

The vulnerable landscape.

Prince Albert festival; September 2012.

Spinning Prince Albert; spinning water.

A back ground to the work I will be taking to the festival and doing at the festival.

Placing images on the walls of one of the temporary gallery spaces in Prince Albert came as an invitation from the PArt festival committee. The space is in the middle of town near the gallery. It is set back from the road and has a small court yard. The images I bring come from a series of paper collages I made in 2003 and 2004. The series is in two parts, one is called “holiday” and the other images are descriptions of land. **(part 1)**

They have also asked me to bring my spinning wheel to work with mohair from the area.

(part 2)

I asked Manda Woermann to make a video. It is called **Thread.**

Part 1

Inside. Images titled holiday time; this is a quiet time and a sensation based time. Inside the old house belonging to our friend we are contained in stillness. The house has absorbed generations of domestic activities and conversations. Outside I feel awake wandering under a very large clear sky; at night or in the day the light wakes me. I always feel present here.

(There is a rhythm of coming and going, returning and meeting and parting again.)

There are references in my images referring to messages, hand written letters taken from being in the landscape around this town. David, my husband did a locum for one of the GP's in Prince Albert about thirty years ago; he wrote long letters to me, sent

by post; I was working in the UK. I remember them as love letters describing the vastness and silence, the heat and sounds at night; his walks and talking out loud into the night, alone. He walked the flat open land in search of us and our future, sometimes in moon light sometimes in sun shine, sometimes just night time. He was like one of the lone birds that come over the mountain to watch, circling in the soft, blue air.

(The rhythm of circling includes a slight interruption, a brief in breath hardly noticeable; you hear it in the spinning wheel and in the brief lowering and lifting of the wings of the bird or in the hoop rolling on the road; the gentle click over.)

I bring these collaged works because they are minimal works, made with mixed media, collaged or woven paper, *re* constructed memories I needed to *re* consider. In their frames the images are autonomous, vulnerable landscapes as if the glass and frame can preserve the memory of a familiar, natural place. The process of making them is similar to what appears to happen in the Prince Albert landscape; the land is vast, living things have space; the stones, sticks and earth, small trees and goats, sheep seek water to survive. It is land under the endless sky that seems to standstill but is so bursting and busy on the ground.

(Layers of uninterrupted breathing everywhere.)

There is a collective sigh when the daily work is done. The earth could be balancing on a scale, being weighed like the drop of water resting temporarily on a leaf. It is held in transit, onto the scale one minute off the scale the next, *(/on / breath / off / breath /)* and in balance, all the weight of the whole earth waiting on a scale. The spinning wheel keeps turning, the water is flowing hidden and exposed, night and day turn in color, conduits for transforming images.

I find lightness in my images, color presents and disappears, shift across lines. I could be awake all the time or sleep through the changes at night, as the spirit moves; who can say, who can tell? This festival will be rooted in images with opinions, giving advice, observations for conversations; the landscape listens to stories of its future, weighing its options. When it is lifted off the scale the earth will sigh, waiting for a message to be posted describing the future.

(If I look up and close my eyes in this place I can feel the balance, the temporary yet all embracing nature of Demeter. My mother was born in Carnarvon, a Karoo town nearby; it was years before she and her brother experienced rain. The stories of trekking with sheep, isolated living, told to me in spirals of ages by my grandmother and mother; the color of this landscape is a soft green in my heart.)

Part 2

Outside. I was invited to bring my spinning wheel to Prince Albert to spin local mohair and/or wool. At home in Cape Town I have mohair, wool and irrigation pipes in common with the vulnerable landscape out there over the mountains and across the plains. On Friday and Saturday, I will spin yarn from the last shearing. Lambs and kids are born and sheep and goats are shorn when it is still very cold. September maybe spring but the wind and early morning freshness get deep inside the body, into ones bones; feet and hands need to be warmed as soon as the sun lifts the distant mountain. Work needs to be done to keep in time with life, to stay alive. I will spin what is from the land; spin images of Prince Albert while I listen to local stories and watch visitors pass up and down the wide main street.

I see these images in my minds eye as I spin; The wheel for spinning and the water wheel; the flow of the wool, the flow of the water, the irrigation systems and pipes; the line of irrigation pipes, the line of spun wool; the wool goes through the wheel, the water goes through the pipes or is channeled in the “lay water” systems. Spirals of cut pipes look like giant spun black plastic thread. The bird spirals on the air and the succulents spiral to greet the sun. I make the pipes into hoops to roll on the scrapped earth or the tarred road, as if we could roll water to cool the heat soaked earth down, roll messages to be seen by gentle people. I see children rolling the hoops in play, the water playing in streams or gardens and the birds circling above. In the fragility/vulnerability there is also the luckiness of life.

(Whisperings and laughter, warmth and cold shivers, whispering and laughter)

Part 1

Going inside; the video has been made by Manda as a gift. We talked about the images and she saw the **thread**. At the end of the video the stillness of the soft shadow takes us into the fairy tale that most associate with a spinning wheel, this is after we have been woken by images that link and transform us. The goats scratch and guzzle; plump succulents rest, softly breathing their fullness. The lines in the landscape are drawn in with the clicking of the turn over of the wheel, smoothly, easily allowing the mohair to become thread; the goat shaking her white water like hair and the lines slipping through the stream all remind me of the rhythms of the universe, the shadows in the night that we hear on our own, this space and time have their own parallel reality but belong to our senses, to us.

(Video made by Manda Woermann).

Part 2

Going outside and inside; the wool will be knitted or woven, a blanket, a jersey; the water will wash over seedling, vegetables on the table, fruit on the trees; healthy milk cows and grounded chickens. Goats have dreamy eyes.

There is a centre to the spinning wheel, the water wheel, the goat's eye and the bird is an eye in the sky. There is an eye at the beginning and end of pipes, another eye where the wool pulls into the bobbin; carry wool, carry water; the needle on the scale shivers, the goat shakes her head in curly rhythms, we read the gentle messages.

In this time, the spinning time and the "wat-run" time, * these happenings are playful and uplifting in this vulnerable space.

The images in their frames are like internal landscape linking us in dance to the ancient spinning reels of luckiness and hope; "*Stay, stay, listen and watch*".

* This is a word used on Tristan de Cunha instead of river; it means, where the water runs.

(Hoops and strips made by Johnson Nose and myself. They are gifts to who ever will play with them.)

On reflection.

Travelling over the pass to Prince Albert, meeting friends and catching up was exciting. I installed my 9 framed collage pieces reluctantly because the allocated space was dark and cold with a flickering light. The large black bars on the window and the glossy, pine room divider were difficult to work with. This room was behind [other shops](#) and at the end of a dark passage. Manda's video projected at the end of the passage was ok but all this work needed to be installed in a fresh, accessible space. It worked as an installation, it was interactive [and the response was very positive](#).