



STAINS INNER:

The Lived Experience, Creative Practice
and Changing Body Consciousness in HIV and AIDS

*A phenomenological exploration of the body's lived experiences of HIV and AIDS
through the process of theatre making .*

*A Research Report submitted towards a
MADA by Course Work and Research Report*

15 March 2012

Phala Ookeditse
(396523)

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I, Phala Ookeditse Koketso Phala, hereby declare that this research document is the result of my own work and that I have not submitted it previously at any other tertiary institution. This is in fulfillment of a Masters of Arts degree in Dramatic Arts by course work and research.

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Abstract

This creative practice-based research report explores a phenomenological approach to the body as a sensorially, audibly, visibly and viscerally present entity. The research argues for an experience of embodiment that highlights the primacy of the body within the context of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in South Africa. It addresses theoretical and methodological concerns of theatre making as a creative practice for interrogating the body's lived experience of HIV and AIDS. The study argues that theatre has tended to describe the surface experience of the trauma of HIV and AIDS and that it has failed to speak to the lived body experience of HIV and AIDS. In so doing, this report excavates the innovation of a theatre making process that helps illuminate complex human experience through performance.

This research report is written in a way that allows the reader access to the process that was developed by the researcher/theatre maker/writer. Through a facilitated process of theatre making, this study focuses on the four co-researchers/performers lived experiences of HIV and AIDS and how through the use of stimuli (visual art and elements of nature) and the use of the combination of somatic play, movement and sound, they evoked and exhumed their bodies living memory. The accounts that were made in the exploration are presented in this report and in the performance and recording (DVD) of *Stains Inner*.

This research posits the body as a knowing entity in the era of HIV and AIDS in South Africa and highlights the process of *on-flow* in theatre making as a fluid dynamic process through which the body can viscerally access the latent lived experiences associated with the pandemic. It is a powerful process that enhances the body aesthetic in theatre. The study concludes that this form of theatre making has the capacity to create a transformative experience for the performer and audience. The study also puts forth recommendations that would possibly shift the landscape of HIV and AIDS discourse.

Key words:

Practice-based research; HIV and AIDS; somatic play, movement and sound; lived memory; visceral; body expressivity; on-flow; performance as site.

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Introduction

Sometime in 2009, I visited the Campus Health premises at Wits University for an HIV rapid test. The moment I got inside the testing room my body was clasped with tension and fear although I could safely say I had been clear of HIV infection risk for over 11 months, counting from the last time I tested. I wondered what my body was trying to 'tell' me and what it knew which my mind did not. Our bodies as the means through which we live in this world are exposed to a life laden with fear, anxiety, shame, trauma, hopelessness, loss of both the perception and actuality of life. These are but a few of the effects within the era of HIV and AIDS. I have observed that in the era of HIV and AIDS we are likely to experience immense changes within the space of a single lifetime. The effects of HIV and AIDS life, impacts our bodies in deeper ways than those the current responses on HIV and AIDS are addressing. The body absorbs such lived experiences in complex ways that are both conscious and subconscious. HIV, regardless of whether you are positive or not, has inscribed itself upon us all. We are all affected; the trauma of HIV has led us, in South Africa, to dissociate, to ignore, and to shut down from the reality of how hurt we are physically. It is therefore necessary to seek to address the deeper effects of lived experience of the body in the era of HIV and AIDS.

As a theatre practitioner, I intuitively turned to theatre to establish how it has addressed the deep seated effects of HIV and AIDS on the body. Although theatre has made significant contributions to the HIV and AIDS response, it has not adequately addressed the effects of HIV and AIDS on the body. Theatre has tended to describe the facts about HIV and AIDS rather than how we have come to embody a silence that kills souls, relationships, and bodies. As such, it has glossed over the impact of HIV and AIDS on the 'inner' landscape of the body. In an attempt to address this gap in the HIV and AIDS response, especially in the response that uses theatre, I submit that there are possible ways in which theatre can help attend to this gap and thus focus on the primacy of the body to address the deep seated traumatic effects of HIV and AIDS within the body. As a theatre maker, I therefore set out to facilitate a theatre making exploration that would help excavate the HIV and AIDS lived experience of the body.

This research report forms part of a practice-based research project. It is a written document that speaks back to a research intention that sought to invigorate the phenomenological understanding of the body within the HIV and AIDS discourse, with particular reference to performance, so that we might see how bodies matter in new ways. By using the title *Stains Inner: The Lived Experience, Creative Practice and Changing Body Consciousness in HIV and AIDS*, I intended to not only affirm the visceral sense of the lived experience of the body, but I also wanted to suggest that this research report is about what is latent to the body because of the nature of the body's perception and consciousness in the era of HIV and AIDS. The work of facilitating the creative practice and writing about the critical processes, capacities, and sensations of the body in performance has demanded a particular mode of attention, and here the concept of *on-flow* has proved useful, not as a method or a theory, but as an integral culmination of body consciousness.

Holding onto the notion of the body as a knowing entity within the confines of academic scholarship has involved making a series of leaps through theoretical and conceptual debates, as well as a generous amount of methodological inventiveness. The disconnection between theoretical bodies of HIV and AIDS discourse, which are silent, subservient, and sterile and those of real life bodies, which are often noisy, troublesome, and messy, is one that I focused on by way of engaging this study. I have sought to embrace materiality, from the flesh and blood materiality of the body to the specific material qualities of the research methods and devices that I have used. Turning to this materiality has introduced a sensuous dimension to this project, creating a mode of scholarship that viscerally and vibrantly resonates with the living body.

Thinking creatively about how to undertake this research led me to ask different questions and to find other ways of showing and telling. In this research report, I present an account of the body that was created with the help of four performers; Albert Silindokuhle Khoza, Bongani Ntshingila, Lerato Matolodi and Bongani Malinga. By making use of the collaborative process this study does not only challenge the belief of the body as a knowing entity, but hopes to

exemplify how HIV and AIDS affect us all. In this creative practice I took the role of the facilitator involved in a delicate journey of the body's discovery, through a process of excavating sensitive memory of HIV and AIDS lived experience. It was a journey at times laden with risks of unearthing hidden truths that are hard to bear as the body searched for the 'purity' of the lived experience held within. This journey was marked by a process of intertwining, braiding and crisscrossing of theory and practice tenets that were elemental to theatre making processes as the locus of research.

My collaborators' contributions came in the form of using their own bodies as sites for creative space (as participants in the creative exploration), culminating in contributions through their spoken words and written thoughts (as co-researchers), as well as in the performance of *Stains Inner*, the creative offering of this research. Much of this data has been written into these pages, and I have used their own words wherever possible – both in quotations and in my own writing. A DVD recording of *Stains Inner* is attached to this report. The recording allows the viewer to see the significance of bodies and experience ways of listening to and caring for them more directly than this text alone can offer.

By emphasizing the finer details of the project my intention is to bring the reader closer to the research process, creating a sense of proximity with the life of the study. Framed as practice-based research, this study falls within the paradigm of Practice as Research (Bourdieu, 1977; Fraleigh, 2000; Niedderer, 2007; Latimer, 2009; Steward, 2009). Practice as Research aims to offer an alternative approach that does not only permit for practice to be the basis for research, but also brings to the fore works that are rooted in the body. More importantly, Practice as Research stands in contrast to academic research stances that hold conventional forms of research 'in such high esteem that all our lived experience of the world seems by contrast to be of little value' (Merleau-Ponty, 1948:32). As a research domain, Practice as Research offers creative practice that is 'embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, co-experienced, covert – and all the more meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out' (Conquergood, 1999: 312). As such, following cues from Merleau-Ponty (1948) and Conquergood (1999), Practice as Research, through its emphasis on process and how process

brings about product, validates knowledge situated in the body, through a structured interrogation that documents and makes available such knowledge, and in so doing exemplifying a healthy exchange between theory and practice. Oftentimes, the treatment of the body in Practice as Research, and indeed in this particular study, recognizes the body and mind as unity; negating the binary polarity which has dominated western discourses of the body for years. As Steinman (1986) argues:

That mind and body are a unity is as evident as the process by which the human infant, progressing through the basic developmental movements, acquires fundamental knowledge of its environment. Physical and mental information are inseparable, the warp and the weft of the individual's whole sense of reality (Steinman, 1986:2).

I believe it is the nature of Practice as Research projects for the researcher to explain the canons that form the basis of his/her investigation, setting up theoretical underpinnings and how theory links to such canons. It is important to prepare a methodological outline of the practice and how it hopes to answer the research question(s).

The creative process made use of stimuli utilizing visual art and elements of nature, with somatic play, movement and sound as operative tools employed to unlock the creative latency of the bodily memory. As Zarrilli (2006:55) observes, 'it is through the awakening of an awareness of the inner body-mind that lies dormant in our everyday lives' that processes such as theatre making deal with the primacy of the body expression. As a theatre maker, I began working with particular stimuli after I was introduced to this method of working by several mentors in my earlier stages of postgraduate studies. I was introduced to the use of stimuli in theatre making by Sara Matchett, Warren Nebe, Athena Mazarakis and Helen Iskander. Further interest was harnessed by interactions with theatre practitioners such as, Mwenya Kabwe, Mandla Mbothwe and PJ Sabhagga. My use of the stimuli in this research is also owed to the Practice as Research project I carried out as part of the Masters core-course in March 2010. In that project, I used visual art and elements of nature as stimuli in a theatre making process that produced a play entitled *Ungasabi – Metaphor of Crossing Borders* which featured in the 2010 Drama for Life Festival. This study therefore is my second bite at the use of visual

art and elements of nature as stimuli, however the context in which they are employed in this study differ greatly from the *Ungasabi* project. In *Ungasabi* the objective was to engage in short experiment with the stimuli as basis for creating theatre and on how theatre retains the stimuli on the process of storying, while in this study the visual art and elements of nature are used as tools to access different states of bodily expressivity.

This study was structured into phases in order to encompass a comprehensible structure for an academic research project. It is therefore useful to outline these phases. The first phase was the contextualization phase which included an extensive literature review of the subject matter under discussion, and the desk study into theoretical underpinnings that set up the creative practice component of the study. This phase speaks to the structuring of the study as the phenomenological practice-based research and outlines the researcher's claims, hypothesis, and presuppositions going into the creative practice that may prove, disprove and or shift these claims, hypothesis and presuppositions thereby contributing to knowledge in the field of study.

The second phase was the creative practice which entailed an exploration through a synthesis of tools focusing on the primacy of the body as a knowing entity. This phase included the process of excavating the lived experiences of four research participants/co-researchers¹, data collection and processing, working towards a theatrical offering imbued in the principle of theatre as both a process and a product and the showing of the theatrical offering, '*Stains Inner*', described at the beginning of this introduction. *Stains Inner* was shown at the Amphitheatre, a part of the WITS Theatre complex in WITS East Campus, Johannesburg in November 2011, following a six week exploration process.

The final phase was the discursive reflection of all the steps taken and at the core of this phase is data triangulation and analysis that has resulted in the written component of the study – the research report. This research report is in what Melrose (1994b) terms an "*interpraxiological*" dialogue, written from the position of an experiential agent who produces both practice and

¹ I use the term 'participants/co-researchers' in reference to dual responsibilities of my collaborators. In the act of engaging their bodies in the actual creative practice they were participants in the process I facilitated and whenever they got took a objective stance to that act when they

theory and moves between an internal and external 'reading' of the creative process and thus discursively engages theatre making process as a practice based phenomenon explored within the confines of existential phenomenology as taken up by Merleau-Ponty (1962). It attends to show how this phenomenological practice was approached and undertaken and the insights it has brought forth. The methodological set up of creative practice will be discussed to contextualize the creative practice discussed in this report.

The creative process and its shifts will be discussed including *on-flow* as one of the critical findings of the process. These will be discussed in a way that intertwines and braids together the crisscrossing of experiential and theoretical voices of the collaborators, at times from a temporal, distanced yet experiential position of the writer, who was also the bricoleur and facilitator of the creative process. I selected several methods of data collection that would contribute toward my phenomenological study. These methods included the use of a workbook that entailed the exploration exercise and a record of methodological shifts, spontaneous journals by the participants/co-researchers in which they recorded exploration journey during and after each session, and a structured journal in which I recorded thematic and theoretical shifts and overall research findings. This phase also included the encompassing data packaging through a DVD of creative practice as part of the final submission with the written research report.

My role as the exploration facilitator in the creative component of the research is not aligned with the empirical research approach of the detached observer; rather it was an experiential one where I found myself entangled with the research's creative process as subjectively as the participants. This I believe is owing to *on-flow* which I elaborate on in the later pages of this research report. However, my subjective embodied involvement in the creative process should not be misconstrued for my lack of objectivity in the research.

This Research Report is not written in the traditional chapter form synonymous with academic research but rather in the light of following the cyclical energy of creative practice, characterized by *on-flow*, I have chosen to use titles to demarcate sections. Figure 1, below illustrates the structure of this practiced-based research.

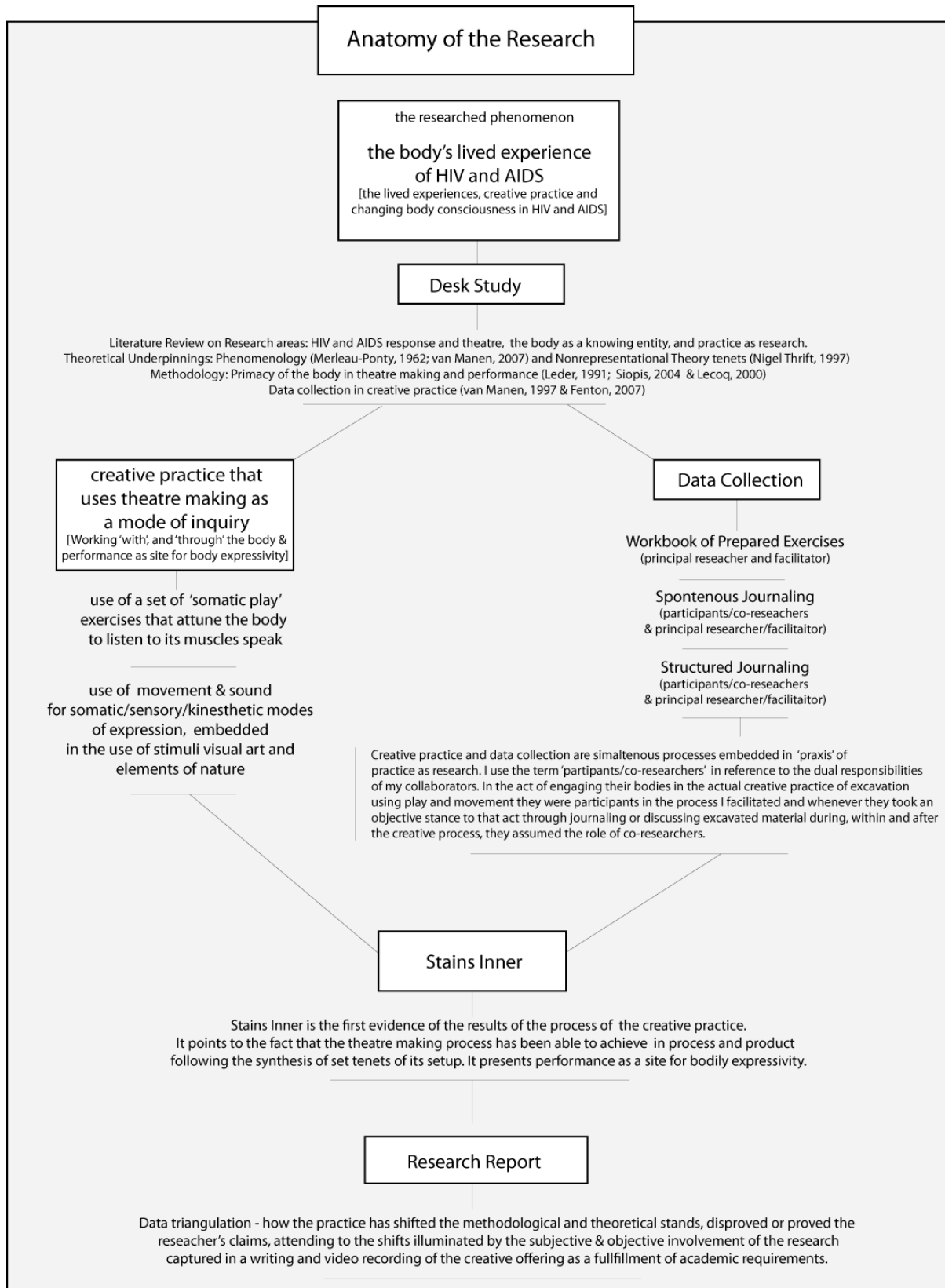


Figure 1: The structure of this practice-based research

Assembling the 'Bricolage'

'Bricolage' is a term that offers a way to describe what we do. In this context it refers to the approaches to research that use multiple methodologies. These consist of a pieced together, close-knit set of practices providing solutions to a problem in a concrete situation. (Weinstein and Weinstein 1992 as cited in Stewart 2007: 127)

To interrogate the tacit belief and claim of the body as a knowing entity I had to assemble an appropriate research framework that would illuminate this belief and claim, in other words assemble a 'bricolage' as Weinstein and Weinstein (1992) offer in the above quote. This conceptual framework is a synthesis of theoretical underpinnings that are embedded in creative practice as a site of knowledge exploration. This study intended to undertake a site exploration of body knowledge in relation to HIV and AIDS. The "bricolage" consist of a set of methods, techniques, and tools assembled by the bricoleur as the researcher, attending to the pragmatic, strategic, intentional, self-reflexive creative practice. Taking a cue from Ball and Smith (1992:3) when they posit that 'the theoretical framework sets an agenda for the types of researchable questions that can be addressed', I, in the following paragraphs, outline my agenda as to how I assembled the creative practice that investigates the claim of the body as knowing of HIV and AIDS effects.

Following my experience of the overwhelming tension and fear when I took an HIV test, I kicked off the setting up of my bricolage and agenda by attending to literature on HIV and AIDS. I wanted to know how the body is 'held' within this discourse. Within the discourse of HIV and AIDS, observes Patton (2002:1), 'it is apparent that AIDS activists have been deeply aware of the ways in which the body is constituted through biomedicine and social science and painfully cognizant of how that body is policed through the public policies and health education programs developed from these research disciplines'. One could argue that beyond this 'policing of the body' through distinct, appealing, and theoretically uncomplicated declarative 'prevention messages' and finite policy driven education and marketing campaigns rooted in teleological assumptions regarding behavior-change in HIV and AIDS response, lies the disembodied and distanced perspective of the body, which perpetuates an intellectual-

somatic divide. The situation is no different for the South African context where there is an estimated 5.6 million people living with HIV and AIDS. It is a statistical projection that is higher than any other country's (UNAIDS; 2010). Taking into consideration that HIV and AIDS have enormous and devastating ramifications on multiple levels inter alia personal, societal, economic and political levels, it is very clear that the inexorable progress of the virus, is beset by a complex structure. The culturally elaborated codes of behavior within HIV and AIDS not only concern gender, personal identity, community morality, status, prestige, family and household organization, the high statistics show the extent of the scourge within South Africa in terms of the citizenry's exposure to HIV and AIDS. This exposure goes beyond biology. It speaks to the complex relations within this country. Dow and Essex (2010) observe that:

...many more are affected by AIDS than just those who are infected with HIV: orphans have lost parents, parents have lost children, spouses have lost partners, schools have lost teachers, farms have lost farmers. So behind every HIV infection is some form of personal tragedy for others – not just for the deceased, the sick person, or the stigmatized individual who is infected (Dow and Essex, 2010:ix).

The impact of HIV and AIDS on the affected population conjures up a complexity of its own when one considers the fact that AIDS is a disease that follows no precedent for coping both on a personal and societal level, leaving those affected and those living with HIV and AIDS helpless and hopeless. One is therefore compelled to seek answers as to what happens to a 'body' that experiences a wrack of another 'body' going through the drawn-out event of slow and lingering damage by HIV that leads to eminent death. It seems that the fear and tension I experienced in the testing room at the Campus Health premises is linked to these startling images of the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS. My experience of fear and tension points out that my body has somewhat embodied these effects. So if my body could unconsciously embody such an impact of HIV and AIDS so could bodies of many others living in the era of HIV and AIDS. As such, I sought to find out how the body has embodied the impact of HIV and AIDS and to what extent. I, therefore, invited four other people to help me investigate the impact of HIV and AIDS on the body, using their own bodies as a space for investigating this lived experience, hence the collaborative approach in this study.

In sum, the literature on HIV and AIDS presents the frame of reference from which HIV and AIDS has been understood and contextualized in response to its devastating effects on the body. Only a small number of theoretical studies and empirical research have begun to explore how humanity in general copes with living with HIV and AIDS (Evans 2002). Research on the lived experience and how this translates into how we construct the meaning of HIV and AIDS particularly within the South African context has to an extent been ignored and neglected. Those studies that have given insight to the lived experience of HIV and AIDS have mostly used conventional research modes. Although these studies have contributed positively to the HIV and AIDS response, much ground has not shifted from the cognitive ways of knowing that have dominated HIV and AIDS responses. Therefore, the body as a knowing entity in HIV and AIDS remains on the side-line. This study does not only attend to the need for exploring the body's lived experiences of HIV and AIDS, but also takes a critical stance to intellectualism, which has defined the body as a passive object and, as such, treat it only as a reflection of ideas and symbolic meanings manifested in academic ritual practices.

By contrast, phenomenology is concerned with a mindful body (the body-mind nexus) and somatic modes of attention as a way through which the body perceives and lives in the world. Phenomenology further posits that bodies are active in both learning and remembering; as such it is not only the mind that constructs identities, but the body as a whole is at work simultaneously. Phenomenology, argues Merleau-Ponty (1962), 'seeks the intangible obvious, that which lies before our eyes and in our hearts however obscured through habit, even as its existential conscience reminds us that the innocence in the river of our body's memory is not *naïveté*'. This is a principle carried in Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology that posits the body as a knowing entity hence the use of his existential phenomenological lens in this study. Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology is based on perception as the way in which the body interacts with the world and relates to other bodies. This phenomenology principle is consistent with Russell (1967) when he argues that:

We have acquaintance in sensation with the data of the outer senses, and in introspection with the data of what may be called the inner sense – thoughts, feelings, desires, etc.; we have acquaintance in memory with things which have been data either of the outer senses or of the inner sense. Further, it is probable, though not certain, that we have acquaintance with Self [the body], as that which is aware of things or has desires towards things (Russell, 1967:28).

Although Russell argues for the body-mind nexus when he posits that we have acquaintance in sensation and introspection of outer and inner senses of the body, he concedes uncertainty when it comes to the question of acquaintance with the self. The self here I deduce refers to the body. I suggest that Russell's uncertainty is due to the lack of evidence in how such an acquaintance is achieved since there is not much research undertaken in proving or disproving this acquaintance. This study is therefore important in contributing to scholarship on the body as a knowing entity and importantly to the acquaintance of the body with itself in the era of HIV and AIDS, which I submit, is attainable through the phenomenological attentive theatre making process and performance.

I find existential phenomenology as the ideal conceptual framework for a research inquiry which considers that...'[lived] experience is also a form of knowledge gained as first hand, knowledge gained from praxis' (George, 1996: 23). Mostly, we are ignorant of how our body learns and memorizes in daily activities as it interacts with the environment. Joanna Latimer (2009:4) observes that 'bodies do not only hurt, scream, giggle, cramp, faint, get numb, they also at times seem to conceal, rebel, falsify and distort ... bodies can seem to be *unknowing*'. Latimer's observation resonates with Russell's concept of uncertainty that I alluded to in the above paragraph. This is more so because bodily practices remain unconscious to us, nonetheless it is evident that once we have learnt something through our body it continues to play an important role in how we situate ourselves in the world and how we perceive others and this is no different in the situation of HIV and AIDS, as Merleau-Ponty observes:

My body is geared to the world when my perception offers me a spectacle as varied and as clearly articulated as possible, and when my motor intentions, as they unfold, receive from the world the responses they anticipate. This maximum

distinctness in perception and action defines a perceptual ground, a basis of my life, a general milieu for the coexistence of my body and the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:250).

The perceptual ground that Merleau-Ponty argues here rejects 'cognitive registry' as the sole source and means of knowing. In following Merleau-Ponty, I take the body as the locus of the self and the site where public domain meets the private, where the social is negotiated, produced and made sense of. This is a notion of the body shared by Henri Lefebvre (1991) when he suggests that the body is the means by which we produce our social beings, by which we produce social space. My 'theoretical bricolage' is drawn from the understanding of how the body grasps knowledge in the world in a fuller sense.

This study seeks to find the way(s) in which the body through the process of theatre and consequently performance can express itself as knowing in relation to the impact of HIV and AIDS. The trajectory of the body as a means of expression in this study is taken up as an attempt to deal with something repressed that subsequently returns to the surface with all uncertainty that surrounds it. Subsequently, the creative exploration in this study falls into the category of body of work that focuses on experimentation with the body's lived experience, as a result the study also looks into the subcategories of perception and memory excavation.

The Bodily Perception

To conceptualize the bodily perception as taken up by this study, I draw on Drew Leder's (1991) analysis of the perceptual bodily operatives in the world from his book '*The Absent Body*'. Leder (1991:1) addresses the 'question of why the body, as a ground of experience . . . tends to recede from direct experience' thereby becoming absent to us. Following Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the body as lived (*lieb*), Leder posits the lived body not as a homogenous thing, but rather 'a complex harmony of different regions, each operating according to indigenous principles and incorporating different parts of the world into its space' (1990:2).

To elaborate this complexity, Leder provides a lengthy description of two modes of perceptive embodiment through which our everyday experience is usually constituted - the 'surface body' and the 'recessive body'. According to Leder, the 'surface body' is physiologically characterized primarily by *exteroception*. He explains *exteroception* as a way in which 'the outer-directed five senses' open us out to the external world, usually 'without immediate emotional response' (1990:43). This exteroceptive perception is not different for the body in the situation of HIV and AIDS. The outer directed senses are the means through which we are alive to the effects of the pandemic. We see those close to us suffer from AIDS, at times we are exposed to the putrid *smells* of their disintegrating body system while caring for them, we *touch* them in show of affection, at times as well as aid them to walk when their limbs are weakened, we *hear* all the derogatory things said of them and us as other people try to distance themselves from our predicament. Thus it is through our *exteroceptive* surface body that we live through the situation of HIV and AIDS. And as Leder suggests, at times what registers on the surface body is not necessarily registered in a logical manner on the body inner landscape, neither does it induce an obvious emotional register.

The complex body response, explains Leder, lies with *proprioception* where the surface body mediates the information from the outer senses. *Proprioception* can be referred to as the 'sense of balance, position, and muscular tension, provided by receptors in muscles, joints, tendons, and the inner ear' (1990:3). As such, *proprioception* signifies one of the specific areas where the distinction between phenomenal consciousness and physical body gets defined. I believe proprioceptive communication, which this study attends to through theatre making, is reliant on integrating different modalities of sensory information of the body with the intra-corporeal information. I argue that this integration that helps effect somatic memory can be provided by the use of stimuli of visual art and elements of nature. I attend to this argument in the later topics of this study, particularly under topics Visual Art and Elements of Nature. This understanding of the body's exteroceptive consumption of the world also operates within the era of HIV and AIDS, as thus contributes to our lived experiences of the scourge. This way of bodily communication is also argued by Lorna Marshall (2001) when she states that:

... we receive all our incoming information about the world via body's sense organs; through eyes, ears, skin, nose and tongue. It is a two way process; from the world through our physical senses to our inner landscape, and then from our reactions and thoughts back to the world through physical action. And the body stands at the centre of this constant exchange. It is the interface between our inner life (thoughts, feelings, memory, dreams) and the outside world (other people, objects, the physical environment) (Marshall, 2001:xii).

Understanding the modes through which the body perceives the world was critical in designing a creative process that connected to this aspect of the body in exploring its lived experience of HIV and AIDS. Proprioceptive communication which can be evoked by the use of stimuli (visual art and elements of nature) moves us into another mode of perception that Leder (1990:42) brings our attention to. This is the 'recessive body', that is, 'the deep, inner, visceral body of corporeal depths' which in physical terms includes 'the mass of internal organs and processes' enveloped by the body surface. Physiologically, suggests Leder, in this body our experience of our internal viscera and organs is characterized by '*interoception*' (1990:43). *Interoception* deals with how humans perceive 'feelings' from the body, providing a sense of the body's physical condition and underlying mood and emotional state. This often is the 'absent body' that Leder (1990) alludes to, bringing about the uncertain acquaintance that Russell (1967) speaks of. This is the body that Patton (2002) argues HIV and AIDS responses have neglected, the body that existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962) puts to the fore and this is the body whose investigation I argue for by way of this research. Therefore, in this study my participants/co-researchers and I, seek to excavate this body through a theatre making process and let it express itself in performance not of text but of itself. We pay attention to the inherent emotional (affective/motivational) qualities and reflexive autonomic effects that come forth from this body when induced through the use of stimuli. With the use of stimuli, the interoceptive system associated with autonomic motor control and somatic energy, though distinct from the exteroceptive and proprioceptive systems, is to an extent reliant on the exteroceptive and proprioceptive systems to guide and bring to the fore its contents of somatic motor activity.

With the above described understanding of bodily perception, the theatre making process, as a creative locus of this study, was designed such that it focused on the primacy of the body-as-whole in excavating the lived experience of HIV and AIDS. This focus on the primacy of the body was achieved through creating a synthesis of integrative frames for the creative practice premised on phenomenological attentive research. These frames in particular illuminate three areas, namely, the phenomenological practice principles, the creative tools that would be the vehicle for probing the body and the data collection tools that would help crystallize the outcomes of the creative practice.

Integrative frames for this phenomenological creative practice

The integrative frames for this study form critical aspects of how this study attends to empirical research. I start by contextualizing how I, as the researcher perceive theatre making, attend to the phenomenon conceptually and the data collection tools that use in this study.

Theatre Making

It is critical to attend to how I, as the researcher, view and frame theatre making in this study. I perceive theatre making as a site for the production of meaning constituted by its products; a site where the ways in which knowledge and messaging are produced can be interrogated, inspected and performed. It is an engagement with several ideas about creating meaning through a dramatic process and performance as not a product but a site of experiencing such a dramatic process. I believe such meaning in theatre making is constructed by challenging and inviting the following principles that guide the theatre making as a research methodology:

- **Non-hierarchical collective collaboration of an ensemble;** the basis of theatre making should acknowledge that those who participate in the process are equal contributors knowledgeable through their contributions in the process and the lived experiences of such a process. The hierarchy of traditional ways of conceptualizing theatre often impedes free flow of ideas and knowledge and tends to produce more of top-down products. I believe theatre making processes should be anti-authoritarian, dialogical, interactive and

liberating in nature. I concur with the Freireian pedagogic approach which defines any act that limits human potential as oppressive and dehumanizing. Paulo Freire (1997) seeks a more liberating approach to learning and production of meaning when he argues:

What I have been proposing is a profound respect for the cultural identity of the students – a cultural identity that implies respect for the language of the other, the color of the other, the gender of the other, the class of the other, the sexual orientation of the other, the intellectual capacity of the other; that implies the ability to stimulate the creativity of the other. But these things take place in a social and historical context and not in pure air. These things take place in a history and I, Paulo Freire, am not the owner of history (Freire, 1997:307-308).

I understand the addressing of the 'other' by Freire not to be limited to the people's relations but that it extends to entities as well. As such, the other could mean the empirical practice dominated by conventional notions or the further suppression of the recessive body by the tendency to lean towards the surface body. Within Freire's pedagogy, an individual's ontological vocation is to be the subject who acts upon and transforms the world. This praxis, action and reflection, propels the individual towards ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life through initial subjective engagement and reflection resulting not only in rational and objective action, but also an embodied experiential one. Theatre making should then help us deal creatively and critically with reality in order to transform it through collaborative participatory exploits which are more horizontal and dialogic in nature. And from this study's perspective, the participants equally are co-researchers, hence the term, participant/co-researchers as adopted by this study.

- **An Embodied Expression;** the theatre making process needs to allow its participants freedom to excavate materials psychosomatically. In turn, theatre makers also need to be committed to honoring and acknowledging the expressive materials discovered in the process without privileging one over the other or passing judgment. This is a commitment to and ownership of the ideas that could yield invaluable results for the theatre making process. This is what I would refer to as a total commitment to art expressivity in the sense

that expressive and creative languages are not censored but embraced. In this way, the process can open up the opportunity for multiple expressive voices.

- **Closing of the gap between art and life;** Risky as it might be to allow for participants' vulnerabilities to surface in the theatre making process, it is equally beneficial to achieve an inventive product with care and sensitivity applied in the process. This aspect would bring forth genuine experiential depths and reflections of our social realities. Richard Schechner puts it more explicitly when he says, 'the body is an organism of endless adaptability. A knee can think, a finger can laugh, a belly cry, a brain walk and a buttock listens' (1973: 132). This negation of the gap between art and life can achieve a process of embodiment through which participants/co-researchers can access organic connection phenomenological attentive between across the body-mind and lived experience. For the participants of such a theatre making process to open up to levels of vulnerability there is need for a 'safe space' to be created and facilitated, and it is for this reason that this study makes use of facilitation in its theatre making as a creative practice.
- **A distrust of overreliance on spoken words;** theatre making should not entirely rely on words for expression. The words and rational thought can be given less prominence in order to achieve other ways of communicating. Murray and Keefe (2007a:3) assert this by arguing that '[t]oo often... physicality is relegated to a mere supporting role to the word, is regarded as vulgar or simply a means to an end – at its worst being the vehicle by which the words are delivered or moved around the stage; or reduced to... routine gestures and mannerisms...'. A theatre making process needs to allow a trust of other ways of communicating and expression to effectively bring forth deeper meanings of complex issues it deals with.
- **An escape from theatrical conventions;** I would like to believe that the theatre making process should not seek to conform to convention but escape it through innovative means in order to produce new work. The means of exploration should challenge theatre makers to employ non-literal ways and approaches to theatre making. Therefore the methodological parameters of such processes should give tools for exploration instead of definite ways.

The above mentioned presuppositions on theatre making frame how creative practice was undertaken in this study.

The Phenomenological Gaze

On the phenomenological frame I employed Max Van Manen's theoretical lens for distilling the researched phenomenon. Van Manen (2007: 12) observes that 'unlike the poet, the phenomenologist directs the gaze toward the regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the porous membranes of past sediments – and then infuses us, permeates us, infects us, touches us, stirs us, exercises a formative affect'. I concur with van Manen's analysis of the principal task of the phenomenologist and in directing my phenomenological gaze I employed the following activities in my comprehensive framework to help distil comprehensive outcomes in this practice-based, experimental and creative practice process. I specifically picked up five of his distinct research activities, these includes:

- (a) 'Turning to a phenomenon of a particular interest to the researcher' (1997:30) - van Manen posits that it is not necessary to 'bracket' information as in the sense of German philosopher Husserl (1859 -1938). Husserl is considered the founder of phenomenology. Van Manen rather advocates that researchers and their research subjects need to make their knowledge of the phenomenon explicit. This I believe calls for a clear methodological framework, data collection tools and statement of how every aspect of the research is framed. This principle of clear and concise practice in dealing with the study as a whole and in particular with canons of the study one at a time was well communicated to the participants and this became the *modus operandi* of the research.
- (b) 'Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize' (1997:31) - here van Manen suggests that the researcher needs not to take anything for granted and prepares tools to help seek a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. In the context of this research, the data collection was conducted through experiential observation and journaling both by the researcher and participants. Each exploration session was concluded with a sharing ritual where each collaborator spoke back to their session's

journey, highlighting shifts, discoveries, impediments and concerns. This session was integral to holding the safe space that this kind of exploration needed. In this session, participants also shared how the exploration of each other's journey impacted on their own.

- (c) 'Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon' (1997: 30) - what van Manen refers to as 'meaning units' or themes are said to give structure to the experience under investigation, and meaning is constructed from the individual themes that are rooted in the investigation. According to van Manen, the exigent aspect when dealing with research is deciding whether the theme or unit is essential to the experience or is incidental. This helps the researcher outline whether meaning is changed or lost as a result of altering, removing or adding the unit in question. In the case of this research, it was critical to observe what emerged as the body was freed to look into its lived memory of HIV and AIDS through the use of visual art drawings and elements of nature and subsequent somatic play, movement and sound.
- (d) Describing 'through the art of writing and rewriting' (1997; 30) – according to van Manen writing and rewriting is 'giving appearance and body to thought' (1997:127). It is through the writing and rewriting of shifts, discovering and findings throughout the process (journaling, recording and reflecting) and analysis after the process that structure of the meaning from body's lived experience can be discovered. This writing and rewriting process helps create phenomenological content that brings meaning to light. This, according to van Manen, is achieved through the researchers' maintenance of strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon. This was achieved through keeping up with the emerging themes and constant reflection throughout the practice.
- (e) 'Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole' (1997; 30) – here van Manen highlights that it is important to have clear research plans and to have an overall picture of how the research will proceed and how the process and text will be organized. He however cautions that one should not be consumed with writing the details of the exploration until the research is done.

Max van Manen's principles resonate with Niedderer (2007) when she argues that practice should be used as a means of making tacit knowledge available to research. I concur with Niedderer when she further argues that practice includes the experiential part of knowledge which often evades conventional communication by verbal or textual means. This, she emphasizes, is brought about by the prioritization of propositional knowledge, and therefore creative practice needs more structured and comprehensive methods of data collection to make available such evasive communication. In attending to this concern, let me layout the synthesis of van Manen's principles with creative and data collection tools, which form the third frame of the integrative phenomenological attentive creative practice.

Data Collection Tools

In attending to Max van Manen's principle **(a)**, in which he suggests that there is need for the researcher and their research subjects to make their knowledge of the phenomenon explicit, I used a workbook which outlines the detailed plan of exploration sessions. This workbook also served as the blue print which serves as the backdrop for analysis of shifts or lack thereof established in the exploration. It contains the plan for each exploration session with exercises aimed at preparing the body through exploring with visual art, exploring with elements of nature, accessing the inner self through somatic play, movement and sound, and the collaborative juxtaposed storying and the treatment of performance as a site of forms and levels of bodily expression.

Van Manen's principle **(b)**, which attends to investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it, resonates with Tim Ingold's argument that planning of creative practice is but 'stepping stones along the way, punctuating the process rather than initiating it or bringing it to a close' (Ingold, 2000:231). The experiential voices in the creative exploration were recorded using forensic reflection method which according to David Fenton (2007:53) is 'a methodological strategy to process meaning before, during and after practice'. In particular, my co-researchers and I used the method of spontaneous journaling. Spontaneous journaling concentrates on the phenomenon investigated; recording in first person descriptive voice the

intuitive description of the creative exploration as it unfolds, capturing reflections on the material and experiences emerging out of the creative process. I had also requested my participants/co-researchers to record their analytical and theoretical observations distinctly in this journal, whether they formed during and or after each exploration session. This I requested because the formation of knowledge in bodily practice and embodiment transcends time. The proprioceptive and interoceptive systems at times continue to work beyond the confines of the exploration session time, despite the de-rolling exercises. However, I cautioned my participants/co-researchers to try all they could to deal with issues within the exploration time and respect and use the de-rolling tools provided within the exploration session.

The recording of the analytical and theoretical shifts by my co-researchers also takes care of van Manen's principle **(c)**, which underscores the need to reflect on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon, attending to the structure of the phenomenon and categorizing its meaning into units where applicable. It was structured within the creative exploration to freely write on analytical and theoretical shifts after experiential accounts of the participants/co-researchers journeys. And they entered these analytical and theoretical shifts into their spontaneous journals specifying them distinctly.

I used a structured journal and not my spontaneous journal to record the shifts in themes and structure. The reason for this is that in order to have clear and concise data I needed to separate the experiential voice from the analytical and theoretical one which often required supplementary research. By way of writing this research report I can establish clearly what I initially sought out to do as recorded in the workbook, how it was implemented as captured in the spontaneous journals and the structured journal, in which I captured major shifts from initial theoretical thoughts as recorded in the workbook.

Van Manen's principle **(d)** that deals with 'giving appearance and body to experience by describing through writing and re-writing' was taken care of by the process of revisiting ideas through the structured journaling, and by way of writing up this research report which is a synthesis of all the stages taken up in this research. It employs the perspective of critical

reflection informed by a synthesis of various research activities emerging out of the embodied experiences of this creative exploration and reflection of the performance.

This Research Report is a write up that has taken a temporal distance and experiential voice, reviewing material from journals by the participants/co-researchers, critically engaging the material emerging out of the creative process and performance in a manner that attends to van Manen's principle **(e)** that strives for a balancing of the research context by considering parts and a whole. As such, this report engages with the body of ideas coming out of the practice in the theoretical framework that attends to research questions, creative practice, research claims and presuppositions in a dialectic fashion that reconstitutes research events so as 'no longer to live those events in passivity, but to actively rework them, both in dialogue with others and within one's own imagination' (Jackson 2002:15).

The integrative phenomenological creative practice frames described above outline the structure of this research as a practice-based study. Not only does this structure attend to putting the primacy of the body at the heart of this study but it also attends to the core activity of research which is comprehensive data collection, as such it sets up a clear pathway for a practice-based research that used theatre making and performance as sites of bodily knowledge and expressivity. Below I speak to the use of stimuli as the activity that helped engage the body in the excavation process of lived experience.

Stimuli in this creative practice

In employing the use of stimulus of visual art and elements of nature, I setup an improvising technique focused on the intertwining, braiding and crisscrossing of the surface and recessive bodies. The use of stimuli in this study follows the bodily perception structure espoused under the topic *The Bodily Perception*. This way of using stimuli has helped open up the adventurousness and novelty of the body as it (re)discovers its lived experience of HIV and AIDS, opening up opportunities for horizontal ways of knowing. Taking into consideration that

our sensual worlds catalyze complexly and dissipate unexpectedly, the use of visual art and elements of nature provided ideal catalysis in that they both give freedom that allows for the body's complexity to manifest.

The use of stimuli in this exploration highlights that social fabrics and practices are not locked into rational or predictable logic but rather that they are often visceral and instinctive. This way of memory excavation allowed for the body to bring forth its complex, unexpected, visceral and instinctive lived experience of HIV and AIDS. The use of visual art and elements of nature thus presented a channel and means to attend to bodily modes of perception in a manner that is not only safe but laden with tools, such as somatic play, movement and sound that helped excavate lived experience of the body. Below is a description of how the use of stimuli was undertaken in this study, resulting in the merge of psychic life, visible form, and experiential truth, converging of thought and feeling, and arising of bodily expressivity in the process of theatre making and performance.

Visual Art

A visual art piece, as material stimulus, offers much more than mere triggering of the memory because with it, participants do not just engage with an object but with the deep contents that are open to interpretation and different possibilities of meaning. This study used Penny Siopis' visual artwork entitled '*Shame: Series of Ten*' as stimulus. The prints are part of Siopis' larger body of work on the experiences of 'shame' as a private condition and a public phenomenon. When contextualizing 'shame' Siopis, quoted by Luke Crossley (2010) argues that:

Shame involves psychological nakedness, exposure, humiliation, hurt, guilt, and deep embarrassment. When shamed, we lose our dignity and integrity in full view of others – we live in a state of disgrace. But there is also another dimension of shame that is of interest: in its deepest despair shame may offer us the potential for empathy (Crossely, 2010:nd).

These vivid images are striking and speak to a South African context of vulnerability to traumatic experiences where the HIV and AIDS situation contributes to 'shame'. Shame in HIV

and AIDS is brought about by the exposure to 'humiliation, hurt, guilt, and deep embarrassment' experienced not only by those infected but everyone who lives in the era of the pandemic. Significantly, as Crossley observes, the seriality of the *Series of Ten* 'is less about conveying narrative than it is a way to register emotion as a set of concretized images and associations'. This aspect of the seriality of Siopis' prints being less about conveying a narrative and being more about the concretized expression is integral to this study. The potential of Siopis' prints to concretize images through association 'triggers somatic memories which in turn prompt stories...' as one gets to engage with them (Govan et al: 2007:4).

Arthur Koestler (1964) emphasizes that 'the canvas expresses or represents an idea in the artist's head, and if all goes well it will cause a similar experience to occur in the beholder's head; [they] will read something in the picture which strictly speaking is not there' (Koestler 1964: 370). Koestler further observes that 'at moments of intense aesthetic experience we see not only with our eyes but with the whole body' (1964: 371). These observations by Koestler, which I deeply share, put forward the idea that the experience of visual art by its viewer concretizes in non-literal ways. Therefore, visual art presents several entry points to meaning(s). Koestler (1964: 371) emphasizes that 'the eyes scan, the cortex thinks, there are muscular stresses, innervations of the organs touch, sensations of weight and temperature, visceral reactions, feelings of rhythm and motion – all sucked into one integrated vortex' when one engages with visual art. Koestler's analogy here points to the interconnectedness of the way human beings perceive and interact with objects in the world. His observations are consistent with Drew Leder's take on the body's perception modes of *exteroception*, *proprioception* and *interoception* as the intertwined way in which the body-whole engages with the worldly objects. Employing visual art in the process of theatre making that aims for the body's full engagement was aimed at achieving an exploration principled in outward/inward dialectic, 'probing more deeply into [the body] and discovering the significance that lies there' (Ingold, 2000: 11). This significance of the body is what I believe Siopis illustrates in her art. As Sarah Nuttall (2011: 289) has observed, Siopis' attention to the life of the body in its 'local senses, to a history of emotions as we try to know from the body', to the surfaces across which

we 'attempt to see and to the underneath which return us to old wounds or propel us into fragments of the future', is the critical feature in engaging with her visual art.

Siopis has over the years used art to express complex feelings of embodied affliction and she is quoted in Law (2002:26) saying, 'I am interested in trying to evoke the image of trauma – or wound as it is understood in its original context – in a material amalgam suggesting both individual and collective experience'. Siopis' *Series of Ten* is a series of images pregnant with intensity and trauma of shame and how it stains and congeals into personal, transpersonal and/or erotic connections between the self and the other. These prints by Siopis were crucial to this study as they were used as a stimulus. The following are the images from the *Series of Ten* (the full range is annexed to this report) the participants/co-researchers chose to work with:



In engaging with the art the use of structured questions was employed. These questions were structured to ensure that participants went through the same process of using stimuli so as to standardize the process for research purposes, in relation to how each participant engaged

with the visual art they chose. The participants/co-researchers engaged with the drawings by providing answers using free writing method to these aspects; (a) their thoughts of the art, (b) what the art evoked in them, (c) what they saw in the art, (d) what they disliked about the art, (e) what they liked about the art, (f) what they thought was missing in the art, (g) whether/how their overall feelings have shifted after dealing with the first six aspects, (h) a personal story that they attach to the art, (i) an HIV and AIDS story or theme that they attach to the art, and (j) allowing a conversation with the art to come through establishing what feelings it expresses, what it says and to whom, allowing themselves to speak to the art and the art to speak back to them.

One is inclined to explain what the free-writing tool is. It is a writing tool borrowed from Julia Cameron's (2006) concept of 'morning pages' in which she explains it as 'the act of moving the hand across a page and writing *whatever* comes to mind. Nothing is too petty, too silly, too stupid, or too weird, to be included' (Cameron, 2006: 10). I believe this way of using writing frees the mind of rational thought that often blocks ideas, as thus it is an embodied way of writing. The use of the free-writing tool in this part of the exploration is critical not only for recording the process for the research report but also gathering material for the theatre making process.

With the gathered free-writing material the participants/co-researchers began to engage with the material to a kinesthetic improvisation through the use of somatic play, expressive movement and sound. In this way, they began to find a dynamic nature in embodying the material and giving it a bodily expressivity. This was done in fashion of locating the material within the body, addressing the question 'where in the body sits these thoughts and images stimulated by the visual art?' The embodiment kicked off by participants picking out five phrases or words or statements that carried the essence of what stood out for them in their free writing responses to the art. This was followed by the participants finding a body posture and sound that best expressed the essence and meaning of what they picked out from their free writing engagement with the visual art they chose. The posture and sound not only began a process of embodying their deductions of engagement with the visual art but also started off

a journey of bodily expressivity and finding material for performance. Borrowing Cameron's expression, similarly in this process nothing was 'too petty, too silly, too stupid, or too weird' to be explored, embodied and expressed.

Through the use of somatic play, movement and sound participants explored, improvised and found ways to express their bodily atmosphere expressions, as they followed feelings, emotions, vibrations, and the essence of what the art stimulated in them; tracing and mapping the source of this essence carried in the phrases/words/statements, finding the place within their bodies that best resonated with that quintessence.

This process was then followed by the use of elements of nature as stimuli for further and deeper excavation of the expressivity of the lived experience of the body. Below I report on the choice and the process of using elements of nature as stimuli in this study.

Elements of Nature

The use of the elements of nature in theatre making is largely founded on the work of Jacques Lecoq (2000). He uses elements of nature in his mask work in the improvisation stage which he has termed *identification with the natural world* where Lecoq's students play at *identification*. With the masks on, they are asked to become different elements of nature such as water, fire, air, earth (Lecoq, 2000: 43). Lecoq further uses elements in his method of improvisation teaching termed, *transference method*². The method 'consists in basing oneself on natural dynamics, on action gestures, on animals, on materials, using them for expressive purposes in order to achieve a level of human nature' (Lecoq, 2000:44). This is a method Lecoq uses for transposing work done from the early stages of improvisation, bringing it into a dramatic dimension. The objective of this method is 'to achieve a level of theatrical transposition, going beyond realistic performance' (ibid). Lecoq's method illustrates that there is potential to excavate an embodied language that goes beyond literal ways of communication. The use of elements of nature in this study goes beyond the simple reason of bringing early improvisation

² Jacques Lecoq's transference method should not be confused with the psychoanalytic term transference. Lecoq's method is purely concerned with ways of creating theatrical material through transposition. See his book *The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre*.

into a dramatic dimension or finding a language that goes beyond ways of communication, but rather it is aimed at letting the body fold into itself to find a language of its lived experience in a nonrepresentational fashion. And it was evident in this study that the use of elements of nature helped bring forth a rich bodily memory and rich expressivity that communicates the body at deeper levels than normal language.

Used as intangible or nonrepresentational kind of stimuli, elements of nature provided this exploration with the opportunity to excavate deep seated body memory, helping participants/co-researchers access information/stories/feelings/trauma stored in their bodies. And in the Lecoq fashion it also helped in furthering a process began by the use of visual art, completing a conversation of the use of stimuli. Visual art as stimuli is much entrenched in the exteroceptive system because it is tangible. It, however, also affects and effects the proprioceptive system. Elements of nature on the other hand, because of their intangible nature begin in more proprioceptive system towards an interoceptive one.

The process of using elements of nature as stimuli was structured such that participants made a particular choice of what characteristics in an element they identified with. The process was kick started with the element of water. Participants' choices were based on the question 'if you were water, what would your current state be in the situation of HIV and AIDS?' The state referred to their actual life state and that was stimulated by the use of visual art. They then embodied the choice; trying all they could to embody the traits of their particular choice; finding feelings, focusing on how they would behave and express their behavior as that element. The goal here was not becoming the element through identification and association in a Lecoq fashion but to begin to find a language that expressed what sat deep within their bodies. Through facilitation they were guided through a process that made them find expressivity, investigating their spontaneous reactions by subjecting them to repetition, varied rhythm and tempo. There were several images, stories, expressions, that emerged from exploring with all the four elements. Some of these interconnected while some were fragmented. As the facilitator of this process, I was taken by the emerging material out of the use of elements of nature. I observed varied types of expressivity differing from one element

exploration to the other. In one of the sessions when exploring the element of fire I watched as Ntshingila was stuck to one place with only his body giving slight twitches, while Khoza was repeating a vomiting gesture, Matolodi was moving in a sharp turn around movement led by her hands and Malinga had the knee collapse movement that led to loud bursting out cry; creating sequences rich in embodied expressivity that rode on metaphoric bodily language.

A reflection on the use of elements of nature in this study points to the evidence that the participants/co-researchers' expressions and observations were not so much pinned to lived experience. For example, as one of the participants/co-researchers has experienced the use of one of the elements of nature, in particular the element of earth, they were able to reconnect with memory of their HIV positive brother. He wrote in his journal entry:

The invisible presence, his invisible presence was brought forth by the sound of cough. I had forgotten of my brother's chronic cough and it came back when I was exploring with the element earth. I chose very dry soil and in the act of becoming this dry soil, embodying it, the sound that came was his cough and it took me right to his bed, his blanket, his body clutched in fetus position because of pain. And when I looked at the art I chose it has something like a blanket and kneeling body of a man. If you flip the image the fetus position is almost the kneeling position (Ntshingila, 26 Oct 2011).

It is evident in Ntshingila's case that the use of elements of nature exhumes lived memory. This access to memory rides on the use of somatic play, movement and sound in deepening the rhythmic kinesthetic sensations of the body through a focus on the inner landscape of the body.

Somatic Play, Movement and Sound

Understanding that as soon as the perceptual awareness from outside registers in and upon the individual's inner environment, it converts sensation, perception, awareness and response – and relates directly to the 'inner harmonic' senses, this study makes use of the synthesis of use of somatic play, movement and sound embedded in visual art and elements of nature as

stimuli, to access bodily memory and harness the expressivity of the body's lived experience. The site of the excavation of the bodily memory was the exploration sessions and performance became the site for the body's expressivity of the excavated lived experience. I should clarify that by performance here I do not only refer to the event where audiences are invited but a performance as a process of embodied practice often harnessed by repetition as a way of becoming, formulation and concretization of expressivity.

I argue that somatic play, movement and sound activate the recessive body using the somatic motor activity helping to bring forth inherent emotional persona and reflexive autonomic effects of lived experience of the body. The somatic motor activity helps with the loosening of the body and through this organic/sensory movement we (re)discover the human intelligence indigenous to the body and as the body 'plays' rhythm within itself it evokes what is latent in its affective zone. The motor activity is also evident, as (Walser, 1993; Storr, 1992) suggest, in the use of sound. They argue that sound can enter the body directly, bypassing the intellect as vibrations especially when produced by the body itself in the activity of kinesthetic response. As such, the combination of somatic play, movement and sound resonates with the argument by Thrift (1997) quoting Schechner (1993), positing that the use of somatic play, movement and sound is:

... a process of performative experiment: 'the ongoing, underlying process of off-balancing, loosening, bending, twisting, reconfiguring, and transforming the permeating, eruptive/disruptive energy and mood below, behind and to the side of focused attention' (Schechner 1993: 43) which is brought into focus by body practices like dance and which 'encourages the discovery of new configurations and twists of ideas and experience' (Schechner, 1993: 42; Thrift, 1997:145).

The use of the combination of somatic play, movement and sound ensures that the bodily acts engaged with in the creative practice are felt and responded to as organic experience; that perception of self, derives from a new awareness of the body-self as a physically reactive sensory wholesome, in that way the body gets to 'physicalize' images accessed by and within the body as organic instructions. As Questal (cited in Potter 2002:53) points out, one gains

increased movement potential as a benefit from applying this method. The true gain is far deeper reaching. Somatic and expressive bodily movement is 'simply the medium for cultivating more effective ways of sensing, thinking, feeling and knowing' (Questal in Potter, 2002:53).

Somatic play, movement and sound used in this way helped engage the body in a psychosomatic re-learning, enabling the participants to feel and perceive internal, physical experience and learn experientially that the sensory or 'feeling process' is the currency through which we communicate with ourselves, and communicate and relate to others. By engaging in the sensory or 'feeling process' we are tapping into sources of 'instinctual energy' and 'objective internalization' that have been heretofore hidden in the body. This 'hiding' is perhaps due to the nature of being-in-the-world which is often a one way process of input from the external environment, a traumatic environment in the case of HIV and AIDS and not processing or dealing with the effects of such an input can only be detrimental to how we relate to ourselves and with others. The results of this kind of body primacy can be beneficial, I believe, in creating pathways that help us engage with the inner landscapes of body; stimulating the inner turbulence, and utilizing the body intelligence by turning our understanding outward with great courage and imagination. This way of bodily engagement is the physical continuation of pre-intellectual awareness which perpetuates the awareness of the body on a non-intellectual basis. However, the aspect of non-intellectual basis should not be seen as a total negation of the mental or cognitive process rather it is a knowing based on a self to self - communication of the body – channeling mental information into the body, where it in the first place began, thereby allowing the body to behave in a non-conflicting way. This, I argue, is the perceptual experience that incorporates the movements of the body and spontaneously takes them into account in opening us onto a stable external world. This kind of perception, argues Merleau-Ponty, is always informed by a 'body schema' (*schema corporel*), which consists neither in a mental attitude nor a mere physiological state in isolation but is brought to play by a process that integrates both mental and physiological states of the body. As such, using a combination of somatic play, movement and sound in engaging the physical 'feeling' modality; looking, hearing, tasting inside of our body environment is the dynamic that permits our emotions to

relate to our physical selves and those of others. This is a knowing that has been negated in the area of HIV and AIDS, and by way of this study, I begin dialogue to plant seeds for the use of this knowing in the HIV and AIDS discourse.

The combination of somatic play, movement and sound, evokes free bodily movement, which Merleau-Ponty argues is critical in perceptual awareness. He cites with approval Husserl's notion of "motivation" in describing the unity of bodily movement and perception, arguing that our bodily movements are neither reasons nor causes, but 'motives' informing structural changes in the order of perceptual appearances as a whole (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 47–50). Merleau-Ponty, argues that getting out from under the cloud of the mind-body problem demands that we come to recognize the body, even purely descriptively, as the place where consciousness and reality in fact come to occupy the very same conceptual space. Merleau-Ponty never doubts or denies the existence of mental phenomena, of course, but he insists, for example, that thought and sensation occur only against a background of perceptual activity that we always already understand in bodily terms. Moreover, the body undercuts the supposed dichotomy between the transparency of consciousness and the opacity of objective reality when one engages in processes that take into cognition the perceptive nature of the body. And it is evident in the case of this study that somatic play, movement and play contribute to the shaping of perception, emotional experience, memory, judgment and the understanding of self and others.

In summing up the use of stimuli in this research, one could argue that with the use of the combination of somatic play, movement and sound embedded in the use of visual art and elements of nature we engage the exteroceptive, proprioceptive, interoceptive systems through kinesthetic, muscular, auricular, postural, tactile, coetaneous, vestibular, equilibrium, visual, and auditory senses as well as information from our sense of physical energy from the surface body and recessive body modes thereby engaging the body-whole in excavating the memory of lived experience of HIV and AIDS. This deeper engagement of the body was enabled by the creation of a 'safe space' through a facilitation process that guided the creative exploration of the body in excavating the material for theatre making. Within this safe space,

participants found freedom to engage in a total commitment and focus that led them to be transported into a heightened 'zone' bodily engagement. Below is a description of such a zone.

On-Flow

With the use of visual art and elements of nature as stimuli and the combination of somatic play, sound and movement to induce the sensory motor in order to access lived memory of the body, the exploration process was characterized by a heightened fluid, shifting and dynamic energy that became the zone for accessing bodily memory and lived experience. I have come to term this fluid, shifting and dynamic zone the *on-flow* following Csikszentmihalyi (1975)'s *flow*, which is described as:

... a subjective state that people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of forgetting time, fatigue, and everything else but the activity itself... The defining feature of flow is intense experiential involvement in moment-to-moment activity. Attention is fully invested in the task at hand, and the person functions at his or her fullest capacity (Csikszentmihalyi et al, 1975:600).

It is the 'subjective state' and 'attention fully invested to the task at hand' which attracted me to drawing on Csikszentmihalyi's *flow* for the description of the 'zone' discovered by the creative practice of this study. I use the preposition *on* attached to *flow* to make *on-flow* in order to acknowledge the 'bodily praxis' as the means through which we attain this zone. Before I set out to explain *on-flow*, I must admit that I am not an expert in Csikszentmihalyi's *flow* and that I have only conducted an overview of his and his co-researchers' concept of *flow* with the sole intention of explaining and describing the process of *on-flow*. Therefore, I am in no way attempting to compare *flow* with *on-flow*. This is more so because Csikszentmihalyi's *flow* is a concept theorized after extensive research over years, whereas *on-flow* has been encountered in this study and its seeds were sown in a Practice as Research exercise that produced the work *Ungasabi – Metaphor of Crossing borders* in one of the academic courses I undertook in 2010.

Following my overview of *flow*, my deduction is that it is a mastery of awareness geared towards optimal and intrinsically motivated behavior in carrying out whatever activity at hand. This analysis is evident in the respondents of *flow*, as one respondent has alluded to with *flow*:

You're so involved in what you're doing you aren't thinking about yourself as separate from the immediate activity. You're no longer a participant observer, only a participant. You're moving in harmony with something else you're part of (in Csikszentmihalyi,1975:86).

In the moment one is engaged in *flow*, they are fully a participant and only an observer in retrospect, this is an aspect consistent with *on-flow*, where participants were fully participants when in *on-flow* and only got to attend to their roles as co-researchers when they got to document the material gained from the process. With *on-flow* the body and its modes of perception are not merely physiological nor are they simply psychological results of physical causes, rather they avow the necessary connectedness to consciousness as it is embodied and based on corporeal and sensory relations. The phenomenological reflection on the body through *on-flow* reveals that the body is not a subject separated from the world or from others. It is a way of bodily experience that gets the body to fold back on itself, getting the body into a state where it is transferred and emptied out via the 'eyes' of sensory self, a process that is not only abstract and visual, but also embodied. *On-flow* shares Lefebvre's analogy when he posits that:

The body does not fall under sway of analytic thought and its separation of the cyclical from the linear. The unity, which that reflection is at such pain to decode, finds refuge in the cryptic opacity that is the great secret of the body. For the body indeed unites the cyclical and the linear, combining the cycles of time, need and desire with the linearities of gesture, perambulation, prehension and the manipulation of things - the handling of both material and abstract tools. The body subsists precisely at the level of the reciprocal movement between these two realms; their difference - which is lived, not thought - is its habitat (Lefebvre, 1991:203).

The body's unity of bodily action and cyclical experience that Lefebvre speaks of was evident throughout the process of *on-flow* in the creative practice of this study. Borrowing Merleau-Ponty's correlation, in the state of *on-flow*, 'he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he is of it, unless . . . he is one of the visibles, capable by a singular reversal, of seeing them-he who is one of them' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:134-35). *On-flow* is characterized by a state of possession that has a trance like effect though it is not a trance state but a deeper level of engagement, as such in the state of *on-flow* participants are often aware of their actions but not of awareness itself.

The exploration process required that participants pursue a feeling or sensation evoked by the stimuli, committing to experiencing it in whole and not dismissing it as illogical, allowing the boundary of play and self-awareness to dissolve within the internal logic of experience. This internal logic of experience was set in motion by the use of somatic play, expressive movement and sound – repeated, reversed, slowed down, sped-up such that each moment is felt and expressed in its entirety. The focus on internal logic of experience is what Csikszentmihalyi (1975: 36) refers to as the 'autotelic experience', a deep focus on the immediate demands of activity. I submit that as the participants acquired such an 'autotelic experience' *on-flow* became not only a way of perceiving but that of knowing as the body began to find ways in which to express its lived experience, searching for the true essence of expressivity from within.

When expressivity comes from deep within the body then there is a connection between what is being expressed and the body expressing it. As such, when expressivity comes from deep within the body we are exposed to the 'languages of the body' which somehow convey an 'experience of self-in-the-world' (Carter, 2000:182). It is evident that in normal consciousness the state of awareness of bodily sensation is limited – or even pushed away aside by the fact that our attention is locked upon some social or situational issue. It is almost as if the functions of the body are on automatic pilot and do not usually have to be attended to consciously (Crook, 1987: 390-1). But as evidenced in this study the 'autotelic experience' attained in *on-flow* affirms that through creative practice attending to the body consciously, psychic life,

visible form, and experiential truth merge; thought and feeling converge, and meaning arises, as participants shift from one situation of bodily memory to another, illustrating embodiment as a way of knowing. Merleau-Ponty argues that such an embodiment achieves this knowing through:

...offering all naked to a vision which could only be total or null [...] a sort of straits between exterior horizons and interior horizons, ever gaping open, something that comes to touch lightly and makes diverse regions of the colored or visible world resound at the distances, a certain differentiation, an ephemeral modulation of this world, less a color or a thing, therefore, than a difference between things and colors, a momentary crystallization of colored being or of visibility. Between the alleged colors and visible, we would find anew the tissue that lines them, sustains them, nourishes them, and which for its part is not a thing, but a possibility, a latency, and a flesh of things (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:132-33).

My understanding of Merleau-Ponty's giving 'a flesh of things' is bringing to life that which was latent in the body, availing such material to be known and engaged with. One can, therefore, consider *on-flow* within the creative practice of phenomenology that as a processual exploration activity relying on deep experiential engagement in bodily awareness geared towards exhuming and experiencing memories of lived experience – a zone that allows for a process of giving flesh to the body's lived experience. Therefore, whereas Csikszentmihalyi's *flow* grants a primacy to psychological consciousness to achieve a bodily state of happiness, focused on intrinsic pleasure, *on-flow* is premised on an integrated bodily consciousness and goes beyond intrinsic pleasure as the goal as evidenced in this particular study which is focused on the body's lived experience of HIV and AIDS, an experience often traumatic. The following journal extract from one of the participants/co-researchers illustrates the deep seating trauma accessed through *on-flow*:

Have you ever seen someone's flesh fade away till the skin is the only thing left covering their skeletal frame? The skin written with rash that has discolored a surface that once was their point of identity. It is not pain you feel, it is something else. People often say that you get used to such situations. Today I have experienced that your body just hides this experience somewhere far deep inside, saving you from a traumatic breakdown. Today I feel this trauma as if it is in a distance, like I

am meeting it and we have a conversation. I was in a place, a zone where the pain was physical, touchable, moving me (Khoza, 2 Nov 2 2011).

This extract where my co-researcher Khoza, was in a physical, touchable, and moving conversation with pain from within his body describes a metaphoric expressivity in *on-flow* consistent with Mueller-Glode and Nebe (2006) when they argue that:

Traumatic events tend to be remembered through senses and images rather than language, so people who are traumatized find it difficult to talk about the experience [...] It is within the safety and distance of metaphor and symbolic dramatic processes that people can begin to identify, express and manage their traumatic experiences (Mueller-Glode & Nebe, 2006:17).

This metaphoric and symbolic distancing that provided the safety for the participants to engage with their body's traumatic lived experience of HIV and AIDS can be credited to the use of stimuli (visual art and elements of nature) in a facilitated exploration. As such, I believe *on-flow* is the heightened state brought about by the way the exploration process engaged the body into expressing itself through the use of somatic play, sound and movement structured and inherent in the use of visual art and elements of nature as stimulus in an enabling safe space. Below are some of the journal entries by the participants/co-researchers on their reflections of *on-flow* experience:

Feelings are coming forth in an illogic manner. There is a deeper talking layered with issues from inside and it all feels fragmented. It feels like a limbless body trying to extend its inner expressivity, with only its eyes and torso trying to express its inner world. It is amazing since I was only following a feeling of sympathy in remembering the day I saw her ARVs spilt over on the floor and she, dejectedly in her blindness, searching for them (Matolodi, 9 Nov 2011).

It is a simplistic art (referring to the visual art) bearing a child but this child somehow connects to my heartfelt pain of seeing my aunt in her state. She is HIV positive by the way and I think she is in a difficult space at the moment. I hear her voice. Then voices speaking unclearly like my inner felt world wants to speak its regret, pain, anguish, denial, anger, longing, desire, confusion, all at the same time. They evoke a feeling that cuts deep inside in a way that transcends time. Working with visual art forces you to find things missing, journeying with impulse that takes you to places inside

of you that you hardly knew existed. You listen to your deeper inner self and you want what is inside you to be seen, you want to vomit it all out (Khoza, 6 Nov 2011).

It's frightening to explore deep feelings of hurt that makes you cry yet crying which often serves to release pain surmounts this pain, becoming more unbearable. I went to this place inside of me that just released the pain. It is difficult to cry when you come from a very strong culture that dictates that a man does not cry. Having taken care for someone who fell very ill for almost two years I finally got a chance to let out. I fought so hard not to cry but tears fell of their own accord. It became more difficult and painful as I tried to resist this place (Malinga, 9 Nov 2011).

The above journal entries from the participants/co-researchers' spontaneous journals illustrate that *on-flow* allowed the participants to experience a different form of awareness and expressivity. It is apparent that participants somehow became one with the sensations they followed and with their feelings, recreating their moments of experiencing pain that they never thought were inscribed and encrusted within their bodies, bringing to the fore moments of painful experience of being exposed to HIV and AIDS devastation. When one totally engages their body consciousness, different components or images of the body parts, of which they usually are unconscious of, can emerge. This perceptual attentiveness to the body involves various intentional acts creating the heightened fluid and dynamic zone of *on-flow*. In the state of *on-flow* one perceives, remembers, imagines, conceptualizes, studies, their own body state, thus *on-flow* is experienced rather than reasoned hence the difficulty involved in expressing it in words, as alluded to by almost all the participants/co-researchers in the above extracts. As such, I believe the experience of *on-flow* falls within the realm of nonrepresentational embodiment of experience. I, therefore, concur with Catherine Nash (2000: 655) when she argues that nonrepresentational theory focuses on practices that 'cannot adequately be spoken of, that words cannot capture, that texts cannot convey – on forms of experience that are not only or never cognitive'. An arrival to or recreation of such pre-discursive experience, uncultivated or raw sensibility, is necessary to produce a non-dualist, non-binarized ontology through which it is experienced.

Apart from this study focusing on the primacy of the body and thus giving the inner body a platform to express itself and be at the centre of HIV and AIDS discourse, I believe there are greater lessons to be learnt from the stories that came forth from the exploration process of this study with regard to their possible influence on the HIV and AIDS discourse.

What some of the excavated lived experiences enlighten

The UNAIDS Report (2010) points out that there is no greater peril for South Africa, than the AIDS epidemic. There has been a spectacular spread of the epidemic in the past decade and half marked by the 'inextinguishable controversy of its causes and treatment' (Fassin, 2007:xvi). I believe the danger of what has come to the fore of HIV and AIDS response is the ignorance of body's inept exposure to loss, trauma, death, poverty, care giving, that the epidemic exists and enforces upon communities and their members. There are several lived experiences that came forth in this study through *on-flow*, that my co-researchers and I felt could warrant some shifts in HIV and AIDS responses.

Emanating from the analysis of some of the stories shared in this study, it is my belief that there is need to bring to the fore injuries that continue to disfigure us and lock us into the 'us' and 'them' rhetoric when in actual fact our suffering is interconnected. This, I believe, will help us see that HIV infection brings about 'affect' to human life, therefore the interpretation of HIV infection should be treated as equal to the subsequent 'affect' that is often traumatic. This, I believe, will help us understand what lies deep in the famous rhetoric of 'we are all either infected or affected'. I am compelled to argue that this acknowledgment of HIV and AIDS as not only an virus contraction but a trauma contraction and spread, will help us move beyond a phase of HIV and AIDS response that has objectified the body and curtailing a more 'holistic' response that is cognizant of the greater effects of HIV infection and acknowledges the far reaching impact of HV and AIDS on human life. Such a response needs to include counseling for the families of those living with HIV and AIDS, much in the same fashion that counseling is integral to testing, such counseling must be integral to care giving.

One is also compelled to make deduction on the 'deep care' that came forth from some of the lived experiences of the participants. Taking up one example:

Having cared for someone with HIV/AIDS for nearly two years, I have nothing to fear of this disease. I am now involved with someone whom I love very deeply and they are HIV positive. Today having come to face the hurt I experienced due to this caring, I know I cried because I never got to mourn for someone I so deeply cared for. If my partner would ask me to make love to them without a condom, despite knowing they are HIV positive, I would agree because of the love I feel for them (Malinga, 8 Nov 2011).

It is evident that there are some people whose love for their partners living with HIV outweighs the risk of infection. For such people, the message around 'risk' does not appeal to or has an effect on them. This then creates a message gap for this constituency of people. So there is need to design HIV and AIDS messages around such deep sitting love which I believe could also help with issues of stigma. Moreover, there is need to carry out quantitative and qualitative studies to establish the variables of such a constituency and its influence on infection rates, care giving and impacts on stigmatization and discrimination. It is my supposition that looking at the history of deterrent messaging and the current prevention messages coined around 'risk', the situation of stigmatization has not improved much and such constituency that rides on the deep sitting love could perhaps bring about the change we need.

The 'affect' HIV and AIDS on the body is also regulated by cultural and social structures where there is a lot of silent pain that exists. In grappling with this invisible enemy HI virus, we seem to have adopted and embodied the metaphor of invisibility and enact it on the 'visible' which is the seen 'symptoms of HIV' and the clear 'effects of HIV ravaging the body, right to the state of fully blown AIDS'. Therefore what is visible is the actual evidence of the enemy, the infected body thus gives face to this invisible enemy, resulting in the stigmatization and discrimination of those infected. What is invisible is not taken notice of until its effects take their toll visibly. This 'silent enemy action' seems to apply to those affected by HIV and AIDS, there is ignorance of the traumatic experiences of those exposed to and witnessing the impact of HIV and AIDS on family members and close friends. Concern registers only when such trauma manifests in detrimental ways, that is, until the trauma becomes 'visible'. This 'silent enemy action' needs

to be addressed both in HIV and AIDS messaging and through counseling as suggested in the above paragraph. Theatre processes such as the one used in this exploration can also help in dealing with such 'silent enemy action' through exhuming and dealing with the HIV and AIDS lived experience of the body. Such theatre processes may need to include structured counseling and therapeutic input where there is need. More importantly, such theatre processes would need ethical and sensitive facilitation that helps provide pathways for the participants as opposed to scratching the scars and creating wounds anew or creating a circle of dependency upon the facilitated process. Below I speak to the issue of the situation in which a theatre process, to ride on a warning by Helen Nicholson's (2005), can become 'poison and gift' at the same time.

Facilitator as the Rescuer

Creating the favorable conditions for body consciousness in the creative practice required an enabling 'safe space' where the participants could feel safe and free in their vulnerability to traumatic effects of excavating lived experience. The safe space was created through a process I facilitated. One of the challenges of facilitating such a process was premised on creating an enabling environment for the participants to find their own pathways in dealing with the traumatic moments they (re)experienced in moments of *on-flow*. Looking objectively at this aspect of facilitation I believe I did not do sufficient work in enabling the pathways in dealing with such experiences. I was more of a facilitator as a rescuer, to use Karpman's drama triangle to provide an analysis of this challenge. In the Drama Triangle concept developed by Steve Karpman (1968) there are three roles: *Persecutor, Rescuer and Victim*. All of us play each of these roles from time to time depending on what situation we are involved in. When we play the role of either Persecutor or Rescuer, we violate others' boundaries. When we are in the Victim role, we either feel someone has violated one of our boundaries or we are unconsciously dependent of intervention from others.

As a facilitator, I found myself entangled in the role of a rescuer. When the facilitator plays the rescuer, s/he often tends to put others' needs first, protecting, carrying feelings for them,

creating a dependency instead of supporting a process where one becomes reliant on their own mechanism to deal with their situation and create a pathway out of the situation. Unfortunately, the Rescuer needs a Victim to rescue. So the more one becomes a rescuer, the more they entrap the Victim into a circle. To some extent, I believe that I had some of my participants entrapped in this circle where they depended on my intervention to de-role out of the *on-flow*. The Rescuer often unconsciously has a hidden message that they 'know better' than the Victim; what the Victim needs. The better way out of the facilitator as the rescuer role is to show empathy, encourage and kindly give space for the participants' natural pathways to develop, while the facilitator holds the space. This is a gesture to show the trust that the other person has 'enough' to make it, and expect them to be responsible for themselves and their own actions. When we are playing on the Drama Triangle, we are vulnerable to emotional pain and lack of authenticity. The goal is to move out of the triangle altogether, to a frame of mind where we are clear about our power to protect ourselves and about how to respect others as well.

On-flow in this study was not only limited to the theatre making process of exploration during the excavation of the body's lived experience. It was also evident in the performance of *Stains Inner*. *Stains Inner* is a theatrical assemblage of the journeys of the participants' exploration of the body's lived experience. It is important to note that though participants were chosen randomly and without any requirement of having cared for or living with someone who is living with HIV or AIDS, some of the participants shared deep stories of caring for and living with family members with HIV or fully blown AIDS. The participants voluntarily shared these personal stories and permitted me to responsibly use them in this study. It is equally critical to state that the concern of this study was much about the participants' bodies' lived experiences by being in such situations than it was about the situations themselves. As such, in *Stains Inner* one is privy to bodies not really 'performing' but expressing their deep sitting lived experience of the era HIV and AIDS. The title *Stains Inner* was coined to try and capture the essence of the process which was about firstly establishing whether the body is stained living in the era of HIV and AIDS and if so how deep in the body is this stain and then finding ways for the body to

express its voice about the effects of this stain. The offering of *Stains Inner* to an audience is discussed below. This forms the basis of a conclusion to this study.

Stains Inner – A conclusion

Plunged into the thick half-darkness, with lights lowered, the blues hit the four performers on stage from the sides, each standing in front of a closed bag, and ready to journey. The audience makes their way into the theatre. The audience sits facing the stage on the horse shoe bank of seats. Once seated the journey begins. Matolodi opens her bag to begin her journey, she walks into the bag, then Malinga follows, later on its Ntshingila's and Khoza's turns. Bags are not meant to carry humans or their stories; they often carry our private stuff. The deep seated, often latent contents of the body's inner landscape are the private stuff the performers share today.

They move around expressively effecting quite complex transitory manoeuvres of their individual inner journeys. The space is charged with affective reminiscence laden with visual vividness. The expression gets deeper and deeper as the body paints, not on the surface but right inside, painting within, in the moment of *on-flow*, transferring the energy to the audience. The watching eye piques the sensation of moving expression, as the moving bodies arouse other senses with metaphoric texture, weight, size, colour and positioning.

The monster is seen from a different angle. The body is naked, clean empty, and bare, as the body's inner stains of HIV and AIDS are exposed. The anomalous environment created by the juxtaposition of stories in fashion that characterizes real life, where no one individual's life waits for another, invites not only the performers to share somatic states, but a kind of bodily empathy with the audience. There are moments during this mesmerising, disconcerting 45 minutes when you feel as if you are experiencing the whole thing through your skin. The body rhythm and kinesthetic response espoused by *on-flow* is the agency whereby the performance *Stains Inner* negotiates with its audience.

On-flow in performance makes it possible for the audience members to gain insight through distilling their own life's on-going scenery, as the performers repeat selected gestures, motions, and sounds, melding and maintaining certain shapes. It allows them to absorb the textures, meanings, and motions of a fragile bodily existence as it expresses itself in a nonrepresentational fashion.

Stains Inner presents deep human experiences like collapse, disorder, decay, and formlessness of trauma brought about the era HIV and AIDS so much loaded with fear, loss, hopelessness, lingering pain, vulnerability, shame, embarrassment, humiliation, hurt, isolation, deprivation, loss of expectation of life, silence and death. As the body expresses itself, some images emerge out of the vicissitudes of the performance as the theatrical medium itself. As Lefebvre and Regulier explain:

It is on the one hand a relationship of the human being with his own body, with his tongue and speech, with his gestures, in a certain place and with a gestural whole, and on the other hand, a relationship with the largest public space, with the entire society and beyond it, the universe (Lefebvre and Regulier, 1996:235).

Some of the responses from the audience members who watched *Stains Inner* exemplify this deep relationship that emanates from the expressive body in an offering that rides less on words and much on expressivity and follows no particular narrative order. The following is Raezeen Wentworth's response to the work:

I was taken aback by what I saw as this was not the usual playhouse production. Even though it was on a stage, with audience members watching performers as per usual, this differed from the typical theatre play. There were four performers on stage and each seemed to be 'telling' their own narrative. By 'telling' I mean expressing or experiencing trauma or dilemma that has once, and now again deeply affecting them. As an audience member I could feel that I was not watching a show, the end product of many hours of rehearsing; instead, I was watching the actual process of these people living through their personal impasses and dealing with them right in front of me the only way they know how. I found that each performer used their bodies to find and ground their emotion and then used movement as a medium to express or rid themselves of that emotion. The movements that the performers used seemed to be organic and true to their moments of sentiment. One felt the urgency when repetition was fast paced, slowed down and the absolute despair of

stillness. The voice sounds were not words and could not be rehearsed. Those were the sounds that escaped the moving body when emotion engulfs the heart and mind and the body moves from within. Stains Inner spoke to the emotion that would usually be placed somewhere within us and forgotten for some time (Workbook, 25 Nov 2011: Raezeen Wentworth's Response).

It is evident from Wentworth's response that the coherent temporal unity lying at the heart of stories, the linear connection between beginning, middle and end, often used in normal playhouse productions, is not a 'given' to accessing intrinsic responses to real human events, real selves and real life. She was moved by experiencing the body speak, painting its own story from within, expressing itself through performance, notwithstanding the stories going on simultaneously. Michael Bell (1990: 174) argues that whereas the story has an 'implicit contract' towards order, life has no such contract. In this sense, it is claimed, the story differs radically from 'life' insofar as in the latter, everything is 'scrambled messages', 'chaos rather than order' (Carr cited in Wood, 1991: 161). It is this 'chaos' that Wentworth alludes to when she observes that in *Stains Inner* she was not watching a typical theatre play but she was watching the actual process of these people living through their personal impasses and dealing with them right in front of her the only way they knew how. Thus, *Stains Inner* was not only delivered in a fashion that speaks to the fragmented material that follows the nature of the process undertaken in excavating lived experience of the body but it provided a juxtaposition of individual stories in a fashion that characterizes real life, where no individual life waits for another. This juxtaposition of individual stories fashioned in real life's fragmented 'chaos' and 'scrambled messages', conversely invites the audience members to share the somatic states and a kind of bodily empathy with the expressive body of the performers.

Another audience member, Basetsana Malope shares how these juxtaposed stories appealed to her and what she deduced from the offering:

From what I could deduce, the performance piece illustrates the relationship between the body and its 'attacker' of some sort. Of course one learns that this attacker is the HI virus, but even without this piece of knowledge one can notice that there is a demon that haunts its host. Perhaps more than the deteriorating body, one is able to see the toll the 'attacker' has on the emotions. Stains Inner focused closely on the emotional strain that occurs as a result of the HI virus. This is illustrated

by the lady who constantly carries the baby, the guy who keeps singing the same song and another who feels the edge to scream to release his pain. But also the deep embedded frustration that continues to remind them of their truth about the trauma eating away at their bodies (Workbook, 25 Nov 2011: Malope's Response).

This further exemplifies the power of theatre to not only communicate through the body, but through a somatic bodily expressivity that does not rely on words to communicate. It is evident in Malope's account that the traumatic moments of the lived experience were felt and witnessed by her, as an audience member, when she observes that the offering 'focused on the emotional strain that occurs as a result of the HI virus'. Her response also exemplifies that just as in real life where things happen simultaneously, in the performance of *Stains Inner* the audience members are able to deduce meaning as the performance interweaves their memories with that of the performers through an *on-flow* charged performance space. This *on-flow* charged space is what Tony Miyambo, another audience member grapples with in his response when states:

*While watching the work I searched to find logical meaning and realized that I was constantly re-positioning myself in relation to the loaded encounter with the performers. In my observation, the show began with what seemed to be different routines that the performers were taking part in. However, through the repetition of the routines they began to transform into emotionally charged trance like states. The way in which the content was structured placed me in a position that made me feel like I was no longer just an observer, I was implicated in the experiences of each performer and their moments. Even though I had no back story and no logical narrative I was feeling what they were feeling if not something more. I felt like I had a stake in their lives and in turn they had a stake in mine. How the work manages to do this without dialogue, a clear narrative or a background story amazes me. Throughout my experience as an audience member I have never encountered a work that commanded what I can only describe a visceral emotional presence like *Stains Inner* did. This work did something amazing in the way that it began to address my capacity of understanding not through logical reading and interpretation but by privileging my ability to intuit instead (Workbook, 25 Nov 2011: Tony Miyambo's Response).*

Miyambo states that the *Stains Inner* addressed his capacity to understand the performers stories through privileging his ability to intuit; this is evidence that in attending to the body

lived experience a study such as this one, brings forth a way of communication that appeals to the intuitive capacity of human beings. I submit that such an ability of theatre to afford intuitive communication without following a linear structure is worthy of further investigation and harnessing in the era of HIV and AIDS where we are faced with behavioral change challenges.

In sum, the accounts from these audience members affirm that the sharing of the body's lived experience through its own expressivity can somehow become an amalgamation of different voices, personal and singular yet communicating and contributing towards a common narrative from different and honest perspectives, hence the *Stains Inner* is one story of many individual stories of living in the HIV and AIDS era.

It is the assertion of this study that perhaps through creating means to understand and make sense of or be simple in dialogue with the debilitating trauma HIV and AIDS might have on the inner body, we can begin a new pathway of dealing with the scourge. Through this study we possibly have crossed a particular threshold. One which does not over simplify the multi-dimensional effect(s) of HIV/AIDS but one which, through a deliberate departure from the structural pitfalls of conventional story telling modality, and dreary message structures that renders the body as less knowledgeable, could capture or depict more accurately the effects of HIV/AIDS on our wellbeing as humans.

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Annex 1: Penny Siopis' Shame (Series of Ten)



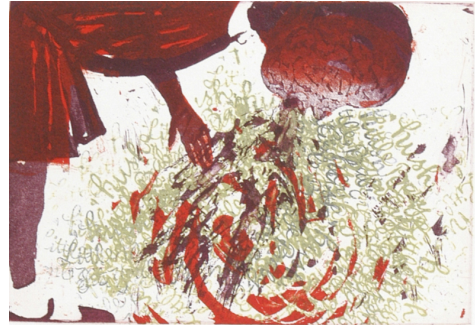
Where your mom is (Series of Ten)



I'm Sorry(Series of Ten)



To A Special Father(Series of 10)



Hush little baby(Series of ten)



Sorry(Series of Ten)



Don't you cry(Series of 10)



Shame Again(Series of Ten)



Home(Series of ten)



Shame(Series of Ten)



Get Well Soon(Series of 10)