

PAUL STOPFORTH



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Judith Mason

Anne Sassoon

Leora Maltz-Leca

Kate McCrickard

DAVID KRUT
PUBLISHING

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These fragments from a South African journey are now
fragments of memory, salvaged and celebrated in paint.

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Wounded Man, 1988
Charcoal on paper, 76 x 56 cm

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INTRODUCTION

Judith Mason

Some decades ago, a certain man died while being interrogated by the South African Security Police. That he had slipped on some soap in the shower was the official explanation, just one of many risible excuses offered by the Security Police for the deaths of people in their custody. Some in detention 'fell down stairs' or 'leapt out of windows', and ordinary carbolic soap seemed peculiarly dangerous. Soap is not the stuff of martyrdom. It is slapstick, like the proverbial banana peel. To go down in a hail of bullets or be hanged by the neck until dead is something. But to die as a result of a silly accident is to be stripped somehow of the last dignity afforded one. In such cases, we quickly bury the dead and they are soon lost to our collective memory. Paul Stopforth is one of the guardians of that memory, and he will not allow us to forget. Spurning grand gestures, he is the artist of the quiet icon, the man who retrieves the soap and sees in it a sliver of history. From the first shocking lifecasts in his 1978 exhibition at The Market Theatre Gallery, where the falling, wretched figures performed a ghastly ballet of state-sanctioned abuse, to more recent work in which mundane objects testify to the grandeur and sordidness of the Struggle, Stopforth has addressed himself to this history, even as it is unfolding. The soap was there in that first exhibition, at the top of the steps. To pick one's way through those figures was to become complicit, drawn into the moral core of the installation.

When, later, Stopforth drew Steve Biko's bruised corpse, the viewer felt that she was at the autopsy, spinning a web of lies and justifications with the police, yet weeping with Biko's family beside his naked young body. Even thirty years ago, Stopforth did not edit out the bad stuff. He gave us the facts and expected us to respond with whatever humanity we could muster.

Following this early work, Stopforth created, in the 1980s, several quasi-portraits of the factotums of the apartheid system. The people portrayed in 'The Interrogators' were self-caricaturing in the Stroessner/Vorster/Pinochet mold – dark glasses, grim-faced with mustaches like duelling scars. Stopforth used a limited palette and dark backgrounds, and he enlarged the figures to create the impression of so many Big Brothers watching, bloated with power. Looking at these images some decades later, at their insidious forensic clarity, one recalls the interminable menace of those days.

By the late eighties, Stopforth was regarded by colleagues and critics alike as one of the most uncompromising interpreters of our moral quagmire. Then, in 1988, he emigrated to the United States. He taught for the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, and in 1996 was appointed to the faculty of the Visual and Environmental Studies Department at Harvard University. His teaching position left him some time in which to paint. For a while his work seemed free of his earlier political concerns and the engagement these demanded. His richly painted surfaces and nuggety figurines characterised by matrices of dots that contradicted and enlivened the images seemed to engage with an entirely different aesthetic and admirers of the work would have little sense of the difficulties of translocation with which he struggled.

PREVIOUS Gilbert Bell (left) and Paul Stopforth with *Tumbling Figure*, from 'Deaths in Detention', The Market Theatre Gallery, 1978
Collection: Wits University Art Gallery

OPPOSITE Paul Stopforth with *Hooded Figure*, from 'Deaths in Detention', The Market Theatre Gallery, 1978



On Robben Island, Stopforth found the soap that had caused such havoc in our history. Now he sees it as iconic, as synecdochic, the fragment that contains the whole. In *Healer #1 (Sunlight)* (2004) the soap is a lintel: archaic, African, reflecting light and creating a space through which the sky can be seen and entered. We smell kelp and carbolic. For a fraction of a moment we become Nelson Mandela, and this act of identification is profoundly healing. On the other hand, it is a cake of soap on a dingy surface: the smell of respectable but impoverished childhood rises to the nose. The paint has a beautiful, washboard feel to it, and the promise of Sunlight.

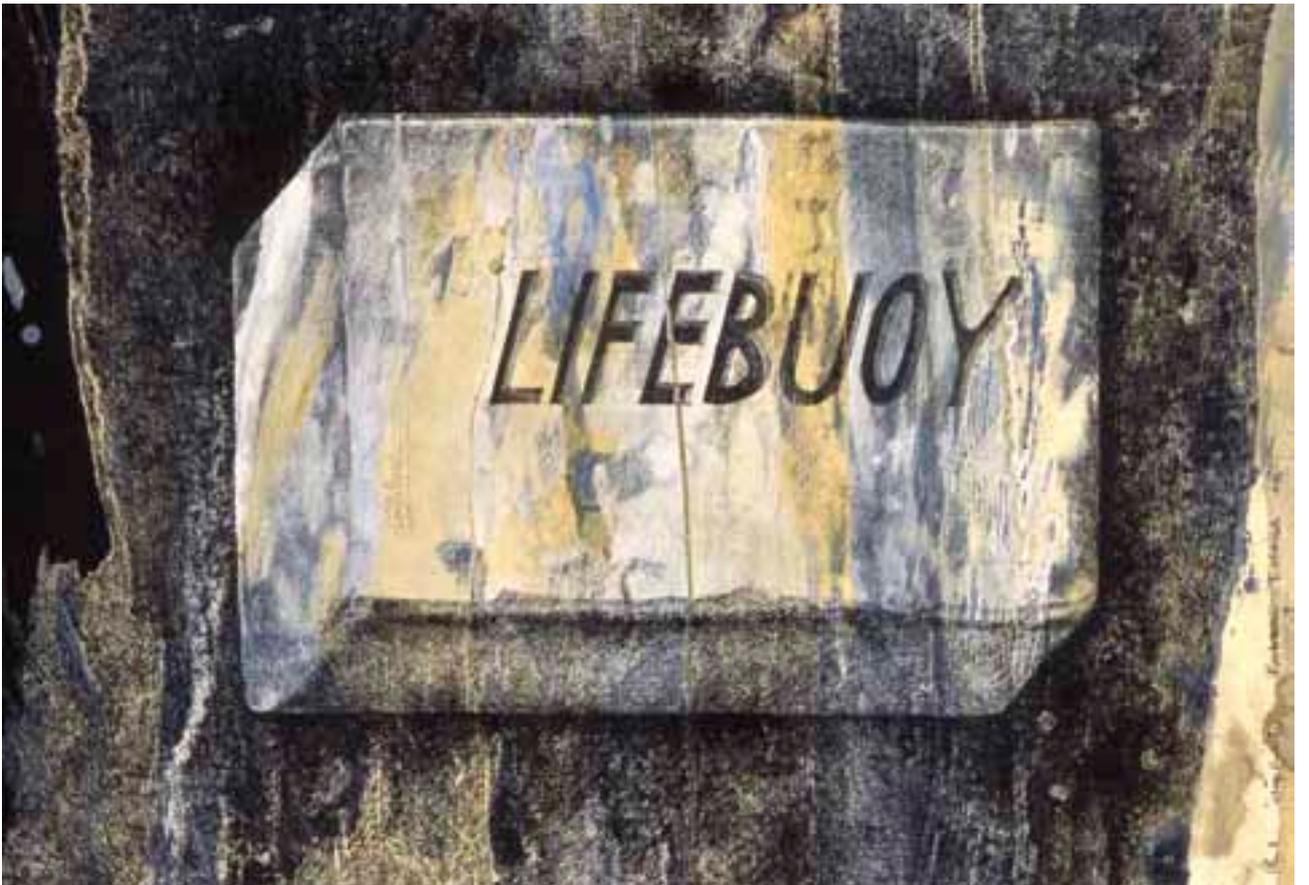
In *Healer #2 (Lifebuoy)* (2004) we see the sustaining word 'Lifebuoy' pressed into soap set in a scum of grey paint. It suggests endurance without the promise of release. Both works convey the resilience and the hope of Island prisoners, the tedium of everyday life,

the will to maintain cleanliness and dignity, and the prospect of soap, cake after cake, washing the user into a captive infinity. These pieces remind us that the happy ending of Robben Island was not shared by all of her inmates.

ABOVE *Suspended Figure (Helicopter)*, from 'Deaths in Detention', The Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, 1978
Plaster bandage, wax floor polish and false teeth; life-size.
'Helicopter' was the name given by interrogators and victims to this particular form of torture.

OPPOSITE TOP *Healer #1 (Sunlight)*, 2004
Mixed media on paper, 51 x 76 cm

OPPOSITE BOTTOM *Healer #2 (Lifebuoy)*, 2004
Mixed media on paper, 51 x 76 cm



Julia Hartwig writes, 'If the attitude towards reality is the nerve-centre of every aesthetic, whether in literature or in art, visible reality has always been a constant point of reference for me.'¹³ In *Homage* (2008), we see Stopforth creating a small and pretty piece of visible reality, pinning its bright nerve-centre to the canvas and making it an object of meditation. A bougainvillea blossom splits the canvas into two almost identical parts, a mirroring device that can often create an almost intolerable tension between images; but here we find ourselves the third part of a very

agreeable triangle. We could, for that matter, be the base of a scale whose contents are in perfect poise, or somebody at a crossroads. In other works containing the triangle motif, the artist makes us look outwards. The game he plays with us here is existential, personal. We read each tenderly painted vein in the fabric of leaves as if we had never really looked before. Our cataracts have been removed. Translucent cerise and scarlet pulsate against fields of broken yellow. We want to measure the space between the colours. Is the yellow a landscape away?



An inch away? Or is it like Hildegard of Bingen's feather on the breath of God, lighter than air? Here, to quote Hartwig again, 'the image, accessible to us ... carries us in a most extraordinary way, into an invisible sphere.'⁴

Despite the important and obvious shifts in Stopforth's work over the years, his commitment to bearing witness has never changed. He has looked at objects, people, incidents and facts in a clear-eyed and compassionate way, and deduced that a kind of truth resides in an agglomeration of all of these things.

NOTES

1. Cited in Benjamin Paloff, 'Personal Histories', *The Nation* (June 30, 2008).
2. 'Kgotla' is a Setswana word. It refers to a public gathering or community council called by a village headman to decide important or judicial matters.
3. Cited in Benjamin Paloff, 'Personal Histories', *The Nation* (June 30, 2008).
4. Ibid.



OPPOSITE AND ABOVE *Homage*, 2008
Gouache on 2 panels, 28 x 56 cm

OVERLEAF *Godhead (for JM)*, 2008
Gouache on 2 panels, 31.5 x 51 cm

COLLECTING EVIDENCE: ART AND THE APARTHEID STATE

Anne Sassoon

To recall the emotional impact of Paul Stopforth's work when it first appeared at The Market Theatre Gallery in Johannesburg in 1978 requires a shift in mindset. Looking at it today from the comfort of post-apartheid South Africa, with Resistance Art now an established part of local art history, is a very different experience.

Then it seemed that the clenched grip of the apartheid government could only grow tighter. Arrests of political dissidents were widespread, torture was no secret and deaths in detention were commonplace. And yet Stopforth was the only visual artist at that time, white or black, who confronted the issues of torture and detention directly in his work. What made him different?



ABOVE Paul Stopforth and Wits University Mountain Club members install *Falling Figure* on the roof of The Market Theatre, 1978

OPPOSITE *Falling Figure*, from 'Deaths in Detention', 1978
Plaster bandage, wax floor polish and false teeth; life-size



Stopforth approached his images as if they were icons. In the context of the exhibition, *Elegy* was like a horizontal crucifixion and *The Interrogators* (1979) a triptych based on photographs taken of the three men who had been present when Biko received his fatal injury, was like a totem pole. The original photographs that inspired the triptych were taken by Mike McCann, a brilliant photojournalist on the *Rand Daily Mail*, who captured the evil in the faces of those men as they left court after the inquest. The *Mail* displayed the photographs prominently on the front page, with one grim head placed above the other. In Stopforth's drawing, the floating outline of a chair creates another layer – the chair with which Biko, according to the interrogators' account, had attacked them.

These images return us to the idea of Stopforth in the role of preserver and custodian of relics from another period. His method of working was like an act of conservation – the careful documenting of objective information, the tender cross-hatching with a small instrument over large areas. These works had a profound effect on me at the time: 'A leaden grey runs through everything, and the airless, stifling application of it imposes a deadness on the figures, even when literal death has not occurred, like a miasma.'¹⁶

When the grey miasma started to feel like a self-imposed trap to Stopforth – in the way that artists periodically discover that they are going too far and painting themselves into a corner – he permitted himself to let go of photographic references and produce a series of imagined portraits. But the characters he imagined still carried a load of unpleasantness. Perhaps he had to physically leave South Africa in order to slowly and carefully approach colour, beauty, and finally painting. Even out of the country, it seems impossible for Stopforth to leave South Africa behind him – it is still very much at the source of his creativity. But he has liberated himself from the overbearing sense of white guilt. A clue to this may be in a conversation he remembers having with Biko. Explaining in personal terms why he insisted Black Consciousness had to be established as an entirely black organisation, Biko said, 'I was brought up to believe deep in myself that by virtue of history I am inferior, and what is embedded in you is the belief that you are superior.' However, Stopforth was not one to feel innately superior. Whatever the impulse that drove him to identify with victims of apartheid, it arose out of feelings that were authentic and personal. For this reason, the best of his work rings true and has an honourable place in South African art history.



THE LOGIC OF THE RELIC: TRACES OF HISTORY IN STONE AND MILK

Leora Maltz-Leca

Robben Island was without question the harshest, most iron-fisted outpost in the South African penal system ... Moving from one prison to another always requires a period of adjustment. But journeying to Robben Island was like going to another country. Its isolation made it not simply another prison, but a world of its own ...

Nelson Mandela¹

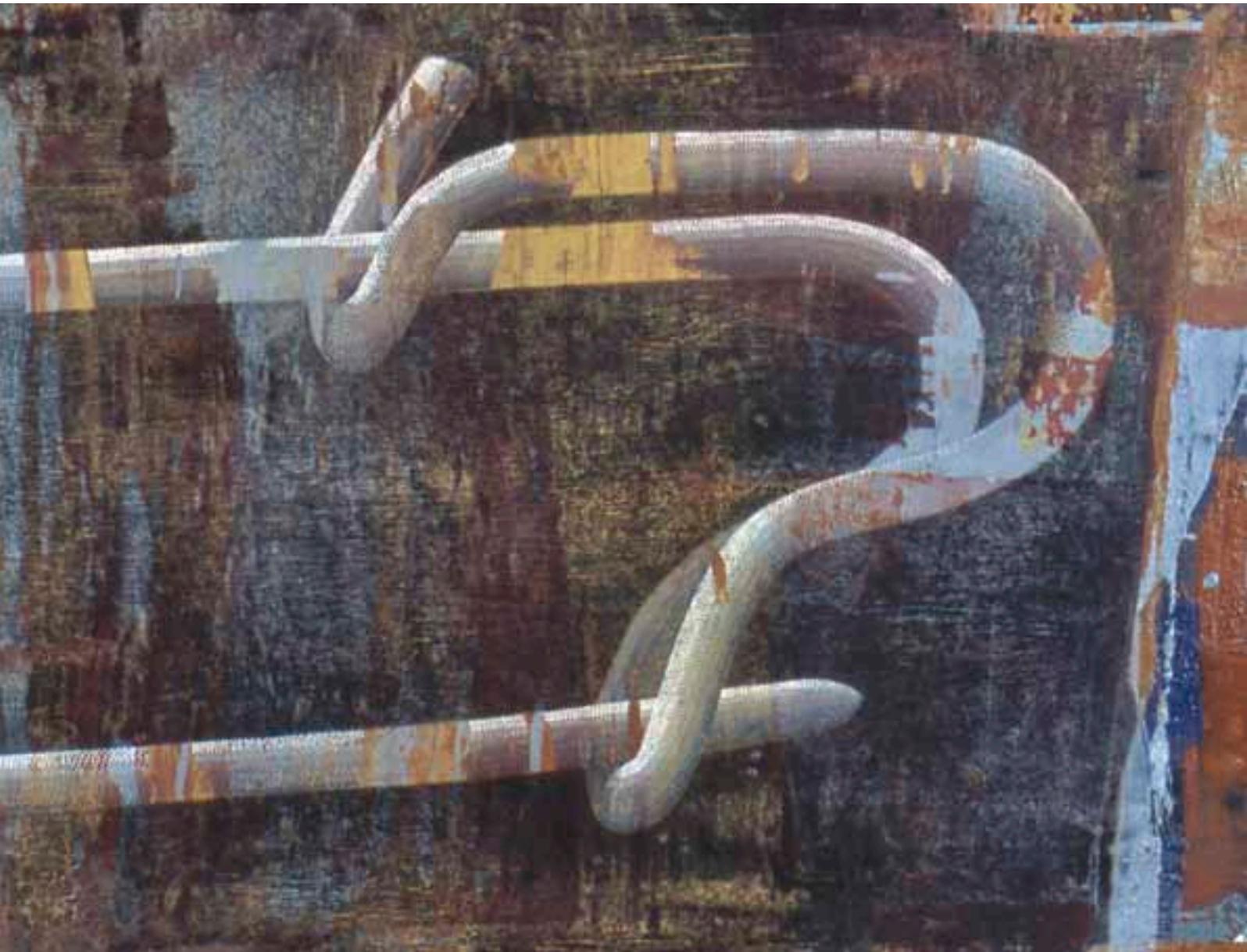


To live means to leave traces.

Walter Benjamin²

Hand-wrought from a length of scrap wire by an unknown prisoner, a miniscule blanket pin shifts between enduring skeleton and harbinger of decay in Paul Stopforth's 2004 painting, *Monument* (below). Smooth brushstrokes trace an elegiac trajectory of long, slow curves, winding in and out of metallic orifices in an uninterrupted flow of calligraphic line. This 'monument,' one in a series of portraits from Stopforth's 2003 residency on Robben Island, exemplifies how the artist seizes the banal

remnants of apartheid's past – the physical 'traces' of lives lived, of objects touched – as the unlikely vessels of history. Probing the artist's description of his mundane objects as 'both relic and evidence,' this essay explores how the aesthetics of the vestigial underpins Stopforth's work, how its unerring logic connects paintings, drawings and assemblages that are decades apart and otherwise profoundly dissimilar. This 'logic of the relic,' I propose, surfaces in the guise of the tiny, the fragmented and the fetishised; it can be recognised in the imprint of the bony, the rocky and the anti-monumental; and in all cases, it marries an obdurate materiality with the spectres of loss and decay.





PREVIOUS *Monument*, 2005
Mixed media on panel, 76 x 198 cm

ABOVE *The Island #7: Limestone*, 2004
Mixed media on panel, 224 x 203 cm



Stopforth charges his scraps of metal and stone as messengers from 'Another Country' as he titles one work in the series. To be sure, this foreign territory is the receding horizon of South Africa's past.³ But as in Nelson Mandela's description above, the phrase summons too the vision of a parallel, indescribable world in which



ABOVE TOP *The Island #6: Cabinets*, 2004
Mixed media on panel, 61 x 203 cm

ABOVE BOTTOM *The Island #4: Blankets*, 2003
Mixed media on paper, 58.5 x 58 cm

words founder and paint congeals. It is towards this other country that Stopforth travels in the series under discussion here, producing paintings which return to us as envoys from 'Esiqithini, the Island, that narrow windswept outcrop of rock ... that hellhole.'⁴

In Stopforth's poetics of the ordinary, Robben Island becomes the locus of literal and metaphoric meaning, anchoring images such as *Monument* to the geopolitical specificities of that scrubby parcel of land. The paintings of this series – all isolated forms tenuously suspended in fields of aqueous medium – are further moored to the salty landscape of apartheid's past by the works' unambiguous titles: *The Island #4: Blankets* (2003), *The Island #6: Cabinets* (2004), or *The Island #7: Limestone* (2004). These verbal tags affirm Stopforth's pedestrian objects as travellers from this other country: the blanket folded with military precision is the standard-issue prison grey; the wall cabinet was the single piece of furniture in Nelson Mandela's cell, and the rocks of *The Island #7: Limestone* and *Tideline* (2007) (pp. 56–57) are monuments to the numbing labour political prisoners had to perform daily at the Island's limestone quarry. Like so many grave markers to the old regime, rocks, stones and all things petrified populate numerous paintings as memorials, announcing *Monument* as merely one example of a paean to memory that subtends the entire Robben Island series.⁵



NOTES

1. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. Boston, MA: Little Brown and Company, 1994, p. 338.
2. Walter Benjamin, 'Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century' in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978, p. 155. Benjamin is referring here to the traces people leave on furniture and other items of domestic habitation, making this insight particularly relevant to Stopforth's own stools and cabinets.
3. I refer here to the well-known expression, 'The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there' which opens L.P. Hartley's 1953 novel, *The Go-Between*. Adapted into a film in 1971 by playwright Harold Pinter, *The Go-Between* uses the Anglo-Boer War as the symbol of our last, genocidal century, which opened with genocidal atrocities and concentration camps on the tip of Africa, and exploded into a century of violence and holocaust. A common expression now, it was also the title of David Lowenthal's 1999 novel, *The Past is a Foreign Country*.
4. Mandela, *Long Walk*, p. 337.
5. Paintings featuring rocks include not only the aforementioned *The Island #7: Limestone* and *Tideline*, but also *The Island #2: Boundary*, *The Island #7: Harbor*, *The Island #8: Bethesda*, *Touchstone*, *Inland*, *Another Country* and *Mirror*. For more detailed discussions of *Quarry* and *Bethesda*, see my essay, 'Paul Stopforth: Being Here and Not There' in *Paul Stopforth: Fragments and Reliquaries from Robben Island*. Cambridge, MA: W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Studies, Harvard University, 2006, pp. 5–17.
6. The role of grand, overbearing monuments in the aestheticised politics of Italian fascism and German Nazism has long been noted. As James E. Young points out in his discussion of twentieth-century monuments, it is precisely the way such monuments were used by these totalitarian regimes that has made post-war histories of monuments and memorials so fraught. See *At Memory's Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000. In the South African context, photographer David Goldblatt has drawn attention to the imbrication of monuments in apartheid. In *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Goldblatt demonstrates how the monuments and physical structures that dot the South African landscape are deeply embedded in the psycho-political structures of apartheid.
7. Artist's Statement for April 2006 exhibition, Neil and Angelica Rudenstine Gallery, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
8. Mandela, *Long Walk*, p. 367.
9. The landscape's blinding surface beauty also deflects attention from what lies beneath – a beauty that defies the violent histories of a place like the quarry. The intense light at the quarry was also literally blinding, creating problems with the prisoners' vision. Mandela described how 'the glare hurt our eyes, and along with the dust, made it difficult to see. Our eyes teared and our faces became fixed in a permanent squint.' (*Long Walk*, p. 354).
10. For the definitive account of the early history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century landscape painting and poetry in South Africa, and the ways in which both poets and painters repeatedly figured the land in terms of images of blindness and blankness, see J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing: On The Culture of Letters in South Africa*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1988.
11. As Stopforth points out, the leached pigments staining the water were presumably responsible for the attribution of healing properties to the pool.
12. For the theory that monuments function not as a means to help us remember, but as aids to forgetting, see James E. Young, 'Against Redemption: The Arts of Counter-Memory' in *Humanity of the Limit: The Experience of Jews and Christians*. Michael A. Signer (ed.). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000, pp. 44–62.
13. Artist's Statement for April 2006 exhibition, Neil and Angelica Rudenstine Gallery, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
14. Anne McClintock has argued that soap and a national obsession with cleaning became highly fetishised and racialised concepts in Victorian England and its colonies. These narratives continued well into late-apartheid South Africa in the form of print and television commercials that linked cleanliness and purity with whiteness and 'civilization.'

ABOVE *Beside the Sea (Singer)*, 2007
Gouache on panel, 38 x 38 cm

OPPOSITE *Transformer #3 (Breath)*, 2008
Gouache on panel, 71 x 79 cm

Stopforth's attention to soap highlights the somewhat fetishistic character of all his Robben Island subjects. See 'Soft-Soaping Empire' in Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995, pp. 207–231.

15. In *Long Walk to Freedom* Mandela describes how he and other ANC members saw their struggles on the Island for basic amenities 'as very much part of the apartheid struggle' (p. 355). Fighting daily what they saw as the same dehumanisation and brutality that marked the larger system of apartheid, the political prisoners explicitly perceived the Island as a microcosm of the larger resistance.
16. *Transformer: Breath*, the title of three recent paintings, refers to the 'camouflaged, cylindrical metal protrusions that stick out of the ground in the vicinity of the emplacements [which were] a means to circulate air through the probably foetid bunkers.' Built by the British when they used the Island as a military base during World War II, the metal protrusions thus "'transform" the air supply to the bunkers, and in doing so function metaphorically as mechanical lungs.' (Paul Stopforth in an email of 14 January 2009.)

Robben Island 2: Boundary is one of the few works not made of metal or stone, but of concrete – a similarly hard and permanent material.

17. This imagery participates in a long tradition of conceiving the South African landscape in terms of its desiccated remnants of the past, most famously exemplified in Antjie Krog's description of South Africa as 'country of my skull; landscape of my bones.' *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998.
18. Although history tells us that 1988 was the penultimate year before apartheid collapsed, it certainly did not feel that way. 1988 marked the fourth year of a seemingly interminable five-year State of Emergency that gave the government license to censor all coverage of political events, and unprecedented powers to arrest, detain and often kill political dissidents.
19. Discussion with the artist, Cambridge, MA, February 2006.
20. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. Trans. and ed. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, p. 71.





EXILE ON MAIN STREET: THE AMERICAN WORKS OF PAUL STOPFORTH, 1989–2009

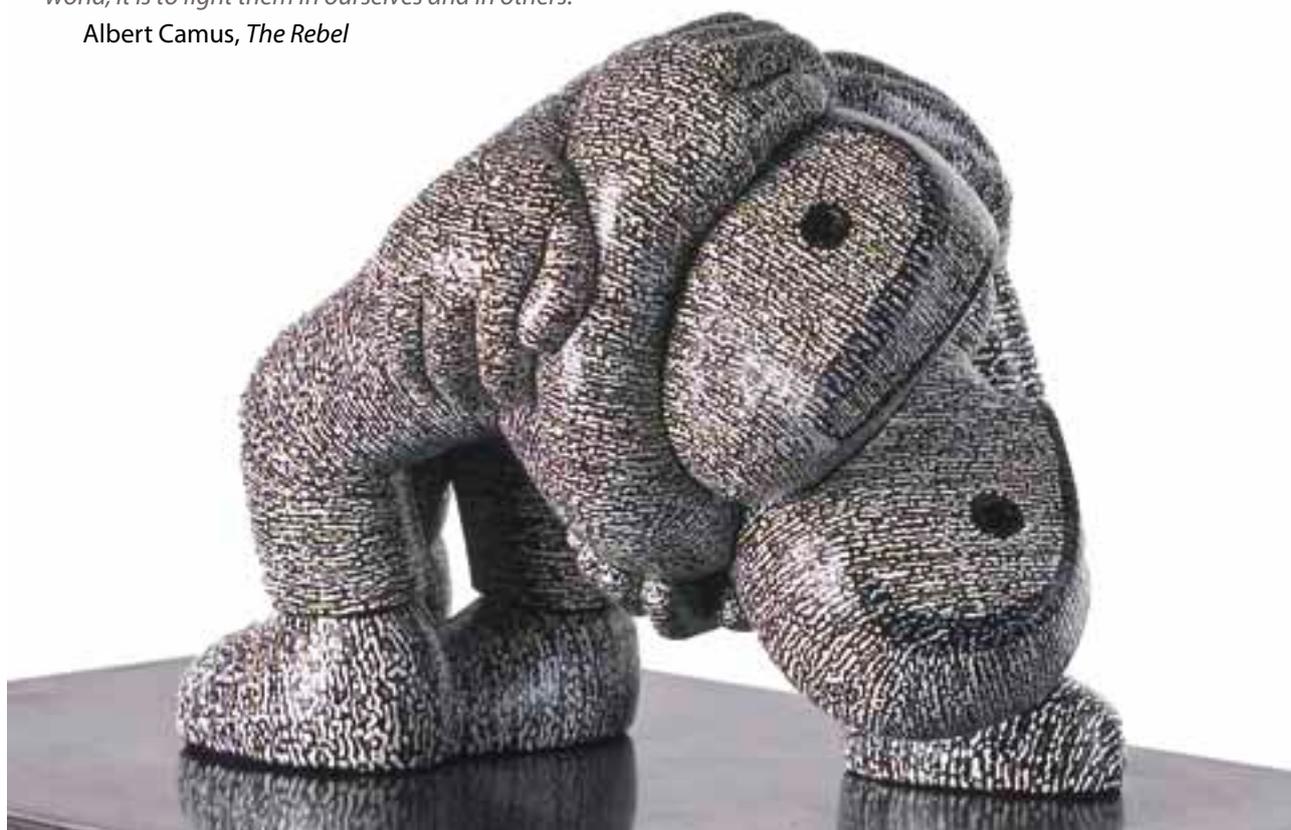
Kate McCrickard

*... Now that my ladder's gone,
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.*

William Butler Yeats, 'The Circus Animals' Desertion'

*We all carry within us our places of exile, our crimes, and
our ravages. But our task is not to unleash them on the
world; it is to fight them in ourselves and in others.*

Albert Camus, *The Rebel*



OPPOSITE *Pointing Down*, 1999
Pastel on cloth, 188 x 381 cm
From *Turning Right, Pointing Down, Turning Left*, triptych

ABOVE *Crossing #5*, 2001
Mixed media, 32 x 35.5 x 48 cm

Crossover, 1988–2000

Deeply embedded half-forgotten landscapes and geographies, South African birdcalls and flora, half remembered and whispering. The immigrant who wishes he had just stayed home, pitied by Bob Dylan and hounded by regret. Casting about, rocking sideways, forward and back on shape-shifting ground. His *New Freedom*: fractured, dislocated and dumb.

Wrong light, wrong sky, wrong sound, wrong sun, wrong earth, wrong move. Unmoored and unhinged.

Floundering in dreams, mental scab-picking accompanied by American survivors in drab church basements, followings dreads of memory guided by the insight and compassion of three women, discovering the possibility of drawing breath and the Buddha's wisdom mind.

Aboriginal dreamtime paintings, Zulu beadwork, Hindu and Buddhist pantheons of the spirit, Indra's Net, and colour, colour, colour. Afrikaans phrases, songs, foul curses and rancorous demands for blessings from a grace-denying god. The double-headed curse of nostalgia and regret, the blues songline: 'You don't know what you've got til it's gone.'

Sinking deep into psychic, wounded dreams, searching for clues in their bones – where's the resurrection man, the transformation, the metamorphosis? Floundering, out of water, drowning in air. Search, discover, explore and destroy the new beginnings that appear as promise, and slowly dissolve into predictability. False dawns, false starts, false hopes, sifting quicksand and lime, scraping away, scraping away, where's the fucking brand new day?

'tick-tack, ticktack-tirr-tirr-tirr'
'choorr, choorr, choorr, chwirr'
'ha, ha, haadeeda'*

Paul Stopforth, 2009

* This is how *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa* describes the call of the Hadedah Ibis.

In 1988, Paul Stopforth and his wife, Carol Marks-Stopforth made the decision to leave South Africa and cross the seas to Boston, USA, knowing a return to their homeland was unlikely. Had Stopforth known that Nelson Mandela and others would unexpectedly be freed from prison only two years later, he might have gritted it out. The subsequent loss of direction railed against in the epigraph by Stopforth at the start of this essay, paints Stopforth's strangled predicament as an artistic casualty of the South African Diaspora. His beginnings as an artist were born of the struggle: the subjects, the medium, the application were all pointedly grueling, accusatory, and labour-intensive – attempts by a privileged white man to bear witness in a racially segregated country bigoted in his favour. Leaving South Africa was a life-transforming experience for Stopforth, and induced in him an initially alarming sense of utter dislocation. Where does the artist who made the iconic *The Interrogators* (p. 45), the *Deaths in Detention* (pp. 4–5, 6, 12, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33) installations and the *Biko Series* (pp. 40–41) recommence once the political struggle central to his life and work ends? He must reconstruct himself on shaky new ground.

Stopforth is a candid and sincere man. Seated between Nigerian curator Chika Okeke-Agulu and Cameroonian artist Bili Bidjocka at the *New Geographies in Contemporary African Art* conference at Harvard University in 2008, he asked the floor if he had the right to call himself an *African*. Born and raised in South Africa, he never dreamt of teaching at Harvard, and as a young artist, avoided the fashionable pull towards

OPPOSITE (TOP TO BOTTOM)

Guardian, 1992
Oil on canvas, 102 x 152.5 cm

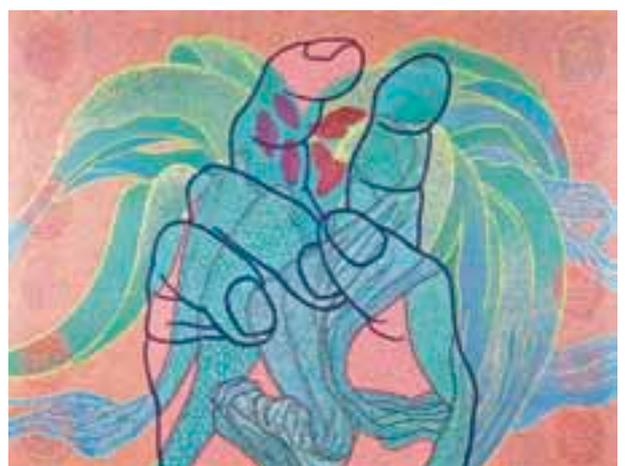
Alchemist, 1992
Oil on canvas, 102 x 152.5 cm

Bodhisattva, 1992
Oil on canvas, 102 x 152.5 cm

San, 1992
Oil on canvas, 102 x 152.5 cm

artistic trends such as Lyrical Abstraction, Fluxus and Postminimalism, current in Europe and America in the late sixties. His work was a head-on confrontation with the dismaying politics around him. Twenty-one years later, the humanism integral to his work remains, but he mines richer, more complex veins of imagery, mythology and psychology. South Africa continues to be the touchstone for Stopforth's art: 'I had to leave,' he explains, 'to become aware of the enormous scale, the history and mythology of the country, the flora and fauna – things other than politics.'¹ But his unsettled status as an exile on the east coast of America has proved fecund, embodying a new inner vision of generosity and optimism.

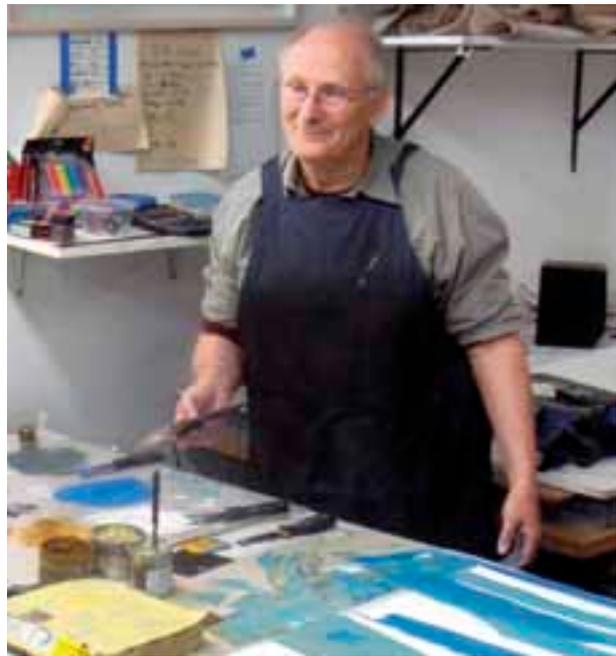
The liminal works that appear in the early 1990s and through the next decade, suggest an artist contemplating the inevitability of impermanence and the nature of change and oscillation. It is possible that Stopforth's discovery of Buddhism in the USA helped him find acceptance within himself and make the jump to a new subject after the demanding immediacy of the politico-journalistic South African works. The shift was necessary and declares itself strikingly in a move to zappy, buoyant colour, so celebratory after the sombre charcoal and graphite works of the late 1970s and 1980s. *Guardian*, *Alchemist*, *Bodhisattva* and *San* from 1992, illustrate a delight in decorative surfaces, stippling and cross-hatching, dappled textures with burnt oranges, dark golds and azure blues reminiscent of luminous Ndebele and Zulu beadwork. The minutiae of dots applied with the tip of a tiny brush works the oil paint across the canvas in high-toned points that jump from dark grounds like nocturnal constellations. They bring to mind a number of associations: concentric circles from Aboriginal dreamtime painting, beetle tracks, and the looped weave of Zulu baskets made out of telephone wire. It is *pointillist*, but without the French movement's interest in optics. The effect is textile, expressive of sweeping space and wonder. There is an openness despite the punctiliousness of application.



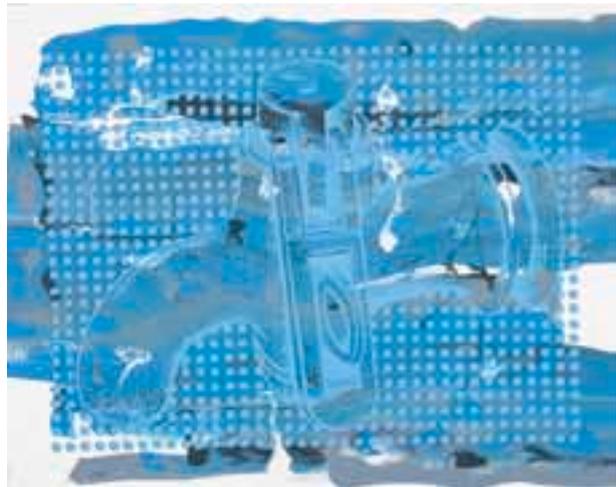
Selected Exhibitions

SOLO

- *Source*, The Schoolhouse Gallery, Provincetown, MA, USA
2009
- *Gate*, The Schoolhouse Gallery, Provincetown, MA, USA
2007
- *Being Here and Not There: Fragments and Reliquaries from Robben Island*, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, Harvard University, USA
2004
- *The Island*, David Krut Projects, New York, NY, USA
2002
- *Slip Slide*, The Schoolhouse Gallery, Provincetown, MA, USA
2001
- *Crossing*, The Schoolhouse Gallery, Provincetown, MA, USA
2000
- *Fragments*, Groton School, Groton, MA, USA
- *Scatterlings*, Hampden Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, USA
1999
- *Figuring*, The Schoolhouse Gallery, Provincetown, MA, USA
1998
- *Essential Gestures*, Creiger-Dane Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
1996
- *Love's Body*, Creiger-Dane Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
1995
- *Alchemist*, Holzwasser Gallery, New Art Center, Newton, MA, USA
1993
- *Offerings*, Akin Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
1992
- *African Herbs*, McQuade Library Art Gallery, Merrimack College, Andover, MA, USA
1988
- Gallery II, Tufts University, Medford, MA, USA
- New Art Center, Newton, MA, USA
- Galerie Sandoz, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
1987
- Association of Arts Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa
1986
- Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
1983
- The Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
1981
- The Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
1980
- Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
1979
- The Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
1978
- The Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
1976
- Walsh Marais Gallery, Durban, South Africa
1974
- Walsh Marais Gallery, Durban, South Africa
1971
- Walsh Marais Gallery, Durban, South Africa



Paul Stopforth hand-painting paper in preparation for the print
Source: *Blue Field*. David Krut Print Workshop, Johannesburg, 2009.



GROUP

- 2009
- Two-Person Exhibition with Peter Scott, NAGA Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
 - *Violence Transformed*, Massachusetts State House, Boston, MA, USA
 - *ECC 25: Forward March*, Spier Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2008
- *Is there still Life*, Sanlam Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2008–07
- *Apartheid: The South African Mirror*, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Spain
- 2007
- *Art Now Fair*, Miami, FL, USA
- 2005
- *Four-Person Exhibition*, The Schoolhouse Gallery, Provincetown, MA, USA
 - Rust-en-Vrede Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2004
- *Excavation and Reconstruction in Contemporary African Art*, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, USA
- 2003
- *Four-Person Exhibition*, The Schoolhouse Gallery, Provincetown, MA, USA
- 2002
- *Faculty Exhibition*, Carpenter Center, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA
 - *A Continent Away: Multiple Identities in Contemporary African Art*, Brush Gallery, Lowell, MA, USA
 - *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa*, University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ, USA
- 2001
- *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa*, Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for the Visual Arts, Stanford, CA, USA
 - *Faculty Choice*, Victoria H. Myhren Gallery, University of Denver, CO, USA
- 2000
- *Drawings & Photographs*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, NY, USA
 - *Day Without Art*, Barbara Krakow Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
 - *Inside/Out*, Carpenter Center, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA
 - *Awake*, Harbor Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA, USA
- 1999
- *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa*, The Museum for African Art, New York, NY, USA
 - *Postcards from South Africa*, Axis Gallery, New York, NY, USA
 - *Destination/Place*, The Schoolhouse Gallery, Provincetown, MA, USA
- 1998
- The Schoolhouse Gallery, Provincetown, MA, USA
 - *The Contemporary Artist as Observer and Observed*, The Brush Art Gallery and Studios, Market Mills, Lowell, MA, USA
 - *Recent American Portraits*, George Sherman Union Gallery, Boston University, Boston, MA, USA
- 1997–96
- *Eighth Triennial*, Fuller Museum of Art, Brockton, MA, USA
- 1996
- *Visiting Faculty Exhibition*, Carpenter Center, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA
 - *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*, Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, Sweden
- 1995
- *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, England
 - *Siyawela*, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, England
 - *Taking Liberties: The Body Politic*, Africus Johannesburg Biennale, South Africa
 - *Something Human*, Towne Art Gallery, Wheelock College, Boston, MA, USA
- 1994
- *BOSTON (in dialogue) NOW*, Institute for Contemporary Arts, Boston, MA, USA
 - *Visual Arts Showcase*, Boston Center for the Arts, MA, USA
 - *Faculty Exhibition*, New Art Center, Newton, MA, USA
 - *Faculty Exhibition*, Tisch Gallery, Tufts University, Medford, MA, USA
- 1993
- *Anything but Paper Prayers*, Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
 - *Christmas Exhibition*, New Art Center, Newton, MA, USA
 - *Faculty Exhibition*, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA
- 1992
- *Symphony of Prosperity*, Akin Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
 - *Faculty Exhibition*, New Art Center, Newton, MA, USA
 - *Salon*, Akin Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
 - *Autopia*, Akin Gallery, Boston, MA, USA
- 1991
- *Faculty Biennial*, Starr Gallery, Grossman Campus, Newton, MA, USA
 - *Confronting Political and Social Evil*, Tufts University, Medford, MA, USA
- 1990
- *The Body Politic: Three Figurative Artists*, McQuade Library Art Gallery, Merrimack College, Andover, MA, USA
 - *Let the Voices be Heard*, Harbor Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA, USA
 - *Faculty Exhibition*, New Art Center, Newton, MA, USA
 - *Voices from South Africa*, Stuart Levy Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 1989
- *Three-Person Exhibition*, Gallery NAGA, Boston, MA, USA
 - *Faculty Exhibition*, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA
- 1988
- *Culture in Another South Africa*, Amsterdam, Holland
 - *Detention Without Trial: 100 Artists Protest*, The Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1987
- *Five South African Artists*, Boston, MA, USA
 - *P.O.W.*, The Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
 - *Vita Awards Exhibition*, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa
 - *Director's Exhibition*, The Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

OPPOSITE MIDDLE Source: *Blue Field*, 2008

Monotype with silkscreen on Somerset Satin White, 73.5 x 92 cm.

Printed by Jillian Ross and Lingo Rodrigues

OPPOSITE BOTTOM Source: *Overlap*, 2008

Hardground etching, sugarlift aquatint, spitbite aquatint and silkscreen on Somerset Satin White, 54 x 59.9 cm, edition of 16.

Printed by Niall Bingham and Lingo Rodrigues

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- Cotter, Holland, 'Postcards from South Africa'. *The New York Times* (10 September 1999)
- , 'South Africans, Isolated No More'. *The New York Times* (24 September 1999)
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- Garlake, Margaret, 'Africa Now'. *Art Monthly* (November 1995)
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- Jacob, Miriam, 'The Hidden Horror-in-Open View'. *Weekend World* (25 September 1978)
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- Maltz, Leora, *Being Here and Not There: Fragments and Reliquaries from Robben Island*, Cambridge: W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, Harvard University, 2006
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- , 'Local Artist Paul Leaves Sentiment Way Behind'. *Sunday Express* (17 September 1980)
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- , 'Enigmatic Comment on Society's Harshness: Paul Stopforth and Michael Goldberg at The Market Theatre Gallery'. *Rand Daily Mail* (November 1981)
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- Tarlow, Lois, 'Profile: Paul Stopforth'. *Art New England* (April/May 1996)
- Temin, Christine, 'Confronting the Anguish: Paul Stopforth Shines a Harsh Light on South Africa's Oppression'. *Boston Globe* (3 October 1989)
- , 'Moving from Clenched Fists to Open Arms'. *Boston Globe* (12 May 1994)
- , 'Star Attraction'. *Boston Globe* (15 November 1995)
- , 'Stopforth's Bodies Bear Their Souls'. *Boston Globe* (10 September 1996)
- , 'Truth and the Art of Healing'. *Boston Globe Sunday* (3 January 1999)
- , 'Paul Stopforth's Eloquent Mimes'. *Boston Globe Sunday* (7 October 1999)
- , 'Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa' *Boston Sunday Globe* (26 November 1999)
- , 'Stopforth Expands'. *Boston Globe* (15 August 2001)
- , 'This New Body of Work is Beautifully Abstract'. *Boston Globe* (10 August 2002)
- Vantuyghen, Peter, 'Die Veelheid van een Verhaal'. *De Stand-aard*, Belgium (13 October 1995)
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- , *South African Art Now*. New York: Collins Design, 2009

Honours and Awards

- 2006 Certificate of Distinction in Teaching, The Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA
- 2004 Residency, The Robben Island Museum, South Africa
- 2003 Delivered the Ruth First Memorial Lecture at Brandeis University Ohio Arts Council Jury for OHC Fellowship Awards, OH, USA
- 2000 Residency, Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany, CT, USA
- 1998 Juror, The Copley Society of Boston, Boston, MA, USA
- 1987 Judge for the Federated Union of Black Artists, National Student Exhibition, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1995 Juror, Worcester Art Association, Worcester, MA, USA
- 1994 Curator, The Copley Society of Boston, Holiday Invitational Exhibition
- 1994 Juror, New Hampshire Individual Artist Fellowship: Visual Art Panel, MA, USA
- 1993 Engelhard Fellowship at Bequia, West Indies
- 1987 Judge for the Federated Union of Black Artists, National Student Exhibition, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1986 The Ian Haggie Award for best Artist, *Visions*, The Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1985 The Rodney Burn Award for Figurative Drawing, Royal College of Art, London, England
- 1984 British Council Scholarship to study in the United Kingdom
- 1977–84 Director, The Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1980 External Examiner for Drawing, UNISA, Department of Fine Arts, Pretoria, South Africa
- 1972 Member, Editorial Board of *Reality* (current affairs journal), Editor, Alan Paton)
- 1971 Institute of Race Relations Award, South Africa
- 1970 Member, Theatre Council of Natal (TECON), Non-Racial Theatre Group
- 1967 Student Representative Council Award for Best Student, Johannesburg School of the Arts, Johannesburg, South Africa

Collections

- Biogen, MA, USA
- The Constitutional Court of South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa
- The Council House Gallery, WI, USA
- Durban Art Gallery, Durban, South Africa
- Goodwin Proctor, Boston, MA, USA
- Harvard University Film Archive, Cambridge, MA, USA
- Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- The Kaufman Handel Maatschappij, Rotterdam, Holland
- MTN Art Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa
- Natal Technikon, Durban, South Africa
- National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- Pretoria Art Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa
- UNISA Art Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa
- University of the Witwatersrand Art Galleries, Johannesburg, South Africa
- Total Systems Services, Columbus, GA, USA
- Tufts University, Medford, MA, USA



Biographies

KATE MCCRICKARD is the former director of David Krut Projects, New York where she ran an international exhibition programme, exhibiting artists such as Paul Stopforth, El Anatsui, Suzanne McClelland, William Kentridge and Stephen Antonakos. She is now based in Paris where she continues to write, curate and paint whilst looking after her baby daughter. Kate received an MA First Class Honours degree from Edinburgh University, Scotland in 1998. She has contributed essays to publications including *William Kentridge Flute* and catalogues on El Anatsui, Colbert Mashile and Joseph Hart.

LEORA MALTZ-LECA received her PhD in art history from Harvard in 2008. She is currently assistant professor of contemporary art and visual culture at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her work explores, amongst other things, the cross-cultural dimensions of late modernism; art in the African postcolonies; the relationship between the political and the aesthetic; and the thematics of studio process. Her writing has appeared in *Artforum*, *Frieze* and *African Arts*. She is currently completing a book entitled *William Kentridge: Process as Metaphor and Other Doubtful Enterprises*, which examines walking, talking, and the leaps of metaphor.

JUDITH MASON was born in Pretoria in 1938 and received her BA from the University of the Witwatersrand. She taught history of art and drawing at Wits before deciding, at the age of thirty-seven, to paint full-time. She has also taught at the Medici School in Florence. In the 1970s she met Paul Stopforth who was a colleague and soon a valued friend, confidant and critic. Mason's work is in many collections, including those of the Yale and the Bodleian libraries, and the Constitutional Court of South Africa. She has exhibited widely, and represented South Africa in the thirty-third Venice Biennale. In 2008 the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg held a retrospective exhibition of her work. Mason lives and works on the property of The Artists' Press in Mpumalanga. Her interests are politics, cricket and watching paint dry.

ANNE SASSOON lives in Jerusalem and is an artist, art reviewer for the *Jerusalem Report* and curator at the Yakar Gallery. She and her husband, journalist Benjamin Pogrand, left South Africa in 1986 after the closing of the *Rand Daily Mail*. Sassoon wrote art reviews for the *Rand Daily Mail* and was a courtroom artist at political trials including the Soweto Students' trial and the Steve Biko inquest. She did cover illustrations for a series of previously banned books republished by David Philip. In 1976, Sassoon, David Goldblatt and Barney Simon curated the first exhibition at The Market Theatre Photographers' Gallery – of unclaimed studio photographs from Diagonal Street. Sassoon's paintings are included in the Collection of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, the Johannesburg Art Gallery, the Durban Art Gallery, Wits University's Gertrude Posel Gallery, the Sasol Collection and Pelmama.

Thomas Kasire, 1985, mixed media on paper, 91 x 61 cm. Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery

Thomas Kasire was a young Namibian prisoner who was tied to a pole and beaten to death over a period of 3 days by a drunken farmer who accused him of being a member of the liberation movement SWAPO. This drawing was dedicated to those unknown men and women who gave their lives in the struggle against apartheid.



Acknowledgements

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– Paul Stopforth, 2010

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TAXI art books

www.taxiartbooks.com

Early in his career, PAUL STOPFORTH produced several bodies of work that were startling in their courageous engagement with the repressive society in which he lived. His uncompromising refusal to turn away from a world of pain and injustice cost him dearly, but earned him enormous respect from his peers and from discerning art critics who saw his work in its first, youthful incarnations at The Market Theatre Gallery, where he was a director from 1977 to 1984. Stopforth left South Africa for the United States in the late 1980s, despairing that there would ever be change in the country. He took up a teaching position at Harvard University and exhibited his work at many museums and galleries in the USA. He is currently on the faculty of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts.

Despite this separation of miles and years, Stopforth has maintained ties with the country of his birth, returning for short periods to do work that engages intensely with the physical and psychological landscapes of home. In 2004, during a residency on Robben Island, he created a series of poignant paintings reflecting on the intense memories contained in such mundane objects as old blanket pins, cabinets, and bars of soap used by the prisoners incarcerated on the Island before 1994. The series stands as a watershed in his oeuvre, connecting past to present not only in its subject matter but also in Stopforth's own trajectory as an artist.

Over time, Stopforth's work has become less overtly political, but no less engaged with the world. He is an acute observer of the minutiae of everyday life and keenly attuned to the significance of ordinary objects, which he imbues with dignity and careful metaphorical significance in a palette that ranges from the soft earthy tones of the Robben Island series to the startling pinks, yellows and greens of his recent work.

Stopforth has exhibited his work since 1971 in galleries and museums in South Africa, the United States and Europe. He has served as curator and juror for a number of institutions and competitions, and in 2004 he delivered the Ruth First Memorial Lecture at Brandeis University. His work is held in many public and private collections in South Africa and abroad.

TAXI Art Books is a series on contemporary South African artists, initiated in 2000 by the French Institute of South Africa, Pro Helvetia – Arts Council of Switzerland, and the Royal Netherlands Embassy, and published by David Krut Publishing. The series aims to broaden awareness of, and create an archive on, contemporary South African art. This is the fifteenth title in the series.

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