

| Views and (Re)Views

The Terra series: 'Terra Firma', 'Terra Nullius', 'Terra Incognita', 'Terra Pericolosa'

Nathani Lüneburg*

*Nathani Lüneburg is Visual Arts and Multimedia Lecturer at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and a practising video artist.

Professor Elfriede Dreyer, the owner of Fried Contemporary Art Gallery and Studio in Pretoria, curated a fresh and vibrant exhibition series during 2012 titled the Terra series. This was a sequence of four group exhibitions dealing with contemporary issues relevant in post-apartheid South Africa: visual

presentations of the human relation to space, place and land. The series commenced with 'Terra Firma', which opened on 2 February 2012 and ended with the prestigious exhibition 'Terra Pericolosa' on 21 July 2012. Jointly, the four exhibitions showcased the works of 25 upcoming and established artists. With a great selection of contemporary and traditional media, and a combination of sophisticated South African artists, the Terra series produced strong and multifaceted artworks.

'Terra Firma': Portrayals of six expeditions beyond, beneath and within space and place. 2 February–4 March 2012.

'Terra Firma' is the title of a collaborative exhibition curated by Elfriede Dreyer.¹ The selected body of work comprises bronze sculpture, mixed media, embossed drawings, oil painting, interactive art and installation. The six artists involved investigate human experiences of space and place and explore recollection, expression and desire as they accompany these perceptions of space. 'Terra Firma' is the first exhibition of four curated shows at Fried Contemporary Art Gallery prefaced *Terra*. The central aim of this series is to explore the experience of the self to land, soil or earth (Dreyer 2012:3). Although the Latin phrase *terra firma* refers to 'solid ground' and the 'dry soil on the earth's surface', the art on display at the 'Terra Firma' exhibition excavates deeper than the earth's surface and appears to deal with social and psychological concerns of space and place such as locality, dislocation, commune and identity. Space, as expressed by Steve Harrison and Paul Dourish (1996:67–76), is a natural reality, a physical gathering of land. Place, conversely, can be perceived as a social invention – a perception that is developed only after spaces have been experienced, visited and inhabited by individuals. The curator of 'Terra Firma' constructs the premise of the show around the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's perception that space and place are critical elements of the existing world, that both elements collectively define geography and that place forms part of space (Dreyer 2012:3). People inhabit space, and space becomes the metaphor for freedom. Furthermore, people become emotionally involved with place, and place becomes the allegory for safety (Tuan 1977:3, 387). Thus place, bearing history and meaning, also embodies people's experiences and becomes

a reality that needs to be understood from the perspective of the meaning people attach to it (Tuan 1977:387). Space as a natural component, and place as social construct, are diversely explored through the various artworks displayed at 'Terra Firma'.

As one accesses the foyer gallery of the exhibition, Leana van der Merwe's hanging sculpture (an ethereal construct of ear buds and diapers) illuminates the entrance hall, its floating presence indicating that one is entering a place of secrecy. The front wall of the foyer is partially covered with Van der Merwe's installation piece titled *Baby's first three months & Flynnch* (2011) (1) and an overwhelming excess of disposable diapers, cotton wool, bottle teats, baby wipes, breast pads, lace, and ear buds seems to seep out of the wall. At first Van der Merwe's work materialises as exceedingly clinical and laden with perplexity as regards the foreignness of its links to the theme of *terra firma*. It is as if locality of space and sociology of place are concealed and almost undetectable. But as soon as the evidence of infant life is discovered within the installation, one may comprehend that space and place are explored in terms of the social notion of 'the mother', which metaphorically refers to the female body as a place. Traces of mapping occur in the selection of media: it speaks strongly of the bonding which occurs between mother and child, and how this relationship can be perceived as a social construct in addition to a natural process. There is also an indication of the association of the self with the socially constructed space of 'the mother'. It seems as if the artist explores herself as place, seeing that her work documents her own process of motherhood. The mapping within Van der



1 Installation view: Leana van der Merwe, *Baby's first three months & Flych* (2011). Disposable nappies, cotton wool, bottle teats, baby wipes, breast pads, lace, ear buds and hot glue. Installation is approximately 90 x 160 x 150 cm.

Merwe's work represents a connection between the natural and the cultural, with specific reference to the female body (the place where the infant originates from) as the colonised 'Virgin Land' 'as spoken through male desire and power' (Dreyer 2012:32). This relates to Linda McDowell's (2003:13) statement that the mapping of a place onto gender identities still plays an integral role in women's lives. Women are usually associated with the role of nurturer, in relation to men and children within a geographic space, therefore one can argue that Van der Merwe's work in this show signals the extent to which women with children become the cultural construction 'mother', which in itself becomes a place.

On the wall next to Van der Merwe's cunningly fitted and almost overpowering installation, Clare Menck's oil-on-wood portraits are mutely waiting to be discovered. Her work also investigates identity and the relation of the self to space and place; however her portraits seem raw and exceptionally ordinary in relation to Van der Merwe's polished installation. Menck portrays recognisable and common spaces and places typical to South African landscapes, and through these landscapes

she includes her self-portrait, camouflaged in the familiar Voortrekker *kappie*² that carries messages of space in relation to colonial and European ancestry. The artist treats familiar spaces such as a vast Karoo landscape, a typical farmhouse in Hopefield, a gravel road in the Swartberg Pass, the flatness of the Western Cape countryside and a farm shed in Albertinia, as mapping points that tie her and her cultural disposition to the earth. In the exhibition catalogue she explains that she becomes a traveller passing through the spaces and places of the country of her birth (Dreyer 2012:16). Her portrayal of herself as traveller through space and place appears effortless in these portraits, and makes one wonder if there is greater profundity within the work. However, after staring into these proverbial landscapes with their unforced colour application and almost expressionless facial depictions, one is confronted by the question of place-identity. Kevin Durham (2000:27) states that identity-related issues such as 'who I am' are interconnected to matters such as 'where I am'. An individual's identity is bound to place, thus subjectivity and place cannot be detached.

Menck's skilfully structured portraits turn into a sequence of personal studies of space.

In the same exhibition room, Isabel Mertz's stone-and-bronze sculptures are in tantalising conversation with Van der Merwe's buoyant installation and Menck's earth-coloured paintings. The *terra firma* theme is immediately apparent in Mertz's *Treacherous Territories Series* (2012), but not in a superficial manner. The soil-based media may imply post-place visualisations of disintegrating geometric spaces (buildings) diminishing into loamy masses, echoing the existence of what once was known as cultural and personal spaces. Tuan (1977:389) proposes that geometric space (represented as imploding buildings in Mertz's work) embodies objective reality which refers to cultural space. Tuan further states that personal and cultural space suggests distortions. Accordingly, as Tuan subtly contradicts himself, objective reality becomes insignificant as cultural space when described (by Tuan) as a distortion (Tuan 1977:389). Mertz's tumbling buildings and overshadowing rock globes capture the insignificance of space and place as social and cultural constructs. Through *Treacherous Territories*, Mertz explores the earth as an overwhelming agent, providing space and place for humans to dwell in, but at the same time her sculptures demonstrate the earth's power over human productions.

When one looks at the wall behind Mertz's striking sculptures, a sequence of floating, pastel-coloured, oval-shaped paper-embossed segments created by artist Marili de Weerd, becomes visible. At first, the oval shapes seem like small pink, beige, blue and grey patches of mildew appearing arbitrarily on the large wall, but on closer study one notices that each unframed oval segment of De Weerd's wall piece has a simple organic illustration of plants and root systems embossed on brittle hand-made paper. The backs of the embossed papers are attached to smaller wooden shapes and mounted onto the wall, to form what appears to be a random pattern. The artist affirms that through her body of work she attempted

to interpret *terra firma* as a space and place of life and death underneath the earth's shell, and that she tried to present space and place as a cross-section of the earth's surface (Dreyer 2012:28). Yet, her visual interpretation of the aforementioned appears to be indistinct, one-dimensional and literal. Although De Weerd struggles to visualise her concept effectively, one can identify a perception of distance that not only engages the idea of near and remote, but also the time-related perception of 'past'. Underneath the earth's crust is layered, solid soil, a remote place far from physically visible places and spaces. Tuan (1977:390) postulates that '[d]istant places are also remote in time, lying either in the remote past or future'. De Weerd's embossed organic illustrations coyly, but also sketchily, toy with Tuan's idea of a 'distant place'; her work reveals a process where it seems as if she is aiming to hide and conceal root systems of a murky distant past underneath the visible world. De Weerd's excessively fragile body of work is certainly pleasant to look at and easy to assimilate, however, it lacks conceptual depth and appears less successful than the rest of the works on show.

Next to De Weerd's arrangement is an entrance to a smaller gallery room where Jenna Burchell's interactive installation, *Urban Wetlands* (2012) (2), is exhibited separately. Similar to De Weerd, Burchell interprets *terra firma* as the space underneath and just above the earth's crust. Burchell's interactive installation emerges out of the floor as an



2 Installation view: Jenna Burchell, *Urban Wetlands* (2012). Interactive installation. Dimensions variable.

electronically engineered reed field with a technological root system entrenched deep underground. *Urban Wetlands* is a construction of a figurative field of reeds, which suggests how urban constructions dominate and penetrate the natural. Entering the tiny gallery room, one's first step is on a grey floorboard with aluminium-crafted reeds. The reeds have light nodes at the tips, which light up when a viewer approaches, and dim as the viewer moves away. The viewer can travel through the installation and activate the reeds such that they cast light. Burchell (Dreyer 2012:19) states that the reeds imitate an incursive South African plant called Snake Grass, which

has an inexorable growth system that roots vast distances underground. The Snake Grass becomes a metaphor for urbanisation and for the technology which invades our lives on a daily basis. The viewer passing through the installation becomes a symbol of the natural. As a result, Burchell's installation is a place where infiltration of the natural takes place. The installation is aesthetically very pleasing; multimodally functioned, inviting and playful. Audiences participate eagerly in the activation of the lights. However, as I moved through the installation I realised without any reservations that I instantly knew what the concept entailed, that the work was highly

predictable and that well-developed conceptual depth was absent. I furthermore found the scale of the work in relation to the exhibition space specious. Interactive art relies on participation, and with inadequate space to activate and travel through, Burchell's installation appears limited. Although Burchell's work is not fully resolved yet, it is still very unique. I justly appreciate her devotion and her efforts at tackling such a technically difficult art genre.

The exhibition ends satisfyingly when entering the last display room which introduces the drawings of the tribute artist of the show, David Koloane (3). With his gestural mark-making and signature use of misty colours, his body of work suggests the fleetingness of living on Earth and the ritual of passing through place. *Two horses and a victim* (2011), *Coal man* (2011), *Alexandra scene 1* (2011), *Alexandra scene 2* (2011), *Three birds* (2011), *Flight 1* (2011) and *Flight 2* (2011) embrace Tuan's notion of stability and place.



3 David Koloane, *Traffic rhythm* (2011). Mixed media on paper, 134 x 87 cm.

Through the urgency and movement in mark application these drawings portray how living beings travel through spaces and places on Earth, whether it be by horse, in flight or by car. Tuan (1977:411) proposes that in travelling one loses a sense of place, but rather collects scenes and images of a place. Scenes are not true representations of places and can be described as lacking stability: it is in the character of a scene to transfer with each change of perception. This insight of *terra firma* is deeply rooted in Koloane's representation of the fleetingness of places.

'Terra Firma' as a curated exhibition is an investigative excavation revealing human perspectives in relation to earthy soil. It presents a broad account of individual thoughts and interpretations of experiencing place and space on Earth. The six bodies of work on exhibit are overall charming, and most are effectively articulated. Van der Merwe's compelling installation and Mertz's sculptures are the most successful pieces on show. Van der Merwe, in exploring the human birth process on Earth, impartially exposes the female body and the role of nurturer as a socially constructed place. Menck's paintings echo Van der Merwe's reading of the role of the self in relation to the earth, by positing that self-identity is bound to place-identity. These portraits form a compact body of work that could conceivably function successfully in a solo exhibition. Mertz digs deeper than Menck into the crust of the earth, to illustrate the disintegration of place in terms of social and cultural construct. De Weerd's delicate representations of what lies beneath the earth's surface propose ideas of distance

'Terra Nullius': Visual chronicles of colonialism, nationhood and transformed landscapes – 17 March–14 April 2012.

The second collaborative exhibition of the Terra series displayed at Fried Contemporary Art Gallery in Pretoria took place from 17 March until 14 April 2012. This show, titled 'Terra Nullius', skilfully embodies a superb collection of mature artworks representing different segments of colonialism, nationhood and stolen land. It consists of sculptural pieces portraying colonised land by established artists Willem Boshoff and Sarel-Petrus, Turner-esque-style paintings symbolising loss within deteriorating landscapes by Pieter Swanepoel, narrative-

and remoteness. Burchell's interactive art installation also toys with what lies beneath, but threads of technology are woven into her representation. Her installation demonstrates how technology and urbanisation become threatening to the natural and are rooted within society, just like Snake Grass is rooted underground. Koloane's mature and mythical body of work concluded the show fruitfully.

Notes

- 1 Elfriede Dreyer is Associate Professor in Fine Arts at the Department of Visual Arts, University of Pretoria, South Africa. The owner of Fried Contemporary Art Gallery, she is a well-known curator and theorist.
- 2 *Kappie* is the Afrikaans word for a headpiece worn by Afrikaner Voortrekker women during the Great Trek through southern Africa.

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based paintings illustrating colonial wrongs and rights by Lisa Allan, a collection of traditional oil paintings by Pauline Gutter, and fascinating photographic portraits questioning new identities shaped through colonialism by the young up-coming artist Christiaan Harris. This exhibition focuses on the impact of colonialism in terms of forced Westernised philosophies and the amalgamation of cultures across the globe (Dreyer 2012:3). Most of the art pieces exhibited effectively investigate moral concerns regarding colonialism and land, as well as the histories and identities of postcolonial nations.

The Latin aphorism *terra nullius* encompasses more profound significance than just the phrases 'empty land', 'no one's land', or 'land that doesn't belong to anyone'. It not only recounts the legal implications surrounding the phrase, but also the cultural and social complications, as is visible in the sculptural artwork by Sarel-Petrus. *Embodiment* (2012) (1) resembles a bed of nails and consists of spiky bronze pieces placed in a methodical structure on a wooden foundation. On the tips of the bronze parts letters are embossed, and when deciphered they collectively form a narrative in English. The bronze letters become metaphors for European colonisation, the English narrative formed by the bronze letters symbolises the Western system of meaning, and thus the artwork allegorically reflects colonisation as an enforced system of Western law. Originally the phrase *terra nullius* originated from the Roman law system and has extensive legal importance as well as psychological and sociological associations. During the onset of colonialism, the phrase was used to gain autonomy over land, which could be obtained through occupation, such as European settlers colonising several South American states, African countries, as well

as Australia (Borch 2001:222–239). This assumed entitlement to land by Western society is evident in Sarel-Petrus' systematic construction of the English language. The sculpture suggests that there was no room for people whose land was claimed. The aboriginal tribal groups in Australia suffered under the first colonial power implemented when British settlers decided that all local residents were subject to English law (Borch 2001:222–239). This entailed that local occupants were not allowed to own or sell land. In 1992 the High Court of Australia inverted *terra nullius* and found that there was a notion of native title in common law that allowed aboriginal people to occupy and own land. Major ethical issues and demanding psychological consequences resulted from ongoing European colonisation. Several indigenous nations' (and even European settlers') cultural identities and relations to land were affected.

The repercussions of European colonisation are still evident in contemporary postcolonial nations, particularly in South Africa today. Identity and community perplexities in postcolonial South Africa are portrayed in Christiaan Harris' photographic series titled *Performing Identity* (2011) (2). Entering



1 Sarel-Petrus, *Embodiment* (2012). Bronze and wood, 190 x 90 x 35 cm.

the upper gallery room, one is confronted with theatrically-placed, distant-looking subjects who at first glance appear to be fashion models. Initially Harris' humorous and melodramatic compositions reflect great European painterly appropriations and are reminiscent of Jillian Lochner's photographic series *Flesh, Fish and Holy Swine* (2005). At closer investigation it is detectable that Harris' subjects are dressed in miscellaneous attire that resembles a fusion between archetypal Voortrekker garments, African hand-crafted charms, historical European headpieces and contemporary wear. The colour reference, lighting and positioning of subjects within Harris' compositions indicate the imposing familial indoor-landscapes reminiscent of works by Frans Hals and Johannes Vermeer. Harris poses the question of authenticity within contemporary South African nationhood by visually representing hybridised South African cultures along with cultural diasporas.

Performing Identity presents a universal theme: that history of postcolonial nations seems blurred; parts of it are missing or lost, and many of these nations experience psychological struggles within nationhood, particularly between political and personal memories. According to social-history writers Mario Rufer and El Colegio de México (2007:158–159), inheritance becomes the apparent struggle in nationhood. Inheritance, as mentioned by Rufer and De México (2007:158–159), consists of 'cultural patrimony' and 'historical experience'. Harris' portrayal of heritage in his artworks appears as vague cross-breeds between South African cultures, where a clear distinction

between cultures and their histories is not recognisable.

Distortions of cultural histories and the construction of new identities are evident in Harris' *Act 3 Scene 1* (2011). Within this artwork the subject, who appears to be a young white male, is half naked. The background space is loaded with European colonial traces such as wallpaper, ballet shoes hanging from the wall, a hand fan and what seems to be a hand puppet of a wolf from the fairytale Little Red Riding Hood. The male subject's face is wrapped with a translucent cloth, hiding his identity, and he is wearing a Voortrekker *kappie* which becomes a metaphor of colonialism. Around his neck is an African hand-crafted necklace. All the symbols used in this composition become cultural relics of memory, combined to form a new collective cultural remembrance. There is little reference to a specific culture's historical experience, and the work thus relates to Richard Werbner's (1998:16) postulation that collective historical

experiences of postcolonial nations are not based on clear distinctions between past, present and future, but rather on a cultural re-inscription in which memory is revised after the traumatic events of colonialism. Moreover, postcolonial nations struggle to establish identities and communities rooted in their actual history, and rather focus on creating new communities and identities that derive from appropriations of private and public memories (Rufer et al. 2007:158–159). The constructions of new communities and identities in postcolonial nations are clearly visible in Harris' graphics. Although his oeuvre of work is fairly literal



2 Christiaan Harris, *Act 2 Scene 4* (2011). Archival print, 54.9 x 84.1 cm. Edition 1/5.



3 Lisa Allan, details from *Right from Wrong I, II, III* (2012). Mixed media, oil on tin on wood, 10 x 20 cm each.

and overloaded with visual insinuations, it is aesthetically pleasing and the upfront nature of the imagery presents the viewer with new constructions of identity and nationhood in a postcolonial country.

Complementary to Harris' strong realistic depictions of postcolonial identity constructions, Lisa Allan's succession of small, playful, painterly illustrations, titled *Inventing Right and Wrong* (2012) (3), deal with various ethical issues shaped by colonialism. These images are produced on small silver plates, mounted on wooden blocks and are displayed in sequence on one of the entrance walls as well as in the passageway of the gallery. The images are borrowed and copied from existing visual records and depict historic and futuristic colonial events. Allan explains in her artist's

statement that the moral concern revealed by the images rests in the manner it is revised through different 'historiographic lenses' (Dreyer 2012:22). Through visual transmission she duplicates illustrated documentations of colonial acts recorded throughout the history of colonialism. Through the act of copying original images a part of the truthfulness disappears; accordingly the viewer is left contemplating the authenticity of the acts portrayed through the illustrations. Allan's body of work creates a slightly stronger visual ecstasy than Harris' photographs and is filled to capacity with figurative signs and undisclosed narratives.

The awareness of narrative within the underlying exhibition theme flows from Allan's illustrations to the large-scale paintings by Pieter Swanepoel. Where Allan purposefully

duplicates illustrations from colonialist documents and convincingly emphasises narratives concerning imperialist actions by humans, Swanepoel's body of work echoes the narrative of land and the memories it encloses. His ethereal landscapes, titled *Oceanic* (2012), *No Horizon* (2012) and *Fallen* (2012), have no horizons and create an impression of bewilderment; change and loss are provoked. The works seem to be records of change within land and delicately speak about the natural and cultural traces visible in postcolonial landscapes. Although these landscapes seem devoid of all human activity, they reflect a restlessness and uneasiness, arrived at through the use of shadowy colours, the movement evident in the brushstrokes, and the way the paint is encrusted and applied onto the canvas. These restless landscapes portray clandestine narratives of memory and can be described as chronotopes. Professor in Social Studies, Stawomir Kapralski (2001:36), states that landscape as a chronotope 'is a locus in which time has been condensed and concentrated in space'. This means that the chronotope landscape can either be a physical, sanctified place where a specific event happened within a nation, or it can refer to a symbolic place, a memorial or monument constructed to honour a particular event that occurred at a specific place. The human construction of landscape and identity are inseparable, and so landscape becomes part of a nation's identity. When a nation permanently inhabits a place, it will become a geographic outline and the nation's territory will be known as 'traditional land' (Kapralski 2001:35–36). Territory is invested with cultural meaning and thus landscape is a culturally defined territory that conveys the human acts of remembering and forgetting. Memory and disremembering within landscapes are present in Swanepoel's unfathomable works. Inside the overpowering clashes of white and shadowy colours and the absence of horizon, appear traces of once culturally-inhabited land, suggesting soft murmurs of the formerly constructed identity of a nation.

Respectively exploring *terra nullius* through painterly qualities, Pauline Gutter's *Die Padskraper (The Grader)* (2012) and *The Milestone I, II and III* (2012) aim to metaphorically portray methods of discovering different ways to create inroads into land not belonging to anyone, in other words,

abandoned or uncultivated land in-between farm borders and roads (Dreyer 2012:3). In her artist's statement Gutter writes that the grader plays a role in creating a no-man's land to prevent the spread of wildfires, and describes how milestones become witnesses to the death and destruction on our roads (Dreyer 2012:14). Regrettably, Gutter's visual interpretations of her concepts are exceedingly literal, illustrative and seemingly insubstantial. The large-scale artwork, *Die Padskraper*, is portrayed as monumental and appears almost grotesque, leaving little to the mind's eye. The portrayal of this large object suppresses Gutter's notion of no-man's land and as an object, the grader becomes over-valued and the concept hollow. Similarly, the three smaller paintings, *The Milestone I, II and III*, are illustrative and do not convey the concept effectively. Gutter is well known for her rich application of paint and colour, and her intricate play and blending of concepts such as the macabre, decay and beauty. Awkwardly, her body of work for 'Terra Nullius' seems weak compared to *Passage* (October 2010), her previous exhibition at Fried Contemporary. The technical facility is not up to Gutter's unique and high standard, and the interpretation of the exhibition theme seems to be problematic and skeletal.

In contrast to Gutter's body of work and parallel to Swanepoel's otherworldly paintings, the tribute artist Willem Boshoff's sculptural wall piece, *Land Grab* (2012), is aesthetically rendered to precision, exploring uninhabited landscapes and alluding to the consequences of urbanisation. Where Swanepoel's artworks might suggest memory and the dismembering of colonised land, Boshoff's work comments on how unpopulated blank earth can possibly be colonised and transformed into an ultramodern city. This concept is visualised through a square sculptural landscape, built up with sand and framed with a wooden border. The embossed landscape forms two words when viewed from a distance: 'Land' and 'Grab'. These English words propose how the natural landscape might be renovated by human systems and mechanisms. Ever since the Industrial Revolution, empty landscapes have been overly developed, and unpopulated landscapes are seemingly becoming extinct. Geographer and landscape scientist, Marc Antrop (2005:25–26), suggests that the speedy deconstruction of vacant landscapes is a result of the accelerating

pace of globalism, urbanisation, calamity and accessibility. Contemporary society represents speed and change, inter-dependency on global exchange, and the mass construction of landscapes. Currently, declining landscapes are being overlaid with new ones, which results in merged histories of landscapes. Antrop (2005:25) states that these modifications to and reconstructions of landscapes are made on a daily basis to meet the needs of the growing population, which is primarily urban. Urbanisation has existed ever since land zoning around medieval towns occurred, and coincided with the development of automobiles after the Second World War. The automobile enhanced mobility and cities further developed into outer sectors known as suburbia. Cities form extended systems that affect huge areas and any change experienced inside the city can affect even isolated communities or unpopulated landscapes (Antrop 2005:26). These issues are evident in Boshoff's convincing artwork and they also play on the German translation of the title, which means 'land as grave for histories and events' (Dreyer 2012:3). This phrase could prophesise that urbanisation and globalisation, which signify human progress, might destroy all natural landscapes and resources, and ultimately result in the demise of humanity.

'Terra Nullius' is an impressive exhibition which offers conceptually relevant artworks by artists Willem Boshoff, Sarel-Petrus, Pieter

Swanepoel and Lisa Allan. It introduces the audience to charming, witty artworks by the young artist, Christiaan Harris. This exhibition is loaded with visual pleasure and is significantly more buoyant than the first of its kind, 'Terra Firma'.

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'Terra Incognita': Mapping, revealing and concealing the unknown. 5 May–9 June 2012.

Terra incognita is undeniably a phrase that fuels the mind's eye. In geography this expression, coined by second-century geographer Ptolemy, becomes the place of the imagination; unknown land marked by ancient cartographers as regions roamed by extraordinary creatures in the distant corners of the world. All through history geographers were challenged to establish unknown territory, and explorers such as Columbus and Cook contributed to the development of the geographical understanding of the West through cartography. However, in this day and age geographers and explorers rarely have the chance to infiltrate entirely unknown territories. Most parts of the earth have already been claimed, explored and marked; as a result

terra incognita as a mysterious exploration into the unfamiliar has become ostensibly rare. Conversely, contemporary cultural discourses have adapted the phrase and it no longer only refers to geographical mapping, but furthermore to the mapping of personal and cultural foreignness. The aforementioned are explored in the artworks exhibited at 'Terra Incognita', the third curated show among the Terra series of exhibitions at Fried Contemporary Art Gallery.

This show includes works of video, digital print, painting and sculpture by the appealing grouping of artists Minette Vári (tribute artist), Frikkie Eksteen, Berna Thom, Eric Duplan and Celia de Villiers. The show combines most of these artists in a mesmerising conversation that displays the processes of mapping the

unknown and the associations of the self to place and Earth. The visual dialogues between the self and the unknown offer an indirect sense of alertness and imagination which are driven by confrontational questions around historical charting, the space of reception and the mapping of the self's journey within an excessively diagrammed world.

Berna Thom's digital print series *Lateral Journeys* (2010) and *The Quest for the Field* (2011) map the voyages humankind undertakes in search of the self. From a distance Thom's maps, which are a collaged eruption of painterly eminence and diagnostic cartography, give the impression of deep garnet and primordial arctic landscapes. At closer observation one perceives the pictorial tension between the logistics within the human desire to map the biosphere, and Thom's subjective exploration through the use of her own symbols and diagramming. The subjective approach in Thom's atlases reminds one of ancient maps, particularly those that mapped the unknown South lands: Antarctica. According to Peter Whitfield (1994:preface), former director of Stanfords International Map Centre in London, historical maps frequently contain subjective features specifically regarding mapping *terra incognita*, just like Thom's. Whitfield (1994:preface) states that these personal maps are best understood when interpreted subjectively, and just the same, Thom's maps become mirrors of the self, where one can trace one's own journey through an unknown territory created by the artist.

The urgency in Thom's mappings is echoed in the large paintings (*Ancient Future no 4* [2012] and *Urban no 1* [2012]) of Eric Duplan, who captivantly chose to record the city and all its synthetic imprints and constructions through the traditional medium of oil paint. According to Rebecca Harvey (2008:1), artist and Professor at Ohio State University, a map is a record of information. As noticeable in cities around the world, contemporary society has a fascination with recording information: roads, public transport systems, weather systems and suburbia are mapped out for effortless access and tracing. This obsession becomes clear in Duplan's reference to maps of cities and urbanity. He uses his own emblematic enigmas and cryptograms to represent the city as a dark dwelling, connecting all occupied and vacant volumes. His paintings grippingly represent

shadowy areas of negative space that can be interpreted as unknown, isolated vacant places entrapped by the city. These places can become the *terra incognita* in Duplan's works and might even be what Ann O'M Bowman and Michael Pagano (2004:1) describe as broad open spaces, such as tainted parts which are unfit for urban development or public parks, or they might be allocations of land scattered with uninhibited buildings and houses. According to O'M Bowman and Pagano (2004:1), *terra incognita* in cityscapes are not necessarily unexplored territory, they can be any vacant land or buildings in a city which is ready to be re-explored by man. In a cryptic manner Duplan skilfully and almost effortlessly presents a different aspect of *terra incognita* and unlocks the viewer's imagination regarding the unknowable of urban landscapes.

Duplan's dark and mouldy depiction of the unknown is similarly visible in Frikkie Eksteen's large-scale oil paintings titled *The Conspirators* (2012) and *Deleted Scene* (2012) (1). Although the artist's intention is more focused on the unknown borders between digital and traditional artistic disciplines, these artworks could be read as anything within the territory of the unfamiliar, since the painting style is profound but simultaneously interrelated to the painting style of ancient seventeenth-century Flemish portraiture. The ethereal figures and the macabre mass of torn flesh in *The Conspirators* seem to express human deterioration and deception, and the observing portraits capture the unfamiliarity of the spirit world. However, Eksteen's key intention with these exceptional artworks is rather more technical than just an emotional interpretation. He is inventively steering away from geographical mapping of the unknown, and interprets *terra incognita* within the context of the unknown territories present in traditional painting. In his paintings he explores unknown methods, combining digital hi-tech printing with traditional oil painting techniques by painting over the digitally wire-frame figures in such a way that the latter still manifests through the layers of paint. The open-endedness, impassioned power and the technical perfection in these works allow the viewer's thoughts to dwell in secretive places of the unknown; amid the corporeal and the departed.

Minette Vári's *The Falls* digital print series (2008) (2), *Vigil* (2007) video installation

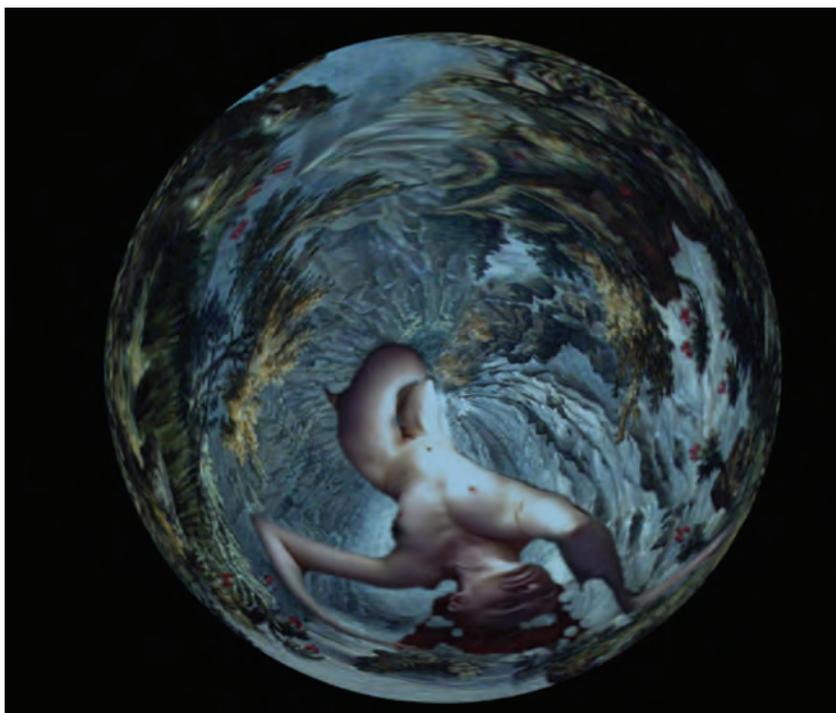
and *Monomotapa* (2007) digital print series transfer hauntingly with Eksteen and Duplan's representations of the unknown. All three artists maintain solemn compositions of colour and manage to signify unknown spaces and places as dark, enigmatic locations. Vári's *The Falls* series reflects the colonial landscapes of traveller and painter Thomas Baines (1820–1875), with particular reference to his explorations of Zimbabwe's Victoria Falls. Images of the Victoria Falls are reworked into tondo-format and photographs of a naked Vári are superimposed in such a way that her body appears in spherical positions; attempting to map her own identity onto land associated with the unfamiliar of the past. These images, according to Vári (Dreyer 2012:5), construct an unsettling fusion between cartography and one of her reoccurring themes, allegorical self-portraiture. The circular explosion of colours opens a peephole allowing the viewer to glance into a post-produced unknown land. While *The Falls* series offers the viewer a glimpse of indefinite Earth, the video *Vigil* becomes a gateway for the imagination and dynamically pulls the viewer into an unravelling narrative of colonial antiquities, with swift references to explorations into southern African

landscapes. The moving visuals are enclosed by a cartographer's embroidered pictograph (as seen in the *Monomotapa* series), surveillance cameras and exotic animals. This video expeditiously introduces human characters from unknown lands and transmits sound effects hosting resonances of exotic forests and animals. For three minutes and 45 seconds Vári's visual exploration of the unknown grips the viewer's thoughts in such a way that it needs to be viewed again. Although Vári's body of work is not new and has been on show previously, it leaves a haunting impression and still has an appropriate contemporary authority to it.

Vári's body of work slightly conceals *terra incognita* from the viewer and only discloses post-produced snippets and traces of what is unknown. Contrary to Vári's work, Celia de Villiers reveals unknown territory to the utmost. Among all the thought-provoking presentations on show at 'Terra Incognita', De Villiers introduces the *terra incognita* of hydro-politics and the uncertain future with regard to the accessibility of water. Her body of work, *Aquatic insurrection* (2012), consists of skilfully crafted resin castings offering futuristic hybrids of aquatic animals. A fish



1 Installation view of 'Terra Incognita', with works by Frikkie Eksteen, Eric Duplan and Minnette Vári.



2 Minnette Vári, *The Falls I* (2008). Part of *The Falls Series*. Pigment print on cotton fibre paper, 80 x 80 cm. STD edition 1/5.

with wings like a combat plane and a seagull with lobster claws become amusing and animated, but also nurture the idea of tragedy. De Villiers fascinatingly presents creatures from the unknown future, originating from the contaminated sludge to guard their declining space. These vibrant, tainted creatures suspended from the gallery ceiling create an appealing shift in the exhibition and lighten the serious atmosphere provided by Duplan, Eksteen and Vári's bodies of work.

'Terra Incognita' combines five assorted, yet relational bodies of work that delve deep into the vital necessity for humans to establish a comprehension of the world they live in. These five artists all mapped their diverse understandings of the unknown, whether through digital collage, video and digital print, oil painting or resin casts. Maps are documentations that offer safety, protection and direction, no matter what the format or symbols used (Murray 2005:110). Thom mapped out personal journeys by combining original cartography from Antarctica with Photoshop® layers of textures; Duplan employed his own insignia to map the unknown vacant spaces of cities; Eksteen joined the medium of traditional painting with digital printing to graph the unknown within two art disciplines; Vári revealed glimpses of unfamiliar landscapes and

humans to map the colonial past of *terra incognita* and De Villiers created new aquatic species to map the unknown of the future. According to Carl Murray (2005:110), maps with blank spaces create anxiety. In order to cure the anxiety of not knowing, human nature allows us to fill in the

empty spaces and to obtain clarity. However, emptiness and not knowing completely may have significance in themselves, as interpreted by the works on display at 'Terra Incognita'.

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Visual explorations within, outside and across 'Terra Pericolosa'. 23 June–21 July 2012.

'Terra Pericolosa' is the fourth and final exhibition of the Terra series. In comparison with the previous three Terra exhibitions that featured combinations of five or six upcoming and established artists, this show includes eight high-profile South African artists with conceptually loaded and extensive bodies of work, all exploring the mapping processes of danger and the unknown. The tribute artist of the show is Diane Victor, one of South Africa's most prominent, internationally acclaimed artists. The rest of the group includes esteemed artists and academics such as Keith Dietrich, Diek Grobler, Karin Preller, Sybrand Wiechers, Georgia Papageorge, Paul Cooper, Gwenneth Miller and Carolyn Parton. In an extremely diverse arrangement of strong artworks the exhibition reflects eight different interpretations of the human being's relation to space, place, land and territory. The Italian phrase *terra pericolosa* refers to 'dangerous land' and was used in ancient cartography to mark regions that could potentially put explorers in danger. The works exhibited in 'Terra Pericolosa' not only refer to dangers held by land, space and place, but also explore the mapping of psychological dangers, revealing underlying histories and memories, and the unravelling of political, environmental and social dangers.

The curator's choice of prestigious artists led to immense public interest and the exhibition was successful in terms of individual works on display. Continuous conversations regarding dangerous territories between most works are observable, and the works are grouped well together with a flow of colour that binds the entire show. Although the choice of artists and the combination of their works are original and coherent, there appears to be some difficulty with the execution of the gallery's interior space, which creates a lack of flow in movement. As one enters the first room the interior space seems restricted. The floor space of the entrance room is mostly occupied by Dietrich's cleverly constructed artist's book that is displayed on three neatly assembled trestle tables. These rows of tables seem to be displayed too close to each other and obstruct comfortable movement for the viewer, while at the same time limiting the viewer's ability to observe Victor and Preller's hung works from a distance. Limited space in the

entrance area furthermore hampers comfortable access to Cooper's quirky installation which deals with space and place. Movement and circulation in a gallery space need to be led from the entrance to the opening area, providing movement through the significant exhibition space and into the other areas of the gallery (Brooker and Stone 2004:220–222). Unfortunately, the overfilling of space in certain areas of this exhibition obstructs effortless movement and affects the way in which some artworks are interpreted. Even so, the artworks still portray stimulating subtext and meaning.

As I enter the gallery, I am immediately drawn to Dietrich's overwhelming large-scale presentation of his artist's book *Many Rivers to Cross | Conflicts Zone, Boundaries and Shared Waters* (2012). This installation consists of three rows of grey trestle tables which serve as objects of display. The artist's book, which consists of three long, separate sections, is placed on these tables and is displayed in a concertina format that slightly elevates the book from the surfaces of the tables. To some extent it is difficult to move through the installation without bumping into the trestle tables or being sidetracked by all the other artworks exhibited within the same space. Since this installed artwork deals with geography and space, I feel the installation needs more room. The confined space can, in addition, contribute to the idea of shared space, as reflected in the cartography in the artist's book. The book presents greyscale imagery that appears to be reworked and resembles the archaeological mapping of river courses, with overlays of the human body. The three main South African river paths that are represented in this book are the Gariep, the Great Fish and the Vaal. The importance and histories of these three rivers are reflected through power struggles regarding shared water resources for industrialised, farming and household use. Furthermore, the historical disagreements that took place along and across these rivers are symbolically referred to in this book to reflect the country's pain and anguish during historical events (Dreyer 2012:17–18). Dietrich not only produces a historical narrative of the dangers around water possession through his revised cartography of South African rivers, he also presents the notion of boundaries and territory

as they relate to land and water. Territory and boundaries within geography are not only lines on a chart, but are also reproduced by human movement (Steinberg 2009:467). According to Phillip E. Steinberg (2004:467–468) from the Department of Geography, Florida State University, movement within a bounded territory serves to construct that bordered area. The history of the territorial entity must be understood beyond the spatial tracing, and one must also trace the acts of movement that occur within, across and outside the territory's boundaries. In my opinion, Dietrich succeeds in tracing historical narratives of territoriality around water and further succeeds in offering the open-ended conclusion that these territories around shared water are always in flux and will never be entities owned by one person or one province.

As Dietrich's artist's book reflects maps showing South African geography, Victor's body of work reveals the concealed dangers of the human psyche through a vast, dark landscape and abstract references to animals. Her large, black and white drawing *No-man's land* (2012) is exhibited on the inner wall of the gallery's entrance room and is in captivating conversation with Dietrich's artist's book. Both artworks are done in greyscale, and where

Dietrich's maps become an aerial excavation of territories around rivers and land, Victor's drawing excavates a landscape of human history. Although the drawing is remarkable on close inspection, the limited floor space in the room hinders one from viewing the work from a distance and absorbing the content to the fullest. *No-man's land* reflects unknown figures buried underneath a barren and ravaged landscape, reflecting post-war references to known and unknown territories. The dark landscape is divided in the centre of the composition by an enormous void. Although this artwork can be interpreted as a surreal dreamscape created by Victor to present the concealed and the unknown, it can also be read as a visual interpretation of what was once a territorial state. In cartography, no-man's land usually refers to territory which is unclaimed due to danger or a fear of the unknown. *No-man's land* certainly reflects unknown land, but the underlying visuals that refer to appalling political horrors suggest that the land was once autonomous, and is now owned by history. The landscape in the artwork therefore imposes a post-territorial state in which the history of its political systems and the geographical imagination unfolds. Victor's etchings on exhibit, *Let sleeping crocs lie* (2012) (1) and



1 Diane Victor, *Let sleeping crocs lie* (2012). Etching and embossing, 120 x 80 cm.



2 Sybrand Wiechers, *Mother* (2012). Wood and steel, 142.5 x 100 x 65 cm.

Bearer (2012) are furthermore laden with subtext and refer to the dangers and threats confronting the human condition, especially with regard to social issues, violence and HIV/Aids. In my opinion, Victor's work is by far the strongest on the show and pushes the visuals beyond physical cartography and geography. Her works become reflections of subconscious mind maps reflecting bizarre worlds of horror and fantasy.

After viewing and absorbing Victor's visuals, I'm intuitively drawn to Wiechers' enticing sculptural pieces. Wiechers' ability to portray tales of danger and fear in a youthful though well-contextualised manner is visible in his sculptures *Cloud* (2012), *Deluge* (2012) and *Core* (2012). The most convincing piece is *Mother* (2012) (2) which is on exhibit on the gallery's terrace area. A striking combination of wood and steel leads the eye in a circular motion, reading the form as an overarching monstrous figure constructed from wood and steel, bearing a small steel-modelled house on

its back. Within this work there exists exigency and repulsion, as if Wiechers aims to introduce the viewer to *Terra* as Mother Earth, bearer of danger and fear. The symbiotic as well as the precarious relationship between nature and man is mapped out in this sculpture, and an immediate connection between Victor's *No-man's land* and Wiechers' *Mother* can be traced: both works present nature as an exhausted, horrific agent showing how human activity within and across the land results in contaminated histories and dangers being embedded in nature. According to psychologist Bengt Scager (1998:2–3), humans are forced to accept nature and need to adjust to it. However, it is human nature to seek to tame and exploit nature, therefore humans have developed technologies through the years to facilitate this. In the sculpture *Mother* one can read the steel-modelled house as a metaphor for human systems that attempt to tame and control the wooden-and-steel figure which symbolises the earth or nature. This sculpture appears to freeze that moment before severe disaster strikes – disaster caused by human productions.

Similar to Wiechers' concept, Miller's striking installation, named *Residual system* (2011/ 2012) (3), also speaks about that instant before catastrophe strikes and emphasises human systems designed to tame nature. The artwork rests on a rusty iron floorplate and consists of a Perspex display case containing what appears to be a minuscule laboratory made up of laboratory glass, handmade glass and lights. The artist's intention is to portray systems of biological legacy and she refers to systems of residue as the damage caused by power struggles (Dreyer 2012:9–11). In this installation Miller reduces the human mapping system to a scientific arrangement, revealing how people attempt to control and manipulate human biology and how such experiments have left a residue of harm through the passing of time. Although Miller's installation is exhibited in a smaller gallery space separate from that of Victor, Dietrich and Wiechers' works, her installation still converses strongly with these artists' artworks and also maps out human systematic interference in nature and the earth. In the same gallery room Grobler's diptychs on scraperboard panels and digital prints, titled *Terra Pericolosa 1 & 2* (2012) (3), are installed against one wall. The two artists' bodies of work exhibit

well together aesthetically, and harmony in colour and structure unites the works. But unfortunately the interior space of the gallery is yet again problematic. The breathing space between Miller's installation and Grobler's hung works is not sufficient, and when entering the room many viewers interpret the artworks as a single installation piece. As soon as the title list is studied, one can differentiate between the two works. Despite the lack of space between the two artworks, Grobler's works are interpreted as finely-contextualised reimagings of war memories and immediately form a strong connection with Dietrich's artist's book displayed in the entrance room of the gallery. Grobler's artworks are based on a friend's recorded experiences during the Angolan War in 1975. Grobler took the young soldier's diary entries, which consist of maps of battlefields drawn from memory, and reproduced them as digital prints. The hand-drawn maps from the diary are contrasted with maps of self-invented battlefields drawn and painted by Grobler using the scraperboard method. The body of work refers to geographical and human territoriality, with specific reference to war. Countries are territorial structures, safeguarded

by governments that protect their borders, plan and divide the land within, systematise it and organise its human and natural assets (Steinberg 2009:468). When such clear parameters are set, complex human histories are imposed onto the land (Clifford 1997:7). In the case of war, territory and all the human history it entails are threatened, and thus social space (individual and cultural identity) is also jeopardised. The tension between boundaries, inside and outside, is visible in Grobler's presentation of territoriality, and maps the danger of the unknown.

Moving back into the entrance room of the gallery, a number of Preller's oil paintings become noticeable. These paintings indicate fragments and stills from the film *Sin City* (2005, directed by Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez). The series of works are moderately different from all the other exhibited artworks and present an innovative perspective on *terra periculosa*. According to the artist, these paintings present a transformation of imagery from film into paint (Dreyer 2012:22). The paintings are about the seductive and uncomfortable spaces represented in the film, now materialising as strange maps re-emerging



3 Installation view, Gwenneth Miller, *Residual system* (2011/12). Laboratory glass, handmade glass, perspex, rusted iron plate, light fitting, 157.5 x 107 x 30 cm; Diek Grobler, *Terra Periculosa 1 & 2* (2012). Diptych of Scraperboard panel and digital print, 44 x 44 cm, each 5 x 169.5 cm.

in a gallery space, not in a cinema. Captivatingly, Preller re-maps filmic compositions in a traditional method of oil painting by using references to a film that represents important perspectives on contemporary visual culture. Parton, too, works with paint as medium and her works *Fall – landscape* (2012) and *Fall – mound* (2012) speak of *terra periculosa* as a ubiquitous element. Her compressed strips of used and recycled paint layers in *Fall – mound* symbolise the erosion and degeneration processes that occur in soil, caused by changes in weather patterns, global warming and human interference with the geological structure of the land. Through the application of paint, Parton's work might suggest how the ground underneath us becomes *terra periculosa*: a dangerous territory ravaged by the increasingly destructive alteration of land due to human intrusion. Parton's suggestion of soil as a constantly hazardous territory is reflected in Papageorge's video and digital print installation that is exhibited separately in a darker exhibition room. The video artwork, titled *Kilimanjaro/ColdFire* (2012), and the digital prints, titled *Inferno* (2012), deal with deforestation and melting ice in the tropics, with specific reference to the East-African Rift Valley. By documenting global warming processes through video and photographs, Papageorge maps the dangers of global warming by referring to site-specific landmarks such as the melting Mount Kilimanjaro and the destruction of the rain forests in central Africa. This body of work effectively brings to mind the powerful forces humans exert as they impact on the environment through global warming, the increasing human population, escalating energy and land use, the exploitation of natural resources (such as coal, oil and gas), the over-development of the world economy and the expansion of technologies. Both the video and the photographic works have sufficient three-dimensional space and are therefore easily accessible to the viewer. Moving back to the full entrance room of the gallery, I sense an imbalance between the divisions of interior space and feel that the exhibition room occupied by Papageorge could have been successfully shared between more artists, to construct a better flow of movement



4 Installation view, Keith Dietrich, *Many Rivers to Cross | Conflicts Zone, Boundaries and Shared Waters* (2012). Artist's book. Four volumes in a Solander box. Epson Ultra Chrome™ inks on Innova Smooth, Cotton High White 215gms IFA. Each book (closed) measures 25 x 25 cm; Paul Cooper, installation of *Walk Interminable* (2012), bronze, *Hermes se Echo (vs.1)* (2012) (in collaboration with Landi Raubenheimer) and *Shroud* (2012). 180 x 140 x 80 cm.

and facilitate accessibility through the entrance room.

In the corner of the entrance room is one of the more compelling conceptual works on the show: Cooper's peculiar and melancholic installation that comprises a sculptural piece entitled *Walk Interminable* (2012), a mailbox as a found object (*Hermes se Echo (vs.1)*), in collaboration with Landi Raubenheimer, and a cast wall panel *Shroud* (2012) (4), which summarises his views around space, place and placelessness (Dreyer 2012:24). Consequently, he manipulates three-dimensional space in the installation with the intention to transmit his feelings of aggravation, isolation, doubt and angst, experienced within the unknown places he visited during his recent travels abroad. The three works collectively suggest the processes of directionless wandering across unfamiliar territories, the experience of misplacement in time and space, becoming impassive and experiencing private and geological boundaries

enfolded. These processes lead to a feeling of being ensnared in a physical experience, trapped within one's own boundaries and the geographic borders of one's physical position. It is said that boundaries are imitated by 'acts of movement' (Steinberg 2009:467). Cooper's installation suggests movement of the individual outside, across and inside a bounded territory, and furthermore proposes what Carter (1996:2–3) puts forward, namely that our species is the most drifting and nomadic of all, and still we impose our political views, sentiments and morals on the direct opposite of movement, i.e. on cultural history, ancestry and stability, which in itself provides personal boundaries and entrapment. This installation moreover relates to Nicolas Bourriaud's altermodern theory by portraying the contemporary artist as *homo viator* or as a nomad, moving in space, in time and among signs, by travelling through the world (Bourriaud 2009:3). The idea of the artist as cultural nomad is certainly not new, since various artists from the past, such as Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and Marcel Duchamp travelled to revisit artworks and histories, and write new visual narratives (Verhagen 2009:805). One can even trace references that this concept, as subtly mentioned by Bourriaud (2009:3) in his *Altermodern Manifesto*, derives from Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin's models of modernism, with the emphasis on the *flâneur*, where travelling and dwelling become ways of producing innovativeness and originating knowledge. Cooper's installation rather reflects the impassivity, disorientation and entrapment experienced through travelling the world. Although the installation is pleasant and conceptually well resolved, its placement within the gallery space seems challenging and confined.

Regardless of the complications surrounding the organisation of the gallery's interior space, 'Terra Pericolosa' is an enlightening, varied show, exhibiting conceptual art pieces in vigorous conversation with one another. All eight participating artists worked with current world issues to portray concrete visual understandings of their subject matter. Victor's body of work is the one with force on the show, supported and complimented by Wiechers and Cooper's intriguing depictions of *terra periculosa*. Victor traces and maps the underlying psychological human histories that contaminate the land. In direct conversation

with Victor's work, Wiechers' compelling sculptures exhibit a sensible understanding of Earth as an agent with human qualities, unfolding in a treacherous territory, on the brink of disaster. Miller's attractive installation echoes Wiechers' representation of the energies between nature and human systems. It captures the moment before catastrophe strikes and reflects how scientific systems can drive human existence to the border of menace. Aesthetically, Miller and Grobler's works connect effectively, but the latter artist's oeuvre communicates more strongly with Dietrich's artist's book, which suggests human histories around the river paths reflected in the redrafted cartography. Preller's out-of-the-ordinary portrayal of danger through moments in film culture stands out amongst all the representations of dangerous land. She positions film culture into a new sphere by representing existing filmic compositions into oil paintings. Parton, too, creates with paint and articulates through her visuals that the existing Earth we live on can, at any moment, fail humanity and disintegrate into dangerous land. Papageorge's installation quietly communicates with Parton's interpretation of geographical deterioration, by representing documented moments of global warming processes as an omnipresent danger, ready to explode. Cooper's work resonates with Bourriaud's notion of the contemporary artist as cultural nomad, but simultaneously questions the idea of travelling without boundaries. It suggests misdirection, physical disorientation and a longing for familiar places.

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