploration of human relationships Botha is conducting is not only important in regard to the Afrikaaner dilemma of that time but to the dilemma of disharmony. As he says, this series of works (of the 1990s although the exploration continues in later works) is designed to 'find the underlying causes for chaos, for joy, for sensuality, rather than the superficial ones.' The figures are attractive and have vigour and movement but the mood still shares something of the bar-room and of the dance-hall dinginess of fig.35 of the *Carol's Bar Series* and speaks of betrayal.

Botha comments (Interview with Leigh, 2007) on this work: 'I take a certain potent and laden symbol and reduce it to an idea ... that there are two forces tied up together in some sort of ritualised interaction'. He has intended no gender connotations and states that the figures could be taken as sexless or cross-dressers and sees the term androgyny as 'playing fast and loose' with our generalised stereotypical definitions of masculine and feminine. The figures thus have no sexual designation although the 'outer skin' of the figures, the clothing, may appear to be masculine or feminine. The 'male clothing' is a 'celebration' of his referencing of cinema and comic book heroes of an earlier era, (more convincing to him than the cultural stereotypes, Johnny Depp or Tom Cruise, of this era) to give an embodiment of suave deception and male sexuality (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

The 'female clothing' has gendered connotations. For example, the flipping up of the undergarment, coloured red, its inside fixed with crucifixes that here become mere protective talismans, the exposed leg and the red boots suggest sexuality. The red boots also can be related to the fairy story of the 'Red Shoes'. The girl in the story wears

provocative and forbidden red shoes to church and from thence is condemned to go on dancing in the red shoes forever more. Botha intends these instances to suggest but not dictate 'a showing of the evocative nature of the erotic self as powerful metaphor of seduction' - not necessarily seduction which leads to the sexual act but seduction of others into doing what you want of them (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

A work in the set that is also designed to be centrally placed is the large, stately *Embarkation* (1995) fig.54 that has an air of great solemnity appearing as a floating ensemble. The work 'looks at the idea of leaving which also implies a future home-coming (and we may find it significant in the context of a changing South Africa). The work has to do with travel by water and the materials and decorative elements refer to water and the water symbolism of journey and transformation. The work has art historical reference to Delacroix's *Dante and Virgil Going into Hades*, and the male figure to *The Charioteer of Delphi*. The male figure represents Moses cleaving the waters of the Red Sea and also as a boat traveller. His journey indicates embarkation for another shore of the metaphysical, or the mysterious state of transition implied in the movement from one reality to another; there are links to adventure and to the trauma attached to transition. '... Moses, Biblical patriarchal hero, cleaves the water but a powerful woman nude rides the water ahead of him like a water-skier and the water is scattered with tiny commercial crucifixes, an allusion, Botha comments, to Christ walking on the water, as proposed by Rankin (1997:45).' (Leigh, 2001:116).

The work harks back to the *Human Structures* exhibition of 1984 figs.21-25 and is connected with the idea of spiritual journey, transition of spiritual states, and also, by

association, with Egypt where Moses lived and, by inference to the role of water in the history of Moses, his withdrawal from the Nile and his splitting of the Red Sea. Moses has a dark perforated veil such as Afghan women wear and carries an African-style ceremonial umbrella. The references are to suggestions in previous works but also to ethnicities, to the continent of Africa and to South Africa in a time of change

The work has a mechanism that creates a sound like water. And there is a distinct suggestion of movement on water: consequently the implication of 'walking on water' is appropriate. However the water-skiing woman belongs to a modern world. Like *The Dance* (1995) fig.53 she is almost humorous, perhaps part of a sports show or movie. Her vigour intrudes on the ancient quiet of the boat.

Altogether the work's size and its processional and ceremonial qualities have a certain magnificence and weightiness suggesting the dignity of the patriarchy that is challenged. Ancient and modern are contrasted, the one challenging the other. The movement of the water, the presentation of waves (grand and rolling near the Moses figure to suggest the flanking wheels of a chariot) allies the work with ideas concerning water in *Baptism for the fallen ... and those taken darkly* (1991) fig.42. This association lends a sadness and gravity to the piece, the movement of water suggesting the passage of time from the ancient world: but the water also has a forward movement to the modern world and the vigorous woman leader. As in earlier works, water is a renewer and in this situation becomes both a slow-moving symbol of ancient times and a rushing powerful movement to an astonishing new.

Water and its movement play an important role in the third piece to be placed centrally, i.e.

between the two wall installations, *A History of monuments ... and wounds that are forgiven*. (1996) fig.55. This sombre, moving, meditative work uses the movements of the sea as symbolic of the passage of time. It involves 'notions of history and archive, looking at monuments and as to how their span of permanence relies on the ideologies that they support. This becomes a metaphor for the transitory nature of our society. The strong historical documentary dimension moves through from colonial rule to Afrikaner and black nationalism. The artist sees people being tied into transitory values and considers possibilities of a profounder individual placement. The content has reference to the story of Wolraad Woltemade a hero in South African history who rode his horse into the sea to rescue people from a sinking ship. The artist is reacting to a medal awarded by the Afrikaner Nationalist Government for extreme bravery. He reconsiders monuments to bravery, questioning this award to Security Force members in the context of apartheid. In doing this he seeks to reposition his Afrikaner identity, as well as examining a multiplicity of other concerns.' (Leigh, 2001:117,118). His idea is to consider Woltemade as hero as compared with the idea of 'rescue' (as exemplified by oversolicitousness, over carefulness) as a kind of dominance. Botha states -

'On the one hand we have ... Woltemade there ... he goes out and he saves people and then forfeits his life. On the other hand we look at it in a broader historic context, the whole issue of the kind of nationalism that vindicates itself in helping, in a sense actually dominating. He compares the 'febrile hand' grasped by the 'powerful, dominating masculine hand ... and it sets up questions more than predicates answers about what those relationships may mean.' (Interview with Leeb du Toit and Leigh, 2000).

The work is intended to express a censure of militarism, not only in reference to Afrikaner Nationalism, or black nationalism but to militarism in the wider context of colonial actions.



The work, especially at night, has the ephemeral effect of a lace work of light so the viewer is transported from the material of *terra firma* to a sense of floating above the work. The idea is to create the sense of the viewers' drifting above a landscape that appears, because of the device of the lighting, ethereal. Botha sees the 'floating' experience as suggesting the kind of cleavage in which South Africans existed at the time of transition. The work, that represents the materiality of historic fact, appears as though viewed from an aerial perspective - 'that which we adhere to and has such great consequences, in retrospect has a bizarre, dreamlike and surreal quality to it.' (Interview with Leeb du Toit and Leigh, 2000).

The structure is complex, consisting of a large flattish hollow base made of printers' lithographic plates, sewn together (lights within showing through the interstices) and made to appear undulating continuing the theme of water. In the historic context that the artist has chosen to make reference to here, water suggests the tide and flow of human history and, as he says, emotion. The undulations also refer to movements of the sea and the history of immigrants to South Africa. The water movement links this work to *Embarkation* fig.54 and connects the theme to floods in Africa, and the natural force of its rivers, sustaining and dangerous.

The artist has chosen lead for the structure as a very toxic material and as the only material known to stand radio-active fall-out. It is an ancient preservative material that is both toxic and preservative to suggest that it embalms the event. Each element is hand-modelled, cast in fibre and then bandaged in lead like an embalming. He sees in this a

recapturing of his own archival history, the toxicity being also preservative; the weight of being is captured in the highly toxic material. The lead base is formed of lithograph plates taken from newspaper presses, recording both profound and mundane elements of everyday history and forming a backdrop to the historical wash of fragments.

Certain elements are placed on the undulating body of the work, some having direct equivalents in *Bloodlines: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Portfolio* (1998) fig.63 a,b,c,d. According to comments made by the artist (Leeb du Toit and Leigh, 2000), the life-saver's belt has a vagina-like shape, that becomes to the artist the female gender symbol of saving at this moment. It is also the shape of the acacia pods in *Still-life* fig.56 in this six piece installation. A dominating, powerful masculine hand grasping a 'clerical, febrile hand almost feminine hand' raises the question of relationships of dominance. The equestrian element refers to Woltemade's horse and, as in the *Male Courtship* fig.52 piece, a subtle play between both the erect and collapsed phallus constitutes a consideration of male identity; the feminine head is set apart from the others to convey a specific delicacy and beauty, whereas the other metaphors give a sense of gravity. Near the feminine head a newspaper report of a rape appears on a lead plate. The sewn elements in the work hint at a questioning of gender differentiation in the using of materials and labour and there is a constant intertwining of specific elements.

The work refers specifically to South African history but it might be seen to suggest a condition of history. Botha specifically wished to consider a 're-positioning' of himself in his own history in the land by considering a re-positioning of others in history. The work does not only reflect the past but connects it to the present, for example, with the

connection of the graceful head of the young girl, timeless, to a contemporary report of rape in an adjacent lead plate. Thus the news prints on lithographic plates forming the body of the structure provide the archival aspect of the work. Botha's role here is like a reporter's - to observe, to record, to report where he looks on with a grave, and even grieving, eye but does not necessarily intervene.

The third central piece *Still-Life* (1995/6) fig.56 is an interpretation of Michelangelo's *Pieta* and Botha refers to it as his 'response to the *Pieta*, but I'm paying tribute to Hector Peterson.' (Interview with Leigh, 1999). The work was accepted by Martinique for the birthday celebrations of Aime Cesaire. A memorial to Hector Petersen, first victim of the 1976 uprisings of South African children to protest the use of Afrikaans medium in schools, the work is carried out in acacia pods, straw and steel - materials appropriate to the focus on a local contemporary incident. The characters, the mourner, and the lifeless child, are like animals, blind, helpless, wounded - like the animals in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27. The mourner is constructed of bolted acacia pods, similar to the construction of bolted lead wood in the abased figure of *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1987) fig.38 and the sacrificial figure in *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges and Slagoffers* (1991) fig.39 and can be seen to partake of the guileless, impotent grief of the beast/bull in the *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* 1987/8) fig.37. The little victim is of woven grass, like the light figure in *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1987) fig.38 and the little animals in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27. 'Concepts of pain and mourning in a South African context' (Leigh:2001:117) form part of the theme of the sculpture. The most striking aspect of the sculpture is the pathos conveyed by the presentation of the mute grieving figure and the helplessness of the limp little victim on its lap. This latter echoes

the form of a fish, and carries similar metaphoric import as the fish shapes in *South African Elegy* (1986) fig.27, *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers* (1991) and fig.39 and *Baptism for the Fallen ... and Those Taken Darkly* (1991) fig.42. The pathos of the work reflects not only an incident in South Africa at a particular time but the senseless destruction of trust and innocence in the struggles for power and ascendancy that characterise human history. This small piece is an offering, a record, or archive that the passing of the innocent, and the abuse of them, is noted and made known in a worthy manner.

In this set of six works *What is a Home... ?* (figs.51-56) Botha looks at contemporary South Africa through means of myth and metaphor. He also begins to develop a more emphatic exploration of his concept of masculinity. Looking at his relationship with his father (a patriarchal figure in the sense of being a conservative Nationalist Afrikaner), and at concepts of masculinity, (especially in the South African context) he explores possibilities of a profounder understanding of masculinity that would incorporate a wider sense of social responsibility and social nurturing. In interview (with Leigh, 1999) he says, 'I think maleness has to enter into a more profound definition of itself.' Referring to the idea of the 'warrior male' that has had such a strong affect on South African society, white and black he says, 'the idea of the ... warrior male is still very prevalent in Africa and leads to all these kind of grotesque manifestations of conflagration.' He sees contemporary society as being unfit to meet current demands because of generations of maladjustment. The 'adjustment' he proposes could be seen by men as 'losing their physicality... an argument for a feminine male'. On the contrary what he wishes to discuss is 'the foundation for a profounder masculinity that doesn't compromise' - sexual

preferences not being an issue (Interview with Leigh, 1999)

Patriarchy and conventional concepts of the 'masculine' exist not only in Afrikaner society but also in black society and *What is a Home without a Father?* Fig.51 points to the tragic crisis in current domestic life - break-up of families, moral decline, lack of parental guidance, abuse of partners. Botha's consideration of masculinity intends to look at not only physical, but also spiritual and emotional issues. The previous investigation of balance of masculine and feminine entities (for example as in *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1991) fig.38 and in the cluster of works of 1991, (ie.figs.39,42,47) precede this fuller investigation into the possibilities of masculinity.

Rankin sees *What is a Home ...?* figs.51– 56 as 'developing as an epic - a multiple work of independent structures on a grand scale which will ultimately come together to capture the momentous transitions from the old to the new order.' (1997:4). The set of six works of 1995-6 revolves around considerations regarding transition in the South African social fabric at that time, considering ideas of patriarchy, masculinity, South African (or contemporary) domesticity, aspects of sexuality, ascribed heroism, the use of power and authority, historicity and the plight of the helpless. The images find their sources in the European Renaissance and in contemporary life - thus using the grandeur of the past to refer to the contemporaneous, giving an idea of the gravity but also the energy of the theme. He presents these concerns in the form of three-dimensional visual art that challenges in its unusual aspect, size, and thoughtful content. His intention is to examine circumstances and in the examination to propose thoughts relevant to social life in South Africa and also, in general, to contemporary human social life. The works also have

vigour - testimony of the struggle to comprehend the content they present and, understanding that, to carry the works to completion.

I have mentioned the gravity that frequently pervades Botha's work. However the six works of 1995/6 (figs. 51-56) just under discussion, though essentially grave, also show a variety of qualities that are a part of Botha's creative expression. There is a considerable degree of sensual richness in *Embarkation* fig.54. A strikingly unusual set of imagery dealing with aspects of male sexuality appears in *Trials of Male Courtship* fig.52. *Still-Life* fig.56 expresses deep compassion. *What is a Home without a Father?* fig.51 involves consideration of the failure of family life to be an effective entity. *The Dance* fig.53 deals with the theme of the lack of wholeness in self and therefore in relationship presenting that concept with impact and the pithiness of an animated cartoon. The actual formal three-dimensional presentation of the total work is various, challengingly unusual, with animating incidents of colour and a well thought-out variety of movement, combinations of material and methods of construction and play of metaphors.

The explorations Botha carries out in *What is a Home ...?* fig.51 and in the four major works of 1991 (figs.38,39,42, 47) with the attendant bronzes (figs.48,49,50 and *Icons and other playthings*) are maintained in differing highly significant forms in the first decade of the 2000s where he continues to survey South African masculinity especially in reference to his father and to historic conditions in the land and generally to considerations of power, conquest and control. Such explorations take form in the *Skins* works of the late 1990s and the early 2000s.

During this period Botha carried out several works that although not directly part of the

sets of installations of 1991 and 1995/6 extend ideas contained in them or have associations connected with them. For example, Botha constantly seeks to draw on a sensory experience of his locale to state an essential part of his identity in creative production. The container work Botha carried out (1995/6) together with Sam Ntshangase, *To Touch the Heart* fig.57, is concerned with the idea of 'Home'. The containers were invited from seaport cities of nine regions of the world, Cape Town and Durban in South Africa, 96 works being intended for a major international exhibition entitled '96 - *Art Across Oceans* staged in Copenhagen, European cultural capital for 1996. The exhibition was built on levels set on areas of white gravel representing the sea, systems of stairs and walkways giving access to viewers. Botha's and Ntshangase's container harks back to *Familiar Memories* (1984/5) fig.26 where Botha recollects the cattle *kraal* structure, on the farm when he was a boy, made of intertwined logs of wood and continues his emphasis on the idea of 'Home' as place of origin, familiarity, security and identity. The concept was to express a required essence of a local experience of scents, textures and other relevant qualities. The artists lined the interior with grass-weaving (using a variety of KwaZulu-Natal grasses) arranged in decorative geometric and colour patterns, structured the front of the container into a roof formation and covered its floor with a thick layer of mealie pips, giving a strong feel and smell of what is familiar sensory experience of their locale. With this work Botha continues his consideration of the nature of locale, belonging and 'home'. In this instance, his statement is made at a major European art exhibition involving artistic work from the world.

From the late 1990s Botha associates his concerns for South Africa with deeper considerations of land and the concept of 'home'. His concern with 'home' reflects his

own sense of deprivation of a settled home in his childhood and adolescence and he extends this to a concern for the homeless. His references to 'home' at times express regret for the current inadequacy of 'home' and family to meet human emotional needs, as for example, in *What is a Home Without a Father?* (1995) fig.51. In some works he indicts the state for the soulless housing schemes assigned to the underprivileged (eg. fig.75).

With his installation, *Home* (1997) fig.58 exhibited at the *Africus* exhibition Johannesburg in 1997, Botha continues to pursue the concept of 'home' and here uses it satirically. *Home* (1997) fig.58 consists of a small one room house (a kit house) with a white picket fence enclosing a small 'garden' made up of bright red artificial tulips in plastic pots placed on a green painted base. On the fence post is a small 'new South Africa' flag. The house is made of planks of raw wood, has a barn-like door and a galvanised iron roof. The inside of the house is lined with lead, lit by fluorescent tubes, and cooled by an air conditioning unit; the walls support lead panels carrying words from statements made at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. The work was also exhibited in Oslo, September to October 1998, complete and with a garden bench outside.

Botha exhibited this piece particularly in the Johannesburg Biennale 1997 (i.e.*Africus*) to demonstrate the actualities of Africa as 'Home'. He saw the invitation offered by the Biennale as an attempt to present South Africa as a 'cultural place that the world can deal with as an equal' (Interview with Becker, 1998:23). He intended with *Home* to show that the reality of South Africa (because of the continuing deprivation of many people) indicates that it is not such a place. Botha explains that he sees the 'Home' as a 'contested



arena' therefore a choice appropriate for the challenge he is proposing. He chose a makeshift house, a 'kit house' to suggest the insecurity of many 'home dwellers'. As an irony this type of 'kit house' is frequently used as a storage area by privileged or wealthier homeowners, to store their excess. The inside of the 'home' was to be icy cold (lined with lead and air-conditioned) to contrast it with the outside local heat: this contrast was intended to emphasise the heat of the outside of customary experience with the coldness where the seriousness of the panels is to be considered; 'because of what was being said on the panels I wanted to transform the inside into an ice cold space.' (Interview with Becker, 1998:24). The second day of the exhibition the air conditioner was stolen 'a great South African irony' (Interview with Becker, 1998:24). He wished to create a 'physical and a spiritual', an outside and an inside (Interview with Becker, 1998:24). For the panels he chose lead as a 'highly toxic material' and stamped each letter in himself, 'If you spell each word out the gravity of the text sinks into you. The lead itself reinforces the weight, the gravity, the toxicity of those statements, documents, histories. I also wanted them to be flimsy. They're very, very thin - pages of memory.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007). The 'garden', picket fence, green 'lawn', garden bench and pristine 'New South Africa' flag are, of course, satirically used - the outward cosmetic bright paint covers the painful situation in the interior. In the interview with Becker (1998) Botha states that he sees the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as dealing with the 'complex issue of memory and the very emotional issue of retribution.' He was very moved by the proceedings and his *Bloodlines Portfolio* (1998) fig.63 a.b.c deals specifically with the subject. He carried out extensive research into the subject.

In review Virginia Mackenny writes of *Home* fig.58 when it was exhibited in part in

Durban (KZNSA) in 1997 as *Pages from the TRC*: it 'forms an elegiac memorial to the human pain this country has generated and borne. The words of the witnesses, victims and perpetrators of apartheid are stamped awkwardly and painstakingly into dark metal plates to bluntly tell their stories. Sans the picturesque wooden hut and picket fence of its first incarnation, as 'Home' at Africus 1997, the work lacks some complexity, but still carries weight - a silent requiem lining the wall with the pages of its chant.' (*Artthrob*, 12 May, 2000).

Botha carried out three commissions during this decade. *Polo Pony* (1997) fig.59, a mounted polo player, life size, was commissioned by the Hilton Hotel, Durban. The work is cast in bronze, extreme attention being given to detail and proportion. The horse is in movement and the rider about to strike, both dramatically occupying a dynamic spiralling movement in space. The work was carried out with the collaboration of student assistants and shows a high degree of polish and finish.

The commission (fig.60) for the then Durban Technikon, (1998) *For Those Who Will not hear* fig.60 - an outdoor sculpture in bronze for the Technikon grounds - shows two figures, head, shoulders and upper torso on a cylindrical plinth the top of which is grassed.. Botha here deals with the thought that we do not learn from historic circumstance. The larger figure, monumental in shape graciously bows its head, its body, face and head wrapped in bands as though in an embalming. The smaller figure with features and musculature, faces the other figure and bends into it as though one or the other is whispering or speaking into the ear of the other. Botha says of the work, 'On the one hand you have the big figure who is bandaged. The small figure, who is obviously African, is

more delicate and will not hear. It should be vulnerable but it appears to be arrogant. It's an inversion. It is just that things appear to repeat themselves.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007). This concept, dealing with the decisions made in history and their possible influences on future generations, is repeated in the later work *History has an Aspect of Oversight in the Process of Progressive Blindness* (2004) fig.79.

The MTN commission fig.61 was carried out in 1999, a three-storey high work in the vertical space of headquarters in Sandton. A central metal pole is a support from which metal 'arms' project, speakers in perspex boxes are attached to the ends of these 'arms'. The structure rotates and at intervals the boxes give out the sounds of conversation and of cellular ringing. A device enables people to 'ring' the sculpture and this connection sets off the rotation accompanied with sounds. Botha described the work as 'interactive, it functions vertically and it is horizontally dispersed; it's quite playful ... because it's designed to capture the dynamic, highly mobile nature of the company.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

In a review Brenda Atkinson refers to varying responses to the work at the MTN headquarters - critical, appreciative, denigrating, philistine (*Mail and Guardian*, 12-19 February, 1999). She finally comments: 'in the end the great achievement of the MTN collection is that, not only will the thousands of students who debate its content and write about Botha's work in their matric papers probably end up by subscribing to MTN; but they will also enter into their twenties knowing what art is, and why its presence in our lives is not the end, but the beginning, of civilised and democratic society.'

With these commissions Botha demonstrates that command of media and techniques

highly sought after for public work. With the Technikon work, particularly, he also interprets the vision of the requirement with an imaginative response gained from the intensity of his private work.

Three works in particular from this period indicate Botha's development in regard to conceptualisation and expression. *Ikhukhula (The Flood)* (1993) fig.62 has close affinities with the work *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1991) fig.38 in dealing with questions of gender and Botha's perceptions of the idea of binaries. It is similar in medium and technique to the 1991 bronze (figs.48,49,50). It is also connected with the imagery of Flood that pervades Botha's work at this point as he makes use of myth and metaphor to express insights regarding the balance of human and social harmonies. The work a bronze, commissioned by the Standard Bank, approximately one metre in length and half a metre in height, was included on the *Images of Metal* exhibition of 1994. The work consists of two figures, a man pitching forward carrying and offering a sheep and a woman seated on a chair opposite him holding and offering a lamb. Both wear swimming caps as swimmers in the process of life, the concept of Flood indicating the flow of life in which the man and woman are survivors. The man is conceptualised as the giver of life, the woman as the nurturer and receiver (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007). Rankin notes of this work, 'The figures seem caught in a transient stasis that cannot endure, but must lead to encounter or collapse.' (1994:94). The work can be seen as allied to *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) fig.47 as well as to *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...* (1990/1991) fig.38 in Botha's search to indicate a potential human harmony in his perception of the balance of feminine/masculine binaries. He says of this concept, 'Masculine and feminine is manifest as male and female, in a relationship of yielding and giving ... trying to create a balance of those two

binaries within one individual.’ (Interview with Leigh, 1999).

*Ikhukhula (The Flood)* (1993) fig.63 is within the precinct of imagery that informed the large works (figs.38,39,42,47) and bronzes of 1991( figs.48,49,50 and *Icons and Other Playthings*) and the set of six works of 1996, (figs51-56) *What is a Home...?* (1996). Botha is finding ways of dealing with the Flood of political and social upheaval in the country and also within his own world as a sculptor. He is emerging into maturity in a society that is expressing violence, suppression and contestation and in which he, though coming from a background that at the time would have been considered by many as inferior, must put into effect strong convictions and ideals regarding the role of the artist in society. His family, from his boyhood, was dysfunctional, and Botha during this period strove with personal emotional concerns that released themselves into his perceptions of external events at that time. He also strove with conflicting loyalties as I have already pointed out regarding his father’s Nationalist affiliations and his own liberalised political approaches.

Much of the referential imagery in the works immediately spoken of is European in origin - for example, Renaissance Depositions, Michelangelo’s *Pieta*, *The Charioteer of Delphi*, Delacroix’s *Dante and Virgil Going into the Underworld*, the concept of ‘Odalisque’. The mythical and metaphoric reference is also largely drawn from western culture or from its adoption of Judaeo-Christian themes - for example, Jonah and the Whale, Moses, the Noahic Flood and purification and regeneration through baptism, the Flood as purifier. Although he wishes to deal with South African actualities he looks at them through the cultural and art historic reference he has attained and has obviously valued and responded

to and that has been valuably formative in his development. (In later statements in an interview with Leigh, 13 July, 2008, Botha discusses the influence of the Afrikaans writers, *Die Sestigers*, on his work and these have obviously played a marked role in shaping his conceptual and stylistic formations).

By the late 1990s Botha began to look more closely and specifically at the atrocious events that moved him so greatly and that were recorded, for example, in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Documents. *Bloodlines: Truth and Reconciliation Portfolio* (2000) is a portfolio (fig. 63a,b,c,d,e) consisting of five lithographs wherein Botha connects images and text to matters dealt with by the Commission. I quote the text in each instance as it relates to the images presented in simple uncompromising forms and makes clear the realities that have given rise to Botha's passionate concern. (Fig. 63e) *The Burning of a Body...* fig. 63e refers to the incident of the burning of human bodies at Vlakplaas farm on the outskirts of Pretoria. The inscription by the artist on the front of the work, incorporated into the image, reads: *'Burning of a body takes 7 hours. The buttocks and upper part of his legs had to be burned frequently during the night to make sure it all burns ... and we had a braai and beers in the meanwhile, while we waited.'* The words are taken from the report by the former hit squad commander of Vlakplaas Interrogation Facility, Dirk Coetzee, 10 November 1996. A large, dark hooded form - as though of a blinded head with the forbidding quality of a war helmet - is the main visual presentation.

One of the four images (fig. 63c) shows large hands moving over each other, the lower one over a formalised representation of state housing for low income groups. A cartouche touched by the upper hand carries the words,

‘I could feel it in my body that day. I was sitting in front of the house when I heard the gun shots. I crawled in and children climbed all over me saying, Mom, we are dying, some of them tried to climb out of the window. It was like I was dreaming. It happened so fast I thought they had dropped a bomb on us. The girls were lying dead across the floor and I shouted to the people outside. All the children are dead, they are finished.’

Although it is clear that Botha empathises with the human anguish involved he also relates the event to his understanding of contemporary South African and universal circumstances. He comments, ‘It is essentially the Home ... the most fundamental element which is supposed to provide you with sanctity ...that is terribly violated.’ (Interview with Leeb du Toit and Leigh, 2000). In this situation he sees the ‘home and the body as one and the same’, the body as the place the individual occupies closely connected with the notion of ‘home’. The woman’s words, ‘You know I could feel it in my body that day.’ suggest to Botha that primary spaces are violated, as are locations and places of security. Following from this perception he sees ‘the white South African psyche ... violated.’ (Interview with Leeb du Toit and Leigh, 2000).

The preceding incident relates to acts against members of the Inkatha Freedom Party. A third lithograph (fig.63b) relates to offences against members of the African National Congress. Botha is looking at the essential human tragedy rather than favoured political alignments. On this graphic Botha has inscribed the text,

‘They stabbed me when I cried. I have 36 scars all over my body ... each time one of them finished they poured water into my private parts. My husband was made to watch everything. Every time he tried to avert his eyes or turn his head away, they would hit him. My husband and I stopped talking to each other after the incident. We only talk if someone

comes to visit.'

Botha has inscribed on the piece, 'Woman (identity withheld) tells of how she was once repeatedly gang raped by four IFP youths. 26 October 1996.' The work shows the delicate shape of a young girl's head. A border at the base contains seven sections each with an image depicting sexual intercourse as though drawn by a child. Botha wishes to contrast innocence with images of its violation. He sees the 'terrain of the child's mind as already breached.' as it is exposed to this kind of incident and refers to the sensation of 'blood and sex' that attend this kind of atrocity (Interview with Leeb du Toit and Leigh, 2000).

The fourth graphic (fig.63d) is an indictment of state housing and images a government blueprint for such housing. Botha deplores this kind of planning for a 'black middle class family' that is wholly inadequate to satisfy an idea of 'home'. At the base of the blueprint six sections contain lithographed heads of the kind of people who were performing atrocities (against black prisoners, for example) at that time. Botha perceives two realities juxtaposed, the prim, 'correct' planning and the cruelty (Interview with Leeb du Toit and Leigh, 2000). Part of the image is a crudely drawn map that is 'essentially an assassination map' that Botha procured and that indicates simple basics of a township with indications for directions. Botha imposes it over the neat blueprint, again presenting 'two realities'.

Botha has written a poem that accompanies the set as the fifth lithograph. (fig.63a).

Is one life broken the only truth we hear  
Is weeping, silence we cannot endure



Is it shame that knows the father's hand striking the darkest blow  
 Is it God that now prays  
 And who will hold the silent child  
 And free us from this land.

Where will you put my courage now  
 Can I live with what you saw  
 If I should now touch you, Will you feel  
 How deep will my sorrow plough  
 And will our sorrow grow.

If I give the bones to you  
 Will your child return  
 Can we sleep together, just you and me  
 And find that we are lost alone?

In the portfolio Botha comes very close to the immediacy of South African events at the time and these actualities are not expressed in terms of metaphor and myth but by pointing to tangible items - the hood, the assassination map, the portrait, the housing development, the child's drawings. This directness shows a development in Botha's approach to the South African crisis and opens the way to rawer and more stringent representations with which he deals with South African events in later works. The total presentation also shows that Botha has found a way to convey the fervency of his compassion.

A bronze *Stampede* (1985) fig.64, departs from the pattern of the other works of the 1990s period. It shows animals rushing in a longitudinal format and at one end gesticulating humans bound to posts. The surface is textured in a weave that exaggerates the movement of the race. Botha sees 'insanity ruling the earth' in this piece (Interview with Leigh, 2007). With this work he is again dealing with the 'Flood' that assaults South Africa and himself in his perceptions of that and he is also dealing with a sense of world chaos.

However here he does not control the piece so much as he expresses what is scarcely controllable. He comments, 'The figures are instrumental to the chaos. They become the chaos embodied within it and they infect all other living things - horses, dogs - like a deranged hunt and hunting pack.' (Interview with Leigh, 13 Sept., 2007). He continues, 'The humans invoke the insanity, but at the same time become its instruments and its product.' In this interview in 2007 Botha sees himself pursuing a similar approach at a future date where the works would be scarcely contained by the surface, the surface itself being highly expressive. A work like this does not have the 'stasis' of the *Ikhukhula* piece (1993) fig.62 nor does it have the careful placement of the *Bloodlines Portfolio* works, figs.63 a,b,c,d, passionate though these may be. It presages the possibility of a fuller future expression and breaks out into articulation of Botha's pent apprehensions regarding South Africa.

This period shows Botha proceeding with several methods and approaches in a wish to understand the complexities within the contemporary South Africa, and pressing through with insights, striving to match them with formal and conceptual expressions. In doing this he discerns a wider reference that can be drawn from the South African situation and enters into creative expressive possibilities to be developed in further work.

## CHAPTER 5

## MAN, FATHER, LAND: PERCEPTIONS OF MASCULINE RESPONSIBILITY

Botha's concern with history and the effects of land possession is extended at this stage to embrace considerations regarding the effect human expansion over the last few centuries has had on individuals and communities. He looks at the sense of loss of personal and social identities overwhelmed by the 'barrage' of manifestations of international culture. He sees an increase in the control exercised by a few powerful nations over others as a type of economic colonialism encouraging the psychic dependence of the less powerful nations. In the works of this period he 'tries to discover the nuance of what is happening' and to 'measure notions of human fragmentation.' (Botha, Explanation for Exhibition project, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, 24 Oct., 2003).

The work *White Skin Blue* (1998) fig.65 was exhibited on the exhibition shared with Marlene Dumas at Kassel in 1998 together with Botha's *What is a Home ...?* (1995/6) figs.51-56. *White Skin Blue* (1998) fig.65 is linked to ideas touched on in *What is a Home ...?* (1995/6) figs. 51-56, for example, the concept of patriarchy and the role of men in society. The work consists of a latex carpet lying on the floor made to record masculine sensibilities through aural and visual means and through audience participation. The concept of recording events and incidents is a continuation of the notion of archive occurring in *A History of Monuments ... and Wounds that are Forgiven* (1996) fig.55 where the body of the work is made up of printers' lithographic plates recording daily events and where the entire work is a metaphor for the movement of history. In these

respects, too, *White Skin Blue* (1998) fig.65 is also a forerunner to the works that follow in the first decade of the 2000s.

*White Skin Blue* (1998) fig.65 vividly reflects Botha's lively response to 'street culture'. The work is of latex, meant to simulate skin, and is electronically sensitised. Botha interviewed men on the street taping their responses as he asked them about love and about South Africa. The 'carpet' presents a huge tattoo, a huge bruised blue heart lying on the floor; on the top GOOD LUCK is written in big letters, on one side LOVE is written in big letters and on the opposite side HATE. The visitor walking over the 'tattoo' activates certain areas that break an infra-red beam thus setting off a sound track and releasing a cacophony of recorded taped love songs sung by men. In addition to the electronically activated songs a constantly playing recording of a black man singing *Tula, tula, baba* is incorporated as a further metaphor. Botha, commenting on his procedure (a procedure that helps to convey the immediacy of the piece), explains that he took a tape recorder and interviewed men on the street asking, 'Can you remember a love story? Were you in love once? Tell me about it. Can you sing a song?' (Interview with Leigh, 1999). Although there is a certain comedy and humour in the situation the work has a serious intent in looking at the essential humanity involved and in a consideration of contemporary masculinity in South Africa. The work addresses a number of other aspects - Botha refers to 'the songs that these men sing, which speak about lost romance, a yearning for another time, another place' explaining that the piece is 'about nostalgia, my own identity, and certainly a kind of unravelling of my father's white working class identity' (Interview with Becker, 1998:26).

In adolescence Botha absorbed imagery from cinema and 'comics'. His *White Skin Blue*

(1998) fig.65 has several elements that connect with popular culture, for example 'Lucky Draw' cards, 'heart' and 'dagger' tattoos and the funny yet tragic humiliation of the love-lorn. The humiliation of the love-lorn is a universal situation and handled compassionately by Botha. The popular imagery chosen links the work to what is current and known to everybody. Botha comments, 'those resonances link the present to the past. There's no single source, I look at both the backyard and the history book and respond visually to images, and draw on them to make statements about identity and culture, culture and society.' (Interview with Leigh, 1999). Again he notes, 'Comic books and popular sources influence all our world views and how we see the world ... How we see the world is manipulated by the mass media.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

With *White Skin Blue* (1998) fig.65 Botha uses a 'skin' to represent human feeling. He developed this idea to use 'skin' as a means of expressing male identity and through that the identity of the land and man's historic relationship with it. The first *Skin* (2000) fig.66 work after *White Skin Blue* (1998) fig.65

'consists of latex pieces, each in rough cut-out form of the outline of a man's coat. These stretch along about eight metres of wall. Conflict areas are marked with little oblong labels attached with thread and arranged around each 'coat' in a halo form on the wall. The idea of man, skin, map and land are connected by the coat form and the warm ochre colour that resembles an old map. The *Skin* works (figs.65-68) consider the phenomenon of mapping as a physical manifestation of conflict marked on a map, documenting it. It is a metaphor of human strife over land and the concept occurred to the artist on a visit to the Vatican where he saw a map marking armed struggle in the Roman Empire.' (Leigh, 2001:121).

The information regarding the Vatican source is taken from an interview with Leeb du Toit and Leigh, 2000.

The second *Skin* (1998) work *South African Skin* fig.67 is closely related to the popular

imagery of *White Skin Blue* (1998) fig.65 in its focus on tattoo but here the focus is developed into further commentary on masculinity, specifically South African post-apartheid masculinity. The second *Skin* series *South African Skin* (1998) fig.67 consists of very large colour photographs taken in a men's shelter and displayed in exhibition as long panels to be viewed as wall hangings. The photographs are big close-ups of the male human body, tattoos mingled with the hair on the body. The subject may not seem conventionally 'aesthetic' but the scale and treatment of the photographs gives an idea in terms of formal beauty of the extent of Botha's interested concern for the human body and compassion for the humanity in the situation.

Botha explains in interview with Leigh (June, 2007) that the images stand for men 'who had lost their way', the body marked as a result of the individual 'belonging to a sub-culture because he could not belong to a central culture.' Botha's idea is to express that social conditions in the country, such as marginalisation, have led to marking of the body so that 'marking of the body becomes marking of the land and the body becomes the land.': in this situation 'the body is in conflict with itself so it becomes marked.'

Botha comments (Interview with Leigh, 1999) that he was 'wanting to look at the White Body ... (after) the apartheid phenomenon, the Fallen Angel, the Fallen Hero' and questions what had now become of these men in their sense of self and placement in society. Botha was particularly interested in the tattoos because of their 'archival' aspect, marks meaningful because they were marks on the body that recorded memory and made it visible. He was also interested in tattoos because they occurred on his father's body. At that time he was absorbed in achieving a particular understanding with and of his father

(an 'odyssey' as he describes it) a white working class man with a body covered with tattoos chosen as an indication of working class masculinity at the time of World War Two. Botha was moved by the course of the tattoo on the body as the body deteriorated, understanding it as a record of passing time and noting especially the poignancy of certain tattoos - the 'good luck' tattoo done for his father's best friend, and the big dagger with a snake with a woman's name, a woman with whom his father had never had, but only dreamed of having, a relationship.

His exploration of his relationship with his father led to a consideration of the effects of dominant masculinity in South Africa. In the late 1990s, looking at aspects of Afrikaner masculinity with compassion, he put together this series of metre-length photographs (to be displayed as hangings) of the men in a Durban shelter. The photographs show tattoos, once symbols of tough masculinity. The tattoos show men from about age 30 to age 58 (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007). Some of the older men show tattoos now dragged down by the sagging skin to become metaphors for fallen power and the vulnerability of age. From the early 1970s Botha had been in a ferment regarding the social implications of apartheid and highly critical of the attitudes of Afrikaner Nationalism. His identity as a male Afrikaner and his love for his father made his position extremely difficult, however in this series, *Skins 11* or *Fallen Angels* or *Tattoos* (1998) fig.67 he rises above the social and political situation to empathise with a human condition. So *Skins 11* fig.67 also presents a complex consideration of reality: a social rule that in so many ways was mistaken; the mistaken belief men may hold that their positions of security, power and supremacy are necessarily permanent; the pathos of old age, its weakness and obscurity; the artist's compassionate feeling for his father and others in his father's situation. (The

work also has the titles *Fallen Angels* and *Tattoos*).

The third *Skin* work, namely, *KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: 1896-1999* (2000) fig.68 comes out of the 1998 emotional and photographic record of the shelter (fig.67). This work, *KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: 1896-1999* (2000) fig.68

‘consists of nine parchment-like hangings, their surfaces enriched with an element of sewing. Essentially the pieces reflect the battle maps of the Boer War and of political manipulations of land in KwaZulu-Natal. Mapping lines indicate geography, boundary lines and itineraries. Battles and places of hurt are marked by acrylic which soaks into the surface like the colouring of maps but also like bruises and bloodstains. Inscribed into the surface are the actual wordings of treaties, conferences and promulgations. The artist develops a theme from the two earlier work *Skin* works (figs.66,67) connecting the idea of human skin with land and human feeling with events in the land. This work becomes a metaphor for the ground, for historic landscape, and the human identity becomes identified with the land and its events. In this way, to some extent, Botha exorcises his overwhelming emotions concerning apartheid and perhaps his familial conflict.’ (Leigh, 2001:121).

The idea of ‘mapping’ is significant in the *Skin* works (figs.66,67,68) and also in Botha’s conceptualising at this point. Landscape is important to the artist as it reflects his early identification with the Drakensberg and his major works often express in form the geological formations of the Drakensberg landscape – for example in the *Human Structures* exhibition (1984) figs.21-25 and in the works of 1991 figs. 42-47. The *Skin* works (figs. 66,67,68) – dating from 1998 to 2000 - refer to landscape and body. Botha’s involvement with the land as political and cognizant entity is close to the anthropologist Thornton’s discussion of the land as sentient to what takes place upon it, ‘The South African boundaries are not mere edges: they are themselves the focus of attention and identity. Today, these aesthetics and metaphysics of boundaries are under pressure ... South Africa, the country, is a geometry for conflict and accommodation, but above all it is



a landscape ... In the case of the South African land aesthetics is power,' (1996:149,153, 154). Into this decade Botha continues to address the issues of the contested land and also the question of human trauma effected by the contestation of land and strife for power.

The contemplation of skin as a social proposition led Botha to an exploration of the historic imprint of human action on the land. His attention at this stage begins to move to the nature of colonial government and its activities and systems in imposing rule and extending rule over territory. As stated, he had seen maps in the library of the Vatican on a visit to Italy. The parchment texture, the colourings and markings turned his mind to the tattooed skin in the photographs of the men. The inscriptions and markings on the men became in his creative imagination the markings human history left on the land - battles, treaties, borders. In an imaginative act *Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa:1896-1999* (2000) fig.68 he envisaged the hurt to the land as hurt to humanity and the history of the land as the history of human activity on its surface. He carried out the series of latex hangings stained with acrylic and pasted with human hair to suggest at once maps of historical events, political decisions and border lines as well as bruises, hurts and wounds inflicted on human skin. The work has electronic video components. Opposite the maps are three video clips that reveal masculine predatory behaviour. The viewer enters the contested terrain between the maps and the video monitors.

In a commentary on the work (2000) Botha explains that he wished to 'create a multilayered metaphor' to suggest that the 'political context of identity could not be separated from human and physical geography.' He chose one place, i.e. KwaZulu-Natal, as a 'universal metaphor exploring the historical contestation around land'. His usage of

the metaphor is intended to reveal the complexity surrounding identity, ownership and repossession left in the wake of colonialism. The three accompanying video pieces are played on DVD and for these, archival material is used as metaphor. One example shows old footage recording the 'Slaughter of a Pig'. The Videos have only one sound - a black man shoots a gun. The sound breaks into the contemplation - giving an effect of alternating contemplation and interruption.

The work (fig.68) called *Kwazulu-Natal South Africa: 1896-1999* (2000) fig.68 marks a turn of emphasis in his attention from the effects of apartheid to the effects of colonial policy in KwaZulu-Natal. It is also, in many ways, a benchmark work as it initiates Botha's marked preoccupation with land as a metaphor for social history in South Africa. He says of this particular work, 'This landscape is impacted and reflects the discourse of history, the way that it is marked ... boundaries, borders and territories of ownership are imprinted on the land ... and are reflective of the many conflicts that have marked the process of history.' (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge*, Conference, Manila, 2006:8): he sees the record he has made as 'archival' and observes an 'interesting similarity between the historic map and the surface of the human body as a residue of memory.' With this work he arrives at a significant point in his career because he increasingly at this stage relates his observations regarding local historic situations to universal ones. He refers to the 'synthesizing' metaphor he uses in his work as having a social role in the formulation of identity and social being. He perceives those who occupy the land as being responsive to the historical factors that shape not only their inner landscapes but also their notion of the geographic landscape around which they will constitute their own notions of reality. (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge*,

Conference, Manila, 2006:8). His hope is, he says, that the work will 'illustrate that the history of the body is indivisible to the incidence and the tide of history.' (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge*, Conference, Manila 2006:8).

During the 2000 to 2004 period it was Botha's intention in two different projects to engage with people in such a way that their experiences would define historic process. With the *Tangencya* project of 2004 (fig.69) he deals with a contemporary process: whereas with his project *Amazwi Abesifazane* (2001- ) involving women's stories told in embroidered panels, he looks at an historic event, i.e. incidents occurring in KwaZulu-Natal during the 1980s and '90s.

In his project *Amazwi Abesifazane (Hear the Voice of the Women)* (2001 - ) Botha particularly addresses problems in KwaZulu-Natal that arose from the internecine violence of the last two decades of the twentieth century. The stories of women who had suffered in the violence are expressed as creative works, first as written stories, then as embroideries in which each woman tells her story with the intention that trauma would be realised and released. In this way Botha was able to envision a positive creative transformation of the horror engendered by political strife. The communal and personal horror of these moments through the creation of many embroideries is transformed into a work of art. The immediacy of the stories, each related as it is to intense individual experience, makes clear the violence of the actual situation.

The project involved the organisation of African women (mainly of the poor and working classes) into groups, where in a series of workshops under sympathetic supervision, they

were encouraged to tell and then write down with pen and paper stories regarding incidents they themselves had experienced. These stories were then embroidered onto cloths using embroidery thread and beads - media familiar to the women. Botha or a trained person was always in attendance at the workshops when the stories were told, encouraging the story teller in such a way that a catharsis or release was effected.

The project itself provides a comprehensive social document. The total work consists of over a thousand cloths forming an impressive work of art. Each cloth measures approximately sixty by fifty centimetres (though measurements vary and nothing was specifically dictated) and embroidered with pictures that are bold and simple - in the 'vernacular' - beauty in form and colour affirming the individual vitality that persisted through the period of violence (*Udlame*). Every woman participating was photographed, her story told, written in Zulu, preserved and translated into English, and the particulars of her name, date of birth and place of residence kept on file. The stories that are full of passion and meaning for society would possibly never have been heard had it not been for Botha's undertaking. The incidents reflect an historic moment, a time when one South African authority was waning, another not yet in place and people were experiencing upheaval and violence, uncertainty and distress. Even in themselves the stories are a work of literary achievement stating in their words and straightforward terms powerful narratives that closely touch on the basic elements of human community life. The stories are published in book form - *Ngizalizwa izwi lomntanami. (I could hear the voice of my child)* (2004) - together with the assembled data regarding the women and with the visual representations of the stories, the shapes, colours and outlines of which match the story content.

Botha's social and political intentions regarding the *Amazwi Abesifazane* project are expressed in a document written by himself - *Amazwi Abesifazane - Reclaiming the emotional and public Self* (2003). In the document he explains his concern with the value of what is locally experienced and created in the context of wider national and international concerns and sees a particular social responsibility attached to engagement with the cultural dialogue concerning neglect and invisibility. In the project, *Amazwi Abesifazane*, he sees the women's work as an assembly of a 'collective moment of catharsis', a data base, a 'social construction' that could present to scholars of sociology, even if only theoretically, legal ways in which past conflict could be transcended and a political plan put in place to direct and expedite operative democracy (2003:1).

He sees women as politically marginalised components within a cultural debate, but asserts that the affirmation of them and their social and economic significance are requisite to the realisation of any true democratic working. (2003:3). In his view, women's qualities and abilities form the essential social basis for the newly developing South Africa.

Dealing with this project, Botha returns to his concern with the concepts of 'home', 'land', 'identity' and 'location'. In connection with the project he envisages the ideal of secure community, where people can live dignified lives, in surroundings with which they can form intimate habitual connections. The experience of such security could lead to confident participation in broader society (2003:3). These considerations underlie his conviction that through such nurturing a certain social interdependence is achieved wherein the local is made fully acceptable and functional within the global context: only

this kind of living, in his concept, 'can nurture the idea of social interdependence in what has now become an inevitable globalism.' (2003:3).

The foregoing paragraph points to a concern expressed by Botha in the *Amazwi Abesifazane* project and in his later *Tangencya* project (2004/6) - the preservation of the personal, individual and local within the 'global text'. Referring to capitalism as a 'prevailing social ordering principle', he asserts his belief that those who lead in the practice of capitalism should consider the implications of its world-wide practice. Poverty is structured as an essential of profit, many become economically marginalised and deprived of emotional security (2003:3). Following on from these considerations he envisages creativity as a means to be used in the complex process of helping people to feel secure in their identities and in their geographic and cultural localities. Creativity, according to his text, defines and explores individual experience and can make it part of a general text of 'globality' (2003:3).

He sees the cultural complexities of South Africa's past as actually becoming the very allusions from which South African identity can be transacted within a political 'globality'. The global community would then be required to comprehend the particular complexities of South African identity (2003:4). All these comments underline Botha's intention with this project. He states, 'Ironically this divided world is linked. Wealth and privilege define poverty and suffering does challenge the ethics of the culture of excess. In order that we grasp the complexity and cultural implication of poverty we need to construct our individuality as an integral element of shared identity and social responsibility and render it as part of our discourses around political globality (Botha:

Alternative form of *Amazwi Abesifazane - Reclaiming the emotional and public Self*, 27 November, 2003:3).

Botha works with comparable objectives in the *Tangencya* project (2004/6). With this project (fig.69) he further expands his reflections on the social issues regarding 'geographic and emotional locality'. His concept here was to look at 'parochialities' in a wide range of very dispersed localities, to discover how our common human experiences touch on each other. The term 'Tangencya' is derived from an English word 'tangency' and a Portuguese word '*tangencia*'; (it also resembles the Zulu word '*ukuThintwa*'). It was Botha's intention, through the process of exchange of the intimacy of common experience 'find new cultural narratives'. He declares his intention: 'We should all be interested in the historical weight that influences the manner in which this human touching takes place as it is at this point that the possibility for new discourses emerge.' (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge*, Conference, Manila, 2006:15). In this project Botha decided not to work according to any defined plan but rather to let the creative activity, as expressed by various participants, take its course. Characteristically he chose to work in collaboration with other artists and to incorporate disadvantaged artists into his plan. In an innovative approach the creative effort - concept and product - of the participating artists was placed in the 'market place', i.e. in the concourse of daily activities in the city and its environs.

In the 'concept document' (drawn up in 2004) regarding *Tangencya*, Botha states the intention was to represent the 'works or thoughts of artists within the periphery' of a mainstream discourse'; to look at issues of 'cultural identity'; to promote interaction

between creative disciplines' to develop theoretical discourses and disseminate that information throughout the 'represented regions'; to transform local cultural experience into creativity and to create mechanisms to achieve that; to seek points of commonality within countries of the southern vector and countries on the North that share similar cultural concerns. The main consideration in the project was to 'broaden definitions of creativity' in order to 'engage more pro-actively with the social forces that impact upon cultural discourses in the post-colonial terrain.' (Botha's statement made in 2006 expands these intentions to an idea that involves the 'touching' and sharing of experiences rather than any abstract or cerebral idea of 'cultural discourse'). In the talk given in Manila (*Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, 2006) Botha expresses appreciation of the values of *Ubuntu* using the Oxford Dictionary definition: 'human-heartedness, generosity, compassion, especially in African value systems.'

A document (12 November, 2003) produced by Botha's organisation, *Create Africa South*, sets out the intentions of the *Tangencya* (2004/6) organisers. A primary aim was to include countries in the southern half of Africa 'that have a specific colonial history'. The writers of the document refer to what they term 'the recent apartheid war' which they see as affecting the future prospects of certain southern African countries - Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana (p.13). They refer to the recent civil war in Angola and see it as having been aided by Apartheid South Africa and the political and social map of southern Africa as shaped by western economic interests. (p.13). These statements indicate that the *Tangencya* project (2004/6) is intended to address, by creative means, situations arising from the ravages of war and political strife in these areas.

The aims of the project are set out on pages 4 and 5 of the document. They include the



notion of encouraging exchange between creative disciplines. There is also an intention to explore traditional and spontaneous creativity of marginalised peoples within the context of social alteration. One of the objectives selects Durban (as an appropriate urban environment) where creative interventions can be placed as part of the wider public functioning of the city. An intention was to engage the inventive energy of different cultural amalgams by placing creative people from various geographies

The objectives (p.5) include the desire for inter-cultural dialogue that deals with notions of cultural domination and, alternatively, lack of power, the promotion of interaction between different creative disciplines, the establishment of communication between SADEC regions and other southern African cultural areas; to organise discussion among these regions and to disseminate the information gained. Major goals were to validate local cultural experience and to establish creative expression for it. An important objective was, by way of discussion, to comprehend more fully the worldwide debate concerning 'centre and periphery'. A significant objective (p.5) is the idea of broadening our interpretations of creativity so that it may be used to contest post-colonial influence on social, political thinking. With the *Tangencya* project (2004/6) fig.69 Botha and his colleagues attempt to meet the challenges that newly developing and widening spheres of politics, global culture and the global capitalist economy present to creativity.

In this ambitious project Botha and his colleagues also sought to 'revisit older ideas ... *Tangencya* is the affirmation and celebration of ancient cultural identities subjected to historical forces of colonization, that for reasons lesser understood and remain hidden, neglected or isolated.' (p.6).

Actual units in the *Tangencya* project (2004/6) were linked to cultural places or institutions in the city of Durban. A project supervised by the architect, Maria van Gass, (assisted by the artist Richard Shange) was involved with consolidating the fragile building structures and ecology of Zamukuziphilisa, a women's community centre in the 'black township' of Umlazi, Durban (fig.69). The women were encouraged to practise traditional and other skills for income. The project was achieved through work with local people using local materials and methods of construction.

Other projects (*Tangencya*, 2004/6) included a presentation of works of art in the Durban Art Gallery with CDs to be distributed to libraries, community and schools. The presentation was created by Pilotfish, the assistant being Vukani Mpanza, by means of digital creative learning tools. For children's recreation, a slide of joined bamboo poles was designed for a park in Cato Manor. The structure, resembling a *marimba* and thus suggesting African music, was designed by Sazi Dlamini assisted by Smanga Madlala. Mozambican artist, Titos (Fernando A. Mabota) created a taxi out of recycled materials to be placed in a Durban taxi rank to create a point of discussion with drivers, owners and commuters. He was assisted by Durban artist, Mondli Mdanda.

Cato Manor was the focal point in the work of Jeremy Wafer who placed small 'gifts' in culturally sensitive positions relevant to transformation and change in the contested area (fig.69). This area had been the scene of riots in the 1950s, blacks against Indians, instigated by the apartheid regime. It has also been the scene of police raids and the mass removal of black families in the forced removals of that period. (i.e.1950s). Wafer's father

had been an official involved in the enforcement of law in Cato Manor at that time. Wafer was assisted by his brother, a geographer, and the artist, Dumisani Mthethwa.

The project (*Tangencya*, 2004/6) incorporated a number of units reflecting the complexity of the central concept. Miguel Petchkovsky (Amsterdam and Angola), concentrating on the Durban Local History Museum, drew attention to the public function of museums and how they presented aspects of post-colonial and post-apartheid influence. He was assisted by Gabi Ngcobo. An artist from Botswana, John Monakgosi, built from recycled materials, a baboon, his personal totem, to be placed in the Durban Documentation Centre, pointing to the multicultural nature of Durban today. He was assisted by Zinhle Mngomezulu and Ernest Mthethwa. Artist/activist, Greg Streak, made a video exposing the pollution caused in a marginal community by industry and vested interest. Two young Durban artists, Dineo Bopape and Themba Shibase, made a video examining the Durban city interface, interviewing the people on tape. Their photographic assistant was Njabulo Mtshali. Artist Fiona Kirkwood addressed the AIDS/HIV problem with a creative work using a design of condoms, male and female. This was placed in the Pick and Pay Workshop, Durban, where it met with a lively exchange of ideas. Her assistant was Aids activist, Leonard Zulu. Artist and furniture maker, Andrew St. Ledger from Ireland, worked with six indigenous carvers - Thamsanqa Hlela, Siyabonga Khoza, Smanga Madlala, Jabulani Mkhize, Ernest Mthethwa, Lindelani Ndinsa - his project referring to ecology and conservation, cultural foundations and the significance of nature whilst exploring inter-cultural conversation with the carvers.

The *Tangencya* project (2004/6) is a 'Process' work its creative action produced in the

form of a publication consisting of three booklets that explain the inspiration and rationale behind the undertaking and that give an account of the actual creative products as well as a series of recorded conversations relating to each of these. There is a Zulu text and a text in Portuguese accompanying each booklet. Botha was inspired by the works of the Indian writer, Rustom Barucha, with whom he collaborated and whom he invited to chair the proceedings. In his introduction to the *Conversations* (2004:4) Barucha states that the reflection is 'less on the existential and psychophysical dimensions of touch, and more on the social and political dynamics of touch in relation to the pulse of our times.' The conversations offer, he states, not academic presentations but actual process, 'the most amazingly tuned connections between different contexts and observations of cultural practice within the evolving immediacies of an actual project.' (2004:7).

Botha had envisaged the *Tangencya* project ((2005/6) together with his collaborator, Miguel Petchkovsky. Botha explains in the Foreword to the booklets (2004, 2005, 2006: 4-9) that the project's origins were in Senegal, an inspiration being the departure point of slaves, and the human tragedy connected with the slave trade. Botha's preoccupation with the ideas of 'home', 'locale', 'separation', 'identity', of migration, dislocation, loss of identity come into play, as does his preoccupation with history and archive. In this project the idea was to set aside established categorisations regarding cultural entities and rather to investigate individual experience of locality and identity, across geographic and cultural boundaries, thus establishing a view of present historic processes different from those generally presented.

Related ideas of migration, insecurity in respect of sense of identity, displacement in

regard to culture and locale appear in major works from 2000 on. In pieces carried out internationally Botha identifies with the marginalised and the victims of power struggles. During 2001 Botha was selected, with several artists, to participate in three separate projects, one in the Canary Islands (fig.71), one in Spain (fig.70) and one in Holland (fig.73). In these works, expressed in an international context, he pursues his direction of contemplating the effects of colonialism and the growth in the gap, in human and emotional terms, between those who live on the peripheries of 'developed' regions and those whose cultures have been eroded by, often, the development of materially substantial countries. In this period Botha is moving into an area where he is questioning and examining the role of men in administering power, a continuation of his examination of the nature of gender.

The work carried out in Spain (Espacio C.Camargo, Santander), *Meditations on Power* (2001) fig.70 is a contemplation of the spirit and value systems that drove the historical wave of western colonialism. (Botha was one of three artists selected). The structure consists of a unit of ochre coloured blocks (made of sea sand and resin suggesting Spain's connection with conquest by sea in the Age of Exploration) with two flanking columns with ionic capitals topped by a triangular pediment simulating the honoured styles of European architecture.. This cubic unit - merely a facade with no real back, just blocks and a water pipe - is set in a low metal tank of water. Before the pool is a platform of blocks, echoing in form and colour those in the cube structure. The piece is shown in a wide area of floor suggestive of sand. The irony and fullness of meaning lies in the water - made to ooze out of and from the top of the structure in order to slowly dissolve it - and (within the structure, visible through two apertures in the blocks, one at adult eye level,

one at child eye level) - an exact replica in steel of a suit of Conquistador armour. As the structure dissolves the armour will remain, fully visible. The intention of the work is to comment on the passing of time that erodes the 'beautiful classical facade' to reveal the driving underlying militarism. It might be noted that the Grecian pediment is also a symbol of power and has been imposed on world architectural structures for centuries and up to the present, indicating western ideas of, for example, monetary, authoritarian and educational control.

An allied piece of 2001 but showing the other side of colonial assertion is *Meditations on Migrations: Prayers* fig.71. It was commissioned by the Cabildo de Gran Canaria, Area de Cultura the organisation taking place at International Meeting of Contemporary Art: *Nature, Utopias and Reality*, Osorio, Canary Islands. In order to understand and envision the work it is necessary to know where it is situated and the nature of the project whose terms it fulfils. Botha was one of several artists, practising internationally, selected to take part in the project, *Nature, Utopias and Realities*, initiated by the Canary Islands to adapt the Osorio estate as a centre for nature studies. The outstanding natural setting was to be restored and contemporary sculpture installations incorporated into the overall design. Once authorised, the invited artists worked to complete the exceptional and imaginative project incorporating art with a natural setting. Besides 'natural' and 'utopian' aspects artists were also to take into account the realities, the destruction of environment and life styles by exploitation, the movement of peoples to 'brighter' shores. The underlying reality is that many people trying to escape their own areas by boat or through smuggled entry into developed countries are turned away, drown or perish on the way.

Botha's work *Meditations of Migrations:Prayers* (2001) fig.71 includes a large box-like

structure made up of panels of semi-transparent plastic supported by rods of galvanised steel. This structure is suspended from a tree, (a rough vertical trunk) as from the 'sky'. Water is arranged to fall from it onto a boat-shaped unit made of cardboard covered with plastic. The boat is exquisitely shaped, cantilevered to point its prow upward. It is filled with perishable foodstuffs, as for a journey, sealed in plastic. Below the suspended boat, is a shallow steel tank filled with water. In the tank is the adapted shape of a woman lying down, that stands for the mythological beliefs and traditions of indigenous people. Botha sees the jettisoning of such values in these flights as great loss. The woman figure representing a 'prehistoric idol' is made of sand and plaster of Paris and will eventually disintegrate as water seeps onto it from the units above. Sealed envelopes that enclose the names and details of people who have drowned trying to cross from Africa to the European mainland float in the water in the tank. In the boat is a sound element that amplifies the sound of the dropping water as it strikes the boat. The viewer who approaches is enveloped in the sound that resembles gun shots as each drop hits the water.

In the natural setting of the island the semi-transparent 'box', being luminescent like a pearl and suspended in the air, appears as a focal point. It stands as a metaphor for the established homes of the refugees and Botha has intended that its presentation suggest that a particular value is to be attached to such homes and settlements. Below the box/home, water lies in a flat rectangular steel container where it reflects light and receives drops of water from the 'box' above and through the boat. The white plaster body of the 'goddess', or idol, a graceful expressive abstraction of the female form, lies in the reflecting water - an image intended to mean to communicate the concept of beauty, intimating the value Botha wishes to convey in connection with indigenous beliefs. In the semi-tropical area

the sculptural elements, placed in vertical, suspended, floating and flat positions, (and including water), presenting various degrees of luminescence, and separated by and surrounded by air, convincingly incorporate the sculptural work and its theme into the natural surroundings. Botha has fully imagined the intention of preserving and studying the rare natural site as well as indicating the tragedy attending migrations.

The total effect of aerial luminescence, of water, the idea of boat and travel, the proportions and play of light on the textures of varying materials give a strong aesthetic impression. The meaning and power of the work lie in the implied contrasts: the contrast of visual beauty with the suggested sound of gunshots and the implications of the boat. The boat contains enough food for a journey only; the envelopes, floating in the water tank, seal in details of the lives of those who have died in migratory attempts. Grief is expressed in the ephemerality of the emblems of migration, the pale floating transparent 'house', the air that surrounds the work, the boat that does not go, the disintegrating sculptured form of the woman. In this work Botha uses his gifts to create something that has beauty but that at the same time gives expression to human tragedy. This intention is noticeable in former works, for example, *Still Life* (1995/6) fig.56, and is especially evident here.

The title is *Meditations on Migrations: Prayers*. The luminescence and aerial, floating quality of much of the work suggests a highly meditative atmosphere, even a spiritual dimension. We might compare the floating element above the action on the ground with the aerial figure in *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers* (1991) fig.39 and accord to it similar implications of metaphysicality. Botha's early work *South African*



*Elegy* (1986) fig.27 shows various components left as sediment as though after a storm or flood and is headed by a light spiritual figuration in its procession. Here, the prow of the boat takes on a similar configuration and points upwards implying hope.

In this work (fig.71) and the work in Spain (fig.70) Botha uses an actual mechanism to cause the water to bring about erosion. In earlier works, as noted, he uses the representation of water to suggest both redemption and destruction, for example *Baptism for the Fallen ... and those taken darkly* (1991) fig.42 and *A History of monuments ... and wounds that are forgiven* (1996) fig 55 In (fig.55) *History of monuments ... and wounds that are forgiven* (1996) fig.55 water suggests the passage of time, flow of human emotions and the progression of history. The work *Embarkation* (1996) fig.54 continues the idea of floating, including images from earlier European art, suggesting movement on water being used to convey specific impressions of historic events. Botha explores the idea of water in myth in *Baptism for the Fallen ...and those taken darkly* (1991) fig.42 and allied works at that period. With the idea of Flood and water an idea of purification enters in, flood being in many cultural beliefs a recurring destructive but purifying and restorative force.

Botha carried out several smaller commissions during 2001. A small life-size bronze, *School Girl* (fig.72) shows a young girl in conventional South African school uniform, including hat, sitting on a plain chair. The little girl's feet, in school-shoes and socks do not quite touch the ground. The child is unglamourised and shows the normal build of a young woman, aged eight to ten, with a promise of a normal development into womanhood. The actuality of this work is its very strong point. The little girl sitting alone

is something real, something touching, an isolated person carrying the potential of human life and being part of the social structure of everyday South African life at that time. The work is in the garden of the woman who commissioned the work.

In the first years of the 2000s Botha also carried out public commissions, just over life size statues of Shembe, Mandela, Dube, Nyembe fulfilling his wish to honour personages who were distinguished or who worked for social equality in South Africa in the years before full enfranchisement in South Africa.

The work *Oranje, blanje, blou* (2001) fig.73 is a twenty one piece installation, a project initiated by the Museum of Ethnology, in Leiden, Netherlands. Botha was one of seven sculptors selected by Okwui Enwezor to carry out this project. The idea behind the work was initiated by the Museum of Ethnology in Leyden - an old University hospital complex was to be changed into a modern Museum of Ethnology. The museum had been housed in the complex since 1925 and was badly in need of renovation. The project was funded by the Fund for the Hague and surrounding regions, the Foundation for Art in Public Spaces, the Prins Clausfonds and Publication Fund of the Government Architect. The funding included the 'One per cent rule' - one percent of the funding should be spent on contemporary art, a system applied to Dutch public buildings by the Government Buildings Agency since 1951 (Engelsman, 2004:2). Because the museum already contained ethnological works of art from all over the world the project needed to be structured so that the works of art would have connection with the ethnology and the essential meaning of the museum. Because modern life itself with its technologies, migrations of peoples and merging of cultures has brought exoticism to our local

neighbourhoods a special brief had to be devised to engage the artists who were to carry out the 'one per cent' works.

Botha was one of a committee selected to take part in a symposium to determine the nature of the 'one per cent' project. It was decided to form an outside sculpture garden to be called 'The Garden of Eden' and the artists were to be given *carte blanche* to carry out the 'new art' inside and outside the building. One invited artist did not wish to take part on the grounds that he did not wish to be ethnologised. This was a reaction to the European habit of collecting objects in 'exotic' locations and categorising them without reference to their origins of creation. One of the negative connotations of museums of ethnology is that people are treated less as people than as objects of study. The European museum is left with a dilemma: it exists in an age of decolonisation and is linked to a colonising heritage: yet it has maintained an impeccable history of conservation and archive in a contemporary culture (Engelsman, 2004:5,6).

Botha's work is therefore important not only in itself but as a contribution to the understanding of the meaning of the museum. As the commentary on the project states (*Intruders: Reflections on Art and the Ethnological Museum*) 'the concept of 'Images of ethnology' has drifted away from a sculpture park surrounding the museum building and towards a place of metaphors about ethnology as a museum-based and academic discipline.' (Engelsman, 2004:6). The symposium, debates and discussions surrounding the project's inception and the works themselves contributed to a refreshed understanding of the museum's role as custodian and archivist of ethnological objects.

To a certain extent the artists were required to reflect the ethnological link of their own

origin with the origin of the museum, consequently for this project Botha took on the character, as he saw it, of a South African on safari in Europe. He dressed as an 'Afrikaaner' (something like 'Indiana Jones' or 'Crocodile Dundee', according to Botha) and toured Holland making an 'ethnological' collection of objects that would reflect, as he thought, the ordinary everyday choices of people there, typical examples of Dutch 'culture'. His collection included skates, clogs, breakfast biscuit, hurricane lamp and other articles reflecting a certain day-to-day banality. He took these items back to South Africa and modelled them in aluminium. In ironic imitation of museum procedure he carefully documented each item and returning to Leyden placed the total record in book form in the museum.

The material three dimensional part of the work is arranged along a path running the length of the museum, a canal on the other side. Open mesh steel cages, with no solid sides front and top, are attached at viewing height to a line of lampposts on grass alongside the canal. One third of the centre back and sides of each 'cage' is a steel tablet; the backing tablet being an inscribed tablet. One third of the base of each 'cage', running forward, is a steel tablet that carries small modelled shapes, representative of Dutch everyday culture. These are the found objects modelled in aluminium. The intention is satiric, as the title suggests. The Museum of Ethnology that stands opposite the installation contains rare examples from indigenous cultures acquired from Dutch overseas possessions in the days of European expansion. As in many European collections it is difficult to assess by what means the ethnographic material was acquired. The artist's comment exists in the contrast of the value of what is inside the Museum and the representation of banality in the work outside. South Africa's connection with the Netherlands, its early settlement of South

Africa and the continuation of the adaptation of its language in South Africa link Botha to the ethnology of the museum. The tablet in each structure is inscribed with detailed information regarding the object displayed, material counterpart to Botha's book in the museum. The keen comment is a part of Botha's contemplation of the effects of European expansion into exotic cultures. 'Exotic cultures' implies cultures that are rare, so the Botha's contemplation also comprehends his care for the extinction of such cultures.

In 2001 Botha carried out a South African commission for the Cape Town Headquarters of Vodacom (fig.74). The artist was required to produce a work for a tall atrium space, 30m in height and approximately 20m in width. He formulated his thoughts in regard to this area. He also needed to respond to the needs of his client - the selling of portable telephones and electronic communications. His idea consequently was to consider the air as the subject of his work, that which would dictate its nature and form. A tall stainless steel tower culminating in transparent segments and with a propeller attached at mid section supports a huge sail made of square sections of cow skin. The cow skin is at height and attached to its base is a very large cow tail constructed of twisted ropes of cow skin. A cylindrical 'pointer' of stainless steel and ending in a sharp point is attached to the tip of the cow tail. Beneath the pointer is a large steel basin containing white sand. As the sail responds to the movements and velocities of the wind the tail moves the pointer which traces patterns in the sand, reflecting the configurations of the currents of air. A wooden walk-through with railings surrounds the work as it is set in a used public space.

Botha's idea was to reflect the movements of the wind as the bearer of messages and of the spoken word. In his humorous 'Statement of Assumption' he proposes that it is not only everyday conversations or business exchanges that occupy the electronic air spaces but

prayers, incantations, expressions of human relationships. He thus introduces an expectation of mystery and imagination into the technological electronic sphere. Similarly the tower of the work is immaculately worked in polished industrial style while the cow skin remains a warm memory of rural society and primal associations. It is Botha's intention to contrast aspects of South Africa, a 'synthesis of differing cultural traditions in conversation with contemporary technologies.' (Botha, 2001). The pointer's drawings in the sand are 'chance' reflecting the patterns of wind and air and also suggesting our primal creativity. Botha wished to introduce the element of creativity into the work - 'the creative whim of nature ... the rigorous technical poetry of an electronic printed circuit.' (Botha, 2001). The work is also intended to intimate the idea of history, a past, a present, a future, people's thoughts and attitudes carried on the wind.

Although highly polished in its technical aspects the open air Vodacom work still refers to natural elements, the cow hide, the air. Two works of 2002 (figs.75 and 76) persist in the idea of mechanisation, their only relief from mechanisation being cow skin and a ruby light, respectively. In contrast to the Vodacom work they both appear to be in an environment of darkness, claustrophobic. They continue the examination of expressions of power and control, referring more directly to the South African context. Both are markedly less sensually appealing than the works dealing with similar themes that were created in a European context and on the Canary Islands. The two works, with more specifically South African reference, do not have the same seductive use of natural elements, water impressionistically reflecting light, light, floating components surrounded with air, classical architecture in a setting of ochre sand and pale blue sky. They markedly refer to harsh steel constructs that have to do with industry, mechanical workings of

machinery, the kind of effects the wielding of power within this type of mechanised, industrialised society might have on the human being. They appear to be in an environment of darkness, claustrophobic, as though there were no surrounding life or other activity.

Botha, at this point, in powerful social commentary, increasingly develops the idea of land as a metaphor for his perceptions of changing human conditions and the processes of history in South Africa. Keenly appreciative of the aesthetic appeal of the land he is yet aware of inevitable workings of change and expresses sensitive insight into these. In his work (fig.75) *An Acre is an Imperial unit of measurement* (2002) fig.75 he looks at the degeneration of land and community life, over a period of history, through mismanagement, ideological misconceptions, greed and desire. He says, 'the post-apartheid democratic South African landscape is in a process of degeneration, metamorphosis and regeneration ... the human landscape remains marked and embedded with residues of history as well as becoming a signifier for new ambitions and hopes. The physical environment remains in an ugly yet familiar manner.' (Botha: Paper for the *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge*, Conference, Manila, 2006:4). The terms '*Acre ... Imperial unit of measurement*' in the title suggests the period of Imperial colonisation, another example of Botha's perceptions of the 'tide of history' and the activities of rulers and mistakes and efforts made in the contestation of the land. Visually the little rows of houses in the structure refer to the 'ghettoisation of public space: ... the little ruby light illuminates the vestiges of civilization.' (Botha, explanation of planned exhibition, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, 24 Oct., 2003). He sees the work as being related to considerations of the 9/11 attack and his ideas are connected with an idea of equilibrium

and the precariousness of our existence: 'We understand things to be inviolable, but our place in the world is insecure.' (Botha, explanation of planned exhibition, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, 24 Oct., 2003).

In this work a ruby-red light glows in the kind of uplifted cabin used in factories as an office for the supervisor. The cabin could also feasibly be a surveillance position in a prison, a Gulag or on a political dividing wall. The cabin looks out over a highly metallic landscape of forbidding steel structures lifted up from beyond table height to present an ascending set of supporting rods, platforms and house-like structures. The prospect is one of a bleak factory site at night when all human presence is gone. A surprise exists in the little 'housing development' at the base of the factory 'stairs'. Tiny little houses in neat compacted rows, each the exact replica of the other, make a neat pattern on the second level platform. Botha describes this as 'a beautiful little landscape - tiny little houses, row upon row.' (Botha, explanation of a planned exhibition, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, 24 Oct., 2003). There is a tiny engine that grinds like a Mechano construction - a memory from his childhood - its grinding sound magnified by an amplification device. On the wall at the back is a vast sweeping map of Mlazi township. The work again is about 'home' but here refers to the manipulation of public space to the demands of control and power. We have a mechanistic home locale without thought of human feeling. The little red light, element of sensual beauty in the whole, glows in the cabin, while a regulated light on the next level shines down on the pathos of the vestiges of human living below. Beneath the housing platform is a platform with a dark funnel that disappears into a vortex giving an idea of a bleak future for the little town. The grinding sound adds to the idea of dreary mechanisation. In spite of the sombreness the work is not



drab. The squared off shapes, the dark bands of steel separating each level, the luminous windows of the 'factory', the lights and the strong rectangular ascendant shape delineated in legs and supporting upward lines of steel with the dark V of the vortex punctuating and dividing the vertical at lowest level present a striking visual statement. It is something certain. The hope within the work actually lies in the created work itself.

Mackenny comments on 'the whimsy of scale ... subverted by the Blakean hell it invokes. Reminiscent of nineteenth century industrial structures, a composite of mine shafts and factories, it whirs and flickers, engaged in its unspecified task in an endless night.' (2003:3) She traces in the work 'memory born out of apartheid and colonialism' and more currently, reference to the 'dehumanising process of industrialisation in an age of globalisation.' (2003:3). However I see a more present content as I have specified above, one constantly in Botha's thoughts, something close to human experience, a present fragmentation and insecurity, the lack of nurtured places of living in the presence of forces that control.

Botha comments on the work, 'quite clearly these little houses speak of anonymity, uniformity that would seem to be a complete antithesis to a claim to the uniqueness of the individuals that would appear to occupy these little houses or dwellings. Quite clearly I am deeply concerned about the long term implications, the ghettoisation of the landscape through RDP houses that place people in these soulless uniform landscapes.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007). He sees the long term implication of such housing design as the ghettoisation of the individual.

Once again he uses mechanisation to make his point. A little variable amperage motor operates a dim light that hesitantly flickers over the 'town'. The 'ruby-lit' area has a small

motor with an arm attached which moves in a circular motion exposing slight light which faintly projects onto a wall to which a vast surveyor's map of Mlazi is attached showing the landscape broken into a tight grid containing hundreds of small rectangles indicating where people are required to live. Botha sees the work as representing 'the depressing scenario of how we are shaping our post-industrial landscape.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

The second work, allied in title and, in some ways, in intent, is *Surface Area is Equal to Land, Multiplied by Memory, Divided by Time* (2002) fig.76. Botha explains that in this work he intends to discuss 'our attachment to place - our fragile sense of security in attachment to place and fragile notions of security.' (Botha, explanation of planned exhibition, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, 24 Oct., 2003). Botha, at this stage, became intensely preoccupied with the idea of home as of fundamental significance in social life, seeing 'home' and 'ownership of land' as being signifiers of identity, where we intimately identify ourselves with the 'geographic and historical land around us.' (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge*, Conference, Manila, 2006:4). This possession and identification, he perceives, give us the sense of individual and social being. He says, 'From this site (home) all our intimate values are projected on to the more complex political and cultural references that constitute our various identities.' (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge*, Conference, Manila, 2006:4)

Botha's work *Surface Area is Equal to Land, Multiplied by Memory Divided by Time* (2002) fig.76 is a tall, vertical structure resembling an irregular diamond lattice-work of steel bands that supports high in the air, like a derrick, a huge breast-like structure of

cowhide. The breast-like structure drips out water over a concrete block that in turn is held up toward it by a steel structure that resembles a high makeshift table constructed from sheets of metal welded together. Botha's work has been described as heroic. Here the tall metal vertical with its industrial mechanical arms and sheets is seen from a distance supporting the soft-textured organic brown material of the dripping 'bladder' or 'breast' (Botha refers to an 'udder') of cowhide, the concrete block at just over mid-height, the proportion and varied texture giving a seductiveness to the harsh work. The work includes an interrogating device, a microphone. This adds to the idea of instrumentation, that the work is some kind of instrument.

Mackenny refers to the work as an 'instrument' measuring 'the battle over land/soil in the country.' She sees the work as intimating a mechanical measurement of steps toward advancing authoritarian control over the land - battles, treaties, manipulations, Acts, ordinances, Group Areas, Bantustans (2002:3). Botha, (2003) speaks of the work as referring to our sense of location, as discussing our attachment to place, the fragility of our notions of security in our attachment to place. In a way the work is a return to the theme of 'home', the place of identity, security, origin and being. It also measures time, a past, a present a future and a flow of history and its events. It is a recorder of the erosion of the spaces familiar to us. The work can also be seen as related to the insecurity of locale implicit in the 9/11 event (Botha, explanation of planned exhibition, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, 24 Oct., 2003).

Botha comments on the work, 'The bladder is of a very visceral substance, it's an object created out of cowskin ... constantly wet and dripping with water so the metaphor implies a

leakage that takes place out of an organic substance.’(Interview with Leigh, June 2007). The water drips down onto a little house structure made of cement and sand and again the house refers to Botha’s preoccupation with the concept of home. The work is also connected to the idea of impermanence that occurs also in the Osorio work (2002) fig.71: the house that is dripped on is intended to dissolve. Botha’s recurring preoccupation with the insecurity of tenure in what we construct on the landscape, is also a theme. He refers to the issues of home-ownership and land ownership which he sees as being, in South Africa, inseparable from South African identity. The inevitable disintegration of the house suggests to him that despite even our greatest attempts to claim power over place our ownership can only be temporary, ‘something far more profound is taking place that has to do with issues of temporality... We shape the land ideologically (but) ... our time is always temporary.’ (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007). As in the Osorio piece (2002) Botha fig.71 installs a sound device - a microphone that records the sound of the constant dripping - a recorder that interrogates and witnesses the ephemerality that the work indicates.

In both the works of 2002 just discussed (and in other works related to this theme) Botha expresses his awareness of the fragility of what we understand as ‘home’ and ‘security’. To him the land is contested. Speaking of his earlier work *Home* (1997) fig.58 Botha says, ‘The South African home remains a contested terrain. The public and private self constantly search for a place of location within a historically contested landscape. The inside and the outside remain two zones of reference in this work. The illusions of security define for us our inability to locate.’ (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila 2006:6).

His work *Home, Land, Desire* (2001) fig.77 at Nieuw Bethesda is a commissioned outdoor piece dealing with delineation - on a specific piece of ground - of a floor space, or plan, within a matrix of other measurements. It alludes to related ideas of 'belonging', ownership, 'possession', 'identity' and the complex associations attached to South African property, the concepts of 'purchase', measurement, 'boundaries' and 'restrictions' (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge*, Conference, Manila 2006:6). The work is, in keeping with its concept, intended to disintegrate. The delineation of the floor plan consists of slightly raised plots of ground planted with grass. The plots were for a designated time tended by a gardener. In due course the plots were abandoned and allowed to deteriorate. A photographic record was kept of the process. Botha published a statement regarding this piece

'South African identity is defined by our individual and collective relationship with the landscape. Land is the geographic, cultural and romantic metaphor that articulates our place within the African context. This relationship expresses or denies the idea of ownership and belonging, as well as contextualising our struggle against dispossession and/or alienation. Home synthesises land and landscape into an intimate symbol of ownership of the historic and geographic land. From the site (home), all intimate values are contextualised into the more complex political and cultural references of South African identity. My work which references an architectural floor plan of an average government subsidized home into an existing measured erf alludes to the relationship between individual belonging, the idea of belonging, the idea of ownership and the complex association attached to South African property that has either been denied or owned.'

The 9/11 event emphasised the idea of the fragility of our structures and our fragile tenure on existence itself. Botha's concern for the ephemerality of ownership and tenure of land was expressed in the works of 2002 and was especially connected with his keen interest in the South African land. Looking at implications of dispossession, possession, security and

land he moved to a wider field of reference. The work carried out in 2003 looks at implications of dispossession, security, and land but is connected to a world sphere of reference. *Terrain: Spaces of Ownership and Dispossession* fig.78 at the Ceramic Biennale at Abisola, Italy, is connected with meditations around the Twin Towers, New York attack. It was carried out in clay - a substance which in itself has reference to land, or earth and Botha exploits the character of ceramic in making a structure of material that is shaped, baked and easily destroyed. He was impressed with the long tradition of ceramic work existing in Italy and worked with ceramic masters and workmen on this particular piece. As the basis of the work he took a ceramic extrusion, a square (which gives a particular measurement) and arranged for the ceramic workers to make a number of similar extrusions. He arranged these into cubes and then into larger cubes until he had built a structure. He saw the unit of measurement as representative of logic; 'the unit of measurement in a way is a suggestion that it is an application of logic. We develop mathematics as an externalisation of our logic, so we then build the structure that is a kind of celebration of our logic. In a sense our built landscape is a great celebration of our reason, our logic.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

The delicate columnar structure of baked clay extrusions, which he saw as representative of contemporary human logic, he designed to implode by attaching a series of strings which he pulled causing it to fall to the ground and shatter. The implosion was recorded on video. The artist then took the broken pieces, the debris of the destruction, and patiently set about reconstructing what had been broken. His concept was that the human being has the capacity to destroy and on the other hand the capacity to heal. However he sees the structure as never now complete, but fractured, wounded, flawed. He explains,

‘You cannot fully heal something. It always carries the wound and the wound is the memory.’ (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

The reconstructed piece was bound with a metal casing on the outside and a video made of it. Botha then played the video of the imploding structure, collapsing and then rebuilding itself, and then again collapsing and rebuilding and collapsing and rebuilding. He sees an inescapable comparison with 9/11 and explains the concept underlying work: ‘The fact that these young Moslem men could fling themselves to a certain death and create the death of so many others to implode that which is a structure of logic, which is the social monument of western capitalism - the World Trade Centre - is a very powerful and significant metaphor of the flawed notion of logic which is measurement in an order which is actually not order but disorder and chaos.’ (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

Botha’s considerations regarding the piece are complex. As in the two works described in the preceding paragraphs Botha at this point is considering the implications of measurement, measurement in regard to space and time, and to the procession of history. With this work he took the unit of measurement, the square. This measurement he expanded into a cube which was then expanded into space into the format of the total work. He found the material interesting, earth subjected to heat becoming fragile and brittle. In this work, *Terrain : spaces of ownership and dispossession* fig.78 Botha also refers to the intrusion of media into the living space as the tragedy of 9/11 was projected into living rooms across the world. Television presentations confuse reality with image, entertainment with actual disaster. Botha refers to a ‘new hyper reality’ (2003). His intention also was to consider how easily the social organisation of our present culture can

be broken and the logic of our systems destroyed. The fragmenting of the piece reflects Botha's view of the current fragmentation and insecurity in human experience.

The large multi media work, *History has an aspect of oversight in the process of progressive blindness*, (2004) fig.79 was shown on the Africa Remix exhibition 2005 - 2006. The work consists of a wall into which is set a ball and claw display cabinet. In front of the display cabinet are six very commonplace chairs. The chairs invite viewers to participate in the work as people at a cinema. At the back of the chairs is a standing fan. The display cabinet carries forty-nine wax busts (all the same) representing the venerable rural Zulu man as depicted in curios. Forty-nine wax portrait busts (all the same) typical of the colonial representation of important men are arranged in neat rows on the floor behind the cabinet.

The work looks at the portrait as a carrier of meaning. Both the replicated Zulu curio portrait and the replicated colonial official portrait are carriers of meaning as portraits. The wall is a dividing line, a barrier and also a construction. The ball and claw cabinet is where all precious things are kept (in working class families of Botha's knowledge this was the case). The reproduction of the Zulu curio head was placed in the cabinet whose mirrors continually mirror the Zulu heads and also the spectators' heads as they sit in the chairs. In front of this presentation a little machine perambulates; it has a digital timing device which counts off the seconds into a minute and then flicks back to keep counting time in repetitive mode. (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007)

The dividing wall is intended to convey an idea of building, constructing notions of



separation. Botha notes ‘So on the one hand the work is about the historical value of the male portrait. The idealized romantic Zulu portrait on the one hand and the other idealised colonial portrait. So it’s about history the carrier of meaning and the implications of that history and how men have acted in history.’ (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

All these components have reference to Botha’s experience in South Africa. We might imagine, and Botha confirms this, that the ball and claw display cabinet and common place chairs are part of a working class, or middle class home environment as were to be generally seen in South African homes in the 1950s. The standing fan too, might have found a place there. The piece is thus set in a familiar environment in a particular time and the small device, a toy with a digital clock moving round on an oval circuit in front of the cabinet gives an idea of measured time as in *An Acre is an Imperial unit of measurement* (2002) fig.75. The passage of history is a measurement of time. The building blocks of the wall are exactly those that are used in the construction of low cost housing. The official bust is of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, who arranged for land to be allotted to Zulu peoples as reserves by specific arrangement. The bust of the heroic Zulu is reduced to a curio. The electric fan is turned onto ‘strong’; like a wind it brings a sense of disturbance into the content of the work.

The work *Afrikaander circa 1600* (2006) fig.80 is important to Botha as it deals explicitly with male identity and his particular relationship with his father. Completed in 2006 in a period of exceptional creative activity on Botha’s part, it accompanied the *Elephant* work *Ungayithenga inhlizo nomomgo wami (African Curios): You Can Buy my Heart and My Soul* fig.81, to Belgium (Museum voor Moderne Kunste aan Zee, Ostend). In the work

Botha has taken care to present a room in a typical working class home, suggestive of one where he may have lived as a child, and similar to one where many working class blacks now live. The total work is an installation recreating a life-size room in the way in which a diorama is created in a museum. An idea of archive is thus introduced, and the suggestion that that which is presented is a record of a particular history, an anthropological history. The linoleum is exactly of the kind that would have been used in that social and historic context. It is also the kind of linoleum now used in many black working class homes. The chair, standing lamp, ornaments, are found objects, carefully chosen by Botha as exactly appropriate to the 'diorama'. The table is of African rose wood each leg carved by a local African wood carver. On the wall is a commonplace little picture of a conventional landscape, indicative of the masculine desire to see a landscape on the wall, a window to the outside, a representation of an ordered nature outside. In many of his works Botha involves himself with an interest in that which is outside and that which is inside. In larger works he looks at mainly at outside conditions, world concerns; in contrast, with this work he interests himself with looking inward at a closed space and at what is taking place there (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007)

The work is intended as a tribute to Botha's father. The head on the table is a wax life mask taken from his father while still living. A particular meaning is given to the mask because his father suffered from claustrophobia and also from emphysema and the casting process required a particular trust between the father and son. The head is set on the table and rests on a cushion. The cushion is of soft black fabric and is embroidered by an African woman using black beads to spell out many adjectives describing masculinity in English and Zulu.

In the original drawing for the work a man (Botha's father) is seated at the table. In the actual work this figure is transformed into a little short man (life-size) formed of a mild steel armature sewn into a close covering of cowskin. On his lap the figure holds the standing-up trophy head of a horned buck, such as the heads that were often stuffed and mounted and kept as trophies after shooting. The buck is meant to have phallic significance referring to the pride men take in the erectile function and also in the trophies they take. However it should be noted that the 'trophy' here is rather second hand and battered. The figure is simply typical of a man and is seated in a rocking chair that moves back and forth on a mechanised element that gives off a faint burring sound. The movement and sound convey an idea of ritual, the passing of time and measurement of time (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007).

The work certainly presents a very personal perspective. Botha intends to look at the relationship between father and son as suggested in the context of myth and history. He wanted to make the work about his father and in doing so he also talks of himself. He sees the work as about white masculinity, he and his father products of a particular history, trying to discover profounder meanings in the context of their ordinary lives. He concentrates on conveying a particular relationship, although the two share the same historical context as many others. In a statement he says, 'This work is about my father and me, two generations of Bothas who sit within an interesting and profoundly contested time. Somehow that narrative cannot describe the tenderness and intimacy that exists between father and son.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007). He wished to bring this special tribute to his father and clearly what is stated in the formal precinct of the work

cannot really be conveyed in any other way. Botha states, 'I am not capable of interpreting this work further as it appears to have arrived to me at a highly significant time between the relationship of father and son. I do, however, see that as a special tribute that I have been able to bring to my father.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007). What is striking about the work is that it is connected with several works in which Botha makes examination of his relationship with his father; but more particularly that it is a passionate, tender almost inarticulate deeply felt statement of what is actual, the outcome of a very rare and unashamed communication between Botha and his father.

At this time Botha was continuing the cycle of works that examine the relationship between himself and his father - an examination that leads to thoughts regarding masculinity, masculine power and authority ( as manifested in South African apartheid - and ultimately universally), the nature of Afrikaner masculinity, his own Afrikaner masculinity, and the nature of Afrikaner masculine identity. The work also returns to considerations of creativity. In considering himself as Afrikaner he also continues his concerns for his relationship to locale and his placement as Afrikaner yet artist engaged in international interests.

In an interview (with Leigh, June, 2007) Botha says that this work is not only meant as a tribute to his father but also as a 'cementing of a creative relationship.' He sees his father, although he was against Botha's early creative dedication, as yet being a part of it - an 'embodiment of his father and the creativity he never realised.' He sees many possible meditations surrounding the work but states that it is primarily a work about himself and his father. Secondly, he sees it as a work about the relationship between a father and a son,

a son and his father - an intergenerational look at masculinity, a simple essay about a love story between a father and a son. He sees the piece as being set out as a museum diorama - 'the way in which museums would pack out the Bushmen or the Voortrekkers ... (or) the 1820 Settlers. Pack them out, put them in costumes, arrange them as a diorama so that other people can look at them. So in a way the Afrikaner is being looked at, packed out.' In this particular work and in subsequent works presently being carried out (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007) he is commencing to look at Afrikaner identity 'because it sits very petulantly in our historical discourse.' He considers that there exists a stereotype of a 'crude Afrikaner' that is 'only one of the smaller definitions of a fuller interpretation of the historical phenomenon - Afrikaander.' (Interview with Leigh, June, 2007). He sees 'all 'typing' of groups - male, female, Zulu, English, Xhosa and so on - as essentially irreversibly flawed.' Characteristically of the way in which he presents his work he wishes this work (fig.80) to be seen as many layered metaphors - to be viewed in its complexity, not as an explained situation.

The work called *Umgayithenga imhlizyo nomongo wami* (*African Curios*) accompanied fig.81 *Afrikaander circa 1600* (2005) fig.80 in a container to Europe in 2006. The title in English is *You can buy my heart and soul*. The entire work consists of a herd of nine life size elephants ranging from infant to adult, each unit built up of small slabs of wood bolted to metal armatures. It was requested by the organisers of the Sculpture Triennial, Belgium, April 2006, and was placed in Ostend, however several Belgian museums have subsequently sought own it. In this work Botha continues the theme of European attitudes to conquest and refers to a western cultural concern with the perceived exoticism of Africa. Botha sees this preoccupation with wildness as a 'panacea': the conqueror presumes that

wildness can be contained, civilised, and taken back to the ballrooms of the First world as a trophy.’ (Botha, Berea News, 17 Feb., 2006). The huge structures were carried out over a period of intensive labour with the assistance of local craftsmen. The nature of the wood, set on in rough small slabs adds to the sense of rugged wildness, the strangeness and marvel of the constructed creatures. Knots in the wood give the sense of the eyes sunken in wrinkles conveying an idea of the ancientness associated with the animals and in this way the artist’s respect for them as patient inhabitants of a changing world though having originated in an immemorial world. The work is a comment on commodification and also draws attention to the pressing need in the contemporary world for the conservation of species.

In this period Botha comes to grips with the realities of a post-apartheid South Africa and a contemporary world. The (figs.66, 67 and 68) *Skin* works (1998-2000) look at basic human experience as well as history using less European referential imagery than in earlier works. The *Amazwi Abesifazane* (2001 - ) project undertakes a compassionate venture to help with trauma. Whitmer, talking of healing trauma, refers to the lack of affectiveness in language used in western culture, the enrichment of which could be brought about by taking others seriously - ‘Such an exercise in enrichment for violent situations could be diffusing in its appeal to pay attention, to listen closely to others and oneself, and healing as well, as it is committed to communication and not concerned with alienation but reconciliation.’ (1997:27). It can be noted that Botha’s project particularly met the criteria mentioned by Whitmer. The *Tangencya* project (2004/6) attempts to deal with separation and alienation in a present world with a suggested solution of creativity. Several works look at the harsh realities facing humanity in regard to land tenure, securities of home and

location and personal securities. In the works of 2006 Botha looks again at South Africa and comes close to personal reconciliation with his own locale and origins. In a sense his expression of a reconciled understanding of his relationship with his father and Afrikaner origins is a resolution of what 'home' means and of his explorations of 'home', 'land' and 'tenure.'

## **CHAPTER 6**

## **HUMANISM, HUMANNESSE AND POST-HUMANISM: BOTHA'S WORK SEEN IN A CLIMATE OF PHILOSOPHICAL CHANGE**

The intention of this chapter is to amplify and enrich the presented text by looking into a wider range of cultural developments than the particular focus I have concentrated on has necessitated. My purpose is to give attention to sources and influences that bear on Botha's work and also to consider a current milieu of knowledge and values that places his work in an expanded field of inquiry.

The rapid rate in cultural change in a present world creates circumstances that place Botha's work in a sphere of changing cognitions that necessitate a weighed consideration of it and the attitudes and perceptions that have shaped it. For example, the culture of Humanism practised in the western world for centuries, and that obtained at the University of Natal in Botha's student years (early 1970s), greatly influencing both political thinking and thinking in aesthetics, can be seen as gradually diminishing and leaving a vacuum in which a variety of cultural attitudes assert themselves with varying degrees of effectiveness. These exist without the defining control, as was previously existent, of Humanism with its Cartesian emphases.

I wish to point out that Botha's conceptualisation, in many instances, is anticipatory. He draws on the vestiges of Humanist culture – myth, imaging, discourse – in order to represent a time and condition that is scarcely present but that begins to emerge as an inevitable circumstance of changing western values.



Working within the dimensions of his time Botha makes use of varied imagery and cultural expressions as well as elements drawn from a Humanist vocabulary. The many aspects of Humanist thought reflected in his work are diverse. Much of his imagery is Humanistic: much of his thinking has been directed by western Humanism. It is my intention to look not only at the influence of Humanism on Botha's thinking but, to a certain extent, at Humanism as a diminishing controller of cultural thinking.

As we see the results of a Humanist culture waning we also see the residue of its impact left as persistent traces of a once controlling force. For example, the whole progress of material determinism, initiated by the Enlightenment, has left radical changes: attitudes basic to human identity have been changed by the impetus of thinking in psychological and social development. The diminished repercussions of Humanism leave an emptiness where thinkers founder, essaying to find a foothold in Posthumanism, a fragmented and disintegrated culture that looks at the basis of a physical life through the fractured lenses of Postmodernism. Some thinkers, for example Lyotard, Barthes, Baudrillard, Guatarri, mourn the loss of an essential human character in current culture and propose a return to a re-thought Humanism.

I will deliberately dwell on a reference to Humanism because it has formed the foundation for the greater part of thinking in South Africa today and certainly for that of the western world till the present. Although my text deals with a South African artist he himself lives and takes part in a society greatly influenced by Humanist culture. In South Africa many of our political, social, and socio-economic attitudes are formed by Humanism. Our

challenge is to inform these attitudes with understanding of indigenous positions where only in certain circumstances access has been had to the tenets of European Humanism. What is most important to my investigations is Botha's manner of dealing with a fading influence of Humanism that envelops us, present indigenous cultures which surround us and an ongoing challenge to discern and establish that which is valuable in terms of human being. Botha's challenge has been to work within two spheres – that of the receding outcomes of Humanism and that of the impingements of his locale.

In his book, *Humanism: The Wreck of Western Culture* (1993) John Carroll explores the development of Humanism from a particular viewpoint. He cites Pico della Mirandola's dictum of 1486, 'We can become what we will,' as expressive of Renaissance thinking and as also containing the seeds of the destruction of Humanist culture (1993:3). The concept of 'man', or human being, as totally in control of his/her fate is a chief and persistent cornerstone of Humanism – 'creator and creature in one' (Carroll, 1993:3). Carroll follows through the consequences of this attitude in his investigation of western Humanism stating that 'that which is at stake is the future of the human soul.' (1993:2).

Carroll sees the high points of Humanist culture as those works of art, architecture and literature created during the early European Renaissance (1993:7). He views Donatello's *Gattamelata* as a representation of the Humanist ideal, the Renaissance man – 'Man is master of powerful forces surging beneath him ... the baton is also suggestive of a scroll, symbol of knowledge, of the rational mind conquering the volcanic chaos of nature.' (1993:13). Possibly certain elaborate and powerful elements and a certain greatness of spirit in some of Botha's works do resemble the works produced at the high point of

Renaissance sculptural art. After all, he was inspired by Michelangelo.

Carroll uses the metaphor of beast in referring to the rider of *Il Colleoni* by Verocchio ('Features like those of an enraged beast glowering from under his helmet') and to the horse of *Gattamelata* by Donatello ('chest of a bull and a fierce head') (1993:12/13). The 'beast' in Botha's work, *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37 conveys a comparable impression. However many elements have seeped into Humanism, most of them brought about by its nature, many of them the cause of its demise. The idea of the 'beast' in Botha's work and in the Renaissance works may have similar implications although set in widely different conditions. Hidden in the Renaissance works may be the principles of Apollonian and Dionysian, themselves concepts widely held in Humanist thinking.

Botha's work is set in a specific period of human development and he has engaged with discourses, attitudes and events of his time. His work then essentially presents in allegory a number of fragmentary explorations seeking resolutions, many of his conclusions and stances being paradoxical. I am proposing this chapter as expressive of certain 'divergences' in Botha's work. Although he follows the contemporary in regard to discourse and events and upholds elements of Marxist aesthetics, favouring labour intensity and the worth of labour, he is yet subject in many ways – as are most artists who do not work within a specific area of doctrine or belief – to the impelling forces of what have been termed the Apollonian and the Dionysian. I refer to these as considered anew, principles hidden within the nature of creativity. For example, in a work, *The Stampede* (1985), Botha gives full range to an apparently uncalculated and freely expressed

formation that would seem to have arrived from a series of experiences, deeply incised in his emotional being, and not actually articulated in any of his more developed and known work.

Even in using the terms Apollonian and Dionysian I am aware that I am on familiar and well-trodden territory although I intend to use the principles that these terms refer to in an appropriately contemporary way. In using the terms I wish to discover or reveal something unexpected within the expected in regard to Botha's work. I also wish to review in this chapter the pervading influence of Humanism and how it frequently brings about the expected in creative work and hides or underplays the unexpected.

### **Botha's work and Humanist influence**

As Humanist influence abates its remnants continue as garnerings from many nations and cultures. Botha draws on the use of Myth in allegorical presentation to pose his beliefs in human life. In his early works dealing with meditations on life, death and human destiny he makes use of ancient Egyptian beliefs and imagery regarding death and the afterlife. He also confers on these representations the concept of archetype as proposed by Jung in the twentieth century. In these explorations he strives to find equivalents for transcendentals, the explanation or substance of which remain in a state of flux or change within a changing contemporary context.

With the decline in Humanism towards the end of the last century, as discussed, many

elements of Humanism are retained as valuable in current attitudes. These have also been mingled with values placed on beliefs drawn from various world religions. For example, Botha, developing Marxist tenets in regard to aesthetic philosophy also uses eastern religious beliefs in conceiving a harmonious balance to be achieved in a resolution of female and male elements in an envisaged unity. Secular Humanism does not recognise a supernatural in its philosophy (Noebel, 1991:357) but Botha, many of whose beliefs approach Humanist attitudes, draws on supernatural, or religious, references in, for example, his adoption of Taoist principles of the harmonising of feminine and masculine principles.

Again, Botha adopts the Humanist concept that evil is not intrinsic to human being. For example, Carl Rogers (1982:8 in Noebel, 1991:355) writes in support of Humanist tenets, 'though I am very aware of the incredible amount of destructive, cruel, malevolent behaviour in today's world ... I do not feel that evil is inherent in human nature.' Botha does not hold the viewpoint held by many religious doctrines that human nature is dualistic. Nor does he develop any world view that certain forces and agencies for good or ill control events. In many ways his outlook is essentially Humanistic, envisioning how good can be done to those who have suffered trauma, or how disease can be healed by intervention, as in his implementation of programs designed to be effective in the control of AIDS, for example.

In many ways the essential Humanist doctrine is one that has paved the way for the Enlightenment, sustaining the notion that through medical advances and control of social deviance a utopia can be achieved. Toward mid-twentieth century a growing

disillusionment with the idea emerged. Lacan's explorations in psychology, for example, opened a route for a break from the normative and Freud had already considered forces beyond the normative.

The concept that something can be done or affected to ameliorate the human lot is also Humanistic, developing into the utopianism of the Enlightenment. Foucault and others at mid-twentieth century probed the values of Enlightenment philosophy and the concept that human improvement can be achieved through dominant Humanistic ideas. In many ways the human race is left with the problems of failed Humanism which we can now see in a clearer light than at mid-twentieth century. For example, Paul Kurtz, speaking in 1968, views man as a perfectible human being (1968:18 in Noebel, 1991:359) and Robert Roessler writes that he has 'come to feel that people are neither innately good or innately bad; they are either fully aware of themselves or so to speak from themselves. If their own deepest feelings are available to them, they generally behave in ways we label 'good', if they come to deny themselves, they sometimes behave in ways we label 'bad'.' (1958:333 in Noebel, 1991:367). Both these quotations, taken from Noebel (1991), date from a period of high optimism in the Humanist culture.

These beliefs in 'inherent goodness' lead into the nature/nurture debate continuing in various degrees of intensity into the twentieth-first century. Abraham Maslow writes that the good impulses in people 'are easily warped by cultures ... the people within a culture may, deep within themselves, hold the universal constant of justice. Within the framework of a bad culture it can be twisted into a framework of evil.' (1978:189 in Noebel, 1991:360). Rogers writes, (1982:8 in Noebel, 1991:361) 'experience leads me to believe

that it is cultural influences which are the major factor in our evil behaviours.' The concept that 'universal constants' regarding values are inherent in individual human nature implies the existence of conscience or something other than a merely physical set of impulses. Secular Humanism espouses a naturalistic philosophy denying the idea of a supernatural mind or conscience – 'Few Humanists recognize the inconsistency of their view.' (Noebel, 1991:370).

Botha envisages a human perfectibility through development of potential. Maslow (1968:149 in Noebel, 1991:364) envisages a 'full humanness', that is, the 'development of the biologically based nature of man'. Botha stresses metaphysical considerations in his work in contradistinction to the Secular Humanist attitude that 'the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.' (Humanist Manifesto 1 ([1933]1980:8). Thus Botha adopts the Humanist view that eventual human perfectibility lies in the realisation of individual human potential but he does not reject the concept of dualism, that is, that the presence of a metaphysical or further dimensional agency is operative in human existence.

The Secular Humanist view of an ultimate human development through self-actualisation is supported by the nineteenth-century-generated belief in evolution as, for instance, declared in the Humanist Manifesto 11 ([1973]1980:17) 'science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces.' Julian Huxley proclaims, 'I use the word 'Humanist' to mean someone who believes that man is just as much a natural phenomenon as an animal or plant. That his body, his mind and his soul were not supernaturally created but are all products of evolution, and that he is not under the control or guidance of any supernatural being or beings, but has to rely on himself and his own

powers.' (cited in Greeley, 1988:194-5 in Noebel, 1991:268). Botha evidences in his work belief that the individual can achieve his own potential but also recognises a metaphysical dimension, for example, in his *Human Structures* exhibition (1984), and the acknowledgement of the presence of such a dimension is present in most of his work.

The Secular Humanist notion regarding social development, particularly prevalent in much South African thinking, envisages an ethical society, run by a socialist economy, and a globalised world government. Whereas Marxist philosophy questions the institutions of home, church and state, Botha questions them in regard to present conditions but expresses his concern regarding nurturing parenthood, the role of the mother and the role of the father in guiding future generations, and the importance of home and assured land tenure in the formation of secure selfhood.

Botha espoused Marxist philosophies in challenging apartheid rule in South Africa and supported the aspirations of a black majority. He concerned himself deeply with the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and expresses passionate repudiation of the atrocities performed against people during that period. He is also concerned with Afrikaner identity, not on a Marxist basis but as it articulates a national identity. Although investigating Afrikaner conservatism as a positive value he does not espouse ethical absolutes but rather adopts ideas of ethical relativity, the product of Humanism. However, his compassionate attitudes are in contradistinction to the Secular Humanist belief as expressed, for instance, by Fromm in 1964 – 'The failure of modern culture lies ... in the deterioration of the meaning of self-interest.' (cited in Noebel, 1991:365).

### **Humanism, Humanness and the Posthuman**



Botha has largely based his philosophical stance on a concern for the human condition, a compassionate interest in humanity. The validity of his works holds on that premise. I expand upon attitudes taken by current thinkers to consider a cultural positioning of Botha's work.

I return briefly to a consideration of the demise of Humanism and the implications of that in regard to present thinking. At late twentieth century Carroll saw the 'humanist castle as tumbling down in the face of a spiritual and psychological reality' while still 'cemented together at the level of material comfort.' (1993:228). He perceives the Industrial Revolution as producing 'an opulence of material power and comfort that allowed man to think, as long as he narrowed his consciousness down to his animal needs and repressed his conscience.' (1993:228). What Carroll envisages is comparable to the attitudes of Posthumanism that dissect the human body and consciousness without reference to accepted human codes, replacing the complexity of an integrated human body with the interception of machinery and other incidental phenomena.

Speaking with irony, Carroll describes Humanism's 'lasting achievement as the industrial civilization and its brilliant triumph over most of the trials inflicted on man ... poverty, starvation, disease and brute labour' (1993:7). It is, however, ironic that at present (2008) few of these achievements are evident in Africa, South America or parts of Asia and threaten to be less apparent in the western world. Carroll sees, as he declared with the introduction of his text, that Humanism has been the wrecker of western culture. Its drive to achieve comfort, freedom and happiness for all has in great measure been realised. It

has had a role as a cultural destroyer, 'pitting reason and the striving individual against the forces of tradition, honour, authority and revealed religion. On the one hand comfort, on the other a disenchanted world emptied of meaning.' (1993:150). Carroll develops his argument that if the individual is to have free will - the desire of the humanist being to create 'a human order on earth in which freedom and happiness' were to prevail (1993:2) and where the human individual was to become the centre of the universe - the individual had to have somewhere to stand. He thus perceives the failure of humanism as a failure to have a place or point of stability.

In connection with the challenge in regard to discerning and establishing an ongoing humanness and meaningfulness I refer to Lyotard's question, 'What if human beings, in humanism's sense, were in the process of, constrained into, becoming inhuman ... what if what is 'proper' to humankind were inhabited by the inhuman?' (1991:2). Lyotard, in *The Inhuman* (1991) is examining a present situation that, in the wake of Humanism, would seem to abrogate the nature of being human. He refers to two systems, the present one with which we are familiar, an operative one which I have just examined under the category of 'Humanism'; and then there is what Lyotard calls 'an infinitely secret one', one which he sees as being that of which 'the soul is hostage.' (1991:2). The human 'soul' as considered by Carroll and by Lyotard, is held hostage in a way that is not readily visible in the present society where material determinism is practised as a general philosophical foundation. Such matters as myth, transcendence, conscience, honour, dignity, loyalty, for instance, are not a part of this belief system. Lyotard remarks, 'Discontent grows with this civilization, foreclosure along with information.' (1991:2).

Botha works within a period that emerges from the modern into the era of Postmodernism

and he has been required to meet the challenges presented by shifting philosophical standpoints as the culture of Postmodernism changes to that of Posthumanism. Lyotard refers to what he calls a 'bad use' of the term *postmodern*, but yet sees in the term something that designates a present transformation; 'Inevitably it is a discourse of general physics, with its dynamics, its economics, its cybernetics' but yet it is a 'metaphysical discourse' (1991:5). This 'metaphysical discourse', according to Lyotard's argument here, is the ideology of development, 'the ideology of the present time, (that) realizes the essential of metaphysics.' (1991:6). He continues, 'The striking thing about this metaphysics of development is that it needs no finality. ... It has no necessity itself other than a cosmological chance.' (1991:7). Lyotard sees this ideology that needs no finality as having only one limit, that is the expectation of the life of the sun: 'The anticipated explosion of this star is the only challenge objectively posed to development, (thus) The interest of humans is subordinate in this to that of the survival of complexity.' (1991:7).

Considering the explosion of the sun as a possibility, Lyotard emphasises those things that we value as particularly human thus drawing to our attention the greatness of the loss we would feel. For instance, he speaks of – 'A form of life that was spiritual because human, human because earthly – coming from the earth of the most living of living things.' (1991:8). He makes a particularly meaningful comparison by referring to that which in many ways defines our humanity, or our human gaze – the horizon. He writes, 'Thought borrows a horizon and orientation, the limitless limit and the end without end it assumes, from the corporeal, sensory, emotional and cognitive experience of a quite sophisticated but definitely earthly existence.' (1991:9). Once this 'horizon' is abolished our 'transcendence in immanence' disappears as well: his argument is that ordinary death is that which is

common to creatures but the death of the sun is annihilation where no human can be sublated in thought. Again he emphasises the idea of humanness and the value to be set upon it, 'after the solar explosion there won't be any humanness, there won't be any living creatures, there won't be intelligent, sensitive, sentient earthlings to bear witness' (1991:10).

Equating a bodily experience of landscape with humanness he refers to the idea of 'horizon' as that part of the geographic environment which prescribes our experience of humanness and cites Merleau-Ponty's 'chiasmus of the eye and the horizon, a fluid in which mind floats.' (1991:11).

Lyotard questions the concept of Postmodernity, rather he sees the condition as always implied in the modern, because the modern is forever impelled to attain a final stability as aimed at in the utopian project (1991:25). The Postmodern, as envisaged by Lyotard, involves a state of time. Citing Aristotle (Book 1V of the *Physics*) he explains that it is not possible to realise what has gone before and what is to come without placing the mix of events within a present. The flow of consciousness with its multifarious incidents distracts and prevents an apprehension of what is. Thus Postmodernism is always in a state of flux, modern temporality containing a constant impulse to change (1991:24,25). I refer particularly to this aspect of Lyotard's current philosophy as Botha is very preoccupied with time and uses devices to indicate time in his work: for example *Afrikaander circa 1600* (2006) fig.80, (fig.79) *History has an aspect of oversight in the process of progressive blindness* (2004) fig.79, *Surface area is equal to land, multiplied by memory, divided by time* (2002) fig.76. In his Paper on Beauty (2006) Botha, rejecting the notion

that truth or beauty are constant or can be secured as lasting icons, states that he creates 'works that by their very nature (materiality) are never constant but subject to transformation and change.'(5). In the same Paper he remarks, 'The aesthetics of permanence are one of many markers or sign posts that our sensibility tends to cleave to. Entropy, change and degeneration are some of the darker yet significant elements of regeneration.' (2006:5).

Lyotard contrasts the modern nature of temporality with that of the classical age, a comparison relevant to a consideration of the state of humanity in the present age. With classical temporality the present, past, future, coming and going are taken in one totality of life with the same unity of meaning. In this way time and the events it encompasses are envisaged in the same way as in myth or allegory, the parts being of one whole, temporality and meaning. On the other hand, 'historical periodization belongs to an obsession that is characteristic of modernity.' (Lyotard, 1991:25). He takes the speed of modernity as hazardous to deeper processes of human understanding, saying that human thought 'doesn't work with units of information but with intuitive, hypothetical configurations.' (1991:15).

Lyotard is looking at those signifiers that compound the 'human', the horizon, the sun, the corporeal, the sensory, the integrated familiar bodily response to phenomena, emotional and fully cognitive. The experience of the Modern aims at finality, that finality being the utopia of the Enlightenment project and, ultimately of Humanism. Modified by the Postmodern, Modernity becomes a flux involving a modified attitude to time. Classical time, time of the classical age presents a whole, a totality with a unity of meaning - that is,

human meaning. Time in Postmodernity presents a series of intercepted fragments. Many of Botha's works incorporate an element of time, often incorporating mechanical devices. In Posthuman thinking the mechanical is often seen as intercepting the human. Botha's vision in certain aspects is anticipatory in representing a time and condition that is scarcely present but that begins to emerge as an inevitable circumstance of changing of western values. Again, in his paper on Beauty, Botha observes in connection with the value placed on western monuments, "Reflecting on architectonic metaphors of Western logic or sensibility that embody value systems around which historical notions are constructed, is one of our enduring illusions.' (2006:5)

Lyotard is mourning the loss of that aspect of human thinking that is meditative and sensitive, product of profound and sustained contemplation. The metaphysical discourse of Postmodernism involves cybernetics and the impersonal spatial measurements that concern a neutral impersonal unfinalised state and environment wherein the finiteness of human experience is overwhelmed and lost.

The Posthuman approach would seem to be retribution for the ambitions of the Enlightenment project. For example, the Introduction to *Posthuman Bodies* (Halberstam and Livingston, 1995:3) contains the following statement: 'Posthuman bodies are the causes and effects of postmodern relations of power and pleasure, virtuality and reality, sex and its consequences. The posthuman body is a technology, a screen, a projected image; it is a body under the sign of AIDS, a contaminated body, a deadly body, a technobody; it is as we shall see a queer body. The human body itself is no longer part of 'the family of man' but a zoo of posthumanities.' The breakdown of syntax resembles the

structure of HipHop verse and contains a similar, perhaps agonised, plea for attention. In fact, Humanness is expressed in the bitterness of Posthumanism at the Humanist failure.

In contradistinction to the Posthumanist statement Guattari calls on a return to a more considered Humanism. However, in many ways the pleas of both, under different guises, underline the need for a greater consideration of humanness. Guattari proposes a certain response to an 'aura' of the sensory world, a memory (*ritornello*) without which 'the surrounding objects would lose their 'air' of familiarity and would 'collapse into an anguishing and uncanny strangeness' (1996:164). In a different way from the Posthumanists he nevertheless sees subjectivity, particularly, as 'under the massive control of apparatuses of power and knowledge' consigning human activities to the 'service of the most reactionary and retrograde figures of sociality.' (1996:107).

What Guattari especially proposes is a return to humanness by means of an emphasis on creative activity, 'Refusing the status of the current media' ... (he requests) 'new social interactivities, for an institutional creativity and an enrichment of values.' (1996:271). He sees the 'poetic function' as reconstructing 'universes of subjectification ... existential operators capable of acquiring consistency and persistency within the current mass-media chaos.' (1996:201) and envisages a 'poetico-existential catalysis' operating within 'scriptural, vocal, musical or plastic discursivities' (1996:201). Like Lyotard, Guattari senses a threat to essential humanness in present social structures and speaks of, 'the degeneration of the social solidarities and modes of psychic life that will literally have to be reinvented.' (1996:201). He is also critical of the implications of the present capitalist system, perceiving subjectivity as disappearing, 'into the empty stakes of profit and power.'

(1996:201).

We might see Guatarri's view as nostalgic, as we might that of Lyotard, Barthes, and others among the mid-twentieth century French thinkers. Guatarri's proposal is really a return to a reconsidered Humanism: 'The only end result of human activity is the production of subjectivity.' (1996:202). His thought here is very close to Marxist thinking, a humanity redeemed through an existential approach to labour where subjectivity is honoured. .

Derrida raises the question of identity as connected with responsibility and history and asks, 'What is it that ails 'modern civilization?''(1995:3). Looking at a contemporary situation he questions the structures of a society that is 'smoothe-running' but denies the essential nature of humanness. Entering into what he terms the 'abysm' of current society, he comments on the 'monotonous complacency of its discourses on morality, politics and the law, and the exercise of its rights' and decries that that same smoothe-running society allows the death by hunger of 'tens of millions of children' and wars where 'hundreds of thousands' of victims are sacrificed 'for what or whom one knows not.' (1995:86). Derrida's attitude is one of humanness, his concentration is on the identity of the individual whose value is obliterated by the enormity and impersonality of the situation.

Derrida's concern here is for the value of life, the value of humanness, the worth or preciousness and richness of individual being. Human identity is lost in the neutrality of an unresponsive current social system, whereas the virtue of humanness lies in those singular identities, 'each of whose singularity becomes each time infinitely singular.'



(1995:86). Setting aside expressions of disappointment at the failure of the Enlightenment project Derrida looks into the abiding human predicament that responsibility is not taken for our history. Although Botha touches on something of that which concerns Derrida (for example, with his 2004 work *History has an aspect of oversight in the process of progressive blindness* fig.79) he does not reach Derrida's depth of probing or his magnanimity nor the extent of comprehension of the sources of human conflict that Derrida has.

Botha has been concerned with the individual and identity. Derrida's understanding of individual identity is one of humanness: 'technological civilization produces boredom, for it 'levels' or neutralizes the mysterious or irreplaceable uniqueness of the responsible self. '(1995:36). He sees the essence of identity as lying in uniqueness, its authenticity lying in its mystery: 'the individualism of technological civilization relies precisely on a misunderstanding of the unique self. It is an individualism relating to a *role* and not a *person*. In other words it might be called the individualism of a masque or *persona*, a character (*personnage*) and not a person' (1999:36). He refers to Patocka who says, 'modern individualism, as it has developed since the Renaissance, concerns itself with the *role that is played* rather than with this unique person whose secret remains hidden behind the social mask.' (1995:36). To Derrida, techno-scientific objectivity hides the mystery of individual identity just as, in his discernment, the 'authenticity of the irreplaceable self' is hidden behind the social mask (1995:36).

My intention in this chapter is to constitute a probing review of aspects of Botha's work and conceptualisation – to look beyond that which Botha has produced in a Postmodern

and largely Humanist context and to launch out into an examination of aspects of his work that pre-empt or coincide with a continuing future context. Most of that which I have examined is set within a Postmodern context. I now propose to look at aspects of his work as they may stand in a continuing climate of change.

Botha's representations of gender can be seen as anticipatory of an era of marked revision in regard to approaches to sexuality and gender. Although much of his work is thematically within the sphere of Humanist principle his expressions of gender are frequently unexpected. Many of his works refer to androgyny, some to ambiguities of gender or cross-dressing, each representation carrying meaning within a framework of allegory. For example, his work *The Dance* (1996) fig.53, which at first appears to represent a social occasion enjoyed sensually and vigorously by a couple, hides many other intentions. The couple are conceived by Botha to be persons of ambiguous gender. The extensively used red, a colour suggesting brightness and robustness, is used in this allegory to imply deceit, allure and danger.

Tim Dean writes (2000) in *Beyond Sexuality* – a work primarily exploring 'queer' sexuality but that also makes provision for the ground that Botha is touching on – that 'transgenderism reigns supreme' in the contemporary world of sexual politics (61). He quotes Marjorie Garber as identifying cross-dressing as 'constitutive of culture 'as such, not the exception 'but rather the ground of culture itself' (2000:61). Within the area of contemporary standpoints regarding gender, 'transgenderism' has come to be seen as not merely a physical expression of sexuality but rather a symbolic or metaphoric communication of statement. For example, Garber (cited in Dean, 2000:61) argues that

'there can be no culture without the transvestite, because the transvestite marks the entry into the Symbolic.'

In contemporary post-humanist thinking, for instance as exemplified in these words, 'Science and technology have so rearranged the boundary conditions for the reproduction of human identity that the choice is no longer between the natural body and culturally constructed body, but between different fields of bodily (re)construction bearing different cultural and social implications.' (Squiers, 1995:119). Changed attitudes to cultural acceptances of the human body are speculated. Haraway (Simians:162, in Squiers, 1995:119) comments 'Ideologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families.' Although Botha is working within an area largely of Humanist thought in presenting *The Dance* of 1995 fig.53, the work nevertheless intimates Posthumanist concepts of mixed exchanged sexualities, ideas and gender aspects.

A number of Botha's works include ambiguous significations of gender, for example, in *Genesis, Genesis, Jesus...*(1990/1) fig.38 the abnegated figure at the base stands for neither male nor female; it and the ascendant figure at the top are used to propose principles, admittedly Humanist in their implications of an adopted religious belief – Tao - but also Postmodern in the surprisingness of the concept. In a Posthumanist view the figures can be seen as mixing principles of gender. In his work *alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991) fig.47 Botha proposes a reconciliation of human essences through allegorised figures paralleling concepts of androgyny, fecundity, and animality. Again the fragmentation suggests posthuman ideas of the fragmented human identity. The work *Sondebokke, Slagoffers*,

*Seges en Sondebokke* (1991) fig.39 similarly contains fragmented aspects of human individuality. An apparently female but ambiguously gendered figure supports the central figure. In an interview (with Leigh, 2006) Botha explains that as a student he saw the surrounding supportive figures in representations of the Deposition of Christ as persons sucking the strength or energy out of the central being. Botha's conception of the cross-dressed or transgendered figure is that it is deceptive and ambiguous in its intentions, as to whether it is supporting or de-energising the central figure. Again in the *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1987/8) fig.37 the figure that supports the bull is ambiguous in its intent, though we take it to be masculine. In both these cases certain figurations propose mixtures of genders and individual human essences.

Botha's presentation in *The Dance* (1995) fig.53 approaches close to 'drag', a practice very current in the contemporary world. A reconsideration of accepted norms of the nature of gender sexuality and reproduction is characteristic of posthumanism, and incipient in Postmodernist thinking. Dean posits that cross-gender identification is motivated by something that cannot be seen or imagined – 'a place beyond sexual difference where gender would ... (be) completely transcended' and proposes the paradox that transsexualism's obsession with gender norms presents a desire to escape sexual difference altogether (2000:70).

We can perhaps connect Botha's representations (detailed above) as expressing, firstly, a general ironical indictment of the artifactual in much social and cultural gender presentation. For example, at least two of the personages mentioned in the instances detailed express deceit. The work, *The Dance* (1995) fig.53 has a replication in theme and

figuration in the small bronze *Some Thoughts on Loneliness* (1991) fig.48 In the large work both dancers are dressed but their clothing is deceptive suggesting socially accepted gender roles that their identities may or may not support. In the small bronze the male of the couple is appropriately dressed while the woman is naked. The small work conveys tenderness but the larger work conveys deceit regarding both individual gendering and social sexual intention. Secondly, we can consider that Botha expresses (in the works mentioned) a desire to escape all gender difference, to look at a transcendent gender as is suggested in the indictment of socially engendered deceit in *The Dance* (1995) fig.53.

Lacan, following Freud, sees a 'diphasic' phase in human sexual maturation. As the child cannot handle the onset of its sexuality before physical and psychic maturation occur the self experiences trauma which enters the unconscious (Dean, 2000:232). This experience, being in the unconscious, resists assimilation to social and cultural pressures or the pressures imposed by imaginative discursiveness and resists the powerful influence of images and discourses that construct sex, sexuality and desirability in our culture. In this thinking 'Davidson argues that Freud's *Three Essays* opens a radically new conceptual space ... (where) the notion of sexual perversion makes no sense ... the sexual instinct as theorized by Freud is originally dysfunctional, since undetermined by nature.' (Dean, 2000:11).

The clarifying of Freud's theorising that sexual instinct is 'originally dysfunctional and undetermined by nature' leads to possibilities of many explorations of sexuality and interpretations of gender in late twentieth-century thinking. Psychoanalysis, in deep explorations of the psyche, has contributed to the current understanding of sex through

opening and promoting discourse but also has put up barriers in this development by rejecting the more superficial approaches of populist psychology. New examinations of the psychoanalytic perspective on gender and sexuality introduce a strangeness and unexpectedness to norms that have been taken for granted.

Dean quotes Miller's contention that the 'primary status of *jouissance* is not sexual' and proposes that interpersonal relationship is only one way of 'engaging the truth of our being.' (2000:278). Botha has stated that sex is a 'petulant' entity and this understanding relates to its complexity as proposed by Lacan, for example. Consequently Botha's presentation of gender frequently does not subscribe to Humanist conceptions but rather explores unknown territory that may consciously or unconsciously follow investigations made by Lacan. In many of his works (in particular those referred to above) Botha would seem to attempt to search out non-normative approaches to human relationships, gender and sexuality.

### **Humanness and Posthumanism: landscape as body and Botha's attitude toward the South African land**

Whereas Botha has taken an experience of South African landscape, particularly that of the Drakensberg, as something peculiarly his own, the South African landscape and landscape in general are subject to multifarious ranges of experience modified by circumstances regarding time, political contingencies, personal attitude, history and a variety of other factors. However, Botha does conflate land with a number of such entities, these entering

into his presentation of metaphoric landscape.

Botha's attitude to the land is one of Humanness, that is, he felt (speaking of his experience of the Drakensberg) its beauty and value: 'the actual land itself influenced me enormously and the seasonal land as it changed from summer through the various extremes to winter': however, he also felt that the land was actually part of himself, or inherent within him and to him, as a lonely child, the land took on human character: he was 'comforted by the landscape' a place 'where he could have more equal relationship' with his emotions (Interview with Leigh, 1999). He was 'moved, very clearly metaphorically by that sense of freedom, and that sense of space and the sense of colouring in the land.' (Interview with Leigh, 1999). Marilyn Martin, speaking of Botha's experience of the Drakensberg, writes, 'The surgings which characterise *alleenspraak in Paradys* as well as the proportions of the Black Venus, are born from communication with a majestic landscape.' (1991:22). In other words, the landscape was internalised. Speaking at the *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference in Manila (2006), Botha states, 'I am increasingly drawn to an idea that our subjectivities are definitely shaped and formed by the outer and inner landscapes we occupy.'

Botha sees South African identity as 'defined by our individual and collective relationship with the landscape ... Home synthesises land and landscape into an intimate symbol of ownership of the historic and geographic land' (statements by Botha regarding *Home, Land, Desire* (2001). In this work, land is synthesised into identity and ownership. The possession and use of land has particularly concerned him, he says: 'if we consider territory and humanity as cultural metaphors then one could argue that our human desire

for ownership is revealed in the character of the land we occupy, a body that is a measure of our wilfulness expressed as conflictual history and mutated geography.' (Botha, Nov., 2003:3).

Of his work *South African Skin* (2000) fig.67, which precedes a series of works concerned with human skin as land, Botha states that to find 'appropriate metaphors which conflate the surface of body as a residue of memory and time with that of the physical landscape necessitated seeking a material equivalent that would be suitably visceral as an archival document to hold both marking and archival information as a parchment of skin.' (Botha: Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila, 2006:7).

In his later work *KwaZulu-Natal 1886-1999* (2000) fig.68 Botha conflates human bruises, wounds, and blood in metaphors to suggest that human skin is land and that human action on the land is part of the land. His approach compares with the anthropologist Thornton's remarks, 'Both White and Black people who call themselves Africans identify with the land, and claim it as their inalienable right. Both appeal to the blood that has been spilt on it, the dead that have been buried in it, the food that can be coaxed from it.' (1996:151/152). Like Botha, Thornton takes the land to be connected with human experience and human history, a determinant of human identity and involving individuals' rights to ownership and tenure. He says, 'The frontier shifted by degrees, through failed prophecies, informal agreements and abrogated treaties, but each step left an historical trace of boundaries that can still be perceived today, not so much on the ground as in the beliefs and practices of people who live there.' (1996:150).

To Botha notions of insecurity, fragility of tenure of the land and consequently of



individual identity in his work *Terrain: Spaces of ownership and dispossession* (2003) fig.78 connect human experience with an event on the earth. His work, *Home, Land, Desire* (2001) fig.77 is designed to disintegrate, reinforcing the idea of evanescence and relating it to human habitation of the land, insecurity of tenure and consequent disintegration of individual identity.

Foster, in *Washed with Sun: Landscape and the Making of White South Africa* (2008:1) expresses an understanding of the twentieth-century South African preoccupation with land and the concern to find 'some psychic accommodation with 'the land' ... a recurring anchor of identity both in the minds of those who controlled the land and those dispossessed and exiled from it.' Similarly, Botha is concerned with the land, possession of it, tenure, and land as a source of identity and nurturing. His perception of the South African landscape forms a base for his creativity. He was greatly influenced, as has been noted, by his early reading of the phenomenologist philosopher, Merleau-Ponty, and his engagement with landscape involving a bodily reception of immediacy of experience, as proposed by Merleau-Ponty, is part of his creative work. This kind of response to landscape is, in fact, that which establishes identity. For example, Foster (2008:82) recognises a particular identity formation as 'embedded in corporeal gestures, habits, orientations, reflexes and memories that derive from the body' setting in motion and constructing an unfolding space that constantly changes shape and 'takes on new meanings.' In other words, a bodily mingling with landscape constitutes identity. This concept corroborates Botha's notions of the formation of identity and is at one with his explanation of his experience of phenomena.

Foster (2008:82) considers the experience of the South African landscape in the light of

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy and refers to the 'body' that responds to phenomena as 'the intentional body-subject of phenomenology': 'Thus for Merleau-Ponty to 'sense' is to co-exist or 'commune' with it, to open oneself to it and make it one's own prior to any reflection or specifically personal act ... space become a perceptual field that is an invitation to action.' Merleau-Ponty understands what is perceived or experienced to be correlative to his body and more generally to his existence, of which his body 'is merely the stabilised structure.' (Foster, 2008:82). Foster sees the 'the most evolved example of this body-subject' as existent in Merleau-Ponty's philosophical presentation in which 'body and mind function as a unity, and internal (mental) subjectivity is integrated with external contact via environmental undergoing.' (Foster, 2008:82).

Foster refers to the 'poetic body', though 'displaced', as a determinant of *genius loci*; comparatively, Merleau-Ponty sees our 'geographical being' as constructed through our bodily inhabiting of the material world (Foster, 2008:82). The phenomenologist, Norberg-Schulz, understanding space as 'related' to the unconscious image of the perceiving self', follows Merleau-Ponty in seeing identity - in terms of place - as being brought about by a full response to the world through all the senses (Foster, 2008:82). This comment is relevant to Botha's 'Growing up in and being immersed in a particular landscape's sensory, spatial, and material qualities (which) establishes a perceptual schema that determines future experiences and reactions.' (Botha; Paper for *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila, 2006).

Botha's return to certain sites concerned with Afrikaner history (for example, those involving the Anglo-Boer War concentration camps in his *(dis) Appearance(s)* exhibition

of 2008) reflects a particular connection he is making with land as political, historical and socio-economic entity. The land itself is inert geography but becomes a vitalised area through being infused with human character. A notion of the land 'belonging to a particular people, in other than the political and legal sense of ownership, is to enter into the 'poetic body', the determinant of *genius loci*.' (Foster, 2008:82). Experiences, the impacts that enter through the sensual gates of the body, determine the individual's conception of landscape. 'Visual imagery not only plays an integral part in constructing what a culture or nation construes as landscape but also inscribes how a group conceives of a given terrain or locale.' (Foster, 2008:47). The sensual impression received through the eye forms a socio-political notion of landscape.

A poetic understanding of the land, as received through a full embracing of a bodily and imaginative response would include an understanding of the intensities of experience of people who had lived there. Foster writes, imagining the land in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War, 'For the Boers, a people whose way of life revolved around autonomy of the land, the trauma of displacement from the land and loss of families deepened as the war progressed.' (2008:20). Botha expresses such an imaginative bodily response to the land in, for example, *KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 1896-2000* (2000) fig.68 and in the *(dis)Appearance(s)* exhibition of 2008. In these examples, a lingering of intense experience is imagined as having impacted the land and permeated memory.

In these instances, Botha uses the 'poetic body' to create notions of the land as sentient and conflates human body experiences and material marks on the body with historic, socio-economic, and political situations. At the same time his approach to the body is essentially

one of humanness, exhibiting compassion.

Botha has been required to find place for his creative expression amid many shifting fields of philosophy, in changing forms and paradigms in art, in changing patterns in cultural behaviour and in the midst of military and political action. His art emerges as expressive of the time, expressive of those changes taking place and in many instances pre-empting future change for example, in relation to gender and conflation of the body with landscape and historic action.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this dissertation I look at Botha's work over a period from 1971 to 2006. This conclusion is based on a consideration of his work produced over that period and the time covered has enabled an assessment that might not have been possible at an earlier date.

In examining Botha's work I have given attention to the Marxist ideal, a consideration of which has been evident in his work during the time under review. In doing so I have not wished to give any impression that Botha's creativity has been restricted to a particular approach. It has been my intention to give an idea of the vitality and scope proposed by Marxist aesthetics and, through quotation of specific writers – Marcuse, Becker, Rich, and others – to underline the meaningfulness and the importance of the potentially subversive character of the aesthetic. A creative subversiveness has been especially apt in the time of change considered in the text and appropriate to Botha's concerns.

The main strength of Botha's work lies in powerful form amalgamated with poetic character. The power of the form exists not only in mass but in the dynamic disposition of shapes, third-dimensionality and directional lines. The *duende* (or that which I have also referred to as allied to the Dionysiac) is a particular distinction of his work and discovers itself in his energetic formation of structures wherein he escapes from preformulations.

At the outset of his career Botha's considered two intentions in his art: 'The creative act has two clear identities – the private act of creation and the act of creative citizenship'. (Talk to the Newcastle Art Society, Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, 1988 and address at the *Beauty at the Curatorial Edge* Conference, Manila, 2006). Botha has up to this point fulfilled his

aim in regard to creative work and to social activities. Social undertakings can be seen as his endeavours regarding AIDS, his organisation of training programmes in the realms of health and business, his sponsorships of artists and gifted persons, and the initiation and founding of such ventures as the Kunene Foundation.

It is my intention in this conclusion to deal more specifically with Botha's creative works that are his 'private acts of creation.' During the period reviewed in my text Botha has produced work that has shown enrichment and confirmation of his earlier material creativity as well as of his philosophical approaches and perceptions. There is a continuum that backs and affirms his work giving credibility and substance to his viewpoints and creative production.

In reviewing Botha's work from the commencement of my reading for this text and writing the text I have noted that although Botha has always been keenly interested in the social and political environment and epoch in which he lives he frequently has transcended the temporal and particular. I had written a chapter on Botha's work in my dissertation for the Master's Degree (History of Art) but the greater depth in which I have been required to read and enter into studying his work for this text has served to make me aware of certain insights and understandings that one might consider as preemptive or prefigurative of future change. This has become more apparent with a reconsideration of his work. An important aspect of Botha's work is that it has remained significant in global and national spheres to this point. He has continued uninterruptedly in asserting particular attributes that make his work relevant to the South African context and to a mutating world context .

Although his work is cited and illustrated in Williamson's 1989 publication on 'protest art' he has created in his work up until now much more than 'protest art', that is, art tied to a particular span of time and set of events. He has entered into human experience on a wider scale of consideration and less limited by a particular period of time than is indicated in many productions of 'protest' art. I see his work as probing the immediate but also considering the past and creating a continuum that could be seen to be suggestive of future developments, events and processes.

As was his challenge at the beginning of his career he has amalgamated certain features that reflect characteristics of historic world art and that also relate to the traumatic social circumstances in South Africa and to the ruggedness – aesthetically and geographically speaking - of the South African locale. Similarly his considerations are influenced by world philosophies as well as by the contributions of thinkers and writers in South Africa. While reflecting the continuing values of western art and philosophies in his work, he conflates these with a comprehension of the extreme turbulence manifested in events and issues in South Africa over the last decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. His work remains, over the period of time under discussion, expressive of the achievements of international art and of the present spirit and nature of a South African locality. However he has actually done more than this. In his application of phenomenological philosophy he uses an exploratory approach not defining, or having recourse to defined models or already expressed opinions – and this to a certain extent captures the essence of the flow and movement of thoughts and events allowing them a progress, development and character that move into an unknown future condition. We can see this approach as relevant to archive and history.

His relating an historic past with a present, immediate state in the country give Botha's work both aesthetic and cognitive power. His contribution to South African aesthetics has been substantial and valuable in that he maintains certain principles that can be seen to be relevant to present circumstances and yet sustain a continuing value in regard to human conditions. His approach reinforces Marcuse's belief in the possibility of human liberation through creative imagination (1978). His interest in a Marxist theory of aesthetics, backed by the philosophies of the Frankfurt School, (and the writings of Marcuse, his followers and of Merleau-Ponty and others) has contributed in many of his works to a formal expression that can be compared to the Marxist envisaged ideal of art – that which embodies a form that is at once harmonious and meaningful to society. In accordance with Marxist tenets he has created a series of works that can be taken to express 'the highest human values' offering a 'tremendous affirmation of humanity' (Baxandall and Morawski, 1974:36). It can also be taken that in his art certain features understood as Marxist are present: the 'cognitive and the fundamental human values mingle ... both dependent on the adequacy of form to the embodied values.' (Baxandall and Morawski, 1974:36).

Within the South African context Botha implanted a western character in art but has also grounded that in local actualities. My text shows that he has effected a meaningful record of a society involved in change – local and international – and in doing so has addressed to some extent an understanding of societal needs and dilemmas. His many projects undertaken as public practical actions show a methodical and purposeful approach mingled with committed industry and these have benefitted local communities financially and in the affirmation of individual self-worth through creative expression.



Practical actions are a tangible and outward public expression of Botha's decision to serve society through his creativity. More substantial are the imaginative achievements of his private creativity. One of the features I have mentioned – the contribution to the welfare of people – is outlined in the mentioning of Botha's practical undertakings. However it must be clear that a far greater contribution is made in his private creative work in its exploratory character and meditative approach.

Botha also reflects in his work certain ideals proposed by Gramsci, for example, 'the integral education of the human spirit ... (the rehabilitation) of the human spirit as the creator of life and history' (1985:234). The emphasis placed on the human spirit is a characteristic that pervades Botha's work and makes it of human importance. We may take it that the recognition of that spirit is applicable to all people and is thus relevant not only in a South African context but in a world context in a period of changing values. This quantity in Botha's art has made it adjustable to time and circumstance but steady in its central communication.

In proposing a type of absolute in respect of Botha's presentation of those things of importance to the human spirit I do not wish to imply that he in any way puts forward an unmodified good: rather he deals with aspects that are potentially positive or whole as well as those things which are distressing, degenerative or destructive. However his essential approach has predominantly been directed to upliftment. In his works he has looked into the nature of matters, say, especially what can be seen as the turbid condition of a present situation, and has not spared accuracy in presentation. For example, his post-apartheid

'landscapes' - *An Acre is an Imperial unit of land measurement* (2002) fig.75 and *Surface area is equal to land, multiplied by memory, divided by time* (2002) fig.76 convey the barrenness of bureaucratic social provision yet the power and force of the presentation reveal an energy and commitment to the task that in itself is positive. Similarly the care with which *Home* (1997) fig.58 is developed in its conceptualisation and in the technical attention given to the text-bearing metal plates in the interior of the structure is a positive feature although the total comment in the work is a wry one concentrating on the value of 'home' and the forces by which many have been made homeless. His work *Terrain: spaces of ownership and dispossession* (2003) fig.78 carries oblique reference to current media bringing horrifying incidents into the everyday sphere as virtual reality. In all these examples the overriding motive has been concern for humanity, presenting circumstances with distinctive sculptural adequacy and in doing so calling to attention the intensity of his commitment to humanity. On the other hand Botha does not greatly deconstruct the persisting malignancy in society or in individuals..

Botha's engagement with the human condition has been at one with his concern for history. His sense of history can be compared with Benjamin's connection of history with allegorical expression as quoted by Owens (1992:55) where Benjamin refers to 'man's subjection to nature', 'the enigmatic question of human existence' and the 'biographical history of the individual'. In this connection I refer to the gravity of Botha's presentation of history and historic incidents and the weight they carry in suggestion of the tide of 'human existence' and of the 'biographical history of the individual'. He sets his perceptions and explorations of these quantities specifically in the circumstances of a changing South Africa and changing world attitudes. For example, the major six unit

work, *What is a Home...?* (1996), figs 51 – 56 deals with both the scope of history and the biographical history of the individual. In one of its six units – *Still Life* fig.56 – the pathos of the individual death of an innocent is enveloped in the historical drama of the period. In this work, *What is a Home...?* figs.51 – 56, the concept of transition and change that the passage of history brings about are conveyed in the unit *Embarkation*, fig.54 where a boat is positioned and surrounded by references to water. The patriarchal figure standing in the boat's prow and involved in the boat's passage intimates the passing of a particular patriarchal society in South Africa, while the formal comportment of the male's pose suggests that that society was not without dignity, an appraisal in keeping with Botha's present assessment of Afrikaner society. The presentation carries the idea of the dispensation of Mosaic Law and by inference the strict interpretation of Calvinism adopted by the dominant Nationalist Party of the Apartheid era. In (fig.55) *A History of monuments ... and wounds that are forgiven* (1996) fig.55 a unit in the same set of six works, Botha uses the idea of history as a tide that carries human events and their meaning on its movement, conveying within that presentation the 'enigmatic question of human existence' (Benjamin, 1977:183-184, in Owens, 1992:55).

Again in this six-piece work Botha refers to an individual history, a 'biographical history of the individual' (Benjamin, 1977:184); his *Trials of Male Courtship* (1996) fig.52 where he uses symbolic reference to look into, and objectively represent, the state and existence of masculinity. A fourth representation in the set of six, *The Dance* (1995) fig.53 deals further with the enigma of human existence and behaviour, the couple symbolising the dance between the sexes but incorporating the concept of seduction and betrayal. In keeping with the dominating theme of this set, the question of human and individual life in

the setting of history, Botha uses the last work, *What is a Home without a Father?* (1996) to deal with the concept of family, its great potential value, its actual sadnesses and failures. In the set, *What is a Home ...?* (1996) Botha uses the theme of history but compounds that with insights into humanity as it is positioned in history and current history.

In later developments of his work Botha acts on the concept that history is created within the patterns of human behaviour - actions and decisions shaping the course of the human lot and falling into repetitive sets of behaviour for good or ill (Interview with Leigh, 13 July, 2008). For example, in the work (fig.79) *History has an aspect of oversight in the process of progressive blindness* (2004) fig.79 Botha intimates that the decisions made by Natal white officials at mid-19<sup>th</sup> century had a reverberating effect on the history of Natal – now, KwaZulu-Natal. He uses Theophilus Shepstone - who was made 'diplomatic agent to the native tribes' in 1845 - as a symbol of white misadministration of land. In the work, the repetitive use of busts - of Shepstone and of the 'curio' Zulu man - is made to suggest the repetition of events in history and the repercussions that particular decisions and actions have on events over a period of time.

Botha's later works show his developing attitude to history as he sees it increasingly as a series of subjective perceptions and interpretations and not as empirically determined fact. (Interview with Leigh, 13 July, 2008). He takes subjective understandings and reflects upon them to create an enlarged perception of an historic event. Even in advance of ideas of contemporary archive that attempt a possible empiricism by examining multiple sources (especially those previously marginalised or hidden) Botha tries to draw out a subjectively

formed narrative from individual experience and perception. He thus chooses to perceive history not as a document and record that is ideologically confined but as an essentially contested narrative, presenting matter to be speculated and reflected upon by an individual subjectivity. Such speculation places history in a domain other than the specified, a domain that is poetic and to be expressed in allegory, simultaneously melancholic and simultaneously pessimistic/optimistic (Interview with Leigh, 13 July, 2008). Sceptical of any determined 'truth' and finding an individual subjective 'placing' only within a consideration of many contested narratives Botha creates works wherein he gives attention to situations, circumstances and events and which he renders relevant in the face of persistent changing attitudes and thinking and in differing world and local conditions (Interview with Leigh, 13 July, 2008).

Working on the assumption that history and its many narratives must be engaged with, separated and disentangled in a logically discursive way in order to establish an individual subjective perception Botha has looked at South African history. He has seen the past as to be engaged with and not to be ignored and makes use of increasingly relinquished attitudes, requiring everything to be subjected to a level of individually interpreted empiricism and to a wholly more subjective understanding of factual truth. (Interview with Leigh, 13 July, 2008).

Botha's particular envisioning of history, allegorically presented, is peculiarly applicable to the time of considerable change in which we live and to the tumultuous and disturbed histories existent in South Africa. Seeing history as a linked past, present and future intrinsically connected, Botha has understood allegory as the mechanism that can engage

this complexity. Allegory can also act as the interpreter of the individual's subjective perceptions of the contested and tangled narratives that history presents and convey the necessary poetic level achieved through reflection.

Botha has been concerned with the placing of contemporary events as an overlay to historic connections. In doing this he has discerned that which he has called a 'pattern of recurring rupture' drawing the conclusion that human endeavour creates a pattern that is essentially flawed. In his view the melancholy of history consists in the failure of human endeavour and in the continued failure of humanity to achieve its potential. His consideration is that such potential is realised at times in such acts as demonstrate kindness, compassion and generosity (Interview with Leigh, 13 July, 2008).

Benjamin connects the melancholy of history with death: 'Everything about history that, from the beginning, had been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face – or, rather, in a death's head.' and sees 'the ruin' as the 'allegorical emblem par excellence' where the 'fragmentary, the imperfect, the incomplete – finds its most comprehensive expression.' (in Owens, 1992:55).

Botha associates the melancholy of history with human failure to realise its potential. In a sense his attitude is positive, envisaging a human potential that could transcend death. For example, his work *Meditations on Migrations: Prayers* (2001) fig.71 deals with the fact that boat-crossings usually involve starvation, futility, death and loss but he uses the allegorical structure to imply that a potential has not been realised and intimates that something valuable has been lost – human life, beliefs and a past. Similarly in his work

*Meditations on Power* (2001) fig.70 the grand achievements of western civilisation are revealed as essentially marred by the cruelty and greed that underpin them. It is not only the passing of glorious works that give rise to melancholy but rather the essential flaw revealed in human activity. Again in his work *For Those Who Will Not Hear* (1998) fig.60 Botha shows neither the confident present nor the embalmed past as willing to hear the voice of the other. The value of experience, or the lessons of history, are continually and repetitively ignored. In these works, once the allegory is interpreted in terms of Botha's viewpoint, melancholy is seen to be presented as something active inspiring the realisation of a potential.

Botha has interconnected his interpretation of human behaviour and his view of its potential with his sense of history and his perceptions of political developments as they impinge upon human feelings and behaviour. For example, in his work *KwaZulu-Natal: South Africa, 1896-1999* (2000) fig.68 Botha draws a connection between human experience, the land and the passage of history. His views in this work are expressive of his perceptions of patriarchy and the passing of apartheid. At the same time the work that preceded and inspired it *Tattoos, or South African Skin* (2000) fig.67 expresses compassion for men who have become vulnerable (the work was carried out in male shelters for the homeless) and for the position of men like his father who, metaphorically, had fallen from positions of male power and a believed supremacy under Afrikaner Nationalism. A complex set of considerations is presented as a critique of apartheid, of the male search for power, and of the inevitable vulnerability of men in such flawed situations. Botha's concern for the land is drawn into the presentation which shows the South African land as becoming a part of human history and also sentient like the skin of men. In this

presentation Botha reflects upon such occurrences and circumstances as have impressed themselves with great intensity on South African experience and allegorises an historic complexity that refers at once to human feelings, a place, events and socio-political actualities.

Botha's concern for humanity and the realisation of its potential is a theme and recurrent element of importance in his work. In early works he entered into consideration of the most significant aspects of human existence, reflecting on human fate, and pondering on the state of death. In the early 1980s he embarked on an exploration into a search to arrive at an understanding of human nature and behaviour and the causes that work upon it and control it. His Triptych of 1981, fig.6a, b, c) *Contemplation Series*, indicates that he had then begun to consider and meditate upon the nature of human life and of human destiny. In this work his use of substances such as ceramic and bone, suggesting basic human life on earth, contrasts with the complexity of the allegorical content that refers to another level of intent and of existence – sleep, thought and contemplation. Representations of the artist's sleeping/ dreaming/meditating head at this period intimate Botha's engagement at the time in a period of long and thoughtful consideration of the nature of humanity and its destiny *Dream Sequence* (1984) fig.10. In keeping with these meditations on the themes of death, human destiny and an after life, Botha dealt more fully with such subjects in the *Human Structures* exhibition of 1984. figs 21-25 With this exhibition he explores and connects particular aspects of human experience - dream, subliminal and subconscious states and the state of death. The presentation of the works is not morbid but rather celebratory in the sculptural forms. The contemplative mood of the works embraces life, death and after-life as a corollary to death.



Following on from these considerations regarding human destiny Botha began to look carefully into the nature of individual being and gender. At this period gender issues were taking a place of importance in world thinking. Botha exploited the circumstance: but, rather than working with already accepted models he began to look afresh into the question, applying what he had gathered from his previous processes of exploration. Consequently he was able to present individual conclusions garnered from subjective and hard won insights in the form of allegory - the four major works of 1991, *Genesis*, *Genesis, Jesus...* fig.38, *alleenspraak in Paradys* fig.47, *or those Taken Darkly*, fig.42, *Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers* fig.39. Botha's explorations here are intended to confront the complexity of being and the essence of male and female. His study is meant to uncover an origin of being that may indicate the sources of strife and disharmony in human existence. His object was to propose a reconciliatory solution.

To place the investigation in a universal domain Botha makes use of allegory and myth thus relating his subject to general human experience. He essays to present in sculptural form his findings regarding causal agencies creating and controlling human behaviour. He looks into gender and the complexity of intellectual and emotional attributes that shape it. His intention is to comprehend the intricacy and propose a possible accord. Within a context of world changes and South Africa's bitter discord and conflict Botha's intention, as interpreted through his art, has evidently been to explore and understand in order to imagine and propose a reconciliatory solution.

The works of 1991 look into the nature of human being. A further side of Botha's preoccupation with the human state is his consideration of violence and the trauma

issuing from it. In South Africa the period building up from the early 1970s to the present has been filled with violence. Violence has also preponderated in world events. Botha particularly chose to deal with matters arising out of the specific period of internecine violence (called *Udlame*) in KwaZulu-Natal and with matters coming out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Proceedings. His reaction to the KwaZulu-Natal violence was to consider particularly the plight of women whose homes had been invaded, whose communities and family life violated, and whose husbands, friends and family members murdered. Looking at the woman as the centre and nurturer of family life he evolved the large project, *Amazwi Abesifazane* (2001-) designed to engage with trauma through creative expression. In this undertaking he initiated a plan to deal with trauma through creative work as the women embroidered their records of personal trauma onto cloth. In doing this he undertook to address violence through imaging violence. The power of the creative impulse in this case was used cathartically to expel the memory of trauma. Similarly in his handling of the *Bloodlines Portfolio* (1998) fig.63 he uses the imagery of violence to indict violence, arousing shock and horror in the viewer by the power of his representations in such a way as to induce an appreciation of the opposite of what is shown, that is, a placing of worth on high moral and intellectual values. In this approach he deeply involves himself in the trauma of South African life in such a way as to make that involvement redemptive.

Botha makes use of a particular iconography in his handling of the human predicament. In allegory he refers to the diminishing of the world's natural resources and degradation of an environment that also signifies a profound loss in human experience. In reference to his concern for the land he recalls through markings on maps the memories of battles, treaties,

places of intensity in social history. He refers to colonial and western attitudes to the land, most specifically to Africa. He makes reference to the passage of history, to nostalgia and a sense of deprivation, the denigration by a western and capitalist world of unspoilt domains. He refers to environmental issues, the destruction of species, the growth of urbanisation and emphasis on material and commercial gains at the expense of irreplaceable values – the appropriation of what is rare and valuable, seen as 'exotica' by invading peoples who bring the taint of a spoilt world

Botha has concerned himself particularly with the South African land. In his interest in *Die Sestigers'* writing, (he states in an interview with Leigh, 13 July, 2008) he has been markedly impressed by what he has taken to be their rootedness in the South African land. He perceives them as indigenes. He wishes to associate himself with a special relationship with the land as *Urbodem*, a place connected with his life and to which he wishes to lay a deep personal claim. As he remarks, *Die Sestigers* responded to the land and, in his view, acclaimed a land whose political integrity at that time was in question. As artist he wishes to reclaim and proclaim a validation of the land. As Afrikaner, Botha sees himself as particularly associated with the land.

An appreciation of the land had been especially expressed in older Afrikaans poetry: Chapman refers to the early Afrikaans writers as having 'sought, in Afrikaans, a language that could touch the essence of the veld': he speaks of Marais seeing the need for a 'new respect for the delicacy and tranquility of human wholeness in touch with the land.' (1996:122/123). Botha's desired association with the land partakes of something of this type of feeling. His experience of the Drakensberg landscape, for example, has been

formative in his creative work.

Combined with his personal emotional concern for the land Botha also upholds a political interest in the land seeing it as part of his Afrikaner heritage and also as a general heritage of South African people. His perception of the land is that it is particularly important in respect of ownership and tenure and in his work he refers to the security and sense of individual worth such rights can confer on the individual. His works concerning South African history emphasise the idea of land as important to societies and communities and express outrage at the deprivation of land of vulnerable people. Consistently, he proposes these attitudes in regard to land deprivation in other parts of the world.

Botha sees ownership of the land as connected with people's lives and well-being and he presents deprivations of the land as the cause of abjection in individuals and the destruction of community life. By the expression of his attitudes he articulates a reappraisal of the land as part of the emotional construct of individual being and community life and gives voice to the deprived.

Arnold makes a distinction between land as geography - 'natural terrain with physical resources' and land as landscape - 'a cultural concept derived from the study of nature.' (1996:39). Richards refers to the land as 'that most heavily mythologised and significant of themes.' (1999:353). Botha conceives of land as a socio-political entity, as an intrinsic part of South African or other history, as an emotional entity to which he and the individual may respond and which in turn shapes the individual. To these concepts he adds the idea of land as sentient as well as restorative of human community and individual

life, expressing these values in his work.

Botha's attitude to masculinity is particularly important in his work. In early works and maquettes he assigns militaristic implications to represented phallic shapes in the period of oppressive apartheid of the 1970s and 1980s. The work *Dromedaris donder! ... en ander dom dinge* (1989) fig.37 includes a markedly phallic shape in the metal helicopter and this work is connected to the idea of settlement at the Cape by Europeans in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and to the militaristic apartheid regime. Both references carry the idea of masculine dominance and oppression and the misuse of men's militaristic skills. In the work *Trials of Male Courtship* (1996) fig.52 Botha makes very direct reference to masculinity as simple masculinity. In a 1991 catalogue (*Decade of Young Artists*, p.12, Standard Bank, 1991) a nine colour serigraph of Botha's makes reference to Afrikaner masculinity in authority, *Minister, Minister, waar sal jy nou skuil?* fig.41 The accompanying text indicates both a critical attitude to Afrikaner masculinity on Botha's part as well as a sense of disappointment. At a later stage Botha is expectant and hopeful regarding certain characteristics he assigns to Afrikaner masculinity although he is disillusioned by attitudes and activities evidenced by the apartheid government (Interview with Leigh, 13 July, 2008)

Du Pisani describes Afrikaner nationalism as a 'racist, militaristic and authoritarian force' giving 'prescriptions for correct male behaviour which were woven into hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity.' (2001:157). He sees Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity as intricately bound up with social and political power in Afrikaner society but being subject to gradual changes in attitude over a fifty year period, say, until the late 1990s. This is the

period during which Botha was required to come to terms with such ideas concerning masculinity in his boyhood, adolescence and maturity.

Botha, closely tied into relationship with his own father, was able to pronounce creatively on essential Afrikaaner character. With his work *Afrikaander 1600* (2006) fig.80 he looks in a straightforward manner at masculinity. His father is a white male Afrikaner, he is himself and so were his forebears. The particular emphasis in this piece is the tenderness Botha expresses for a person and situation that in representation have nothing other to recommend them than that they are. Dealing with this unembellished condition Botha places especial value on filial love and shows his father as precious to him simply for what he is, an Afrikaans man and his father. Again in (fig.52) *Trials of Male Courtship* (1996) fig.52 Botha presents a straightforward representation of masculinity. There is a suggestion that in this case it is unadorned and also vulnerable. The factor that distinguishes these representations is the directness with which the statements are made as fact. I see this as Botha's comment on Afrikaner masculinity; the care he expresses for being a man reveals the value he puts on his fellows.

In a further consideration Botha connects masculinity with politics. I have made reference to Botha's representation of the phallus as indicative of oppressive masculinity in earlier works, for example, *Dromedaris donder!... en ander dom dinge* (1989) fig.37, connecting the work with aspects of the apartheid state. Botha does discern qualities of leadership and endurance in Afrikaner masculinity and his compassionate stance, expressed for example in *Tattoos* or *South African Skin* (2000) fig.67 toward the deposed erstwhile leaders of Nationalism indicates a concern for Afrikaner masculine potential. The respect he shows

for his father in the work cited reveals the worth he places on Afrikaaner manhood. The time factor incorporated in the work indicates that Botha envisages the potential continuation of the characteristics he values in Afrikaner manhood.

Botha has particularly concerned himself with political events in South Africa and in the world especially as these affect human lives and has set himself to look into the unusual patterns of change and incidents at this time. At present he is faced with a challenging set of circumstances as world changes affect local situations making necessary constant re-evaluation and assessment. It is required of anyone concerned with the pattern of current events to reconsider presently held conceptions regarding western political and cultural constructs. Changing philosophies, for example, the diminished influence of Humanism, the consideration of Posthuman values and a review of the effects of Postmodernism, must challenge writers and creative artists.

The full extent of the period under review as seen from the opening of the twenty-first century shows a movement away from European ideas on which the entire concept of democracy is based. Botha's exploration of the period is penetrating in the manner in which he looks into the essence and substance of events and issues. However his approach is also comprehensive. Not only limiting his expression to passing interpretations and perceptions or to the transient nature of events and incidents but taking a transcendent view he has enveloped a range of insights and kept his overview relevant. He interprets the local and immediate as well as his perceptions of the universal.

Botha's work holds - in a manner very significant to our time - the historic together with an understanding of the current dynamics of local and international change. He is deeply

interested in history and connects such interest with the great significance he attaches to the human lot.

## **POST SCRIPT**

I have valued Botha's works and have examined them in detail, relying on Botha's own accounts gained in extensive interviews. I have discussed aesthetics and content in a context of change relating the works to theoretical, social and historical considerations. However I feel the necessity to present in addition a more weighed and objective critical view which I do here.

Derrida (1995) sees the responsibility of life as the giving of what is good in a way that cannot be identified, from a hidden source, a source that is inaccessible. The task is a secret one as the inaccessibility of the donor is essential and the responsibility of keeping the secret is a lonely one. The secret is a special task that needs the silence of secrecy. In many ways this kind of secrecy is the task of the artist. This selflessness constitutes a type of death, that is, death to self. Derrida writes, 'It is from the site of death as the place of my irreplaceability, that is, of my singularity, that I feel called to responsibility.' (1995:41). The giving should be of 'an irreplaceable singularity of the self' ... a uniqueness that 'excludes every possible substitution (Derrida, 1995:41). This giving is above duty, because of the secret and unknown sacrifice that is known only to the higher calling and the one called to answer that responsibility.



I propose that the 'responsibility' that Botha searches for in his works concerning masculinity is still not decided upon. His allegories that seek the root causes of joy, chaos and conflict, as he terms it, still represent in a way the process of search in that respect. His questioning of the nature of 'heroism' is only a questioning. It is true that his findings reflect the indefiniteness posited by Postmodernist philosophy. But he himself has been a secret giver and donor of creative work and one who has chosen 'that excellence at the extreme limit of human possibility that the best of us choose once they decide to exchange the short-lived prolongation of a comfortable life for a durable fame in the memory of mortals.' (Patocka, 146 in Derrida, 1995:17).

On the other hand one must qualify what has just been said. Any consideration of Botha's work should indicate a continuing subtext concerning responsibility. I refer to Botha's dedication to responsibilities, firstly, for example, in his early works he engages with state abuses of individuals and political internment. Then, he dedicated himself to attempt an understanding of the nature of human life and destiny. In his later works (of the late 1980s) he looks at the disturbing side of life and its vagaries. His attempt has always been to investigate. With his works of the early 1990s he assumes the responsibility of examining gender as a foundation for either harmony or destructiveness in human relations.

In the works of the late 1990s Botha considers the male role in history and its capacity to affect good or ill. He continued to examine masculinity, its position and role especially in a changing South Africa. He made himself responsible in attempting to help over a thousand African women with trauma suffered during the period of violence in South

Africa, and especially in KwaZulu-Natal (1980-1990). In this project, *Amazwi Abesifazane* (2001- ) he worked toward the restoration of historical memory and I refer to the careful statements he compiled in regard to this project, considering the standing of women in society, and especially the position of indigenous women. Similarly he compiled detailed statements in regard to his *Tangencya* project (2004/6) in which he undertook to encourage creativity in the regions adversely affected by western rule.

Botha has expressed, in statements and in his work, responsible concern for the use of land, for the abuse of the media, for the decay of family life, for the abuse of children in the KwaZulu-Natal violence, for the atrocities committed by the state. He has recently taken a responsible position regarding the Afrikaans people, their position in society and how they are regarded by people.

Botha has taken a responsible role in his creativity, producing work of a high standard to satisfy himself and clients. Although Botha has taken up responsible attitudes to his acts of creative citizenship more importantly, he has undertaken the responsibility in his works of private creativity of creating work that expresses the highest human values and the human spirit as the creator of life.

Botha has responded hitherto to the primary responsibility of fulfilling his calling. The prime responsibility of the artist is to fulfil his or her calling, to meet the requirements of the gift or genius. The genius, gift or calling is not always kind. Walter Benjamin speaks of the melancholy connected with the 'allegorical temperament' (in Owens, 1992:54).

Identifying melancholia in art, Young-Paik Chun says, 'when we see an undeniable beauty in the low-keyed tones of sadness ... we are naturally drawn to wonder if ... despair retains a trait too fundamental and too identifiable to be diagnosed merely as a person's peculiar psychological distress.' (2006:99). She speaks of 'a constant tension between indulging melancholia and withstanding it.' (2006:100) as the position of the melancholic.

Botha states in his paper on Beauty (2006:3): 'I have tried to make work which transcends normal visual narratives ... work that never abandons the power of the imagination. It is a narrative underpinned by persistent melancholia, that which defines the lessons of history as a subjective experience.' Walter Benjamin, as I have discussed, connects the 'allegorical temperament' with the 'melancholy gaze' (1977:183-4, in Owens, 1992:54). In his allegorical work Botha consistently allies history with melancholy. He writes, 'For me this narrative (of his work) should emit a subtext which is subliminal, that which we cannot comprehend but yet understand. The subject of this work is our flawed humanity, that which comes close to classic tragedy, that which is oblique, hidden, denied, that which we discover within ourselves when we are momentarily elated or unashamedly celebratory.' (Botha:Paper on Beauty, 2006:3).

The melancholy temperament is shown as both difficult for those who bear it yet valuable in the sense that it frequently instigates and accompanies creativity. Young-Paik Chun refers to Kristeva who has particularly written of the relationship between melancholia and the creative personality. Kristeva describes the origin of melancholia in the personality by elaborating on a 'relation between sign system and melancholia or 'incomplete mourning'. (2006:107). The 'mourning' occurs at the stage Lacan terms the mirror stage, at which

stage the 'subject enters into language' (Chun, 2006:100) and in some instances suffers loss. Kristeva writes, 'the negation of that fundamental loss opens up the realm of signs for us, but the mourning is often incomplete. It drives out negation and revives the memory of signs by drawing them out of their signifying neutrality. It loads them with affects... ' (1993:34, in Young-Paik Chun 2006:107).

'Kristeva speaks of deprivation, 'some supreme good' of which the individual is disinherited (1987:13), as creating trauma and refers to creativity' the 'imprint of the triumph that settles me in the universe of artifice and symbol' as joy. (1987:22). (Leigh, 2001:98).

The largeness and creative strength of Botha's work evidence at once a victory over the presence of melancholia in his personality and the power of creativity instigated by melancholia.

Freud theorised the emergence of sexuality in the human individual as 'diphasic', sexuality eventuating before physical or psychic maturation. (Dean, 2000:232). Consequently the disturbing trauma is consigned to the unconscious. Lacan, building on Freud, understands that that which is 'real' is therefore unconscious, originating in trauma. Consequently, in this view, 'The real - like trauma – is what resists assimilation to any imaginary or symbolic universe.' (Dean, 2000:232). The value that lies in this observation is that the melancholic is able to see and grasp a reality that is free from formulated impressions and Botha has sought to achieve this. Chun says, 'Melancholia works by disillusioning the totalized form of the self of the mirror phase and revealing its apparatus of delusion and alienation ... (and suggests that) 'the obstinate operation of melancholia does not allow the self to be easily subject to such an illusion.' (2006:121). As Lacan sees the 'real' as existent in that unconscious area wrought by trauma - where it cannot be influenced by external imagery, symbol or imagination - so the trauma of melancholy signifies the 'real'. Chun

states,' In this sense, then, melancholia signals what is Real.'(2006:121). Furthermore, she observes that once 'all ordinary and banal associations' have been 'evacuated' the laconic visual language is 'endowed with forceful directness and condensed meaning.' (2006:102).

The burden or responsibility of the creative artist is often to face melancholia and its traumatic origins in order to present in art that which is endowed with forceful directness and condensed meaning and which is 'real'.

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## ADDENDUM

**SALIENT INCIDENTS IN BOTHA'S CAREER**

## Andries J. Botha

1952 Born in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

### Exhibitions

- 2004 Africa Remix, Museum Kunst Palast, Dusseldorf, Germany  
 Amazwi Abesifazane, Betty Rymer Gallery, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, USA.  
 Amazwi Abesifazane, Culturefest, Lisbon, Portugal
- 2003 Attese: Biennale of Ceramics in Contemporary Art, Abisole, Italy  
 Amazwi Abesifazane, Africa Studies Sentrum, Leiden, The Netherlands  
 Amazwi Abesifazane, Imagine IC, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- 2002 Vidarte 2002, Mexico City, Mexico  
 Global Priorities, New York, USA  
 Outpost 11, US Art Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa  
 Amazwi Abesifazane, Prince Klaus Fund, The Hague, The Netherlands
- 2001 Freehouse Project, Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
 Nature, Utopia and Realities: Osorio, Grand Canarias  
 Memorias: Santander, Spain  
 Amazwi Abesifazane, World Conference Against Racism, South Africa  
 Amazwi Abesifazane, Durban Art Gallery, Durban, South Africa
- 2000 Area 2000: Reykjavik Art Museum, Iceland  
 L'Afrique a Jour: Lille, France  
 Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht, Holland  
 Dakart 2000 Biennale, Senegal, Africa  
 Amazwi Abesifazane – Voices of Women, African Art Centre, South Africa
- 1999 Galerie Paul Andriessse, Amsterdam
- 1998 Kasselkunstverein, Kassel, Germany  
 Kulturtogbet Solvberget, Stavanger, Norway  
 Four Seasons – National Architectural Institute, Rotterdam
- 1997 Johannesburg Biennial, South Africa  
 Samtidkunst: Fra Sor Afrika, Oslo, Norway

- 1996 The Other Journey: Africa and the Diaspora, Kunsthalle Krems, Vienna  
Containers Across the Ocean, Copenhagen  
Cris Fertiles Unesco, Cotonou  
Transitions. Bath Festival – United Kingdom
- 1994 South African Contemporary Art, Paris, France  
Southern Cross – Stedelijke Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 1993 Venice Biennale, Italy
- 1989 Zabalaza Festival, Oxford, England
- 1985 Tributaries Exhibition, Germany
- 1982 – 2001 Exhibits in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa

### **Honours**

- 2003/4 Consultant to the Department of Arts and Culture, Nkosi Luthuli Memorial,  
Kwa-Dukuza
- 2000 Playground and Toys, United Nations, New York
- 1998 One of 12 International artists invited by Holland Foundation to work on  
Ujama iv project in Maputo, Mozambique  
Civitella Ranieri Fellowship, Italy
- 1994 U.S. Information Service Fellowship – University of Indiana, USA
- 1992 National Vita Art Award, South Africa
- 1990 Standard Bank Young Artist Award, South Africa
- 1988 Cape Town Triennial Merit Award, South Africa
- 1987 Volkskas Atelier Merit Awards, South Africa

### **Boards**

- 1992-1996 Board of Trustees, Durban Art Gallery
- 1992-2001 Board of Trustees, African Art Centre

### **Public Commissions**

- 2004 Nobel Square, Cape Town, South Africa  
Freedom Park, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
- 2003 Shembe Memorial, Durban, KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa
- 2001 Sculpture Commission, Vodacom, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2000 Rijksakademie Voor Volkekunde, Leiden, Holland
- 1999 Sculpture Commission, M.T.N., Johannesburg

## **Community Work**

2004 Mazisi Kunene Foundation

2002 Create Africa South – (1) Amazwi Abesifazane (2) Know Your Body community health (3) Business course for crafters (4) Tito Zungu Trust Fund v CAS Publishing (5) Tangencya

1995 – 2000 Patron to Tito Zungu

1992 – 1999 Patron to Nkosinathi Gumede

1995 KwaZulu-Natal Teacher Upgrade Programme – Fine Art Technikon

1994 Bekha Pambile with Sam Ntshangase 40 women KZ-N South Coast - upgrade skills  
Pkhmani Women's Textile

1993 – 1996 National Arts Coalition (NAC) National Visual Arts Chairperson

1992 – 1993 National Arts Initiative (NIA)

1992 Chairman 2<sup>nd</sup> National Sculpture Convention KZ-N Technikon

1984 – 1986 Founder and Chairman Community Arts Workshop

1983 – 1985 Founder Director Cafe Gallery

1984 – Patron Selbourne Ntshangase

## ILLUSTRATIONS

All images sourced from Andries Botha  
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Known locations discussed in text





Fig : 1  
Fourth Piece  
1978  
Life size  
Fibre glass



Fig : 2  
Man in Chair  
1978  
Life size  
Resin, Canvas, Wood, Found objects



Fig : 3  
Man in Chair  
1977  
Life size  
Fibre Glass, Resin, Found Objects, Clothes



Fig : 4  
Sitting Anguish  
1978  
Life size  
Polystyrene

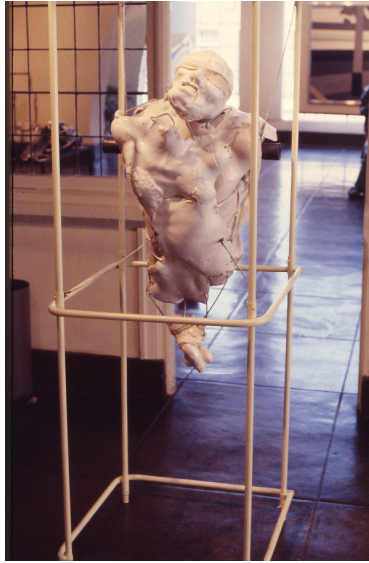
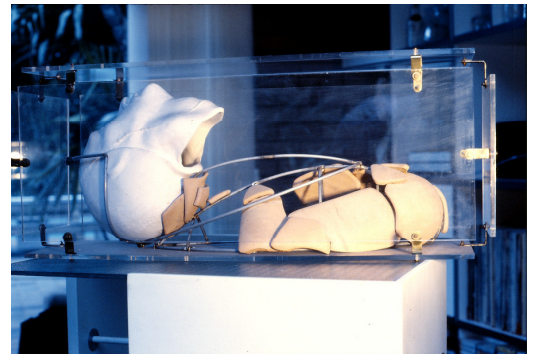
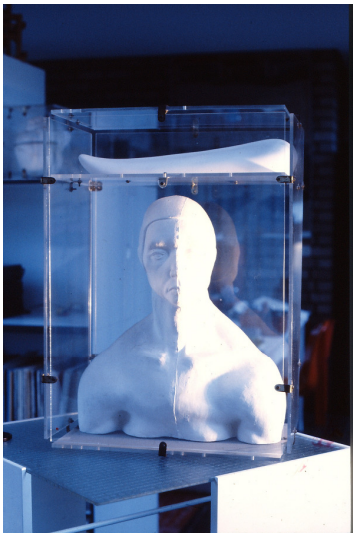


Fig : 5  
Man in Cage  
1978  
Life size torso and head  
Multimedia, Resin, Cloth and Metal



Figs: 6a, b & c  
“Contemplation Series” (Triptych)  
1982  
1/2 Metre Height 3/4 Metre Height 1/2 Metre Height  
Ceramic & Metal in Perspex Box



Fig : 7  
 South African Document – Urban Labour  
 1982  
 H11cm, W27,5cm, L148cm  
 Resin, Metal, Found Materials



Fig : 8  
 Dancing Figure  
 1984  
 Metal, Resin, Bone





Fig : 9  
God Dog  
1984  
H8cm, W15cm, L20cm  
Bronze



Fig : 10  
Dream Sequence  
1984  
H60cm W50cm L100m  
Bronze



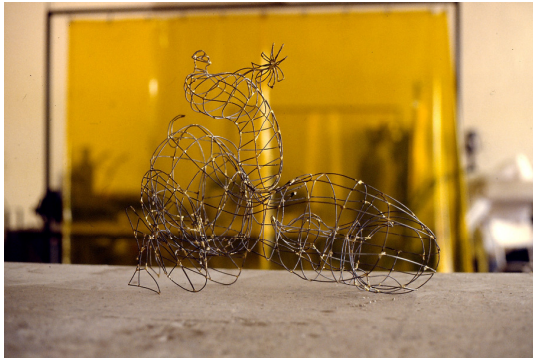
Fig : 11  
Maquette  
1984/5  
H20cm, W15cm, L10cm  
Bone and Ceramic



Fig : 12  
Maquette  
1984/5  
H10cm W15cm L20cm  
Bone, Bronze and Ceramic



Fig : 13  
Bull Leaper  
1989  
H54.9cm W15cm L99cm  
Bronze



Maquettes  
Dromedaris Donder! ...  
en ander dom ding  
1980s  
Fig : 14 Wire  
Fig : 15 Gelaton  
Fig : 16 Wire  
Dimensions unknown



Maquettes  
1985/7  
Fig : 17 Bronze  
Fig : 18 Multimedia  
Fig : 19 Multimedia  
Dimensions Unknown





Fig : 20  
Sweet Toring  
Human Structures Series  
1981  
H 191cm, W46cm  
Metal, Wax, Sand & Wood



Fig : 21  
Horing Toring  
Human Structures Series  
1984  
H2m  
Wattle and grass

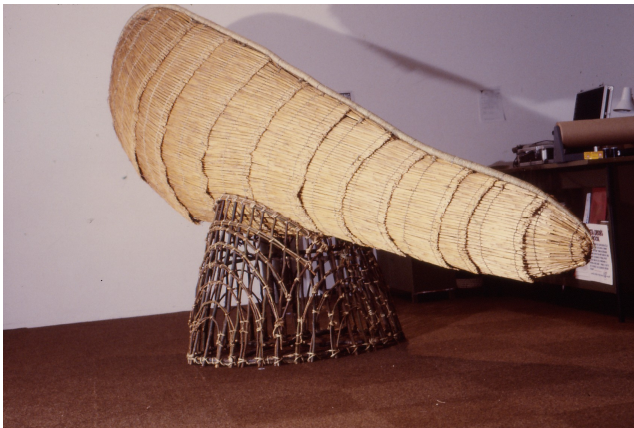


Fig : 22  
Final Journey  
Human Structures Series  
1984  
L3m  
Thatching Grass and Wattle

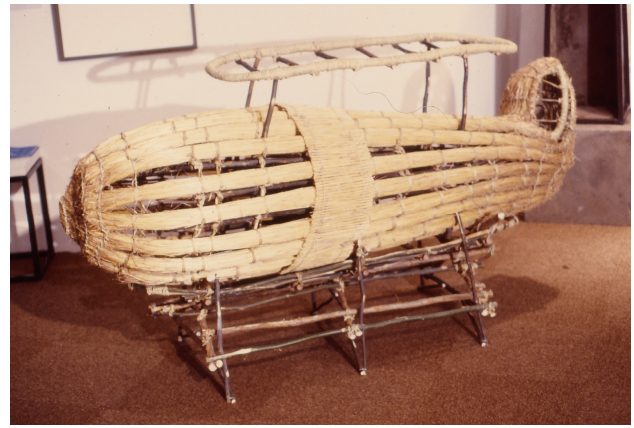


Fig : 23  
Resurrection  
Human Structures Series  
1986  
Life size  
Thatching Grass & Wattle



Fig : 24  
Journey Through Time  
Human Structures Series  
1984  
H 2m  
Thatching Grass



Fig : 25  
Force of Victory  
Human Structures Series  
1984  
H 2m  
Thatching Grass



Fig : 26  
Familiar Memories  
Human Structures Series  
1984/5  
H280cm, W170cm, L Variable  
Thatching Grass, Wood, Metal





Fig : 27  
 South African Elegy  
 1986  
 H172,5cm, W72,5cm Variable, L538cm Variable  
 Thatching Grass, Metal & Wattle



Fig : 28  
 Dwaes Drome van Boesmans en Ministers  
 1987  
 H197cm, W43cm, L410cm  
 Wattle, Thatching Grass, Plastic, Metal & Reflectors





Fig : 29  
Torso  
Late 1983  
Pencil Drawing

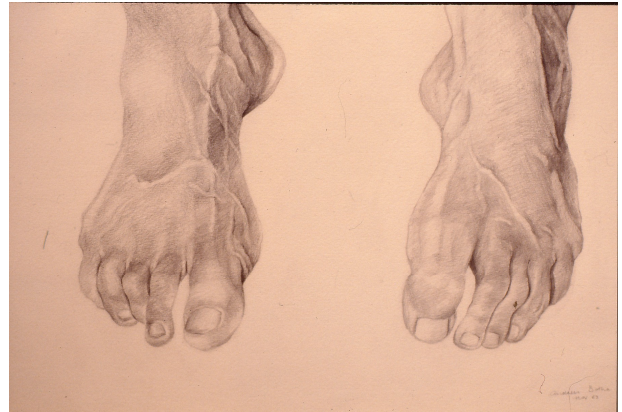


Fig : 30  
Feet  
Late 1983  
Pencil Drawing

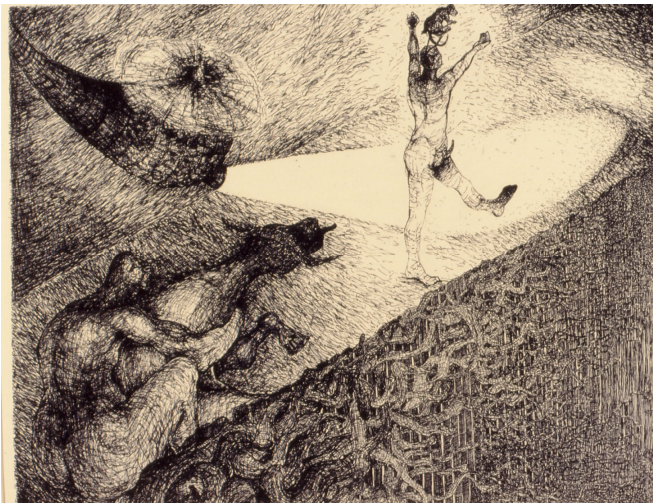


Fig : 31  
Preliminary Drawing for  
Dromedaris Donder! ... en ander Dom Dinge  
1987  
Approx. 50 x 50 cm  
Pen and Ink

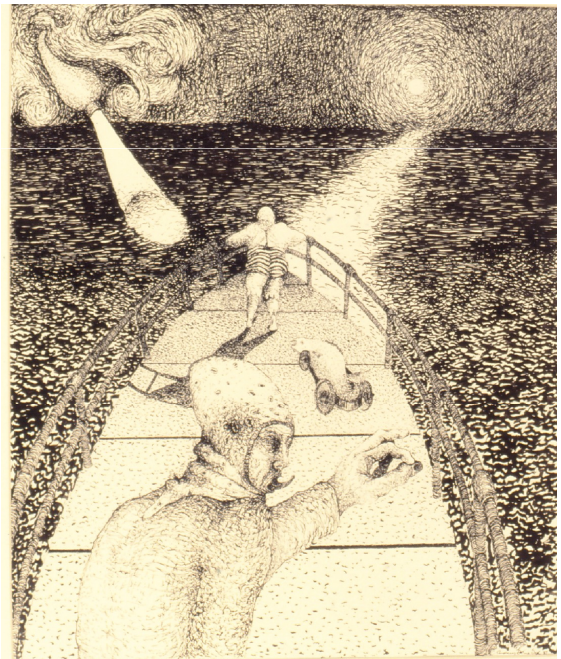


Fig : 32  
Demoina: After the flood  
1987  
Approx. 50 x 50 cm  
Pen and Ink





Figs: 33, 34, 35 and 36  
Carol's Bar Series  
1987

Fig : 33 Approx. Height 50 cm  
Others : Approx. Height 80 cm  
Pastel on paper







Fig : 37  
 Dromedaris Donder! ... en ander Dom Dinge  
 1987/8  
 H316cm, W130cm L Variable  
 Rubber, Metal, Wattle, Brass



Detail Fig. 37



Detail Fig. 37



Figs : 38  
 Genesis, Genesis, Jesus ....  
 1989/90  
 H200 cm, W123 cm, L270 cm  
 Leadwood, Thatching grass, Metal







Fig : 39  
 Sondebokke, Sluipmoordenaars, Seges en Slagoffers  
 1991  
 H236 cm W162 cm L180 cm  
 Leadwood, Metal, Wax, Wattle

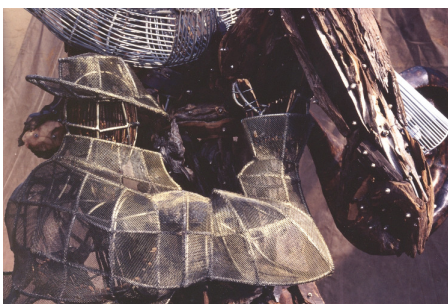


Fig. 39 Details



Fig : 40  
 “Untitled”  
 c.1990  
 H150,2cm W121,5cm  
 Charcoal on brown paper



Fig : 41  
 Minister, Minister, waar sal jy skuil  
 1991  
 H33cm, L64,2cm  
 Serigraph in nine colours  
 Edition 14





Fig : 42  
 Baptism for the Fallen ... and Those Taken Darkly  
 Stage 3  
 1991  
 H94cm, W183cm, L446cm  
 Metal,Thatching grass, Soda can tops



Fig : 42 Details





Fig : 43  
For all those taken darkly  
1991  
Bronze  
Stage 1  
Dimensions Unknown



Fig : 44  
For all those taken darkly  
1991  
H36cm, L74cm, W61cm  
Bronze  
Stage 2



Fig : 45  
Baptism for the Fallen...  
and those taken darkly  
See Fig.42  
Stage 3



Fig : 46  
Baptism for the Fallen...  
and those taken darkly  
1991  
Bronze  
Stage 4  
Monumental Sculpture





Fig : 47  
 Alleenspraak in Paradys  
 1991  
 H232cm, L710cm, W190cm  
 Rubber, Wood, Metal, Neon



Figs : 47 Details



Fig : 48  
Some thoughts on loneliness  
1991  
H26.5cm, W45cm, L45cm  
Bronze



Fig : 49  
The Fear of Gods  
1991  
H25cm, W23cm, L45cm  
Bronze



Fig : 50  
A Delicate moment in History  
1991  
H24cm, W29,5cm, L34cm  
Bronze





Fig : 51  
 What is a home without a father?  
 1995  
 H400cm, L750cm(wall piece)  
 Plastic, Resin, Wax, Cane, Metal, Lead



Figs : 51  
 Details



Fig : 52  
 Trials of Male Courtship : or,  
 To Touch or to Conquer  
 1994  
 H300cm, W500cm, L600cm  
 (Floor and wall piece, dimensions variable)  
 Galvaniszd steel and wire, Resin, Wax, Metal, Lead

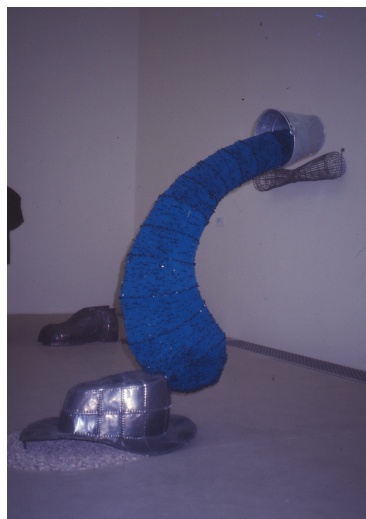


Fig : 52 Details







Fig : 53  
 The Dance  
 1995  
 H250cm, W200cm, L200cm  
 Aluminium plate, Plastic sheet, Metal, Wax, Found objects, Lead, Cane



Fig : 53 Details



Fig : 54  
 Embarkation  
 1995  
 H 350cm, W180cm, L700cm  
 Rope, Wattle, Galvanized sheeting, Plastic sheeting, Canvas, Stainless steel mesh, Metal,  
 Found objects, Resin, Lead , Polypropylene.



Fig : 54  
 Alternate view





Fig: 55 Detail

Fig : 55

A History of Monuments... and Wounds that are Forgiven  
1996

H117cm, W148cm, L395cm

Lithographic aluminium plates, Mild steel, Galvanized wire, Resin,  
Electronic components



Fig: 55 Details



Fig : 56  
Still Life  
1995/6  
H200cm, W150cm, L150cm  
Steel, Acacia Pods, Straw



Fig : 56 Details





Fig : 57  
To Touch the Heart  
1995/6  
South African grasses, dried corn, mild steel  
H550cm, W350cm, L350cm (Container work)



Fig : 57 Details





Fig : 58

Home

1997

H 300cm, W400cm, L500cm

Wood, Artificial grass and flowers, Mild steel sheeting, Laminated lead , Neon

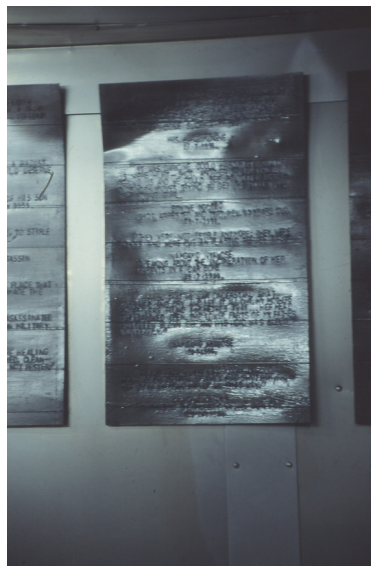


Fig : 58 Details





Fig : 59  
Polo Pony  
1997  
Life size  
Bronze

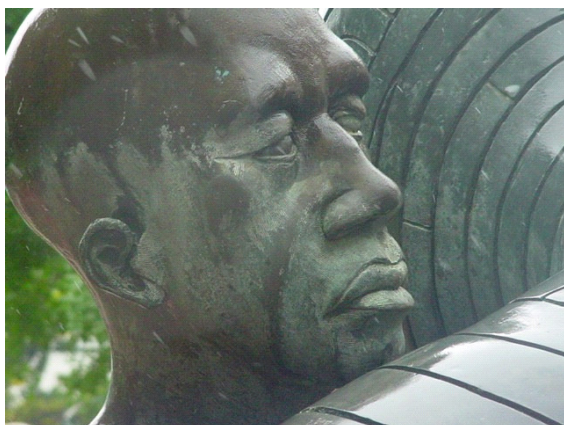


Fig : 60  
For Those Who Will not hear  
1998  
Monumental Sculpture  
Bronze





Fig : 61  
MTN Commission  
Three floors  
1999  
Multi media





Fig : 62  
Ikhukhula (the Flood)  
1993  
Male H59cm, W42.4cm,  
L70cm  
Female H47.3cm W38.4cm  
L23cm  
Bronze

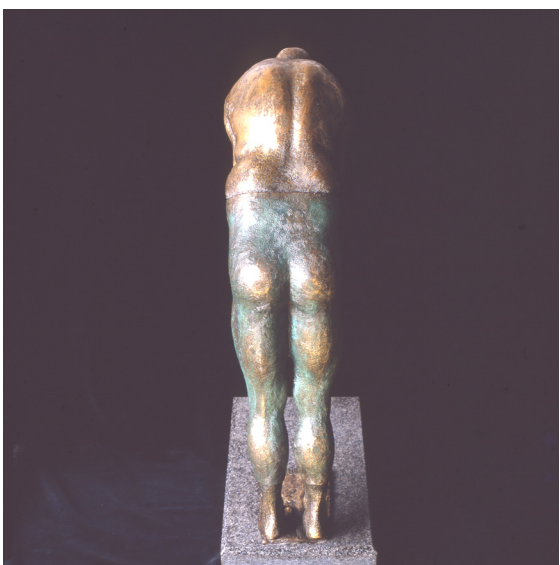


Fig : 62 Details





*Andries Botha*



a

b

Fig : 63 (a-e)  
Bloodlines Portfolio  
1998  
H95cm, W65cm (approx.)  
Screenprint and Lithograph



**c**



d



e

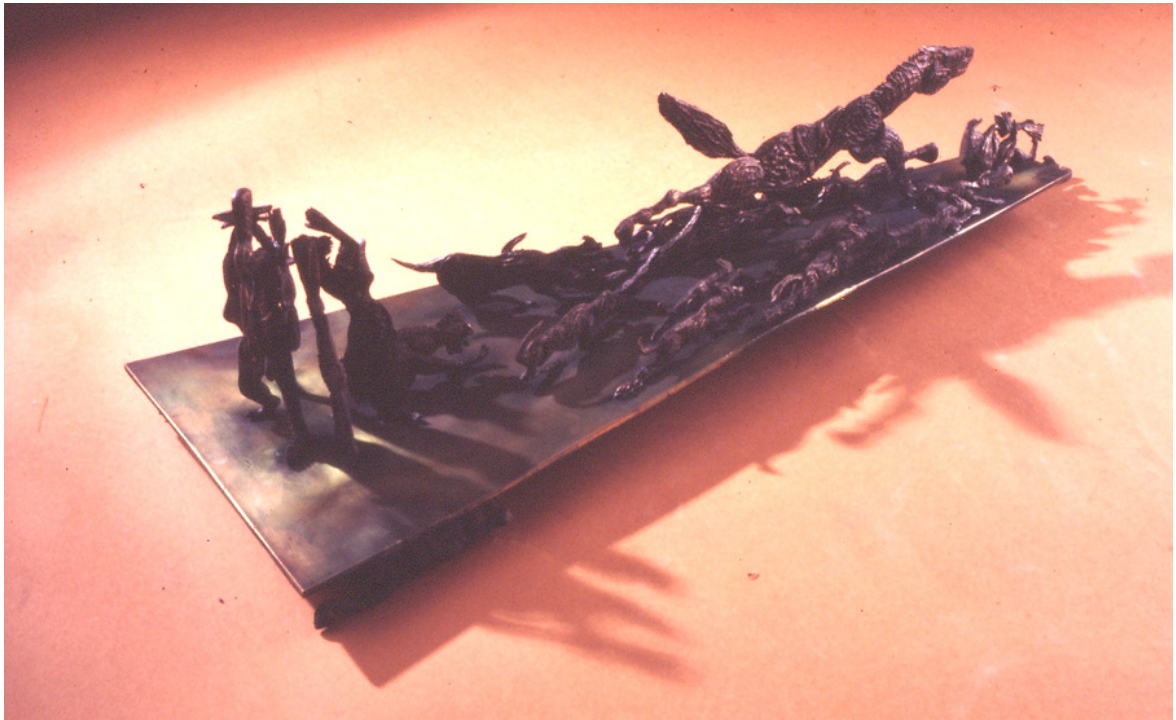


Fig : 64  
Stampede  
1985  
H25cm, L70c, W11cm  
Bronze





Fig : 65  
 White skin blue  
 1998  
 H2m, W5m, D6m  
 Cotton paper, latex, electronic components



Fig : 65 Detail





Figs : 65 Details





Fig : 66  
Skin  
1998  
L500cm  
Latex pieces



Fig : 66 Detail





Fig : 67  
 South African Skin  
 1998  
 H200cm each (approx.)  
 Photographs

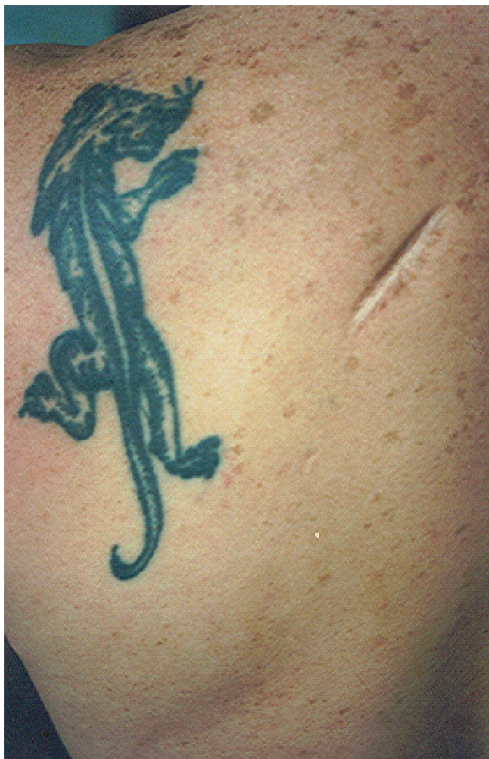




Fig : 68  
“ KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa 1896-1999”  
2000  
H200cm W900cm  
Cotton paper, Latex, Rubber, Video components



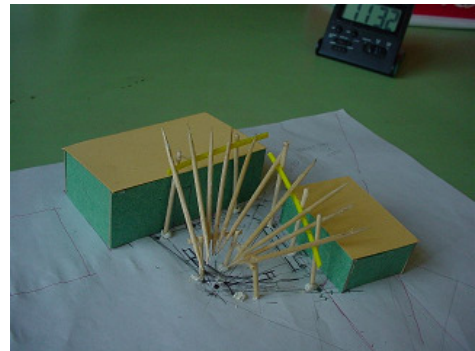
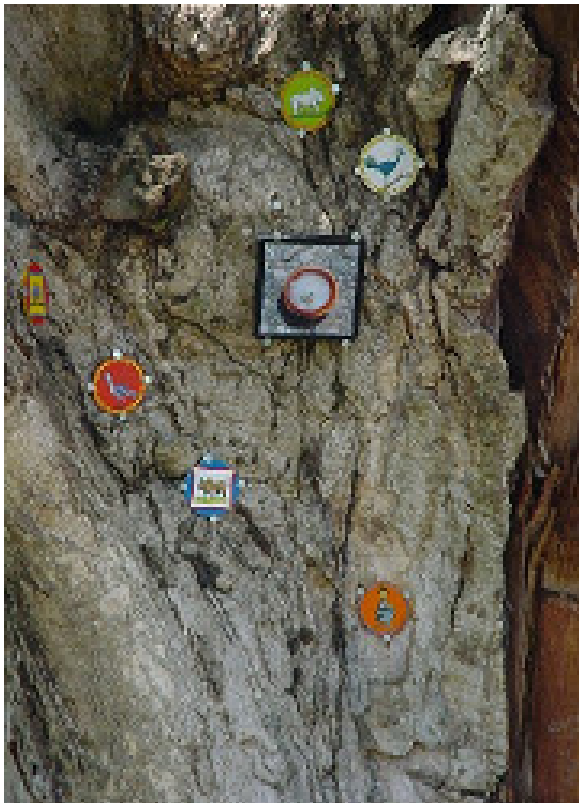


Fig : 69  
Tangencya  
a) Maria van Gass.  
Trench, retaining wall and model for roof  
b) Jeremy Wafer  
The conceptual markers were developed and taken from an artistic performance.

Fig : 5 Detail





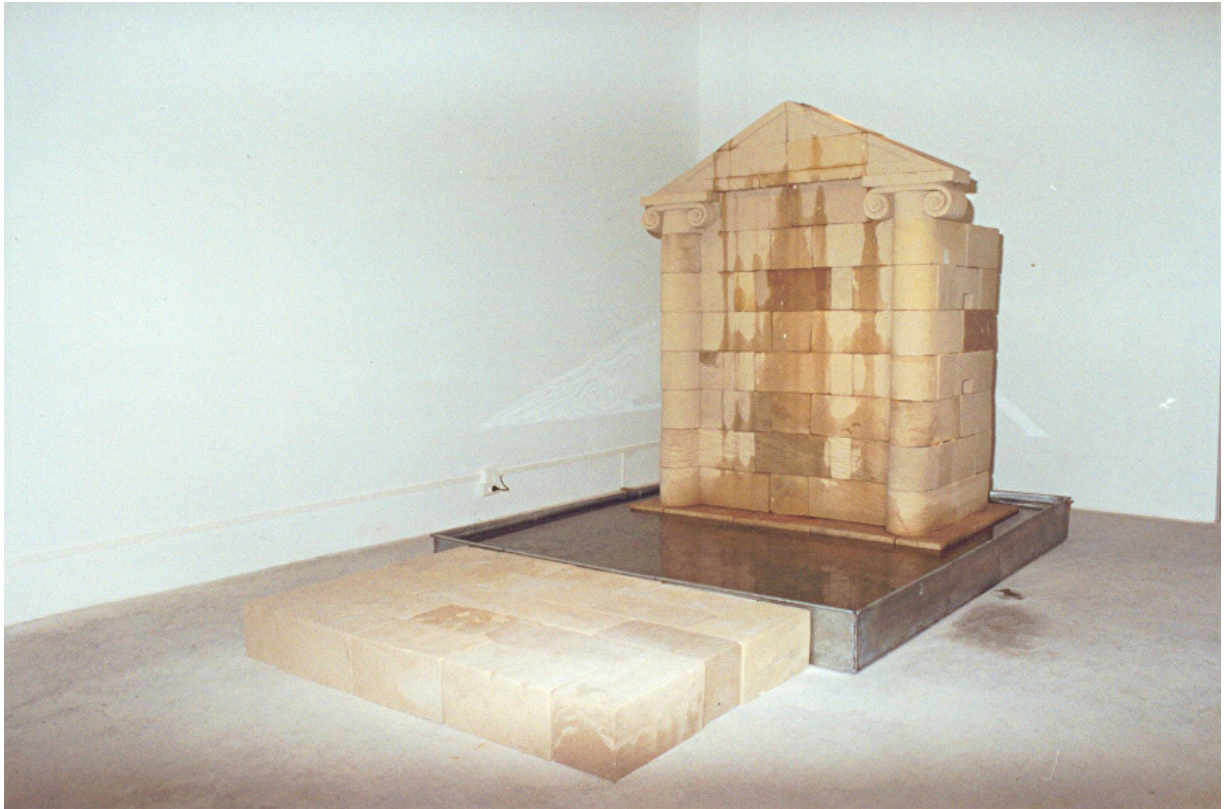


Fig : 70  
 Meditations on Power  
 2001  
 H2m x W2m x L3,3m  
 Sea sand, resin, galvanized steel, water



Fig : 70 Details





Fig : 71  
 “Meditations on Migrations : Prayers”  
 2001  
 H6m W2,8m L2m  
 Mild steel, Galvanized sheeting, Plastic, Water, Cardboard,  
 Plaster of Paris, Electronic components, Perishable food



Fig : 72  
School Girl  
2001  
H90cm W40cm L50cm  
Bronze

Fig : 72 Details







Fig : 73  
Oranje, Blanje, Blou  
2001  
21 piece installation, “Garden of Eden” project,  
Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, Netherlands



Fig : 73 Details

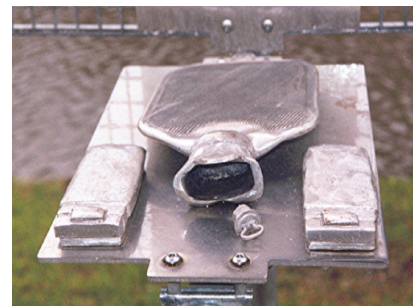






Fig : 74  
Vodacom Commission  
2001  
Stainless steel, Cow Skin, Electronic components, Sand

Fig : 74 Details

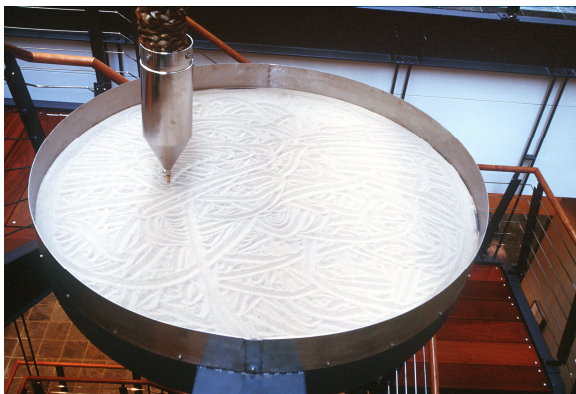




Fig : 75

Acre: Imperial Unit of Land Measurement

2002

H180cm W70cm L60cm

Concrete, Steel, Plastic, Paper and Mechanized unit



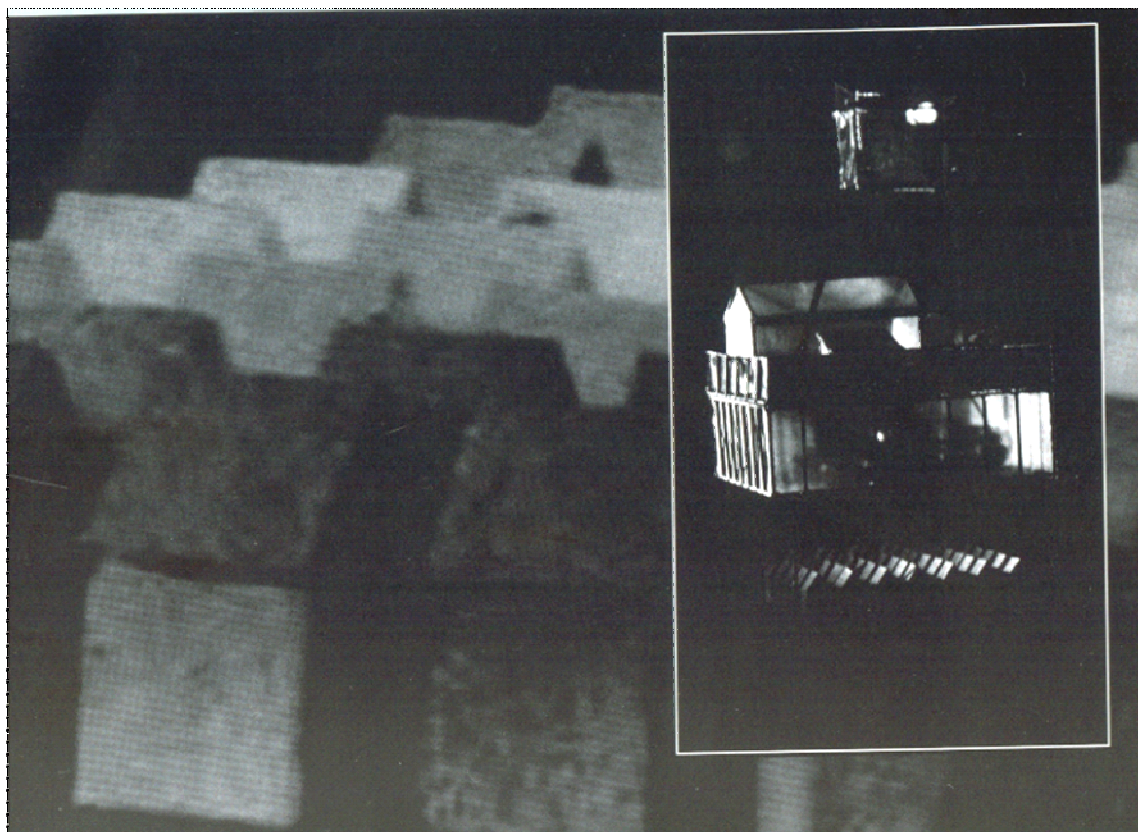


Fig : 75  
Details

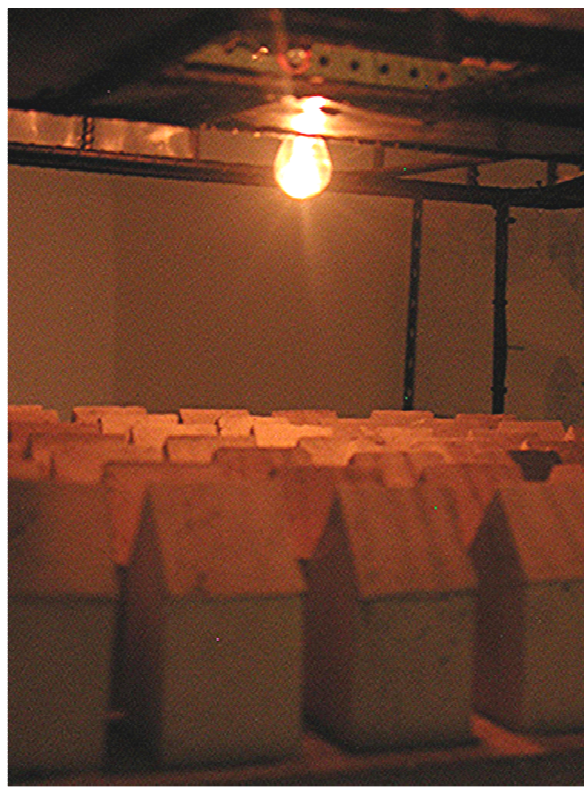
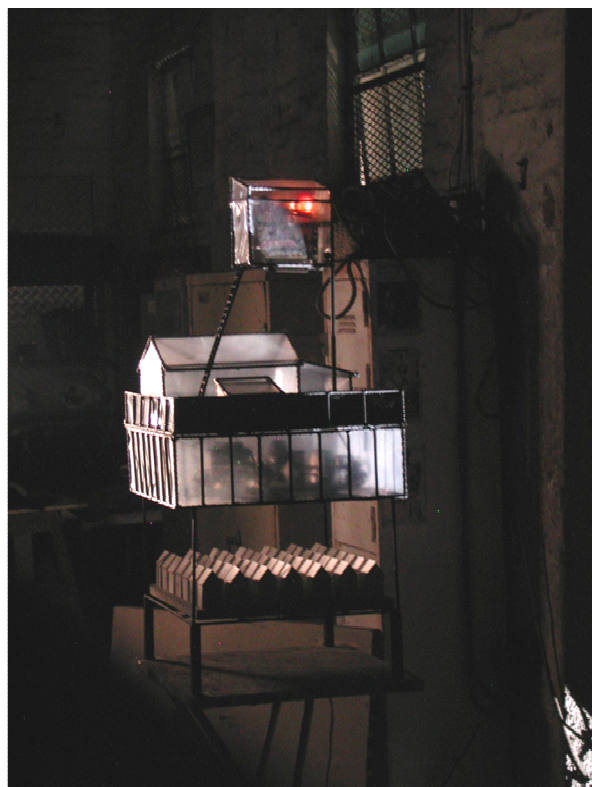






Fig : 76  
 Surface area is equal to land, multiplied by  
 memory, divided by time  
 2002  
 H250cm W70cm L50cm  
 Mild steel, Stainless steel, Cow hide ,  
 Sand, Water, Electrical components.









Fig : 77 Details (Process)







Fig : 78  
Terrain : Spaces of ownership and dispossession  
Albisola Biennale, Italy  
2003  
Ceramic, Steel, Video







Fig : 79

History has an aspect of oversight in the process of progressive blindness

2004

220cm x 240cm x 700cm

6 Chairs covered with cow skin, Electrical / mechanical rotation device, 1 ball and claw display cabinet, 48 wax curio portrait busts, 48 wax full scale portrait busts, 55 (approx.) ash building blocks, Metal support structure, 1 standing fan

Fig : 79 Details







Fig : 80 (Detail)

Afrikaander circa 1600

2006

H 250cm W300cm D 300cm

Mild Steel, Found objects, Concrete composite, African Rose Wood, Cow skin, Ply wood, Paint, Wax, Plaster of Paris, Zink sheets, Beads, Cotton fabric, Mechanized unit





Fig : 80 Details







Fig : 81  
 Ungayithenga inhlizyo nomongo wami – (African Curios)  
 Translated: You can buy my heart and my soul  
 2006  
 Mild Steel, 14 species of indigenous wood, Galvanized bolts

