

ALTERED LANDSCAPES:
A COMPARISON BETWEEN WORKS BY
J. H. PIERNEEF AND JOHN CLARKE

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All the artifacts of human culture, more especially works of art, stand in need of interpretation. Since there are many critical approaches available to the art historian it is imperative that he or she pauses at the outset of any hermeneutic venture to meditate upon the essence of the work of art, which should not be understood as its sole meaning but as a core of possible meanings which can be inferred from it.

When interpreting an work of art the art, historian is tempted to exploit it as an object which will yield meaning if subjected to analysis. So it is appropriate that some common misconceptions concerning art should be dealt with at the outset:

Firstly, that art is a closed system which finds its meaning within itself. A denotative theory of meaning should be introduced as a bulwark against a formalist or purely aesthetic approach. The reason for this assertion is that a denotative theory of meaning “grants art a referential function and forbids us to say with the formalists that art refers only to itself” (Dufrenne 1983: 209).

Secondly, that a work of art is representational. Truth in art is not a correspondence; therefore, representation should not be considered the essence of art. For example, the meaning of Vincent van Gogh’s painting of peasant shoes,¹ to which Heidegger (1950) refers in his discussion of the origin of the work of art, cannot be interpreted adequately in terms of a mimetic relation between the shoes and the image. Therefore Heidegger discusses the shoes depicted as denotive of the woman to whom they belonged and situates them in her life world.

Thirdly, there is the view that a work of art is an object. Turning a work of art into a mere object reduces it to something one can sell or otherwise manipulate by subjecting it to theoretical investigation, analysis and interpretation from a biased point of view, which may falsify its meaning. We concur with Friedrich Schiller’s insight that “the world which is subject to the

scientific method of understanding is a soulless world" (Von der Luft 1984: 267). Thus it may happen that works of art which have their source in the cultural sphere of a particular historical people at a particular time, such as Pierneef's landscapes and Clarke's place images, lose their vitality when they are removed from their context and placed in a museum or gallery in order to be optimally viewed as art objects.

Stated differently, a work of art can be said to be created by an artist at a specific time and place, and an interpretation can be "correct" only if the perception of the interpreter is "direct", not influenced by other preconceptions, and provided that the work of art is not reduced to an object which can be subjected to manipulation which, of necessity, would violate its integrity and alter its intended meaning.

According to Megill (1985: 156), Heidegger's "phenomenological pre-occupation" is concerned "with letting things show themselves as they actually are". This is especially true of a work of art. Heidegger called the "correct" interpretation of Being (*Dasein*), hermeneutics. This method of deriving meaning is actually a combination of phenomenology and hermeneutics (Richardson 1963: 631). Heidegger furthermore connects art to ontology since all things, among them a work of art, aspire to be themselves. The reality of the work of art is to be itself, bound only to its origin.² About this origin he reasoned as follows: "The origin of the work of art – that is the origin of both the creators and the preservers, which is to say of a people's historical existence – is art" (1977: 187). If art is created in a specific place and at a specific time, we encounter a normative choice of interpretation which excludes talk about meaning on the basis of a cultural field in general.

To define art is impossible. However, by following Heidegger one arrives at the insight that a work of art creates "a world". If this world comes into being by an openness opened up by the work of art itself, the more simply it snatches us away from the realm of the ordinary. In this sense the cultural field of the work of art comes into a mimetic relationship with its specific origin.

In the following discussion it is our aim to present the worlds created by two artists who presented the South African landscape in ways that reveal the expectations of two different generations of viewers. The psychological impact of the two sets of place images can only be explained in the context of a

¹ Vincent van Gogh (1853-90), *Old shoes*, Vincent van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

² "Das Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" in *Holzwege* (1950). This essay has been translated in various editions of Heidegger's work in English as "The origin of the work of art". See Heidegger (1971).

country in which political strife has to a large extent centred on the ownership of land, the "land" referring to the country as such, as a geographical and political unity.

J. H. Pierneef's altered landscapes

In the "Foreword" to Nicholaas J. Coetzee's catalogue of the so called "Station Panels" by J. H. Pierneef, entitled *Pierneef, land and landscape*, C. M. Till, the Director of Culture for the City of Johannesburg writes: "Public patronage of the arts has not been a major part of South Africa's cultural life and the commissioning of the Station Panels over 60 years ago was an event which has shown the benefit of such action in furthering and supporting the visual arts" (Coetzee 1992: iv). These panels are at present housed and conserved in the Johannesburg Art Gallery, a necessity which detracts from their meaning in their original setting in the Johannesburg station building. What was achieved by the panoramic and monumental landscape panels in the largest South African station building can only be answered when these representations of landscape and land are placed in the South African context of almost seventy years ago.

Who was Pierneef? Why did he receive the commission and what did he actually portray in the Station Panels?

Jacob Hendrik Pierneef was born in Pretoria in 1886. His parents were Dutch and during the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) when the British forces took Pretoria in June 1900, his family chose to return to the Netherlands. There Pierneef came to the realization that he wanted to be an artist and received some training in Rotterdam. After his return to the Transvaal Colony Pierneef received lessons in oil painting from established European-trained artists. He worked in the State Library and taught art, visited the Netherlands again in 1925 and in all probability became acquainted with the new movements in European art there. On the other hand it is notable that Pierneef, who as a consummate Western artist had an influence on cultured people, both English and Afrikaans, also showed an interest in indigenous art, especially Bushmen art. Coetzee (1992: 2) is of the opinion that Pierneef and most Afrikaners identified rather with Africa than with England, even though this kind of identification was still relatively undefined, widely inclusive and ideologically unfocussed. It is ironic that Pierneef, who had lectured on the art of the Bushman and the "Black" man, sometimes in the most appreciative and complementary terms, should turn out to be one of the main advocates of an exclusionary "White", indigenous art.

In the interpretation of the Station Panels we follow an alternative or revisionist way of looking at Pierneef's landscape painting. His Johannesburg Station Panels constitute the largest single landscape commission in the history of South Africa and therefore merit further research. Pierneef's Dutch connections, personal family background and nationality enabled him (or perhaps compelled him inevitably) to exploit the northern European tradition of landscape painting. At the height of his career Pierneef lent his prestige to the cultural cause of the Afrikaner whose struggle for cultural emancipation from the British empire had intensified by 1935. By that time the polarization of Afrikaans and English speaking South Africans had also increased greatly.

The government of the Union of South Africa had by 1927 decided to provide Johannesburg, a rapidly expanding city and the centre of the world's largest gold-producing industry, with a railway station which rose to considerable importance in the architectural history of that city. The commission for the Station Panels to decorate the main concourse on a monumental scale was awarded to Pierneef by the South African Railways and Harbours Commission in July 1929. The reception of the finished work, unveiled on 31 May 1934, was favourable.

Pierneef finished the twenty-eight main panels described in terms of the commission as depictions of "historical places" or "natural scenery". The setting of the panels necessitated some geometrical analysis because of semi-circular architectural form of the station concourses. The fact that the painter could not work from nature necessitated *in situ* sketches. However, Pierneef designed his panels in such a way that the viewer, acquainted with the South African landscape, will realise that he imposed order to make the panels in their totality expressive of a world-view largely determined by culture and ideology.

An analysis of the compositions of the panels reveals an underlying working design, for example the *Louis Trichardt* panel (figure 1) shows the point of the church spire coinciding with the exact centre of the composition and some of the clouds describe concentric circles intersecting the diagonals around that point. We have numerous sketches clearly showing that Pierneef planned, calculated, divided and balanced the pictorial elements according to geometric forms. One can repeatedly recognize his use of symmetrical compositional features such as the arch as part of a circle, the sectioning of the surface horizontally and the use of triangles on either side of an imaginary line. This use of geometric forms situates Pierneef in a western tradition of mural painting, but they often seem contrived, for example the regularity of the circle. When applied to representational painting most geometric forms transform and stylize natural forms. But, in combining painting and

architecture, as in Pierneef's commission, it was desirable that the paintings support the station architecture in its monumentality.

It should be repeated that, besides a merely technical artistic motivation, the clear compositional schemes of Pierneef's panels indicate a striving to impose order by bringing landscape under the control of architecture. Furthermore, they represent a desire to structure the landscape, to render nature into culture, physically and spiritually, and to transform the wilderness into a collective mental vision. Landscape at its most fundamental level deals inescapably with man's relationship with the world and with man in the world. In Pierneef's world-making, his stylizations indicate a culturally determined set of relations.

In the case of the Station Panels it is most rewarding to engage the content of this culturally determined set of relations that Pierneef presented to innocent viewers who were embarking or disembarking from their travels, during which they most probably saw the real world of nature, of which the panels are representations. I refer to the previous generation viewers of the panels as "innocent" because they uncritically accepted a mimetic relation between art and reality, and were captivated by the exotic romance of the atmosphere that was created by the scenes.

If landscape can reveal the identity of a historic people, what did Pierneef reveal?

His pleas in the thirties for the founding of an indigenous Afrikaans art had an exclusivist undertone, given that Bushman rock art is indigenous in any case. He furthermore cultivated his own public image as an interpreter of the African landscape. The main features of his art, which reveal the influence of the Hague School, are the simplification of forms, the building up of the pictorial surface in planes and the dulling and paling of colours. These features he combined with his theory of art, which was rooted in a combined sense of religious calling and of calling as an artist of the people. The people had to be taught "that art is also a form of religion" (Coetzee 1992: 20). Pierneef believed that he was a "mood" painter; he specifically wanted to evoke an atmosphere that expressed the essence of African landscape. Seen in this combined religious and cultural sense, the meticulously structured and aestheticized landscapes of Pierneef are a response to and, indeed, a concrete expression of deep-seated Afrikaner cultural convictions and political aspirations. Pierneef's identification with Afrikaner nationalism occurred gradually and coincided with his search for artistic identity. Landscape was ideally suited to convey the Afrikaner's sense of being mystically linked to the land. Afrikaners derive their historical being and identity from this

relationship; they are products of the land, farmers at heart. The inference is that the Afrikaners were destined to settle and to take possession of the land. Indeed, one of the primary aims of Afrikaner nationalism was to confirm the Afrikaners' claim to the land, which was already established by the time that Pierneef embarked on the Station Panels. In executing those panels he responded to nationalistic ideas and gave the Afrikaners a pictorial evocation of what they wanted to believe of the land and of themselves: an elevated expression of the greatness of the land which is theirs. In a pantheistic way the artist emptied the landscapes of detail and also of people. They became landscapes of the sublime, but also relate to the politics of expansion, of conquest and grandeur. Pierneef painted a low horizon line with a vast sky, creating striking vistas in which conditions on the ground are eliminated. In this respect it needs to be pointed out that in the 1930s both black and white farmers were poverty-stricken and sporadic labour unrest occurred. Coetzee (1992: 27) argues that: "Pierneef's landscapes are clearly an outsider's view of the land, a view of the land that was de-historicized, de-humanized, drained of compassion. It is a view that is at the same time informed by a sterile religious mysticism." He concludes (1992: 3): "The sense of form and pictorial organization is what appealed to the viewer of the Pierneef landscapes. The reasons are ideological and historical. ... [L]andscape gives the viewer the illusion of control, of the imposition of order on the chaotic world outside and therefore of the domination of the world outside."

The station commission fulfilled an important advertising function for the South African Railways as the responsible authority for tourism. Pierneef's panels gave the Railways much more than the needed publicity material. These panels were painted in an important time for Afrikaner nationalism. I may also add that white English settlers also came to view Pierneef's landscape panels through his eyes. However, in his landscapes Pierneef mainly addressed the Afrikaners' nostalgia for the land, and helped legitimise their exclusive claim to South Africa.³ He achieved this mainly by presenting his work in terms of the notion of art as religion, thereby exploiting the strong Calvinist basis in Afrikaner nationalism. Far from being innocent and purely aesthetic, Pierneef's landscapes are in fact powerfully ideological. He not only exploited the conventions of European landscape painting for purely artistic purposes, but also transformed those conventions to suit Afrikaner ideology. Pierneef's

³ It is a bit too strong to say that the Afrikaners were imperialists like the British empire builders. Only Cecil John Rhodes expressed the "Cape to Cairo" ambition, and Afrikaner aspirations seem rather pale in comparison with the British exploits in South Africa.

influence as a self-appointed indoctrinator of the masses moving through the station concourse, far exceeded his artistic influence.

Either one understands them to be “propaganda” as the South African Railways who commissioned them required, or they can be appreciated as a romanticized version of a country most white South Africans feel nostalgic about. After this foregone conclusion, I will deal with a selection of panels individually.⁴ The panels denote a country that South Africans can never retrieve, perhaps they denote a country which never existed; they unequivocally represent a sentiment that had no basis in fact.

The panel done of the town of Louis Trichardt (figure 1) was preceded by preparatory sketches showing a geometrical design. This panel may be one of the first painted in the series since in the left foreground the surface is left unresolved. Louis Trichard is a historical town, named after one of the Voortrekker leaders who camped in the vicinity in 1836-37. It was linked to the South African railway network in 1912. We know that the settlement of whites in this area was followed by skirmishes with the local black people and that the village was destroyed by the blacks during the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). It was subsequently rebuilt and had not yet reached municipal status when Pierneef painted it.

Pierneef’s placing of the church at the centre of the panel is in keeping with the building having a social and cultural significance far exceeding its physical size, thereby emphasizing its symbolic meaning rather than its pictorial function. *Louis Trichardt* depicts a town situated to the far north, most probably thought of, at the time, as the closest to the “dark” northern regions of the African continent. The prominence of the church possibly represents the civilizing mission of the whites by means of Christianity.

From the northernmost town to the southernmost, Cape Town, we have a view of Table Mountain (figure 2). By dropping away the middle distance a great sense of distance is created and by framing the view with trees the impact of the mountain is increased. While *Table Mountain* dramatizes the grandeur of a specific mountain, the panel depicting the Drakensberg (figure 3) has no specific place as a visual focus. It is a generic depiction of the Drakensberg,

⁴ Data of Pierneef’s landscapes:

Figure 1: *Louis Trichardt*, oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 140x149 cm

Figure 2: *View of Table Mountain*, oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 140x148 cm

Figure 3: *View of the Drakensberg*, oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 141x127 cm

Figure 4: *Premier Mine*, oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 141x127 cm

Figure 5: *Rand Gold Mine*, oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 141x127 cm

Figure 6: *Graaff-Reinet*, oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 140x149 cm

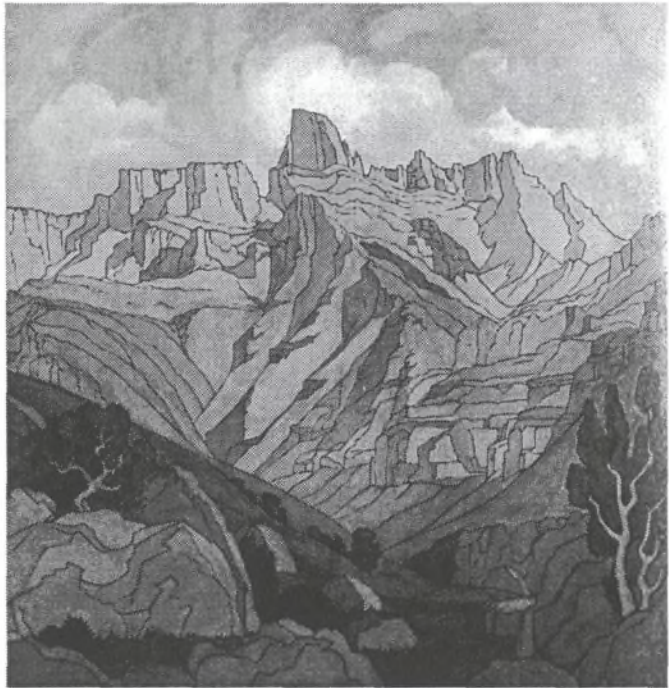


Figure 1: J. H. Pierneef, *The town of Louis Trichardt* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)



Figure 2: J. H. Pierneef, *View of Table Mountain* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)

Figure 3: J. H. Pierneef, *View of the Drakensberg* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)



one of the scenic mountain ranges in southern Africa. To the Afrikaner the Drakensberg is a reminder the barriers they had to cross during the Great Trek in 1838 in search of the promised land, away from British domination in the Cape.

Premier Mine (figure 4) and *Rand Gold Mine* (figure 5) are companion pieces. The importance of diamonds and gold as symbols of South Africa's mineral wealth is what Pierneef invokes in the panels. I will deal only with the diamond mine panel.

On 26 January 1905 the world's largest diamond was discovered at the Premier site, near Cullinan, north-east of Pretoria. Pierneef depicts the vast excavation pit. It is this enormous scar in the face of the earth, reputed to be the biggest single pit at the time, that Pierneef chose to depict. Diamonds were at that time one of the main exports of the Union and the Cullinan diamond was used in the crown of the British monarch. Ironically the Railways did not make any attempt to promote this rather sleepy town and as a result it has very little historical significance to merit inclusion in the Panels. Totally dominated by the presence of the mine, one may ask why Pierneef included it. The only reason is the fame of the Cullinan diamond.⁵

⁵ Most probably there was little prestige in the Cullinan diamond for Afrikaners since the diamond industry was controlled by British interests.

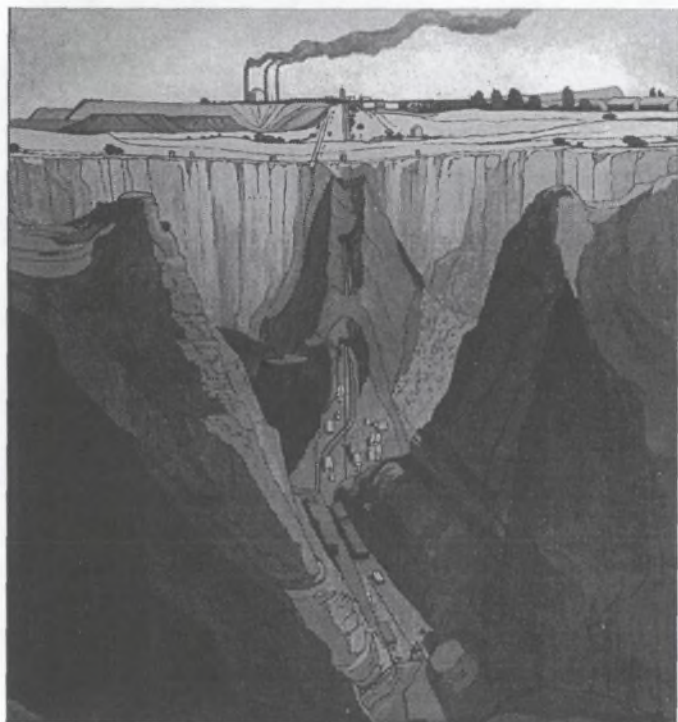


Figure 4: J. H. Pierneef, *Premier Mine* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)



Figure 5 J. H. Pierneef, *Rand Gold Mine* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)

Graaff-Reinet (figure 6) is the depiction of an old and historic town, at least by South African standards, which was granted municipal status in 1845. It is situated in the Karoo, an arid and stony region with dramatic landscapes. Pierneef chose to paint the so-called Valley of Desolation, a well-known landmark and scenic spot a few kilometres west of the town. The panel *Graaff-Reinet* shows a group of basaltic pillars which in reality rise to a height of 120 metres. The scene is executed in subtle tones of brown; it is obviously designed, composed, structured and ordered to create an awesome effect of purposeless natural architecture. The ordered arch of the sky fitting the panel into an architectural form turns the representation into a strange place which vitiates any human interest that it may have.

This group of stone pillars can be used as a thematic link with John Clarke's representation of rural places, but there is also a strong contrast in expression and the two artists' ideological interest in the features of the land.



Figure 6: J. H. Pierneef, *Graaff-Reinet* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)

John Clarke's altered landscapes

John Clarke focuses on the ordinary in his artistic endeavour. More specifically, in the two works under consideration, the etchings entitled *Stockade I* (figure 7) and *Stockade II* (figure 8),⁶ the depicted stones and stockades refer to ordinary and commonplace phenomena in rural areas where traditional Africans dwell. Therefore, Heidegger's (1971: 46-7) description of stones seems to be a relevant link between his theory of art and Clarke's sensitivity to places marked by stones: "A stone presses downwards and manifests its heaviness. But ... this heaviness ... denies to us any penetration into it. If we attempt such a penetration by breaking open the rock, it still does not display in its fragments anything inward that has been disclosed. The stone has instantly withdrawn again into the same dull pressure and bulk of its fragments."

Since Clarke's insistence on the representation of concrete things presenting elements of the earth – such as stones – is so strong, it seems appropriate to inquire into the meaning of the "subject matter" of his works. It may be postulated that he is dealing with the meaning of "earth", which produces rocks and trees and is the habitat of humans. "Earth" is the natural place disclosed by historical *habitat* which merits analysis as the key to the understanding of Clarke's works.

The viewer senses that Clarke himself, and all people, at least try, but do not necessarily succeed, in relating positively to the earth. In the two *Stockade* etchings this relationship is expressed by means of the representation of arranged and decorated stones and similarly spotted branches or tree stumps as elements of human-made environments – even though they are void of any visible human presence. In these works the world of art opens up through a representation of the earth whose very nature is to resist the world's "self-opening".

Clarke's oeuvre shows a consistency of thematic representation: he mainly depicts elements belonging to the earth. However, mimetic landscape depictions of African localities and naturalistic elements do not occur in his work. He composes images of places altered in a specific way in order to reveal a creative human presence. For the same reason, people are never depicted in his later works. Clarke reconstructs places and the implied presence of people imaginatively, since only by means of the imagination can concrete objects be symbolised or brought together in configurations that will reveal

⁶ Data of John Clarke's works:

Figure 8: *Stockade I*, Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria, 1982, intaglio etching, 37x55 cm.

Figure 9: *Stockade II*, Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria, 1982, intaglio etching, 36,5x55 cm.

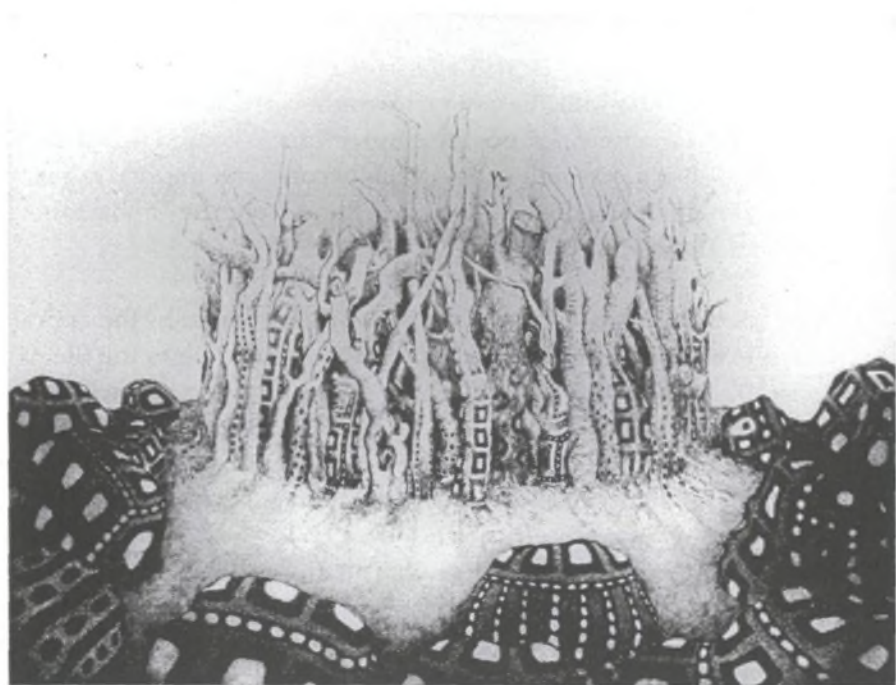


Figure 7: John Clarke, *Stockade I* (Photograph copyright Unisa Art Gallery)

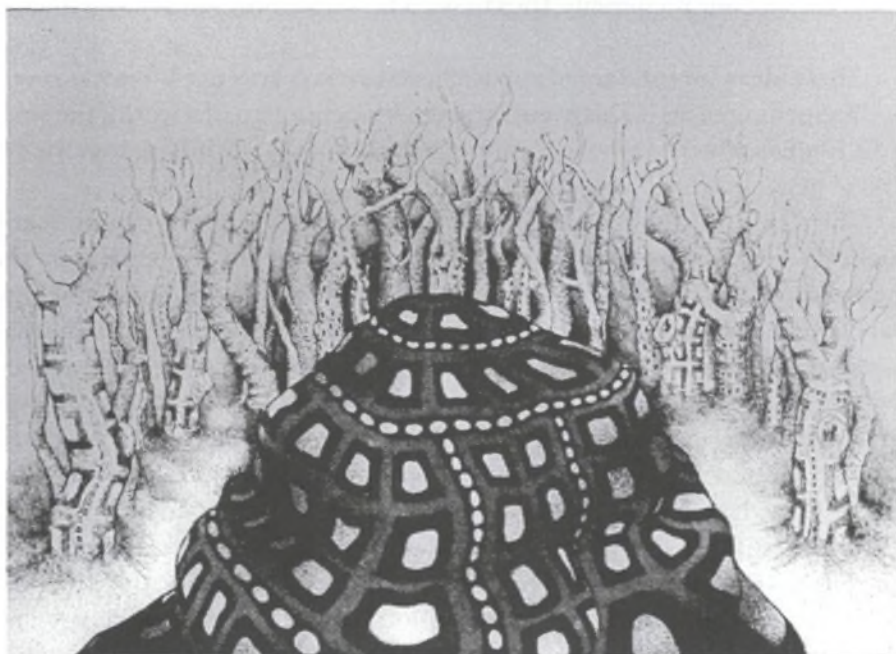


Figure 8: John Clarke, *Stockade II* (Photograph copyright Unisa Art Gallery)

their belonging-together within a greater totality. Such images are non-literal, like Clarke's configurations of earth elements. For example, his stockades and stones are endowed with the power to symbolise acts of revealing and concealing (or, alternatively, self-opening and self-seclusion). The artist's act of endowment is thus a personification which becomes an important part of the topic of revealing and concealing, as is evident from the "behaviour" of the elements in *Stockade I* and *II*.

It is suggested that the essence of Clarke's art is revealed by the creation of an authentic world in which the artist produces, according to the ideals of Heidegger (1971: 54-5), a threefold form of disclosure: first, a disclosure of the strife between world and earth; secondly, a disclosure of the opposition between matter and form, and, finally, a disclosure of the breach (*Riß*) between concealment and unconcealment. Sallis (1989: 185) points out that "strife is not a matter simply of opposition but rather is such that the opponents belong to one another in their very opposition The opponents belong together by having a certain common ground and origin."

In the same sense, matter and form belong together. Opposition between them does not result in duality, nor are they identical. According to Sallis's (1989: 186) interpretation of Heidegger's terminology, one should "discern and preserve their reciprocity, thus to see a bit further into the riddle that art is".

These ideas are considered applicable to Clarke's art since his works reveal the "happening of art". This event evokes the opening up of a world, the work of art itself, in which symbolic meaning is garnered by a bringing together of diverse elements into harmony.

The clearings and boundaries that Clarke defines in terms of stones and stockades may be interpreted as signs or markings on the earth. In the Southern African context, these motifs have a strange magic comparable to that of the shoes that Van Gogh painted, or to Claude Monet's poplars. *Stockade I* and *Stockade II*, are fine examples of images evoking many symbolic aspects of the spirit of the Southern African land and people of which only one aspect – that of place formation and its cultural implications – will be discussed here.

The spotted stones which Clarke depicts in his works derive from his encounter with stones decorated by a Black man called Nukain Mabusa. This encounter influenced the artist to represent stones and stockades as transformed into spotted "beings". The spots which Nukain Mabusa painted on his stones transformed the self-seclusion of those particular stones and opened up a world of artistic creation – a sculptural rock-garden. The stones depicted by Clarke have already been altered by a human hand. Human beings,

who are open to Being, are able to create openness, a world of creation and order. Thus, Clarke does not represent: he re-presents and re-creates the earth in his art in order to create a world in which they can be recognised in the cultural sphere of an historical people.

Stockade I and *II* are unique in the artist's oeuvre as a complementary pair. Both works are composed only of tree stumps and spotted stones that are, in the one case, spread out in a circular pattern and arranged as a boundary and, in the other, contracted into a dense form placed in the centre of a clearing. The uniqueness of these works becomes even more pronounced if they are interpreted as representations of earth elements at play. The play which is suggested transforms concealing into revealing and seclusion into openness.

In *Stockade I* the stones form a semi-circle around a clearing in which the tree stumps are clustered together in a dense bundle which conceals its centre. In *Stockade II* the compositional relation between stones and stockade is reversed: the stones are contracted into one enormous stone in the centre, while the stockade describes a boundary around it. In turn, the two motifs reveal and conceal each other, disperse, and cluster closely into themselves. The compositional reversal also reverses the roles of opening-up and closing-in by means of the arrangement of the stockade and the stones so that they evoke each other's metamorphosis. The duality of the formal arrangement of the two elements in one picture complements that in the other (and vice versa) so that the two pictures reciprocally form a mysterious pair. By alternately revealing themselves (forming a circular boundary) or concealing themselves (forming a dense centre) the arrangements of stockades and stones imply an intelligent presence which guides their advance towards the opposing motif and its corresponding retreat into the concealment of itself. This presence is visible only in terms of a flow of energy which materialises in the strife of the elements arranging themselves into one of two possible formations in equilibrium.

Stones partake of the self-containment (or self-seclusion) of the mere thing. They must therefore be altered (or personified) in order that they may involve themselves in a process of opening up, a process which generates strife with their earthly nature. Therefore, Clarke aspires to re-present reality. He re-presents stones first in a fragmented way in *Stockade I*, and then, in *Stockade II*, gathered together in a unity of form like some enormous archetypal totality, some mythical, primordial earth-navel (*omphalos*) at the centre of an African place. These stones in Clarke's works are, notably, not familiar stones or dead wood. Their spottedness sets them apart from nature. These markings signify that the stones and stockades are not primary natural elements. They

have been ritualised by human hand and are no longer mere things which press downwards and manifest heaviness but have become mythical presences. A creative human being has already encountered them and opposed their self-seclusion by means of alterations in the form of spots. Of this kind of encounter in which two subjects, more specifically nature and man and earth and world, oppose each other, Heidegger (1970: 173) says: "In strife, each opponent carries the other beyond itself. Thus the strife becomes more intense as striving, and more properly what it is. The more strife overdoes itself on its own part, the more inflexible do the opponents let themselves go into the intimacy of belonging together. The earth cannot dispense with the open region of the world if it itself is to appear as earth in the liberated surge of its self-seclusion. The world in turn cannot soar out of the earth's sight if, as the governing breadth and path of all essential destiny, it is to ground itself on a resolute foundation."

At first glance the viewer of *Stockade I* and *II* cannot avoid the impression that the earth elements are in conflict. First, the stones surround the stockade in a kind of ambush; then the reverse happens: the stones contract, their fragments become unified to gain in bulk and so withstand the siege of the stockade. However, the metaphor of strife can be "read" primarily in terms of play. The stockade and the stones mirror each other, a phenomenon which Heidegger explains in terms of mirror-play (*Spiegel-Spiel*). In this way they become mutually related in their play and "counterplay". Thus, the limits of things in Clarke's works serve to mark themselves off against one another and thus define a relational context of strife through which harmony is manifested. This paradox is resolved in terms of mirror-play. In Clarke's works the earth, in the distinctive nature it attains through the alteration caused by strife, becomes part of a world created by the work of art. In this world, openness is attained because the difference or conflict between world and earth can be resolved in the process of mirror-play. The conflict does not give rise to discord but affirms that all things in the artwork – including those transposed – belong together and are at play in a world of harmony. In this sense "world" refers to an authentic creation in which all things can be uniquely themselves.

Stockade I and *II* thus embody a relational context of the earth elements, the tree stumps and the stones. Concerning the hiding or concealing of these elements in themselves and their revealing in the world of artistic composition, Fynsk's (1986: 142) elucidation is apt, particularly in understanding the play that is recognisable in Clarke's *Stockade* pair: "But what would hiding, which surely cannot appear insofar as it hides itself (and it must appear in art), disguise itself as, except disguise, when disguise appears? In art, concealment

appears in disguise or as disguise. What is art but *Schein* (semblance, mere appearance), even if it must be thought [of] as grounded within the horizon of truth? The work of art brings the conflictual pair earth and world into a unity which may be called a single differential configuration.”

Clearly, the spotted stones and the stockades in Clarke’s two works appear in disguise personified by markings. The earth and the world assert their respective natures as the works trace the intimacy of their mutual and conflictual belonging in what Heidegger (1971: 51, 63) terms a basic design, or outline sketch. Heidegger terms this sketch a “rift” (*Riß*) or “rift-design” and says that “it brings the opposition of measure and boundary into their common outline” (1971: 51, 62). Only when the world opens up and marks these bounds as bounds does the “reciprocal accord” of things become a mutual relatedness.

The limits of things, then, serve to mark them off against one another and thus to define a relational context in the manner in which they are portrayed in Clarke’s works under discussion. The conflictual pairs world/earth and revealing/concealing are drawn together through play-mirroring and personification, bringing out both their original differentiation and their articulation in a new design. “Thus”, Heidegger (1977: 183) says, “art is the creative preserving of truth in the work. Art *then is the becoming and happening of truth*” [Heidegger’s italics]. The truth contained in the world, as disclosed by art, is revealed by entering into the hermeneutic circle in which meaning is evoked. In this way Dufrenne’s (1983: 209-11) argument that art has a referential function validates Heidegger’s insight that art discloses truth.

In Clarke’s paired images, revealing and concealing take place in a circular clearing and are interchangeable. Clarke’s event of truth occurring in the *Stockades* is dual, but similar – in the way that Heidegger (1929: 39-40) confirms the opposites, “pure Being” and “pure Nothingness”, as similar.⁷ One may say that a human being’s experience of his or her existence (Being) is in terms of his or her continuous confrontation with death and lack of meaning. Caputo (1970: 29) comments on this view of Being by interpreting Heidegger’s paradox of concealment and unconcealment as follows: “Nothingness is described as the finitude of Being. Being insofar as it is limited is the Nothing.

⁷ Heidegger states: “Das reine Sein und das reine Nichtes ist also dasselbe.’ Dieser Satz Hegels (Wissenschaft der Logik I. Buch W III S. 74) besteht zu Recht. Sein und Nichts gehören zusammen, aber nicht weil sie beide – vom Hegelschen Begriff des Denkens aus gesehen – in ihre Unbestimmtheit und Unmittelbarkeit übereinkommen, sondern weil das Sein selbst im Wesen endlich ist und sich nur in der Transzendenz des in das Nichts hinausgehaltenen Daseins offenbart.”

The two are not opposites, as western philosophy always assumes. Rather they belong together in the sameness of a single, finite essence.”

Thus, in Clarke’s works of art, concealment (the earth) and unconcealment (the world created by art) belong together. And the meaning of this is to be found in the idea of art itself which reveals (mirrors) the harmony of play. Clarke’s works re-present reality by a process of personification. Humans open up the earth to the magical circle of a symbolic African place into which the invisible and mysterious spirit world enter, according to the beliefs of black people. Indeed, if humans are absent in Clarke’s later works, as in *Stockade I* and *II*, space extends into the area in which the viewer stands: he or she, too, is revealed to him- or herself in viewing the scene and undertaking the hermeneutic venture. Understanding Clarke’s works is like entering certain archaeological ruins. What vanished people have left behind, the artefacts of Being, the viewer reclaims and reconstructs in his or her imagination as a part of the process of personal world making.

One way of viewing the influence of man on earth is in terms of Heidegger’s notion of “heaven” as the artist’s inspiration, the region that is the dwelling place of the “god”. Related to Clarke’s works, the African notion of a spirit-world could also be taken as part of the notion of “heaven”. Thus, the mysterious stones and stockades in Clarke’s works are moved into patterns which reveal the spirit-world although, first and foremost, sticks and stones represent earth as part of nature. Even though the types of patterns depicted in *Stockade I* and *II* might be encountered in nature (for example, the stones resemble tortoises) this appears unlikely in Clarke’s work, since it would be a mimetic reading of animation or animalisation belonging to the African realm, which would exclude humanism and the notion of “world”. Clearly, the depicted stones and stockades do not belong to a real place but rather represent a mental creation in which an earth/heaven dialectic is inherent and each opponent enhances the other. In this sense Clarke’s work transcends the ethnic realm and is (in a minor sense) comparable to the Greek temple which according to Heidegger (1977: 172) “opens up a world” which “gives ... to men their outlook on themselves” (Heidegger 1977: 169). This “world is the self-opening openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people”. However, the opening of a world is an event of truth with universal meaning. If art is indeed an origin, Heidegger (1977: 187) says that it “then must be a forward spring”; it should not “remain a mere appendix [which] can only be carried along as a routine cultural phenomenon”.

Clarke’s works create worlds out of earth, or at least symbolically, in the sphere of art as *Schein*, they depict this process in which, in turn, every act of

revealing also conceals, so that the dialectic between concealing and revealing becomes the play of art which "has its essence in the intimacy of strife" (Heidegger 1977: 173). This paradox remains a mystery and in this respect Heidegger instructs us that our task is not to solve the "riddle of art", but to recognise it. We may accomplish this by contemplation of the work itself, for in this way alone may an artwork be gathered into its fullness, which Richardson (1963: 594) concludes is the unspoken that lies concealed in the spoken.

Art is never purely self-referential. In the *Stockade* etchings the essence of strife can be interpreted to imply the strife which has always characterised South Africa as a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. Strife, however, binds the opponents together. That is, there is a release at the same time in that being strife-bound, the opponents delineate themselves clearly. Thus, Clarke's approach of revealing the inveterate strife between the white and black peoples of South Africa is less romanticized than Pierneef's and closer to a solution of existing together in one land.

Pierneef's concern is with a virgin land in the process of being transformed or by European settlers, to yield its riches and become a home for them. Clarke, on the other hand, shows the literal truth on the ground: that the landscape had been altered by the indigenous people whose technology, until the present, had not been such that their activities or rituals left it permanently scarred or transformed. With the exception of the mining panels, Pierneef's visions refer to a land which never existed, while Clarke's representations refer to place-making which is no longer practised. Both ways of expression are a response to a lost innocence, a nostalgia for an aesthetic and social ideal which cannot be redeemed.

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