

An Illustrative Legacy: Art Education and Zulu ‘Crafts’

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Abstract:

This article addresses the stylistic selection and the reproduction of art illustrations in the publications of John W. Grossert, and situates his work in the history of South African art education. Utilizing Grossert's treatment of the ceramic beer pot, or *ukhamba*, the author demonstrates the manner in which apartheid era art education policies and pedagogical publications shaped by figures such as Grossert constricted artistic diversity and molded what were then referred to as “tribal” identities. The author asserts that the consistent distillation of artistic diversity in the publications of this foundational arts administrator canonized art forms now recognized as Zulu. After fueling apartheid era “tribal” politics, these iconic vessels were later associated with Zulu nationalism. The article concludes with descriptions of contemporary ceramic production and the continued preference for the raised bump motif, or *amasumpa*, that has now come to symbolize not only Zulu identity, but to connote South African rural associations in general. Thus, the article traces the continued impact of apartheid era pedagogy on contemporary art production.

Keywords: South African art | art education | John W. Grossert | Zulu art | KwaZulu-Natal

Article:

This article addresses the stylistic selection and the reproduction of art illustrations in the publications of John W. Grossert, and situates his work in the history of South African art education. Utilizing Grossert's treatment of the ceramic beer pot, or *ukhamba*, the author demonstrates the manner in which apartheid era art education policies and pedagogical publications shaped by figures such as Grossert constricted artistic diversity and molded what were then referred to as “tribal” identities. The author asserts that the consistent distillation of artistic diversity in the publications of this foundational arts administrator canonized art forms now recognized as Zulu. After fueling apartheid era “tribal” politics, these iconic vessels were later associated with Zulu nationalism. The article concludes with descriptions of contemporary

ceramic production and the continued preference for the raised bump motif, or *amasumpa*, that has now come to symbolize not only Zulu identity, but to connote South African rural associations in general. Thus, the article traces the continued impact of apartheid era pedagogy on contemporary art production.

The impact of private collectors and museum structures upon canons of African art are today considered foundational disciplinary knowledge. Elizabeth Harney, Steven Nelson, Sally Price, Christopher Steiner, and others slowly have helped us to challenge and sometimes to make our own peace with these legacies (Harney, 2006; Nelson, 2007; Price, 2001, 2007; Steiner, 1995, 2002; Till, 1991). In the foundation of these canons, institutionally affiliated art educators and administrators made their most obvious impression upon emergent arts movements of the early to mid-twentieth century, as documented in Elizabeth Harney's *In Senghor's Shadow* (2004) and several articles in this special issue. There are also more subtle and indirect means by which norms and their perpetuation can be institutionalized, namely through textbooks and the standardization of pedagogical norms. What more efficient means could one harness to cement a normative view of an art form than to write the textbooks that will be used for generations, to train the teachers that will educate generations of students?

FIGURE 1 IS OMITTED FROM THIS FORMATTED DOCUMENT

Figure 1. J.W. Grossert, 1954. Pencil Sketches from Nduleni School Show. Digital scan courtesy of the Campbell Collections of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Copyright permission of Grossert Family.

The illustrations and writings of John W. (Jack) Grossert provide a striking case study in the impact of one art educator and art education administrator both within and well beyond the classroom (Figure 1). Born in South Africa in 1913, the same year the Native Land Act set up South Africa's first black "reserves," Grossert's life spanned a number of changes in South African politics and educational policies. In 1948, the year the National Party took power and began its implementation of nationalized apartheid policies, Grossert was appointed as the Natal "Organizer of Art and Crafts for Native Schools," and he later became the national inspector for art education in teachers' colleges for all of South Africa (personal communication, J. de Waal, May 31, 2012). Over the course of his fifteen-year career at the administrative level, Grossert would leave his stamp on many South African art forms. I focus here on Grossert's illustrations of and writings on Zulu ceramics and trace the echoing effects of his writings and illustrations on these iconic symbols of Zulu identity and spiritual life. One could trace a similar narrative through other media and, throughout Africa, in the lives of individuals who codified pedagogy during colonial and post-colonial eras.

Culling Ceramic Diversity: Erasing the Mission Influence

During his early career, Grossert had little interest in Zulu art forms. His Master's thesis (1942) focused on the Hindu temples of Durban and prior to 1948 he taught in white and Indian schools in Durban. Due to colonial and national policies, art education in rural areas was distinctly different from curricula designed for urban whites or Indian populations. Art education in urban white schools tended to mirror British curricula, which emphasized canonized western art forms. Policies dating to the 1800s marginalized black South Africans from urban areas both physically

and pedagogically. By the time the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, many settlement patterns were already in place. In 1913, official “reserves” for black South Africans were established by the Native Land Act. In schools designated for black students, governmental structures were largely uninterested in arts or crafts education during the colonial and early days of the Union of South Africa. Rather, the majority of art education in marginalized urban spaces and in the rural areas of KwaZulu and Natal lay within the purview of missionary institutions. Over 5000 state-aided mission schools were functioning in South Africa prior to the institutionalization of centralized state controlled schooling (Christie & Collins, 1982).

In KwaZulu and Natal, missionaries promoted the inclusion of “Native Crafts” in curricula as a cost-effective way of encouraging arts and crafts, with discussions of the topic dating back to the 1880s (Leeb-du Toit, 1998). The first issue of the *Natal Native Teachers Journal* was published by the provincial government in October 1919 and contained an article entitled “School Pottery” (Adams, 1919). Though no illustrations are provided, the author describes sources in Natal for clay, basic ceramic preparation methods, and the potential uses of clay in the classroom. Substantive discussion of indigenous local ceramics is notably absent, which may be a product of the push to Christianize and “Westernize” local student populations. The only reference to local ceramics is a suggestion that larger “Kafir” vessels be used as protection for classroom work during firing. In fact, the author describes coil building from the perspective of American Indian ceramics. Ignoring local Zulu ceramics is particularly ironic, as one of the richest traditions of coil-built ceramics was to be found just outside of any urban zone in Natal or KwaZulu. Yet, the author may have had several reasons for his reference to American Indian pottery.

In the broader context of global ceramic art history, South African racial politics and missionary pedagogy, turning one's back on indigenous Zulu ceramics made perfect sense during the 1910s and 1920s. At the 1904 world's fair in St Louis, Maria Martinez, the American Indian potter from San Ildefonso pueblo, became an international name in the ceramic world for demonstrating her beautiful black-on-black burnished hand-coiled ceramics (Peterson, 1977). The nostalgic and often reverent tone that authors took when describing American Indian artists during this era would have also appealed to racial hierarchies popular in South Africa. The “noble-savage” living on reservations in the United States would seem both safe and resonate with the goals of colonial and national efforts to create black “reserves” in South Africa. A continued fascination with American Indian arts persisted among art organizers in KwaZulu-Natal well into the 1980s, when white liberal art organizers visited Cherokee reservations in the US to see if promotions of Zulu arts and crafts could learn from American Indian cultural tourism (Thorpe, 1984).

During the 1910s and 1920s, encouraging black students to emulate the art of physically distant and seemingly “contained” American Indians allowed art educators to appear to be both en vogue and inoffensive to two different factions in art education. Pedagogically, missionary institutions encouraged art education in line with what were referred to as “assimilationist” goals. Though the techniques described work from American Indians, the utilitarian wares students created were suggested for *westernized* household use, such as flower, sugar and spice containers. Modeled figures stressing naturalism were a second focus of educational pedagogy in the medium of clay.

American Indian pottery would be relatively ambiguous in this pedagogical framework, as it was fashionable in the West. On the other hand, national policies were already questioning if black artists were becoming too “westernized” or “detrribalized.” In the *Natal Native Teachers Journal*, a provincial governmental publication, it may have been politically astute of the author to refer to an indigenous American art form, rather than propose black students follow the current trends of revitalizing “‘authentic’ vernacular traditions” popular in the Arts and Crafts movement at the turn of the twentieth century (E. de Waal, 2003). Incorporating black vernacular art in the same pedagogical framework with European Arts and Crafts movement revivals may have been a bit too radical.

The Iziko collections in Cape Town contain two vessels that are the product of early missionary curricula, this ambiguous era in art education. The first example, from 1921, is a post-Victorian confection with undulating edges and ornate impressed designs resembling lace or latticework; a 1939 vessel produced at the Adams Mission Station reflects a more reserved aesthetic. This elongated vase is embellished with small handles at the shoulder, a feature completely unknown in Zulu ceramic traditions, and is vaguely reminiscent of a Grecian amphora. Similar pieces were likely presented at a “Native Show” in 1935 when a *Natal Mercury* reporter commented that, “The clay bowls ... showed too much European influence [which] turned many of the exhibits into hybrid products that had neither the interest of the true Native work, nor the merits of European work” (Staff Reporter, *Natal Mercury*, 1935). The artists who created these utilitarian and decorative vessels are unknown, but artists who chose to work in figurative traditions were occasionally documented by name.

One of the most famous ceramic artists to come out of the missionary educational system was Hezikile Ntuli. Ntuli was mission educated in the town of Eshowe and strongly supported by a host of private and institutional patrons (Calder, 1998). He sold portrait busts and animal figurines, including leopards, elephants, and cattle (Figure 2), to institutions in the urban centers of Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Eshowe, and at his own roadside stall from 1929 until 1973 (Leeb-Du Toit, 1998). Ntuli's portraits reflect market desires and the ambiguous social position held by a Zulu artist working in a “western” figurative style. His busts were most often idealized or stereotyped social types, such as older men and women in traditional dress. These images are akin to the social Darwinist racial typologies of the area and appealed to white urban buyers nostalgic for un-urbanized Zulu populations. Specific portraits, for instance Ntuli's busts of Zulu Kings created from popular print images, reflect obsessions with the Zulu royal house held by South Africans of both British and Zulu heritage. Likewise, Ntuli's animal figures are most often cattle, symbols of Zulu rural pastoralism, or elephants and leopards, animals associated with royal lineages.

The social ambiguity of these works lie in the contradiction between Ntuli's naturalistic sculptural style and the obvious desire for an either rural or royal, rather than urban, Zulu population on the part of patrons. Ntuli and his peers were pushed towards western ideals of art production. In mission schools, verisimilitude was praised in sculpture and “modern” utility for vessels; storage for kitchen staples rated high on missionary curricular goals. Aesthetically, the unidentified artists who exhibited “hybridized” vases during “native shows” discussed above and Ntuli's production are visual artifacts of a South Africa in which social tensions ran high and ambiguous, and often opposing sentiments were held concerning Zulu westernization.



Figure 2. Hezikile Ntuli, 1911. Eshowe, South Africa. Bull. Unfired Clay, enamel paint. 17.8cm h., 23.6cm w., 9.2 cm d. Tatham Art Gallery Collection, 1911/98. Photo courtesy of Tatham Art Gallery.

Social tensions continued to mount throughout South Africa during the coming decades and eventually led to the Nationalist Party taking power in 1948, with its strict apartheid policies. In this same year, Jack Grossert was appointed as the Natal Organizer of Art and Crafts for Native Schools and quickly began educating himself in the pedagogical norms applied to rural black students. As part of a cohort of school inspectors who supervised and implemented educational policy in music, household sciences, agriculture, as well as arts and crafts, Grossert traveled widely to observe and standardize curricular practices. The Bantu Education Act was passed in 1953 and that same year Grossert published his first pedagogical handbook, *Art and Crafts for Africans: A Manual for Art and Craft Teachers*. This manual outlined major lessons and projects that could be used in black classrooms from the primary to the secondary levels.

Intended as a standard teachers' training manual in the newly nationalized educational system, Grossert's 1953 publication still reflects much of the assimilationist pedagogy of the missionary schools. Out of 19 illustrations of ceramics, only four Zulu beer vessels and three traditional Shona vessels are included. The remaining 12 illustrations show western objects and vessels, sculptural forms, and tools utilized in western ceramic traditions. The bulk of his pedagogical writing discusses the progressive development of naturalism in the work of black South African pupils and the importance of understanding cognitive changes in students as they achieve greater

levels of verisimilitude (Grossert, 1953). Grossert does select images that reassert the desire for idealized social types, such as a “Zulu Maiden” and “Mother and Child,” but the portrayal of a policeman seems a provocative choice. This figure bespeaks Zulu students’ observant replication of the increasingly powerful and omnipresent South African state.

Grossert's discussion of pottery reveals his opinions on Zulu ceramic utilitarian forms and decorative styles:

A drinking vessel should be easy to drink from. Although the simple round shape of the *Ukhamba* is pleasing to look at, it is not a conveniently shaped vessel from which to drink or pour liquids. By these standards it is not properly suited for the purpose for which it is made; but custom dies hard! (1953, p. 73)

After this jibe, Grossert goes on to suggest making spice, sugar, and flour containers for kitchens. On the topic of decoration he states: “Traditional patterns for pottery have been developed among the tribal groups of the Bantu people. These can be made use of but should not limit pupils from composing new patterns of their own” (1953, p. 77).

During these early days of his tenure under the Bantu Educational system Grossert's comments and illustrations all point to his continuation of mission school pedagogy. His disparaging remarks about indigenous traditional arts are definitely not in line with the “retribalization” policies that would soon become the credo of nationalist education. Following 1953, Grossert's attitudes would change quickly as South Africa's educational policies were increasingly centralized.

Refining the Canon: Stylistic Selection for “Tribal” Education

It has been inaccurately stated that art education was completely unavailable under the Bantu Education Act (Cruise, 2005). Following the rise of the Nationalist Party to power, any attempts at a western-style art education was increasingly repressed in South Africa's urban centers, but in rural areas “stress on vernacular medi[a]” was a preferred pedagogical means of instilling a narrowly defined cultural pride and encouraging what was referred to as “retribalization” (Davenport & Saunders, 2000, p. 389). The Nationalist Government's special commission on “native” education, known as the Eiselen Commission, completed its advisory report in 1951. And, in line with apartheid policies, the commission “emphasized the functional value of the school as an institution for the transmission and development of black cultural heritage” (Christie & Collins, 1982, p. 59). In the arts, the transmission of cultural difference was suddenly a major educational focus and indigenous media, such as clay, weaving, and wood carving, were utilized as core elements of “Arts and Crafts” curricula. To keep the pedagogical goals of national schools in line with Bantu Education Act policies, there was a concomitant effort to reduce the number of mission schools. Though 5000 mission schools were operating in 1953, by 1965 there were only 509 out of a total of 7222 black schools functioning under missionary control (Christie & Collins, 1982, p. 57).

Though not a staunch supporter of the Nationalist Party, Grossert adjusted well to his position in the nationally controlled educational infrastructure and was promoted to Inspector of Arts and

Crafts for African Schools and Colleges in 1954. For a period of time, Grossert commuted between Pietermaritzburg and Pretoria, but eventually demands of the national government required that he move to the administrative center (personal communication, J. de Waal, May 31, 2012). Grossert's physical reorientation in Pretoria was accompanied by a philosophical shift in his writing and research. Simultaneously guided by both a personal passion for artisanal detail and national “retribalization” policies, Grossert began the process of defining and refining canons of cultural style and focused in particular on arts of the Zulu cultural region.

A calligrapher by training, Grossert executed highly detailed pencil sketches during school inspections in Zulu-speaking regions between 1954 and 1963 (personal communication, J. de Waal, May 31, 2012; Grossert, 1954–1963). Grossert's unpublished sketchbooks feature a wealth of documentary evidence in carving, weaving, beadwork, and ceramics, and would later become the source material for his dissertation and instructional handbooks of the 1960s and 1970s. However, the more scholarly and thorough analysis of his dissertation was only a personal obsession until his retirement. As his career progressed in the National Party's increasingly centralized school system, Grossert turned his attention to writing the pedagogical texts that the Bantu Educational System required. The creation of a canon was necessary for the new nationalized educational climate and racial segregation based on “tribal” differences, including language, leadership structures, styles of dress, and visual self-expression through indigenous arts.

In 1958, Grossert was a contributing editor on the book *The Art of Africa*. Published in South Africa, this text briefly covered the art of the entire continent and then narrowed its scope to a more detailed account of Southern African prehistoric to contemporary art forms. In addition to his role as editor, Grossert authored chapters entitled “The African Races and their Social Background,” “The Art and Crafts of Negro Africa,” and “The Zulu” (Battiss, Franz, Grossert, & Junod, 1958). In this publication, one of Grossert's most widely reproduced hardboard engravings, a small trio of pots (Figure 3), was first reproduced. An assemblage of three original pencil sketches, this small illustration would go on to be featured not only in Grossert's future publications, but it would become a visual staple in the representation of Zulu arts, making appearances in an *isiZulu*¹ cultural handbook, gallery advertisements, international newspaper articles, didactic museum information, and other outlets up to the present day.

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Figure 3. J.W. Grossert, 1958. Hardboard print of Figurative Clay Modeling. *The Art of Africa*, p. 123. Copyright Grossert Family. In Grossert's original sketches two of the three vessels are easily attributed to Tholiwe Mfeka, 15 years Ongoye School (left) and Gretta Mgenqe, 18 years, Khangelani School (right). The center image is

On a technical level the image is relatively simple to describe. It depicts a variety of vessel shapes: relatively spherical, ovoid, and necked. The consistent feature throughout is the blackened color and raised panel designs on each pot. One can safely assume the process by which the panels were made is a technique of applying a flat slab of clay to a smoothed coil-built

¹ *IsiZulu* refers to the Zulu language. Here the cultural handbook was written in *isiZulu*. Utilizing the *isi-* prefix distinguishes the language from *amaZulu*, the Zulu people, or *izulu*, weather or heaven.

pot. Once each slab was applied to the vessel surface V-shaped incisions were carved in a subtractive manner creating a grid of pyramidal projections (Armstrong, 1995; Klopper, 1992).



Figure 4. Various Artists, 2006. Earthenware *izinkamba*, beer vessels. Mona Market, Nongoma, KwaZulu-Natal. Photo by Elizabeth Perrill. Vessels for sale at this monthly traditional market near the Nongoma royal Zulu residence is representative of contemporary beer pots sold for use. A wide variety of incised and impressed decorations are seen along with a few *amasumpa* decorations. The style of *amasumpa* shown here (center left) was not referred to using any additional terminology. The bumps were applied individually and shaped into a conical projection with a quick twist of the fingers.

This decorative technique falls under the broad *isiZulu* term, *amasumpa*,² which refers to any raised decorative nodule on a vessel of wood or clay (Armstrong, Whitelaw, & Reusch, 2008; Doke, Malcolm, Sikakana, & Vilakazi, 1999). In addition to carved panels, a range of raised decorative ceramic methods can be referred to as *amasumpa*, including rows of impressed coils,

² Scholars have erroneously stated that *amasumpa* should be translated simply as warts. Armstrong, Whitelaw, and Reusch rightly point out that *amasumpa* applied or carved raised decorations, should not be confused with *izinsumpa*, which can be translated as warts. Though the root word *-sumpa* is the same, prefixes often change the meaning of words in *isiZulu*.

individually applied conical bumps, subtly raised bumps pushed out from the inside of a pot, and applied disks coming in a range of sizes, levels of relief, and patterns (Figures 4–6). The physical techniques used in each *amasumpa* raised-bump style is quite different and may be the purview of a particular region or family. In *isiZulu*, different names are used to describe specific regional techniques including: *qhumbuza* for the style of pushing out bumps from the interior (Armstrong et al., 2008), *umvaxazo* (Figure 5) for evenly distributed applied bumps of a conical shape (Perrill, 2008), and *amapuluho* (Figure 6) is an aptly borrowed version of the English verb “to plough,” which describes the technique of carving rows depicted in Grossert's illustration (Armstrong, 1995).



Figure 5. Mamile Ngeme, 2006. Ukhamba beer vessel. Earthenware. 10 1/8 in. h, 11 7/8 in diameter. Photography by Michael Cavanagh and Kevin Montague, courtesy Indiana University Art Museum. The artist insisted that this pattern should be referred to as *umvaxazo*, rather than *amasumpa*. The term *umvaxazo* may be derived from an isiZulu word meaning “speckled” or “spotted.” The seventy year old artist came out of retirement to create this vessel and discussed it as evoking the styles of her youth.

The diversity of decorative techniques, ambiguous stylistic zones, and the vigorous flows of artistic exchange that were only enhanced by migrant labor were not in the interests of the Bantu Education Act and its administrators. South African national educational policy was helping to define who belonged to specific “tribal” identities, such as Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, or Venda. In a country where migrant labor had been blending these “tribal” boundaries for generations this became an increasingly strong national preoccupation. In 1970 the South African government stripped black South Africans of their national citizenship, and reassigned them to “tribal” Bantustans (MacKinnon, 2004). In the years leading up to the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970s it was critical that clear linguistic and visual markers of Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, or Pedi identity be codified.



Figure 6. Zulu Ceramic Display, Ethnography Gallery, South Africa Museum, 2006. Vessel featured in center, Iziko Museums SAMAE 9217, Melmoth, 1965. This beer vessel features the *amapulaho* V-carved *amasumpa* style, common in the Melmoth and Makhosini area of KwaZulu-Natal until at least the 1970s. After a panel or slab of clay is applied to the pot surface it is then carved into rows or blocks of pyramid-shaped bumps. Background image, partial view, “Kraal on the Umgani, Zulu cattle and sheep,” George French Angas, 1974, *The Kaffirs Illustrated*. B&W reprint of 1849 edition of hand-colored lithographs. Photo by Elizabeth Perrill.

In *The Art of Africa*, Grossert discusses the “block” *amapulaho* type of “V-shaped” *amasumpa* as the iconic form of Zulu decoration and proceeds to marginalize all other decorative styles, including “scratched, pricked or intaglio designs” (Battiss et al., 1958, p. 124). He specifically points to the various incised designs as invasive additions to the Zulu tradition. Grossert's comments carry the tone of apartheid policy; in this 1958 publication, Zulu ceramic tradition is effectively and conveniently frozen in time as part of a “tribal” tradition, a separate nation (Anderson, 1991; McClintock, 1995). Grossert asserts that Hezekial Ntuli is “outside the stream of Bantu tradition and [his art is] more interesting for its uniqueness than its artistic expression” (Battiss et al., 1958, p. 124). Of Zulu beer vessels he states:

The Zulu women, who are the potters ... show no initiative in producing new forms or attempting new types of decoration, the conventional ones being repeated over and over again The traditional types of decoration of Zulu pottery were confined to lines and variations in arrangement and grouping of small pellets (*mamillae*) of clay called *isumpa*, i.e. warts, stuck on the surface. (Battiss et al., p. 124)

In his dissertation, one finds the source of these strong statements. Grossert's only secondary citation related to *amasumpa* is A.T. Bryant's *The Zulu People: As They Were Before the White Man Came*, completed in 1935 and published in 1948. Bryant describes Zulu ceramic decoration very briefly, pointing out that, “Ornamentation was rare; when present, it was poor and simple,

lacking artistic imagination and skill, always taking the one same for of mammillae or ‘warts’” (Bryant, 1948, p. 401). Grossert's 1958 statements paraphrase Bryant's observations, despite the observations he was making during his school inspections and doctoral research.

Art Education and Zulu Crafts, Grossert's 1968 thesis, was completed after he stepped down from his post in Pretoria in 1962 and returned to Durban. Further hardboard prints based on Grossert's original 1954–1963 pencil sketches are reproduced in the original, as well as published versions distributed out of Pietermaritzburg by Shuter and Shooter publishers. The bulk of Grossert's sketches and subsequent illustrations were gathered as he inspected and judged displays of Bantu School System students. In his thesis various styles are labeled by school name, and although they are not included in any other location, he listed the names and ages of all of the student artists in his original sketchbooks.

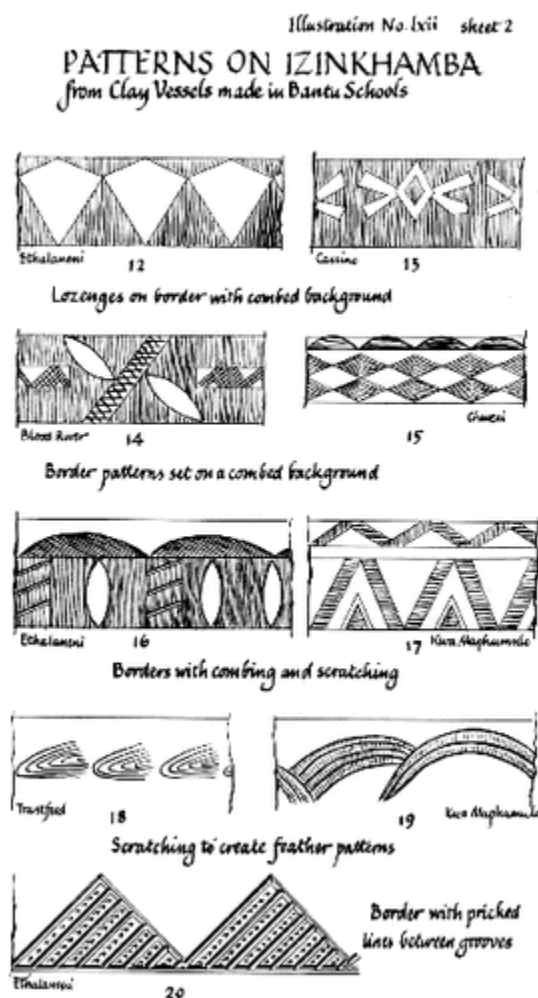


Figure 7. J.W. Grossert, 1968. Hardboard Prints and Calligraphy. *Art Education and Zulu Crafts*, p. 504. This page from Grossert's dissertation shows incised, impressed, and combed decorative techniques that are explicitly excluded from Zulu tradition in his widely distributed handbooks.

Dinah Khumalo, Norah Sibisi, Jean Hadebe, or Elizabeth Khanyile are just a few of the young girls who presented their work in KwaZulu's rural schools and found their way into Grossert's notebooks. The girls ranged between eight and 20 years old and are generally attributed by Christian first names and Zulu last names. The Anglophone first names were often not what students would be called at home; these second first names were typically used for legal, church, school functions, and by rural women while holding domestic labor positions in urban centers (Cock, 1989). Grossert was exacting, documenting the name, age, grade, and school of each student, and one can imagine his imagery is accurate in capturing the form and decorative pattern of the work he saw. However, we have no means to compare these works with the masterpieces that must have been executed by the mothers and grandmothers of these children. Grossert's dissertation contains dozens of illustrations and a far broader range of decorative variation than that listed in *The Art of Africa* or any of the author's later publications. In fact, every stylistic variation excised or marginalized from Zulu tradition in *The Art of Africa* is found in the pages of Grossert's doctoral thesis (Figure 7).

Despite his own detailed fieldwork and illustrations, Grossert held the party line. In his doctoral dissertation, a distinct change of opinion took place from his early years of borrowing pedagogical techniques from missionary sources. Grossert described the “liberal” legacy of missionary education decidedly in the past tense in his historical summary:

The missionaries of all denominations concerned in the evangelisation laid great stress on the teaching of artisan skills in the schools as an important basis or foundation for a new sort of economic life and economic outlook. These attitudes were echoed in the types of art and crafts taught in Native schools which were focal points of acculturation ...
(Grossert, 1968, p. 9)

The 1951 Eiselen Commission's recommendations that “there should be reform of the whole educational system and it must be based on the culture and background and the whole life of the native himself in his tribe” were echoed in the closing paragraphs of this same historical section (Christie & Collins, 1982, p. 69). Grossert asserted that that “any contribution which assists the Bantu of various ethnic groups to appreciate their cultural heritage and contemporary requirements must be considered as educative in the profoundest meaning of the word” (Grossert, 1968, p. 14).

In this project to define Zulu “cultural heritage” and convey the “contemporary requirements” of a colonized life, Grossert's next publication and his most widely distributed work, *Zulu Crafts* of 1978, failed to present the complexity and diversity of ceramic design represented in his pencil sketches and doctoral illustrations. In both its illustration and in statements very similar to and sometimes directly lifted from *The Art of Africa* of 1958, *Zulu Crafts* emphasized *amapuluho* V-shaped *amasumpa* bumps as the most important Zulu design motif. Eight of the 12 vessels illustrated in *Zulu Crafts* bear *amapuluho* designs and vessels that show strong signs of being “western” are eliminated. Gone are the spice containers and candlestick holders of Grossert's 1940s or 1950s publications and all naturalistic sculpture has been expunged. The “purification” and “retribalization” of the Zulu stylistic canon was at this point nearly complete – at least in print.

Ongoing Legacy: Grossert's Illustrations and the Public Sphere

In the history of South African educational politics, which were part of repressive colonial systems of governance, it is unsurprising that an art educator would choose to contradict his field-evidence to support Bantu Education policies. Had Grossert been a less gifted illustrator, his writings may have slipped into obscurity, but both for better and for worse Grossert was a gifted calligrapher and documentarian with an eye for detail. It is today a boon to ceramic specialists that his doctoral illustrations capture a diverse group of ceramic styles utilized during the 1950s and 1960s. The graphic simplicity and crisp lines of Grossert's illustrations also allowed his sketches to extend far past the apartheid classroom and into the public sphere, the metaphoric realm in which public opinion is shaped (Butsch, 2009).

In the history of western art, it is assumed that print culture and the public sphere impacted canons of art. The circulation of prints and books utilizing early monochrome print media helped to cement the reputations of “great masters,” from Raphael to Rembrandt. The same is true of indigenous art canons, but an ironic inversion took place in the case of Grossert's illustrations of Zulu ceramics. A style of decoration was made famous, while artists were erased. The particularity of print culture in South Africa from the 1950s to the late-1970s contributed to the popularity of Grossert's sharp-edged hardboard prints. From the Defense Act of 1957 to the Publications Act of 1974, the apartheid government actively sought to constrain the power of the press (Afolayan, 2004). Cultural boycotts beginning in the 1960s constrained the importation of and access to international publications, and, in the arts, if not in other realms, insular discourses sometimes became particular to a region or to the nation.

Members of the liberal-leaning Natal art world regarded Grossert's images as foundational documentation of Zulu artistic techniques, but most only saw his more popular publications. Grossert's 1953, 1958, and 1978 publications were some of the only widely available and reader friendly books on Zulu art accessible to the broader public. *Art and Crafts for Africans: A Manual for Art and Craft Teachers* was reprinted at least seven times, remaining in print well into the 1970s, and was used throughout KwaZulu and Natal's teacher training colleges. Likewise, *Zulu Crafts* of 1978 was used in classrooms, museums, and galleries as a reference well into the 1990s. As liberal promoters of the arts sought out examples of indigenous production, the easily reproduced trio of the panel-style *amasumpa* decorated *ukhamba*, *uphiso* and *ingcungu* forms was particularly widely circulated. The crisp lines of Grossert's prints lend themselves easily to reproduction in black and white books, newspapers, as well as relatively accurate photocopying as instructors and art venues began to gain access to inexpensive photocopy technology in the 1980s.

Perhaps one of the most historically ironic classroom reuses of Grossert's trio of pots was in the promotion of Zulu material culture to thousands of Zulu-speaking students in the *isiZulu* cultural textbook *Inqolobane Yesizwe* (Storehouse of the Nation). Sibusiso Nyembezi and O. E. H. Nxumalo published this foundational book in 1966, and it was used throughout the Zulu-speaking school system as an advanced text for students interested in Zulu tradition and culture.³ Grossert's trio appears as the sole illustration of domestic ceramic production. The irony

³ My thanks to Muziwandile Hadebe, who alerted me to this text and recounted his experience of utilizing this book as a supplementary school text while an instructor.

is that thousands of Zulu-speaking students were taught that these pots were the ideal forms when they were, in fact, Grossert's sketches of teen and pre-teen student ceramic projects completed during the previous decade. The original pots may have even been made in the same rural schools where students read *Inqolobane Yesizwe*.

In South Africa's urban areas, the African Art Centers of the South African Institute for Race Relations (SAIRR) reproduced Grossert's illustrations in advertisements from the early 1960s through the late 1990s. SAIRR was a liberal organization that promoted racial cooperation and the institute's art centers were some of the largest urban hubs for art sales by black artists during the height of apartheid. The process of honing marketable Zulu arts and crafts was one of the major goals in the early days of the SAIRR arts centers, which held annual Christmas markets and other promotional efforts to make Zulu artwork popular items of white urbanites' interior décor and gifts sent home to expatriated relatives. Grossert's imagery was used in multiple advertisements and it, along with the definitive words of his handbook, contributed to consumer preferences for the carved V-shaped *amasumpa* style. In 1989, Durban's African Art Centre was featured in a periodical titled *The New African: Towards a Non-Racial South Africa*. The feature article "Creating Vibrant Art," described the history and goals of the SAIRR art centers and the sole illustration is Grossert's trio of pots bearing V-shaped *amasumpa* bumps.

The influence of stylistic canonization has also reached a broad audience in Eshowe, one of the nearest urban centers to many artists living in rural areas of contemporary KwaZulu-Natal. The Vukani Zulu Cultural Museum displays a collection of basketry, ceramics and carving that began over 30 years ago as part of the Vukani Association. Rural ceramists, tourists, student groups, as well as members of the art buying public, visit this institution regularly and for decades Grossert's images have been on display as part of the didactic materials. Even today, illustrations from *Zulu Crafts* remain on display as examples of "Zulu Pottery Types." Of course, the impact of illustrations like this on view in public spaces is difficult to quantify, but during my own research, ceramists from the Nala, Magwaza, and Mzuza families, as well as the Amandlethu Cooperative, discussed the importance of the Vukani Zulu Cultural Museum as a site of sales and distribution.

Grossert's limited stylistic criteria in *Zulu Crafts*, along with related apartheid-era efforts to delimit the canon of black South African art, reverberated in scholarly texts for decades. Scholars since the 1990s have been interested in tracing the full range of artistic production. Two of the major authors to write broadly on Zulu arts during the early 1990s, Carolee Kennedy and Sandra Klopper, discussed the full range of Zulu ceramic decorative techniques and offered interpretation of *amasumpa* bumps.

In her doctoral thesis of 1993, Kennedy discussed the visual affinities between *amasumpa* and the practice of women's scarification and heavily cited the work of A. T. Bryant, as well as other early colonial writers and Grossert's 1953 handbook and his doctoral dissertation. She reasserted that many older ceramics were plain or had very minimal decoration, but that George French Angas's *The Kaffirs Illustrated* of 1849 featured, and several museum collections hold, wares bearing a variety of *amasumpa* types. Kennedy was careful to state that, though there may have been specialists working for royal families, there is scant documentation of what royal ceramics

may have looked like. She also noted, quite accurately, that European and South African museums do not hold representative collections of ceramic work (Kennedy, 1993).

Klopper has made stronger assertions that have had echoing impacts in the world of Zulu ceramic connoisseurship, collecting, and creation. In her dissertation, she linked the raised *amasumpa* motifs found on wooden meat-trays and milk-pails to similar raised designs found on brass armbands that may have been commissioned by the Zulu royal family (Klopper, 1992). She went on to hypothesize, in appropriately conditional phrasing, that *amasumpa* motifs may have been given to royal allies and that the motif's possible royal associations could overshadow kinship relations related to the design of *amasumpa*. This hypothesis was more strongly asserted in the widely distributed book *Art and Ambiguity*. "It is not surprising, then that it would appear that the use of the 'warts' motifs either was or became the prerogative of a newly entrenched 'Zulu' elite in the early 19th century" (pp. 84–85, emphasis added). Klopper relied on fieldwork observations when asserting that the V-shaped *amasumpa* design remained very common in the Melmoth and Makhosini area during her research.⁴ Though she cited no secondary sources relating to ceramics during her argument, Grossert's 1978 *Zulu Crafts* is listed in her bibliography; Grossert's more thorough dissertation is not present. The prejudiced overrepresentation of V-shaped *amasumpa* in *Zulu Crafts* would certainly have bolstered Klopper's own observations and her hypothesis.

Later interpretations and reverberations of Klopper's assertion, along with the broad distribution of Grossert's imagery, have set a trend in the collection, representation, and interpretation of Zulu ceramics into the contemporary era that biases scholars, collectors, and the public alike towards *amasumpa* bump designs and V-shaped *amapuluho* designs when they are available. Widely distributed catalogs of the historical arts of South Africa or Zulu artwork favor *amasumpa*, and V-shaped *amasumpa* have received disproportional representation.

Two of the three Zulu vessels featured in the landmark exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, *Africa: Art of a Continent*, bear *amasumpa*; these rigorously vetted pots bear disk and impressed coil decoration. The text of this exhibition also emphasizes the importance of *amasumpa*, stating that "adding raised *amasumpa* or 'warts', is by far the most common decorative technique adopted by Zulu potters" (Phillips, 1997, pp. 220–221). The 2002 French publication *Arts et Cultures d'Afrique du Sud* includes three Zulu beer pots, one bearing an applied impressed coil *amasumpa* and two with V-shaped *amapuluho* panels. Featuring two of the hypothetically "royal" style vessels, this publication misinterprets and oversteps Klopper's deductions in a way that is becoming widespread, stating that *amasumpa* wares may have been reserved for Zulu royalty (Joubert, 2002). Though the statement remains in a conditional tone the market is not listening to the "maybes" and "perhaps" of scholars.

The demand for the Zulu art recently has inspired an increase in forgeries in the marketplace, and the provenance of some vessels in "recent glossy publications(s)," such as *Zulu Tribal Art of*

⁴ While Klopper's discussion of *amasumpa* across media is insightful, she conflates the rounded or elliptical bosses found on late eighteenth-century ceramics with the angular V-shaped *amasumpa* found in the areas surrounding Melmoth and Makhosini. The difference in technique and local terminology point out the subtlety of ceramic arts. A parallel in beadwork would be to say that all "blue" beads were the same in use and interpretation, regardless of the bead's shade or placement in a pattern, a statement that would certainly not stand up to art historical scrutiny.

2000, have recently been called into question (Loots, 2004). The sudden appearance during the last 10 years of “older” *amapuluho* vessels in extremely fine condition is particularly suspicious from the perspective of a specialist. During nine years of field-research traveling throughout KwaZulu-Natal, I have seen no artists producing *amapuluho* style *amasumpa* bumps who were not working from an illustration.

I am not particularly interested in proving or disproving the “authenticity,” as defined by connoisseurship, of contemporary work created during the last 10 to 20 years. When I view the vast majority of ceramic vessels entering collections and marketplaces, I think of Dinah Khumalo, Norah Sibisi, Jean Hadebe, or Elizabeth Khanyile, the young students whose work was documented by Jack Grossert during the 1950s. The fact that Grossert's iconic illustrations were based on the work of teenaged girls who may still be potters today blurs the fine line that is constructed between “authentic” and “inauthentic.” Instead, I am interested in documenting the masterful hand-built tradition of ceramics in KwaZulu-Natal and the rapid response of contemporary artists to market demands for *amapuluho* designs.



Figure 8. Brian Mkhize, member of Amandlethu Cooperative, 2012. Uphiso vessel. Unfired Earthenware. Photo by Elizabeth Perrill. This *uphiso* and several other vessels were commissioned from the Amandlethu Cooperative for a dealer seeking objects for gallery and online sales. It is a replica of a vessel seen in the catalog *Zulu Tribal Art*.

During a 2012 research trip, I encountered three contemporary ceramic groups or individuals specifically creating v-shaped *amapuluho amasumpa* for the contemporary design and tourist markets. During my visit, members of the Amandlethu Cooperative based in kwaNoshungu near Endlovini on the northeastern coast of KwaZulu-Natal were working from pages of *Zulu Tribal*

Art that depicted two *amapulaho* designs, as well as two inscribed designs by a Durban art dealer (Zaloumis, 2000, pp. 167, 169, 177, 178) (Figure 8). There was no fraud intended, as the artists were signing their work, a contemporary process in Zulu ceramic production. It was clear to the artists that a preference for carved panel work was driving the reproduction of these forms in a region not known for the *amapulaho*-style *amasumpa*. One of the artists, Brian Mkhize, acknowledged that making work from his own creative passions and inspirations was more satisfying, but that working from an image also challenged his skills as a ceramist and was profitable for the cooperative (personal communication, E. Mkhize, July 9, 2012).

Mkhize is part of a growing number of men entering into the field of contemporary ceramics. Historically, ceramics were considered women's work in the Zulu social structure, but the stigma for men creating vessels is quickly dwindling as ceramic arts become a business venture. Another male ceramist working in the *amapulaho* style is Vuyisa Potina. Ironically, Potina does not identify as Zulu. He speaks *isiXhosa* as his first language and lives in Franschhoek, a town in the wine-producing region of the Western Cape, South Africa. He has found that both international and domestic audiences respond well to panel designs carved into small pyramids. He has seen many illustrations of Zulu ceramics, and he knows his new line of ceramics evokes ideas not just of Zulu identity, but indigenous South African aesthetics to domestic and international audiences unfamiliar with the subtleties of South Africa's diverse regions. Potina works largely in a white high-fired stoneware and has created several series of vessels that have the appearance of stacked beer pots that are, in fact, a single vase. His work sells particularly well in the design market and he has traveled to Italy, Spain, and Germany on marketing trips, attending trade fairs along with other South African artists. Potina acknowledges that he has an advantage in the international marketplace over many ceramists because he is computer literate and has access to a stable internet connection. He sees technological marginalization and a lack of business-skills training as major challenges for rural artists, particularly women in KwaZulu-Natal where small business support structures are not nearly as developed as those of the Western Cape (personal communication, V. Potina, March 28, 2012).

Finally, during a visit to the famous Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre, I met women working in the ceramic studio on a new commission for white beer pots bearing rectangular *amapulaho* designs. The group had just begun work on prototypes for Khumbulani Craft, a non-profit organization that supports income generation and business development in the art and craft economic sector. The artists had recently brought in a local beer vessel bearing an incised design of a style similar to Jack Grossert's images from the Nqundu School. The pot was decorated with a leaf pattern still quite common among the bilingual Sotho and Zulu speaking potters living in the Nqutu area of KwaZulu-Natal. This blackened, incised pot was being used as a reference for improving the shape of the commissioned white ceramic pots, but the *amapulaho* motif was specifically requested as the surface decoration by the website product developers (Khumbulani Craft, 2012). Khumbulani Craft's projects are perhaps a glimmer of hope for KwaZulu-Natal business development, but it is often easier for entities like Khumbulani to access artists through established groups, such as the Amandlethu Cooperative or Rorke's Drift, and to request patterns they know will appeal to external audiences. Individual ceramists or families who live far from urban centers are difficult to locate and do not fulfill orders on the scale or with the same design-oriented standardization that cooperatives and art centers can provide. Thus, standardization often trumps regional stylistic variation in the online marketplace.

When we compare Jack Grossert's iconic trio illustration, it looks almost like a photographic negative, a template for the white pots of Potina Ceramics and Khumbulani Craft. The trendsetters of the South African design industry seem to have found a common refrain in the carved *amapuluho* technique. Simple spherical pots and geometric blocks of pyramid decorations work nicely into a modern interior. The repetition of this motif on wooden objects, such as meat trays and milk pails, in combination with ceramic vessels provides a theme for designers trying to capture “ethnic chic.” Yet, what happens to the ceramic diversity of KwaZulu-Natal's rich tradition when members of cooperatives and art centers are reproducing carbon copies of an idealized and highly selective view of what a Zulu or South African pot should look like?

Conclusion

South African scholar Ian Calder has noted, after creating an inventory of public and private museum collections in the Durban and Pietermaritzburg areas, that the *amasumpa* applied bump design has been, for decades, the most overemphasized style in Zulu ceramics (Calder, 1995). After nine years of long hours in archives, museums, and artist's homes and studios, I concur with this statistical observation. I have heard Zulu artists refer to pots decorated with *amasumpa* designs as pots for *abelungu*, white people. I have never seen an artist working in the *amapuluho* design as part of a familial or regional tradition, nor without a photographic reproduction. Of course, styles change and the time intensive process associated with all styles of *amasumpa* are often too demanding when artists are working for local audiences with limited financial resources. Nevertheless, it also seems clear that the diverse range of inscribed and raised designs have been part of the Zulu ceramic oeuvre for generations is habitually undervalued.

Historically, the *amapuluho* style of raised *amasumpa* design was a strong tradition created in the Melmoth and Makhosini region of KwaZulu-Natal. Indeed, the Iziko Museums of Cape Town have on display an excellent example of a 1960s pot from this region bearing bold, inventive, and gestural V-carved panels and bands (Figure 6). Sandra Klopper's discussion of the close ties between woodcarvings and iron armbands similar in style to the Melmoth and Makhosini regional style is insightful. The construction and concretization of Zulu identity through material culture tied to the royal household is an area of research that deserves even more in-depth analysis to build on these excellent observations. But it is also important to realize that the traditions of each region are adapting and adjusting to market demands. Today, ceramics from Melmoth echo the applied *amapuluho* style without the use of applied panels. Instead, rows of widely inscribe lines are cut directly into the pot surface. This is more efficient and allows artists to create the volume of work necessary to make a living from pots sold for 50 rand, or approximately seven dollars, in the local marketplace.

The ingenuity of KwaZulu-Natal's artists and the transformation of this tradition is continuing, even as the continued desire for one style overshadows the breadth of contemporary production. It is important that museums and collectors not shy away from acquiring ceramics that vary from the historical canon of *amasumpa* design. The current desire for *amapuluho* designs in both collecting of historical pots and in contemporary ceramic design are a legacy of apartheid policy that implemented a colonial canonization through the repetition of imagery and ideas. There is little doubt that Grossert's assertions and illustrations are a part of this legacy. The shift to codify

norms of “tribal heritage” was part of a programmatic pedagogical change instituted by the 1953 Bantu Education Act. Grossert's illustrations were executed just as these policies came into place and he worked passionately to document many art forms that were being created in rural areas, including weaving, carving, beadwork, and ceramics. Though only a limited number of images came to represent Zulu arts in his handbooks, the diversity of the arts produced in KwaZulu-Natal is preserved through Grossert's illustrative oeuvre. It is important that we understand the echoing effects of divisive policies that attempted to narrow artistic norms that were part of apartheid policies attempting to accentuate tribal identity through artistic expression. We must celebrate not only the possibly “royal” associations of Zulu ceramics, but the everyday aesthetics of beer drinking and socialization that continue to be a part of contemporary Zulu ceramic tradition, a tradition that is constantly redefined via language, region, and aesthetic influence, a tradition as mutable and dynamic as any other.

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