

JILL TRAPPLER

NOTIONS OF BEING/MOMENTS OF BEING

NOTIONS OF BEING/MOMENTS OF BEING

Exhibition Irma Stern gallery 2009

In this exhibition I have drawn from work originating in previous series:

“No trace of vertigo”, “Affectionately yours”, “This is where we meet”, Series 3a, 3b and 3c.

www.jilltrappler.co.za

In this work I stripped some of my woven drawings and some of my painted canvases and wove them or folded them into images of clothes. I made mixed media images on paper from some of them which led me to more and more images of clothing. These I refer to as *Notions of being*.

The images of clothing talk about what people do, who they are, how we dress ourselves, how the cloth is made, the spirit or intention of making and wearing....These images make figurative associations which may lead the imagination of the viewer into bigger pictures and memories. (Perhaps of cut out dolls; or dress making; or a character described in a book....). They are not inhabited because I would like you to imagine who would wear them; I imagine some of them have been worn; I have seen them on friends or family or in books, rituals, dreams, in shop windows, ready to be bought and transformed by the new occupant. I am interested in the way they “talk” to each other.

A notional world is an interaction between the image I carry and its collision with events out there. These pieces, all made on the same format, are like postcards or pattern covers.

Included in this exhibition is a short video of Alexandra Learmont wearing 13 of the original clothing objects. It was made by Alex Learmont in the studio with the paintings that grew out of these notions. Alexandra is transforming the notions we have of the cloths and the notions she has of herself when wearing them. She is transforming the objects and the objects are transforming her. Some of the folded canvas images then became collaged canvases and the paper work is three dimensional.

The act of painting, mixing colour, the rhythm and the poetry are as important as the “things” painted. Painting is an image in itself; it has an objective existence of its own. It does not need to contain an object and does not need to represent anything. As a painter I seek the inner life of the painting. It may simply be a place in time where the viewer if anything may attach a dream! The painting is the something not necessarily about something. The work of some abstract impressionists and some rock art have influences my practice and approach.

Virginia Woolf mentions “moments of being” in her autobiographical writing called “Sketch from the past”. She recalls some of her earliest memories and suggests that the sensations held by memory can be so strong that they are more real than the present. This can also happen in a dream. Sometimes the present seems so unimportant and is so easily forgotten, just a notion, but in reflection or recollection the images recalled are so

powerful. (As if you have sent yourself a postcard and put it in a pocket, when you rediscover it you sense and feel and remember the place and time vividly.)

As colour moves on a format, a river running has a river bed: the eye resonates with the surface, colour, the rhythm and patterning. There is the natural changing, hardening and softening of the light, in time. This becomes the narrative for me. Light falls across surfaces and shows us half tones and spaces within various time frames and shadows.



Video still; Alex in studio



Mixed media on fabiano paper, 70 x 100 cm



Tribute, 2005/2009, collaged canvas, 1000 x 1250 cm (sc 156/3D 8)

The paintings, referred to as *Moments of Being*, ask the viewer to immerse the eyes with colour and surface, to swim lightly, in and out, up and down, back and forth in the line and tone, rhythms' and poetry of the image. These are moments with feelings of resonance, the ability to reconcile the unexpected and familiar. The familiarities of the world around us are notions we have that are transformed by memory and imagination, time and place and suffused with the immanence of now against a backdrop of eternity

JILL TRAPPLER – NOTION OF BEING/MOMENTS OF BEING

"A consummated experience between picture and onlooker"

Mark Rothko

This statement by Mark Rothko captures Jill Trappler's vision for both artist and viewer. It lays to rest the widespread myth, which originated with Clement Greenberg, that abstractionism is necessarily an art of pure perception, and affirms that reading, experiencing and absorbing a work of art goes beyond sensation, if for no other reason than for the concept of totality. Add to that its transcendental potentiality and you have a complex consummation.

Two recent solo shows, *'Studio Conversation'* and the work selected by Joe Wolpe for the exhibition *'Jill Trappler Joe's choice'*, which spanned a period of thirty years, revealed a consummate artist who has consistently explored different modes of non-representational art in a variety of media. Trappler insists that she does not 'abstract' from anything; hers is an art of poetry and metaphor and associations that can emerge years after the visual stimulus registered; these are never literal, but contained and communicated in an astonishing variety of media.

The artist will not answer the question "What does it mean?" because she will not "...compromise the painting or clarify the mystery by trying to explain meaning in intellectual terms. The mystery will remain if the work is autonomous, is interactive and generates imagination, i.e. it is an inspiration for others or offers up a kind of numinosity that is compelling." Her references to music, melody and lyrics – "marks make rhythms; colour has sound" – echo Wassily Kandinsky's belief that art comes from within and that colours and shapes can speak to people just as music does.

Integral to Trappler's creative process are the primacy of surface and physicality of material, for they are the carriers and stimulators of meaning and emotion and they affirm the reality and independent existence of the artwork. In the current exhibition her working methods enable her to engage with the metamorphosis of the object in a manner that is at the same time palpable and mysterious. There is no beginning and no end, as Trappler does not work in a linear way; in order to provide a structure that underpins her seamless moving back and forth between the different elements that comprise this exhibition, they will be discussed individually and somewhat chronologically.

'Notion of being' refers to the life-size objects of clothing which are woven or constructed from painted and stained canvas. They are informed by memories, imaginings, and play; lives that have been lived now occupy these garments. Trappler likens them to postcards and remembers

“... seeing them worn by women in the streets, in buses, on the promenades or even in shop windows ... they have inhabited my dreams in different ways either worn by me or unknown others.” The ritual of transformation is captured, and the cloth and clothes become a metaphor for the fibre of society.



Video still; Alex in studio



Mixed media on fabiano, 70 x 100 cm



Baraka, 2005/2009, collaged canvas, 1050 x 1750 cm, (sc 154/3D6)

Alexandra Learmont has been photographed wearing thirteen of the clothing objects, as well as in a video recording in conversation with Trappler. In the photographs a shift occurs as Learmont wears and interprets the garments; her poses are dramatic, intense, or playful. She becomes part of the notions of being and of transformation – neither the wearer nor the object is left unchanged or intact; and the viewer sees and experiences the images differently.

Some of the objects of clothing have been collaged into paintings and here Trappler gives full expression to the weight and density of material, of thick paint and accretions that cover and engulf and transform them. Made from canvas, they are collaged into paintings on paper; notions of surface are challenged with this reversal of technique.

The large number of mixed media works on paper is exquisite. They come from many different sources – Trappler’s woven objects, real dresses, images from books, garments seen, dreams or the artist’s imagination. Dynamic or static, they are redolent of absence or they carry the imprint of imagined or real bodies, evoking associations with different people, cultures, rituals and seasons. Colour, marks, shapes, decorative motifs and

surface articulation suggest notions of cultural opposites – from delicate lace to strong chevrons, from bold patterns inspired by Chinese plastic to a shamanistic image from South America. Some are no longer recognisable as clothes or cloth. These garments never covered real bodies, yet they are anthropomorphised and speak directly to the personal experiences or emotions of the onlooker.



Video still; Alex in studio (see page 22 for details)

The ‘moments of being’ belong to the two large paintings. In contrast to the garments and the paintings onto which they have been collaged, the paint application in the large canvases is relatively thin and free of intense, laden brushstrokes. Each one is dominated by a different colour range – yellow and red. In *Sunnyside of the moon* the pigment is applied in varied thicknesses, the strokes are large and free and the horizontal and vertical accents are anchored by lines and blocks. The latter are not quite finished or closed, thereby accommodating or resisting the high key of yellows and greens with accents of dark blue, red, and pink. They recede and advance, activating the viewer’s eye, mind and imagination.

The predominantly red painting, *Jingle Jangle Junction* also tantalises, challenges and stimulates the spectator on many different levels. The work has an overall appearance of freedom and spontaneity, yet every centimetre is considered and worked, with intersecting lines that conjure enigmatic geometric shapes – personal hieroglyphics – hidden deep inside or emerging from the brush marks, dribbles, dry brush strokes and painted areas of powerful reds and blues. Careful looking allows for the extraordinary variety of marks, shapes and textures to impinge on the

consciousness and emotions of the onlooker, drawing him or her into the visual, spiritual and metaphysical complexity of the painting. There is no centre, yet the concept of totality and resolution is undiminished.

This substantial and interconnected body of work has resulted from Trappler's decision to prioritise studio work for the first time in thirty years. Although she has participated in many group and solo shows, her presence and contribution have to some extent been over-shadowed by her far-reaching involvement in teaching, mentoring and project work. As an active participant in the Thupelo Workshop from its inception, the driving force behind Greatmore Studios in Cape Town and the Fordsburg Artists' Studios (the Bag Factory) in Johannesburg, as well as her commitment to the Association for Visual Arts, to mention but a few of her activities, Trappler is a force in the visual art world in South Africa and further afield. Her work was publicly recognised when she received an award from the Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs in 2007.

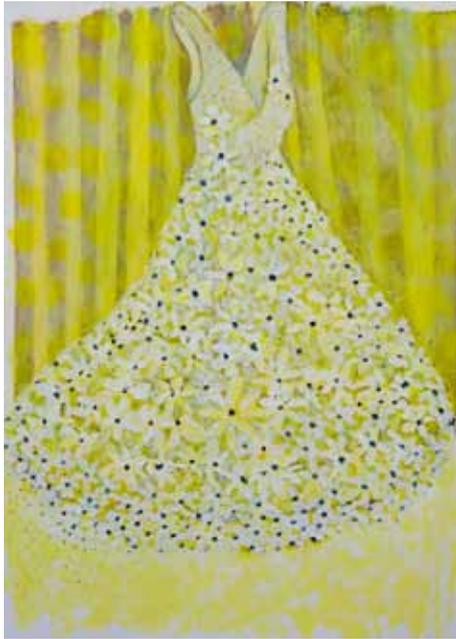
Trappler's generosity of spirit characterises her life and her work, it is reflected in her attitude to painting and in her desire to inspire and stimulate the imagination. Her art is not didactic but healing and transformative for both artist and viewer. She has no need to be fashionable as a painter, and she has remained faithful to abstractionism in the face of shifts and changes in the world of art. This exhibition offers the public an opportunity of assessing and re-assessing Jill Trappler's place and role in South African art.

Marilyn Martin

NOTIONS OF BEING



Mixed media images on fabriano, 2007/2009, 70 x 100 cm (WOP 150 - 155)





Mixed media images on fabriano, 2007/2009, 70 x 100 cm (WOP 156 - 161)





Mixed media images on fabriano, 2007/2009, 70 x 100 cm (WOP 162 - 167)





Mixed media images on fabiano, 2007/2009, 70 x 100 cm (WOP 168 - 173)





Mixed media images on fabriano, 2007/2009, 70 x 100 cm (WOP 174 - 175)





Mixed media images on fabiano, 2007/2009, 70 x 100 cm (WOP 176 - 177)



SCULPTURES



Tissue paper and glue
2008
100 x 100 x 40 cm
(PS 101)



Woven brown card and acrylic paint
2006/2009
75 x 140 x 30 cm
(PS 102/3D5)



Tissue paper and glue
2008
150 x 70 x 30 cm
(PS 103)



Cartridge, tissue paper and acrylic paint
2007
125 x 85 x 30
(PS 104)



Tissue paper, starch, glue, acrylic paint
2007/2008
140 x 100 x 30 cm
(PS 105)



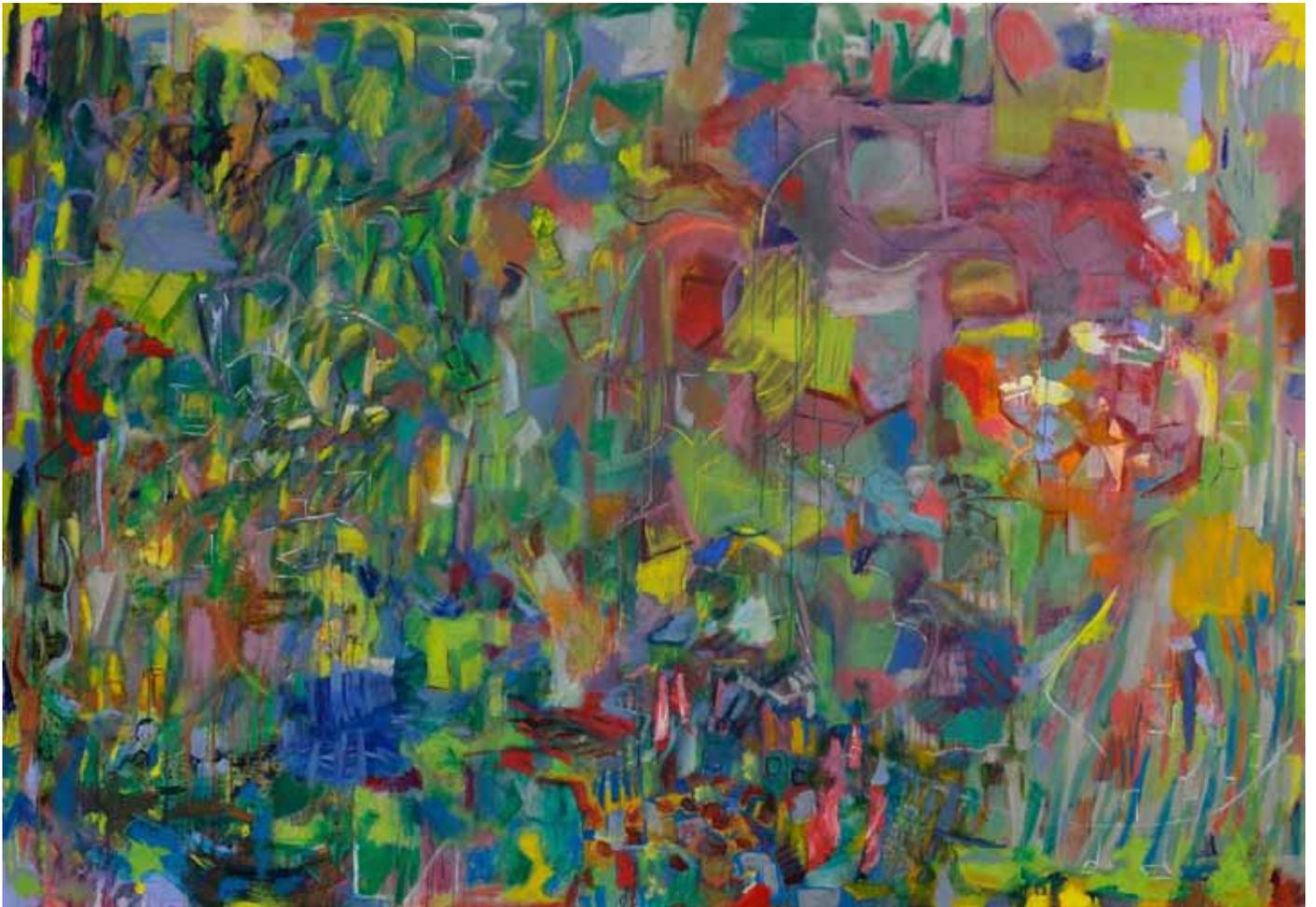
Tissue paper and glue
2008
110 x 112 x 30 cm
(PS 106)

MOMENTS OF BEING



Lavender Rain
2009
715 x 1385 cm
acrylic on canvas
(SC 164)

Mid Summer Morning
2009
1750 x 2500 cm
acrylic on canvas
(SC 162)



Dawn Hummed In
2009
750 x 1400 cm
acrylic on canvas
(SC 166)



Sunnyside of the Moon
2007/2009
2310 x 1800 cm
acrylic on canvas
(Sc 160)



The Sweetness of this Juice
(from Lionel Abraham's poem, "Having spoken")
2009
680 x 1330 cm
acrylic on canvas
(SC 165)



Jingle Jangle Junction
2009
1740 x 2520 cm
acrylic on canvas
(SC 161)



From an Eagles Eye
2009
750 x 1400 cm
acrylic on canvas
(SC 167)



Kissing the Blues
2009
660 x 1310 cm,
acrylic on canvas
(SC 163)



JILL TRAPPLER

NOTIONS OF BEING/MOMENTS OF BEING

Irma Stern Gallery
12 December - 16 January 2010

SMAC Art Gallery
30 January - 21 February 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Estelle Jacobs, David Trappler, Alexander and Alexandra Learmont, Marilyn Martin, Christopher Peters, Tony Meintjies, Jurie Senekal, Irma Stern and SMAC gallery assistance, Ben and Shirley Rabinowitz

Layout: Renzske Scholtz
Photography: Jurie Senekal
Printed by Hansa Printers

ISBN: 978-3-940440-12-9

Published by Seippel Verlag Cologne/Germany

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored on or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the prior written permission of the above mentioned publisher.