

# Personal memory and collective memory: Images of social and political history in the art of four South African women artists.



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Abstract

This study examines the means by which four South African woman artists, namely Penny Siopis, Jo Ractliffe, Lien Botha and Tania Kühl use memory and history as themes to represent social and political events in South Africa. The foundation of this investigation is a critical study of the meaning of history and memory within the context of the candidate's contemporary social and political milieu. This investigation is facilitated by a number of published and unpublished works by various authors relating to the issues in visual arts; particularly social and political history as applied to personal memory and history. Chapter one explores these terms particularly in relation to the visual arts. Chapter one identifies terms that are vital to the dissertation and some of the literature and methodologies used in the research. These are divided into the subheadings of: terms; women, politics and art; art and documentary photography; literature review; methodology and conclusion.. Examples of each artist's work are selected for a comprehensive analysis in chapter two. These examples are methodically studied by media and techniques used to produce the artworks and include a critical analysis of the subject matter of the artwork. The examples were selected primarily for their content in connection with the candidate's own productions of practical work towards the MAFA degree. Chapter two is divided into four main sections, one dedicated to each artist: Penny Siopis, Jo Ractliffe, Lien Botha and Tania Kühl. These four sections are divided into three subsections: medium and techniques; subject matter and conclusion. Chapter three points out similarities and differences in the work of the four selected artists in order to conclude the candidate's findings during the dissertation.

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The artist famously inked cartoons for the Washington Post, covering Watergate, women's rights and McCarthyism, a term he coined in 1950 in reference to US senator Joseph McCarthy. "We have everything from prints to etching and freely downloadable Women's March posters and political art," said Blood. "The idea here is telling stories directly, getting a voice to the voiceless and empowering the disempowered." This exhibit comes at a fitting time considering the recent surge of socially-engaged art under the Trump administration, from Mexican border wall murals to political satire exhibits and Occulting the past. Conceptualizing forgetting in the history and archaeology of Sylvester Manor. *Archaeological Dialogues*, Vol. 18, Issue. 2, p. 197. Memory is a major theme in contemporary life, a key to personal, social, and cultural identity. But personal and collective identity are intimately linked. Classical works such as Maurice Halbwachs's *The Collective Memory*, and Sir Frederick Bartlett's *Remembering* highlight the social nature of what we usually take to be individual memory, an insight reinforced by research on the historical consciousness of non-literate peoples. Sir Frederick Bartlett, *Remembering* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1932); Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, Francis and Vida Ditter, trans. (New York: Harper Collins, 1980).