

Editorial

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The previous bumper issue of *Image & Text* was dedicated to thematic concerns regarding '*pointure*' in visual culture. Number 24 is again an open issue that features current research from researchers in Gauteng and the Western Cape. In keeping with the wider ambit of the journal, the five articles reflect a diversity of current topics in various fields related to visual culture. A strong thematic link in this issue is the ever-popular topic of identity and its various manifestations in post-apartheid South Africa, and particularly the manner in which it is constantly embodied and enacted in various spatial contexts. Current methodologies such as practice-led artistic research also feature and reflect new ways in which artist-scholars are grappling with the interface between theory and practice. In addition to the research articles, there are two book reviews and two conference reports that reflect some of the current trajectories in scholarship. As always, the articles may appear divergent, yet they have many commonalities in terms of the interrogation of visual culture and visuality in contemporary culture.

The first article is by Leana van der Merwe and is entitled 'Sacrificial bodies as corporeal articulations of violence in the work of South African female artists'. In this article, the author investigates the occurrence of the sacrificial female body as a visual device employed primarily by female South African artists. The context used is the prevalence of gender-based violence and patriarchal discourse in South Africa. In particular, the themes of sacrifice, suicide, murder and martyrdom are examined in terms of the theories of René Girard, George Bataille and Julia Kristeva. The author argues skilfully that societal violence and Cartesian dualisms about gender and race inflect the manner in which the female body is seen and experienced in South Africa. But far from taking a negative stance, Van der Merwe argues that representations of violence may be used to dismantle patriarchal dualisms, to foreground feminist concerns regarding corporeality, and to reclaim identity and agency.

The next article, by Karolien le Roux and Elmarie Costandius, is entitled '*Designing in-between: Reflectively mapping an artistic research project.*' *Designing in-between* is the title of an artistic research project by Le Roux that deals primarily with the

concept of space and how it expresses various forms of difference, specifically in the multiracial community of Jamestown in Stellenbosch in the Western Cape. The researcher used active participation by inhabitants of Jamestown to document their everyday experiences of spatiality and difference in the form of maps and photographs; by means of this, the personal experience of space, socio-political difference and changing perceptions of community were able to be explored critically. The visual explorations produced by the participants formed the basis for further exploration in Le Roux's own animations and installations. In addition to expressing people's experiences visually, the authors also deliberate on the nature of artistic research and its relation to critical theory, and in particular the emphasis on self-reflection, critical thinking, and 'artistic experientiality'.

In 'Ironies, Others, and Afrikaners: an analysis of selected print advertisements from *DEKAT* and *Insig* (1994-2009)', Theo Sonnekus focuses on the manner in which irony seems to be used in a range of advertisements to deliberate on the post-apartheid identity of 'white, Afrikaans, upwardly mobile consumers'. In reading a selection of advertisements from two magazines aimed at the upper end of the consumer market, Sonnekus suggests that the feelings of dislocations and disempowerment experienced by many Afrikaners in the years following 1994 may be expressed on an ostensibly liberal platform. Despite the insecurities about loss of political power, Sonnekus makes the contentious point that ultimately in these publications, Afrikaner capital and whiteness still triumph, but in the guise of multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, cultural knowingness, and sophistication.

"Our Caster" and "The Blade Runner": 'improper' corporealities cripqueering the post/apartheid body politic' by Benita de Robillard deliberates on the debates concerning two contested figures in the South African sporting world, Caster Semenya and Oscar Pistorius. De Robillard shows how Semenya's 'sex variant' body and Pistorius' 'disabled' body were frequently conflated by the media and came to symbolise post/apartheid corporeal nationalism. In a series of complex and interrelated arguments, the author invokes crip theory according to McRuer that 'theorize[s] the construction of able-bodiedness and het-erosexuality' in terms of heteronormative and ableist conceptions of the post/apartheid body politic and cultural nationalism. As in the book by Albert Grundlingh reviewed in this issue, De Robillard demonstrates the potency of sport to be the vehicle for national sentiment and nation building, but here not by the 'normal', able-bodied, white, heteromasculine sporting bodies. The author charts Semenya and Pistorius' complex relationships with the media, their rise to visibility, and the various mythic discourses they engendered.

Duncan Reyburn's contribution, 'Reconfiguring the contagion: a Girardian reading of the zombie apocalypse as a plea for a politics of weakness' examines recent zombie cinema through the prism of Girardian theory regarding mimetic desire. Reyburn shows that the fascination with zombie-related topics from the earliest times in cinema is not just symptomatic of bleak apocalyptic impulses, but also reveals a broader cultural politics infused with critique about things such as capitalism, consumption, and dedifferentiation. Reyburn reads these films as sophisticated cultural metaphors and intertextual devices that reveal ideas about violence and sacrifice, but argues for a politics of weakness to counter the zombie contagion, and suggests that vulnerability is the force that conquers, not strength.

As previously noted, this issue ends with a number of shorter contributions: two book reviews and two conference reports. Chris Broodryk reviews the latest contribution by the German film scholar, Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema – terror and trauma: cultural memory since 1945*. Although Elsaesser locates his investigation primarily in post-holocaust Germany, readers will find many resonances with South African cultural politics in his explication of memory and trauma. Albert Grundlingh's *Potent pastimes. Sport and leisure practices in modern Afrikaner history*, reviewed by Jeanne van Eeden, offers an engaging exploration of Afrikaner leisure and recreational practices. Grundlingh focuses on how at certain moments, dog racing, beach culture, rugby, and to a lesser extent cricket, seemed to have embodied Afrikaner ethnic concerns and aspirations.

To end the journal, Martine van der Walt Ehlers presents an overview of the Zanele Muholi Colloquium, held in Pretoria in March 2014, and Fatima Cassim offers her experience of the 'Make a plan' – Design Policy Conference, held in Cape Town in October this year.

In keeping with the editorial policy of *Image & Text*, this issue features contributions by established researchers as well as younger voices. Our dedication to growing scholarship in South Africa demands that we take seriously our mandate to pass on the research imperative to a younger generation of scholars.