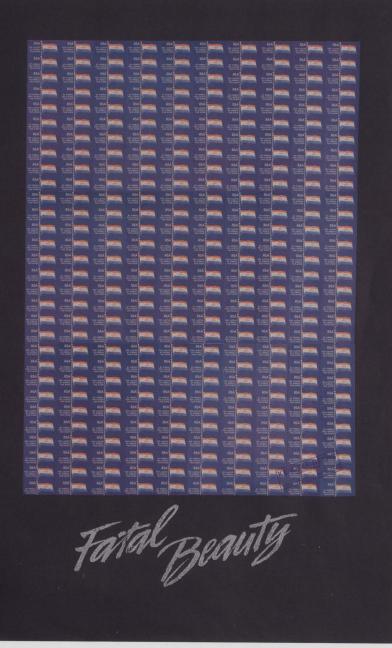


the rationalism of nationalism?

the rationalism of nationalism?



II Geers (b.1967) FATAL BEAUTY postage stamps and silkscreen on paper 77.5 x 51.5 cm November 1

People are people So why should it be You and I should get along so awfully

So we're different colours
And we're different creeds
And different people have different needs
It's obvious you hate me
Though I've done nothing wrong
I've never even met you so what could I have done

I can't understand What makes a man Hate another man Help me understand

Help me understand

Now you're punching
And you're kicking
And you're shouting at me
I'm relying on your common decency
So far it hasn't surfaced
But I'm sure it exists
It just takes a while to travel
From your head to your fists

Depeche Mode People are People, taken from the album Some Great Reward, Mute Records, London, 1984

Ever since hearing this song for the first time when I was sixteen years old and in standard nine at Bryanston High School, I have been aware of my strong dislike and distrust of political systems that display prejudice and intolerance towards people excluded by those systems. Unfortunately South Africa as a country has a shocking record of intolerance and prejudicial behaviour towards both majority and minority groups. This was particularly prevalent during the apartheid years. If one identifies oneself with the nation's government, we have been party to atrocious deeds. We have shot unarmed protestors in the back; sent military personnel covertly to Botswana to massacre an entire community of exiles; and brought about the deaths of citizens like Steve Biko and Neil Aggett in detention. Their crime? Wanting to improve the lives of those who had been excluded. All of this we did for a nation represented by a coat of arms and a flag that no longer seem relevant. This raises the questions: What drives men to kill one another blindly, in the name of a flag and an ideology? Is there any rationalism in nationalism?

Kendell's role as an artist working in South Africa between 1988 and 1998 was to use his art to examine the nature of this indelible stain – this mark of history, which still haunts the national psyche to this day.

Kendell's chosen mode of expression during this period was the found object which had been marginally altered or rectified. This process would dynamically challenge the viewer's reading of mundane everyday objects, thereby uncovering its true meaning in the context of the socio-political landscape of the day. Bricks, Bibles, government letters and documents, tyres, candles, cultural weapons, political identity cards and broken bottles were some of the items selected by Kendell to convey his thoughts about life growing up in apartheid South Africa.

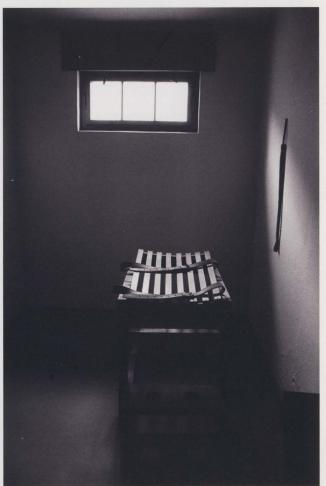
(Warren Siebrits) States of emergence growing up in apartheid South Africa – Aspects of Kendell Geers' art production whilst living in South Africa 1988-1998, Kendell Geers Irrespektiv, Bom Publishers, Barcelona, 2007, pg 31.

The worst genocide in living memory was discovered in the aftermath of World War II, when the Allies took control of the Nazi death camps. These marked the sites where a highly-organised scheme of extermination was carried out against humans. Six million Jewish people were killed, on the grounds that Nazi Germany deemed them an inferior race. The South African photographer Santu Mofokeng (b.1956) visited the most infamous of the concentration camps, including Auschwitz and Ravensbruck, to capture images of places in which horrific acts were made routine. These photographs form part of his series titled *Landscapes of Trauma*, which pays homage to those who lost their lives. Taken almost sixty years after the end of WW II, these pose a number of questions, among them the right of others to make comment on a history that is not theirs. Mofokeng, having grown up during the worst period of apartheid, has suffered great trauma himself, and his own experience of suffering influenced and catalysed the decision to undertake this series of works.

In 15 years or so, there will be no more survivors to confirm the Holocaust. It is going to be up to us, the future generations, to keep alive the memories of the six million who perished.

(Josh Schewitz) Youth Talk - The different colours of Birkenau death camp, SA Jewish Report, 18-25 July 2008, pg 19.





Harold Rubin (b.1932) is the only South African artist on record to have made a work that responded to the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960, in the same year of the event. It was one of the darkest days in South Africa's history. Sixtynine protestors were killed and one hundred people were wounded. Most of them were shot in the back as they tried to flee from the police. One wonders what kind of mindset prompted the police to continue to shoot in cold blood people who were unarmed and running away. The reasons seem hardly sufficient: was it only because they were of a different colour, and demonstrating against the indignity of having to carry passbooks and produce them on demand? When he was on a visit to South Africa in 2002, Rubin told me that he had had to write the word Sharpeville by hand on the cover of the portfolio, because all the printers he contacted would have nothing to do with using that word in the aftermath of the massacre, out of fear of recriminations and reprisals from the state. This implies the extent and pervasiveness of control exercised by the security police during this period.

The Sharpeville shootings led to the declaration of the first State of Emergency in March 1960. As a result of the special powers given to the government under this legislation, both the Pan African Congress and the African National Congress were banned, and thousands of people were detained without trial.

The number of persons imprisoned under these laws increased dramatically after episodes such as the Sharpeville shootings of 1960 and the uprising following the Soweto incidents of 1976. For instance, in the period 1960-7, which saw great turbulence both in the urban areas and in rural resistance to the imposition of Bantu Authorities, particularly in the Transkei, more than 120 000 people were convicted under these secondary laws. In addition to those who have been convicted for political activities, or banned or banished, there are the detainees: persons held without trial, sometimes for years, at the mercy of the Security Police. At least 50 persons have died in detention.

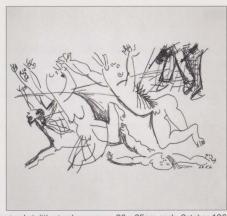
Prisoners of Apartheid – a biographical list of political prisoners and banned persons in South Africa, International Defense and Aid Fund in cooperation with United Nations Center against Apartheid, London, 1978, pg 3.

Owing to the danger of commenting or making public their personal views on brutal state repression, South African artists made few works dealing with political prisoners or deaths in detention. Ezrom Legae (1938–1999) was one of a handful of South African artists to pay homage to Steve Biko (1946–1977) in the wake of his death on 12 September 1977 whilst in detention. This event, like the Soweto uprisings a year before, sent shock-waves around the world.

From the time that Steve Biko entered room 619 in Sanlam Buildings, his destiny was sealed. On the morning of 7 September, twenty-four hours after his interrogation began the blows were inflicted. The man who had laughed at danger and provocation, who had formed organisations and edited magazines, who had argued and debated and propounded strong ideas, no longer existed. His past life had been sheared away. What was left was the frame of Steve Biko, enclosing now only a suffering mutely and inadequately expressed and callously ignored. In the next few days he groped through the haze and pain of his obliterated reason for the receding world. The doctors came and went and came again. Perhaps less is expected of the police, who after all are dedicated to uphold the moral laws of the apartheid state. But what of the doctors and their Hippocratic Oath? If only one of them had, by voice or gesture, shown care, concern, understanding, for the suffering of this human being, this fellowman, whose life was so rapidly flowing away, he would have redeemed himself. But no – they all condemned him to the total isolation and loneliness in which he moved through incomprehension and darkness to his death.

(Hilda Bernstein) No.46~Steve Biko, International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, London, 1978, pg 135.





Harold Rubin (b.1932) SHARPEVILLE 1 and 2 (from a portfolio of six lithographs) lithograph on paper 20 x 25cm each October 1960

Designer Unknown BIKO AND SOLIDARITY lithograph on paper mounted on board 58 x 39cm Published by ELDD 1977

Ezrom Legae (1938–1999) TORSO OF UNIDENTIFIED POLITICAL PRISONER graphite on paper 36 x 52cm 1982





Another artist who made direct reference to the death of Steve Biko in his work was the artist Paul Stopforth (b.1945). Unlike Ezrom Legae, Stopforth was a personal friend of Steve Biko. As a means of coming to terms with Biko's shocking end, of paying homage to his friend, and repudiating the police brutality that killed him, he produced his iconic *Biko* Series. These works depicted various parts of Biko's dead body, including his hands, feet, torso and head, all of which showed evidence of torture under interrogation. Ironically, two of these small graphite drawings were chosen to represent South Africa at the Valparaiso Biennial in Chile, in 1981. The South African government authorities intervened, threatening to cancel their funding and support of the event if the works were not withdrawn. A letter received from the External Educational and Cultural Relations Division of the Department of National Education stated:

The works chosen made political statements. While the department did not want to interfere with the autonomy of the artist, it decided, after a discussion with interested parties, that it was not the way of the department to promote and finance such works overseas.

(Sue Williamson) Resistance Art in South Africa, David Philip, Cape Town, 1989, pg 112.

Two profound examples of works by Stopforth relating to Biko's death can be found in South African museums. *Elegy* (1981) is in the collection of the Durban Art Gallery, and *The Interrogators* (1981) is owned by the Iziko South African National Gallery in Cape Town. By 1983 Stopforth had begun a series of graphite and wax drawings that referred not only to the victims of police torture and interrogation, but also to the spaces in which such activities were carried out.

Formally and materially Stopforth's work involves a patient, painstaking cutting and scraping of layers of graphite laden wax until a 'negative' of Biko's image emerges. This abrasive process is literally and symbolically telling. Biko's body bore scrapes, abrasions and other insults, and there is a correlation here between the creative process and torture.

(Colin Richards) New Humanisms in Contemporary South African Art, Messages and Meaning The MTN Art Collection, MTN Foundation, Johannesburg, 2006, pg 91.

The frightening realisation these works brought home to the viewer was that abandoned or vacant warehouses and buildings could be used as places of torture during the week, and become 'innocent' venues for parties or discos over the weekends. *Interrogation Space # 4* (1983) depicts two unidentified men carrying away what appears to be a dead body in a blanket. In the right-hand corner of the composition is a dancing youth, suggesting that this place of interrogation is used for recreation as well.

The springboard for this series of drawings [Interrogation Spaces] was a memorandum handed to the Minister of Justice and Police by the Detainees' Parents Support Committee asking whether prisoners were being interrogated in isolated areas, such as mine dumps, beaches and the bushveld. "In my drawings, the interiors are bleak and sinister, the original function no longer visible. They are now torture chambers - spaces thick with fear." (Paul Stopforth)

(Sue Williamson) Resistance Art In South Africa, David Philip, Cape Town, 1989, pg 114.



To me the most beautiful and striking posters were designed by Albio Gonzalez, Thami Mnyele and Judy Seidman, although (as explained above) these posters were produced by a collective. Many other artists, graphic designers, comrades and friends contributed input and assistance. The themes of these posters engaged with the many forms that brutality and discrimination took under apartheid. Mnyele designed posters attacking The President's Council; showing solidarity with SWAPO; supporting the liberation and independence of South West Africa; paying homage to heroes of the struggle; raising awareness of the exploitation of black women working for as little as R20 for six days work; challenging rent increases in Soweto; and speaking out against South Africa's use of military force against the black population. Albio Gonzalez created a poster titled *Free Mandela! Free Our Leaders!* with this text superimposed over an aerial view of Robben Island, showing the Sea Point coastline in the foreground, produced and disseminated in 1980. Others call for the "Smashing of Bantu Education" and another commemorates 16<sup>th</sup> June. Judy Seidman also designed a significant number of Medu's finest posters. Personal favourites include *Now You Have Touched a Woman You Have Struck A Rock,* (co-designed with Albio Gonzalez) 1981, *The People Shall Govern,* 1982 and *Dr. Neil Aggett Unite, Mobilise, Avenge His Death,* 1982.

The posters that were to cause the apartheid government the greatest embarrassment at home and abroad were those commemorating deaths in detention. The physician Neil Aggett's (Transvaal Secretary of the Food and Canning Workers' Union) death on 5 February 1982, after 70 days without trial, marked the 51<sup>st</sup> death in detention, and the first white person to die in detention since 1963.

In his statement, Dr. Aggett described being assaulted by the security police during his interrogation on 4 January. He also stated that he had been kept awake and interrogated continuously for 62 hours between 28-30 January, during which he was given electric shocks. Dr. Aggett complained that even though he had reported his injuries to a police warden, he had not been permitted to see a doctor. Police sergeant Blom who had recorded Dr. Aggett's statement did not request that Aggett be medically examined. As she later stated in an affidavit, "the security police were busy with him." On the day following sergeant Blom's visit, Dr. Aggett's body was found hanging in his cell.

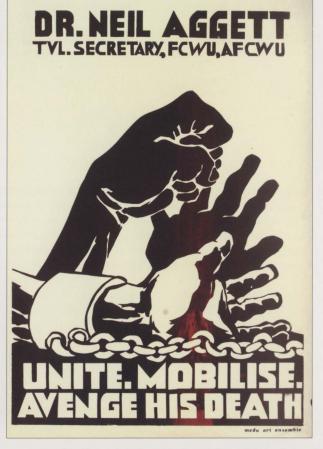
(Mary Rayner) Turning a Blind Eye?: Medical Accountability and the Prevention of Torture in South Africa, Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, Washington, 1987, pg 50-51.

Although Medu's members were always a thorn in the side of the South African authorities, one feels it was posters like these that led to the raid carried out by the South African Defence Force (SADF) in the early hours of Friday morning 14 June, 1985.

Thami may have heard the crunch of footsteps. Thinking, perhaps, that he was being joined by comrades, he may have moved toward the door. His hand would have gone to the light switch and then to the doorknob. Pulling the door toward him, he would have faced four heavily armed men and realised that the moment he had been dreading for five years had finally arrived. Slamming the door on his hunters, he ran through the kitchen and out of the back door, desperate to get over the fence and disappear into the night. Nicholas and Pierre opened fire. The bullets caught Thami as he started to scale the fence. Within seconds his body was hanging lifeless from the wire.

(Diana Wylie) Art+Revolution: The life and death of Thami Mnyele South African artist, Jacana Media, Johannesburg, 2008, pg 201.

Eleven other people died in that brutal attack, including Medu's treasurer, Mike Hamlyn. The homes of several Medu artists were destroyed, along with all the printing equipment and art materials they contained. Many of the artworks and posters found in Thami's home were either disposed of or removed by the SADF. Certain of these drawings and works were displayed on SABC and in the Sunday newspapers by Major Craig Williamson, who presented them as "proof of Thami's terrorist activities".





Jo Ractliffe (b.1961) VLAKPLAAS: 2 JUNE 1999 (DRIVE BY SHOOTING) pigment print on cotton paper 40 x 230cm edition 5 1999

In 1999 Jo Ractliffe was commissioned to produce a work for an exhibition titled *Truth Veils*, the purpose of which was to investigate the concepts of truth and evidence in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings. Ractliffe paid her second visit to Vlakplaas on 2 June 1999, the day the second round of democratic elections took place in South Africa. *Vlakplaas: 2 June 1999 (drive-by shooting)* was photographed by Ractliffe as if the viewer were participating in a sinister crime, like a drive-by shooting. One of the most criminal acts committed by the Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB) was the assassination of David Webster on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1989 by means of a shotgun fired from the open back window of a moving vehicle.

A number of years later, when investigations were launched into the activities of those based at Vlakplaas, the members of the CCB acted collectively to lie under oath, destroy evidence and create false alibis to protect themselves. When Eugene de Kok took command of Vlakplaas on 1 July 1985, he chose as the unit's emblem a honey badger, set against a red background in the shape of the African continent. The animal was chosen because it was deemed to be both invisible and invincible, while the red represented all the blood spilt by policemen in their fight against Communism. He drafted a code of conduct, calling it *The Honeybadger – Attrition of War*.

In August 1996, Eugene de Kok, was convicted of six murders, conspiracy to commit murder, attempted murder, kidnapping, assault, manslaughter, defeating the ends of justice, the illegal possession of arms and ammunition, and fraud. This was, however, only a fraction of the crimes and atrocities committed by the death squad commander. He was in command of Vlakplaas for eight years, during which time he was involved in the killing of about 65 people.

(Jacques Pauw) Into the Heart of Darkness: confessions of apartheid assassins, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1997 pg 30.

Peter Casselton, formerly an operative working at Vlakplaas, described a typical day in the life of those whose centre of operations was this unassuming and innocuous little farmhouse, surrounded by a country landscape and situated next to the Hennops River.

Very easy. Drive to work at nine o'clock, park the car, sit around without doing anything really constructive. Lunch time, buy meat, braai, drink, and go home. The men loved it. We used to go to parties at the Polaris Hotel with hookers and strippers. Eugene paid for everything. It was a good life.

(Jacques Pauw) Into the Heart of Darkness: confessions of apartheid assassins, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1997, pg 63.

I am loyal, patriotic, a person with a broad vision... - Eugene de Kock

(Jacques Pauw) Into the Heart of Darkness: confessions of apartheid assassins, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1997, pg 102.

I am well acquainted with the history of Africa. I am a veteran of lost ideologies. I went through the whole Rhodesian and Namibian debacle and saw what happened in Mozambique and Angola and thought the same was going to happen here. I decided to arm myself and my people should it later on become necessary to defend myself or form a self-defence unit. — Eugene de Kock

(Jacques Pauw) Into the Heart of Darkness: confessions of apartheid assassins, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1997, pg 109.



Jo Ractliffe (b.1961) PARK STATION, JOHANNESBURG pigment print  $50 \times 60 \text{cm}$  edition 3 Octob Wim Botha (b.1974) AFTERIMAGE oil on canvas, brown paper tape, coffee, water  $150 \times 195 \text{cm}$  detail and installation view

When one thinks back on the atrocious crimes committed by members of the CCB against their fellow-countrymen, one is forced to ask: What was it that really drove their nationalism and patriotism? In other words, what role do a flag and a national coat of arms play when they are used as instruments of an ideology that advocates hatred of those who have a different world-view?









At 8.30pm on April 6 1994, two rockets shot down the plane carrying Rwandan President Habyarimana back home to his country's capital, Kigali. This attack, whose perpetrators remain unknown to this moment, became the catalyst for one of the great calamities of our age. It was soon evident that a small group among the Hutu elite of Rwanda had decided to use the attack as the opportunity to launch a full-scale genocide that they had been preparing against the country's Tutsi minority. When the genocide ended little more than 100 days later, between a half million and one million Tutsi lay dead, alongside thousands of Hutu killed for their opposition to the extremists. Virtually all were civilians, unarmed and defenceless. Women and children were specifically targeted to ensure the final elimination of all Tutsi. Tens of thousands of women and girls were raped, tortured and, if not then murdered, maimed for life. Victims were treated with sadistic cruelty and suffered unimaginable agony.

(Gerry Caplan, Eric Markusen, and Linda Melvern) The Rwandan Genocide: A Brief Overview sourced from the Michael Stevenson Gallery website

These photographs, taken a decade later, offer a forensic view of some of the many thousands of people slaughtered at Murambi.

Pieter Hugo (b.1976) BODIES COVERED IN LIME TO PRESERVE THE EVIDENCE OF THE MASS KILLING AT MURAMBI TECHNICAL COLLEGE, RWANDA 1-4 lambda prints 100 x 126cm each edition 3/3 2004





Images of destruction hold their own weight and explicit visuals of death and human anguish have a profound effect on the viewer. I work in a somewhat elusive manner with such visuals, culled from vigilant media selections. This impedes the effect on the viewer: it tames the shock value of the images. However, the concealment, dissection and superimposition of images evoke power through a more subtle, ambiguous or obscure means. In turn this parallels the deceit of propaganda...

(Carmen Jerrard) Image War Imaging War The Everard Read Art Award, catalogue unpagenated, 2005.

What was supposed to be the "war on terrorism" has become a war to enflame yet more terrorism. And now, adding fuel to the blazing hatred, come pictures of American and British troops torturing and humiliating Iraqi prisoners in Saddam Hussein's grim old Abu Ghraib prison. There are pictures of laughing troops urinating on naked prisoners and, worst of all, women involved in sexually abusing them something calculated to be particularly infuriating to Muslims.

A great way to "win hearts and minds", isn't it?

Bush and Britain's Tony Blair are trying to downplay these abuses by describing them as a deplorable aberration, but this is what happens when troops get bogged down in wars unable to be won. It happened in Vietnam, it happened in Algeria, Angola and Namibia, and it happened here. Remember Vlakplaas?

(Allister Sparks) World needs regime change in US, The Star, Tuesday, 4 May, 2004.

Although atrocities of this kind continue to occur, we must take heart from the knowledge that we live in a time of greater transparency than ever before. This has come about through the proliferation of visual information via mobile phone cameras and the Internet. By these means a broader spectrum of artists have been empowered to respond by creating works that invite contemplation and allow us to commemorate those who died. Artists, musicians and writers therefore play an important role in the field of memory and commemoration. Jazz pianist and composer Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand), in an interview with Hein Willemse, made the following profound observation regarding the role of artist and musician saying:

> As delivery boys we are like the keepers of the books, the keepers of the keys of the society, the keepers of the knowledge of how the society should be structured. Our duty is just to remind. To remind ourselves and others what the true reality is, especially in South Africa with the political situation.

Abdullah Ibrahim interviewed by Hein Willemse, Staffrider, Vol. 6. No 4, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987, pg 26.

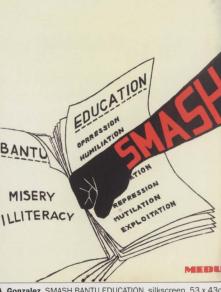
Above all, artists, musicians and writers continue to play an important role in the restoration of dignity lost through the irrational acts of powerful people with hidden agendas.

### **Warren Siebrits**

Johannesburg, 15 October 2008











A. Gonzalez SMASH BANTU EDUCATION silkscreen 53 x 43cm 1980

A. Gonzalez JUNE 16 - THE COURAGE OF THE YOUTH (red) silkscreen 43 x 30cm 1981 A. Gonzalez JUNE 16 - THE COURAGE OF THE YOUTH (brown) silkscreen 43 x 30cm 1981 A. Gonzalez FREE MANDELA FREE OUR LEADERS silkscreen 44 x 34cm 1980 A. Gonzalez SEJA BEM VINDO CAMARADA MACHEL silkscreen 57.5 x 40cm 1982



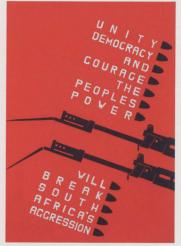


let us arm ourselves with the fearlessness of Shaka; the vision and endurance of Moshoeshoe; the dedication and farsightedness of Sol Plaatjie; the military initiative and guerilla tactics of Maqoma..."

His Master's Voice

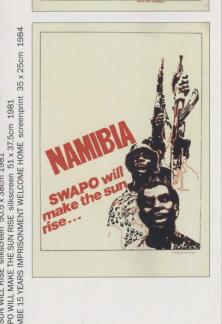
THE

PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL



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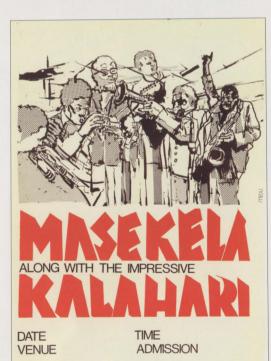


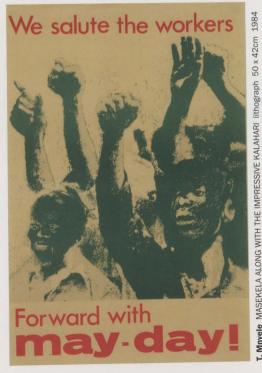
JAILED-1969 \* RELEASED-1984
SYMBOL OF THE COURAGE AND
RESILIENCE OF OUR WOMEN





T. Mnyele SOWETO NO RENT INCREASE FOR MATCHBOXES lithograph and screenprint 40 x 53cm 1984 T. Mnyele A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE STRUGGLE silkscreen 48.5 x 71cm 1984









- J. Seidman and A. Gonzalez NOW YOU HAVE TOUCHED THE WOMEN... silkscreen 61 x 43cm 1981
- J. Seidman WOMEN UNITE AGAINST APARTHEID silkscreen 42 x 30cm 1981
- J. Seidman ...AND THE PEOPLE VOTE FOR NELSON MANDELA silkscreen 33 x 43cm 1981
- J. Seidman ...AND THE PEOPLE VOTE FOR NELSON MANDELA silkscreen 33 x 43cm 1981



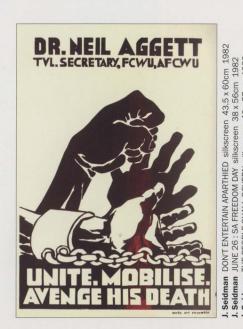














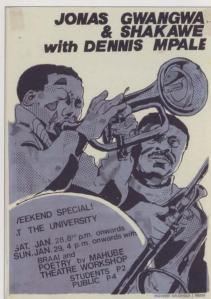


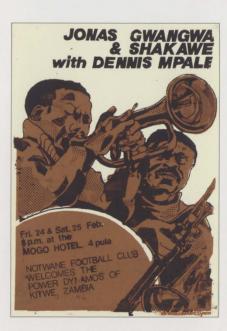
J. Seidman AFRICA SHALL BE FREE: WE SHALL FREE HER silkscreen 42.5 x 60cm 1983
J. Seidman WE SALUTE: SIMON MOGOERANE, JERRY MOSOLOLI, MARCUS MOTAUNG silkscreen 21 x 28.5cm 1983

J. Seidman JONAS GWANGWA AND SHAKAWE (blue) silkscreen 61 x 43cm 1981

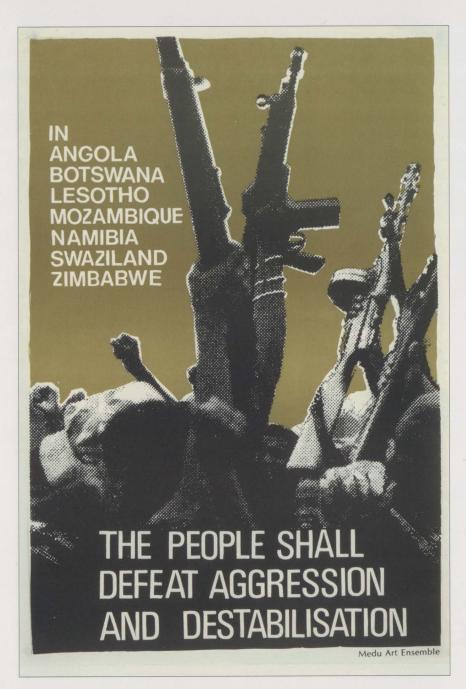
J. Seidman JONAS GWANGWA AND SHAKAWE (brown) silkscreen 61 x 43cm 1981

J. Seidman J. SEIDMAN GRAPHIC WORK NATIONAL MUSEUM 1-12 MARCH 1984 silkscreen 60 x 42cm 1984









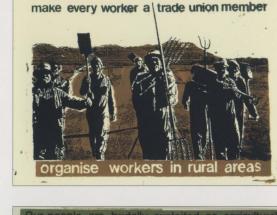




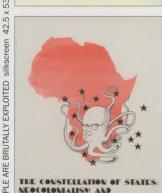
APARTHEID KILLS - FIGHT RESETTLEMENT silkscreen & lithograph 42 x 29.5cm Add 9TH - 26TH ANNIVERSARY OF SA WOMENS DAY - FORWARD WITH UNITY lithograp JUNE 16 - THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES silkscreen 51 x 37.5cm MAKE EVERY WORKER A TRADE UNION MEMBER silkscreen 31 x 43.5cm



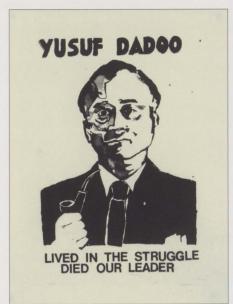


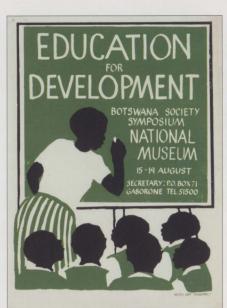


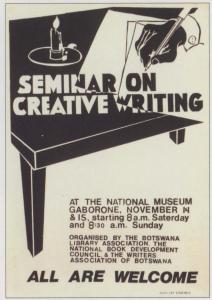




THE CONSTELLATION OF STATES: NEOCOLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM THE SOUTHAFRICAN WAY

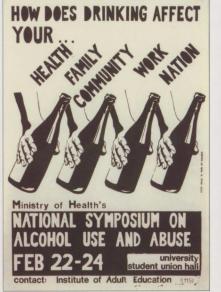






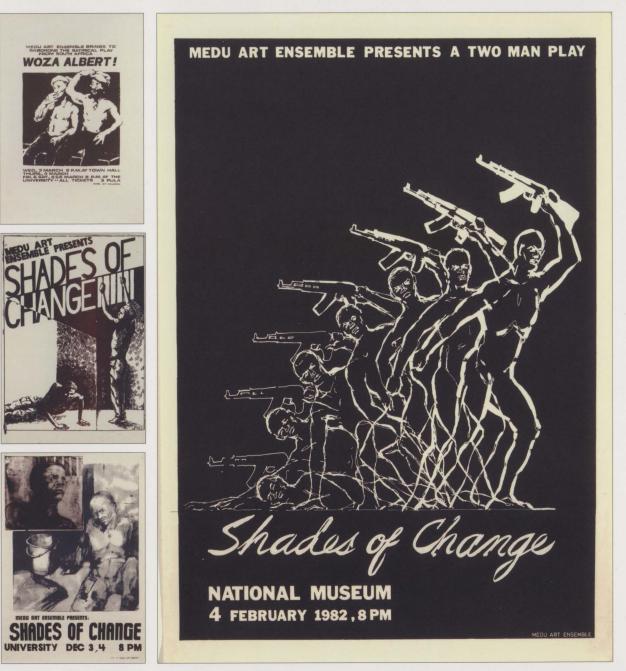


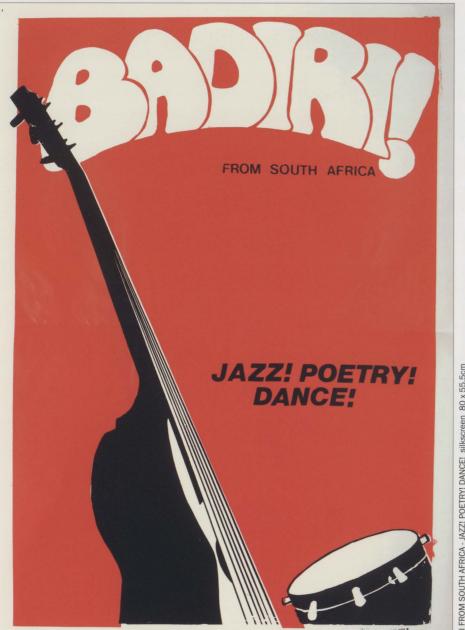


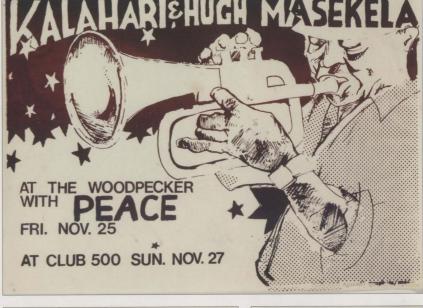


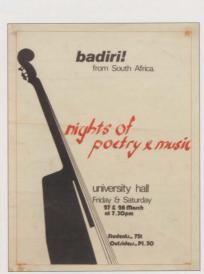






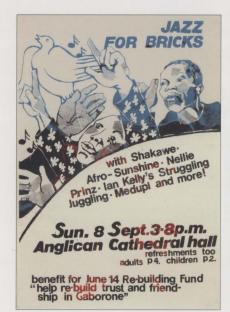


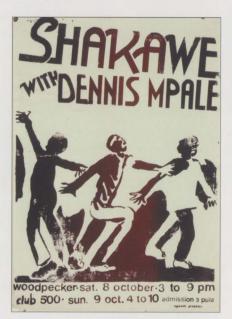




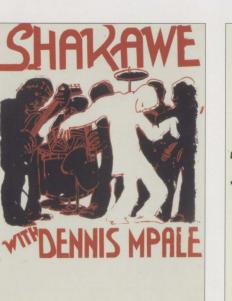


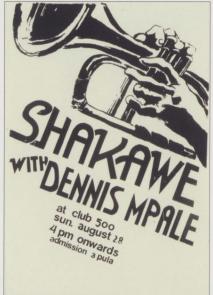














SHAKAWE WITH DENNIS MAPALE (white dancer) silkscreen 61 x 43cm SHAKAWE WITH DENNIS MAPALE (trumpet) silkscreen 60.5 x 43cm ITUMELENG FILMS PRESENTS: VIDEO FILM FESTIVAL silkscreen 59 x

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all items are for sale

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