

FROM STONE TO SEWN

FROM STONE TO SEWN

Unpicking the Traces of 12 Northern Cape Embroideries

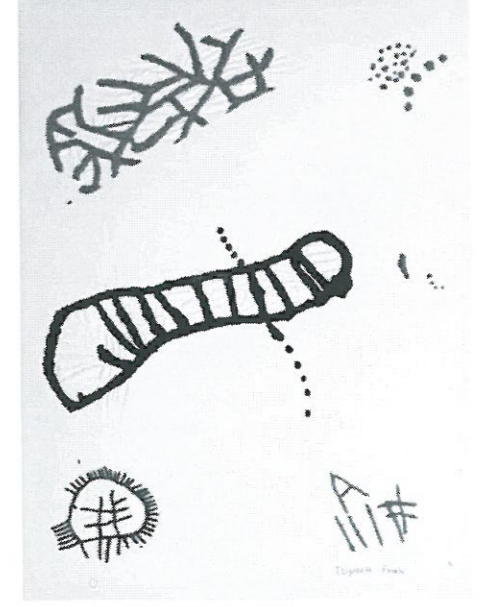
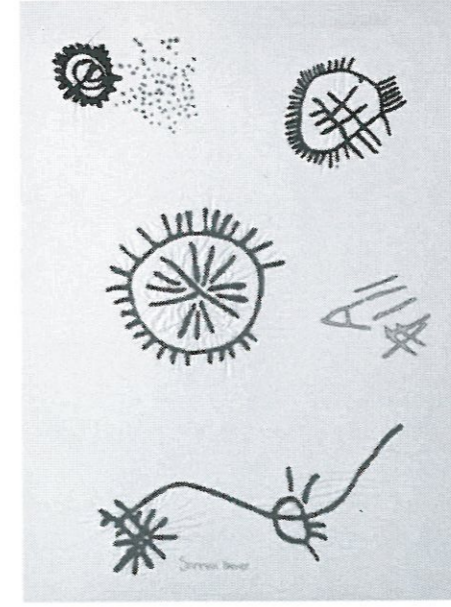
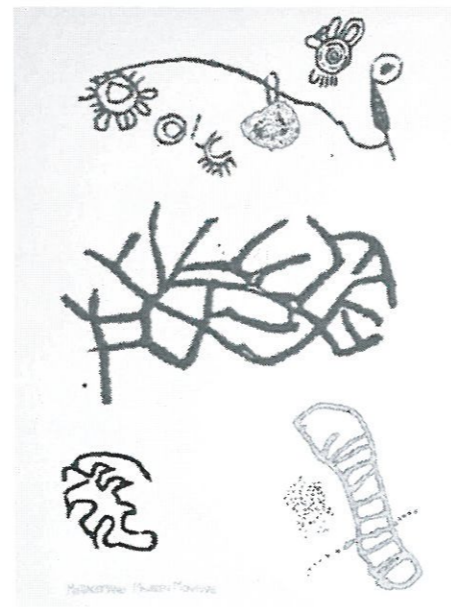
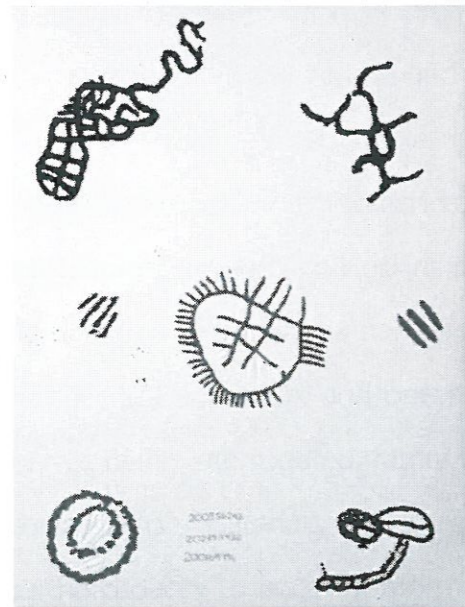
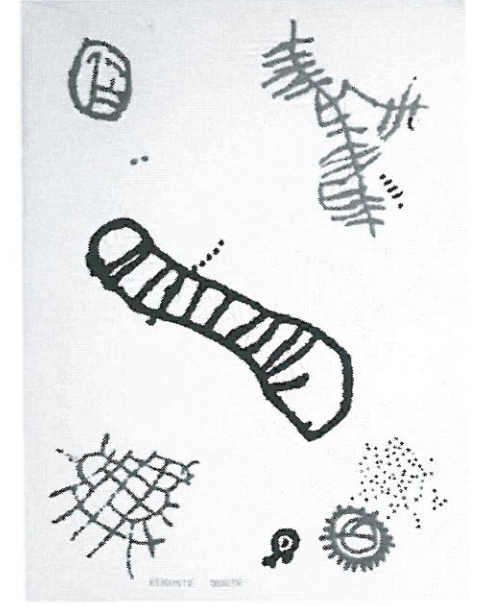
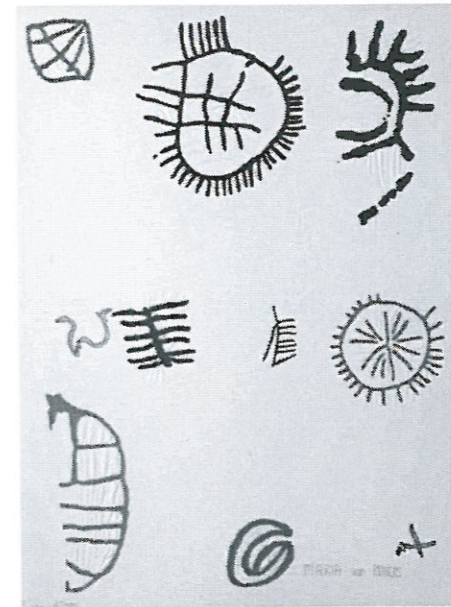
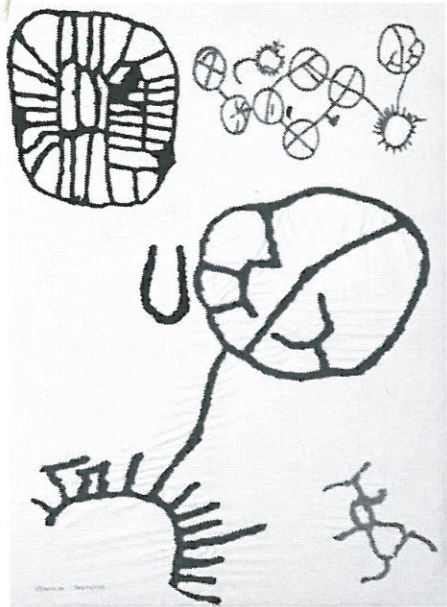
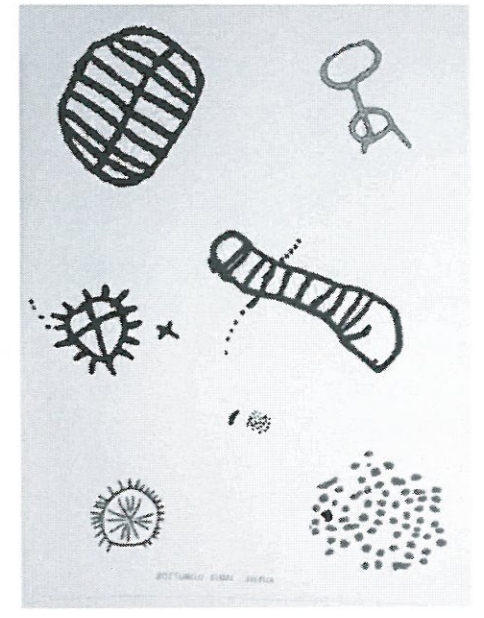
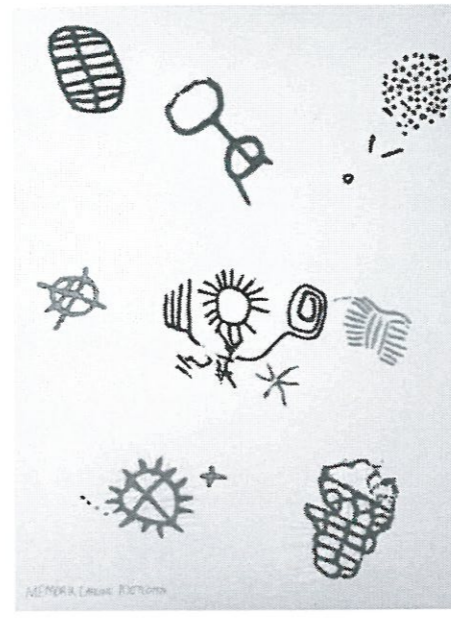
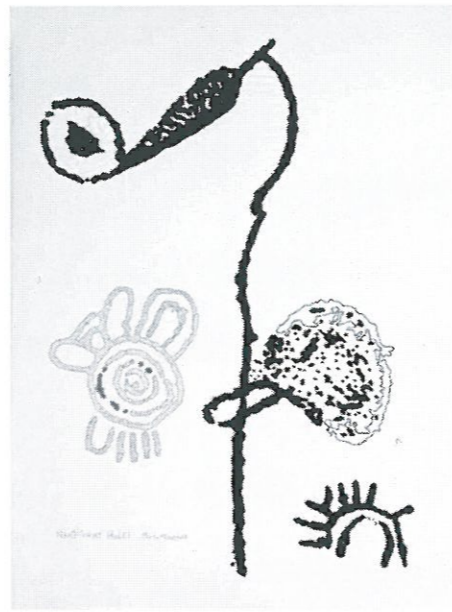
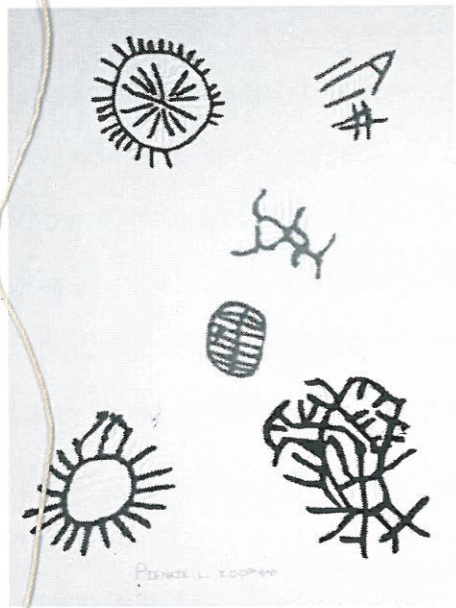




Naudia Yorke, 607980

Writing Art's Histories
HART 7024/ HART 4018

Co-ordinator: Stacey Vorster

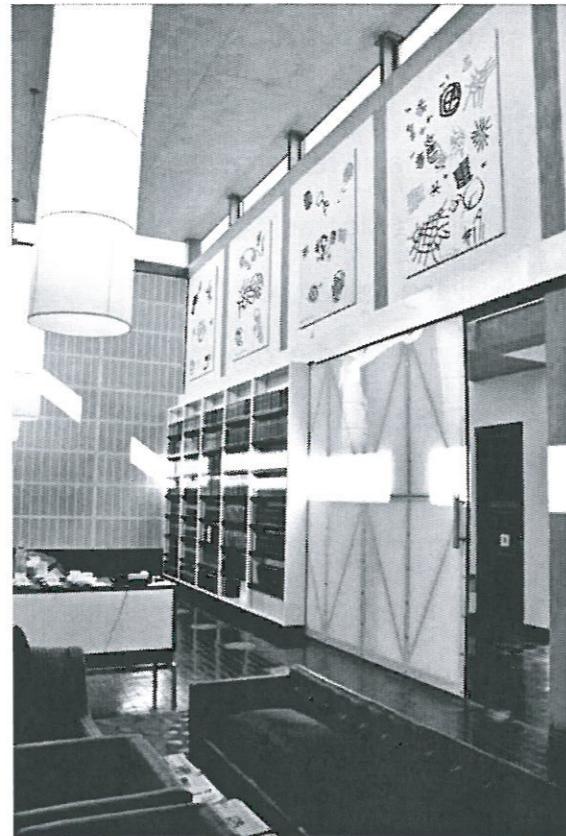


There is no singular method for navigating one's way in this world – through the multiple times and contexts, and the fusillade of people and information – nor is there a singular method for reading an individual's multi-layered history. In the same way, an object cannot be read in a singular way, but rather acknowledged for being complex, layered, and having multiple and disparate encounters with people and places, and having the capacity to hold and convey layers of information.

As part of a History of Art course, Writing Art's Histories, a group of students conducted research on the Constitutional Court Art Collection, held in the Constitutional Court, Braamfontein, South Africa. Each student selected an object from the collection – either from the primary collection on display in the foyer, or other objects housed within the Court itself, the offices, or the chambers. The project was set up with a framework in which we were able research the object itself, and extend and complicate this research to develop an object biography. The object which I had chosen – of which there are more than one – are being researched by both myself, and a fellow student, Kerry-Lee Clark. The particular nature of the objects provides many material and social layers that will be unpacked through both of our lines of inquiry.

In framing the project and my own object's research as an object biography, specific acts of investigation can be taken in order to provide productive directions in formulating research surrounding the object and its biography. A professor of anthropology and religion, Janet Hoskin, in her chapter of the *Handbook of Material Culture* (2009), frames two methods through which objects can be interviewed and interrogated in a way that is generative for the researcher. Hoskins describes the first approach as "ethnographic", where the individual can formulate a narrative through the people the object is linked to (2009: 78). Her second approach, and one that I situate my research in, is through the objects themselves being interrogated, rather than examining the people through who the object was constructed – materially and socially (ibid). In this way, I am prioritising the objects as having the capacity to uncover information through their current way of existing, and the

multiple links to different times and spaces that they are able to be examined through and expanded upon. I trace these moments in order to better understand how the objects came into being, but how they are also able to travel to multiple places and into multiple spheres of meaning-making, without necessarily leaving their structured space at the Constitutional Court of South Africa.



Embroidery Panels in Situ
Image Courtesy of Leonard Shapiro

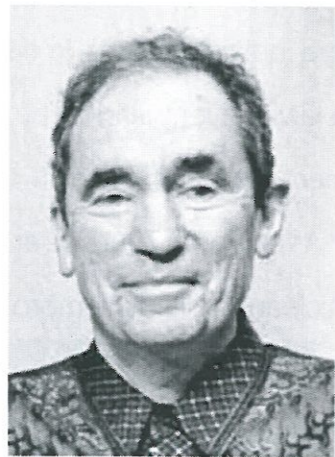
UNPICKING THE PICTURE

The objects which I am researching are 12 large embroidery panels. They are displayed in the Judge's Deliberation Chamber in the Constitutional Court of South Africa, Johannesburg. This chamber is one where meetings are conducted amongst Judges, discussing court proceedings and individual cases. In this space, there are also a number of reference texts and volumes on law and legislation. The embroideries arrived into the Court Collection through an agreement between Crispian Olver, the Director General of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism at the time, and Justice Albie Sachs (Sachs 2016). A group of 12 participants skilled in embroidery and textile work were selected to complete the panels. They were invited to reside in the Constitutional Court for the duration of the three-day workshop in which 11 of the 12 panels were produced – the 12th having been produced prior to this (Sachs 2004-2005).

This agreement between Olver and Sachs developed into a project that attempted to link the Northern Cape Province to the Constitutional Court; this was undertaken as the Constitutional Court Art Collection (CCAC) was attempting to represent all the provinces in South Africa (Sachs 2004). The project directed by Leonard Shapiro – the Product Developer for the Craft Sector of the Northern Cape Arts and Culture Council at that time – who along with Liz Bosman of the William Humphreys Art Gallery in Kimberley, organised the participation of the 12 embroiderers (Shapiro 2016). Shapiro, while facilitating a number of connections with individuals and institutions, managed to contact Dr David Morris, who was a professor in the Archaeology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand, to provide a number of resources on which the embroideries came to be based (Morris 2016). These resources are pivotal to understanding the embroideries, as they are based very specifically off of rock engravings from Kimberley, in the Northern Cape. These rock engravings, and the subsequential representations provide both a link to the Northern Cape as a province, but is the tether on which I will be tugging on to formulate the ideas that produce the embroideries' object biography.



Crispian Olver
Former Director
of Environmental
Affairs and Tourism



Albie Sachs
Former Judge at
the Constitutional Court
of South Africa



Leonard Shapiro
Former Product Developer for
the Craft Sector of the
Northern Cape Arts and
Culture Council



Liz Bosman
Former Community Projects
Leader at William
Humphreys Art Gallery



David Morris
Head of Archaeology
for the McGregor Museum

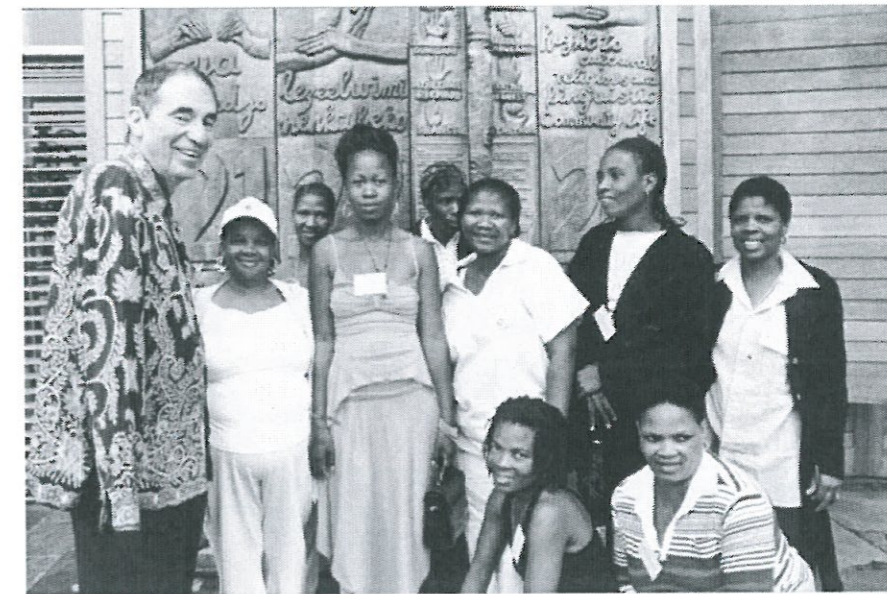
The embroideries, as they currently exist, are situated well above head-height – almost one story higher than the ground floor. This affects the individual's experience of the objects, and one's ability to access each object for examination. They are carefully mounted and sit flush to the walls, and are thus cumbersome for an individual to remove on their own and to look at closely. The panels measure 1,4 meters by 1,9 meters, and each fit into a panel on the wall that is slightly larger than the objects themselves. One of the Court's architects, Janina Masojada of OMM Design Workshop and Urban Solutions, designed the chamber wall so that the panels fit precisely into a demarcated space (Maal 2004-2005). This seems to provide both a secondary framing and a larger landscape with which the panels are able to merge.

The panels are displayed as a set, where the fabric and size is the same in each case, and a similar visual aesthetic is used throughout. They are comprised of a fairly thick, woven fabric, that is stretched over a frame. The warp and weft of the fabric is visible enough to isolate a slightly perceptible linearity, which sits below the embroidered shapes. This linearity brings about the recognition of a surface that has been work on and into, and has the capacity to make the viewer aware not only of the *additive* nature of embroidery, but enhance the material nature of cotton-on-cotton, or thread-on-thread. The fabric is folded over the edges of the frame, and thus does not create an internal border, as opposed to its outer 'framing' that is made with each panel's wall space. The underside of the panels shows neatly folded corners, and the firmly glued edges of the fabric onto the frame. The entire undersides of the panels are covered by a thick card, or firm fabric, which means none of the embroidery process is visible, even when it is not in its typical display position – which inhibits a sense of the working process to those who are able to access the objects for examination.

The shapes that are apparent on each panel are made up single stitches of hand embroidery, which covers the entire surface of individual shapes. Each stitch is slightly slanted, and lies adjacent and flush to the following stitch. The larger shapes, in some cases,

are subdivided and form a number of internal 'streams'. One colour is allocated to individual shapes, and is sometimes repeated within the same panel, but single shapes never have more than one colour. Most of the tones of the embroidery thread seem to be derived from ones similar to those apparent in a landscape – pointing towards naturally-occurring primary colours, and the multiples of browns, greens, and greys of an unimpinged landscape scene.

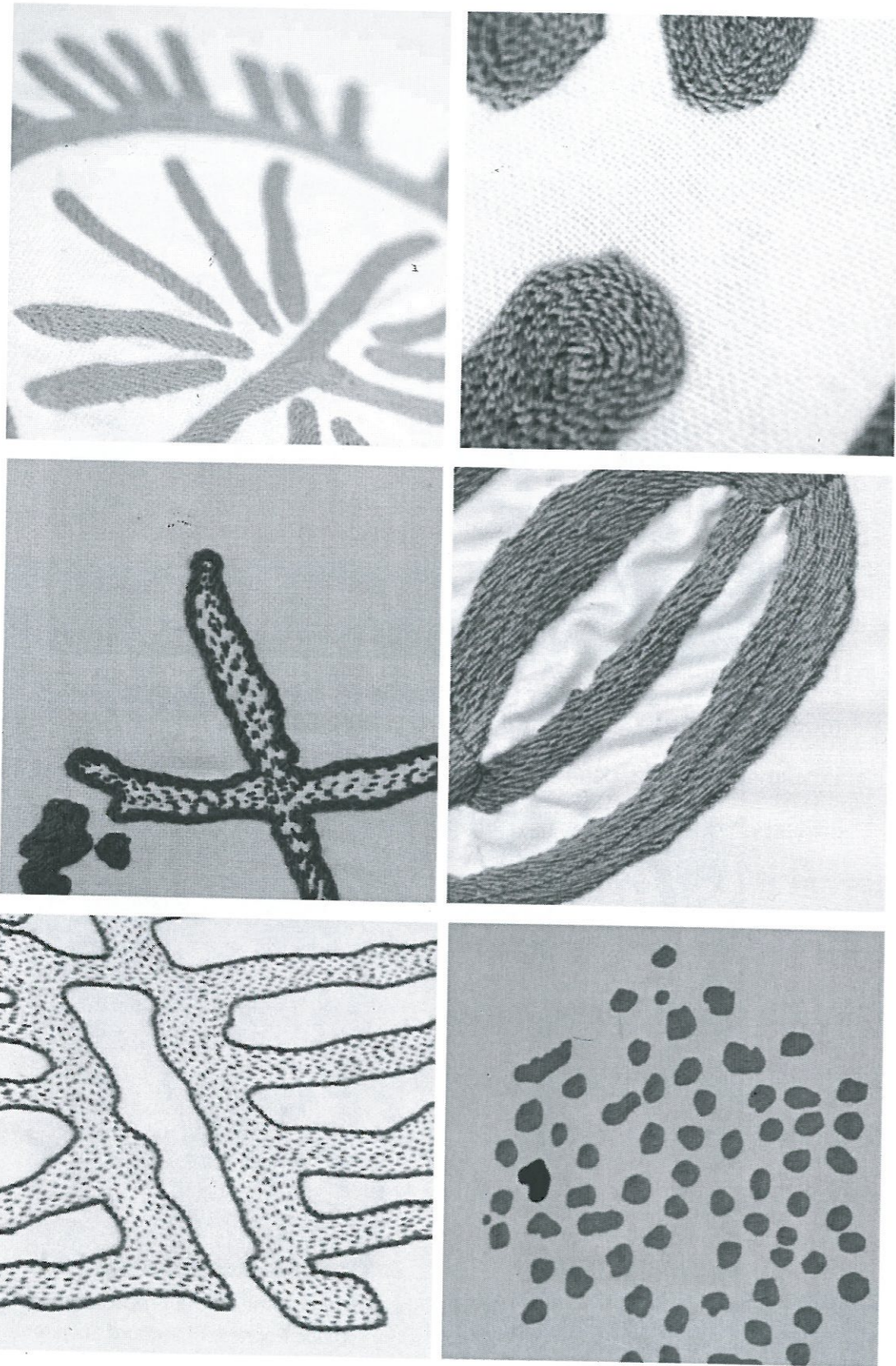
The existence of these panels link intimately with a site-specific set of engravings, and a multitude of transference and translation processes that allowed these engravings to travel, and make their way into their current embroidered form. A number of individuals from the group of 12 embroiderers visited a site in Kimberley called Driekopseiland – a flat, black glacial plane, near the Riet River, with a multitude of geometric pecked shapes in the stone – where individuals examined the engravings and the shapes that they would come to reproduce in the form of embroideries (Morris 2016). At the Constitutional Court, during the three-day workshop, the embroiderers utilised a number of resources from Morris, ranging from actual rubbings of the engravings, to images in academic texts, and photographs of the engravings themselves (ibid). A larger portion of the imagery was drawn from Driekopseiland and surrounding rock art sites in Kimberley, and in this way, was the primary reference point for the panels.



Albie Sachs and some of the embroiderers at the Constitutional Court
Image Courtesy of Leonard Shapiro



Leonard Shapiro and some of the embroiderers
Image Courtesy of Leonard Shapiro



Close-ups of embroidery panels
 Images by Naudia Yorke

THREADS AND TRACES

Social anthropologist, Alfred Gell, notes that objects such as textile products or functional textiles are often seen as material culture, rather than 'high art', and should instead be regarded as equally important as "their making is a particularly salient feature of their agency" (1998: 68). An object's production process is inherent in its outcome, and cannot be thought of as peripheral to its existence. Through tracing the trajectories within a process of making, and the process of the object existing, it can be accessed as having a significant and complex history or biography. The idea of "things-in-motion", which social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai proposes, becomes a methodology for establishing a specific type of close-looking in investigating the embroidery panels (1986: 5). By ensuring that the embroideries are never halted in their "motion", or their continual process of gaining or denying meaning, they are ever-evolving and accessible in multiple moments, with multiple consequential outcomes.

Through this examination of the embroideries, I emphasise their conception and production as integral to understanding the sphere of meaning that they currently occupy and have the capacity to occupy. In this, there is also a prioritising of the multiple materials that the embroideries consist of, and have been passed through, in order to be received as they are currently. The textile-specific production, and the act of embroidering, becomes a method of formulating a framework in which the panels can be examined.

Drawing from Tim Ingold's text, *Lines: A Brief History* (2007), I situate the importance of process, through an understanding of the complexity of lines, and what they can point towards. The line is prevalent both in the rock engraving sites, through the incisions into the stone surface, and in the embroideries, through the accumulation of small, slanted stitches. The line comes to act not only as part of the outcome in each case, but is deeply inherent in the making of each object. Ingold traces the commonality of the line in multiple

acts – from walking and weaving to singing and writing, and in these, prioritises two ideas through which lines come to be active: threads and traces (2007: 1).

Through creating a type of taxonomy of the differences between a thread and a trace, Ingold sets up the conceptual framework from which I will establish a guiding method to move between the engravings and embroideries. With these iterations, I set up the ways in which the embroideries draw from the engravings, how they can run parallel to each-other in making meaning, and how each of these forms can uncover ideas about the other.

Ingold explains that a “thread is a filament of some kind, which may be entangled with other threads or suspended between points in three-dimensional space”, while a trace can be “any enduring mark left in or on a solid surface by a continuous movement – [m]ost traces are of one or other of two kinds: additive and reductive” (2007: 39 & 43). This speaks to how both the engraving and embroidery can be complicated when considering their processes of making (incising and stitching), and the dependence on the materials in which they are made to convey these methods – but primarily how the embroideries are able to hold aspects of both of these ideas, through their processes of transference and travelling. The embroideries’ material is thread, where its addition to the surface of the fabric allows it to be raised and thus exist in a three-dimensional realm. The volumes of the thread, as a material on the fabric, shift between entanglement into a solid shape, and a repetition of single filaments. The thread, in each case, is apparent and forms the core of how we understand the embroideries as both an object and as the outcome of a specific process of making.

The rock engravings read as traces – specifically, as a reductive trace, as Ingold states that “lines that are scratched, scored or etched into a surface are reductive, since in this case they are formed by removal of material from the surface itself” (2007: 43). The act of removing portions of the stone in a specific and guided manner resulted, too, in how we understand them as objects, and as outcomes to a specific process. The stone shapes came



Embroidery thread from archive file
Images by Naudia Yorke

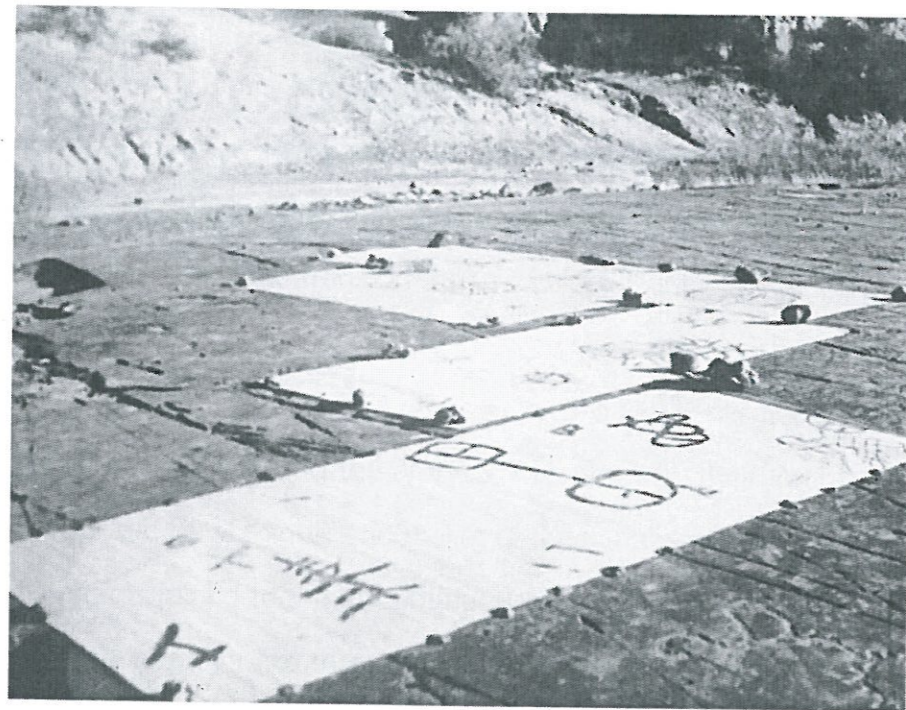
to act as traces through an intricate process of a stone tool removing the stone surface (Morris 2016). This stone-on-stone, or trace-on-trace, is both additive and reductive, and links in an interconnected way the embroideries' addition of thread onto a fabric surface.

This leads onto the means through which the engravings travelled 'into' the embroideries – through the act of tracing in an additive manner (such as charcoal or graphite into paper), the engravings came to sit on a middle-plane of materiality. In moving from a gauged-out surface, onto a flat plan as a rubbing, the engravings could now more easily shift into the three-dimensional, raised embroideries. Similarly, Ingold follows this process, where the embroiderer "starts with traces on a surface, as on the page of her pattern book, but in her activity with the needle she translates those traces into threads. In so doing, moreover, she contrives to make the surface of the fabric disappear. For when we look at embroidered cloth we see the lines as threads, not as traces, almost as though the cloth had itself been rendered transparent" (2007: 52)

These notions link in a direct way with the idea of surface – as it is this which facilitates the movement between threads and traces. Ingold goes on to point to this interconnectivity in an eloquent way, through saying that "threads may be transformed into traces, and traces into threads. It is through the transformation of threads into traces, I argue, that surfaces are brought into being. And conversely, it is through the transformation of traces into threads that surfaces are dissolved" (2007: 52). An idea that explicates precisely the coming-into-being of the engraving and the embroideries through their interactions as lines with surfaces is proposed by of thinker and maker of the Renaissance, Leon Battista Alberti, who states that "[p]oints joined together continuously in a row constitute a line... If many lines are joined closely together like threads in a cloth, they will create a surface" (Alberti 1972: 37–8). This reflects both on the making of each object, where multiple incisions or stitches form lines that make up a larger shape, and through this shape being recognised, creates the surface on which it sits. Wassily Kandinsky, who was a Russian painter and theorist, noted, too, that "a particular capacity of line [is] its capacity to create surface" (Kandinsky

1982: 576). This emphasis on the receptive and transferable surfaces highlights the manners in which the shapes on the rock engravings came to exist, however altered, on the embroidery panels.

These multiple surfaces offer levels of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation, and come to act as the portals through which the shapes 'travel'. Each surface becomes, in this way, a 'surrogate' surface, where the shape is prioritised in the transference, rather than the surface. The surface's capacity to hold these forms, and its facilitation in the transference, provides the entry and exit of these shapes into being. Unlike a sculptural object, the embroideries and rock engravings can be thought of as moulds within each other's process of production. Much like printmaking, the idea of a matrix is something from which something else originates, develops, or takes form – this is like the copper plate where a print or embossing may arise from. In some sense the rock engravings act as matrices to the embroideries, where the transference process is much more complex, time-specific, and steeped in multiple encounters.



Rock engravings and the rubbing process
Images from *Rock Engravings from Driekops Eiland and
Other Sites South-West of Johannesburg, 1962*

WALKING THE WEFTS AND WARPS

In pulling the notion of the line onward and outward, I am enabling a diction through which I can speak both about the engravings and embroideries as objects and processes, and as a means to formulate meaning with the encounters that happen with the objects individually, and between the objects. Ingold suggests that "it is not just that line-making is as ubiquitous as the use of the voice, hands and feet – respectively in speaking, gesturing and moving around – but rather that it subsumes all these aspects of everyday human activity and, in so doing, brings them together into a single field of inquiry" (2007: 1). Through this idea, the line links perceptibly to walking; it is the epitome of a human action that acts out the idea of a line, and is thus a specifically linear action. This notion of walking draws together the engravings and embroideries through the ways that they are experienced, and can be read. The engravings can be felt underfoot, when walking across the glacial plane – the collision of one type of linearity (walking in a direction), with the linearity of the engravings' images (whose depressions in the ground can be felt as linear images), results in both an experience shared between the individual and the objects, and the creation of an avenue through which meaning can be made. When the lines of the engravings merge with walking, it becomes a tactile undulation between a surface and movement. The walker, in this act, takes on the form of a receptive surface, with the line threading together sensory traces, in an effort to communicate its visceral shapes and forms.

The embroideries, in a similar way, utilise the linear quality of walking. The embroideries become active through this travelling in the space when the viewer walks along the stretch of the walls made up by the panels, while maintaining visual contact with each panel as they pass. The combination of the linearity of walking along the length of the chamber's wall, and the linear shifting from one embroidery panel to the next, devises a narrative, or consecutive way of making meaning for the individual. This walking-for-meaning is acted out in a similar way, with a similar medium, through the experiencing of the medieval

Bayeux Embroidery. This 70-meter-long embroidery depicts the story of William the Conqueror's English invasion, which must be experienced by walking along the entire length of the embroidery panel (Szabo & Kuefler 2015: ix). In each experience of the engravings or the embroideries, there is an importance placed on the viewer, the individual, as the receptacle and the meaning-maker. The experience, thus, becomes reflexive of the individual, where the object's activation is dependent on the formulation of a relationship within an encounter.

As part of the Charles Eliot Norton Lecture series in 2012 and his subsequent publication, *Six Drawing Lessons* (2014), William Kentridge reflects on the power of a reflexive view of a biography. He expands and considers the way in which his idea of 'self' is relative to his proceeding relations as well as to his position in the world at a specific time. Kentridge traces his position in time by noting himself as the point 'x', a point of pressure upon which he visualises as a compression or decompression running along multiple lines, from the self-outwards, so as to trace his familial lineage or his geographic location (2014: 72). This is a provocative understanding of biography as it places the self not as the centre, but as a pressure point, from which multiple histories may extend out of and into, much like the radial nature of lines. This notion of an extending biography resonates with my consideration of the embroideries' multiple moments of history and the variable understandings of their meaning, depending upon the conceptual framing of the objects at a particular moment or place. Extending Kentridge's idea of the biographical origin – the point of 'x' – in the instance of these objects, creates their histories and physical construction as part of multiple 'pressure points' – namely the commission of the works, the act of reproduction, the appointment of makers, and the insertion of them into academic discourse.

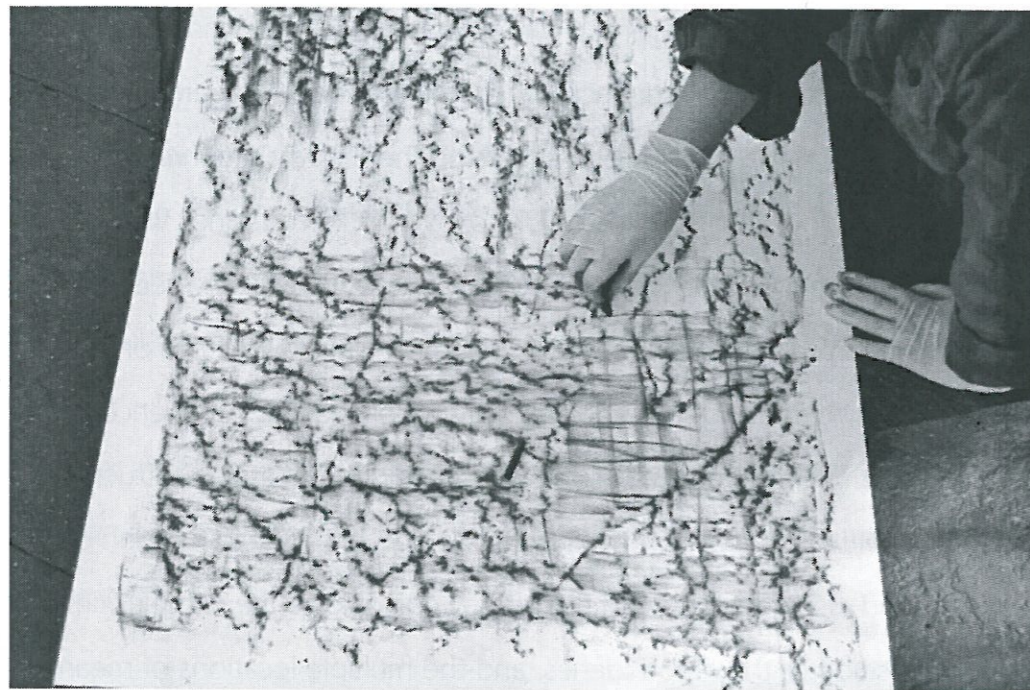
This back-and-forth thinking about meaning making, where it is both applied by the objects, and received by the objects, and similarly by the viewers, comes to take on an ambulatory methodology. The tentative following forward and backward of the object mimics the

viewer's pacing on top of the rock engravings, and the pacing around the court to view all 12 embroideries. This way of viewing and reading the objects in multiple steps, which make up multiple lines of pacing, which then make up a traversing of the surfaces and spaces of the objects speaks intimately to the processual nature of their production and methods of making meaning. In a similar example, the work, *A Line Made by Walking* (1967), was created by the artist Richard Long, who paced up and down in a field until a line appeared in the grass. The walking, in this instance, was not to produce meaning, but rather, become the meaning through the process.

In a class excursion to Kimberley, Northern Cape, we were able to similarly replicate this notion of creating meaning through walking multiple lines of inquiry. We travelled from Johannesburg – where the embroideries are housed – to Kimberley, in order to access the rock engravings at the site of Driekopseiland. An extended sense of walking, into travelling, provided a poignancy in attempting to trace the source imagery of the embroideries. Through becoming mildly lost on our way to this 'source', we were guided by Morris, who provided the original source imagery to the embroiderers. Traversing this landscape with this guide held a metaphoric resonance, where my extended research seemed to return again to the start of the making process. Accessing the rock art site through walking in and around the surroundings, but also, incredibly, on the rock engravings with our bared feet, allowed for a transference of the pressure point 'x' into our tactile and receptive experience of the engravings. In this moment, of our experience, we radiated not only our individual moments of meaning-making, but a collective, and paced out experience of the surface and site as a whole. Walking the area allowed the development as an unstructured narrative, one that is filled with instances of meaning, rather than a traceable location of a story. The widely-spread and disparate nature of the engravings, links to the complexities that arise in both the composition of the embroideries, and the multiple locations of meaning that the embroideries could point to. While this is able to be received as lack of structure in meaning-making, these incongruences can be productive and inclusive, rather than isolating, and narrow.



The Writings Art's Histories class walking on the Driekopseiland rock engravings
Image by Kerry-Lee Clark



Naudia Yorke taking a rubbing of a rock engraving at Driekopseiland
Image by Kerry-Lee Clark

PRODUCTIVE INTER-LACINGS

The emphasis on process as the basis for understanding the embroideries means that there are expansive spaces for inquiry into the notion of multiplicity, as a meaning making and knowledge-generating factor. While I, as the researcher, can only act as the one certain pressure point, much like Kentridge's situating of the point 'x', it is my own tracing and access of the embroideries that situates and expands this point. The embroideries are able to exhibit multiple moments, through threading together or denying the fusillade of narratives that they could and have participated in, but also have the capacity to remain multiple. In acknowledging this close looking as some of the entry points into understanding the embroideries, rather than acting as the actual narrative of the embroideries, I can foreground the extent of their existence. In the same way that history comes to create itself in the moment it is accessed, the embroideries are renewed and re-interpreted in their multiple instances. By moving from a close looking of the whole, to the parts that make up its composite, there exist spaces of examination that I term 'interstices' – much like the interstitial muscles that occupy the space between our ribs. From here, ideas drawn from the objects as they exist independently – as one rib – but also relationally – as a ribcage – to the point where they can rub alongside each-other enough to transfer levels of meaning.

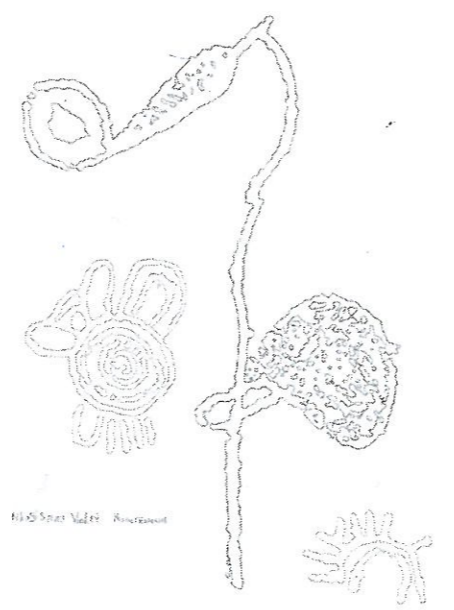
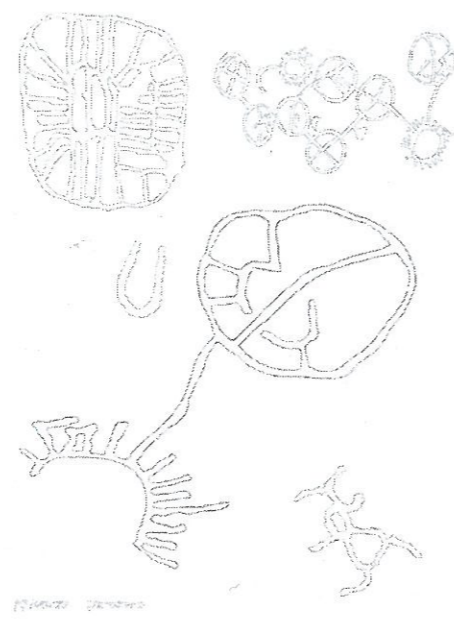
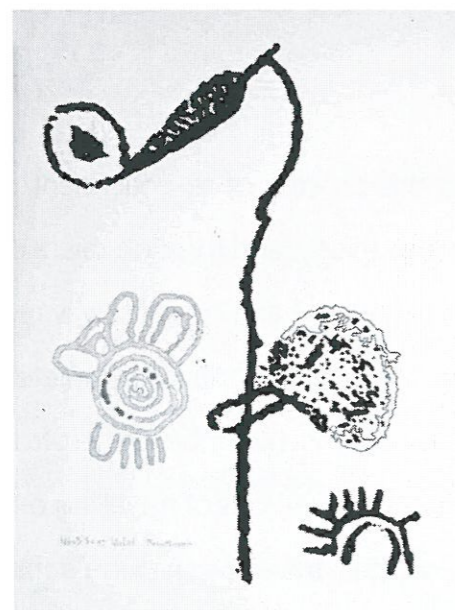
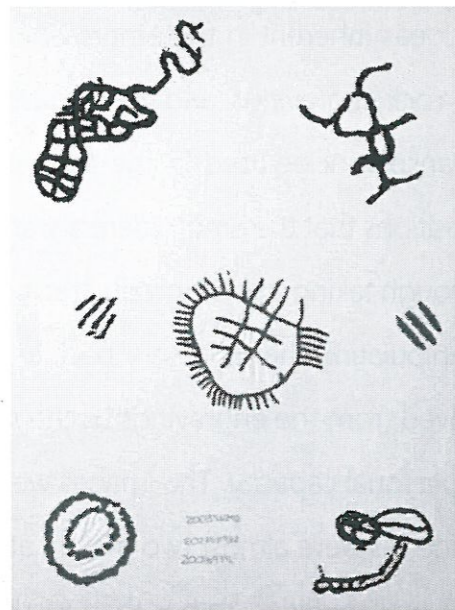
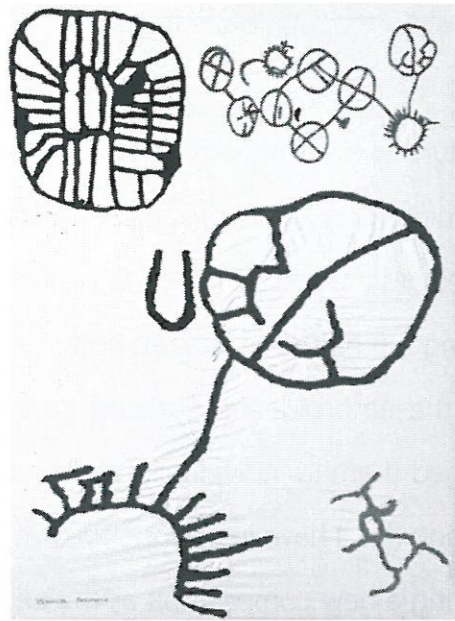
The notion of a rhizomatic understanding or making meaning stems from a book by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari titled, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). The notion of a rhizome references this multiplicity in meaning-making, and speaks particularly about "unstructured multiplicities", where everything can be both multiple and interrelated (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 5). The rhizome is less of a categorisation or hierarchy, but more of a processual understanding of the ability for something, like the embroideries, to be extensively complex and layered (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 3). In this way, one can access the embroideries at any point in their biography, and it will provide a generative set of inquiries, its sense of history will be rich and investigative, and it will provoke multiple ideas for further development. The embroideries' biography is thus much

less hierarchical and linear, but a multifaceted narrative, that presents itself as enterable at any point in the conversation. They become less about a past, present or future of it as a set of objects, but rather what can become of it, and in what ways can it continue to be processual.

SHIFTING FABRICS

Through grappling with the processual nature of the embroideries, I attempted to re-enact aspects of the process, both through mimicking, and through a deconstruction and reconstruction of their making. Before accessing the rock engravings through the Kimberley excursion, and as a means of understanding the nature of shapes, both in isolation and as parts that make up the composition of the embroideries, I traced each shape from a photograph by hand, as an outline, scanned them in individually, and recomposed them alongside their original forms. Through doing this, I have in a sense, followed a similar path to the initial process, but rather than creating a new composition as the embroiderers did, I have remade the existing compositions. Ideas inherent in the embroideries are surfaced in this act – that of the initial tracing of the rock engravings, and the retracing of these into text book images, or directly onto the transparencies used in the transference process, which were moved and altered into compositions that the embroiderers were satisfied with. I similarly shifted from multiple surfaces, through taking a photograph, tracing from a screen onto paper, scanning the images, and manipulating them digitally back into their original compositions. My process was more removed from the engravings as the source, but was situated and read within a predominantly personal capacity. The images were scaled down to a manageable size, whereas the embroideries were almost two meters at their longest; I also was able to trace and compose all 12 embroideries, rather than work in a group to develop the entire set together.

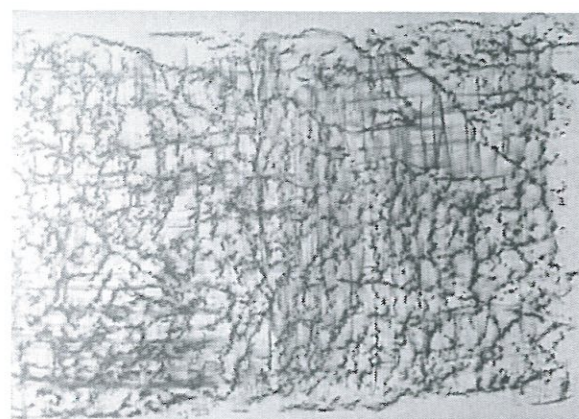
The class excursion to Kimberley extended this process of re-enactment, and influenced how I could formulate a large part of my methodology, and through this, aided how I could begin to understand not only the exceptionally layered and complex way individual makers think, but make, interpret, and reflect upon. While we will never completely comprehend the meaning or intention of the rock engravings, much can be gained from tracing their capacity to move in space and time, and what their methods of travelling or translation are. I re-enacted one of the initial phases of the image's travelling through a material by taking



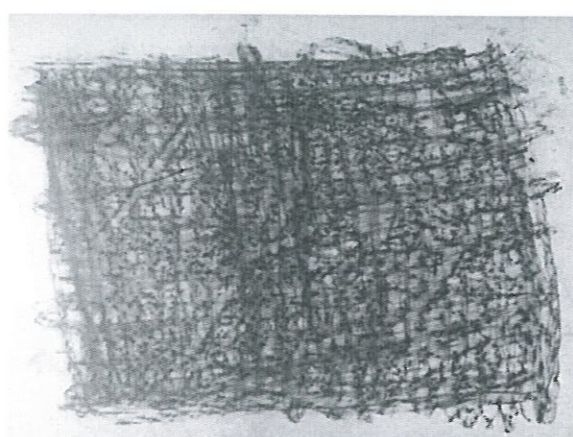
rubbings of a number of the rock engravings, with charcoal and sheets of paper. The rubbing, which was completed in a fairly unscientific, unplanned way, did not necessarily act as a recording device of the engravings – as it had in the first iteration given to the embroiderers – but more so a recording device of the landscape in which the engravings exist. This difficulty in removing the engravings from their site of origin point towards a mediation in the removal of things that are considered peripheral to the image. This is explicit in the embroideries, as they are translation of the shapes exclusively, and do not reference the landscape overtly.

In a co-incidental experiment at the Driekopseiland site, a History of Art student, Gontse Mathabathe, and a Heritage student, Frances Slabolepsky, both made rubbings of the engravings for my project, on their own terms – while I carried out rubbings in both a re-enactment of the transference process, and as a personal recording of the site. Through comparing the three different sets of rubbings I found that there were technical differences in pressure and darkness of the charcoal, which articulated the multiplicity through which the engravings could make their way back to Johannesburg with us, but also an essential prioritising in the act of transferring and in this, translating, of the shapes. While in Kimberley, there were similar iterations of this experiment on a larger and more layered capacity, where the McGregor Museum housed an educational display on rock art, and within this, Driekopseiland, and tracings from the site were on public display. In the same museum, there are images of small, leather, bags with similar shapes to the rock engravings painted onto their surfaces, in a way that is interestingly linked to the embroideries. The presence of these shapes in a textile-specific realm, seems to compress the travelling and time, and directly and naturally link the embroideries in the Constitutional Court, to the rock engravings in Kimberley. Also apparent in our trip to Kimberley, was the decorative and logo-like use of the rock engravings. At the entrance to the William Humphrey Art Gallery, the shapes are paired with multi-lingual script, and act as a watermark to the banner framing the doorway. The retraction of these shapes into a decorative sphere, utilised in a contemporary setting to enhance the site-specificity and the art-centred-ness of the

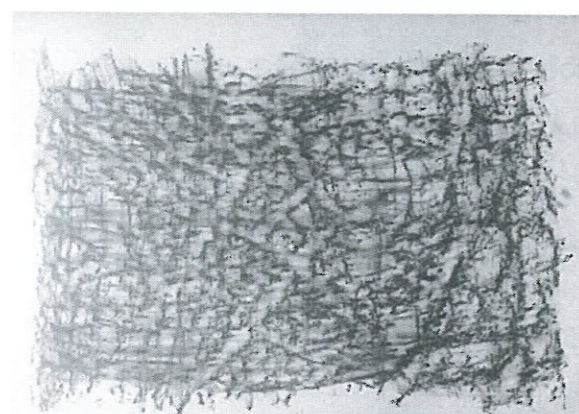
institution provides an interesting push and pull to the nature of the shapes and their transferences and translations.



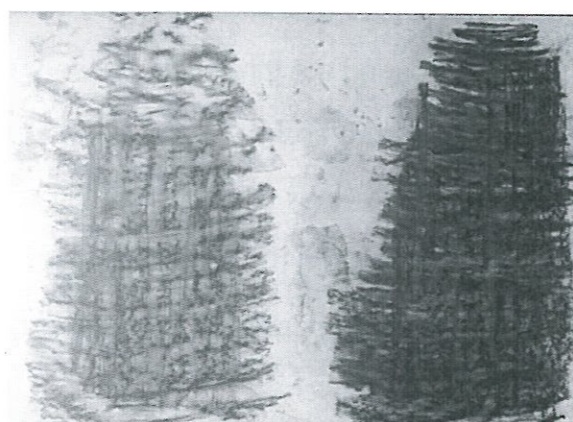
Rock engraving rubbing by Naudia Yorke
Image by Naudia Yorke



Rock engraving rubbing by Gontse Mathabathe
Image by Naudia Yorke



Rock engraving rubbing by Naudia Yorke
Image by Naudia Yorke



Rock engraving rubbing by Frances Slabolepszy
Image by Naudia Yorke

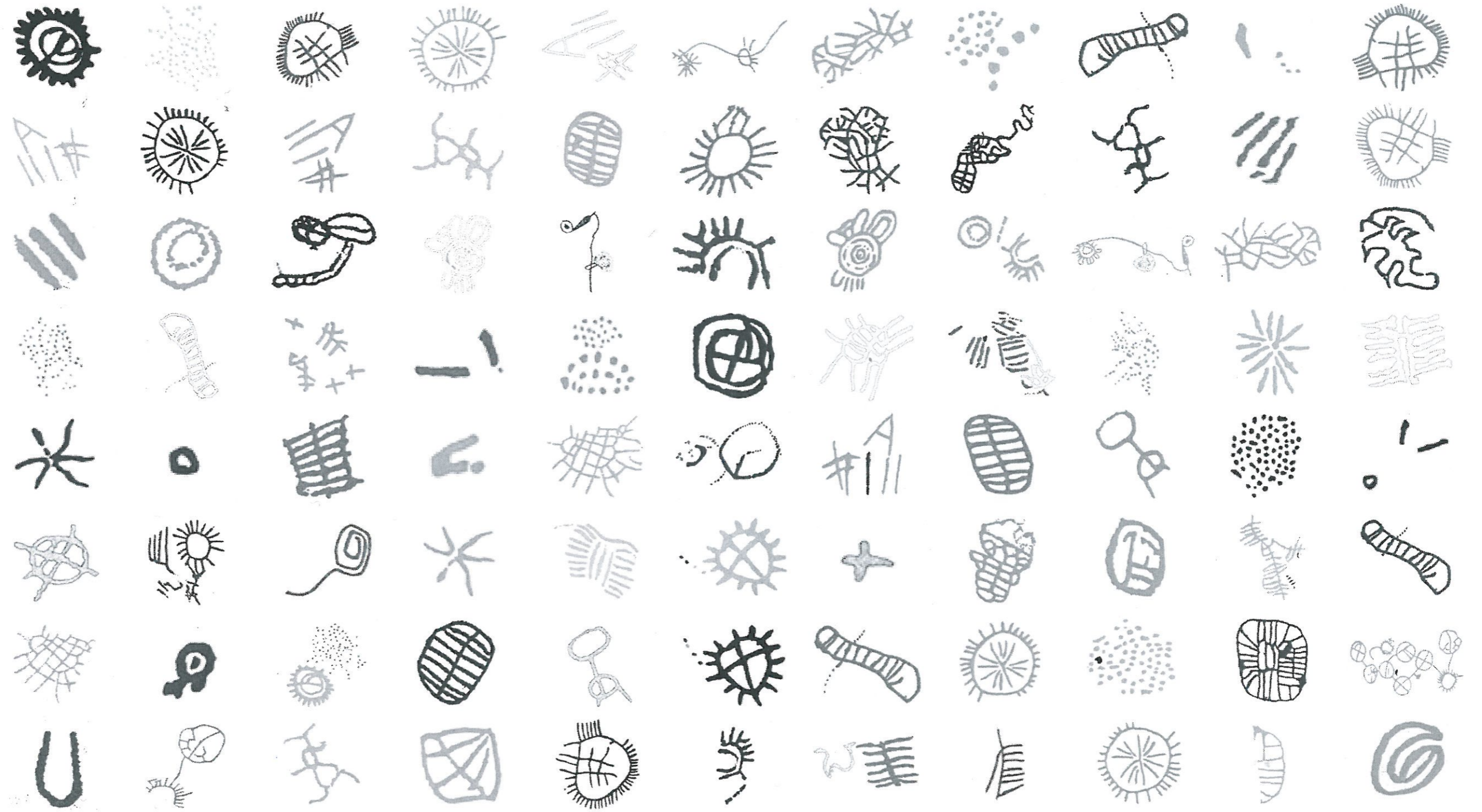
The shapes, with their multiple framings as textual or symbolic, in both their engraved and transferred capacities, reveal a deep-seated desire to decipher or decode their original or intended purposes. The intenseness with which many have applied meaning onto, and made claims around the meanings of the engraving continues to push them into the realm of script, language, record-keeping, and notation. The author, Brenda Sullivan, in her book, *Spirit of the Rocks* (1995) makes an overt comparison of the engravings at Driekopseiland to a set of Russian ruins, that point towards a level of literacy – as she understands it.

Interestingly, in Old English the term *writan* carried the specific meaning “to incise runic letters in stone” (Howe 1992: 61). One was thus able to write a line by drawing a sharp point over a surface: “the relation between drawing and writing is here between the gesture – of pulling or dragging the implement – and the line traced by it” (ibid). This links intimately with the rock engravings, and their process of making, and its outcome in the formation of shapes that have a textual quality – which is transferred to the embroideries.

In understanding how these shapes functioned in their multiple contexts, and how their meanings altered as they moved through each process, I traced their capacity to be utilised and received as active entities; which also became an exercise in ‘unknowing’ or ‘unlearning’. I isolated and gridded each shape that was apparent in the 12 embroideries, ensuring that no surface detail or shadow was transferred. This method of decontextualization allowed me to examine each form in its individual capacity, as well as the moments of repetition and deviation. The act of decontextualization also offers a subsequential act of re-contextualisation. The alteration of colour from their chosen hues, to black, not only feeds these shapes into the realm of text or symbols, but calls up ideas of individual meaning-application or the occupation of arbitrary coding and re-coding. Archaeologist and art historian, Justine Wintjes, in her Doctoral thesis notes that a similar alteration in meaning takes place when rock paintings are traced, they move into being “visual products that are more like text than picture” (2012: iv). These notions all point to the conceptual complexity apparent in the shapes on the embroideries, where they shift from being defined by the removal of a surface with no differentiation in colour, to being assigned a multitude of colours that sit starkly against their surface. In this case, they become more like pictures, or narratives due to their colour, while the engravings are more like text – this shifts depending on context and the capacity to link the engravings to the embroideries, and the embroideries to the engravings. Each of the objects are thus understood as plural entities that maintain a level of fluidity and a multiplicity in existence.

This overt utilisation and translation of the rock engravings points to the complexities of the image's movement. While many publications simply record and reflect on the images, there are multiple levels of translation, and the loss and gain of context, through remaking. This is very much apparent in the embroideries, and is pivotal in understanding the vast scope and complex nature of these objects' capacities as artworks, and as reflective and reflexive objects of knowledge-generation.

plexities of the
e images, there
remaking. This
the vast scope
e and reflexive



Isolated embroidery panels shapes

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ALBERTI, L. B. 1972. *On Painting*. (Trans.) C. Grayson. (ed.) M. Kemp. Harmondsworth: Penguin

ANATI, E. 1977. *Method of Recording and Analysing Rock Engravings*. Trans. by L. Diamond & R. Lawson. *Studi Camuni* 7, pp 1-64

APPADURAI, A. (ed.). 1986. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BAHN, P. G. 2010. *Prehistoric Rock Art: Polemics and Progress*. New York: Cambridge University Press

COLMAN, M. 2011. Geometric rock art for Origins exhibition. URL: http://www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=27209. Accessed: 10 April 2016

DAVID, G. A. 2011. *Driekopseiland: A Celestial Rock Art Site in Central South Africa*. URL: http://www.theorionzone.com/driekopseiland_rock_art_south_africa_gary_david.pdf. Accessed: 27 March 2016

DELEUZE, G. & GUATTARI, F. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. (Trans.) B. Massumi. USA: University of Minnesota Press

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM. 2005. Press Release: Embroidered Panels for the Constitutional Court.

GELL, A. 1998. *Art and Agency: A New Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

HOSKIN, J. 2009. Agency, Biography and Objects. In C. Tilley, W. Keane, S. Kuechler, M. Rowlands & P. Spyer. Handbook of Material Culture. USA: SAGE

HOWE, N. 1992. The cultural construction of reading in Anglo-Saxon England. In J. Boyarin (ed.). The Ethnography of Reading. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

INGOLD, T. 2007. Lines: A Brief History. USA and Canada: Routledge

KANDINSKY, W. W. 1982. Point and Line to Plane. In K. C. Lindsay and P. Vergo (eds.). Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art 2. London: Faber & Faber.

KENTRIDGE, W. 2014. Six Drawing Lessons. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press

MAAL, F. 2004-2005. Multiple email correspondences with Fatima Maal, secretary to Justice Albie Sachs. 2004-2005. Archival File. Constitutional Court, Johannesburg

MORRIS, D. 2002. Driekopseiland and 'the rain's magic power': history and landscape in a new interpretation of a Northern Cape rock engraving site. MA Thesis: University of the Western Cape.

MORRIS, D. 2005. Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and the teaching of history: case studies in a museum archaeology context. Kimberley: McGregor Museum

MORRIS, D. 2008. Driekopseiland rock engraving site, South Africa: a precolonial landscape lost and re-membered. In Smith, A. & Gazin-Schwartz, A. (eds) Landscapes of clearance: archaeological and anthropological perspectives. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

MORRIS, D. 2010. Snake and veil: the rock engravings of Driekopseiland, Northern Cape, South Africa. In Blundell, G., Chippindale, C. & Smith, B. (eds) 2010. Seeing and knowing: understanding rock art with and without ethnography. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

MORRIS, D. & VENTER, A. 2010. Driekops Eiland: an interpretive quest. Bloemfontein: McGregor Museum & School of Design Technology and Visual Arts, Central University of Technology.

MORRIS, D. 2016. Personal Communication with David Morris on 6 & 7 May. Kimberley, Northern Cape

OUZMAN, S. 2013. Friends of the SA Museum Lecture Series: An Archaeology of Water. Tuesday 26 February

PARKINGTON, J., MORRIS, D. & RUSCH, N. 2008. Karoo rock engravings: marking places in the landscape. Cape Town: Krakadouw Trust.

SHAPIRO, L. 2005. Handover Speech: Embroidered Panels for the Constitutional Court.

RUSCH, N. & PARKINGTON, J. 2010. San Rock Engravings: Marking the Karoo Landscape. Cape Town: Random House Struik.

SACHS, A. 2004-2005. Multiple email correspondences with Albie Sachs. 2004-2005. Archival File. Constitutional Court, Johannesburg

SACHS, A. 2016. Interview with Justice Albie Sachs on 5 May 2016. Constitutional Court, Johannesburg. Digital recording in possession of S. Vorster.

SHAPIRO, L. 2006. Constitutional Court Embroidery Project funded by DEAT: Constitutional Court, Johannesburg, Gauteng. URL: <http://www.craftsouthafrica.co.za/special-projects/constitutional-court-embroidery-project.html>. Accessed: 9 March 2016

SHAPIRO, L. 2016. Correspondence with Leonard Shapiro. 5 March; 5, 13 & 16 May 2016. Email correspondence. Online platform. Johannesburg, Gauteng

SLACK, L. M. 1962. Rock Engravings from Driekops Eiland: And Other Sites South West of Johannesburg. The University of California: Centaur Press, Ltd.

SMITH, B. & OUZMAN, S. 2004. Taking Stock: Identifying Khoekhoen Herder Rock Art in Southern Africa *Current Anthropology* 45(4). August/October, pp. 499-526

SULLIVAN, B. 1995. *Spirit of the Rocks*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau

SZABO, J. F. & KUEFLER, N. E. 2015. *The Bayeux Tapestry: A Critically Annotated Bibliography*. Washington: Rowman & Littlefield

WILLIAMS, K. 2015. *The Quthing Thing: A 'translation' history of a painted rock-shelter in the Quthing district of Lesotho*. Honours Long Essay (Art History). Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand.

WINTJES, J. 2012. *Archaeology and Visuality, Imaging as Recording: A Pictorial Genealogy of Rock Painting Research in the Maloti-Drakensberg through Two Case Studies*. Ph.D. Thesis (Art History). Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand.

