

VIDEO ART

'commute' to a world of space

Genna Gardini

THE AUTHOR Anne Michaels once wrote: "Love makes you see a place differently... And if you learn to love one place, sometimes you can also learn to love another." Similar notions of belonging and space are investigated in *commute with intuitive instinct*, a new exhibition of video works at the Brundyn+ gallery.

Curator Portia Malatjie explains that the inspiration for the show, which deals with relationships to and in specific spaces, was itself a result of migration.

"The Brundyn+ gallery has moved into a new space and we are making changes to our programming. It was thus essential to curate a show that would complement the space and simultaneously highlight the aesthetic and ideas that now interest the gallery," she says.

"I had come into contact with all the artists' videos and immediately thought that I wanted to include them in one of my exhibitions at some point in the future. The politics and construction of spaces in the South African context and beyond the boundaries of national borders have also been on my mind, so this was the perfect opportunity to explore some of those ideas."

commute with intuitive instinct features an array of video art works from local and international artists. When asked how she went about selecting the videos featured in the exhibition, Malatjie says: "I have been doing some research on global-

isation and spaces as social constructs, and wanted that to manifest through an exhibition."

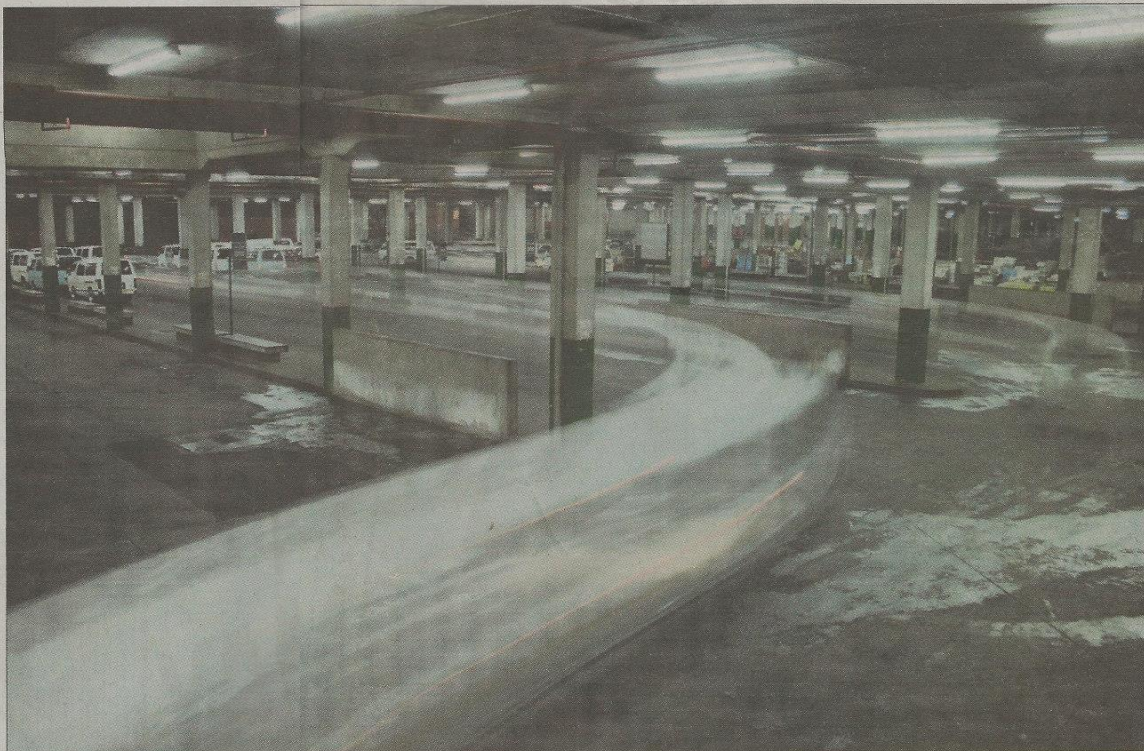
Speaking specifically about the artists included in the show, the curator hesitates: "I almost want to say that I chose the art works rather than the artists, but of course one cannot separate the two. I often keep a mental archive of works that I encounter, and, when working on an exhibition whose theme the art works engage with, I include them in the show. This was the case with most of the art works – including Van Veuren and Collins's *Minutes*, which I saw in 2010, and Ratman's work, which I encountered at the Venice Biennale last year."

The video art works showcased in *commute with intuitive instinct* were sourced from all over the globe, but share an emphasis on or tie to our continent. According to Malatjie, "Brundyn+ gallery is focusing more on artists from the rest of Africa. It is essential that we forge relationships with other African countries instead of solely looking towards the west. This seems like a fleeting and essentialist statement to make, but it is important for the gallery to forge continental relationships".

This is underlined in her choice of artists for the show.

"Some of the international artists refer to Africa and form part of the African diaspora," she says.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the geographical variety of the artists and works represented in the exhibition, Malatjie feels that *com-*



TAKE A MOMENT: Mocke J van Veuren's and Theresa Collins's *Minutes 2010: time/bodies/rhythm/Johannesburg*.

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mute with intuitive instinct has a strong relevance to contemporary South Africa.

"Michelle Monareng's *Removal to Radium* (2013) deals with the 1951 Group Areas Act and forced migrations implemented by the apartheid

government. The video installation tells a story that does not form part of the grand narratives of forced removals – notably in Sophiatown and District Six – but concentrates on the displacement of a small community in Heidelberg; this story has hardly been told and has been written out of history," she explains.

"Monareng is working with her grandfather's archive – her grandfather documented the research that he was doing in an attempt to return the land to his people."

Another work she draws particular attention to is Mocke J van Veuren's and Theresa Collins's *Minutes 2010: time/bodies/rhythm/Johannesburg* (2010). It "refers to how people of different demographics occupy different spaces in Johannesburg", says the curator. "The taxi rank scene is congested almost throughout the day and it is

predominantly occupied by working-class black people, who often have to leave their homes in the townships before sunrise, catch a second taxi in spaces such as the one referred to in the video, and get to work on time. Other spaces depicted in the videos, such as the Linden swimming pool, are less congested, and are occupied, typically, by white people."

Malatjie adds that she "could speak at length about the relevance of spatial politics in contemporary South Africa, including who occupies gallery spaces and gains access to exhibitions that ironically theorise how the general public has historically been excluded from certain structures".

Discussing her decision to only showcase videos in *commute with intuitive instinct*, the curator clarifies that "by exhibiting only video art works, I am hoping to communi-

cate that the medium should not solely be seen as accompaniment for other more traditional mediums".

Although Malatjie admits that audience responses to video art, especially long-form video, can often oscillate, she considers the reactions to *commute with intuitive instinct* to have been positive so far.

"People seem to be reacting to the fact that the exhibition concentrates purely on video art works," she says. "It excites people. The gallery has had a lot of traffic since the opening. We are also developing an education programme and are looking to get schools from different parts of Cape Town to come see the show, thus expanding our audience and people's knowledge about video art."

• *commute with intuitive instinct* will show at Brundyn+ until May 17. See www.brundyngonsalves.com