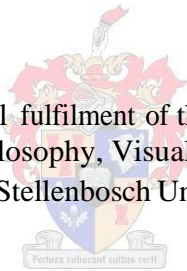


# Animated Storytelling as Collaborative Practice

An exploratory study in the studio, classroom and community

by  
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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Philosophy, Visual Arts (Illustration)  
at Stellenbosch University



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## **DECLARATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis investigates stop motion animation as a form of socially engaged visual storytelling. It aims to expand commonly held perceptions that associate animation with the mass media and entertainment industries by investigating three non-industry related contexts: the artist studio, the classroom and the community. In each respective context the co-authoring of stop motion animation was employed as a means to promote collaboration between artists, students and members of the public. This was intended to encourage participants to share their stories regardless of language differences, contrasting levels of academic development and diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. Thus, animation making provided a means of promoting inclusivity through active participation and visual communication. This process is perceived as valuable in a South African context where eleven official languages and a diversity of cultures and ethnicities tend to obstruct an integrated society. My fundamental argument is that animation can be used as a tool to facilitate the materialisation, dissemination and archiving of stories whilst promoting the creative agency of the storyteller.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis ondersoek stop-aksie animasie as 'n tipe van sosiaal-geaktiveerde visuele vertelkuns. Die studie is daarop gerig om algemene aannames oor animasie – wat animasie assosieer met die massamedia en die vermaaklikheidsindustrie – te verbreed deur drie nienywerheidsverbonde kontekste te ondersoek: die kunstenaar se ateljee, die klaskamer en die gemeenskap. In elk van die onderskeie kontekste word die gesamentlike skepping van die stop-aksie animasie gebruik as 'n manier om samewerking tussen kunstenaars, studente en die algemene publiek te bevorder. Die doel is om deelnemers aan te moedig om hul stories te deel, ongeag taalverskille, verskillende vlakke van akademiese ontwikkeling, en diverse sosio-kulturele agtergronde. Daarom verskaf die skepping van animasie 'n geleentheid om samewerking te bevorder deur aktiewe deelname en visuele kommunikasie. Die proses word veral in die Suid Afrikaanse konteks as waardevol beskou, waar elf amptelike tale, asook 'n diversiteit van kulture en etniese groepe, dikwels die skep van 'n geïntegreerde samelewing belemmer. My hoofargument is dat animasie met vrug gebruik kan word as 'n metode om die skepping, disseminasie en argivering van stories te fasiliteer en terselfdertyd ook die kreatiewe rol van die storieverteller aan te moedig.

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## PREFACE

I understand Illustration as the process of making an idea visible, of surfacing stories. The topic for this study emerged from an interest in the innate human tendency to make sense of the world through storytelling. The capacity to share experiences, values and imaginings in narrative form, is fundamentally human. It is this capacity that motivates my practice as an illustrator.

As an undergraduate student, my research was concerned with mapping and personal cartographies. At a postgraduate level, I have developed an interest in the capacity of stories to create a sense of place. This is based on my perception that we use stories to organise time in the same way as we use maps to organise space: as locational devices. Both maps and stories serve to orientate us, organising information to provide a sense of coherence to the practice of everyday life. Thus, since 2010 my work has been primarily concerned with *story-mapping*: collecting the concealed or disregarded stories, embedded in people, places and objects. This activity is motivated by the concept that social space is produced through the collective narratives of its inhabitants: the inter-woven memories, wishes and interactions of individuals. In this view, a life could be understood as a selection of moments, a story intersecting with other stories in dynamic inter-relation.

I began experimenting with animation as a means of adding a temporal dimension to my illustrations. The ritual of rendering incremental transformations through improvisational interaction with my subject matter, allows a time-based narrative to emerge. This practice, combined with an interest in art making as a socially engaged process, has led to projects that investigate the potentials of animation as a tool for collaborative storytelling. For this Masters degree, my practical work has consisted of two components: collaborative, community-based workshops and private studio work. This theoretical study will focus only on the first component.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Two examples of my practical work: *The Possibili-Tree* and *24 Frames*, are provided in Addendum 1 in the appendix.

## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 Introduction and Problem Statement

Animation continually offers new possibilities, narratively, aesthetically and technically, encouraging new animators, artists and practitioners to explore new kinds of storytelling (Wells, 2006:6).

This research explores animated storytelling as a collaborative activity between groups of artists, school students and communities. The investigation of animation making as a socially engaged process is partially an attempt to shift prevailing perceptions of the medium as a vehicle for popular culture. The investigation does not attempt to re-define animation, but approaches it from a different angle, focusing on the capacity of the medium to support the active co-creation of personal narratives, as opposed to the relatively passive consumption of commercially constructed narratives. From this perspective, animation is used to capture the stories of small groups of individuals, rather than conveying the grand narratives conceptualised by the media or entertainment industries.<sup>2</sup>

The study reasons that animation provides a multimodal means of storytelling, incorporating visual, auditory and performance-based aspects. Applied in a collaborative context, the medium can act as a centre around which individuals of diverse socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds can meet and interact through the co-creation and production of stories. Thus, the central argument is that beyond its use as a medium for popular culture, animation making is an effective modality for socially engaged storytelling. In this capacity as a socialising agent, it can facilitate creative development, inclusive education and community building. Such benefits would be particularly useful within the context of multicultural South Africa.

#### 1.1.1 Finding a Voice: the importance of storytelling

Having a sense of Self, means possessing a set of stories about who we are (Kittredge, 2000:7).

Stories and storytelling lie at the heart of human experience and are among our most basic tools of communication; “we are socialized through narrativity” (Sunwolf, 2004).<sup>3</sup>

Storytelling is of paramount importance when attempting to define who we are as individuals

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<sup>2</sup> Animation is largely associated with popular culture and is therefore marginalised by academic study. Wells explains the need to reimagine animation, to explore it as an evolving medium with multiple applications and techniques.

<sup>3</sup> Clara Sunwolf is a Professor of Communication at University of California-Santa Barbara.

and as a society. If our knowledge of the world and of ourselves is rooted in our interactions with people, places and objects, we make sense of these interactions through storytelling.<sup>4</sup> Educational psychologist Jerome Bruner<sup>5</sup> supports this idea. Bruner states that every culture has stories and that our sense of self and cultural identity is based upon our capacity to create narratives: “Stories help to make the strange familiar, but they also serve to render the ordinary exceptional, cultivating a lively sense of the possible in education and life” (Hall, 2010:1). In other words, stories are a means of bringing order and meaning to our existence. Anthropologist Karen Brodtkin (2007:50) describes the act of creating a personal narrative as exercising human agency by acting upon society. Brodtkin asserts, “Being the interpreter of events makes the narrator an active agent in constructing the world”. Her use of the term ‘personal narrative’, relates to the postmodern concept of ‘micro narratives’, ‘small stories’ that focus on the lives and daily practices of individuals.<sup>6</sup> On the scale of the social, personal narratives are also important, as indicated in anthropological writings, which stress “the importance of personal narratives in creating engaged citizens of a democratic state” (Brodtkin, 2007:50).

Throughout history, storytelling has been used to transmit knowledge, ideas, wisdom and experiences. Stories have been shared using the means accessible to their time and place: through images, speech, writing and performance. They have been adapted according to the narrative potential of various mediums. Leslie Rule of the Digital Storytelling Association describes storytelling with digital technology as the modern expression of an ancient art (in Helen Barrett, 2004). Likewise, Couros (2011) notes that stories are “the expression of common cultural artefacts shared by individuals and societies with roots extending to the emergence of prehistoric humans”. Traditional African storytelling is used to transmit information and knowledge from generation to generation. It is usually oral and performance based, incorporating music, dance and imagery. As a multimodal narrative medium, animation accommodates and synthesises all of these modes of storytelling with the advantage of capturing, sharing and archiving the story. Thus, traditional techniques of storytelling can find a new place in digital, global society promoting human agency by giving individuals and communities a voice.

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<sup>4</sup> Ricoeur perceives life as a story in search of a narrator: “the temporal nature of human existence is lived and illuminated in narrative coherence” (Hoshmand, 2005:178).

<sup>5</sup> Jerome Bruner is a senior research fellow at the New York University School of Law. He has made valuable contributions to cognitive learning theory in educational psychology.

<sup>6</sup> Micro-narratives are a postmodern concern with the multiplicity and relativity of perspectives which sociologist Jean Francois Lyotard validates through his opposition to meta-narratives: large-scale theories and philosophies that present an absolute view of the world. By contrast, micronarratives are contingent, subjective and provisional, decidedly postmodern in nature. They allow for each individual to have their own perspective and story (Lyotard 1979:7 and Lemert 2010: 456).

Unfortunately, scholarly studies in animation have been marginalized because of the general perception that the medium is synonymous with commercial entertainment and television cartoons and therefore lacks academic merit (Furniss 1998:3). Animation is a significant art form that deserves recognition beyond the scope of mainstream culture (Wells,1998:3). Wells states that it is of critical importance to re-imagine animation, exploring it through the “intentions of its creator and the contexts in which it was made”, in order to broaden the perception of its narrative capacities (Wells and Hardstaff, 2008:7). The above observations are particularly relevant in the multi-ethnic South African context<sup>7</sup> where cultural and linguistic barriers naturally inhibit the sharing of stories, problematising an integrated society.

## 1.2 Aims and Objectives

This study aims to investigate the capacity of animation making as a collaborative practice to promote socialisation<sup>8</sup> and support creative, educational and community development. This will be achieved through a discussion of selected animated storytelling projects implemented in different contexts, namely an artist studio, a school classroom and in various civic spaces. The projects are presented as case studies. The primary aim of each project was to observe and facilitate the dynamics of co-operation that developed between participants through their interaction with each other and the medium. Although the three projects did not take place in the above-mentioned chronological order, I discuss them in this order because I aim to demonstrate how the value of animation-making can be expanded from the more personal domain (of the art studio), to the pedagogical domain of the classroom, and finally to the broader social context.

Secondary aims were specific to the particular context of each of these projects. In the artists’ studio, the study aimed to disrupt traditional approaches to illustration by introducing a collaborative, multi-media aspect to the creative process. In the classroom, the secondary aim was to promote the development of digital and verbal language literacy amongst the participants. In the context of the community, the aim was to provide participants with a creative, non-intrusive means of sharing experiences, articulating memories and developing a vision for the future.

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<sup>7</sup> South Africa has eleven official languages and a diversity of cultures. This combined with its legacy of apartheid and the resulting discrepancies in socio-economic and educational levels, perpetuates a fragmented society. According to Nussbaum (2010:48), in order to create a successful democracy it is essential to equip individuals with the capacity to “think and argue for themselves, rather than to defer to tradition and authority”.

<sup>8</sup> The term *socialisation* applied within the context of this study, refers to the process of social interaction in which people participate as active agents (Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology, 2006). Through this process knowledge and identity develops.

The objective of this study as a whole is to provide a theoretical platform, based on practical experience, from which to propose future animated storytelling projects in South African schools and communities. The objective highlights an alternative application for animation, presenting it as an accessible medium for the illustration and creation of stories by artists as well as by ‘non-artists’. This perspective constitutes a paradigm shift from animation’s consumer-orientated role in the mass media and entertainment industry.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The primary question asked through this research is ‘How can animation be applied as a socialising modality in visual arts, education and community contexts? Each of the secondary questions listed below are explored with reference to a specific practical project.

- What is the unique vocabulary of animation as a narrative art form and how can this be implemented in a collaborative process?
- How can animation be applied in an educational context as a tool to promote the development of multiliteracies and a more inclusive learning environment?
- How can animated storytelling be applied as a tool to cultivate a sense of place and belonging through community engagement?

### 1.4 Background to the Study

The three practical projects used as case studies for this thesis were conducted between 2011 and 2013. The co-creation of animation was the central activity in each of the projects. However, the method and approach to animating varied in each situation according to the goals of the participants and the resources and constraints of the venue. This section aims to contextualise the practical aspects of the research by introducing each project and providing a comprehensive overview of the circumstances in which it was developed.

In 2011, I was invited to participate in the *Art Enclosures* residency in Venice, Italy.<sup>9</sup> The residency selects two African artists annually to produce a body of work over a three-month period. During this period, a growing interest in the capacity of storytelling to create a sense of place, led to the implementation of *Trace*, a collaborative, community-based *story-mapping* project. The project was conducted simultaneously in Venice, Italy and Stellenbosch, South Africa through collaboration with MPhil. colleague, Marli Lyon. The stories collected during this project were compiled into a digital, interactive book containing

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<sup>9</sup> *Art Enclosures* was an International Artists Residency in Venice, Italy that aims to promote and enhance the talent and work of young emerging African artists. It was created, promoted and implemented by the *Fondazione di Venezia* between 2008 and 2011.

audio-visual content. The book was illustrated through the co-creation of simple animations with participating members of both communities. This residency project comprised the third part of my three-tiered exploration into collaborative animation, namely the community building capacities of the medium.

The outcomes of the *Trace* project heightened my interest in working with animation in a socially engaged capacity. I subsequently applied for a course in Animation Pedagogics,<sup>10</sup> at *The Animation Workshop* (TAW), an animation school located in *Viborg*, Denmark. Hanne Pedersen, a Danish animator and pedagogue, developed the course. Pedersen founded the *Centre for Education and Animation* (CEA)<sup>11</sup> at TAW in 1993 with the intention of exploring the benefits of animation as a tool for developing students' skills and competencies in visual communication, cognition, co-operation, and problem solving. The module trains international university students from various disciplines in the techniques, theories and applications of animated storytelling. Here, participants are encouraged to make animations both collaboratively and individually using various stop motion animation techniques,<sup>12</sup> which are easily adaptable to classroom and community contexts (CD Rom: *Collaborative Animation*). Through this training, I acquired knowledge and practical experience in how to implement these techniques with children and youth to facilitate learning and socialisation in a classroom environment. The practical fieldwork carried out at the end of this module will be described as a case study in chapter three. After graduating from the Animation Pedagogics course, I completed an internship at the CEA. My role was to co-facilitate animation workshops with children and young adults in various schools and community centres in Denmark. In addition, I helped to conduct teacher-training workshops for educators who wanted to integrate animated storytelling into the school curriculum.

On returning to South Africa, I was invited to conduct an animation workshop with a group of post-graduate illustration students at Stellenbosch University. The *Inter-animate* project that I conceptualised for this workshop will be discussed as a case study in chapter two. It provided the opportunity to implement collaborative animation in a visual arts context.

Through these projects, I have gained first-hand experience in how to apply animation as a collaborative practice in visual arts, education and community settings. In each instance, I

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<sup>10</sup> This was partially funded by a merit bursary awarded by the Openheimer Trust Foundation.

<sup>11</sup> CEA has worked together with schools and community projects in Denmark, Europe, South America and North Africa with the aim of integrating animation into education and implementing it as tool for social development through actively engaging students in the learning process.

<sup>12</sup> Techniques include object animation, cut-out and puppet animation, hand-drawn traditional animation and clay animation.

have worked closely with the participants providing them with the creative and technical support necessary to express themselves through the production of animated stories.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.5 Research Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative approach to research. This is intended to evaluate and record the “relational dynamics between people, places, objects and institutions” that develop through the process of animated storytelling (IDEO, 2008:24).<sup>14</sup> Qualitative research is defined as a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world and consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3). According to *The IDEO Human Centred Design Manual (HCD)*, qualitative methods of research can uncover deeply held needs, desires, and aspirations (2008:25).<sup>15</sup> To this end, qualitative research is perceived as being particularly useful in early-stage research to test assumptions and to understand the mutual dependence between phenomena in the social world in relation to the internal processes of the individual (IDEO, 2008:25).

### 1.5.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation is the specific method of qualitative research employed by this study. According to Barbara Kawulich (2005:1),<sup>16</sup> participant observation has been implemented, across various disciplines, as a tool for collecting data about people, processes, and cultures. Sociologist Robert Bogdan (1973:303)<sup>17</sup> defines participant observation as an approach to research in which the core activity is characterised by a sustained period of contact with subjects, in their habitual environments, during which data is collected. This technique was applied to each of the practical research projects conducted during this study. In each project I spent several weeks immersed in the participants’ various contexts: the artists’ studio, the classroom and public places that were familiar and comfortable to them.

The participant observation research method is divided into two categories: the *observer as participant* and *participant as observer*. The main point of differentiation between these two

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<sup>13</sup> My role entailed assisting with character design, camera set-up, idea development and crafting. Thus, throughout this study I will refer not to my individual art practice but to the art created through this process of convening, facilitating and ‘excavating’ the stories of others.

<sup>14</sup> IDEO is a design and innovation consultancy based in California, United States. The company takes a design-based approach to helping organisations in the public and private sectors innovate and grow (IDEO, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> The Human Centred Design (HCD) Toolkit was designed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for NGO’s and social enterprises that work with impoverished communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The kit is available as an open source, downloadable tool that guides users through the human-centered design process supporting them in activities to develop listening skills, run workshops, and implement ideas (IDEO, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Kawulich is an Associate Professor in the College of Education's Department of Educational Technology and Foundations at the University of West Georgia, USA. Her interests include evaluation and research methodology, particularly qualitative methodologies.

<sup>17</sup> Professor Robert Bogdan is an expert in Education, Sociology and qualitative research methods.

methods is that, in the former, the researcher is not a group member (Kawulich, 2005:6), whereas in the latter role the researcher is immersed in core group activities with other members whilst simultaneously conducting observations of the activities.

In each context, I adopted the *observer as participant* stance, which enabled me to participate in the group activities as needed, whilst simultaneously collecting material in the form of interviews and photographs, and ultimately the animations themselves. In every instance, the participants were aware of my observation activities. According to Kawulich (2005:6) in the observer as participant stance, “the researcher is not a group member but is interested in participating as a means for conducting better observation and, hence, generating a more complete understanding of the group's activities”. As noted by Adler and Adler (in Kawulich, 2005:6), this “peripheral membership role” enables the researcher to “observe and interact closely with members, establishing the identity of an insider but not “participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership.”

### **1.5.2 Informed Consent and Ethics in Participant Observation**

According to Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013:101) the “highly contextual nature of participant observation can present special ethical challenges to the researcher”. It is advised that in small-scale participant observation studies, such as those conducted within this thesis, it is viable to follow the same informed consent procedures implemented for an in-depth interview or focus group (Guest *et al* 2013:101). This approach is effective in situations where the scope of the observation scene is limited in terms of the number of people involved, the size of the physical environment, and the duration of the study (Guest *et al*, 2013:101). It entails providing participants with the required information about their rights and responsibilities, answering participants’ questions and obtaining a written or verbal record of their consent. These ethical procedures were followed with participants in each of the contexts mentioned in this study.

## **1.6 Social Constructivism as a Theoretical Framework**

This section establishes the theoretical basis of the study by providing a brief overview of social constructivism whilst reviewing literature that has informed my understanding of this theory. The social constructivist assertion that self and society are mutually constituted, provides an appropriate theoretical frame for the implementation of animation as a tool for co-creative storytelling. Investigated as a collaborative practice, animated storytelling provides a mechanism for the co-construction of meaning. This notion is supported by the social constructivist perception that knowledge<sup>18</sup> of the world and of the ‘self’ is constructed

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<sup>18</sup> Throughout this research, the word *knowledge* refers both to knowledge of the external, physical world and knowledge of the internal sense of self-identity.



through an individual's active engagement with the people, objects and phenomena in their environment (Vygotsky, 1978:7). Furthermore, aside from its broader applications as a sociological theory, social constructivism has been applied within the context of formal education. This is due to the work of Russian socio-cultural theorist and psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) whose educational theories will be discussed extensively in the third chapter.

### **1.6.1 Contextualising Social Constructivism**

In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of social constructivism it is necessary to contextualise it within constructivist meta-theory. Social constructivism is a post-modern epistemology with roots in philosophy, sociology and psychology of the twentieth century. It is based on the premise that "society does not exist independently from the thoughts and ideas of the people involved in it" (Jackson & Sørensen, 1999:162). This philosophy negates the existence of knowledge as an absolute, external entity whose laws can be discovered and measured by scientific research.<sup>19</sup> Constructivists do not seek the reflection of an external reality in the human mind; instead, they identify humans as "observers, participants, and agents who actively generate and transform the patterns through which they construct the realities that fit them" (Hickman, Neubert and Reich, 2009:40). Thus, a basic premise of constructivism is that each individual conceives of external reality somewhat differently, according to their unique set of experiences of the world and their beliefs about them (Jonassen, 1991:10). These observations are particularly interesting within the scope of this research, considering its focus on the co-construction of narratives and their capacity to reflect the collective realities of the storytellers.

There exist two main branches of constructivism: the cognitive and the sociological, each focussing on a contrasting perspective of knowledge construction. Cognitive constructivism, associated with Swiss Developmental Psychologist Jean Piaget, understands human development and knowledge acquisition as the inevitable result of maturation. It perceives human development to be a passive process (Vygotsky, 1978:80). By contrast, social constructivism, underpinned by the theories of Vygotsky, stresses that development and knowledge acquisition is the result of "collaborative social interaction" (Applefield, Huber and Mahnaz, 2000:3). In other words, social constructivism is concerned with the dynamic interrelationship between the individual and the socio-cultural context.

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<sup>19</sup> According to Jackson & Sørensen (1999:162) constructivism has encountered criticism because it undermines the capacity of scientific research to measure absolute facts. In this regard, it can be argued that scientific research is as ineffective a means of measuring matters concerning human relations and perceptions, as art and stories are in measuring natural laws. Considering that this research is concerned with art, storytelling and human relations, I argue that the controversies surrounding this theory, whilst valid considerations, do not undermine its relevance within the scope of this study.

### 1.6.2 Vygotsky's Social Constructivism

While it must be acknowledged that Social Constructivist theory has a number of forerunners, including philosophers and sociologists such as Kant (1724-1804)<sup>20</sup> and Weber (1864-1920)<sup>21</sup> it has, to a large extent, become attributed to the learning and developmental theories of Vygotsky.<sup>22</sup> *Mind in Society* (1978) is a collection of Vygotsky's writings investigating "the dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes" (Steiner and Mahn, 1996: 1). These writings are concerned with "the relationship between human beings and their environment, both physical and social" (Vygotsky, 1978:11). Vygotsky described learning as a two-fold process initiated through one's engagement in external social activities and embodied through the subsequent internalisation of this experience (Vygotsky 1978: 127). Thus, knowledge and identity are perceived as being "rooted in society and culture" and can be regarded as the result of the "internalization of culturally produced sign systems" (Vygotsky, 1978:7).<sup>23</sup>

### 1.6.3 Social Constructivism and Tool Mediation

The role of cultural tools as mediating agents "between the person and the world" (Hedegaard, 2001:3) is central to Vygotsky's theory of knowledge acquisition and identity development. Cultural tools are defined as tangible and intangible elements of culture: material objects and artefacts, as well as sign systems, namely language, numeric systems and writing (Vygotsky, 1978:7). According to Vygotsky cultural tools are central to the appropriation of knowledge through representational activity by an individual (Steiner & Mahn, 1996:3).

Vygotsky perceived development as a dialectical process whereby cultural tools create who we are and how we operate in the world, while individual (inter)actions, in turn, create and transform the cultural tools we have inherited (Hedegaard, 2001:4). This idea is echoed by Dudley in *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories* (2012), a collection of essays that discuss the "significance of the stories that objects can be used to tell" (Dudley *et al*, 2012:13). The authors explore the relationship between people and objects (cultural tools) that, "through social processes, act to make each other what they are" (Dudley *et al*, 2012:13). These ideas

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<sup>20</sup> Kant argued that knowledge can be obtained but will always be subjective because "it is filtered through human consciousness" (Jackson & Sørensen, 1999:162).

<sup>21</sup> Max Weber emphasized that the social world (i.e. the world of human interaction) is fundamentally different from the natural world of physical phenomena. Human beings rely on 'understanding' of each other's actions and assigning 'meaning' to them. Therefore in order to comprehend human interaction, "we cannot merely describe it in the way we describe physical phenomena" (Jackson & Sørensen, 1999:162).

<sup>22</sup> Vygotsky was extensively influenced by Marxist social theory, which states that historical changes in society and material life produce changes in human nature (Vygotsky, 1978:7).

<sup>23</sup> According to Vygotsky (1978:127) objects can be used either as signs or as tools. The former is internally oriented and related to the mastery of the self, for example counting on one's fingers or tying knots in a piece of string in order not to forget something. The latter is externally oriented and related to mastery over nature, for example using an axe to cut down a tree, or bricks to build a house.

are relevant to this study based on the fact that, through the process of animating, cultural tools are appropriated and transformed as subject matter in the creation of a narrative.

#### **1.6.4 Social Constructivism and Collaboration**

This research focuses specifically on the collaborative aspect of animated storytelling. Collaboration is an embedded characteristic of social constructivist theory. This is evident in its emphasis on the processes of social interaction and cultural practice as being fundamental to knowledge and identity development. Vygotsky postulates a dialectical<sup>24</sup> history of culture in which every individual is a part of the process of negotiating meaning through “co-operative social activity, discourse and debate” (Von Glasersfeld, 1992: 380). This statement is particularly relevant to my research, considering that one intention behind the use of animation beyond the studio has been to attempt to integrate artistic practice into the spaces of everyday life as a ‘co-operative social activity’.<sup>25</sup>

#### **1.6.5 The Constructivist Approach to Narrative Theory**

Storytelling is the concern of Narratology. The specific focus of this research, within the field of narrative theory, is the notion that personal and cultural identities are constructed through the sharing of narratives. Narratological and constructivist theories converge in the study of constructivist narratology, an area of narrative theory describing, “the cognitive activity through which observers create subjective models of the world they regard as actual” (Nünning, 2001:209). In the book *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective* (2001:209) narratologist and cultural theorist Ansgar Nünning defines constructivist narratology as the “world-making activity through which characters and narrators shape the subjective world models that constitute their individual experiences.”

Narratology, seen through a constructivist lens, perceives narrative as a system that is constructed through our attempts to make meaning and share experiences. According to this understanding, narratives and the act of storytelling can be seen as fundamental to human interaction and identity development. Nünning (2001:209) suggests that constructivism can potentially be applied to every level of narrative communication: the ‘story world’ is a construct that reflects the ontology of the storyteller and discourse about the story will always be informed by the socio-historical context of those engaging in it.

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<sup>24</sup> According to Vygotsky (1978: 64-65) the basic premise of the dialectical method is based on the understanding that “to study something historically means to study it in the process of change” because “it is only in movement that a body shows what it is.”

<sup>25</sup> According to Woolf it is through interaction with their social environment that artists ‘produce’ rather than ‘create’ and in so doing reveal the ‘cultural unconscious’ (Wolff, 1981:137).

The discipline of Narratology examines the means whereby stories structure our perception of cultural artefacts and the world around us (Felluga, 2011). Dino Felluga (2011)<sup>26</sup> proposes that “our ordering of time and space in narrative forms constitutes one of the primary ways we construct meaning in general”. Donald Polkinghorne in his essay *Narrative and Self-Concept* (1991:1)<sup>27</sup> states, “When the self is thought of as a narrative or story, rather than a substance or thing, the temporal and dramatic dimension of human existence is emphasized”. This statement shifts the understanding from self-identity as a fixed entity to self as a mutable flux of possibilities that is made coherent through narrative. Bruner supports this idea in an essay *The Narrative Construction of Reality* (1991), in which he asserts that we are born to “structure the world narratologically, in story-form” (Bruner, 1991:5). Bruner investigates the mechanisms whereby narrative structures and organizes human experience, operating as “an instrument of mind in the construction of reality” (Bruner, 1991:5). He presents narrative as a process that represents “the rich and messy domain of human interaction” (Bruner, 1991:4). This idea has been echoed by numerous theorists including Barthes who states that narrative is “international, trans-historical, transcultural; it is there, like life” (Barthes and Duisit, 1975:237).

This section has introduced social constructivism from several perspectives, namely Vygotsky’s dialectical approach to tool-mediated development, the notion of meaning-making as a collaborative process and the constructivist approach to Narratology. This theoretical framework will be expanded throughout subsequent chapters according to its relevance in each of the contexts to be discussed.

## 1.7 Animation: Literature Review

The previous section introduced the theoretical framework for this study along with the key literature that informs it. This section will review literature that has been fundamental to research into the theoretical aspects of animation and its applications as an artistic medium, a learning tool and a tool for community building.

### 1.7.1 Animation: from Popular Culture to Visual Art

A search for literature that discusses the significance of animation as an experimental art form independent of the animation industry, revealed two seminal texts: *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics* (1998) by Maureen Furniss<sup>28</sup> and *Understanding Animation* (1998) by

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<sup>26</sup> Dino Felluga is associate Professor in the English department, at Purdue University, USA.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Polkinghorne is part of the consulting faculty in the School of Psychology at University of Pasadena, USA.

<sup>28</sup> Maureen Furniss is a writer, animation historian, animation theorist, critic, professor, and president of the Society for Animation Studies.

Paul Wells.<sup>29</sup> These have informed the bulk of my investigation into the aesthetic and theoretical aspects of the medium. Both authors provide insight into the broad range of techniques and applications available to the animator. The authors acknowledge that, despite its diverse potentials as a medium, animation has become associated with the commercial production of films made for cinema or home entertainment. Furniss (1998:13) identifies four dominant traits that define animation in the minds of the public: “1) American, 2) created with *cel* artwork,<sup>30</sup> 3) made by famous men, 4) at the Disney Studio” (Furniss, 1998:13). Furniss notes that animation is not perceived as a “real art form” because it is “too popular (and) too commercialised to be taken seriously by scholars” (Furniss, 1996:1). She denounces this perception as flawed on the basis that a large number of existing animations are neither commercially orientated nor ‘childish’.

Both Furniss and Wells grapple with a definition of the medium that extends beyond “the technique of single frame cinematography” (Furniss, 1996:4). They introduce a broad range of viewpoints considering the technical, the philosophical and the aesthetic perspectives of a number of pioneering animation artists. These include Norman McLaren and Jan Svankmejer whose experimental, post-modern approach to animating utilised appropriation and *bricolage*,<sup>31</sup> redefining commonplace situations and everyday objects to challenge accepted notions of reality. This manner of working exemplifies the approach to animating that was encouraged in each of the contexts described in this study. Wells (1998:1) discusses the pre-cinematic origins of animation in which optical devices such as the Flipbook functioned as manually operated ‘toys’ in which the viewer had to engage their own hands to generate the illusion of movement. According to Wells (1998:98) this can be contrasted to the contemporary hyperrealism of *Disney* productions, which favour mimesis over abstraction, resulting in a more passive relationship between the viewer and the narrative.

In his more recent publication *The Fundamentals of Animation* (2006), Wells defines Animation as one of the most conspicuous aspects of popular culture worldwide. Wells (2006:6) states that animation surrounds us daily in the form of films produced by prominent studios such as *Disney*, *PIXAR* and *Ghibli*, television cartoons, advertising, the internet and computer games. This statement demonstrates that we occupy a visual culture. If animation is indeed ubiquitous and familiar, it supports the propensity of individuals to identify with it as

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<sup>29</sup> Professor Paul Wells is Director of the Animation Academy at Loughborough University, UK.

<sup>30</sup> *Cel animation* refers the traditional, hand-drawn technique that was the dominant form of commercial animation before computer-generated animation. *Cel* is an abbreviation for *celluloid* film that was used to record each image.

<sup>31</sup> *Bricolage* refers to construction (as of a sculpture or a structure of ideas) achieved by using whatever comes to hand (Merriam-Webster, 2013).

a narrative medium. From this perspective the ‘popular culture’ aspect of animation works to the advantage of this study because participants, particularly youth, respond enthusiastically to learning the ‘secrets’ behind creating the illusion of motion to tell their own stories.

*The Sharpest Point: Animation at the End of Cinema* (2005), is an anthology of essays edited by Chris Gehmen and Stephen Reinke, that draws attention away from the industry-related contexts mentioned above, by focussing on visual artists working with animation. Gehman and Reinke (2005:7) acknowledge that animation artists have difficulty receiving critical attention because their work is presented through popularised media formats such as cinema, television and computer screens, which tend to be associated with recreation and are perceived of as existing outside of the ‘art world’ (Gehman and Reinke 2005:7). In their introductory chapter Gehman and Reinke refer to South African artist William Kentridge as one of the few contemporary visual artists whose work with animation has received critical acclaim. Gehman and Reinke (2005:7) propose that this is the result of Kentridge’s rejection of mass-media screening platforms in favour of more intimate venues such as theatres or art galleries.<sup>32</sup> Curator Francesco Bonami supports this idea in the book *Supercontemporanea* (2007) in which he describes Kentridge's work as “worlds away from the irony of *Walt Disney* or *Pixar* technology” (Kentridge, Alemani & Bonami, 2007:8). These elements of Kentridge’s practice are central to its relevance within the scope of this study. They will be discussed further in the following chapter.

### **1.7.2 Animation: a Learning Tool**

In her article *Learning with Animation*, Hanne Pedersen describes animation as a powerful, multimodal educational tool. It is with this conviction that Pedersen implemented the Animation Pedagogics course and continues to research animation as a tool to support literacy among children and young people, especially those who may have learning disabilities or experience language barriers (Pedersen, 2011:1). Pedersen (2011:2) states, “Moving image media and animation are part of daily life for many young people and this is one of the reasons why it should be part of the school curriculum...as a means of expression and exploration”. According to Pedersen (2011:2), animation as a practice can “make implicit knowledge explicit, and give value to that knowledge”. Pedersen (2011:2) suggests that participants should be encouraged to work with their own visual understandings and “the images and metaphors that have meaning for them”. This process aids the development of personal and social identity cultivating a sense of self in relation to community through the co-construction of narrative.

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<sup>32</sup> These venues generally attract an audience more willing to engage in critical discourse.

In the article *Animation: children, autism and new possibilities for learning* (2013) Chris Abbot, the primary author, focuses on involvement by children and youth in the production of stop motion animations. The article presents animation making as a means of facilitating the understanding of concepts, narrative sequencing and story convention. Moreover, animation is described as a beneficial group task and vocabulary building activity. The article defines animation as a representation of thought using objects, suggesting that an animated sequence is an “anthropomorphic transformation of an object into a subjectified character” (Abbot, Holmgaard and Pedersen, 2013:2). Abbot proposes that the ability to preserve and re-present that sequence without the presence of its author affords anonymity and objectivity, which facilitates the sharing of personal stories without self-censorship (Abbot *et al*, 2013:2). This statement relates back to the social constructivist view of tool mediation introduced in the previous section.

*Learning, Identity and Self-Orientation in Youth* (2003), by Professor Knud Illeris,<sup>33</sup> is a key article that has motivated and informed the exploration of animation as a collaborative practice in the classroom. Illeris outlines a teaching concept that is based upon principles of social constructivism. He states that traditional learning models focused primarily on cognitive development, emphasising the formation of “knowledge schemes and functionality” to the exclusion of patterns of “sensitivity and sociality” (Illeris, 2003:359). These concepts re-enforce the case for animation as a collaborative learning tool that accommodates the cognitive, emotional and social aspects of learning. The cognitive aspects of animation include planning, strategising and problem solving, the emotional aspects are engaged through the recreational nature of the creative process and the social aspects are embedded in the fact that it is a collaborative process in which participants negotiate meaning and find solutions together. The articles introduced in this sub-section will be expanded upon in the chapter: *Animating the Classroom*.

### **1.7.3 Animation: in Community Engagement**

In his article *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (2006) media scholar Henry Jenkins discusses participatory learning in the digital age as a means of developing cultural competencies. Jenkins (2006:4) defines a participatory culture as one with relatively “low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, coupled with informal mentorship and support for creating and sharing one’s creations” (Jenkins, 2006:7). According to Jenkins (2006:7), participatory culture is one in which members believe “their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social

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<sup>33</sup> Knud Illeris is a Danish scientist and professor of lifelong learning at Roskilde University, Denmark.

connection with one another”. This observation is of particular relevance to the projects to be discussed in the chapter *Animating the Community* in which the participants represent marginalised or disenfranchised members of the community.

In *Cultivating Humanity* (1997), Martha Nussbaum emphasises the capacity of the arts to develop narrative imagination, which enables people to look beyond stereotypes of race, gender and language (Nussbaum, 1997:90).<sup>34</sup> The active involvement of youth and young adults in creating and sharing their own animated stories, has the capacity to encourage cultural integration whilst cultivating a sense of self and belonging to a community, one that is not defined along racial, linguistic or socio-economic lines. Ellison (in Nussbaum, 1997:88) states, “Narrative art has the power to make us see the lives of the different with more than a casual tourist’s interest, with involvement and sympathetic understanding, with anger at our society’s refusals of visibility”. This statement defines the fundamental premise behind the use of animated storytelling as a socially engaged practice. It will be illustrated by the practical projects discussed in Chapter four.

## 1.8 Overview of Chapters

The role of animated storytelling in each of the three successively expanding contexts will be discussed as separate chapters, with each chapter focussing on one of the secondary research questions listed above.

Chapter one: *Animating the Studio*, investigates the narrative potentials of stop motion animation in a visual arts context. The chapter provides a comprehensive definition of the aesthetic and technical aspects of the medium and discusses the distinctive ‘vocabulary’ that distinguishes animation from other genres of time-based visual narrative (Wells, 1998:11). William Kentridge’s experimental, low technology approach to animation and his symbolic use of objects are referenced through a discussion of *Journey to the Moon* (2003). Animation as a collaborative activity between artists is discussed through a case study of the *Inter-animate* project.

Having investigated the application of animation as a collaborative practice between artists, Chapter two: *Animating the Classroom* investigates the potentials of animation applied in an educational context. It illustrates the role that animation can play in supporting educational reforms in South Africa. The chapter supports a social constructivist approach to learning in which storytelling can be used as a means of embodying knowledge through co-constructive

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<sup>34</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum is a law and philosophy professor at the University of Chicago.



activity. This is illustrated through a discussion of *What Goes Around*, a flipbook animation project conducted during the Animation Pedagogics module in Denmark (2012).

Chapter three: *Animating the Community* extends the application for animation beyond the contexts of the studio and the educational institution, into the realm of community based practice. It explores the potentials and the challenges of collaborating, in public spaces, with members of the community, using animated storytelling. This chapter is based upon the social constructivist approach to community building in which storytelling can act as a means of actively engaging members of the public. The discussion is contextualised with reference to *Lion's Tea Party* (2008), a stop motion animation initiated by Moving Hands Theatre Company during the *Cascoland* public arts project in which I was involved.<sup>35</sup> The case study for this chapter is *Trace* (2011), a *story-mapping* project that investigates notions of migration and belonging. The chapter intends to illustrate the capacity of participatory animation to enable individuals and groups to articulate their aspirations, address social issues and share their stories.

In summary, this thesis intends to demonstrate the scope for research into animation beyond its commercial applications in the entertainment industry. The following chapters will support this argument by offering an account of research projects I conducted in each of the three contexts described above.

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<sup>35</sup> The project was initiated during *Cascoland* public arts intervention (2008) in Durban, South Africa

## CHAPTER 2: Animating the Studio

Animation film visualizes the invisible. The creative imagination gives life to the abstract and the amorphous. (Steen in Arkinson, S.a)

This chapter introduces animation as a collaborative practice, exploring the narrative potentials of the medium within the context of the art studio. This constitutes the ‘first sphere’ of my three-fold study, the others being the educational and social spheres. A primary aim is to investigate animated storytelling as a collaborative practice between artists. This is achieved through a case study describing the *Inter-animate* workshop (2013). The investigation is not concerned with technologically advanced, made-for-cinema permutations of animation. Instead, it focuses on how artists have experimented with relatively ‘primitive’<sup>36</sup> hand-generated techniques, to create imaginative narratives and intimate representations of the spaces and objects of everyday life. Since William Kentridge pioneered the use of ‘primitive’ animation in contemporary art, the case study refers to his work, specifically an analysis of the animated film *Journey to the Moon* (2003). The following section offers a comprehensive definition of animation’s distinctive aesthetic qualities, exploring its capacities as an artistic medium.

### 2.1 Animation as an Art form

The etymology of animation is derived from the Latin *animare*, “to give life” and “to endow with a particular spirit, motion or activity” (*Collins English Dictionary*, 2003. S.v. ‘animate’). Thus, to animate is to ‘bring an object to life’. The attempt to define animation as an art form, independent of its numerous genres, necessitates a return to its most fundamental capacity: the ability to create the illusion of movement of objects in space over time.

The basic unit of time-based visual media is the ‘frame’, a single, still image that relates visually and conceptually to a sequence of still images. The sequence in which the frames are arranged constructs the *diegesis*<sup>37</sup> of the narrative in the same manner as words are arranged in a sentence to communicate an intended meaning. Thus, the inter-relation of each frame can be likened to the syntax of a sentence. Kentridge compares his creative process to the act of speech: “In the very activity of speaking, generated by the act itself, new connections and

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<sup>36</sup>The term *primitive*, used in this context refers to basic processes. In comparison to contemporary, hi-technology, computer generated animation. The techniques of animation employed in this research were manual and required minimal technology.

<sup>37</sup>*Diegesis*: “A narrative’s time-space continuum, the diegesis of a narrative is its entire created world. Any narrative includes a diegesis; each kind of story will render that time-space continuum in different ways. The suspension of disbelief that we all perform before entering into a fictional world entails an acceptance of a story’s diegesis”(Felluga, 2011).

thoughts emerge” (Gehman and Reinke, 2005: 98). It follows that possessing a basic knowledge of the ‘grammar’ and ‘vocabulary’ of animation allows the storyteller to communicate an idea in a manner that includes improvised and playful interactions with the subject matter. In other words an animated story cannot be fully defined by a description of the frame-by-frame technique employed to create representational motion, “but by the artist, context and condition of expression” (Wells and Hardstaff, 2008:15). This observation is significant in terms of the social constructivist framework that contextualises this research. It recognises that the process of animation is not merely a mechanical procedure but an art form, fundamentally influenced by the identity and social context of the storyteller.

Despite the fact that animation is commonly associated with the media and entertainment industries, it has historically been a field characterised by diverse modes of expression, including experimental film. This genre of animation is usually associated with the visual arts, rather than with commercial animation studios (Wells and Hardstaff, 2008:15). According to Wells (1998:43-44), experimental animation “resists telling stories and moves towards the vocabulary used by painters and sculptors”. By this Wells means that it is more prone to abstraction and symbolism and is concerned primarily with exploring the limits and potentials of the medium. Animation artist Jan Svankmejer (in Wells, 1998:11) describes animation as an art form capable of subverting everyday reality. Svankmejer notes “in my films I move many objects, real objects, everyday contact with things which people are used to acquire a new dimension and in this way casts a doubt over reality”. This capacity of animation to disrupt and re-interpret the commonplace role of objects characterises the aesthetic of Kentridge’s *Journey to the Moon* and defines the theme of the *Inter-animate* project. Both *Journey to the Moon* and *Inter-animate* will be discussed later as examples of experimental animation.

### **2.1.1 Stop Motion Animation**

The stop motion technique is used to create the on-screen illusion that a physically manipulated object is moving autonomously. The object is moved or transformed incrementally between individually photographed frames. This technique can be applied to animating three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional representations of objects, as exemplified by Kentridge’s stop motion charcoal drawings. When the series of individual frames is shown in rapid succession the viewer perceives movement. A ‘strobing’ visual effect, created by the time-space between frames, is a characteristic of the visual aesthetic of stop-motion animation. Curator Mark Rosenthal (in Auping and Rosenthal, 2009:157) suggests that this perceptual gap between frames disrupts the illusion of unity, manifesting “as an open question” and creating a space that must be actively bridged by the imagination

of the viewer.<sup>38</sup> These integral qualities of stop motion animation invite experimentation with the technical possibilities of the medium, allowing the storyteller to physically transform and re-imagine objects rather than simply recording their movements.<sup>39</sup> The examples of stop motion animation referred to throughout this study do not attempt to create realistic representations of everyday reality. Instead they “revel in the artificiality of the film”, intentionally foregrounding the whimsical and the improbable (Weintraub, 2010).

One of the characteristic features of stop motion animation is that the technique involves a practical, ‘hands-on’ approach to animating, requiring the physical mediating gesture of the artist to manipulate the objects in each frame.<sup>40</sup> This is demonstrated by Kentridge’s direct, tactile engagement with his subject matter. Kentridge’s method involves the use of a single drawing that is subject to numerous hand-generated transformations: erasing, smudging, and redrawing, to create a palimpsestic sequence of instances. Each permutation of the drawing is captured as an individual frame, which intentionally bears perceptible traces of the frames that preceded it. These traces represent the residual evidence of the artist’s physical interactions with the surface of the paper (Fig.9).

Abbot describes animation as “a seductive and attractive medium”, which has developed over more than a hundred years. He states that in the past thirty years, the technologies of animation production have become “democratised” and are therefore more easily accessible to the public (Abbot *et al*, 2013:3).<sup>41</sup> The ease with which basic techniques of stop motion animation can be taught, allows the creative agency of the storyteller to take precedence over the technical skill required to produce it. Used in a collaborative context, stop motion animation enables participants to ‘play’ together and to experiment spontaneously with their subject matter in a way that a highly technical medium would hinder. The simplicity and

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<sup>38</sup> In the 1870’s photographer Edward Muybridge’s use of sequential photographs to document instances of motion, revealed what persistence of vision prevents us from perceiving: “the gaps in the manufactured reality of film”. It is within those gaps that animators work (Nienhuis, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> The rhythm and timing of animation is more *staccato* than is the case of live-action footage. This is because live-action uses the camera to represent and record “the world as our eyes are thought to see it” (Weintraub, 2010). This seamless motion of images allows the viewer to suspend disbelief and to become immersed in the space-time continuum of the narrative.

<sup>40</sup> Hand-generated animation can best be described as the counterpart to computer-generated animation in which the artist interacts with the object indirectly via a digital interface.

<sup>41</sup> Whereas in the past, digital technology was expensive, complicated, and accessible only to the media, animation production tools have become relatively affordable, user-friendly and accessible for home use. Opensource stop motion software, such as *Monkey-Jam*, allow anybody with access to a personal computer and a web camera to produce an animated film. Furthermore, digital stills cameras or cellular phone cameras can be used as frame capturing devices. The images captured can subsequently be combined in standard movie-making software built into the operating system of every computer.

accessibility of these tools and techniques facilitate their application within and beyond the artist's studio.<sup>42</sup>

### 2.1.2 Animation vs. Live-Action Film

The animated film was a far more honest expression of the cinematic illusion than the so-called realistic film...the animation revelled in its own illusory nature, exulted in the impossible...found in impossibility, in the negation of the actual, its profoundest reason for being (Millhauser in Arkinson, S.a).

Because animation is essentially the creation of an illusion of movement through the successive manipulation of objects or images, it can be understood as the conflation of the graphic arts with live-action film (Wells 1998:15). In his writing Wells identifies two distinctive aesthetic and technical qualities inherent in animated films: the first is the importance of the image and the second is its ability to transform into a different image. These abilities illustrate the relatedness between “construction and deconstruction, stasis and evolution, mutability and convergence” (Wells, 1998: 15). They constitute the “unique vocabulary” available to the animator, a vocabulary which is not accessible to the live-action filmmaker (Wells, 1998:11). This characteristic allows the storyteller to give life to a story “not through copying reality but through transforming it” (Wells, 1998:5).

A comparison between live-action film and animation is significant within the scope of this discussion where animation is used specifically because of its ability to physically engage the storyteller's capacity to re-interpret rather than to document reality. In other words, each individual frame in an animation is ‘manufactured’ by the manual intervention of the storyteller, whereas in live-action film a rapid succession of frames is recorded automatically to capture constant motion. Furniss (1998:5) notes that creating the illusion of motion, rather than recording it, expands the scope of the storyteller's creative agency. It is this unique aesthetic element of animation that invites the storyteller not to reproduce empirical reality but to “invent subjective and abstracted versions of it in order to communicate an idea or feeling” (Furniss, 1998:5). Thus, animation can be described as “a raw material made exclusively of human ideas” (Bendazzi in Wells, 1998:7). In this capacity, the process of animating allows the storyteller to make symbolic use of objects, to visually embody concepts that are perhaps too intimate or too complex to address directly or to explain with verbal language. This characteristic of animation makes it an effective tool for experimentation by visual artists.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> This makes it ideal for social interventionist or pedagogic purposes in the school and community based animation projects to be discussed in subsequent chapters.

<sup>43</sup> This quality also makes animation relevant in other non-commercial applications including to pedagogy and community building contexts.

### 2.1.3 Aesthetic Space

The 'world' I wish to suggest for animation is one of the imagination (Kearney in Buchan, Surman and Ward, 2006:1).

An important aspect of animation is that it invites the storyteller to construct and interact within an aesthetic space. Aesthetic spaces are relational,<sup>44</sup> resulting from the transfiguration of any physical environment through the active engagement of the storyteller's imagination with physical objects. Through these interactions, meaning is made and narratives unfold. Aesthetic spaces are spaces of inventiveness in which the subject can playfully re-interpret existing physical structures. Educational psychologist Shari Popen discusses the importance of aesthetic spaces "to vitalize social practice" in which participants actively engage in problem solving. He notes that within these spaces, we can "dramatize our fears", express our wishes and "practice our actions in places of relative safety" (Popen in Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, 2010:125-126). He illustrates this idea by describing children who, in their play, are adept at overlaying material objects and places with imagined constructions. In this manner, aesthetic space enables the creation of imaginative geographies, capable of subverting the "overly determining nature of highly structured contexts and places" (Popen in Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, 2010:126).

In this view the animation set can be identified as an aesthetic space, a site upon which to create an embodiment of the imagination (Popen in Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, 2010: 126). Animating provides a means of exercising personal agency by enacting stories (real or imagined) through the subjectification of characters in a constructed, representational world. This concept will be discussed further in *Journey to the Moon* where Kentridge constructs a fantastical lunar landscape from charcoal drawings and transforms his studio into a 'rocket ship' (Fig.1-10). Furthermore, the *Inter-animate* case study will demonstrate how, in a collaborative context, an aesthetic space is co-constructed by the diverse imaginations of several participants.

### 2.1.4 In-between Frames

What happens between each frame is more important than what happens on each frame (McLaren in Wells, 1998:10).

In order to understand how animation can be implemented as a socialising agent it is necessary to shift focus from the visible content of individual frames to the creative process that unfolds between the frames.

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<sup>44</sup> Relational space is created when people interact with each other or with the objects in their environment.

This concept is effectively communicated by Nienhuis (2012) who states:

If you could see the invisible gaps between the frames of a stop motion film, you'd witness pairs of hands delicately manipulating or replacing objects, possibly making minute adjustments to lighting systems or camera positions, all while attempting to maintain the continuity of the scene as a whole.

Animation is therefore, at its essence, the art of manipulating the individual interstices between frames (Furniss, 1998:5). As noted by Furniss (1998:5) this process is not merely the mechanical creation of a sequence of images but is always somewhat intuitive and evolves in the interval between the shooting of each frame. The significance of this process is evident in Kentridge's "stone age" experimental approach to animation (Auping and Rosenthal, 2009). Kentridge experiences the interval between the shooting of frames as a journey, in the literal and the figurative sense, which he describes as "walking, thinking, and stalking the image, allowing the project to percolate" (Weintraub, 2010).<sup>45</sup> He sets up a tripod and camera several meters in front of a large sheet of wall-mounted paper. The zone between the camera and the paper becomes the site of a process that has been described as both "mechanical and meditational" (Auping and Rosenthal, 2009:155). The image on the paper is altered and reworked continuously as the artist walks back and forth between the camera and the drawing in a repetitive cycle of gestures. Kentridge's process-based approach to mark making relies on this ritualistic pacing to provide the space-time interval in which he prepares to interact with his subject matter. Kentridge describes the process as "arcane" and executed with the hope that it will "pull to the surface intimations of the interior" (Auping and Rosenthal, 2009:3).

The process described above illustrates Kentridge's impromptu, investigational engagement with his subject matter. The sequence of frames resulting from this process demonstrates a narrative coherence. However, the space between the frames requires the artist to enter the field of open-ended possibilities. Participants of the *Inter-animate* project adopted a similar investigational approach. In this collaborative context, the creative process was characterised by the participants' improvised interactions with their objects, experimentation with new drawing styles and spontaneous group interactions. Through this process, participants shared ideas, solved problems and established a mutually supportive group dynamic. In summary, these observations have identified that 'in-between' the frames is a 'gap for the imagination', that dynamic interval in which creative and socialising processes evolve.

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<sup>45</sup> As stated by Rosenthal (in Auping and Rosenthal, 2009:155), Kentridge's rejection of a storyboard coupled with his method of "stalking" a drawing, "questions the foundation of what it means to perceive and produce moving images".

## 2.2 Objects as Actors: An Investigation of *Journey to the Moon*

Objects become traces of stories and histories, sites of action in the present which communicate or at times recreate, the past (Walklate in Dudley *et al* 2012:14).

An example the capacity of animation to ‘bring life’ to objects, is represented by Kentridge’s animated film: *A Journey to the Moon* (2003) (CD Rom, *Chapter 2*). The concept of objects as actors takes into consideration Vygotsky’s perception of objects as cultural tools with embedded socio-cultural meanings.<sup>46</sup> Social constructivism proposes that human interactions are mediated by cultural tools, in relation to a social context (Hedegaard, 2001:2).<sup>47</sup> As stated by cultural theorist Mieke Bal (1985:5),<sup>48</sup> the narratological definition of ‘actor’ is a term that describes any agent, not necessarily human, that causes or experiences an event. Thus, it can be said that stop motion animation presents objects as actors by creating the illusion that they are capable of autonomous action. *Journey to the Moon* illustrates this statement. This animated film is one of a series of nine experimental films produced as a tribute to the work of French filmmaker and stop motion pioneer Georges Méliès. The viewer witnesses as Kentridge transforms his studio into an imagined rocket ship through the emblematic use of drawings and found objects.<sup>49</sup> Through this symbolic appropriation of commonplace objects (Fig.4-10), Kentridge constructs fantastical representations of Earth and Cosmos, creating a discourse rich in metaphor. The artist rejects verisimilitude, intentionally making the audience conscious of filmic construction and of their own role as viewers (Weintraub, 2010).

The narrative portrays Kentridge’s effort to escape the isolation of his studio, a physical territory that also constitutes a psychological space of ideas and creative potential (Auping and Rosenthal, 2009:13). He describes the studio as a symbolic space, comparing it to the inside of an “enlarged head” (Auping and Rosenthal, 2009:13) within which his pacing represents the ephemeral thoughts and images that form and fade inside the mind

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<sup>46</sup> Vygotsky’s perception of the relationship between individuals and cultural artefacts is described by Giddens (1984:xxiii) as ‘recursive’, a cycle whereby the agent is produced by the structure, which is, in reality, no more than the objectifications of past actions by agents. Like the social constructivists, Giddens (1984) proposes that it is through dialogue with these objects that culture is transmitted and preserved and identity is constructed.

<sup>47</sup> The term *cultural artefact*, as it is used in social constructivism, refers to all manual and conceptual tools that regulate and enable social processes (Hedegaard, 2001:2).

<sup>48</sup> Mieke Bal is a prominent cultural theorist and critic based at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA).

<sup>49</sup> Kentridge's experiments with low tech., illusionistic techniques, such as reversed motion and inverted tonality, interweave moments of magical realism into the plot, which support the notion of an allegorical journey into an imagined landscape.



(Westerveld, 2010).<sup>50</sup> This representational space moves beyond the boundaries of geography, “to signify the mutable terrain of memory and identity” (Abate, 2004:239).<sup>51</sup>

The key signifiers in *Journey to the Moon* are commonplace domestic objects, which acquire a symbolic meaning through the artist’s interaction with them. This transforms their roles from the banal to the extraordinary, capable of navigating trajectories that extend beyond their domestic context. In the opening scene, Kentridge sketches animated charcoal drawings across the pages of a dictionary (Fig. 8 &10). These roughly drafted moving images present a counterpoint to the fixed grid layout of the dictionary, “a symbol of objective reason and definitive meaning” (Weintraub, 2010). Other ‘actors’ include a table, a coffee cup and saucer, a coffee-making pot and a colony of ants. By re-interpreting their original roles, the artist establishes new syntactic relationships between these objects: the table surface becomes a mapped terrain; the coffee pot becomes a rocket ship, which crashes into the surface of the moon (represented by a saucer). This scene is observed through the *espresso* cup, which is used as a telescope (Fig.4).

Kentridge surveys the table surface cluttered with the above-mentioned objects. Viewed through the *espresso* cup ‘telescope’ this scene resembles an aerial map of a bustling urban terrain in which the topography is defined by the motion paths of a colony of black ants on a white surface (Fig.2). To lure the ants into formation the artist painted lines of sugar in water onto the surface of the table. The result is the semblance of contour in a shape-shifting landscape. As the artist turns the ‘telescope’ from the tabletop towards the ceiling, the tonality of the image is inverted. This effect causes the ants to appear white against a black backdrop (Fig.5-6). As a result, the same image now takes on a different symbolism: rather than signifying a terrestrial map, the subject matter evokes a map of the cosmos (Auping and Rosenthal, 2009:190) in which ants represent stars and constellations, a shadow cast by the saucer signifies a crescent moon and a cup in a saucer resembles the rings of Saturn. With the mirror-imaged versions of the same scene, contrasted pairs are created to signify earth/ cosmos, day/ night, and colonised/ un-colonised territory respectively. According to Rosenthal, Kentridge’s use of metaphor and his adaptation of objects as signifiers, invoke “a

<sup>50</sup> This insight reveals the artist’s attempt to generate a visual, time-based metaphor to communicate an ephemeral internal state.

<sup>51</sup> The diegesis is encoded in a manner that references the aesthetic of early cinema. Black and white footage recorded at one frame per second creates a “deliberate jerkiness, which resists cinematic illusion” (Abate 2004: 36). The illusion of objects defying gravity is created through the use of reversed footage, a rudimentary special effect characteristic of early cinema. The artist’s use of dramatic body language to perform ordinary actions such as pacing, observing and reading is a technique reminiscent of actors in early cinema, who, in the absence of the spoken dialogue, relied upon exaggerated gestures to communicate meaning and emotion. The audio track is non-diegetic. A piano recording, by South African composer Phillip Miller, accompanies the narrative in a musical style redolent of the soundtrack in ‘silent movies’.

poetry of transformation”. This confirms that the preferred reading of the text is one in which the reader willingly suspends logic in order to be transported into the intimate aesthetic space created by artists imagination (Auping and Rosenthal, 2009:52).

In summary, *Journey to the Moon* exemplifies animation’s innate capacity to transform and re-imagine the culturally embedded meanings in objects.<sup>52</sup> This capacity engages the creative agency of the storyteller, allowing him/ her to reinterpret the cultural tools and signs that organize and constrain social practice.

This investigation serves as a foundation for the following discussion of the case study in which a group of visual artists select a significant object as a starting point for a studio-based collaborative animation.

### 2.3 Inter-animate: *To Inspire Mutually*

Environments are constituted of ‘living beings’ and ‘things’ and each of these is an actant in the creation of a world (Walklate in Dudley *et al*, 2012:14).

*Inter-animate* was an animated drawing workshop<sup>53</sup> conducted with seven post-graduate Illustrators, Fine Artists and Graphic Designers in their shared studio at the Stellenbosch Visual Arts Department. It was based on the Surrealist parlour game *Exquisite Corpse*.<sup>54</sup> The game was originally played with writing or drawing in which a group of participants work on the same sheet of paper to co-create text or image. As an image-based activity, each participant continues the drawing where the other ended and is able to see only a fraction of the image created by the person before. The result is a collaborative representation composed of each person's individual contribution. The final piece reflects the collective character of the participants. The *Inter-animate* project was intended to achieve a similar effect using a time-based medium to reveal and re-interpret the stories embedded in familiar objects. (CD Rom, *Chapter 2: Case Study*)

The project brief was motivated by the notion that we interact with objects every day, attaching meanings, memories and value to those that serve an important purpose in our lives. Dudley (2012:14) states that “immaterial elements of human culture: stories, concepts and ideas, are often thought through things.” In this view, objects and people are understood to be

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<sup>52</sup> Social constructivism refers to objects as ‘cultural tools’, connecting the individual to society and society to the individual. Sharing meaning connects the two.

<sup>53</sup> The workshop was adapted from a project conducted by Professor Cara Jaye at Western Washington University.

<sup>54</sup> Surrealist artist Andre Breton developed this as an image making technique in 1925. The activity derives its name from a word game exercise played by a small group of artists in 1918 in which the phrase *Cadavre Exquis* (Exquisite Corpse) was used.

mutually constitutive because they are embedded in shared social relationships (Dudley *et al* 2012:14).<sup>55</sup>

### 2.3.1 Aims

The workshop was based upon the following aims:

- To observe the dynamic that develops in a group of artists using animation to create a multi-authored visual narrative.
- To develop participants' ability to work together in a collaborative environment.
- To encourage participants to re-interpret and symbolically link unrelated objects using sequential drawings, thereby promoting their experimentation with mark making.

### 2.3.2 Process

As a point of departure for the project, participants were invited to select a human-made object with personal significance: as a metaphor, a memory, or a tool. They were required to consider how the story of the object intersects with their lives: What makes it significant? What purpose does it serve? What memories and experiences are associated with it?

In an initial group discussion, the participants introduced themselves and their selected objects. They were subsequently guided through a series of mixed-media drawing exercises to familiarise themselves with their objects.<sup>56</sup> Participants each selected one of the images that they created during this experimental drawing phase. This became the first frame of their animated sequence. A photocopy of this first frame was given to the preceding participant on the list.<sup>57</sup> At this point, each participant had an opening frame (their own drawing) and an ending frame (the drawing of the person following them in the sequence). These two drawings constituted the key frames.<sup>58</sup> Using the process of *tweening*,<sup>59</sup> participants visually

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<sup>55</sup> This idea resonates with Bruner's argument that narratives function as tools for thinking, helping us to fit into and make sense of our environment because they "exist in dynamic relationships with the minds and imaginations of their creators and audiences" (Spolsky in Aldama, 2010:38).

<sup>56</sup> The exercises included the following drawing activities:

- Deconstruct the object: imagine what it would look like in its component parts/ break it down into shapes.
- Reconstruct these components to form a new structure.
- Blind contour drawing of the object (draw according to how it feels to touch).
- Draw the object, tear it up and reassemble it into a collage of something different.
- Use the object as a stamp. What happens if you stamp it in an inkpad /paint it with acrylic and use it to make a mark?
- Think of the object as a shape: create a triptych of silhouettes of the object as seen from three different angles.
- Draw 5 frames in which you tell a story visually using your object.
- Create a drawing in any medium /technique in which you combine your object with one of your colleague's objects.

<sup>57</sup> The group was sequenced in random order. The first frame of one participant's animation constituted the final frame of the preceding participant's animation.

<sup>58</sup> **Key frames** are drawings that indicate the beginning and ending points of a transition between two states.

<sup>59</sup> The term *tweening*, used in the animation industry, refers to the process of creating a sequence of successively transformed images to link the subject matter between two key frames.

linked their first frame to the next person's first frame through the creation of a series of approximately 240 sequential drawings.<sup>60</sup>

Through the workshop, participants learned the pre-production, production, and post-production processes involved in the creation of an animated film. They received instruction on storyboarding and the basic principles of animation, such as how to create the impression of speed and gravity in their illustrations. Furthermore, they were given a demonstration on how to compile and add sound to their animated sequences using *Final Cut Pro* video editing software. This equipped them with the analogue and digital skills required to conceptualise, create and compile animation. Throughout each phase of the project, regular group feedback discussions were held in the artists' studio. During these meetings, they presented their work and their ideas to receive feedback from their peers. My role as researcher was to observe and facilitate participants' interactions with the aim of allowing the group to evolve its own co-operative dynamic independent of external intervention. At the end of the project, each participant was requested to complete a feedback questionnaire. This provided them an opportunity to critically reflect upon their individual performance and upon the performance of the group as a whole. Excerpts from this feedback are quoted in the following observations.

### 2.3.3 Observations

Observations made during the workshop focused primarily upon the dynamics that developed between the artists through their collaborative engagement with the brief. Of additional interest was their relationship to their selected objects and how this evolved through the process of experimental drawing.

#### *i. Collaboration*

Working in collaboration was a great starting point for our year, as we did not know one another. It also adds some element of competition ... it pushes you to create a better product (T. Turner, personal interview, Stellenbosch, 2013).

The collaborative element of this project exposed the artists to the benefits and challenges of working together on a multi-authored piece. Several of the participants were introduced to one another for the first time on the day that the workshop commenced. The process of animating together acted as a socialising agent, providing a means of developing creative and personal relationships with each other. The distinctive feature of this process is that it allowed

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<sup>60</sup> This number of frames was selected as a guideline, with the intention of editing the animation at twenty-four FPS. Consequently, each artist would create ten seconds of animation, resulting in a group film approximately 1'10 in duration.

the artists to experiment with and develop their drawing techniques both individually and through collaboration with the members of their group.

The animation that evolved from this collaboration was the product of many imaginations and personalities working toward the same goal...it was a different approach to the creative process (L.Wessels, personal interview, Stellenbosch, 2013).

Of central importance to the animation was the creation of a seamless merging between the participant's sequences. This required planning, co-operation and, in some instances, drawing as a team to integrate and complement each other's visual styles. In cases where two successive participants employed a contrasting style of drawing, it was necessary for them to co-construct several frames in order to create a complimentary transition. Azrah Osman and Alain Lotriet's animated sequences demonstrate a successful example of this. Osman's black and white line drawing of a wooden artist mannequin transforms into Lotriet's digitally coloured image of a green plastic soldier (Fig.11). The participants had to draw collaboratively for a number of frames merging each other's mark making techniques to create a seamless transition between the two figures. Although not all of the transitions in the group animation were this precise, the process of collaborative problem solving developed participants' ability to work together in a co-creative environment.

The spirit of collaboration manifested throughout the production and post-production process. In several instances participants worked in self-assembled teams to help one another with the shooting and editing of their animations. Furthermore, participants held one another accountable for producing high-quality work in accordance with the prescribed schedule. The participants supported each other's process because each contribution formed an indispensable component of the animation in its entirety.<sup>61</sup>

#### *i. Narrative objects*

The adding and erasing of the charcoal liberated my very controlled approach to drawing. I felt free to make awkward shapes and imagine shapes and forms, which I otherwise would not have contemplated (C. Gericke, personal interview, Stellenbosch, 2013).

Canadian Animator Norman McLaren defines animation as "not the art of drawings that move but rather the art of movements that are drawn" (Wells, 1998:11). One of the aims of the *Inter-animate* workshop was to encourage the artists to create narrative connections

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<sup>61</sup> The following list details the sequence of objects and the name of the artist that animated it: Wooden artists mannequin animated by Azrah Osman, Plastic toy soldier animated by Alain Lotriet, Bullet casing animated by Tiaan Conradie, Toilet roll carton animated by Colleen Gericke, Clothes Peg animated by Tracey Turner, Hand-crafted cat created and animated by Stephanie van Vuuren, Feet animated by Lezanne Wessels.

between seemingly unrelated objects through a series of experimental, sequential drawings (Fig.13). The process challenged participants to ‘draw movement’ while experimenting with new techniques and mediums of mark making. The artists were requested to generate a large volume of images in order to encourage them to fully engage in the process of experimental drawing. This required them to release their practiced and controlled approach in favour of a less restricted method of mark making. It was a difficult concept for several of the participants to come to terms with, given that their previous training as graphic artists generally demanded that the message be embodied through a single, flawlessly executed image. Stop motion animation was a useful tool in this regard each frame ‘archived’ the drawing in a specific stage of its evolution, liberating the artist to experiment with improvised approaches to image making without the risk of losing the original image. This allowed the artists to document each instance of their drawing in process, with the aim of creating a series of harmonious transformations rather than perfecting a single image.

The qualitative methodology applied to the *Inter-animate* project was based on personal observations and interviews with participants. From the results observed during this process, and given the subsequent feedback, it can be deduced that the participating artists found the project to be of value, in terms of both the technical skills acquired and the collaborative dimension that it introduced to their practice. Participant Stephanie van Vuuren commented, “Animation provided a new way through which to tell a story. It is useful to learn how to bring something to ‘life’ and understand movement” (Fig. 12). The project cultivated bonds of co-operation between participants most of whom are used to working independently, even within a shared studio space. Participants mastered new techniques of drawing through collaborative engagement. Drawing alone, they would not have been forced to expand their visual ‘vocabulary’, whereas drawing together they experimented with on another’s styles and practices, finding new ways of mark making to articulate their ideas. This capacity to work collaboratively is an important skill for emerging visual artists to acquire given that collaborative practice has shifted into the mainstream of contemporary art, eroding “the cult of personality of the individual artist” (Dunhill and O’Brian, 2005).<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the workshop equipped participants with the practical skill to extend their illustration practice into a digital medium, to create audio-visual narratives by merging graphic art with moving image technology. In summary, the *Inter-animate* project cultivated a mutually inspiring dynamic between a group of artists, presenting them with an opportunity to experience the benefits and the challenges of art making as a collaborative practice.

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<sup>62</sup> It can be argued that the ability to subvert traditional perceptions of the artist as a ‘solitary creator’ is essential given that the participants will be required to participate in a globalised, networked society.

In summary, this chapter has defined the distinctive capacities of stop motion animation as an experimental art-form. Having discussed the collaborative use of animation in the context of the visual arts, the following chapter will focus on animation as a tool in educational contexts. Here, the focus will be on student-authored animations.

**CHAPTER 3: Animating the Classroom**

Animation is a powerful medium and should be as common in schools as blackboard and chalk, or speaking and writing (Pedersen, 2011:1).

This chapter represents the second concentric expansion of the study: from the traditionally private space of the art studio into the more public space of the classroom. It examines the educational benefits following student involvement in the co-creation of animated narratives. While significant research has been conducted into the advantages of learning through *viewing* animation this study focuses on the advantages associated with giving students access to the means of production, thereby developing their creative agency and assuming an active role in the learning process (Abbott *et al*, 2013:1). The theoretical and practical aspects of the study were conducted during the Animation Pedagogics module at the Centre for Education with Animation (CEA) in Denmark. The CEA perceives animation as a multimedia language, applying it in educational contexts as a tool to facilitate learning and to promote language literacy and communication. Pedersen (2011:1) observes that involvement in animation “supports an increased awareness of language and its structure”. Animators work with the grammar of the medium, combining images, sound and movement to create and communicate meaning (Pedersen 2011:2). For example, constructing and animating representations of concepts essentially creates a tangible visual metaphor that can be “grasped literally” (Pedersen, 2011:2). Transferring ideas and concepts in this manner “from one genre to another creates powerful users of language” (Pedersen 2011:3).<sup>63</sup>

The case study for this chapter will describe the project *What Goes Around*, a collaborative animation produced by primary school students in Denmark. The workshop was conducted in English, with participants whose native tongue is Danish. Thus, it provided a means of using the ‘language’ of animation to develop students’ English language competency.<sup>64</sup> As an illustrator, I find the idea of using a visual medium to promote verbal language development appealing. Moreover, the acquisition of English language skills is highly relevant in the context of the South African education system. Of the eleven official languages spoken in South Africa, only 9.39 percent of the population speak English as a first language (Statistics South Africa, 2011), yet in most schools, English remains the main language of instruction.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> This idea is corroborated by Bruner who discusses the notion that language is a systematic way of communicating to others, of affecting their and our own behaviour, of sharing attention, and of constituting realities to which we then adhere just as we adhere to the “facts” of nature (Bruner and Watson, 1983:119-134).

<sup>64</sup> English is studied as a second language by eighty-six percent of the Danish population from Grade three (Eurobarometer, 2006:17).

<sup>65</sup> According to Rebecca Davis, a Rhodes University graduate currently working in lexicography at the Oxford English Dictionary, “The right to choose the language of learning and teaching is vested in the individual.”



The fact that the majority of South Africans receive education in a language that is not their mother tongue could negatively affect their ability to grasp subjects across the curriculum. Mamphela Ramphele (1998:176)<sup>66</sup> emphasises the significance of language development and creative arts in developing cognitive faculties.<sup>67</sup> She describes the importance of cultivating students' ability to "think critically and develop strong conceptual skills" (Ramphele, 1998:177). One section of this chapter will outline the current trajectory of South African education in order to assess the potential relevance and predicted obstacles that would be involved with introducing animation as a learning tool into South African schools.

### 3.1 Shifting Paradigms: Evolving Perceptions of Education

Imagination is the source of every form of human achievement...it's the one thing that I believe we are systematically jeopardizing in the way we educate our children and ourselves (Robinson, 2006).

This section will investigate animation as a teaching tool within a social constructivist learning environment. Initially it will define the characteristics of contemporary approaches to education, contrasting them to traditional definitions of learning and literacy. Thereafter, it will explore the current state of education and its proposed reforms in a South African context. It will be argued that animation can be used as tool to facilitate this reform by contributing to an inclusive, multiliterate learning environment.

#### 3.1.1 Defining the Paradigm Shift

According to the New London Group of authors (1996:21)<sup>68</sup> the school curriculum and its delivery must engage with students' own practices and discourses, "which are increasingly defined by cultural and subcultural diversity and the different language backgrounds and practices that come with this diversity". This statement summarises the core motivation for the global transition away from traditional, instructional views of education, which are rooted in the "intellectual culture of the enlightenment and the economic circumstances of the industrial revolution" (Robinson, 2006). In a speech titled *Why Schools Kill Creativity*,

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the 12.2 million South African school pupils, just 850,000 (seven percent) speak English at home. The South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) 2012 South Africa Survey, drawing on figures from the Department of Basic Education, found that 7, 6 million of them (around sixty-four percent) wish to be taught in English". Thuthukani Ndebele, SAIRR researcher, states that the dominance of English in the South African public school system reflects "a global trend for the preference of the language" (Davis, 2012).

<sup>66</sup> Dr. Mamphela Ramphele is a South African politician, medical doctor, academic and businesswoman. She is a former Vice-Chancellor at the University of Cape Town and former Managing Director at the World Bank. In February 2013, she announced the formation of *Agang* a political party intended to challenge the African National Congress. Ramphele criticises the current state of education in South Africa, which she states was more effective under apartheid (Sapa, 2013).

<sup>67</sup> These subjects, along with mathematics and science, were "deliberately de-emphasised" under the apartheid 'Bantu' education policy (Ramphele, 1998:176).

<sup>68</sup> The New London group refers to a collection of approximately fourteen academics and social theorists from international universities who co-authored the article *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures* (1996). For the sake of efficiency, they will be cited as 'The New London Group'.

educator and author Ken Robinson argues that such a system of education has no place in contemporary society. He asserts that children need to be educated in a manner that allows them to mediate multiple platforms of information delivery. Robinson describes traditional means of education as “based on linearity and conformity and batching people”. He proposes instead moving toward a model which takes into consideration that human growth is “an organic, not a mechanical process” (Robinson, 2006).

Illeris supports Robinson’s observations, proposing that ‘traditional’ industrialised societies provided us with a narrative and a social role whereas post-traditional networked society generally necessitates that we create them ourselves (Illeris, 2003:360). Illeris suggests that, in order for a student to ‘flourish’, education must consider three integrated dimensions of learning: the cognitive, the emotional and the social aspects (Illeris, 2003:359). This three-dimensional approach to education aims to develop knowledge and self-motivation as well as the ability to co-operate and to think critically. This combination of skills enables students to ‘self-orientate’ (Illeris, 2003:357). Illeris argues that this is essential in order to cultivate a generation of students who are able to make decisions and embrace a fluid sense of self-identity in a pluralistic global culture. Animation implemented in an educational context supports Robinsons’ call for an ‘organic’, student-centred ideology,<sup>69</sup> in which the needs and creativity of the student finds expression through a multimodal medium that accommodates each of the learning modalities.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, it encourages the co-construction of knowledge, creative initiative and co-operation amongst students thereby developing their ability to self-orientate. As I will demonstrate next, the theories of Robinson and Illeris converge with social constructivist approaches to education.

### 3.1.2 Social Constructivism as a Learning Theory

The theoretical and practical components of the Animation Pedagogics module are based upon social constructivist learning theories. Applied within a framework of formal education, social constructivism emphasises the role of social interaction as a catalyst for learning. This

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<sup>69</sup> According to Sue (2009) student-centred learning (SCL) prioritises the capabilities, interests and educational needs of students’. This approach can be contrasted to teacher-centred learning in which the teacher’s role is to ‘give’ information to students, instructing rather than encouraging them to question and discover for themselves.

<sup>70</sup> Research with U.S. school children has identified a variety of perceptual learning styles (or modalities).The process of animating engages each of the modalities described below:

- . *Visual Learners* think in pictures ,creating visual metaphors and analogies .They excel at visual arts.
- . *Auditory Learners* process information best through listening and speaking. Because of their ability to use words and language they excel at story telling and explaining concepts
- . *Kinesthetic/ Tactile learning* : experiential learning, that is, total physical involvement with a learning situation “hands-on” learning, such as building models or doing laboratory experiments (Reid, 1987:89).

is associated with Vygotsky's belief that "the social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and in fact (whereas) the individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary" (Vygotsky in Wertsch, 1985:58). In other words, knowledge, of the self and of the world, is acquired through a two-fold process: first through social interactions (an external process) and subsequently through the embodiment of these interactions (an internal process).

In this view, knowledge becomes embodied through students' engagement in a collaborative meaning-making process within their social context, most significantly comprising their peers (Vygotsky, 1978:90). Thus, social constructivism proposes a student-centred approach to learning. This subverts traditional education philosophies, which assume the existence of a fixed body of knowledge that can be transmitted as fact by educators and passively received by learners (Hedegaard, 2001:2). Social constructivist education encourages students to critically engage with subject matter, questioning proposed facts based on the understanding that knowledge is never neutral (St. Pierre Hirtle, 1996:91).<sup>71</sup> These theories set Vygotsky in strong opposition to Behaviourist approaches to learning,<sup>72</sup> which maintain that cause and effect governs human behaviour, rather than consciousness and reasoning (Palincsar, 1998:1).

Vygotsky's research focussed primarily on the development of language literacy.<sup>73</sup> He perceived Language as the signifying system most fundamental to human development (Vygotsky, 1978:7) because it acts as a mediator between the learner's thoughts (internal) and social environment (external), thereby enabling the mediation of knowledge within a social context (St. Pierre Hirtle, 1996:91). This observation is significant in view of Pedersen's statement that animation constitutes "a language in itself" (Pedersen, 2011:1).

One the most fundamental theories of social constructivism is the *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*. Vygotsky's ZPD theory describes the area between a student's level of independent performance<sup>74</sup> and the level of assisted performance (Vygotsky, 1978:84-85).<sup>75</sup> *Scaffolding* is a teaching strategy underpinned by the ZPD theory. In a 'scaffolded' learning

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<sup>71</sup> This statement acknowledges that the success of such a system depends on suitably trained and incentivised teachers, capable of creating a framework within which critical reflection and discourse can occur.

<sup>72</sup> Behaviourist approaches to teaching are concerned with "shaping the responses of the learner through using instructional procedures such as demonstration and reinforcement to elicit a targeted response"(Palincsar, 1998:1).

<sup>73</sup> Vygotsky's view on education was an extension of his general approach to the development of higher mental functions. Higher mental functions can be identified as intentional, self-regulated, and mediated by language and other sign systems (Vygotsky, 1978:7). Examples of these include the ability to plan, evaluate, memorize, and co-operate, as well as the acquisition of linguistic and numeric literacy.

<sup>74</sup> This refers to the best the learner can achieve without help.

<sup>75</sup> This refers to the best the learner can accomplish with help.

environment, a mentor provides students with a temporary framework for learning, supporting the student through a series of active tasks within their ZPD (Hedegaard, 2001:8). As students begin to build knowledge and develop skills independently, elements of the framework are dismantled. When the student is capable of performing the task un-aided, the scaffolding is removed. In the case study to be discussed in the latter part of this chapter, scaffolding and the ZPD theory were applied as didactic methods; guiding students to acquire the skills necessary to conceptualise and produce animated stories.

### 3.1.3 Multiliteracies

Literacy is most commonly defined as “the ability to read or write” (*Collins English Dictionary*, 2003. S.v. ‘literacy’). The theories discussed throughout this section describe a contemporary socio-cultural environment that requires not only the ability to read and write but also visual, digital and media literacy. This can be described as the capacity to engage in a “multiplicity of discourses” (New London Group, 1996:1). In their article *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures*, the New London Group (1996:3) use the term ‘multiliteracies’ to define “a broader view of literacy than the traditional verbal language-based perception”. Multiliteracies, applied to education, take into account that the ability to operate within diverse linguistic and cultural frameworks empowers students to critically engage in the “design of their social futures” (New London Group, 1996:1).<sup>76</sup> The article describes various types of literacy:

- *Linguistic literacy*: understanding language as a meaning-making system.
- *Visual literacy*: the ability to interpret visual signs such as images, objects and symbols.
- *Audio literacy*: The ability to generate or interpret music and sound effects.
- *Gestural literacy*: Understanding how to use and interpret body language.
- *Spatial literacy*: Understanding the layout of environmental and architectural spaces.
- *Digital literacy*: The ability to work with digital technology to accomplish a task.
- *Multimodal literacy*: A combination of two or more of the above types.

Based upon this list, animation is identified as a multimodal process that employs each of these forms of literacy. The process of creating an animation engages multiliteracies through the incorporation of verbal discourse, storyboarding, character and set design, audio recording and the ability to understand how physical space translates into a digital medium.

### 3.1.4 Visual and Verbal Literacy

According to Professor Jackie Marsh (in Abbott *et al*, 2013:6), children can benefit from considering the ways in which narrative concepts, such as characterisation, setting and timing, are expressed differently in the moving image and the written word. The notion that

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<sup>76</sup> This is what Illeris refers to as the ability to ‘self-orientate’.

students' acquisition of literacy concepts can be supported by translating the techniques of one medium into another (Madden in Abbott *et al*, 2013:2), resonates with Pedersen's observations in the opening paragraph of this chapter.<sup>77</sup> As a multimodal tool, animation could potentially enable participants to overcome some of the communication difficulties imposed by verbal language barriers. In his book *Visual Literacy: Connections to Thinking, Reading and Writing* (1986) Richard Sinatra suggests that this is because visual literacy is fundamental to human thought. According to Sinatra (1986:7), "We can say that the first stage of literacy development is that of visual literacy". He suggests that this is because visual language uses objects as concrete symbols that can act as reference, assisting learners to acquire the more abstract symbols involved with verbal language acquisition (Sinatra 1986:6).

In summary, this section has investigated the potential for animation as a narrative technology in the classroom.<sup>78</sup> It has discussed education from a social constructivist perspective and justified the need to reform traditional approaches to classroom learning. Furthermore, it has identified the capacity of multimodal, visual literacy to support these reforms. The following section contextualises education in South Africa through a discussion of the educational reforms proposed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

### 3.2 A Place for Animation in the South African Classroom

Ramphela (1998:171) states that amongst the most significant challenges facing South Africa since 1994 is to implement an effective education and training system. When schools have "nothing to offer" students lacking the required capacity to read, write and communicate in the language of instruction, it can result in low self-esteem, demotivation, and language delay (Pedersen, 2011:1). This observation is relevant considering the previously established fact that the majority of South African children are being educated in a language that is not their mother tongue. Sarah Howie<sup>79</sup> acknowledges the impact that language proficiency has on pupils' performance in every subject. Consequently, all teachers should receive literacy training in order to negotiate "linguistic complexities in the classroom", identify reading difficulties and develop literacy in their students (Royds and Dale-Jones, 2012). Howie concludes that delayed language literacy obstructs academic development (Royds and Dale-Jones, 2012). In view of these statements this section will argue that animation provides a

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<sup>77</sup> It can be argued that children, already acculturated into a society where a large amount of visual and verbal information is communicated in the form of multi-media moving images, are accustomed to bridging between visual and verbal language systems.

<sup>78</sup> Professor Tony Hall (2011:1) defines *narrative technology* as the synergy of storytelling and computing.

<sup>79</sup> Professor Howie is from the University of Pretoria's Centre for Evaluation and Assessment.

tool for teachers, given the necessary training, to support literacy development and, as a result, educational development.

The recently implemented Curriculum 2025<sup>80</sup> has set out specific, measurable annual goals with one of the primary targets being to promote literacy. Research conducted in 2009 indicated that only thirty-seven percent of grade six pupils had obtained the required level of literacy. One of the goals of Curriculum 2025 is to increase these statistics to sixty percent by 2014 (DBE, 2013). However, several infrastructural challenges face the Department of Education in its attempt to provide an equitable education to all South Africans. Amongst these challenges is the need to address inclusive learning, educational resources, parental support and student to teacher ratios (DBE, 2012). In a report outlining the objectives of Curriculum 2025 the DBE acknowledges the above-mentioned obstacles to the actualisation of South Africa's educational ideals. It recognises the need to motivate students, train and incentivise teachers and to foster integration between the home and school environments (DBE, 2013). Animation as a learning tool could facilitate the attainment of each of these aims.<sup>81</sup>

### **3.2.1 Inclusion**

Nineteen years into its democracy, South Africa remains challenged by the task of formulating a curriculum that is accessible to a culturally and socio-economically diverse population. Schools are an important venue for socialisation. They should facilitate integration by providing an inclusive, multicultural education. This observation is supported by Pahl and Rowsell (2006:129), who suggest that engaging children's identities and curiosities by providing an inclusive space for them to develop, is a means of preventing differences in socio-cultural background from obstructing the acquisition of literacy. Animation provides students with the opportunity to engage in a playful, co-creative activity. As a collaborative process, it fosters an inclusive environment in which students of diverse socio-cultural, linguistic backgrounds and educational levels can work together to create meaning through storytelling.

### **3.2.2 Educational Resources**

In South African schools, equitable provision of educational resources is an obstacle that is being targeted by the Department of Education's 2014 Action Plan (DBE, 2012). This plan

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<sup>80</sup> Curriculum 2025 is the revised version of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). OBE was implemented as South Africa's curriculum 2005 education model in 1997. It sought to "democratise education" (Jansen, 1998: 1) but failed due to lack of adequate teacher training and the absence of common national standards for learning and assessment (Jansen, 1998:3).

<sup>81</sup> However, the success of this implementation would hinge upon a number of elements, including committed and suitably trained teachers.

aims to increase student access to a wide range of media, including computers. Access to textbooks, libraries and computer facilities<sup>82</sup> is recognised as being essential to the development of multiliterate students. The simplicity of the basic stop motion technique and the fact that it requires relatively little in terms of technical equipment<sup>83</sup> means that it could be implemented in most schools regardless of their existing infrastructures. Moreover, the application of animation as a learning tool would provide students with an essential foundation in digital literacy.

### 3.2.3 Parental Involvement

A government issued report describing the objectives for Curriculum 2025, acknowledges the necessity for parents to take an active role in the education of their children. Moreover, it recognises that parents need to cultivate a co-operative relationship with their children's teachers, through participation in school activities (DBE, 2013:2).<sup>84</sup> A standard practice at the end of each animation workshop is a screening session where parents are invited to the classroom to watch and discuss the animations with their children. These sessions are considered a crucial phase of the workshop because they bring parents into their child's educational setting, effectively 'bridging' the home and the school environment whilst providing an opportunity for parent-teacher-student discourse.

### 3.2.4 Class Size

Statistics released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2013:37) calculate an average of thirty-three students per teacher (with as many as sixty students per class) in South African classrooms. Managing independent study programs for thirty or more individuals under these circumstances is not viable for teachers, especially in view of the fact that many lack the adequate training and resources. Animation as a group activity can facilitate a more productive dynamic in large classes. In a typical classroom animation scenario, pupils work together in groups of mixed-abilities<sup>85</sup> with four to five students around a single workstation. Each of these groups forms a mini production team in which every member has a specific, equally essential role, namely storyboard artist,

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<sup>82</sup> However, it should be noted that many schools currently remain without electricity, drinking water and toilet facilities (HSRC, 2005), which suggests that there is some progress required before computer and Internet facilities are considered a priority.

<sup>83</sup> Basic animation equipment can include digital stills camera mounted on a tripod, or a web camera connected to a computer. Free applications such as *Monkey-Jam* stop motion software and Windows Movie-Maker/iMovie are available online or as a standard part of every computer's operating system.

<sup>84</sup> A report on education in South African communities revealed that, for low income or unemployed parents, particularly in the rural areas, the "pressures of everyday life result in a conflict between the achievement of ideals for the education of their children and the survival of their families" (HSRC, 2005:107). A 25.5 percent unemployment rate reported by Statistics South Africa (2011) illustrates that a large portion of South African households occupy a low socio-economic sector, which may influence whether parents introduce children to educational experiences.

<sup>85</sup> *Mixed-abilities* describes a classroom situation in which students of different learning aptitudes and developmental stages are educated together.

photographer, director or character designer. This typically social constructivist approach to learning cultivates a mutually supportive environment in which peers learn with and from one other. Students actively engage in critical dialogue concerning the subject matter and are encouraged to reflect and discover for themselves. A consequence of this is that teachers do not have their attention dispersed over a large class of individuals engaged in isolated activity. Instead, they can focus on scaffolding and facilitating the activities of self-motivating groups in which each student is engaged within their ZPD.

For these reasons I maintain that animation as a collaborative activity could make a valuable contribution to the cultivation of a literate and integrated generation of South African students.<sup>86</sup> The following case study re-enforces this claim, offering a first-hand account of how animated storytelling was implemented to facilitate inclusive learning and promote language competency in a classroom environment.

### 3.3 Case study: What Goes Around

As part of my fieldwork in the Animation Pedagogics module, I conceptualised and conducted a workshop over ten days with students at the *Friskolen i Skive*, a Danish public school. The workshop comprised five short animation projects intended to introduce various techniques of stop motion animation to the students and their teachers. Of the five projects, *What Goes Around* was selected as a case study (CD Rom: *Chapter 3: Case Study*). This workshop provided a means of investigating animation as a collaborative practice to promote verbal language literacy amongst a group of second language English speakers. *Addendum 2* in the Appendix details each of the five projects, the schedule, and an unabridged overview of the fieldwork.

#### 3.3.1 Project Description

*What Goes Around* is a collaborative, digital flipbook-making project. The point of departure for the project is a *Post-It* note memo-pad with an identical circle drawn on the first and last page. The circles act as the starting and ending points (the key frames) for each participant's animated sequence. The goal was for students to work individually and collaboratively, transforming their circles into objects through the creation of successive images, and then to return the object back to the original circle. This method was intended to ensure that the final frame in one student's animation would align with the first frame of the next student's animation.<sup>87</sup> The desired result was a series of short, interdependent hand-drawn animations

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<sup>86</sup> It is acknowledged that implementing animation as a tool for learning in schools is less of a priority than the need to address the fundamental infrastructural inadequacies that currently impede student's access to an equal basic education.

<sup>87</sup> In this sense the project operates according to the same principles applied in the *Inter-animate* project



that begin and end with a circle. Thus, students worked toward a common goal with the knowledge that their stories formed part of an interlinked sequence of narratives.

A circle was chosen as a point of departure for the drawings for the reason that, as an archetypal shape, it can be transformed into any number of objects without being related to a specific era or cultural frame of reference. The intention was to encourage participants to engage their memories and imaginations rather than relying on culturally pre-configured icons and symbols.

### **3.3.2 Aims and Learning Processes**

The project aimed to investigate animation as a co-creative medium and to implement visual storytelling as a means of promoting verbal language acquisition. These aims are described as follows:

#### *i. Animation as a co-creative medium*

The primary aim of introducing animation as a collaborative practice into a classroom was to observe its capacity to create a more inclusive learning environment. This aim reflects the fundamental social constructivist belief that individuals learn through their participation in the social world and through their involvement in “reciprocal processes” (Hedegaard 2001:2).

#### *ii. Visual storytelling to promote verbal language acquisition*

The second aim intended to encourage students to use visual elements, created through the animation process, to support interaction in a language that is not their native tongue. In a discussion on the development of symbolism in drawing, linguist Karl Buhler likens drawing to “graphic speech” (Buhler in Vygotsky, 1978:112). In the previous section it was discussed that visual language, which essentially comprises a set of concrete signs, can be used as a point of reference from which to come to terms with the more abstract signs that constitute verbal language (Sinatra, 1986:6). As mentioned before, these observations are also relevant in a South African context considering that approximately ninety percent of South African students are second language English speakers (South African Government Online, 2013).

### **3.3.3 Biographical Profile of Participants**

The research sample comprised a class of sixteen grade six students (eight males and eight females). The participants were aged between eleven and twelve years old. Though all the students’ native language was Danish, the class contained students of mixed-abilities. Consequently, *special needs*<sup>88</sup> students were educated together with students whose

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described in Chapter 1.

<sup>88</sup> *Special needs* refers to students who do not fall within the normal range of educational development for their

developmental stage was considered ‘normal’ or advanced. Teachers noted that although this inclusive grouping was intended to benefit the socialisation and academic development of the special needs students, in reality it frequently problematised social relations because the more advanced students teased or ostracised their less developed peers. As a result, the special needs students tended to acquire low self-esteem, which in turn jeopardized their social and academic development. Therefore, it was intended to use animation as an activity to shift prevailing class hierarchies. Two of the students had been diagnosed with significant learning disabilities. For ethical reasons the students’ names will not be disclosed. *Student J*, a twelve year-old female had been assessed as having the developmental age of a six year old while *Student V*, a thirteen year-old male had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder and dyslexia.

### 3.3.4 Process

#### *i. Pre-production*

During a preliminary class brainstorm session, students were asked the question “What can a circle become?” This exercise was intended to encourage the students to speak about their surroundings, observe the familiar objects in their classroom and find the English vocabulary to name as many round objects as possible. Students were encouraged to think in consecutively expanding circles: first by naming round objects visible in their immediate surroundings, then inside their homes, their community, their country, the world and the universe. This was intended to expand the students’ capacity to reflect beyond the framework of their own culture and daily routine.<sup>89</sup> Students were shown examples of flipbook animations that I made using similar techniques and materials to those that they would employ (CD Rom, *Personal Projects: Post-It Piece*). Additionally, basic principles of sequential drawing were demonstrated, such as how to trace consecutive images by making sensitive, incremental adaptations to their subject matter (Fig.15).

#### *ii. Production*

In the second phase of the creative process, each student produced a series of sequential drawings<sup>90</sup> on their *Post-It* note pad. My intervention during the drawing of the flipbooks was to offer technical assistance and encourage dialogue, in English, about each student’s story. Students were asked several simple questions including: “What is this story about?” “What will your circle become?” and “What happens next?”

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age group due to physical or mental handicaps which present learning difficulties.

<sup>89</sup>Popular suggestions included: a clock, a pizza, the Sun, a flower, a head, wheels, a soccer ball, the Earth and a moon. *Student V* suggested a coffee cup. Significantly, he was the only student who had imagined an object from a different perspective (a coffee cup is round when seen from above).

### *iii. Post-production*

Having completed the drawing of their flipbooks students worked together to photograph each page using a digital camera on a tripod. Every digitised image formed one frame in the animation. Hence, each student's drawings contributed approximately five seconds of footage to an animated movie created by the whole class. Once each flipbook had been digitised as a sequence of images, I combined the sequences and uploaded the final movie onto the schools video channel to be shared with the community.

### **3.3.5 Feedback and Ethical considerations**

Oral and written feedback methods were utilised as data collection instruments. Informal class discussions established an open forum in which questions and concerns could be raised. At the end of the research period, a feedback questionnaire was provided to the participants. The questionnaire and student feedback were translated from Danish to English. In addition, the creative process was documented via daily photographs (Fig. 15-17) and timelapse video (CD Rom, *Chapter 3: Case Study, Animating the classroom*). Samples of the feedback forms are attached as *Addendum 3* in the Appendix.

Parents and students were informed about the aims and intentions behind the workshop. They were notified that photographs taken to document the process would be used exclusively for research purposes and that student work would be posted onto the schools video channel.

The goal of this case study was to observe how students engaged the creative process and what this revealed in terms of the aims stated at the beginning of this section. Thus, the focus was on student input rather than on the quality of the output.<sup>91</sup> The following deductions are made through having observed the participants and the written and oral feedback received.

### **3.3.6 Observations**

#### *i. Animation as a co-creative medium*

The most important thing I have learned is to collaborate much more than we're used to; and also the patience (Shawn, 12).

Using animation as a collaborative process introduced a different dynamic into the classroom, one characterised by co-operation, visual practice and group work as opposed to written academic exercises and individual achievement. Whereas, under usual circumstances, only the special needs students tend to be 'out of their comfort zones', this altered dynamic moved the entire class into an area that was unfamiliar. Animating together provided a medium for

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<sup>91</sup> Thus, the quality, crafting and aesthetics of the films were secondary considerations.

students to socialise around, shifting existing hierarchies by affording an opportunity for less academically advanced students to excel at a visual, hands-on activity. It was encouraging to observe that the ‘clever’ students were more willing to offer and receive assistance from the special needs students who they usually undermine. For example, *Student J* exhibited exceptional ability as an animator. Her sense of form, timing and methodical sequential drawings were technically superior to those of her more academically and developmentally advanced peers. Thus, on several occasions, her classmates approached her for help. For *Student J*, the opportunity to problem-solve with her peers was an empowering experience, which noticeably elevated her self-esteem. Furthermore, students exhibited co-operative tendencies by working together to finalise and photograph one another’s drawings. Thus, throughout the production and post-production process students showed signs of bonding around a common purpose and a shared goal.

*i. Visual storytelling to promote verbal language acquisition*

I think it was really good speaking in English. What I’ve done to understand the questions is to ask and listen (Kasper, 12).

It was super to speak about my drawings. I’ve learned a lot of new words (Lasse, 12).

The figures below compare the class English language competencies<sup>92</sup> assessed by teachers during formal English lessons (Fig.A) and during the animation workshop (Fig.B).

*Fig.A: Before Animation*

Reading	Writing	Spoken	None
14	14	2	2

*Fig.B: During Animation*

Reading	Writing	Spoken	None
14	14	12	2

*Figure A.* demonstrates that, of the sixteen students, fourteen were assessed as having achieved adequate competency in reading and writing prior to the workshop. However, teachers considered only two of the students to be competent in the spoken aspects of the language.<sup>93</sup> The two special needs students were identified as lacking the required literacy in terms of writing, reading or speaking English.

<sup>92</sup> In this instance competency was gauged as the ability to engage in unscripted conversation.

<sup>93</sup> Jesper Bundgaard, one of the Grade six teachers, attributed this to the fact that although students learned English as part of the curriculum they were seldom exposed to the language beyond the scope of their textbooks. As a result, they acquired a basic grounding in reading and grammar but lacked the confidence to articulate and understand spoken English.

*Figure B.* illustrates the assessment of English competency observed during the workshop. The figure demonstrates that twelve of the students were able to verbally narrate their stories and to respond to questions in English, when utilising their flipbook drawings as visual reference. It was encouraging to observe that *Student V* engaged in English dialogue, albeit to a limited degree, by contributing to the naming of round objects during the class brainstorm session.

In summary, ten students who had previously been assessed as incompetent in spoken English, engaged in unscripted discourse using their own sequential drawings as visual aids. This corresponds to Pedersen's observation that when students are engaged in the production of animation, their language comprehension and expression is re-enforced (The Animation Workshop, 2009). Based on this observation it can be deduced these time-based visual sequences provided a support for verbalised storytelling.

Throughout the two-week workshop participants engaged with a number of animation techniques and curriculum based themes (*Addendum*). Through this process, they acquired enhanced digital literacy and experience in learning through animation. Moreover, the time-consuming production process required participants to simplify and cut to the essence in the narrative, which enhanced their understanding of narrative structure. After viewing their animation for the first time the class communicated enthusiasm and pride in their group achievement. This was consolidated by the fact that the animation was screened and applauded during a school assembly. Furthermore, uploading the animation to an online channel such as *You Tube* or *Vimeo* connected their work with a global community. Being 'published' on the Internet instilled an authentic sense of accomplishment in the participants, all of whom have subsequently visited the site and shared it with friends and family at home. The Grade six teachers at *Friskolen i Skive* have subsequently introduced animation making into several areas of the curriculum and have initiated an extra-mural animation club at the school.

This chapter explored the educational benefits of engaging in animated storytelling as a collaborative activity. It described principles and practices that characterise a social constructivist teaching methodology and discussed educational reform in a global and a South African context. These insights motivated the case study *What Goes Around*, which provided an example of animation implemented as a tool to promote socialisation and English language competency in a classroom context. This is just one of the numerous applications for animation in a classroom environment. The CEA has compiled an interactive

guide for teachers to use animation across the curriculum including science and mathematics. Pedersen believes that animation provides the opportunity to reach groups of children and youth who are not strong academically by creating a new approach to subjects. This new approach would be of benefit in South African classrooms.

**CHAPTER 4: Animating the Community**

Places come to exist in our imaginations because of stories...when we reach for a sense of place, we posit an intimate relationship to a set of stories connected to a particular location. (Kittredge, 2000:8)

The previous chapters investigated the benefits of collaborative animation within the contexts of the visual arts and education. This chapter enters the third successive context of this investigation, extending beyond the self-contained environments of the studio and the classroom, into public spaces. Situated in a community context, animation was implemented as a means of promoting social integration through storytelling. According to Lacy (in Billing, Lind and Nilsson, 2008:23), public art practice is concerned with relations between people and with social creativity rather than with self-expression. It is characterised by co-operation and creative participation in a process through which marginalised voices can surface. This concept is echoed by education specialists John Raven and Karen O'Donnell (2010:201) who state that identity has always been constructed socially "based upon history, symbols, heroes and the stories that a community tells about itself". In *Taking Matters into Common Hands* (2008), Nancy defines 'community' as relational and non-absolute. According to this definition community does not provide the basis for a given society, rather it is what develops "in the wake of society", resulting from the dynamics set in place through social interaction (Billing *et al*, 2008:18). This theory supports the social constructivist<sup>94</sup> notion that community plays a fundamental role in the process of meaning-making whereby individuals work together to construct their perceived realities.

Two community-based animation projects are discussed in this chapter, namely *Lion's Tea Party* (2008) and *Trace* (2011). *Lion's Tea Party* is a stop motion animation created by homeless children in Durban's city centre (CD Rom, *Chapter 4: Cascoland*). Despite the fact that my involvement in this project predates the commencement of this Master's degree, it played a key role in motivating my interests in animation as a socially engaged practice. It is therefore deemed relevant as a means of contextualising the case study: *Trace*, an interactive storybook comprising text, audio and animated sequences (CD Rom, *Chapter 4: Case Study*). Both projects implement animation as a participatory practice, providing a platform for members of the community to share stories concerning aspects of their daily lives, their memories and their visions for the future. My participation in *Cascoland* and *Art Enclosures*,

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<sup>94</sup> Social constructivism understands the 'self' as contingent upon communication with the living beings, objects and spaces with which one interacts. It is proposed that community and a sense of place develops through this process.

was defined by two levels of collaboration: initially between myself and other artists and subsequently between the artists and the participants.

#### 4.1 *Cascoland: Animating Durban's City Centre*

South Africa's urban spaces have undergone radical changes over the last decade. While it may be that cities have been transformed by new forms of social and economic interaction, they still bear the mark of racial and structural segregation. We can see these boundaries all around us...the structural and physical reality of these separations are often challenged by the informal and everyday use of public space by those who actively engage with their environment (Jahangeer in *Cascoland*, 2008).

This project provides an example of how animation can be used as a tool to promote socialisation and integration amongst disenfranchised youth. *Cascoland*<sup>95</sup> public art project was hosted in Durban, South Africa in 2008 with the intention of activating a specific 'informal'<sup>96</sup> route by initiating various artistic interventions at sites along the way. It was intended to encourage the citizens of Durban to engage more creatively with the people and places constituting their community. According to Jahangeer (*Cascoland*, 2008),<sup>97</sup> this process provided a means of cultivating new notions of citizenship and civic engagement, "contesting the politics of fear that shape our interactions within the city". Of the approximately thirty-four projects that developed through *Cascoland*, this section will focus on an animation workshop initiated by Moving Hands Theatre Company. I was involved in the project as a general assistant, supervising the participants during certain of the animation activities in the early phases of the workshop. My *story-mapping* project conflated thematically with the Moving Hands project: both aimed to identify the stories, wishes and aspirations of the participants (Fig.18-19).

The Moving Hands production team comprised Alison Smith, John Charalambous and Caroline Morten. This group of artists, animators and filmmakers recreate temporary animation studio environments with the necessary filming, lighting and computer equipment in school and community settings. For *Cascoland* Durban the team proposed to work with a group of homeless youth at the *Umthombo* shelter.<sup>98</sup> The workshop culminated in the

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<sup>95</sup> *Cascoland* involved a selection of forty-five South African and Dutch artists, designers and performers. It emphasised collaboration between the artists as well as between the artists and members of local communities. As a selected *Cascoland* artist, I proposed to walk this route collecting wishes and stories from people I encountered along the way. This *story-mapping* proposal took the form of several collaborations with fellow *Cascoland* artists and members of the community.

<sup>96</sup> This route was created by commuters walking from home to work in the city every day. The route connects the outlying townships, via the suburbs of Musgrave, along the N3 highway into the heart of the city, terminating at the harbour.

<sup>97</sup> **Doung Anwar Jahangeer** is a Durban based architect, visual artist and co-founder of the DALA artists collective.

<sup>98</sup> *Umthombo* is a non-profit organisation that aims to provide alternative lifestyles for street children. It aims



production of *Lion's Tea Party*<sup>99</sup> a seven-minute mixed-media stop motion animation that was conceptualised, written, produced and narrated by nine of the *Umthombo* youth.<sup>100</sup> The animated story invited the municipality, the police force and citizens of Durban to support the participants' self-initiated campaign for an improved understanding of street children. In other words, it provided a mechanism for self-actualisation whereby those who are usually disregarded could be 'heard' and 'felt' by those in positions of relative power. The animation, filmed in Durban's city center,<sup>101</sup> offers insight into the thoughts and wishes of a marginalised subculture, exploring their relationship to each other and to their community.

#### 4.1.1 Cultivating Narrative Imagination

*Lion's Tea Party* was screened in a mobile 'cinema'<sup>102</sup> during a parade through the city where it was viewed by members of the public and by the city Mayor. Through sharing their animation with the municipality and having members of the public bear witness to their story the youth effectively engaged the *narrative imagination* of the audience, instigating a transformed social perception of street children. Nussbaum (1997:11) defines narrative imagination as the ability to empathise, to be "an intelligent reader" of another person's story and to understand the desires, thoughts and emotions that a person in that situation would feel. Nussbaum (1997:85) identifies the capacity to exercise a narrative imagination as being essential to the cultivation of socially effective human beings.

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"To capture the children's interest and imagination through high intensity engagement programs" (*Umthombo*, 2013). Programs include art, drama music and sport. The primary aim of this workshop was to keep the participants engaged in creative activity compelling them to remain at the centre during the day, rather than going into the streets to beg or to source drugs. With this reality in mind, the workshop aimed to encourage the participants to envision an alternative way of life. It was themed to address the question "What do I want to become?" and attempted to encourage participants to consider their needs and to voice them in a creative, non-threatening environment.

<sup>99</sup>The plot revolves around the main character 'Lion' who hosts a Tea Party and contemplates who to invite as a guest of honour. He considers Elephant, but Elephant is "too big" and Hare, but Hare is "too clever". Finally, he invites Hyena because he is "not too big or too clever". The group identified themselves and their target audience through the symbolic use of African animals: Elephant represents the municipality and Hare represents the public. The participants chose the Hyena to represent the homeless street children who they consider a strong and loyal family.

<sup>100</sup>The animation employs numerous stop motion techniques including pixilation, cut-out and hand drawn methods. The narrative was enacted through improvised interactions in public space. These included drawing onto walls, carving words into soap and playing with shadows cast over three-dimensional objects. Furthermore, the participants were encouraged to express themselves in ways that felt natural to them. For this reason the animation contains a strong performance based element, in which the participants animate their own gestures and spontaneous dances in front of the camera.

<sup>101</sup>Apart from the camera and some drawing materials, the scene was created using props and resources that were found on location. Thus, the animation is constructed both in and 'of' the streets, by the children who live there. This site-specific production process required the participants to re-imagine familiar spaces and to transform their way of engaging within these spaces. Instead of their usual behaviour, which tends to be motivated by a sense of powerlessness and rejection, the participants were provided with the opportunity to engage in a manner motivated by creativity and the desire to self-actualise.

<sup>102</sup>The 'cinema' comprised a laptop fixed into a modified municipal waste disposal container (with wheels). The plastic container had a screen sized hole cut in to the side so that the screen of the laptop was visible.

By creating a public platform from which to address the community, *Lion's Tea Party* allowed participants to communicate their needs thereby cultivating a more self-empowered identity. Social constructivism acknowledges that self-identity and an individual's socio-cultural context inform and influence one other in a reflexive process. Based on this insight it is suggested that encouraging marginalised youth to express their needs and to set constructive goals, catalyses positive validation from the community, which in turn supports the development of a more optimistic self-perception. It is proposed that through this process, marginalised citizens can exercise the capacity to become more visible, accountable and self-actualising members of society.

This section has described the observations made during my earliest engagement in a collaborative, public arts project. The experience motivated further investigation into the potential applications for animation as a community-based practice. The following case study will discuss a subsequent attempt in which the above-mentioned theories and techniques were applied to illustrate various stories shared by participants in the *Trace* project.

#### **4.2 Art Enclosures: Animating Two Cities**

Each of us is a place, corresponding to a time, a geography a colour...whole cities built with bodies (Plenza in Parcerisas, 2009:1).

*Trace* was a collaborative project motivated by the notion that cities are shaped through the collective stories of their inhabitants: the interwoven memories, wishes and values of each individual. It aimed to reveal the insights, aspirations and memories of individuals occupying urban communities. The project was conducted simultaneously in Venice, Italy and Stellenbosch, South Africa in an attempt to investigate the various socio-economic and cultural layers that constitute these two historic sites. Jahangeer (Cascoland, 2008) describes the necessity of shifting a community's focus onto the 'spaces of in-between' and the 'invisible' people that inhabit such spaces. Inspired by this notion, a key concern of the project was to investigate the means whereby inhabitants negotiate a sense of place in the spaces they call home.

The process manifested in an interactive digital-book installation.<sup>103</sup> The book acted as the site of convergence for fragments of stories collected from the various participants in

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<sup>103</sup> The digital interactive book was first installed at Casa de Trei Oci gallery in Venice (2011). The installation comprised several components- most visibly a hard-covered book (30 by 60cm). The book contained sixty blank pages. It was placed on a plinth (150 cm in height). Installed directly above the book were a projector and a web camera. Ajeet Mansukhani, a Singaporean web developer, programmed the digital content in Adobe Flash. Mansukhani scripted the content to respond to directional motion detected by the web camera. Thus, the projector used the pages of the book as a screen. As the viewer turned the pages, the program

Stellenbosch and Venice. It comprised animated sequences, photographs and excerpts from recorded interviews, all created through several stages of collaboration with participants. Thus, through a series of audio-visual stories, the book documented and archived the lives of inhabitants in two urban communities, with the aim of revealing the ‘invisibles’: people, places and aspects of the city, which are usually concealed. By peeling back temporal layers of history and memory, *Trace* envisioned and mapped the diversity of social structures and subcultures existing within the same geographical space. Through the process of excavating, and giving voice to these micro-narratives the digital-book exposed a multi-layered psychosocial landscape.

#### **4.2.1 Collaboration between Artists**

At the time of submitting the proposal for the *Art Enclosures* residency, I was engaged in collaborative arts practices with fellow Masters Student Marli Lyon. Our projects addressed notions of “home” and the potentials of connecting spaces through storytelling. The decision to work together on the *Trace* project was intended to extend our combined practice into a broader social context whereby we would collaborate with each other and with two separate communities. We each performed the same role in the initial stages of the research process. This involved sourcing participants and collecting photographs and interviews. In the final month of the project, for the sake of expediency, we each focused on one specific aspect of the remaining workload. My task was to collect material and Marli’s was to collate it. In practical terms, this defined my role as working in the community: conducting interviews and animating with, or in response to, recorded conversations with the participants. Once I had collected the photographs and composited the audio-visual sequences, Marli’s role was to design and format the layout for a printed and digital version of the book. Further in the chapter it will be described how animation provided a necessary point of convergence in our collaboration.

#### **4.2.2 Collaboration with Participants**

Within the scope of this research, I focus predominantly on the process of generating audio-visual content for the digital book. Specific reference is made to the co-creation of stop motion animations with selected participants. The animations provide a means of illustrating participants’ earliest memories, their views on migration and their most significant sites within the city. Whereas previous chapters described my work with groups of individuals, the *Trace* project shifted the nature of my engagement with participants to a more personal level,

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detected their movement and loaded the next content, projecting a different movie onto the next page. The camera was capable of tracking both backwards and forwards motion thereby allowing the viewer to page backwards to review content. In this manner, the digital book simulated the way that one would navigate a printed book. It created an interface between traditional and digital books whereby digital content can be browsed using the same mechanisms required to view printed material in a traditional book.

in which it was required to work with each participant individually to animate aspects of their stories.

#### **4.2.3 Target Group**

The project profiled ten lives from each city, resulting in a collection of twenty main stories. The intention was to work with a diverse demographic spectrum in order to represent multiple facets of the two cities, identifying the contrasts and similarities between the lives of their inhabitants. Thus, the socio-economic group, age group, culture and occupation of potential participants were taken under consideration. Furthermore, it was considered important to target similar demographics in each city in order to provide a basis for comparison. Participants included a wide range of citizens from youth to senior citizens, residents of suburbs and townships, domestic workers, teachers, migrants and native residents. The participants that proved most challenging to access were the 'informal' migrant communities who had relocated to the cities of Stellenbosch or Venice. The second most challenging participants to locate were Venetian citizens, those who were born and raised in the city. The dwindling number of native citizens<sup>104</sup> and the increasing number of migrant communities represent juxtaposing aspects of Venetian society: those who actively seek to make a new life in this historic city and those whose heritage is embedded in the city's history. Through the process of identifying and building relationships with each of the participants, discourse emerged around ideas of migration, habitat and what it is to establish a sense of belonging to a place.

#### **4.2.4 Ethical Considerations**

No participant's identity or integrity was jeopardized in the production or the exhibition of this project. The intentions and the scope of the practice were clearly articulated to all participants. In each case, the participants were informed that their animated material, photographs and interviews would be on public display and would subsequently form part of a printed book. Participants were invited to view the material before publication and exhibition. Any aspect of their material that they did not consider suitable for public disclosure was edited or omitted from the book. Several of the migrants requested that their faces and their family names not be revealed. Consequently, it was decided to refer to all participants in the book on a first-name basis only. The *Fondazione di Venezia*, the company that sponsored the project, undertook any necessary ethical clearance procedures.

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<sup>104</sup> Statistics sourced from Eurostat (2013) reveal that the population of native Venetians decreased from 108 000 in 1971 to below 60 209 in 2009. Venetian citizens are radically outnumbered by tourists and a commuting work force.

#### 4.2.5 Process and Methodology

The IDEO Human Centred Design Manual (HCD) provides a toolkit of methods for conducting qualitative research. These tools are presented according to a sequential three-phase methodology: *Hear*, *Create* and *Deliver*. Each phase describes a variety of techniques, which can be adapted to all forms of community-based projects. Selected methods from the *Hear* phase of the toolkit were implemented during the generative stage of the project.<sup>105</sup> This stage involved fieldwork, which entailed collecting stories and listening to the needs of the community. Implemented within the scope of this project it included *in-context immersion*, *self-documentation* and *individual interviews*.

##### *i. In-context Immersion*

The first stage of the project was to identify and approach potential participants. The challenge encountered during this period was largely centred on how to access and communicate in a meaningful way with social groups whose language, background and culture I had never been exposed to. For example, the male North African migrants living in Venice form a close-knit subculture existing on the margins of society. It proved difficult to establish a relationship of mutual trust with members of this subculture for several reasons. Firstly, they wished to remain ‘invisible’ so as not to disrupt the fragile tolerance they are afforded by the municipality. Secondly, my race and gender elicited suspicion or disrespect. Moreover, the fact that many of the more marginalised participants existed in ‘survival-mode’ did not readily intersect with the relative inconsequentiality of an art project. The IDEO toolkit suggests in-context immersion as a means of meeting people where they live, work, and socialise. It reasons that immersion into the daily contexts of individuals reveals new insights and establishes reciprocal relationships. Understanding and becoming more integrated into the migrant community necessitated my active contribution to beneficial aspects of their daily routine. Consequently registered as a volunteer at the *Ca’litzia* in Venice, a non-profit charity organisation that provides shelter, food, clothing and recreational opportunities for disenfranchised migrants and refugees (Fig.21). At the *Ca’litzia* I had the opportunity to meet a variety of migrants from Eastern Europe and Africa, several of whom, with time, expressed their willingness to participate in the project.

##### *ii. Self-documentation*

Having identified and begun to establish trusting, transparent relationships with participants, the following step was to gain further insight into their daily realities in order to better

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<sup>105</sup> Qualitative research methods enable the researcher to develop deep empathy for people they are working with, “to question assumptions, and to inspire new solutions. At the early stages of the process, research is generative, used to inspire imagination.” (IDEO, 2013: 21).

understand their needs, values and lifestyles. The IDEO toolkit suggests that self-documentation is a creative, non-invasive method whereby participants feel comfortable and motivated to document personal aspects of their realities. With this aim, each participant was given a disposable camera with twenty-four exposures, to capture aspects of their daily lives: the objects, people and places that they routinely encountered. To every camera was attached a list of suggested subject matter (Fig.24-26).<sup>106</sup> These directed topics were intended to inspire and guide, rather than to dictate the creative process. The suggestions aimed to capture aspects of the participants' lives that are common to all human beings, regardless of their culture and socio-economic situation. Common aspects were identified as: the use of cultural tools and artefacts, the attachment of significance to certain places and the need for sleep and shelter. When participants returned the cameras the images were developed and used as material to initiate the third phase of the project.

### *iii. Individual Interviews*

In the third generative phase of the research, I met participants for a private interview.<sup>107</sup> During the interview, their photographs were used as visual stimulus to initiate an informal conversation pertaining to their daily lives, their wishes and how they came to live in this city. The photographs assisted the flow of conversation and acted as a visual aid for those participants who could not communicate fluently in English. Each interview was recorded with the participant's consent (CD Rom, *Chapter 4:Case Study-Voice recordings*). During the interview two specific questions were asked of each participant: "What is your earliest memory?" and "Which place in this city is most important to you?" These questions formed the basis for the fourth step of the project.

### *iv. Animation*

This final phase of the process involved creating a stop motion animation in collaboration with willing participants to illustrate an aspect of the story recorded in their interviews. Pedersen (2012:2) states that participants in collaborative animation projects should be encouraged to work with images and metaphors that have meaning for them. Accordingly, I asked participants which aspect of their story they wanted to communicate, rather than prescribing the content myself. It was explained to participants that their animation would form time-based content for the digital book. In the case where a participant did not create an

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<sup>106</sup> Participants were requested to photograph the following: 'This is where I sleep', 'These are my feet standing in a place that's important to me', 'This is something I use every day', 'This is the view from my window' and ' This is the contents of my handbag/pocket'. These statements were also translated into Afrikaans and Italian.

<sup>107</sup> An exception being the occasions in which a translator was present.

animation, I created one based on excerpts from interviews.<sup>108</sup> Consequently, this phase of the project afforded three equally valid opportunities for collaboration: producing animations through direct collaboration with participants, producing animations with my colleague and producing animations independently, to illustrate excerpts of participants' stories on their behalf. The process and method of animation varied according to each participant, their choice of subject matter and the context in which the animation was created.

Animating on site in the informal and unpredictable context of civic spaces required a more basic set of equipment and an improvised approach to production. Thus, compared to the contexts described in previous chapters, a technically more simple and unstructured approach was adopted. The production of the animations described in this chapter utilised a digital-stills camera on a tripod to manually capture each frame and create a sequence of digital images. Pre-production involved neither storyboarding nor set construction. Instead, the aim was to identify what the participant wanted to communicate and to assess which materials in the surrounding environment could be appropriated to communicate that story. The animated sequences frequently involved adding movement to text selected from interview transcripts or to objects that the participants considered significant. In each instance, the process was considered more important than the product, with the goal being to use animation as a socialising agent rather than as a medium to create highly refined pieces. The animations that resulted from this process are shorter in duration and of cruder quality than those constructed through collaborations in the relatively formalised settings of the art studio and the classroom. Because these qualities are perceived to be representative of the reality in which the animations were created, no attempt was made to refine them through post-production.

#### 4.2.6 Case Studies

Origin is given to us, homeland we find through our way of living (Neumann, 2008).

The following case studies offer a narrative account of the storytelling process followed with six participants in the *Trace* project. Each of these studies illustrates a scenario in which the process of co-constructing an animation provided a practical means around which to interact with individuals whose culture, language and lifestyle would otherwise have restricted our ability to communicate. Case studies were selected on the basis that each addresses notions of migration and emplacement from a unique perspective.

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<sup>108</sup> Of the twenty selected participants, nine were willing to animate with me, three preferred me to create content on their behalf and eight were willing but unable to participate in the animating of their stories due to geographic and time constraints. Four of the animations were created in collaboration with colleague, Marli Lyon.

*i. What place in the city is most significant to you?*

Europe is the dream of a good life (Walter, a Cameroonian in Stellenbosch, South Africa).

There is nothing for me here (Galas, a Senegalese in Venice, Italy).

The first case study documents the stories of two North African Migrants: Walter, from Cameroon and Galas, from Senegal. Both participants earn a living as vendors, selling souvenirs and accessories to tourists in Stellenbosch and Venice respectively. The decision to refer to Walter and Galas in tandem stems from the parallels observed between each of their stories. At the time of this project, Walter had been trading at the Informal Traders Flea market in Stellenbosch since 1994. Galas migrated to Italy in 1992. He is part of the subculture of African migrants earning a livelihood by selling imitation designer handbags in makeshift stalls on Venetian sidewalks. Neither of the participants' attempts to earn a legal livelihood in the 'informal' sector is condoned by their respective municipalities.<sup>109</sup> As such, Galas and Walter represent the marginalised members of migrant communities who, being denied a legitimate sense of belonging, constitute part of the 'invisible' population of the city. Participation in this project was an opportunity for Galas and Walter to voice their concerns, their needs and their opinions (Fig.20 and CD Rom, *Chapter 4:Case Study*).

Interviews with Galas and Walter revealed that neither of them attach personal significance to a fixed geographic location within their respective cities. Instead, both men identify their stalls as their most significant place. These temporary, itinerant constructs define the site from which the traders are able to sell their merchandise. They therefore serve to contextualise and to enable the migrants' existence in a foreign city. For Walter this site was represented by a four-by-two meter shelter of tent poles and tarpaulin that he constructed and removed daily near the town square in central Stellenbosch. For Galas it was represented by the makeshift site demarcated by two meters of white fabric that he placed on the pavement at different locations in Venice (CD Rom, *Chapter 4:Case Study-Trace Animations*, 03'17).

Each of the participants was willing to animate visual content to accompany their story. A site-specific documentary style of animation was used to record the construction and subsequent dismantling of the traders' stalls. This was intended to reflect the transience that

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<sup>109</sup> The African bag sellers in Venice must constantly migrate through the city because they are not granted trading licenses and are therefore not entitled to set up a stall. A similar lack of municipal support is experienced by the informal traders at the curio flea market in Stellenbosch, who at the time of this project were engaged in negotiations with the municipality for permission to keep trading on the plot of vacant land that they have used to earn their livelihood since 1994. In January 2013, the African traders in Stellenbosch were evicted by the municipality and their market was closed down. The animation made with Walter and the other African traders in Stellenbosch has been used to raise public awareness supporting the campaign to reclaim the right to trade in their original site.



defines their existence as migrants and to tell the story of their respective most significant spaces in the city. The participants used digital-stills cameras on tripods. The technique consisted of the manual capturing of large numbers of successive images from a fixed angle. The time frame for each animation was dictated by the elapsed period between the setting up and the dismantling of each trader's stall.<sup>110</sup> In each instance, the capturing of frames became a participatory process, engaging myself and the participant as well as other members of the migrant community. The co-creative activity of photographing together united us around a common purpose, namely the recording of the participants' daily realities. Through this activity, discourse emerged regarding the transient nature of the sites being documented and the impact of this on the lives of the migrants.<sup>111</sup>

**ii. *What story do you want to tell?***

I want people to see me again, here I feel invisible. I forget who I am (Said, a Moroccan in Venice).<sup>112</sup>

The second case study documents the story of Said, a Moroccan citizen residing in Venice since 2002. For seven years he earned a livelihood as a factory labourer. His work permit has subsequently expired. At the time of this interview, Said received no income and lived in a dormitory provided by the *Ca'litizia* organisation. Said speaks Arabic and Italian but no English. Translator Chiara Stradella of the *Fondazione di Venezia* translated and mediated the majority of our conversations (CD Rom, *Chapter 4: Case Study-Trace Animations*, 0'53).

Said communicated an interest in working with the disposable cameras on condition that a copy of the photographs could be sent back to his brother in Morocco. He seemed reluctant to record his living circumstances in the self-documentation phase of the project, declining to take a photo of the place he sleeps because "I don't want my brother to see that I am not a wealthy man." Instead, Said requested passers-by to photograph him in front of popular tourist sites in Venice. Thus, the story that Said chose to communicate photographically was one of opulence. The identity portrayed in this visual narrative reflects the aspirations that motivated Said's migration however much they contradict the reality of his encounter with Europe. In a translated interview, Said revealed that he is too humiliated to return to Morocco

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<sup>110</sup> For Walter's stall, photographing commenced at 6am and lasted until 6pm. For Galas, the photographing lasted twenty-five minutes before he had to pack-up and relocate his stall in order to avoid the police.

<sup>111</sup> Whereas traditional methods of stop motion animation involve the staging of imagined characters against a constructed backdrop, the technique implemented with Galas and Walter documented real-life contexts. This process conflated the manual, frame-by-frame stop motion technique with more traditional documentary style methods of digital storytelling. Each frame was captured manually allowing the participants to exercise creative agency by selecting which instances of the scene to capture.

<sup>112</sup> Translated from Italian: "*Voglio che la gente torni a vedermi, qui mi sento invisibile e dimentico chi sono.*"

until he has saved enough money to afford a house and a car. He showed interest in an excerpt of the English translation I had written down during this interview:

When I was five years old, my mother died. That's my earliest memory. A lot of my friends came to Italy and returned home with a car and good dresses and other things. I wanted that.

When asked what story he wanted to tell with the animation Said responded, "I wish I could tell a story like theirs, a story about success, but my story here is different".<sup>113</sup> Based on this statement it was decided to use the handwritten English transcript as subject matter for the animation (Fig.21). The animation process was entirely spontaneous and improvisational: photographed on a dining room table in the communal area of the *Ca'litizia*, using a digital-stills camera and materials found on site. Said's intervention was to incrementally erase the transcript with white acrylic paint, while I captured frames. Having concealed the writing entirely we experimented with scratching text back into the damp paint. This process was conducted without a translator present. Our communication was therefore limited to gestures and mark making. The nature of communication experienced during this short animation activity created a 'bridge' between Said and myself, two people whose different cultural and linguistic frameworks prevented unmediated verbal conversation.<sup>114</sup>

### iii. *What do you want to change?*

It doesn't matter about their colour, their age or if they are man or woman...people don't belong in a place if they can't take care of it (Mncede, a South African in *Khayelitsha*).

The third case study presents a scenario in which animation was produced on behalf of a participant through collaboration with my colleague, Marli Lyon. Mncede is the one of the few participants whom Marli and I had the opportunity to meet and interview together. He is thirty-five years old and lives with his wife and two-year old daughter in a reconstruction and development (RDP) house in *Khayelitsha* Township, an informal settlement thirty minutes outside Stellenbosch (Fig.22). Mncede walked with us 'behind-the-scenes' of *Khayelitsha*'s façade of scrap metal shacks, past the schools and hospital and through the suburbs of the township. He discussed the fact that *Khayelitsha* comprises migrants from various provinces in South Africa as well as neighbouring African countries. According to Mncede, newcomers to *Khayelitsha* erect shacks on the periphery of the township while they are waiting for the government to provide them with an RDP house. Mncede explains that this phenomenon

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<sup>113</sup> Translated from Italian: "*Mi piacerebbe poter raccontare una storia come la loro, una storia di successo, ma la mia storia qui e' differente*".

<sup>114</sup> Barbour (in Koneya and Barbour, 1976: 33), states that seven percent of communication is verbal whereas ninety-three percent occurs through nonverbal means, including gestures and facial expressions. This indicates that nonverbal communication skills are essential and emphasises the effectiveness of storytelling using a visual, activity-based medium.

antagonises more established residents of the township who go at night to destroy the shacks. Through this interview with Mncede, it became apparent that, although *Khayelitsha* is essentially an informal settlement built on inhospitable terrain, residents of the township take a pride in their community. This pride instils in them a sense of place and has gradually transformed *Khayelitsha* from a marginal territory to a thriving community. However, it also tends to cultivate xenophobia and should therefore not be romanticised.<sup>115</sup>

Marli and I produced a short animation on *Mncede's* behalf to illustrate his wish that “we could reach a stage where everyone is equal” (Fig.22 & CD Rom, Chapter 4:Case Study-Trace Animations, 05’30). Animating with my colleague provided a necessary opportunity to co-operate in a shared creative activity, rather than being continuously involved with separate aspects of the same project. Each of the subsequent occasions that we could animate together provided a sense of mutual endeavour, which was an essential element of our collaborative process.

**iv. What is your earliest memory?**

Venice is losing its citizens and also its memory (*Alessandro*, a Venetian in Venice).

The final case study is concerned with the animation of memory. In her book *Space-Body-Ritual: Performativity in the City* (2010:76), Reena Tiwari<sup>116</sup> describes memory as a place. According to Tiwari (1996:76), reminiscing is an orientating experience for the individual, strengthening the connection between past and present and between different times and spaces. This statement describes the process of animating with *Alessandro*, an eighty-one year old, fourth generation Venetian citizen. Born and raised in Venice, *Alessandro* spent extensive periods of his adult life living and travelling in various countries, including South Africa. At the time of this project, he had recently been obliged to return to Venice and was constrained to remain there due to a chronic injury that prevented him from walking without the aid of a cane. During one of several interviews, *Alessandro* explained that the freedom to migrate at will represented an important aspect of his sense of self. This loss of mobility symbolised the end of his migratory existence.<sup>117</sup> Whereas Venice represents the hope of new beginning for many migrants, *Alessandro* felt that returning to this city represented the end of his story.

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<sup>115</sup> Cases of Xenophobia have been a serious problem for other immigrants who try to create a home in the township.

<sup>116</sup> Reena Tiwari is a senior lecturer in the Departments of Urban and Regional Planning and Architecture at Curtin University of Technology, Australia.

<sup>117</sup> The fact that Venice is a pedestrian city where the ability to travel, even locally, requires the ability to walk, presented an additional frustration.

Alessandro disclosed that his earliest memory is located at a place in the city that he had visited since his youth: “I remember that when I was a boy we used to jump off a bridge into the canal, people don’t do that anymore”. It was decided that the animation should be made at the site of this memory, a fifteenth-century bridge, the *Ponte Dei Carmini*. We travelled together to this site and, using a digital-stills camera, a stick of blue chalk found on the bridge and some water from the canal, we created a short, stop motion animation on the stone slab at the top the bridge where Alessandro used to play as a child. This collaborative site-specific animation represented more than the act of making visible and archiving a memory (Fig. 23), it allowed Alessandro, to reconnect in a positive manner, to the Venice of his youth.

This chapter has investigated animated storytelling as a collaborative tool to facilitate community engagement and encourage self-actualisation. Each of the case studies focused on participants whose animations interrogate notions of emplacement and belonging. They validated the capacity of animation to give a voice to marginalised individuals through participatory storytelling and yielded valuable insights into the lives of individuals with whom I would not ordinarily communicate. This demonstrated that acknowledging and valuing the stories of each participant can serve to re-orientate and shift the perception of the storyteller and is therefore a precursor to initiating intercultural integration and establishing a sense of place. The following chapter will summarise the significant observations derived from each of the contexts investigated in this study (Fig.23 and CD Rom, *Chapter 4:Case Study-Trace Animations, 00’05*). Chapter 5: Conclusion

**CHAPTER 5: Conclusion**

This study has positioned animation as a creative practice and an agent of change, combining the fields of art, education, and community engagement. In the introductory chapter, animation was identified as being predominantly associated with the mass media and entertainment industries. It was described how this perception has resulted in a paucity of contemporary academic literature reflecting on the medium as an experimental art form (Furniss, 1998:3), as well as a lack of published research documenting the use of animation as a tool for community development. On the basis of these observations this study has aimed to extend the medium beyond its commonly held status as a vehicle for popular culture by exploring animating as a collaborative, socially engaged means of storytelling. The practical projects underlying this investigation were implemented in an attempt to answer the primary research question, namely “How can animation be applied as a modality in visual arts, education and community contexts?” In each of these three contexts, animation was used as a time-based form of illustration, making visible and bringing life to stories co-created by groups of artists and ‘non-artists’.<sup>118</sup> Thus, case studies have illustrated the capacity of collaborative animation to act as a socialising modality, effectively creating a platform for people of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds to tell stories together.

As this thesis demonstrates, the growing accessibility of animation as a creative medium has opened up multiple other potentialities for this narrative genre. Research findings indicate that the medium can be evolved through experimentation and collaboration in the visual arts. Moreover, it can provide a tool for education and has the capacity to support communication between members of society who would not ordinarily interact.<sup>119</sup>

In the first context, the artist studio, I discussed the narrative and aesthetic potentials of stop motion animation in the visual arts. One of the defining characteristics of animation was identified as its embedded capacity to conflate the graphic arts with moving image technology allowing the storyteller not to simply record reality as a sequence of unfolding events but to mediate and re-interpret it through the frame-by-frame construction of a time-based ‘world’. This ‘world’ was described as an aesthetic space, a space of the imagination in

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<sup>118</sup> The case studies underpinning this thesis study have challenged and subverted traditional notions of artistic practice as an isolated endeavour to be undertaken only by ‘proper’ artists.

<sup>119</sup> The social impact of working with animation, in schools and communities is not enough to resolve the tangible and immediate concerns constituting the reality of many South Africans, namely inadequate access to education, disease, poverty and xenophobia. These issues are in need of direct and practical solutions. However, it can be used as a means of acknowledging and addressing these issues.

which commonplace objects can be appropriated and transformed<sup>120</sup> to perform symbolic roles that subvert their culturally embedded meanings. This capacity was demonstrated through a discussion of Kentridge's *Journey to the Moon* in which the artist employed found objects in his studio and elements of stop motion animation to enact an allegorical voyage into an imagined landscape. The *Inter-animate* project applied this capacity to a collaborative context in which a group of artists re-imagined selected objects to co-create a narrative through a series of sequential drawings. Through this experimental process, poetic connections were woven between ordinarily banal and incongruous items. The participating artists acquired the skill to add a time-based dimension to their illustration practice, combining traditional techniques of image making with accessible digital media technology, thereby expanding their creative scope as visual communicators. This research project demonstrated that animation as a medium in the fine arts and illustration provides rich potential for multimedia experimentation, especially when utilised in a collaborative capacity. The participating artists drew inspiration from each other in terms of discovering new approaches to drawing and innovative modes of expressing movement. In their collective capacity the artists were able to accomplish a more ambitious project than would have been viable as individuals, developing their ability to negotiate and articulate ideas whilst remaining receptive to criticism and creative input from their peers. It was concluded that the ability to work with digital media and to collaborate are valuable skills for contemporary emerging artists, given that they will be required to work in a media dominated, networked society in which collaboration has become a common form of creative practice.

In the second context I investigated applications for animation as an educational tool in a classroom setting. Through a series of workshops and the subsequent feedback from participants, it was deduced that animation as a student-authored activity can effectively facilitate learners' engagement with and comprehension of subjects across the curriculum, whilst promoting the development of multiliteracies and an inclusive learning environment.<sup>121</sup> The case study, *What Goes Around*, presented a method whereby animation was implemented as a visual support for the development of verbal language proficiency in students whose second language is English. The above-mentioned benefits are attributed primarily to the fact that animation is a practical, physically engaging technique that promotes learning through 'doing'. This creative, multi-media approach to education reaches

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<sup>120</sup> It is in the 'gap' between frames in which the artist directly engages with and transforms the subject matter.

<sup>121</sup> The goals set by the department of basic education include boosting learners' language literacy, numeracy and computer literacy as well as providing teachers with adequate literacy training tools to help students with learning difficulties (DBE, 2013).

students who are less academically inclined because it necessitates the visualisation and narration of information, allowing students to recreate a tangible representation of a concept and then to ‘bring it to life’ in a digital story. In this manner students actively embody knowledge rather than passively absorbing facts given by a teacher. These aspects of animation therefore support a student-centred approach to learning. Consequently, they could be applied to support educational reforms in South Africa in accordance with the goals described in Curriculum 2025.<sup>122</sup>

The third context explored the potentials of animation, implemented in civic spaces, as a means of enabling members of the public to articulate their aspirations, address social issues and share stories. This was simultaneously the most challenging and the most rewarding context in which to introduce animated storytelling, largely because it involved engaging marginal spaces and marginalised individuals beyond the confines of any formal institution. This context required the ability to adapt the process of animating to a number of site-specific public venues, appropriating materials and resources native to that site. In each of these encounters animation provided a safe, creative space in which discourse could evolve through shared engagement with the subject matter at hand. It was observed that the interactions that unfolded during this process were less inhibited than they had been during the preceding voice recorded interviews. This was attributed to the fact that participants were focused on our common activity of animating and were therefore less self-conscious. As a result, the interpersonal barriers imposed by language difference and the formalities of an interviewer/interviewee relationship were abolished. A further observation was that the attitude of adult participants shifted from guarded and sceptical to receptive, playful and ‘child-like’ through their engagement in the simple ritual of photographing and incrementally transforming their selected subject matter. In summary, animation applied in the context of community engagement performed an integrative function, contributing, albeit on a small scale, to the cultivation of a participatory culture in which participants came to understand that their stories are valid and that their contributions matter (Jenkins, 2009:3). Although many of the animations resulting from these projects are short and roughly executed they are valuable in terms of the process of interaction that they represent. They exist as artefacts, bearing testimony to the meaning co-created by a group of individuals within a specific

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<sup>122</sup> The Curriculum and Assessment Policy published by the Department of Education declares its vision for general education to move away from a “rote model” of learning and teaching, to a “learner-centered initiative”. The curriculum seeks to create respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen. Teachers are seen as key contributors to the transformation of education and South Africa (DBE, 2012:21). However, it is acknowledged that in a South African context animation as a learning tool would only be effective in schools equipped with adequate facilities and properly trained, incentivised teachers.

cultural context. Moreover, the animated films provide an object for reflection and a point from which to initiate constructive dialogue.

### 5.1 Scope for Future Research

During this MPhil degree, I have had the opportunity to participate in an international artists residency and a semester of study abroad. These experiences provided an occasion to implement the practical projects that underpin this thesis. My future research into animated storytelling as a collaborative practice, will apply the skills, experience and interpersonal connections established through these projects, in the context of South African schools and communities. The scale of this study is too limited to obtain a generalised conclusion. Further research is required in order to confirm if the preliminary results evidenced by this study can be extrapolated.

The next step for the educational aspect of this research is to approach selected primary schools in Stellenbosch and Durban, with the proposal to conduct animation workshops for teachers and for students. The teacher training workshops would equip educators with the necessary techniques and experience to implement animation as a learning tool in the classroom, as a component of media training and as a new way of approaching subjects across the curriculum. Through a series of practical exercises, teachers would learn how to make stop motion animations themselves and subsequently how to plan and implement animation with their students. As a result, they would be empowered not only to guide learners through curriculum relevant animation projects, but also to create their own animated instructional materials. If these workshops are successful, an interactive teaching guide will be developed, providing detailed examples, explanations and exercises of how animation can be applied in the classroom. The guide will be designed and illustrated specifically for the South African educational environment taking into consideration the subjects and aims of Curriculum 2025 and the multicultural, multilingual nature of the South African classroom. Consequently, it will be available in all of the official languages and will include a show reel of animations produced by South African participants.

As a further initiative, I am working on a project outline and funding proposal<sup>123</sup> in collaboration with the CEA's *Travelling Workshop* program. The Travelling Workshop comprises a team of animators and educators with mobile recording equipment who conduct animated storytelling workshops in communities worldwide. In each community, animation

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<sup>123</sup> I am applying to the National Research Fund (NRF) and the CEA is applying to its various Danish sponsors.



is used as a tool to tackle and to educate around social issues relevant to that location in a “fun, creative and visual way” (The Animation Workshop, 2009).<sup>124</sup> In this manner, animation is used as a means of self-expression, a visual tool for disseminating information and sharing stories, even for those who cannot read. A further objective of these workshops is to use animation inter-generationally, providing children and adults with a tool to create stories together. If the proposal is accepted, I will be a member of the Travelling Workshop team during its month long tour to South Africa, conducting workshops in selected schools and community centres in the Western Cape. This would be a valuable opportunity for cultural exchange, connecting local and international animators in a community-engaged project. I am currently researching schools and community centres that might be willing to participate in such a workshop and who have specific issues that need to be addressed and broadcasted.<sup>125</sup>

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated that visual storytelling is a self-actualising process, a practice of giving form and ‘life’ to insights, imaginings and experiences. Through this, it is possible for the storyteller to establish a sense of meaning and purpose by imposing a narrative coherence on everyday life. As a collaborative practice, animated storytelling provides a creative, informal means of stimulating discourse and promoting inclusivity. For these reasons the benefits observed through the course of this research are perceived as relevant in multicultural South Africa where the multiplicity of languages, ethnicities and levels of education require modalities that promote the surfacing of voices and the sharing of stories.

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<sup>124</sup> The topics are diverse as the instructors always take their starting point in the needs of the country or organisation. The Travelling Workshop has worked with children, youngsters, and animation since 1988 and has visited more than 250 institutions and schools all over Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Burkina Faso and the Philippines.

<sup>125</sup> One possible community for this engagement is *Enkanini* Township, an informal settlement of approximately 8,000 people located in Stellenbosch South Africa. The residents of *Enkanini* are working together with a trans disciplinary development team, including engineers, anthropologists and artists, to develop the community through projects that promote sustainable living and self-actualisation. Various artistic interventions have already been implemented as a means of exploring the needs of community members, their daily realities and the issues they face, namely poverty lack of access to fresh water and electricity. A community center has recently be built in *Enkanini* with one purpose being to host community engaged projects aimed at catalysing discourse and finding creative solutions to the issues facing this informal community.

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**APPENDIX**

## **ADDENDUM 1: Personal Projects**

The following projects, constituting the personal aspect of my practice, form part of the body of practical work developed during this Masters degree.

### **1. *The PossibiliTree*: an interactive narrative about stories**

A story for children and for grown-ups who have forgotten how to be.

*The PossibiliTree* is based on the idea that every life is a story. The narrative and characters were developed during a children's book illustration project in the first year of the Masters degree. It was printed as two volumes. In 2012, while at the Animation Workshop in Viborg, Denmark, I was given the opportunity to animate the book in order to publish it in a digital format. Using the original collaged characters, I added motion and thus, a temporal dimension to each page in the book (in Adobe After Effects). In February 2013, *The PossibiliTree* was published by Danish game developer *Level Rewind*, as an electronic book application for iPhone and iPad. In each modality, the narrative is designed to be interactive. For example, the printed book makes use of use of various techniques including fold out's, activities pull out maps and inserts. Readers are encouraged to physically engage the pages of the book in order to navigate the story. In this manner, they become active participants rather than passive observers.

The electronic version of the book expands the possibilities for reader participation. Using touch and gesture, readers can interact with the animation and the images on the screen. Subsequent versions of the application will improve the scope for participatory storytelling; the next goal of the project is to provide a platform for collecting stories. Readers will be invited to contribute a story in any medium they feel comfortable to work with: writing, drawing, photography, video or any combination of these.

All stories will be uploaded to *The PossibiliTree* website where participants will be able to read, update, share and add new stories at any time. In this manner, *The PossibiliTree* will become an archive of stories collected from readers all around the world. The book was initially targeted at 10-12year old age group, however the published electronic version has a sizeable adult readership (Fig.30 & CD Rom, *Personal Projects: The PossibiliTree*).

### **2. *24 Frames*: an animated collection of days**

*24 Frames* (provisional title) is motivated by the desire to measure time and collect moments. The recording and archiving of experiences pertaining to the processes of daily life, is a central motif in much of my work. *24 Frames* is a hand illustrated stop motion animation, a daily ritual in which I animate 24 frames every 24 hours for one year. One second (24

frames) of animation is created per day. The content of each day's animation is based on something experienced during that day: a thought, a word, a feeling or an event. The project draws inspiration from the animations of South African artist William Kentridge, French animator Denis Chapon and the silent movies of the early 1900's.

(Fig.29 & CD Rom, *Personal Projects: 24 Frames*).

**ADDENDUM 2: Evaluation questions for animation project at *Friskolen i Skive***



My Name:

My Age:

**1. Content:**

- a) What have you learned about animation that you did not know before?
- b) What things did you enjoy most about animating? Please explain.
- c) What is the most important thing you have learned during the animation workshop?
- d) What was your favourite project?

**2. Language:**

- a) What did you think of learning in English?
- b) Do you ever read English books or watch English movies for fun?
- c) Do you feel it helped to speak English when you were looking at your pictures?

**4. Teaching:**

- a) How did you get enough help from your teacher during the project?
- b) How did you find the experience of being taught in English?
- b) Do you feel it got easier to understand your teacher during the weeks?

**5. Working Together:**

- a) If you could choose, would you prefer to animate by yourself or with a group?
- b) What were some of the hard parts of working as a group?
- c) What were some of the good things about working as a group?

**Thank You**

### **ADDENDUM 3: An Unabridged Report on Schools based Fieldwork with Animation**

Chapter 3 selected the project, *What Goes Around*, as a case study. This addendum outlines the full schedule, aims and objectives encompassing the ten days of fieldwork at *Friskolen i Skive*, Denmark.

#### **1. Aims and Learning Processes**

The workshop was designed to observe the role of animation in a classroom environment through the application of specific collaborative projects. It was conceived as a means of gaining insight and practical experience into the technique of guiding groups of youth through the creative process of animated storytelling. The workshop was also an opportunity to familiarise teachers with the equipment and techniques of stop motion animation for future use in the curriculum. The aims were formulated with consideration to the practical skills and knowledge that would be required to implement these projects in South African schools.

Each group was provided with an animation ‘kit’ comprising the following equipment:

1. Computer: An entry-level laptop with Microsoft Windows Operating System.
2. Software: There are various stop motion animation programs available for purchase or accessible through open source. The basic features of stop motion software include *onion skinning*<sup>126</sup>, the ability to add or delete frames and the capacity to synchronise an audio recording to the animated video. *Monkey Jam*, an open source stop motion animation program designed to allow users to capture images from a webcam, camcorder, or scanner and assemble them as separate frames of an animation. Movies created in *Monkey Jam* can be exported as AVI files and edited in *Windows Moviemaker*, the standard video-editing program in the Microsoft Windows operating system.
3. A Web-camera and a flexible camera arm: A camera arm or tripod allows the camera to be angled and held in place for the duration of the production process.

This kit constitutes a portable animation station, which can be easily transported and assembled at any venue.

#### **4. Classroom Arrangement**

Four clusters of three desks were arranged to provide a space for crafting and animating<sup>127</sup>.

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<sup>126</sup> *Onion-Skinning* is a feature that allows the animator to see several frames at once in order to register, and adjust an image based on the previous image in the sequence.

<sup>127</sup> In the constructivist, student-centred classroom, desks and seating are arranged in clusters rather than rows to

The workstations were positioned in close proximity to a light source. In addition to the technical equipment, each group was provided with a supply of colored paper, scissors, glue and old magazines from which to create sets and characters. A large sheet of blank white paper and drawing material was provided for storyboarding. The aim was to assemble groups of mixed abilities working together to provide mutual support. Teachers were aware of the ZPD of each of the students as well as the social dynamics within the class. They therefore agreed to formulate the groups dividing the class into four clusters of four students.

### 5. Supervision and Mentoring

Senior lecturers of the Animation Pedagogics module provided a support system through regular consultations. These mentors monitored my research design, objectives and the progress of the workshop. It was mandatory to deliver presentations describing the progress of the fieldwork to staff and students of Via University College during two feedback sessions.

#### Overview of the schedule

The workshop schedule was developed to cover two weeks (40 hours) in accordance with a timetable of four hours per day five days per week. Classes ran from 8.30 am until 1pm daily with 30 minutes lunch break.

The first week of the fieldwork introduced the participants to the four basic techniques of stop-motion animation: Object animation, Cut-Out animation, Claymation and Hand-drawn animation. Students were free to select their own themes while coming to terms with these techniques and the animation software<sup>128</sup>. The second week focused on two curriculum related themes: Recycling and the re-enactment of scenes from Danish folktales, which formed part of the students' literature module. In this second phase of the fieldwork, having familiarised themselves with various techniques, students were at liberty to select or combine techniques appropriate to their story. A daily routine was established to provide a sense of continuity for the participants. Selections of relevant short, stop motion animations were screened and discussed as the first activity of every morning.<sup>129</sup> After the screenings, participants gathered into their groups to commence the pre-production process. My role as research facilitator was to move between groups offering guidance, assistance, and documenting the work process. Every lesson concluded with a screening of the animations made by each group during that day. A class discussion and reflection session would follow.

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allow for groups of students to engage in subject-related discourse.

<sup>128</sup> This approach was suggested based on the teachers' observation that students are seldom assigned a task without a prescribed theme. It would thus be informative to observe the narratives that emerged through co-creative storytelling by a group of youths without adult mediation.

<sup>129</sup> For example, a screening of Kentridge's *Journey to the Moon* on Day 1 was followed by a conversation in which, students were asked to identify the objects that they saw and to discuss how the artist transformed the roles of these objects in his story.

A summary of key aims and activities for each day is provided below:

#### **Day 1: Object Animation**

Participants were introduced to the techniques and equipment used to make stop-motion animation. As an initial exercise, each student was required to bring an object of personal significance. The students discussed their objects in groups asking each other questions such as: “What is it used for?”, “How long have you had it?”, “Why is it important to you?” They subsequently produced a short collaborative object animation using their combined objects to create a narrative.

#### **Day 2-3: Clay Animation**

The clay animation project was run over two days because the character and set construction tends to be more complicated when working on a vertical stage set<sup>130</sup>. Participants were encouraged to spend more time storyboarding and crafting the animation and to design characters that existed in a pre-established, rather than an improvised, relationship to each other.

#### **Day 4: Cut-out Puppets**

Students were shown how to construct articulated paper puppet characters. Groups were given a selection of blank coloured paper and old magazines to use as material for their character and set design. The magazines dated from the 1989 to 2011 and comprised a selection of genres including Gossip publications, Home, Travel, Fashion, and Family magazines. The intention was to observe what themes, eras and subject matter participants would select as material for their characters and how these individual characters would be combined into a group narrative.

#### **Day 5: Animated Flipbooks: *What Goes Around***

(please refer to case study in Chapter 3)

#### **Day 6-7: Re-enacting Danish folktales**

This assignment was suggested based on the Grade 6 teachers’ interest in exploring a contemporary approach to the literature curriculum. Students were assigned the project to research and animate excerpts from Scandinavian folktales about *Thor*<sup>131</sup>. The teachers’

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<sup>130</sup> 2-dimensional animations are flat and can therefore be shot on a horizontal plane with the camera angled directly above. Clay characters are more bulky and 3 dimensional, requiring the scenery and backdrop be arranged vertically.

<sup>131</sup> The mythological Roman God *Thor* features in Scandinavian folklore as a hunter with a hammer who chases trolls with his thunder.

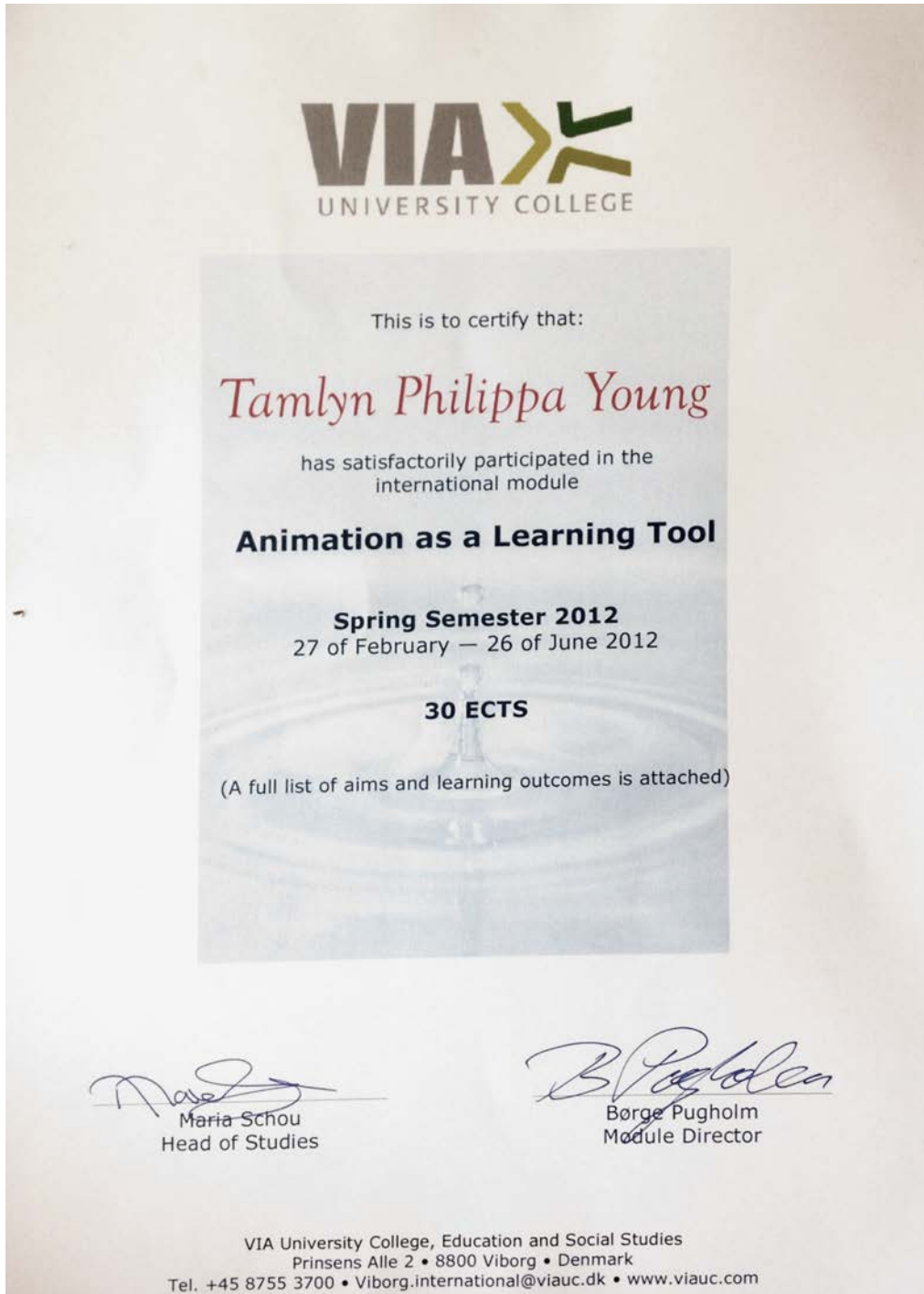
believe that folklore represents an important aspect of the students' cultural heritage, the preservation of which is a primary concern of the school. They suggested that perhaps a more creative approach could be taken to learning these 'old fashioned' tales and hoped that animation would make the stories come alive in the imagination of their students. Furthermore, animation is the medium, which allows for the re-enactment of mythical creatures and supernatural occurrences, which populate folk mythology.

**Day 8-10: Environmental Campaign**

Students were assigned the task to animate a story about an aspect of recycling. Characters and sets were to be constructed from found objects and recycled materials only. The animations would be screened as part of the school's campaign to boost environmental awareness.



**ADDENDUM 4: Diploma in Animation Pedagogics**



## **ADDENDUM 5: Contents of CD Rom**

### **Chapter 2**

- Case Study: *Inter-animate* (2013): Animation and Stills
- *Journey to the Moon* (2003)-William Kentridge

### **Chapter 3**

- *Animation Pedagogics* course syllabus (PDF)
- Case Study: *What Goes Around*

Process, documentation and selected animations made by students during fieldwork at *Friskolen i Skive*, Denmark, 2012.

- Final Practical Project: *Flipside*

Created as a graduation requirement for the Animation Pedagogics course. The animation was required to have some relevant application as a teaching tool. Thus, *Flipside* was created as a teaching aid for use in Grade Six Life Orientation classes to promote discussion on conflict resolution. It was accompanied by a teachers guide of questions to encourage students to reflect on the subject matter of the film in a class discussion.

### **Chapter 4**

- Cascoland: *Lions Tea Party* (2008) and process work.
- Case study: *Trace* project
  - African Traders time-lapse animation (Stellenbosch).
  - Compilation of selected animations by *Trace* participants.
  - Interactive book documentation.
  - Voice Recordings (selected)

### **Collaborative Animation**

Examples of animations made with colleagues during the Animation Pedagogics module.

### **Personal Projects**

A selection of mixed media animations (in process) made during my studio practice.

- *24 Frames* (2013): An animated journal ( See Appendix)
- *The PossibiliTree* (2012): Animated sequences from the interactive book
- *5th Floor* (2013):: A test for an animated short story.
- *Towards an Animated Dictionary* (2010)
- *Post-It Piece* (2009):

**FIGURES**

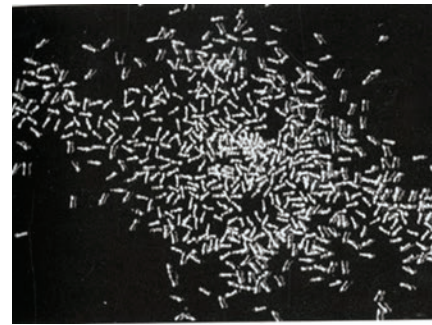
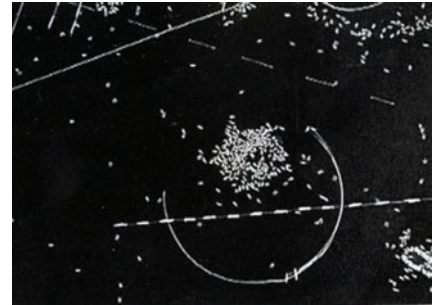
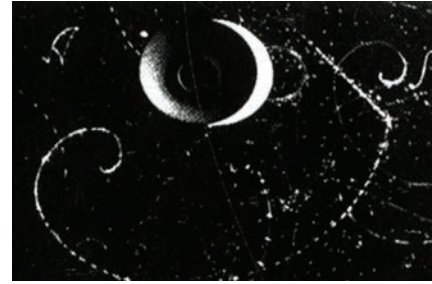


Fig.1 Video stills from Journey to the Moon (left)

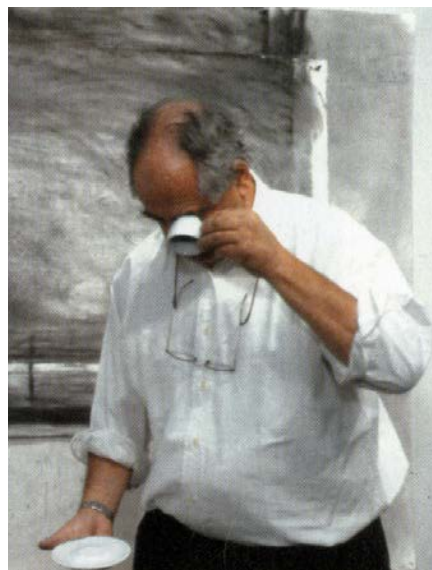
Fig.2 'Ant map' with inverted tonality (above)  
(Abate:2004:188)

Fig.3 The artist in his studio (bottom left)

Fig.4 Espresso cup 'Telescope'



Images from the animated work of William Kentridge



(Bonami:2006:88)

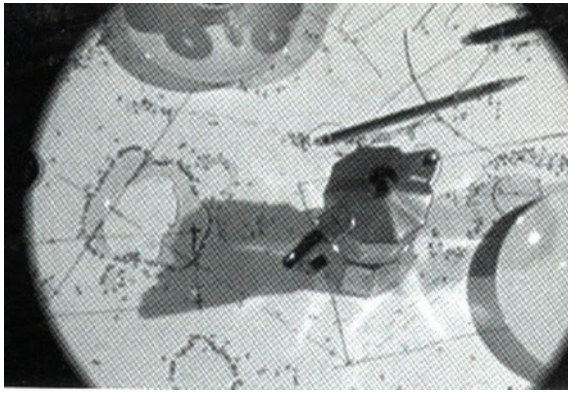


Fig.5 Aerial view of tabletop 'landscape'

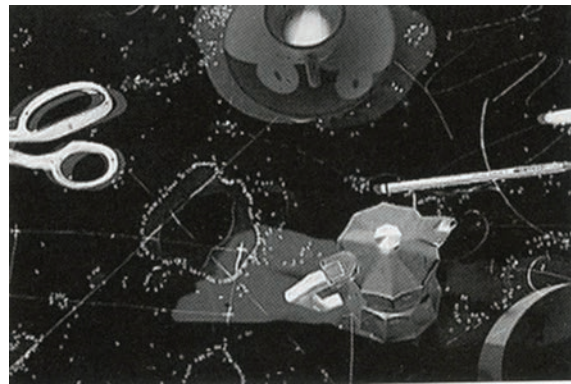


Fig.6 Using inverted tonality to create an impression of the 'night-sky' using the same shot as the previous figure.



Fig.7 Coffeepot 'rocket ship' set against charcoal landscape



Fig. 8 Coffeepot 'rocket ship' and saucer 'moon'.

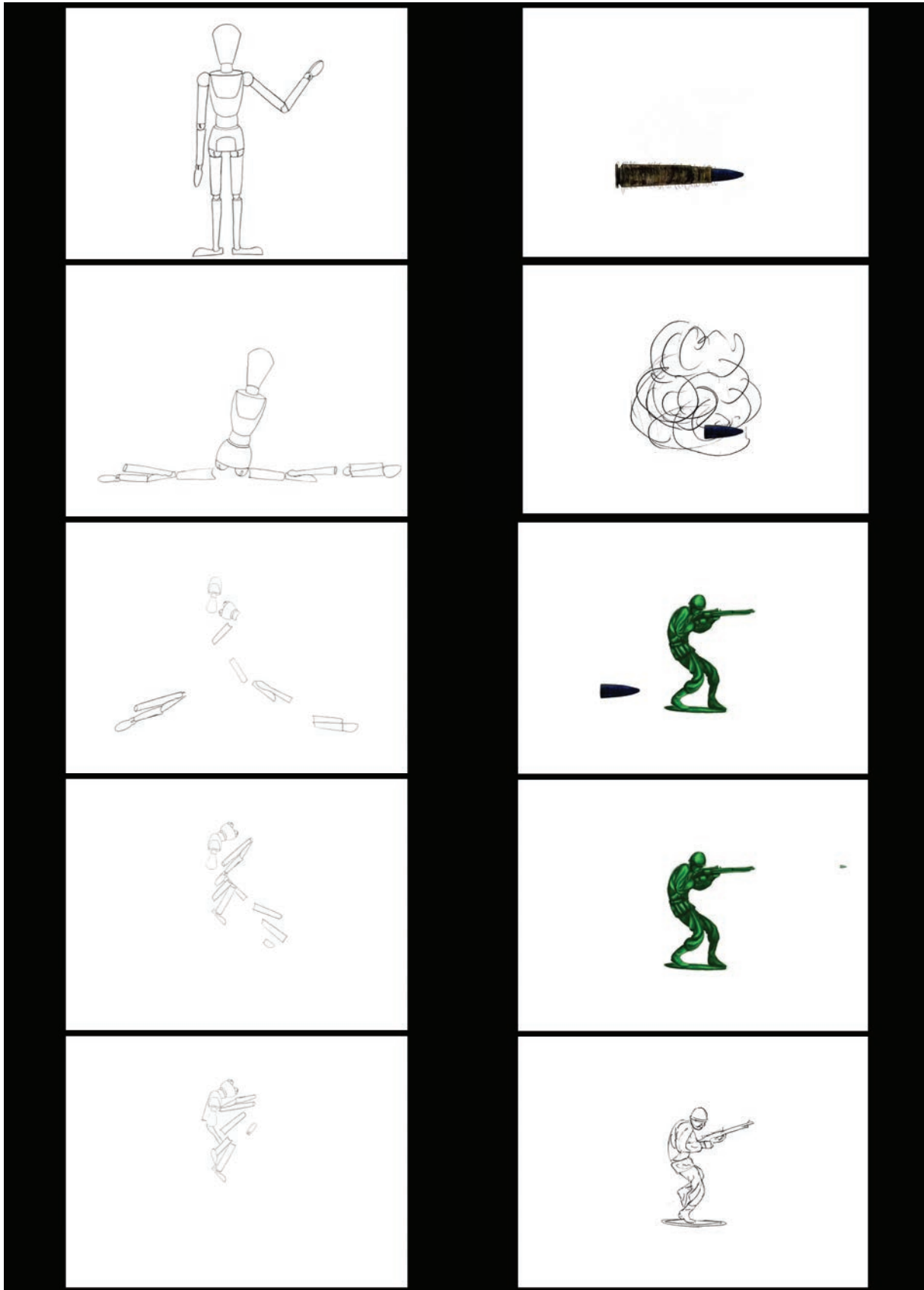


Fig.9 Palimpsestic Charcoal drawing



Fig.10 Animated drawing on dictionary pages

Images from the animated work of William Kentridge  
Video stills from Journey to the Moon (2003)



Process work for Inter-animate (2013)

Fig.11 The transition between Azrah Osman and Alain Lotriet's animation.





Process work for Inter-animate (2013)

Fig.12 Frames from Stephanie van Vuuren's animation of 'Broodjies', showing the transition from 3D to 2D animation. The transition to Lezanne Wessels animation (top right)





Process work for Inter-animate (2013)  
Fig.13 Frames from Colleen Gericke's charcoal drawn animation

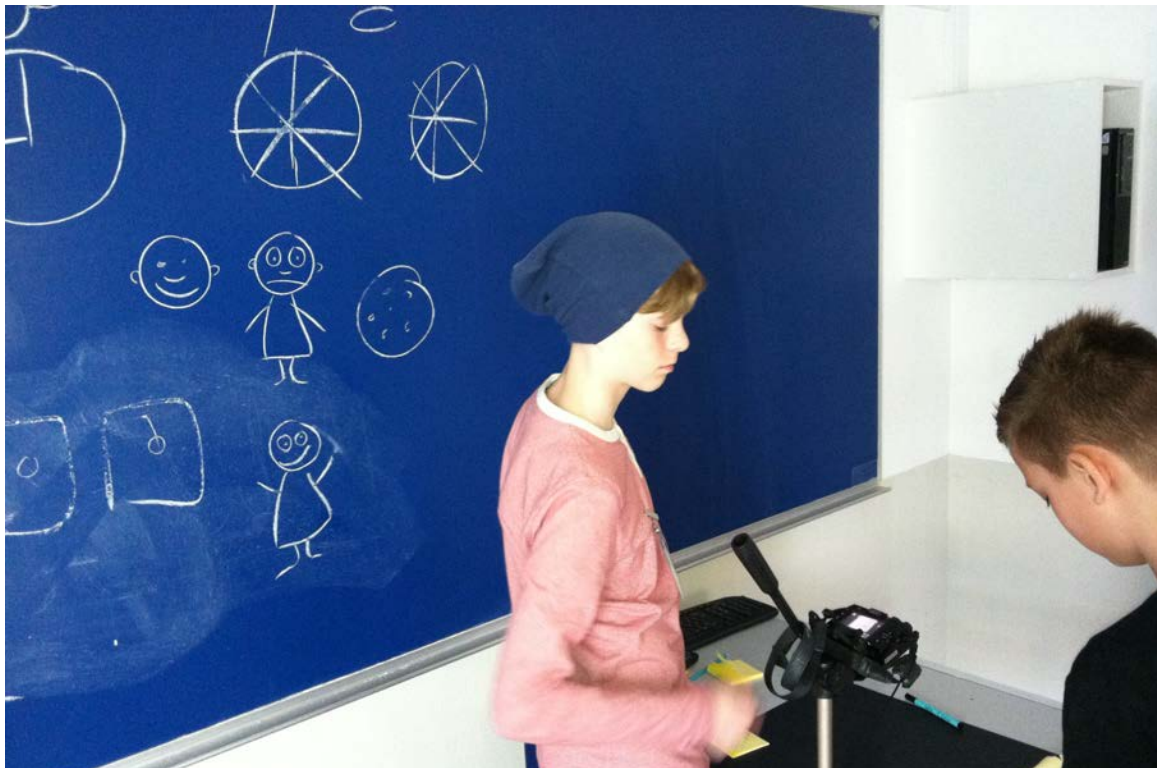
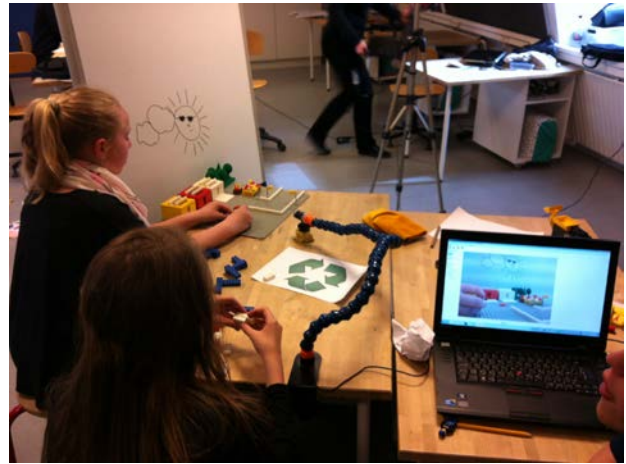


Fig.15 Documentation of What Goes Around (2012)  
Students drawing and photographing flipbooks  
(see CD Rom for What Goes Around animation)



Production process showing set and characters



Clay-mation character



Recycling: animating found objects



Clay-mation character



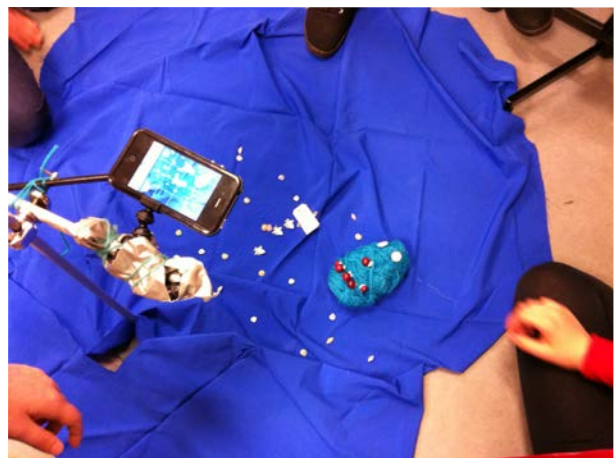
Fig.16 Documentation of fieldwork research (2012)  
Students at Friskolen i Skive participating in various animation processes.  
(see CD Rom for Fieldwork animations)



Fig.17 Characters constructed from found objects:  
Fish from scissors and red feathers.



Storyboarding in process



Animating with an iPhone application



Fig.19 Stills from Lions Tea Party (2008)  
Initiated by Moving Hands Theatre Company  
(see CD Rom for Lion's Tea Party animation)



Fig.18 Documentation from Cascoland Animation Workshop (2008)  
Initiated by Moving Hands Theatre Company  
(see CD Rom for Lion's Tea Party animation)

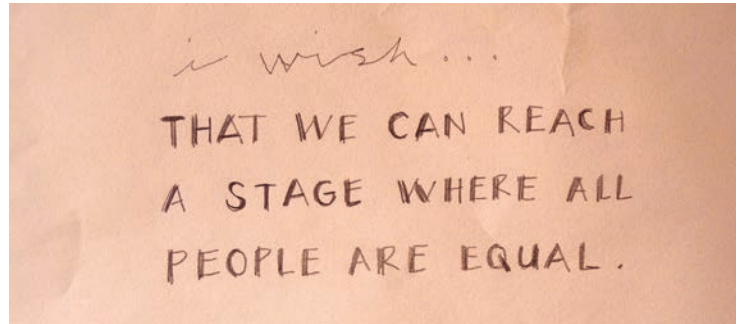
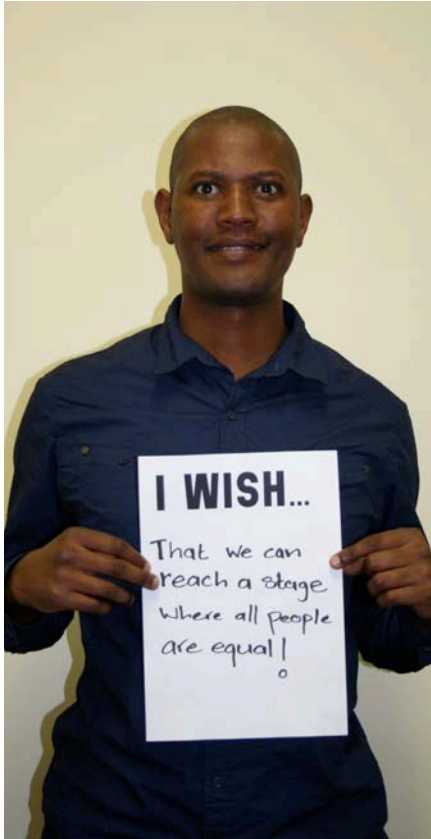


Fig.22 Mncede Khayelitsha township, Western Cape, S.A (2011)  
Mncede's wish and still from animation (top)  
Mncede's House (bottom)  
(see CD Rom for Trace animation showreel)





Fig.20 Documentation of Live-Action Animation with North African Migrants (2011)  
Walter setting up stall at Stellenbosch Traders Market, S.A (left)  
Galas selling bags in Venice, Italy (right)  
(see CD Rom for Trace animation showreel)

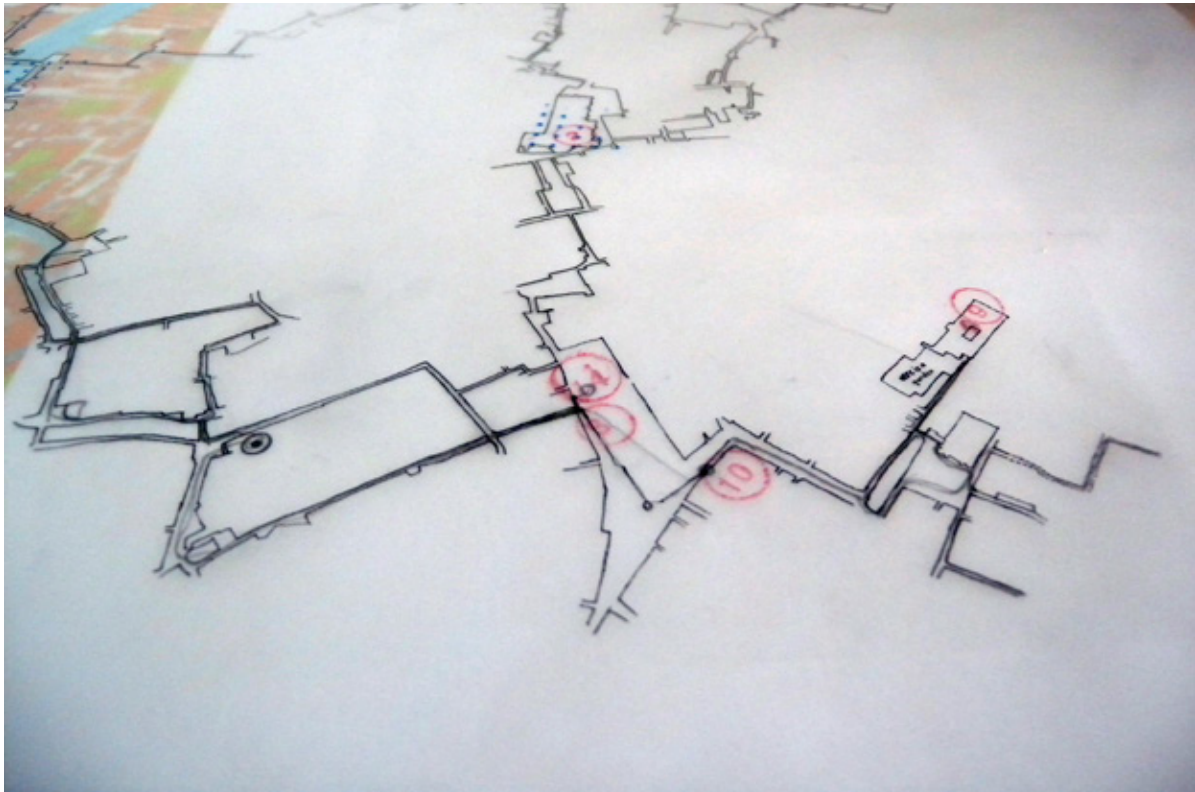
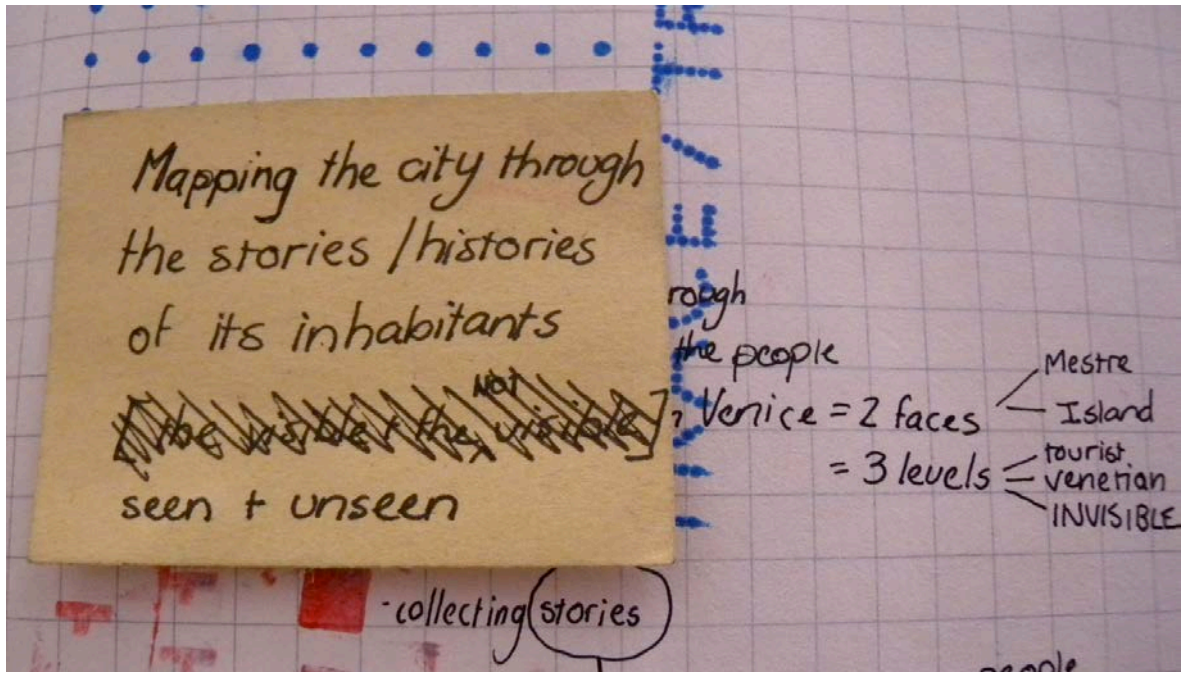


Fig.27 Images from Journal of the Trace project (2011)  
Notes and one of a series of psycho geographic maps of walks through the city of Venice.

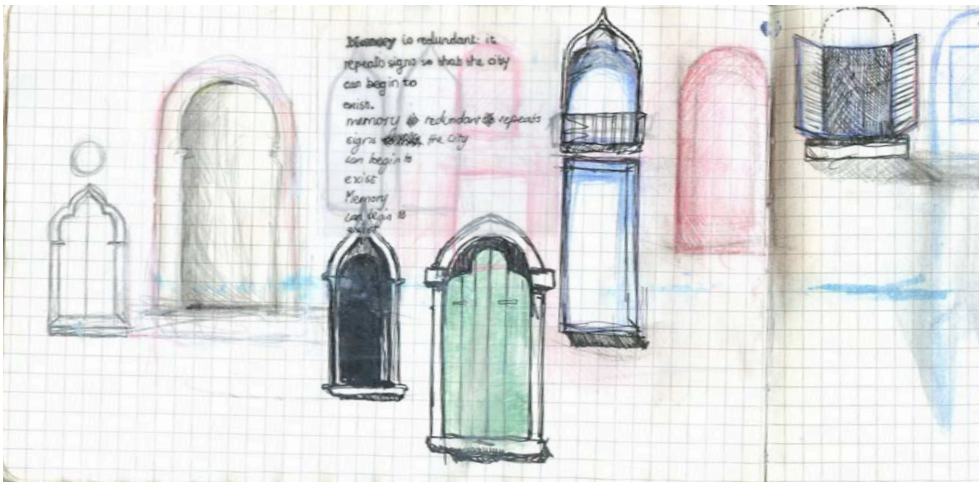


Fig.28 Images from Journal of the Trace project (2011)  
Sketches and found objects from the African traders market (top & middle)  
Windows of Venice (bottom)



Fig.25 The Invisibles (2011)  
Installation of  
self-documentation  
from the Trace project  
80 prints.

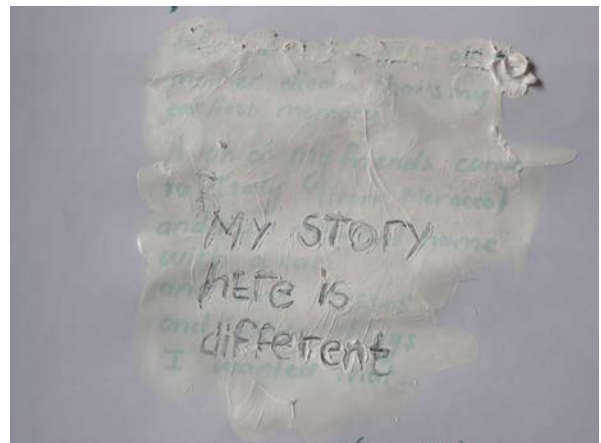
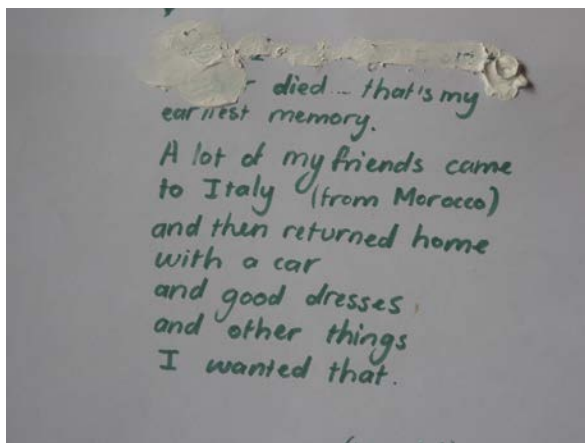


Fig.21 Documentation of Animation with Said (2011)  
Said self-documentation (top)  
Said at Ca'litizia, Venice (middle)  
Stills from animation made with Said (bottom)  
(see CD Rom for Trace animation showreel)



Fig.24 Trace project, self-documentation phase (2011)  
Disposable cameras and list of suggested subject matter  
Index of photos from participants (middle right)

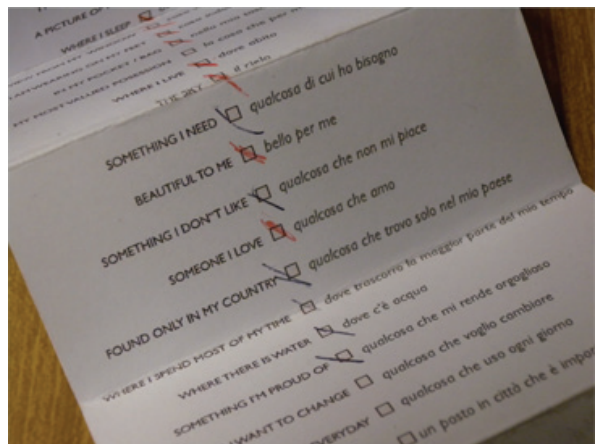




Fig.26 Images from the self documentation phase of the Trace project (2011)  
“This is where I sleep” (Doris, 58)  
“This is the sky above my head” (Jurgen, 23)  
“These are my feet standing in a place that’s important to me” (Shelley, 12)



My oldest striking memories are perhaps ~~the~~ the boys jumping from the bridges, and especially in my case at i Carmini where there was also a man tenting boats which intrigued me a lot and I was up and down, in and out of them.

Another mememory is a power line they were building which was crossing the lagoon and I couldn't understand how possibly the posts were able to stand.



Fig.23 Alessandro, Venice, Italy (2011)

Alessandro's walking cane and self-documentation photos (top)

Stills from animation on Ponte dei Carmini, Venice. Transcript of earliest memory (middle & bottom)  
(see CD Rom for Trace animation showreel)



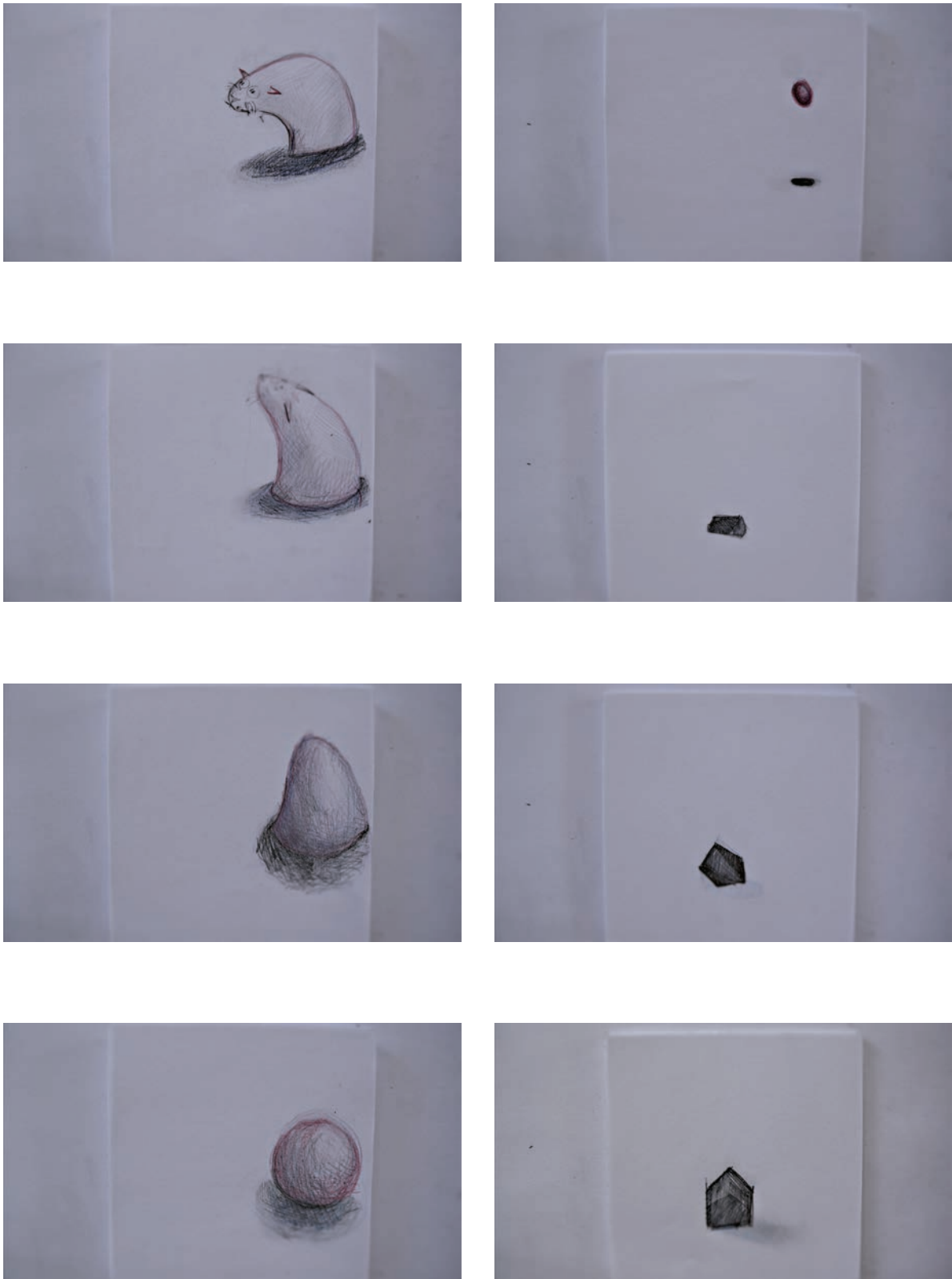
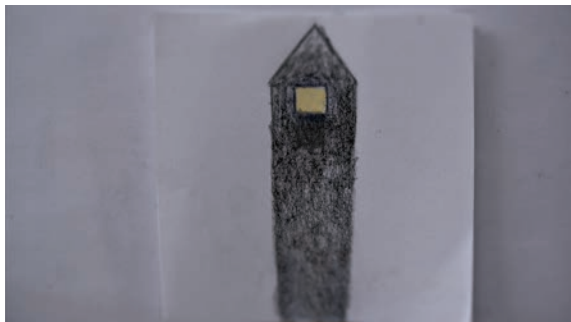
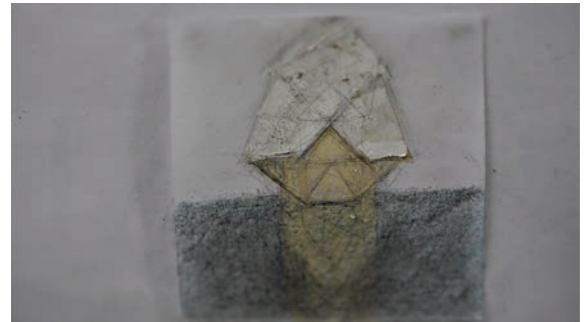
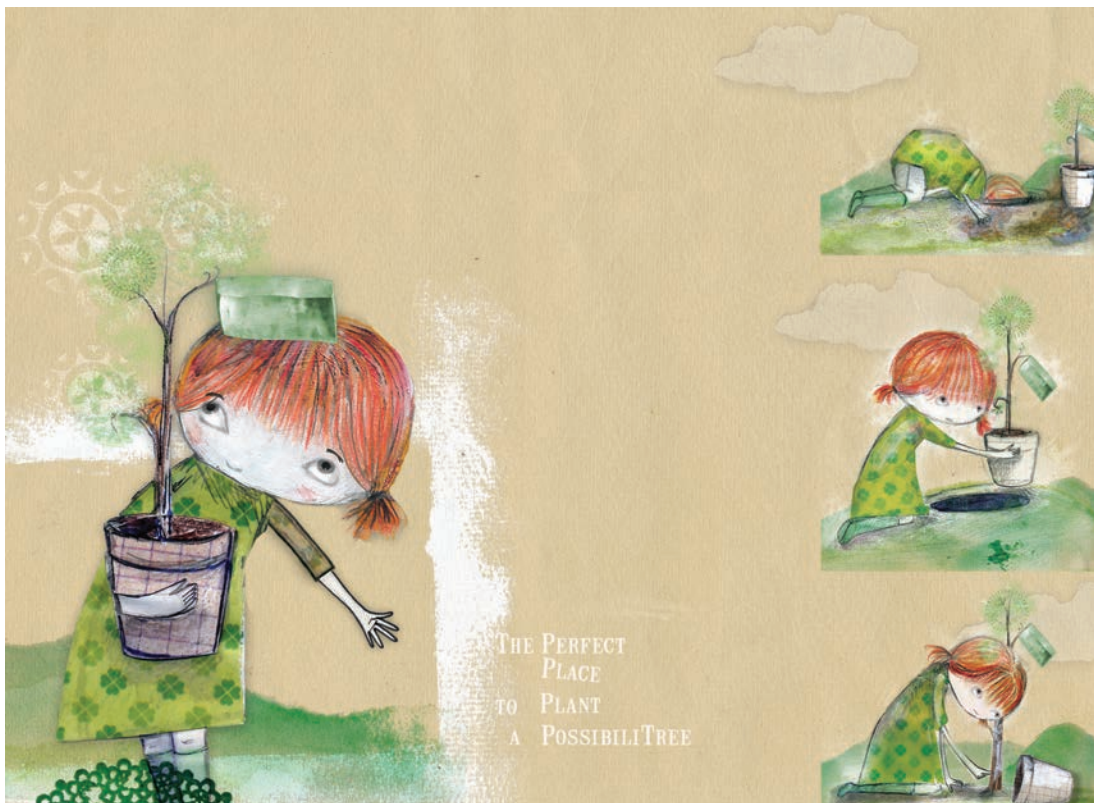


Fig.29  
24 Frames (2013)  
Selected frames from the January Chapter of the Animation  
(see CD Rom for in-process animation)





24 Frames (2013)  
Selected frames from the February Chapter of the Animation  
(see CD Rom for in-process animation)



The Possibili-Tree (2012)  
Selected pages from the printed and digital book  
(see CD Rom for in-process animation)





## THE TEA TREE

BY THANDI T. POTTS

I was born in a land that's quite far away  
where people know  
what it feels like to play  
We had plenty of **TEA PARTIES** ,  
plenty of sun  
and plenty of time for stories and fun.

Grown-ups do strange things  
for paper-money  
When dad said 'We're moving'  
I said 'Hey, that's not funny!'

But my father was serious  
as serious can be  
he'd found a job  
in Nowheresville  
at Mediocr-a-TV

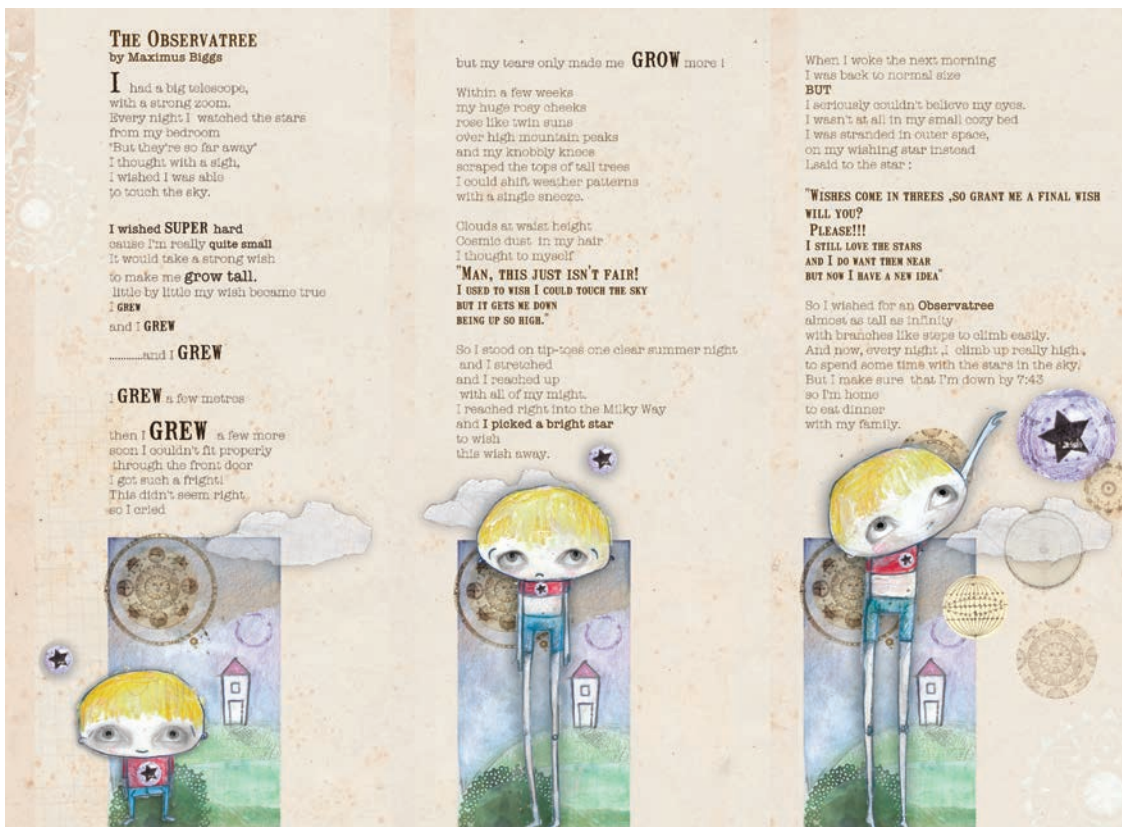
So I packed all the things  
that are special to me:  
some photos of friends  
my collection of **TEA**.  
My heart without fear,  
My mind without walls  
I made a few final  
'I'll-miss-you' phone calls.

In Nowheresville I'm an alien  
try as I may I will never fit in  
I came in peace, my intentions were good  
and I did all the things that an alien should:  
I studied the language,  
the culture  
the food  
but so many people were terribly rude.

I missed my home,  
I had stories to share  
or Nobody  
in Nowheresville  
needed to care.

So one night I ran away  
into the dark and  
quite by mistake  
found this tree  
in this park  
beneath the **TEA TREE**  
I feel I belong  
nobody tells me  
my customs are wrong

All my new friends  
can rely on me  
for unlimited  
**GENEROSI-TEA.**



## THE OBSERVATREE

by Maximus Biggs

I had a big telescope,  
with a strong zoom.  
Every night I watched the stars  
from my bedroom  
'But they're so far away'  
I thought with a sigh,  
I wished I was able  
to touch the sky.

I wished **SUPER** hard  
cause I'm really quite **small**  
It would take a strong wish  
to make me **grow tall**.  
Little by little my wish became true  
**I GREW**

and I **GREW**

-----and I **GREW**

**GREW** a few metres

then I **GREW** a few more  
soon I couldn't fit properly  
through the front door  
I got such a fright!  
This didn't seem right,  
so I cried

but my tears only made me **GROW** more!

Within a few weeks  
my huge rosy cheeks  
rose like twin suns  
over high mountain peaks  
and my knobby knees  
scraped the tops of tall trees  
I could shift weather patterns  
with a single sneeze.

Clouds at water height  
Cosmic dust in my hair  
I thought to myself  
**"MAN, THIS JUST ISN'T FAIR!**  
**I USED TO WISH I COULD TOUCH THE SKY**  
**BUT IT GETS ME DOWN**  
**BEING UP SO HIGH."**

So I stood on tip-toes one clear summer night  
and I stretched  
and I reached up  
with all of my might.  
I reached right into the Milky Way  
and I **picked a bright star**  
to wish  
this wish away.

When I woke the next morning  
I was back to normal size

**BUT**  
I seriously couldn't believe my eyes.  
I wasn't at all in my small cozy bed  
I was stranded in outer space,  
on my wishing star instead  
I said to the star:

**"WISHES COME IN THREES ,SO GRANT ME A FINAL WISH**  
**WILL YOU?**  
**PLEASE!!!**  
**I STILL LOVE THE STARS**  
**AND I DO WANT THEM NEAR**  
**BUT NOW I HAVE A NEW IDEA"**

So I wished for an **Observatree**  
almost as tall as infinity  
with branches like steps to climb easily.  
And now, every night I climb up really high,  
to spend some time with the stars in the sky,  
But I make sure that I'm down by 7:43  
so I'm home  
to eat dinner  
with my family.

The Possibili-Tree (2012)  
Selected pages from the printed and digital book  
(see CD Rom for in-process animation)



The Possibili-Tree (2012)  
Selected pages from the printed and digital book  
(see CD Rom for in-process animation)