

# DOMESTICATING THE MODERN: AN INTERROGATION OF THE VISUAL RHETORIC OF SOUTH AFRICAN GRAPHIC DESIGNER ERNST DE JONG (1934-2016)

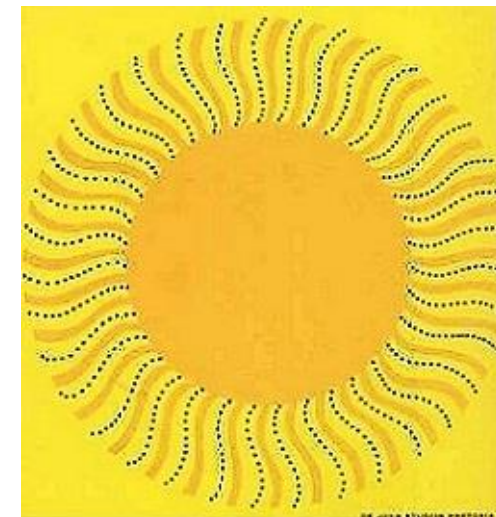
by **Marlize Groenewald**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree DPhil (Visual Studies)  
in the Department of Visual Arts at  
the University of Pretoria  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

SUPERVISOR: **Professor Jeanne van Eeden**

CO-SUPERVISOR: **Professor Lize Kriel**

March 2018



### **A note on the format of the bound study**

*Following Alun Munslow's (2010) call for "expressionist historical forms" that offer the possibility of history writing that is "overtly figurative in exemplification, [and] expansive in taste," I have endeavoured to enrich my narrative with a generous number of images that, as a researcher in the graphic design discipline, I did not wish to subject to the impoverishing constraints of the more usual A4 format of academic theses. However, I have not privileged aesthetics merely for the sake of flouting convention. Most examples require large-scale reproduction to enable a close engagement with the designs and, moreover, benefit from being grouped together on a page. An A3 landscape format has allowed me to do so without compromising the aesthetic choices inherent in the designs themselves, or adding unnecessarily to the number of pages.*

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## **DECLARATION**

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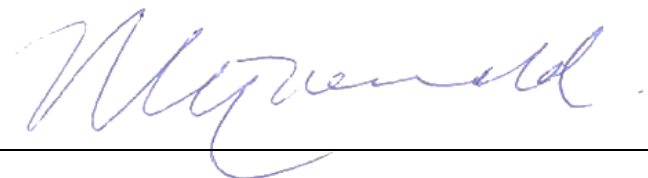
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Title of thesis: **DOMESTICATING THE MODERN: AN INTERROGATION OF THE VISUAL RHETORIC OF SOUTH AFRICAN GRAPHIC DESIGNER ERNST DE JONG (1934-2016)**

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*I declare that this thesis is my own original work. Where secondary material is used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.*

*I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of university policy and implications in this regard.*



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**Signature**

**Date** 12 December 2017

To Mark Sean Hallinan (1958-2015)

*You lie  
in the hook of my heart  
so small, and so silent  
but warm, like nursery food  
and soft; a lullaby*

*No rational thought comes here:  
no logic, no deduction. All this  
is kept at bay by the fleshy wall  
of conception —  
the grace of understanding  
in the absence of an understanding  
of love*

Lisbon, June 2002



## ABSTRACT

In 1957, South African born Ernst de Jong returned to Pretoria, South Africa, after studying painting and information design at the University of Oklahoma in the USA. De Jong and his American wife, Gwen Drennan, immediately set about opening a graphic design studio that profited from de Jong's transformative experiences in Oklahoma and established itself as a pioneer of identity design in South Africa. The modernising rhetoric of Ernst de Jong Studios (EDJS), and indeed de Jong himself, came to signify the utopian aspirations of a putatively bright, new and modern Republic. As the political and cultural contexts of the country changed, so did the nature and fortunes of EDJS; de Jong closed his design practice in 1994 and then gradually faded from view.

This study is a discursive space, an interrogation of and often personal reflection on the circumstances of de Jong's life and creative practice, as well as the inventive task of 'prying open' the artefacts, events and relationships that informed this practice. I aim to make visible an influential life, but also to question how it was constructed, and then re-presented — both by the participants and myself — for the purposes of this study. Concomitantly, I flesh open the drive, in a post-colonial community, to appropriate modernism in its project of individualisation. Oral history, and in particular 'life history', provides the starting point and underlying framework for my narrative that explores design briefs executed for the journal *Lantern*, the Rand Afrikaans University and the *Afrikaanse Taalmonument*. Although the three case studies cannot provide a comprehensive account of the vast output of EDJS, they serve to throw light on mainstream graphic design experiences in publication design, university branding and heritage design in the years 1957 to 1975 in South Africa.

**Key terms:** Ernst de Jong, South Africa, Pretoria, *Lantern*, Rand Afrikaans University, *Afrikaanse Taalmonument*, graphic design history, knowledge systems, architecture, publication design, Afrikaans, biography, modernism, identity, rhetoric, oral history, narrative research.



*Ernst and Gwen de Jong, c1960*



*Ernst de Jong in his studio at 366 Hill Street, Pretoria, 14 May 2015*



*Gwen de Jong in her townhouse, Cape Town, 04 April 2015*

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Ernst, I salute you.



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## PREFACE

Ernst de Jong was born in 1934, in Pretoria, South Africa. In 1951, he was awarded a sport scholarship to attend the University of Oklahoma (OU) in the United States of America (USA) where he obtained a Bachelors Degree in Fine Art, specialising in Information Design. Upon his relocation to Pretoria in 1957, he and his American wife, Gwen Drennan (1935- ), secured lecturing positions at the Pretoria College for Advanced Technical Education.<sup>1</sup> This appointment resulted in both an educational and a corporate shift with regard to graphic design in the region: de Jong incorporated his Oklahoma experience into the teaching methods at the College and immediately started to exert a professional presence by launching a commercial design enterprise, Ernst De Jong Studios (EDJS).

EDJS soon acquired legendary status in the South African design community. Work from the studio appeared in prestigious international publications such as *Graphis* and the *New York Art Directors Annual* and, in 1986, de Jong won the Society of Designers in South Africa (SDSA) Award for outstanding design achievement (Fig.1).<sup>2</sup> Contiguous to the running of EDJS, de Jong also pursued studio painting and mural commissions with notable acclaim. It is no surprise, then, that Esmé Berman (1983:109), in her encyclopaedic *Art and artists of South Africa*, could remark that, “Ernst De Jong’s career furnishes a story of success. He has done more than well in all the fields he has entered”. What is curious, given this accolade, is that, prior to 2014, the only published biographical material — besides Berman’s — appears as an anonymous, one-page acknowledgment in the South African design journal *Image & Text* (Ernst De Jong 1994:32).

The reasons for de Jong’s absence from the historiography of South African visual culture are complex. Berman (1983:109), who acknowledges that “in the field of advertising design ... he is considered one of SA’s leading practitioners”, comments on the problematic articulation between de Jong’s “commercial art” and his “serious intentions” as a painter. Indeed, de Jong, until the end of his life, chose to describe himself as a ‘legendary painter’, not a designer, despite his belief in the symbiotic relationship of the two types of practice. Yet it is in the field of design that de Jong received tangible recognition and, as a consequence of the output of EDJS, made important contributions to the transforming identity of a post-colonial South Africa.<sup>3</sup> However, as a designer who spent more than thirty years producing, in his words, “much of South Africa’s most prestigious graphic [design] work” (de Jong 2013:4), de Jong, despite early success in this regard, increasingly struggled to be acknowledged as a creative practitioner.

A complicating factor was de Jong’s involvement in gymnastics, springboard diving, fencing, pistol shooting and horse riding. As Chris Thurman’s (2010a) volume *Sport versus art: a South African contest* demonstrates, sport — perceived to be “an unintelligent endeavour” (Sport versus art ... 2018) — and the arts have, in this country, engaged in a “bickering rivalry” (Thurman 2010b). Thurman (2010b) refers to the schism as a “bitter ... obsession” fuelled, in part, by the amount of money spent on sport, as well as its popularity when compared to the arts. While the relationship may be acrimonious in South Africa, where organised sport, divided along racial lines, also came to signify, for many, a narrow-minded ruling order, it is not unique. Jeffrey Tobin (2002: 57) points out that, in Argentina, sport is considered to be “‘manual’ labor as opposed to mental labor, so ... it is still disparaged by intellectuals”. Ryan Flynn (2015) proposes easy money, mob mentality, the tawdry element of luck and the mindless debating of minutiae as reasons for the antipathy of intellectuals towards sport. Another condition that potentially disaffects the arts is sport’s lingering association with fascism (e.g., Mangan 2013; Gori 2004; Kater 2004; Dogliani 2001), of which Leni Riefenstahl’s film *Olympia* (1938) is a salient reminder. De

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<sup>1</sup> Currently the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT).

<sup>2</sup> Although de Jong’s (2014:10) curriculum vitae indicates 1987 as the date that he received the award, a promotional flyer for EDJS states that it was in 1986.

<sup>3</sup> While acknowledging the porous parameters of ‘the colonial’ with regard to South Africa, for the purposes of this study, “post-colonialism refers to the situation in a society ‘after colonialism’” (Ashcroft 2001:10). In less material terms, the study also positions itself within the framework of *postcolonial* studies, where the prefix ‘post’ is not to be understood temporally, but should be read as a “postulate of the current engagement with ... the deconstruction of colonial discourses and thought patterns that continue to exert an influence up into the present” (Fischer-Tiné 2010).

Jong, in his sporting practice, evinced none of the alienating qualities enumerated by Flynn;<sup>4</sup> however, he chose, and widely proclaimed, sport as his primary, indeed *only*, ontological compass. While his sporting prowess had, in the early years, elicited admiration from the general public and boosted the profile of EDJS, de Jong's failure to concomitantly engage with the intellectual *gravitas* required for serious art-making did not, in the long run, stand him in good stead.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, notwithstanding the earlier, if somewhat ambivalent, recognition by Berman, de Jong is not even mentioned in her 1993 compendium, *Painting in South Africa*. However, celebrating him as a designer was also problematic owing, in part, to his reluctance to be known as such, but also, and perhaps more pertinently, the general paucity of history writing in the discipline of design in Southern Africa. The combined effect of these circumstances was that, at the 2013 Design Education Forum of South Africa (DEFSA) conference, almost no-one in the audience of more than a hundred delegates had heard of Ernst de Jong.

What, then, sparked my interest in the man? The question prompts, at first, a deceptively simple answer, namely an article co-written by de Jong and his wife, Gwen, for the 1958 October/December issue of *Lantern*, a South African cultural journal to which my parents subscribed. A copy of this issue survived in our household until I, born in 1957, was old enough to read the de Jongs' articulate defence of advertising as a form of art and be intrigued by the revelation of graphic design as a career. In the early 1970s, when I was planning my tertiary studies, de Jong had already established himself as a well-known lecturer in graphic design at the University of Pretoria. Although I enrolled at the University of Stellenbosch, de Jong's work, albeit vicariously, infused my student life since the weekly letters from my mother displayed the second definitive South African stamp series, designed by de Jong and issued in November 1974. Once I was working as an illustrator in Johannesburg, I travelled with opera-loving friends to the State Theatre in Pretoria where de Jong's mural design on the auditorium's fire curtain reinforced his prominence and versatility. Many years later, when I embarked upon a Masters in Information Design at the University of Pretoria — a programme that owed its origins to de Jong — I followed up on this trail of confluence by arranging to meet the designer in person and, as a result of this conversation, analysed and published articles on the rhetoric of the 1992 CS Stals banknote series, of which de Jong had been the overseeing design director.

The banknote project was the tip of a metaphorical continent that, at the time, was too vast to traverse but that nevertheless called for exploration. From a socio-political perspective, the period in which de Jong was active as a designer coincides with the coming to office of HF Verwoerd in 1958, the establishment of the Republic of South Africa and the subsequent rule of the National Party (NP) until the coming to power of the African Nationalist Congress (ANC) in 1994. De Jong's clients were often influential individuals and organisations. While much of his client-base was in Johannesburg, de Jong lived and worked in the administrative capital, Pretoria. Consequently, the 'prestigious graphic work' referred to by de Jong did not happen in a vacuum, neither was it a purely superficial aesthetic. Jessica Helfand (2001:137) states that graphic design

responds to needs at once personal and public ... and is informed by numerous disciplines including art and architecture ... Graphic design is a popular art, a practical art, an applied art and an ancient art ... [I]t is the art of visualizing ideas.

Here Helfand (2001:136) is constructing a context for a reflection upon the prolific career of Paul Rand (1914-1996), "arguably the most celebrated American graphic designer of the twentieth century", but her definition of the nature of graphic design serves to highlight much of what is important about de Jong. His design work was not merely a commercial necessity: it was the art of visualising ideas, and these ideas have not, to any meaningful extent, been described or interrogated. That they deserve attention is reiterated by Rebecca Houze (2016:2), who writes that the visual landscapes constructed by designers "resonate through culture, history, politics and social change". These sign and symbols

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<sup>4</sup> He was, perhaps, more impressed with *Olympia* than he cared to admit.

<sup>5</sup> This difficulty was not limited to de Jong's relationship with academics, but, upon occasion, extended to design clients as well (Hoekstra 2017).

shout to us loudly from a distance. Others we can hold in our hands, and near our eyes, where they ... whisper suggestively ... [They] are not only practical tools, designed to provide us with new knowledge ... They are central to our imaginative lives and the construction of our identities (Houze 2016:1).

Consequently, the undertaking to document and make visible de Jong's life was clearly a necessary one. However, underlying the scholarly justification of addressing a *lacuna* in South African design history was, and remains, a personal impulse to resurrect and make visible a child's fascination with the local manifestation of a creative sophistication exemplified by the metropole. More simply put, de Jong generated in me a sense of ethnic pride. For a young Afrikaner whose parents had emerged from the demoralising circumstances of white poverty in South Africa in the 1920s,<sup>6</sup> the de Jongs — whom I assumed to be fellow Afrikaners — provided evidence of the ability of a marginalised group to compete with and even surpass its international counterparts, perhaps British exemplars in particular.

Anna Calvera (2005:378) warns that when modernity is explained solely in terms of westernisation, “many doors are closed to the understanding of local realities”; rather, she suggests, one should ask *why* modernity was adopted in a peripheral nation and *how* it might have expressed “the ideal of improving the ways of living of ordinary people”. Adrienne Viljoen (2014\_03\_March\_03:30), manager at the South African Design Institute and veteran champion of South African design, believes that de Jong's knack of appearing to place South Africa (and Pretoria in particular) on a global stage contributed to the esteem in which he was held by ‘ordinary people’. This enabling optimism was felt keenly by myself, a young girl living in East London that was, as its name implies, an outpost of the British Empire in the borderlands of the then Cape Province.<sup>7</sup> Afrikaners, a small minority group in the city, were shunned and routinely mocked as being backward, a charge that the embattled Afrikaner community attempted to disprove by resorting to a near-paranoid, reactionary cultural conservatism. It was therefore often difficult, in the late 1960s, to construct an identity that acknowledged one's identification as Afrikaner and, at the same time, signal an affinity with international cultural trends.

When I encountered the de Jongs' article it was already a historical artefact and thus my response to its rhetoric was, even then, one of a curious nostalgia — the “disorderly back-and-forth between a deceptively finished ‘then’ and a patently active ‘now’” (Eley 2008:160). De Jong's bold placement of modernism within the perceived context of Afrikaner cultural history offered an alternative to the stultifying metanarratives of creaking ox-wagons, pious patriarchs and an insular, hopelessly old-fashioned aesthetic. Therefore, although I was not alone in looking to de Jong to rescue me from a putative ‘backwardness’, I concede that the *why* of the present enquiry emerges quite powerfully from my own past experiences and a desire to make sense of these events.

Yet, the need for the study notwithstanding, the reasons for the lack of critical (or other) writing on de Jong, once they are acknowledged, auger the challenges faced by the would-be biographer of a white, privileged, English-speaking male who shaped the everyday visual culture of a post-colonial community through a modernism that in the twenty-first century might “seem worthless as a reference to be shared globally” (Calvera 2005:371). The problems, broadly speaking, initially appeared to be twofold: the theme of biography itself, and the peripheral nature of the proposed history in relation to the global understanding of the subject of design. These framing conditions, impacting as they do on the validity of the study, are acknowledged and briefly considered in Chapter One.

However, as I embarked upon the research itself, both the challenges and opportunities multiplied in a rather alarming manner, and the nature of the project shifted from a narrow focus on one individual to the complex network of relationships that impacted upon and became intrinsic to the output of EDJS. Although de Jong remains the central orb in the solar system of his own enterprise, what became clear is that a study of Ernst de Jong could not be a study of Ernst de Jong *alone*. This realisation gradually emerged from artefactual research, but also, and most forcibly, from interviewing de Jong's erstwhile associates. Encounters with the designer

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<sup>6</sup> See The Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question in South Africa (1932).

<sup>7</sup> Now, the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa.

himself proved to be a salutary example of what Sarah Nuttall ([sa]) refers to as “a battle of wills” between interviewer and interviewee and the often exasperating nature of the interview as a source of data is reviewed in Chapter Two. Conversations with other role players, who, while they were perhaps more mindful of the needs of the interviewer than the main participant, introduced a disruptive agenda of a different kind. Not originally planned as central or even necessary to the study, dialogues with individuals whose lives were changed by their association with de Jong both problematised and enriched his own representation of his life. Consequently, a core objective of the study — the recording of empirical data — withered before a richer panorama of memory as performance and identity construction.

Perhaps most poignant was the transition, after de Jong’s sudden death early in 2016, of the designer’s youngest daughter, Tamara de Jong, from absent bystander to strident spokesperson for her father’s legacy. That we both wept while watching my videotaped interviews of her father, attests to the transformation — not generally recommended in an academic endeavour — that the research project had undergone since its inception in 2013. Within the limitations of the present study, only glimpses of this emotional investment, from both researcher and participants, are made apparent, but it should be noted that, within the context of the title of the study, the story that I re-imagine often becomes the story of other people’s lives as much as it is about these lives within the gravitational pull of de Jong’s extraordinary personality.

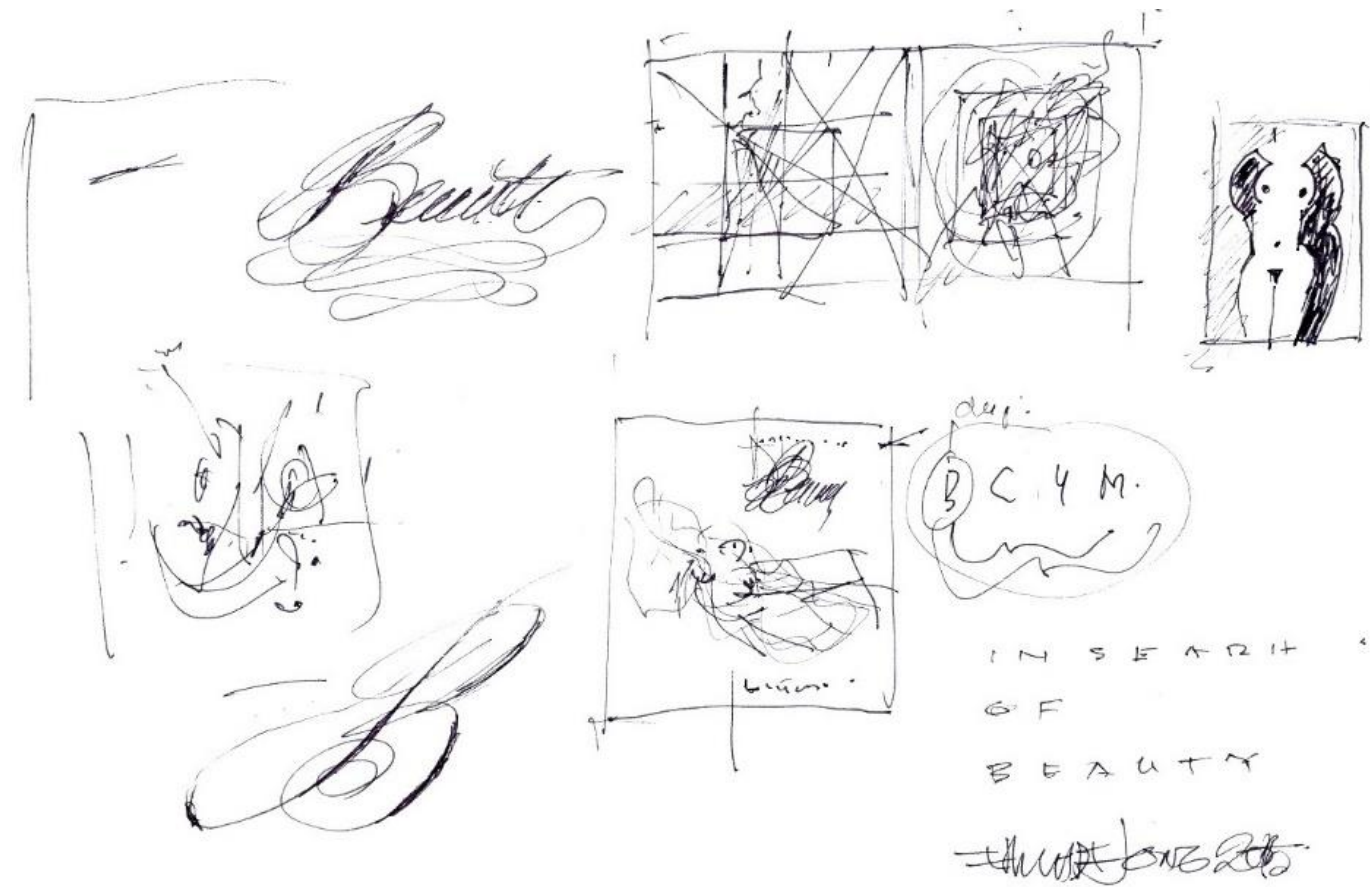
Although oral historian Lynn Abrams (2010:10) reflects that, “One can hardly think of anything more different to the ... experience of sitting in an archive ... than ... creating one’s source from a living person”, the condition that meshes the inert evidence of graphic design artefacts with the visceral experience of the interview is the use of rhetoric. Chaim Perelman and Lucie Ohlbrechts-Tyteca (1971:5, emphasis in original) define rhetoric as “the art of persuading and convincing” and emphasise that “*it is in terms of an audience that an argumentation develops*”. Design theorist Richard Buchanan (1989:91, emphasis added) expands upon this definition by stating that rhetoric is “the inventive and persuasive relation of speakers and audiences as they are brought together in speeches *or other objects of communication*”. Since it is, indeed, both ‘speeches’ and ‘other objects of communication’ that are the concern of my narrative, the theory and practice of rhetoric as underpinning frameworks of this story are addressed in the following chapters.

Literary theorist Kenneth Burke (1955 [1950]:123) aligns the rhetorical act with courtship. This is perhaps a fitting descriptor for a project that unfolded by means of the ‘open fist’ of rhetoric, wielded by both researcher and participants in a performance that, in and of itself, was an “engaging, claiming, beseeching [of] attention — commercially, politically, aesthetically” (Silverstone 1999:32), but also, always, with love.



# CHAPTER ONE: PLACES OF REFLECTION AND ENQUIRY

*[A]n interpreter of the visual arts committed to figuring out how to say what she sees is destined for disappointment ...  
Continuing curiosity about what the scholar can never fully know is the most critical and most noble, though undeniably melancholic, lesson of all*  
Michael Ann Holly, 2013





**Figure 1** Photographer unknown, Ernst de Jong receiving the SDSA Dashing Crystal Award from Mr AL Ringo, chairperson of Dashing, 1986.

## 1.1 Research approach

In pursuing my project of exploring the work and life of Ernst de Jong I utilised a qualitative research approach that, by definition, allows the researcher to ask open-ended questions, explore multiple perspectives and interpret and make sense of what he or she sees (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:133-134). In this type of study researchers look subjectively for patterns in the complex phenomena they observe and then interpret the themes that emerge (Creswell 2014:17).

Data is typically collected in the participant's setting, while analysis builds inductively from particulars to general themes as the researcher interprets the meaning of the data (Creswell (2014:4, 17). John Creswell (2014:4) notes that, in this type of inquiry, the written report has a flexible structure; the focus is on rendering the complexity of a situation as opposed to quantitative research that has as its purpose the testing of objective theories.

Creswell (2014:5) uses the framework of *worldviews* — a basic set of beliefs that guide action — to explain the interaction of research design, philosophy and specific methods. He highlights four views that are widely discussed in literature, namely a transformative view, postpositivism, pragmatism and constructivism. Of these, a constructivist approach is typically seen as a qualitative approach and best describes the present study, in which both the researcher and participants develop “subjective meanings of their experiences ... directed towards certain objects or things” (Creswell 2014:8). Participants are enabled to *construct* the meaning of a situation or artefact, where these meanings are negotiated socially and historically (Creswell 2014:8); the focus is therefore on the historical and cultural settings of the participants. Moreover, Creswell (2014:8) points out that researchers who adhere to a constructivist approach “recognise that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and ... acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences”.

Within the broader context of a qualitative approach, two types of study were selected, the first of which can be described as *narrative research*, which is a design of enquiry “in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks [these] individuals to provide stories about their lives” (Creswell 2014:13); this information is then ‘restored’ by the researcher into a narrative chronology. Secondly, case studies, in which the researcher typically develops in-depth analyses of programs, events, or processes (Creswell 2014:14), are interwoven with — and frequently prompt — the narrative response. In case studies, researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures. I collected two types of data, namely primary data, in the form of taped interviews and archival data, as well as secondary data, namely a review of texts that informed the theoretical, methodological, social, political and institutional contexts of the undertaking.

David Plowright (2011:3, 49, 219), in advocating his framework for an integrated research methodology, notes that, irrespective of the research paradigm, there are three data collection methods, namely carrying out observations, asking questions and undertaking artefact analysis. Plowright (2011:49) concedes that these categories may seem somewhat “unusual”, but Creswell (2014:185), who reviews quantitative, qualitative and ‘convergent mixed method’ research design, indicates similar categories for qualitative data collection, namely observation, interviews, documents and audio-visual information. However, Plowright’s approach is more useful in a study of design and designers in that he highlights artefact analysis, where the definition of an artefact is an object or event “produced by people” (Plowright 2011:92). Unlike Creswell, Plowright does not make a distinction between documents and audio visual material and his examples of artefacts include letters, magazines, photographs, drawings, buildings, clothes, music, film, dance and food; in other words, products of the human-made world.<sup>8</sup> In the present enquiry, I have drawn, to a greater or lesser extent, on all three of Plowright’s categories as a source of data for analysis and reflect more fully upon the process and ethics of interviewing and documenting artefacts from personal collections and archives in Chapter Two. However, the analysis of data for the purpose of interpretation is first and foremost underpinned by a review of scholarly literature, and this aspect of the study is addressed in Section 1.2.

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<sup>8</sup> In view of the consideration, in Section 1.3, of what may or may not comprise the ‘visual’, it is interesting to note that Plowright differentiates those objects containing text (e.g., letters, books and brochures) from the rest, in which category he includes film, videos and buildings. Plowright concedes that the categories are not mutually exclusive, but it is notable that textual material is often regarded by scholars as *non-visual* (e.g., Atzmon 2011b: 371). Although Plowright defines a building as an artefact, he, like Helmers and Hill (2009), apparently does not include typewriters and toasters in this category.

## 1.2 Consideration of the literature

### 1.2.1 Using literature in a qualitative study

Reviewing existing literature accomplishes several purposes. Amongst other things, it shares the results of related studies, positions the present study within a larger, ongoing dialogue in the field and argues for the importance and validity of the research undertaking (Creswell 2014:28). In general, a review of the literature unfolds from the larger problem to the narrower issue that leads into the methods of the study (Creswell 2014:28). The use of literature can assume various forms. Creswell (2014:28-29) notes that in qualitative research this use varies considerably: the literature may be discussed to frame the problem in an introduction, be presented as a stand-alone review, used at the end as a basis for comparison, or threaded throughout the study. In the present enquiry, the literature is used both to frame the problem and to support the interpretation of data throughout the study.

To this purpose, I have, in addition to scholarly texts, made use of what may be described as ‘popular’ sources available on the Internet. Owing to the historical nature of the enquiry, and the diverse themes that emerged as a result of the analysis, it was necessary to gather background information quickly and effortlessly on matters ranging from the history of college swimming competitions to the architecture of Indian temples. As far as possible, when it was appropriate to do so, I have consulted reputable on-line sources, in which category I include Wikipedia™,<sup>9</sup> for incidental information and cross-checking of ‘facts’ in an attempt to provide an informed context for the interpretation of data. However, lest the reader grow alarmed, key theoretical and methodological concepts are derived from what are recognised as scholarly, authored texts in books and journals.<sup>10</sup>

In order, then, to cast light on the places of concern in the study, the following sections address issues pertaining to modernism, biography and the nature of design history in a peripheral society.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.2.2 What was modernism?

The broad framework of the study of EDJS is *modernism*, a term that, as Christopher Wilk (2006:12) points out, is widely used but rarely defined.<sup>12</sup> A curious impulse exists — even when the word forms part of the title of a publication — to avoid the explanation of a concept that is either taken for granted, or is so ambiguous that any attempt to define it appears overwhelming. In order to address this *lacuna*, Wilk (2006:12) valiantly sets out to pin down a phenomenon that, in his opinion, is the “most powerful force” in twentieth-century visual culture and that has, moreover, become embedded in twenty-first century writing on contemporary visual culture.

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<sup>9</sup> Numerous studies, most famously the one carried out by *Nature* (Giles 2005), have indicated that the quality of Wikipedia™ articles rate favourably with similar articles in other online encyclopaedias. In 2012, Epic, an e-learning consultancy, in partnership with Oxford University, conducted further research. Epic’s study, which is an exemplar of scholarly reporting, concludes that, in comparison to other encyclopaedias, “Wikipedia articles were more often judged [by scholars participating in the study] to provide more comprehensive and up to date content, useful references and at least comparable levels of accuracy and citability” (Casebourne, Davies, Fernandes & Norman 2012:55).

<sup>10</sup> Phillip Meggs’s *A history of graphic design* (1998), and Meggs and Alston Purvis’s (2006) expanded edition of this text, served as a general source with regard to a European and North-American graphic design history throughout the study. With regard to timelines of political events in Southern Africa, The Reader’s Digest *Illustrated history of South Africa: the real story* (1994), edited by Dougie Oakes, has, as always, proved to be useful.

<sup>11</sup> See Sections 1.2.4 and 1.2.5.

<sup>12</sup> A case in point is Phillip Meggs and Alston Purvis’s celebrated *Meggs’ history of graphic design* (2006:219) that devotes 200 pages to what the authors off-handedly refer to as ‘modernist design’, but where the term *modernism* is never defined. The term also does not appear in the index to the volume.

As do most writers who pause to examine the meaning of the word, Wilk (2006:13) takes care to point out that the term *modernism* was in use well before the twentieth century<sup>13</sup> and nineteenth-century usage often meant “something ... of its time”. Thus, in Latin America *El Modernismo* referred to French-influenced poetry in the late 1880s, and the term was used in Spain to describe turn-of-the-century architecture and art. Modernism in the designed world did not, therefore, exist in a fully developed form until well after WWI, the trauma of which spurred modernism’s subsequent utopianism (Wilk 2006:17).

In the inter-war years, the term *modernism* was still used primarily in literary studies. In the 1920s, it was occasionally used to indicate the ‘new architecture’, and by 1936, Wilk (2006:13) notes, Nikolaus Pevsner used the term *modern* in the title of his book that detailed design from the Arts and Crafts Movement to the Bauhaus. Starting in 1939, modernism in painting acquired its “canonical definition” (Wilk 2006:13) that was bestowed by Clement Greenberg, namely that ‘modernist’ painting “referred only to itself and that its concerns were entirely aesthetic ... to the exclusion of anything outside of itself”. Wilk (2006:13-14) points out that Greenberg’s widely accepted definition, despite criticism, has survived “remarkably intact” and continues to serve as a contrast to the definition of modernism in the *designed* world.

Thus, Wilk (2006:14) proposes, as a definition, that modernism in the designed world was not, at first, conceived as a style, but rather as a loose collection of ideas that emerged in cities in Europe and, later, New York. Key themes were an enthusiasm for the ‘new’, the rejection of history and tradition, and a utopian desire to create a better world, in which endeavour the machine would play a central role. The physical manifestation of these aims demanded the rejection of ornament and adherence to abstraction. Modernism also required an acceptance of the unity of all the creative practices, in other words, the disintegration of the traditional hierarchies that separate the practices of art and design. All the aforementioned principles were frequently combined with social and political beliefs “which held that design ... should transform society” (Wilk 2006:14).

Duangfang Lu (2011:5) enumerates similar expectations in his definition of modernist architecture:

By purifying traditional restrictions and decoration, reconceptualising space-time, following the logic of function, and modularizing its components, modernist architecture was considered to embody modern modes of living, thinking and production based on rationality, efficiency, calculation, the obsession with novelty and abstraction, as well as the moral pretension of advancing social and political goals through design practice.

However, by the time that Greenberg formulated his notion of aesthetic formalism in painting, modernism in the design world was gradually being divested of its utopian character, especially once it encountered the pragmatism of American society (Wilk 2006:14). As Philip Meggs and Alston Purvis (2006:374) point out, European modernism was often theoretical and highly structured; American modernism, in contrast, while borrowing from European modernism, was more frequently intuitive and — foreshadowing postmodernism — ironic in its visual language. In an egalitarian but highly competitive society, novelty, personal expression and originality of concept were more prized than utopian intent. Increasingly, design responded to capitalist, not “left-leaning” (Wilk 2006:14-15) values and as early as 1932, popular American magazines had begun to offer ‘Modernism’ as one of a number of possible style choices for the domestic home. This loosening of modernism’s attachment to ‘moral pretension’, and the guileless adoption of its visual language as decorative form, is of considerable importance in terms of de Jong’s encounter with ‘modern modes of thinking’ in the USA in the early 1950s.

Wilk (2006:17, emphasis added) explains the nature of *modernity*, a condition that has been brought about by *modernisation* — the process of scientific, technological and societal change — and its relationship to *modernism*: “Modernism represents the ‘visions and values’ that have enabled men and women to become the subjects and objects of modernization ... [and to] *make it their own*”. Inherent in this understanding of modernism, then, is the concomitant project of appropriating its

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<sup>13</sup> Duangfang Lu (2011:4) notes that the term ‘modern’ originated in the fifth century in the Latin term *modernus* that set the Christian present aside from the pagan past. In an ironic turnabout in 1907, Pope Pius X (in Wilk 2006:13) described modernism as heretical and “leading to atheism and to the annihilation of all religion”.

visual language in a project of individualisation. Jeffrey Meikle (1995:143-144) uses the term *domestication* with regard to the use of modernism by ordinary people but, unlike Wilk who accords agency to the consumers of modernism, posits that organs of power in both democratic and socialist societies “realized that they had to domesticate the disruptive experience of modernity ... [in order] to persuade ambivalent populations that new modes of living retained or promoted traditional values”. Meikle examines artefacts produced in the industrialised north in the years between WWI and WWII and proposes three ‘modes’ of *domestication* that were imposed ‘from above’: situating modernity in a continuum linking past, present and future; limiting modernity to the city; and neutralising threatening aspects of modernity by incorporating icons of the modern into a personal, domestic space. Meikle (1995:165) therefore views the use of modernism as a subtle form of propaganda and contends that these strategies both trivialised modernity and rendered it familiar.

But it was not just in Europe and North America that populations had to be persuaded. Of particular relevance to this study is that Wilk includes, in his definition of modernism, the ‘extra-territorial’ nature of the phenomenon. Not only did leading modernist designers move between European and American capitals, but, as Ludwig Mies van den Rohe (in Wilk 2006:15) proclaimed, their work rapidly became “part of a movement which [emerged] across the whole world”. Inherent to the definition of modernism, then, is its practitioners’ claim to *internationalism* and, moreover, the concept that modernism was the positive face of globalism: new forms and technologies were a matter of “universal knowledge unrestrained by national boundaries and an expression of zeitgeist which held an epochal force that no society could escape” (Lu 2011:5). However, Lu (2011:5) points out that modernism, conceived as such, did not always match the forces that drove it. In Germany, the flat roofs and white walls of early modernist architecture were frequently ridiculed as ‘orientalist’ or ‘African’. In the 1930s, Nazi propagandists proclaimed architectural modernism — indeed modernist design in general<sup>14</sup> — to be ‘anti-national’. Conversely, French critics regarded the promotion of internationalism as an attempt by Germany to impose its cultural values upon other nations.

Yet, despite these conflicting responses, Lu (2011:6) comments that for most design historians, modernism embodies the utopian notions of “dissemination, progress and enlightenment” and that, consequently, there is a failure to problematise this process. Lu (2011:6) argues that the globalism embodied in the phenomenon of modernism has more complicated meanings beyond those constructed by the early modernists. While the common view, and one that is also offered in this study, is that colonialism was underpinned by classic forms and that modernism operated as its antithesis, Lu (2011:6) posits that modernist design was not necessarily a denial of colonialism. Since 1990, several studies have revealed that Western expansion through colonisation was an indivisible feature of modernity, and colonial modernities, for their part, an integral part of global modernity (Lu 2011:6).

One aspect of this symbiotic relationship that Lu (2011:7) explores is the replacement of the socialist ideals of European modernists by a commitment to democracy in “Americanized” modernism, a strategy that was employed to counter the USA’s perceived enemies in, for example, Latin America, Turkey and India. Following decolonisation, newly independent nations also exercised globalism, often supported in this endeavour by countries such as Israel that sought to legitimise their own presence on a world stage. To illustrate the latter, Inbal Ben-Asher Gitler (2011:113-140) examines the design of the Obafemi Awolowo University Campus in Nigeria, built in 1962-1976 — a project that presents interesting parallels with the case of the *Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit* interrogated in Chapter Three of this study. Lu (2011:8-9) concludes that global design practices were performed by “a wide range of players and tangled with multiple political purposes”; it achieved its worldwide hegemony when financial capitalism was on the rise, but it also travelled in the name of knowledge transfer and brought international recognition and accelerated modernisation to its host societies. Thus, Lu (2011:9) calls for greater focus on the relations that were in place “in the actual ‘postcolonial’ vision” during the

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<sup>14</sup> Accused of creating ‘un-German’ typography, graphic designer Jan Tschichold was arrested by armed Nazis in 1933 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:322, 331). He was eventually released, but Hendrik Werkman, a Dutch designer who was noted for his experimental type, was subsequently executed by the Nazis in 1945.

1950s and 1960s when awareness of the temporal lag between the metropolis and the periphery “turned into a nationalistic aspiration for development ... an all-encompassing project of modernization [that] was at the top of the national agenda of many Third World countries”.<sup>15</sup>

Lu’s concern is, of course, with architecture and therefore some of his observations need to be understood within this context. However, de Jong was, from the outset, intrigued by the built environment and architects and engineers were some of his earliest clients; indeed, two of the case studies presented in this study have as their starting point the modernising vision of architects. Lu’s (2011:10) observation that the features of modernist architecture, which appeared “clean, open, dynamic, and neutral”, allowed for sufficient differentiation from both ‘native’ and ‘imperialist’ buildings is therefore of relevance. Modernist architecture was taken as a symbol of “order, efficiency, and development” (Lu 2011:10) and shaped the collective conscious of what a modern nation should look like. Lu (2011:11), in line with Wilk, therefore recognises that the localisation of modernism was often a process in which people “worked actively to make themselves modern, instead of merely being made modern”.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, just as modernism and colonialism evince co-dependence, so do modernism and nationalism. Lu’s (2011:13) observation that the national unity formed against an alien oppressor before independence was replaced with the need to construct a national identity in the face of multiple contending forces within the newly independent state is of particular relevance in a South African context. Lu (2011:13) identifies three mechanisms by which modernism was employed to represent nationhood, all of which are relevant to this study. Firstly, modernity was the *visible representation* of a peripheral society’s capacity to equal the centre. Secondly, modernism served as an important strategy in the need for *individualisation*: modernism was welcomed in young nations as “free of the ties of the past”. Thirdly, in a post-colonial state, it was essential to *impose homogeneity*, and modernism, a style that was peddled as being both neutral and universal, was therefore presented as the means to reduce social, cultural, political and religious tensions. Consequently, while Lu (2011:15) acknowledges the validity of the core-periphery model, he encourages analyses that acknowledge “connection, dispersion, entanglement, and mobility” as important dimensions of the relationship between the metropolis and the colony.

Taking a somewhat different view, Brian Donnelly (2006:292-293), in reflecting upon the scarcity of Canadian graphic design history texts, posits that the primary use of the term ‘modernism’ in contemporary visual culture studies remains as “a marker of historical originality and canonical importance”. Since the dominant visual influences on Canada’s graphic design practice have come from outside the country, the reality, Donnelly (2006:286) argues, “is that the history of design in Canada is not entirely, or even fundamentally, a Canadian history”. Consequently, it cannot claim ‘historical originality’ or ‘canonical importance’, and an attempt to frame a history of Canadian design within the matrix of modernism is therefore a self-defeating task. Donnelly (2006:292), moreover, relates that in the more than hundred oral history interviews that he conducted with Canadian graphic designers, concepts of ‘modernism’ do not feature prominently, if at all; rather, designers talked about their work by means of “professionally selected [examples] ... historically determined but with no particular logic of their own”.

Donnelly’s account resonates strongly with South Africa’s history of received design influences, as well as my own experiences when interviewing local designers. However, when considered against the arguments by Wilk, Meikle and Lu, I do not believe that a modernist lens necessarily hampers a rich and original history of local design. Where I am in agreement with Donnelly (2006:293) is his premise that oral history, as a method of investigation, is necessary in these circumstances, since it

attends closely to the local, even as it works to understand it [the local] in its increasingly global context ... [T]he stories told by designers are not necessarily always true ... but they do yield evidence that points to important truths ... a picture ... of a space far larger than just design.

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<sup>15</sup> Lu (2011:2-3) goes to some length to justify his use of the term ‘Third World’, which, he posits, is a “classification describing the emerging arena of global politics associated with neither Western capitalism nor Soviet socialism in the early 1960s”. The arena defined as such shared a history of colonisation, relatively low per capita incomes, was culturally non-Western and relied on agriculturally-based economies. Lu rejects terms such as ‘developing countries’, arguing that the ‘Third World’ is more than a socio-economic designation and has come to represent “a forceful ideology ... and a unique source of identity”. Although South Africa — or rather, certain sectors of its society — may find itself aligned with this classification in the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is unlikely that this was the case in the 1960s. However, Lu includes Brazil, Singapore and China in the category, and thus South Africa’s status, as is almost always the case with this perplexing region, remains ambiguous and thus occluded.

<sup>16</sup> Notably, Meikle reviews domestication of modernism in so-called First World countries, whereas Lu uses examples from Brazil, Morocco and Peru.



The vehicle, then, that enables me to reflect upon the particular ‘entanglements’ that inform the introduction of modernist design in a post-colonial, Southern African community is the life story and creative production of the designer Ernst de Jong.

### 1.2.3 *The shrinking of great men*

A proposal to document the life of a prominent human being requires, firstly, that the researcher acknowledges the mid-twentieth-century rejection, within the discipline of cultural history, of a focus upon “the ideas of the elite and individual intellectuals” (Green 2008:27). Anna Green (2008) highlights Lucien Febvre’s insistence, in 1922, on history writing that seeks to understand collective human behaviour: “Not the man, never the man”, declares Febvre (quoted in Green 2008:27), who shared many of the convictions of British Marxist historians. Febvre’s assistant was Fernand Braudel, whose subsequent work had as its purpose the “shrinking [of] great men and big events into the sovereign causalities of economics, population, and environment” (Eley 2008:37). Reacting against Victorian histories that were set upon constructing “a gallery of worthies” (Tosh 2000:75), scholars were now moved by the ability to measure change and establish patterns underpinned by the populist identification of ‘history from below’ (Eley 2008:45). The writing of individual biographies was therefore one of the earliest casualties of the rise of social history during the 1960s. As historian Geoff Eley (2008:168) explains,

social historians dismissed the biographical approach as an example of everything in the discipline that needed modernizing, deriding it as either the benighted traditionalism of old-fashioned political historians or the trivializing and frivolous recourse of the non-professional.

By the end of the 1970s, however, social history was encountering “frustrations and insufficiencies”, signaling a discursive shift – the “much vaunted ‘linguistic turn’” (Eley 2008:125-126) – from ‘social’ to ‘cultural’ modes of analysis. First to be dismissed in the 1960s, biography was, again, the first theme of history to be re-evaluated in the 1980s. With feminist scholars in the lead, historians recognised that the life of an individual is a complex text in which “the intersection of elaborate and multiform forces might be traced through and inside a particular life, allowing the generalized and the abstract to be focused through the personal and the particular” (Eley 2008:168).

However, notwithstanding the resurgence of the individual biography at the close of the twentieth century, John Tosh (2000:66) could still dwell on the reasons why biography is “often disparaged by academic historians”. Tosh (2000:75-76) concedes that the most pressing concerns are those of bias and the tendency to a simplified, linear reconstruction of events. Somewhat ambivalently, he suggests that biography should not be “dismissed altogether” (Tosh 2000:76), pointing out that full-scale biographies of dictators are indispensable, just as biographies of unknown individuals make visible a neglected aspect of the past. Tosh (2000:76) reiterates the scholarly rigour required in biographical research and the important role of biography in the understanding of motive and intention. Although there is much dispute among historians with regard to the latter, Tosh (2000:76, emphasis in original) argues that “plainly the motives of individuals have *some* part to play in explaining historical events. Once this much is conceded, the relevance of biography is obvious”. Biography is, therefore, legitimate, but the inference is that to be relevant its subject must be either an instrument of supreme evil, or labour in abject anonymity.

This distaste with regard to the invention of ‘heroes’ is reflected in twentieth-century design discourse. In the late 1980s, John Walker (1989:130) warns that “social history has come to be regarded as the appropriate way of writing histories of art and design; it can no longer claim an alternative status”. Walker (1989:132) cites Adrian Forty’s *Objects of desire* (1986) as a “sophisticated attempt at a social history of design”. Forty (2005 [1986]:245) proclaims that, “only by ... shifting our attention away from the person of the designer can we properly comprehend what design is”. The analysis of designed *objects* – removed from the personality of the designer – was now seen as being capable of giving “direct access to the ideas and emotions of a social group” (Walker 1989:133).



However, despite Walker's call for a social history, the next decade saw the publication of several bestselling monographs that would catapult their individual subjects to graphic design stardom — for example, Jon Wozencraft's (1988) *The graphic language of Neville Brody*, April Greiman's *Hybrid imagery: the fusion of technology and graphic design* (1990), and Lewis Blackwell's *The end of print: the graphic design of Dave Carson* (1995). Steven Heller's *Paul Rand* (1999) — for which Helfand wrote the short biographical sketch referred to in the Preface — did not so much create a legend, as canonise an old one; Heller's visual compendium of Rand's modernist output, somewhat ironically, relies for its *raison d'être* on a postmodern fascination with the archive. Whatever the merits, or not, of these paeans to individual genius, the 'designer-as-hero' prompted debate that was not limited to scholarly theses. In 1995, George Fejer (1995:3) — in a letter to *Design Review* — finds it necessary to defend the need for "heroes of our profession", but Michael Rock (1996), writing in *Eye*, presents the opposite view, namely that, "If we really want to go beyond the designer-as-hero model, we may have to ... ask, 'what difference does it make who designed it?'" Paula Scher (2001:31), in response to Rick Poynor's definition, in *Creative Review*, of graphic design 'authorship', takes Poynor to task for suggesting that, "The designer who merely attempts to achieve well-crafted design does not merit serious discussion". Scher, herself an icon of twentieth-century graphic design, clearly disagrees, but the problem is pertinent to any study of a 'successful' designer such as de Jong.<sup>17</sup>

The most current manifesto on design history is arguably that of Kjetil Fallan, Professor of Design History at the University of Oslo. Fallan (2010:ix) acknowledges the paucity — since Walker's text — of surveys of design historical scholarship; the aim of Fallan's *Design history: understanding theory and method* (2010) is therefore to supplement existing frameworks by focusing on more recent discourse. Unlike Walker, Fallan (2010:7-8) is emphatic that "design is not art", and outlines the problems in design history that arise from this assumption, one of which is the tendency to view designers as 'artists', or 'authors' — resulting in the much-maligned 'heroic approach'.<sup>18</sup> He leaves no room for doubt:

Besides being highly elitist, disturbingly mythopoetic and contributing to panegyric personality cult, this bias towards creation/production has also resulted in a neglect of use and consumption (Fallan 2010:8, 10).

Thus, the term 'biography' only appears as an expression of the life of objects (Fallan 2010:37, 98). Fallan (2010:56-104) proposes histories of technology, actor-network theory, script analysis and *domestication* as suitable methodological frameworks for 'industrial design history' — by which he means the history of "design in industrialized society" (Fallan 2010:17). The emphasis here is on *use* of design, in which "symbolic codes of various kinds are converted into ... a personal expression for the user" (Fallan 2010:93).

The battle lines are therefore drawn. Published in the same year as Fallan's treatise, *The design history reader* (2010), edited by Grace Lees-Maffei and Rebecca Houze, only features the names of two eminent designers in the titles of the 67 contributions to the volume and, of these, Philippe Starck is treated with high irony.<sup>19</sup> More recently, Lees-Maffei edited *Writing design: words and objects* (2012), where the title announces the premise of the publication, namely, "that design history has taken the *object* as its starting point ... to find out about *objects* and communicate their social and historical significance" (Lees-Maffei 2012:3, emphasis added). Of the seventeen contributions, only one title alerts the reader to a prominent individual, who is, however, an architecture critic, not the designer of the object in question (Munson 2012:120-130).

Within the context of the position taken by theorists such as Fallan and Lees-Maffei, the question of whether 'the intersection of elaborate and multiform forces can be traced through a particular life' necessarily prompts the answer, 'apparently not'. However, in considering the second difficulty raised by a study of de Jong, namely

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<sup>17</sup> The catalyst for this polemic was the publication of Bruce Mau's *Life style* (2000). Mau's self-promotional text was followed by several monographs celebrating individual graphic designers, for example *Some people can't surf: the graphic design of Art Chantry* (Lasky 2001); *Massin* (Wolff 2007); *Drawing life* (Mariscal 2009); *Born modern — the life and design of Alvin Lustig* (Heller & Lustig Cohen 2010); *Saul Bass: a life in film and design* (Bass & Kirkham 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Fallan takes the term from Hazel Conway, whose edited volume *Design history — a student's handbook* (1987) informs much of his point of view.

<sup>19</sup> See Lloyd and Snelders (2010 [2003]).

the peripheral nature of the proposed history, Fallan's methodology points the way to an instrument that not only enables narratives about design in peripheral communities, but admits individual authorship (if not an omnipotent hero) to the historical narrative. This is the framework of *domestication*, and it is reviewed in the following section.

#### 1.2.4 Rather unknown regions

The broad field of study “disengaged from connoisseurship and canonicity” that Fallan (2010:55) advocates is *sociodesign*, in which it is acknowledged that technology and society are “formed and transformed simultaneously”. At first, the approach appears to hold little relevance to a study of graphic design in Southern Africa; Fallan's examples are objects such as telephone booths, in Norway. However, the more useful underlying principle is how “the phenomenon in question is perceived, interpreted and used” (Fallan 2010:70).

As has been pointed out in Section 1.2.2, Meikle (1995) first uses the term *domestication* with regard to the ‘disruptive experience of modernity’ in Europe and the USA. Fallan (2010:89-104) responds to a slightly later and altered interpretation of the term developed by sociologists Roger Silverstone and Leslie Haddon (1997 [1996]:44-74) in which the ordinary consumer is not regarded as a passive receptor, but rather as an active participant in the processes of industrialisation. Thus, Silverstone & Haddon (1997:45, emphasis added) offer an account of “the role of information and communication technologies in everyday life which focuses on *innovation* as a social and cultural, as well as a political and economic, process”. Fallan (2010:99-100), in seeking to broaden this concept of *domestication* from the home to that of national community, calls on the arguments of Anna Calvera (2005:373-383), and in so doing, makes a fortuitous leap from Northern Europe to, as Calvera (2005:373) puts it, “rather unknown regions”.

The leap is, first and foremost, geographical, in that Calvera's (2005:380) concern is with the practical problems faced by a local historian, where ‘local’ signifies a national community “whose design activities and achievements are still unknown abroad” (Calvera 2005:372).<sup>20</sup> Calvera raises the uncomfortable question of the relevance of local histories within the global discourse. ‘Peripheral’, or ‘marginal’,<sup>21</sup> works are similar in character to those made in the ‘centre’; therefore, local design is “nothing other than new examples to confirm what is already known” (Calvera 2005:374). Consequently, local design may never be interesting enough to be mentioned, except in a footnote to a world history: Canada, as Donnelly (2006:285) gloomily reflects, has “never merited a chapter in Meggs”.<sup>22</sup> In particular, Calvera (2005:377) identifies the problem, addressed by Donnelly, of the simultaneous arrival of ‘the idea of design’ in many geographical areas in the 1950s or 1960s. What Calvera (2005: 376) suggests, as a counter to this difficulty, is that it is “the duty of a local historian ... to explain to foreign colleagues what has been different, specific or original about a local process”.

Although Calvera never uses the term *domestication*, Fallan (2010:99) proposes that her argument refers “precisely to ... the domestication of ideology. Her point is that ... ideas/theories/knowledge are transformed by their users – just as with the domestication of products”. The second leap, then, is the shift from a theoretical concern with *objects* of design to an interest in the adaptation of *ideas about design*, but also, as Fallan (2010:100) emphasises, the adaptation *to* ideas, aesthetics and technologies. An understanding of *domestication* in this sense, Fallan (2010:100) concludes, results in a “highly rewarding concept” with which to respond to Calvera's call for purposive regional/national narratives in design history. In this regard, Lu's (2011) edited volume on Third World modernism is an exemplar.

But does this call include biography? Calvera (2005:374) makes the general observation that ...

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<sup>20</sup> Calvera (2005:374) points out that design historians have struggled to find a workable definition of countries not at the ‘centre’; much seems to depend upon a region's dependency on “models ... coming from the centre”.

<sup>21</sup> Calvera takes the descriptor ‘marginal’ from Tony Fry (1995 [1989]), although she does not necessarily share Fry's view of the role of or interest in modernism in these geographical areas.

<sup>22</sup> Donnelly's remark is noteworthy for several reasons, not least being the acknowledgement that, in the graphic design community, getting a mention ‘in Meggs’ is conclusive evidence of a region's relevance within the global design discourse.

peripheral narratives ... have always the same structure: a nation<sup>23</sup> is only known by a highlight moment or personage ... [T]he character of this highlight moment ... becomes the main argument of the research. It is easy to see the connections between the objectives of this research and ... the boundaries imposed by the grand narratives of history.

Calvera's insistence that local histories have *always* been reconstructed as the act of a single 'personage' is, perhaps, debatable; had this been the case, de Jong would be well represented in local literature. However, her point — that adhering to 'personality cults' in regional design history will not persuade foreign colleagues of the worth of this history — is taken. Nevertheless, Calvera does not dismiss biography out of hand. Indeed, in the preamble to her article she refers to the necessity of providing "information about the designer's biography" (Calvera 2005:371). What Calvera (2005:374) believes is critical is that the character of 'marginality' should not merely describe itself in terms of appropriation of signs, or as a victim of western imperialism, but acknowledge "alternative experiences that [are] peculiar to local characteristics". Like Lu (2011), Calvera is positive about westernisation in Creole culture: the design historian is required to grasp "the potential of [d]esign to play a role in criticism, renewal and transformation of society that it [brought about] when it arrived in a peripheral or undeveloped country" (Calvera 2005:378).

More recently, Daniel Huppatz (2015:190) has taken up Calvera's cautionary stance on "self-conscious marginalization" in his reflection on the "possibilities and problems" (Huppatz 2015:182) of a global design history. Key challenges are the definition of design as "limited to artefacts conceived by professional designers and produced by mechanized mass production" (Huppatz 2015:188-189), in other words, modernism. What results from this preoccupation with technological progress is the "diffusionist problem" (Huppatz 2015:193), namely that modernism begins in Western Europe and "diffuses outwards" (Huppatz 2015:188). The fundamental difficulty, in Huppatz's (2015:190) view, is that the

terms marginal and periphery immediately situate design activities — whether Australian or Latin American — always already in a subordinate relationship to a (real or perceived) centre. Ultimately, design histories that adopt a centre/periphery model adhere to the 'first the West, then the Rest' sequence.

However, argues Huppatz (2015:190, emphasis added), "*self-consciously* using this model may well be a useful strategy in certain circumstances". Drawing on the observations of historian Raymond Grew, Huppatz (2015:193, emphasis in original) posits that if design historians "shift the focus to the *process* of diffusion", the objects of interest become not modernism itself, but "adoption, resistance, assimilation, adaptation, and transformation" of this idea.

### **1.2.5 Getting personal and particular: the case of South Africa**

**A**lthough Fallan and Lees-Maffei (2016:9) reiterate Huppatz's wariness of "the notion of a periphery, which implies a centre", and state that "a model of multiple centres is now more accepted", I contend that South Africa has, perhaps, a particular claim to the periphery as opposed to, for example, countries such as Australia, Japan or Brazil, although this view is complicated by the region's complex history and fragmented identity. Although it is an African country (and therefore not 'the West'), it is important, as Huppatz (2015:194) warns about Uganda, not to assume that indigenous design equates to the "pre-industrial or primitive". In Herbert Bayer's *World geographic atlas* (1953) the Union of South Africa, which at the time was still a British dominion, is singled out as Africa's "only large producer for domestic consumption" and was the site of Africa's "only important iron and steel plant". On several of Bayer's graphs detailing major

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<sup>23</sup> Within the context of South Africa's fractured experience of 'nation', it is rather bothersome that Calvera assumes that a 'local' history is by definition also a 'national' one. However, Calvera is not writing in her native tongue and several expressions in her article (including the reference to 'undeveloped' countries), suggest that occasionally meaning has been compromised in translation. Moreover, a singular definition of 'nation' and 'nationalism' has eluded commentators (see Hearn 2006:1-10). Michael Billig (2005:193) argues that official nationalism is the weaker force, that feelings of belonging are more powerfully generated in the "banal way of life in the nation-state". It is beyond the scope of this study to interrogate the nuances of the phenomenon as experienced in South Africa; suffice to acknowledge the complexity, which is hopefully made apparent in this study. Fallan and Lees-Maffei (2016) provide a useful overview of ideas of nations and national identity in their introduction to *Designing worlds: national design histories in an age of globalization*.

contributions to the global economy, the Union is listed with countries such the USA, the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan. For de Jong, South Africa in the late 1950s offered the curious double advantage of possessing a rapidly expanding economy — it was *seen* by the rest of the world<sup>24</sup> — yet it was sufficiently provincial and geographically isolated to offer the possibility of acclaim that might have been out of reach in the USA or Europe. Although Pretoria, at the time, was an important centre of cultural production, prominent creative practitioners, without exception, travelled abroad in order to valorise their local output.

Thus, mindful of the arguments of Wilk, Lu, Calvera and Huppatz, I posit that South Africa encountered the transformative phenomenon of modernist design in the 1950s. The study takes as its premise that this arrival was, to a marked degree, facilitated by the American-trained de Jong and as such he deserves attention. In answering questions of ‘How?’ and ‘Why?’ design arrived in a given community, the question of ‘Who?’ must therefore, of necessity, also be addressed. To this purpose, I use the framework of rhetoric to examine not only how de Jong, on a personal level, adapted and modified American modernism for his own ‘use’, but also how and why his audience readily incorporated modernity into its ‘home’.

As Calvera points out, ‘the idea of design’ arrived in many post-colonial communities in the mid-twentieth century, one of these being Australia. As was arguably the case in South Africa, the focus of Australian visual culture shifted, in the 1950s, from Britain “to the rising star of North America” (Fry 1995 [1989]:216). Tony Fry (1995 [1989]:213) asserts that, “Modernity [in Australia] was ... a regime of signs — the arrived appearances of the modern world of metropolitan capitalism”. Fry (1995 [1989]:216-217), anticipating Donnelly’s misgivings, argues aggressively for the “emptiness” of Australian modernism, that, he claims, “has never been other than a culture of appropriated fragments”; as a consequence, Fry postulates, ‘postmodernism’ was taken up in Australia “with vigor”.

What is of interest here is that ‘postmodernism’ did not find such a ready home in South Africa. De Jong’s own attempts, with fellow *Blue Sky* members in the late 1980s, to draw on postmodernism’s legitimisation of the local and conceptualise an ‘indigenous’ South African design language, failed (De Jong 1992:10). The reasons for this inability to break away from the ‘appropriated fragments’ of the centre continue to exercise the South African design community: twenty years after the launch of the ill-fated *Blue Sky*, celebrated South African designer Garth Walker (quoted in Unkeless 2008) reiterates the necessity “to establish a new visual language for the country ... Our target audience is the people of Umlazi and Soweto but brochures look like they come straight out of Milan”. Walker (quoted in Unkeless 2008) observes that the country’s new elite takes direction from the west, suggesting that “all the emerging markets want to be a super Paris/London/New York”. Perhaps the grip of the latter could be attributed, in part, to the impact of the import of a universalising modernism — at a particular time in South Africa’s history — which allowed (and perhaps continues to allow) citizens to “maintain both the structure of their lives and their control of that structure” (Silverstone & Haddon (1997 [1996]:60). In terms of domestication, argue Silverstone and Haddon (1997 [1996]:60), “it is precisely the social, political, and economic dimensions of the struggle over meaning and influence which are at issue”.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the ‘heroic approach’ has been held at bay to such a degree that no seminal figures have emerged in terms of graphic design history in South Africa. A singular attempt at a broad overview of what she terms the ‘development’ of graphic design in South Africa is Deirdre Pretorius’s ‘Graphic design in South Africa: a post-colonial perspective’ (2015). As the title suggests, Pretorius’s brief synopsis has a specific, theoretical purpose, and the examples proffered have been selected to demonstrate how settler colonialism was implicated with local graphic design, as well as how resistance media countered colonial ideology. While laudable, in one sense, this ‘history from below’ only reconstructs one aspect of the past; an exploration of “‘the origins’, ‘the truth’, ‘the story’ ... and so on and so forth” (Munslow 2010:217) of mainstream, in other words ‘white’, graphic design industry in South Africa in the twentieth century, remains elusive.<sup>25</sup> Rather ironically, ‘successful’

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<sup>24</sup> Perhaps more so in 1953 than in 2015. It is noteworthy that Huppatz, in 2015, refers to Uganda, Australia and Latin America in terms of the marginal / peripheral debate in design history, but not to South Africa. After 1961, the latter became increasingly ‘unknown’ as the international community ostracised the Republic in response to its *apartheid* policies. Despite almost a quarter of a century of democracy, South Africa still struggles to recover from this pariah status, which has, for entirely different reasons, perhaps even deepened, in some respects, since 1994.

<sup>25</sup> Subsequent to the commencement of my research in 2013, several essays pertaining to South African design history have been published, most notably by Pretorius (2016a, 20016b, 2015) and Jeanne van Eeden (2016 [with Jacques Lange], 2014). Both authors have also made insightful contributions to, in particular, South African graphic design history prior to 2013 (e.g., Pretorius 2008; van Eeden 2012;

graphic designers seem to have exchanged places with EP Thompson's 'poor stockinger', and are, perhaps, in need of rescue — not for purposes of launching elitist personality cults, but as a contribution in the context of citizenship. As Tosh (2008:141-142) points out: "Without historical perspective we may fail to notice continuities which persist, even in our world of headlong change". The premise of this study is that de Jong's individual history contributes to a memory bank of what is unfamiliar, or alien. Tosh (2000:19-20) regards this *difference* as a community's most important cultural resource:

Our sense of the heights to which human beings can attain, and the depths to which they may sink, the resourcefulness they may show in a crisis ... [is] nourished by knowing what has been thought and done in the very different contexts of the past.

However, *difference* is not only a matter of past and present; it is also implicit in the act of communication. Historian Lyn Abrams (2010:164) concludes that the history project is rarely a matter of equal relationships: "[I]n the final analysis, the researcher holds a privileged position, especially if she is ... [an] academic scholar". In terms of the media, Roger Silverstone (1999:32) reflects that "[p]ersuasion implies difference, since ... there is no point in trying to influence someone who already thinks like you do". Consequently, hierarchy brings about *rhetoric*. Implicit in this order of things, is the view of persuasion as *courtship*, a concept that Silverstone derives from Kenneth Burke's (1897-1993) *A rhetoric of motives* (1955 [1950]:177) in which the latter declares that "love is a communion of estranged entities, and strangeness is a condition of mystery". In order, then, to reflect on the mysteries of rhetoric as an interpretative framework in a narrative research project, this "intercourse ... between kinds" (Burke 1955:177) is considered in greater detail in Section 1.3.

### 1.3 In the region of rhetoric

Rhetoric, observes Silverstone (1999:37), is a "dirty word". Although its reputation for coercion and empty show can be dated as far back as Cicero's *De oratore*, rhetoric, when it was revived in the 1970s, suffered at the hands of structuralists and semioticians who, in an otherwise laudable enquiry into media power, were misled "precisely in [their] assumption of that power" (Silverstone 1999:37). Silverstone (1999:37) refers to Roland Barthes's (1977) classic, and therefore influential, semiotic analysis of the Panzani advertisement in which images and words are interpreted — in Silverstone's opinion — as nothing more than "tricks for the unwary, [and] locations for the locking of the bewitched consumer into ... the politically incorrect". Owing to Barthes's title for his essay — 'Rhetoric of the image' — this closed analysis of meaning is conflated with the practice of persuasive communication and consequently design writers remain wary of a method of critique that is perceived to be the signifying aspect of despotic ideologies.

Silverstone (1999:37), in championing rhetoric as a means for analysis of media, points out that semiotics, as practiced by critics such as Barthes, is an "insufficient approach for the understanding of mediation in contemporary culture", since this methodology both ignores the historical, sociological and anthropological 'locations' of a textual claim. Consequently, semiotics is unable to make interpretations that are plural, unstable and contested. This view draws on the pre-existing arguments of both Buchanan (2001; 1995; 1989) and Perelman and Ohlbrechts-Tyteca (1971). Buchanan (1989:91) defines rhetoric in sharp contrast to semiotics, which he regards as "a grammatical theory", and Marxist dialectics that consider signification only in relation to some fiscal or spiritual 'truth'. Rhetoric, on the other

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2011). Amongst scholars addressing this theme, Pretorius has perhaps been most proactive in her attempt to map the landscape of design history in South Africa. However, despite the enlarging discourse, both Pretorius and van Eeden and Lange, in their contributions to Fallan and Lees-Maffei's edited volume, *Designing worlds: national design histories in an age of globalization* (2016), still feel compelled to highlight the invisibility of South African design history. Although Pretorius (2016a:57) concludes that a body of Southern African design history exists, she remarks that access to this knowledge is "hampered by its wide dispersal". Jacques Lange and van Eeden (2016:60) introduce their review of the 'design' of the South African nation between 1910 and 2013 by ascribing the paucity of South African design history writing to "a general lack of archival and documentary evidence". Notably, Pretorius identifies two main themes in Southern African design history writing, the first, and most prominent, being architecture and the built environment, and the second being graphic design, a category in which Pretorius (2016a:57) includes the study of "political graphics and propaganda, advertising and branding, cartoons and comics and print media". Lastly, Pretorius notes that the study of 'craft' and 'art', seems to be preferred to studies of 'design'. Themes therefore all interrogate the products of design; biography, or the study of the agency and influence of designers themselves, is, apparently, absent from these design history interrogations.

hand, being the art of persuasion, has relevance to the art of design, since the designer, instead of merely making things, is actually creating a persuasive argument (Buchanan 1989:95-96). Thus historical, sociological, aesthetic and cultural studies of design, while not obviously rhetorical, nevertheless “move deeply into the domain of rhetoric” (Buchanan 1989:91). Buchanan (1989:93) points out that

“[r]hetoric is an art of shaping society, changing the course of individuals and communities, and setting patterns for new action [...] [Similarly] designers have directly influenced the actions of individuals and communities, changed attitudes and values, and shaped society in surprisingly fundamental ways.

What is, therefore, needed in design writing, argues Buchanan (1995: 24) is a recognition of the “inherently rhetorical dimension of all design thinking”, and central to this aim is the explanation of how designers invent the arguments contained in their designs. Buchanan (1995: 26) distinguishes between the *poetics* and the *rhetoric* of design artefacts; the former considers how products *are*, whereas the latter is the study of how products *came to be* as vehicles of persuasion in both private and public life. Buchanan (1995:27) warns about elevating a designer’s beliefs, after the fact, to the status of “determinate principles”; rather, design studies should acknowledge these tenets as “personal visions infused into a rhetorical art of communication and persuasion”. Thus, in contrast to Fallan’s emphasis on the use of the object, Buchanan (1995:46, 55, emphasis in original) concludes that,

The disciplines of design are *embedded* by the rhetorical abilities of designers [...] Products embody the intentions and purposes of their makers ... The essential humanism of design lies in the fact that human beings determine what the subject matter, processes, and purposes of design shall be.

Buchanan’s pointed reference to the ‘intentions and purposes’ of designers therefore suggests that creative practitioners, in themselves, can be the subject of enquiry. Leslie Atzmon (2011a:xiii), likewise, argues that meaning does not reside solely within the user’s interaction with an artefact: rather, artefacts “embody a range of meanings that owe much to the designer’s beliefs and intentions as well as to the historical contexts in which the artifacts were designed”. For this reason, design objects offer audiences “communicative data that orchestrate an array of cultural themes” (Atzmon (2011a: xiv). Buchanan (1995:56) emphasises that a rhetorical exploration of design should cultivate its connection with the past and recommends that design theory

balance any discussion of products with discussion of the particular conception of the design that stands *behind* the product in its historical context. Indeed, different conceptions of design ... carry with them different conceptions of history (Buchanan 1995:27, emphasis added).

Clearly, although Buchanan (1995:31) acknowledges that the use of words “has consequences for action and understanding”, his interest here is not with speech, but with “those arts of making which employ materials other than words”. Moreover, graphic design — where persuasive communication may be regarded as an “obvious goal” (Buchanan 1989:91) — is of little or no interest to him: examples Buchanan chooses for analysis are the outcomes of industrial design, such as a cassette deck and wrench. Nevertheless, his definition of design — namely, “the art of shaping arguments about the artificial or human-made world” (Buchanan 1995:46) — must perforce include the ephemera of the magazine cover, beer label and directional sign. Likewise, a study that interrogates the ‘intentions’ and ‘influence’ of designers can hardly avoid the interview as a method of data collection, requiring the design historian to reverse, in some instances, the late twentieth-century turn from words to things in rhetorical enquiry. In this regard, Buchanan’s (1989) reassessment of the classical rhetorical elements of *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* not only enables an interrogation of artefacts, but also, perhaps inadvertently, points to the analysis of persuasive language in the re-construction of a history of design.

Indeed, in his reflection on the conceptual framework of design history as it is anchored in ‘the moving present’, Buchanan (2001:80) posits that, “The study of design begins with what people say ... about design”. When considering these “places of reflection”, Buchanan (2011:75) refers to *The new rhetoric: a treatise on*

*argumentation* (1971),<sup>26</sup> Perelman and Ohlbrechts-Tyteca's seminal text in which they re-evaluate the theory of argumentation where the object is the study of discursive techniques that allow authors "to increase the mind's adherence to the theses presented for its assent" (Perelman & Ohlbrechts-Tyteca 1971:3-4, emphasis in original). Perelman and Ohlbrechts-Tyteca (1971:4) warn that one should not confuse "the aspects of reasoning relative to the truth and those relative to adherence". This is an important insight, since it challenges the impulse, in semiotics and Marxist analyses, to establish a universal 'truth' against which, as Silverstone takes pains to point out, a rhetorical appeal is tested and then invariably found to be wanting. Perelman and Ohlbrechts-Tyteca, like Buchanan, are interested in *how* speakers invent arguments, not whether the reasoning is *valid*.<sup>27</sup> The treatise is a rapprochement of the theory of argumentation as conceived by Aristotle; in particular, the authors address the premise, taken up by Buchanan in the 1980s, that "it is in terms of an audience that an argumentation develops" (Perelman & Ohlbrechts-Tyteca 1971:4, emphasis in original). Their work, therefore, is presented as a 'new rhetoric', an idea subsequently taken up in design theory writing.

In this respect, Gui Bonsiepe was one of the first design theorists to demonstrate that verbal rhetoric could form the basis for visual rhetoric (Sauthoff 1999:129), although Bonsiepe (1999 [1966]), like Barthes, does not consider the agency of the audience. Buchanan's more considered advocacy of the use of the 'new' rhetoric in design writing served to inform, amongst others, Anne Tyler's (1996) analysis that reiterates the importance of audience in 'shaping belief', Marian Sauthoff's (1999) investigation of rhetoric as an interpretative strategy in graphic design studies and Victoria Gallagher, Kelly Norris Martin and Magdy Ma's (2011:30) examination of two rhetorical concepts — vividness and flourishment — in public sculpture.

Charles Hill and Marguerite Helmers (2009:ix), responding to the "major shift" in the field of rhetoric from the verbal to the visual in the early 2000s, raise what they regard as the 'problem' in the diverse efforts by rhetoricians of the visual, namely the nature of the term *visual rhetoric* itself. The authors point out that definitions of the 'visual' range from representational images such as paintings and photographs to "pretty much anything created by human hands" (Hill & Helmers 2009:ix). However, rhetorical analysis of the latter category of things overlaps with the study of design (Hill & Helmers 2009:x), a conflation that the authors regard as indicative of the 'problem' of visual rhetoric as a coherent category of enquiry. Hill and Helmers (2009:ix) appear to balk at the notion of analysing the rhetoric of a toaster, perhaps a veiled reference to Buchanan, who is, however, never mentioned by name. Nevertheless, despite their apparent adherence to the study of images as opposed to household appliances, the topics that are explored in Hill and Helmers's edited volume, *Defining visual rhetorics* (2009), offer useful examples of rhetorical frameworks for the analysis of objects in the human-made world. The editors relinquish their quest to pin down a single definition and allow contributing authors to explore their own interpretation of visual rhetoric, thereby eliciting a wide range of responses — and, by implication, definitions — of the term.

Although the focus remains 'representational images' — for example, photographs, paintings and print advertising — some essays in Hill and Helmers's volume venture into needlepoint, film, and even the three-dimensional experience of a grocery store. Charles Hill (2009:25-40), in his chapter on the psychology of images, draws on pre-existing theories of verbal rhetoric in his explication of *presence*, a concept he gleans from Perelman and Ohlbrechts-Tyteca (1971). Notably, Hill (2009:30) does not limit his reflection to a discussion of the visual; drawing on Perelman and Ohlbrechts-Tyteca, he concludes that where images are lacking, "concrete" words can elicit highly emotional responses in an audience.

Words are, however, absent as a persuasive element in Thomas E Franklin's photograph of three men raising the American flag amidst the rubble of the World Trade Centre in 2001, the image that Helmers and Hill (2009)<sup>28</sup> choose as a framing example in their Introduction to the volume. Within the context of graphic design, the lack of text (and therefore its absence from the subsequent analysis) is disappointing. However, in their scrutiny of the image, Helmers and Hill (2009:5) provide a

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<sup>26</sup> Originally published as *La nouvelle rhétorique: traité de l'argumentation* (1958).

<sup>27</sup> Buchanan (1989:101-102), for example, does not only examine the rhetoric of 'beautiful' objects that conform to the norms of 'good taste'; he also attempts to explain why *kitsch* is successful in its appeal. While 'good taste' may be a *valid* argument, it is not necessarily an *effective* one.

<sup>28</sup> When the editors turn authors in the Introduction to their edited volume, the order of their names is reversed in the credits.

valuable exemplar in that they identify six ‘modes of interpretation’ with which to rhetorically analyse the human-made world, namely intertextuality, symbolism, composition, hierarchy, gender and time.

This analytical model is noteworthy in that it does not refer overtly to the classical tropes of rhetoric.<sup>29</sup> Although the authors pointedly state, in the first sentence of their Introduction, that they “study the relationship of visual images to *persuasion*” (Helmets & Hill 2009:1, emphasis added), the analysis of Franklin’s photograph can perhaps be interpreted as more closely concerned with *meaning*. Sonja Foss (2009:306, emphasis in original), in summarising the arguments contained in the volume, appears to confirm this impression when she writes that, “in a *rhetorical response* ... meaning is contributed to the artifact”, an opinion that she reiterates when referring to Helmets’s chapter on fine art. Not surprisingly, given this point of view, Foss (2009:305-306) defines visual rhetoric as “symbolic action [...] a theoretical perspective that involves the analysis of the symbolic ... aspects of artifacts”; in other words, rhetoric appears to be little different from semiotics.

Indeed, the relationship of semiotics to rhetoric is a critical one, and requires some clarification. To this purpose, Helmets and Hill’s model is instructive in that it includes consideration of the symbolic function, but the analysis is not limited to the interpretation of symbols *alone*. This is perhaps the distinguishing factor between semiotics and rhetoric, in that the latter utilises the former, but not vice versa. Symbolic language, whether verbal or visual, is a rhetorical trope (Perelman & Ohlbrechts-Tyteca 1971:331-337), but other rhetorical strategies — such as exaggeration, repetition, contrast and comparison — stand outside the symbolic realm. The size of an image, or the frequency with which the audience is exposed to this image, or the prominence of the author of the image, may all contribute to its persuasive power, but none of these conditions are functions of the ‘symbolic action’ of the image *per se*. Consequently, a rhetorical analysis, as that of Franklin’s photograph, is likely to reflect, perhaps quite extensively, on the symbolic aspects of the artefact, but for the analysis to be rhetorical, it has to consider those elements of the visual argument that operate beyond semiotics.

What these elements are likely to be, is open to interpretation and subject to the rhetorician’s overall aim. Helmets and Hill (2009) develop a purposive framework that emerges from the denotative meaning of the photograph; they reflect upon gender as a rhetorical trope because the image depicts men. Buchanan (1995:99), on the other hand, does not address the symbolic realm at all beyond referring to the “metaphoric relationship” of buttons and levers to the internal workings of a machine. Instead, he restricts his analytical framework to *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* as applied in classical rhetoric. Indeed, the majority of techniques that Perelman and Ohlbrechts-Tyteca review in their overview of persuasion in written texts can be appropriated for the analysis of the visual.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, to qualify Foss’s assertion: rhetoric *is* concerned with meaning, but only insofar meaning is instrumental in gaining adherence from an audience. It is in terms of an audience that an argument is constructed and, as Perelman and Ohlbrechts-Tyteca (1971:335) warn, the symbolic connection is precarious. The very indexical nature of a photograph may, for a particular audience (if not for the semiotician), exclude the image from the symbolic realm, and Helmets and Hill’s confidence that an audience is able to recognise, in Franklin’s image, the intertextual reference to a World War II (WWII) photograph, may also be misplaced. Moreover, Franklin did not *set out* to reference Joseph Rosenthal’s iteration of American military heroism; the resemblance between the images is fortuitous rather than designed and the persuasive value of the perceived intertextual reference is being assigned *after the fact* by scholars of visual rhetoric.

What one may take from this overview is that visual rhetoric eludes fixed categorisation and that in a twenty-first century context rhetoric in general has taken on multiple meanings that enable rich interpretations of human culture. In response, *inter alia*, to the eruption of neo-nationalisms in the late twentieth century, writers moved beyond the simplistic perception of rhetoric as a malevolent tool of hegemonic manipulation and, like Buchanan, recover some of rhetoric’s original concerns. Thus, although they remain adamant that rhetoric is primarily a *verbal* art,<sup>31</sup> William Covino and David Jolliffe (1995:xi) argue that

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<sup>29</sup> Admittedly, all six modes may correspond, perhaps under different descriptors, to classical rhetorical tropes, but the authors do not present their modes as such.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Groenewald 2012, 2007, 2006a, 2006b,

<sup>31</sup> Covino and Jolliffe (1995:6) dismiss the matter of the visual early on by stating that the rhetoric of a painting — the only type of visual they consider — should be regarded as “the verbal understanding that accompanies its viewing”.



as we recognize the community, the nation, and the world, as a more and more complex conglomerate of diverse cultures, politics, and ways of knowing, it becomes crucial for us to understand how different modes of theory-building and knowledge-making — different rhetorics — interact in the construction and negotiation of this diversity.

Covino and Jolliffe (1995: 5, emphasis in original) take as their cue the classical view of rhetoric “as much more than verbal ornamentation ... [namely a] *situationally contingent, epistemic art that is both philosophical and practical and gives rise to potentially active texts*”. Amongst other useful aspects of their overview, the authors discuss the three “textual” appeals of *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* (Covino & Jolliffe 1995: 15-20), thereby providing a necessary adjunct to Buchanan’s explication within the context of industrial design. Reflections on the positive agency of rhetoric include the recovery of Cicero’s account of the ‘open palm’ — rhetoric as an alternative to violence (Rollins 2009: 539; Silverstone 1999:32;) — and the pursuit of *eudaimonia* — rhetoric as an instrument of “human happiness or flourishing” (Cook 2013:1; Gallagher, Norris Martin & Ma 2011).

References to Kenneth Burke often inform this ‘rapprochement’ of verbal rhetoric. Burke (1995:x,177), who aims “to show how rhetorical analysis throws light on literary texts and human relations”, is like Covino and Jolliffe, mostly — although not exclusively — concerned with words and their persuasive function, what he refers to as a “pleading, [a] ‘Come hither’”. In addition to his consideration of “the mystery of the hierarchic”, Burke (1955:333,ix) unpacks the idea of *identification* as a key concept of rhetoric, to show how “a rhetorical motive is often present where it is not usually recognized”. Thus, Burke (1955:27-28) argues, in a discussion that calls on the act of visualising if not the visual itself,

we are clearly in the region of rhetoric when considering the identifications whereby a specialized activity makes one a participant in some social or economic class. ‘Belonging’ in this sense is rhetorical ... [I]n the literary and the fine arts, the very stress upon the pure autonomy of such activities is a roundabout way of identification with a privileged class [...] [and] political conservatism.

Consequently, Burke (1955:28) cautions, “whenever you find a doctrine of ‘nonpolitical’ esthetics affirmed with fervor, look for its politics”, an observation that may well have been made in response to Greenberg’s characterisation of modernist painting. The insight that the pursuit of objectivity in itself signifies a rhetorical act, is taken up by the typographer Robin Kinross (1949- )(1989:131-143), who questions whether, despite the claims of modernism, the presentation of information can ever be neutral.<sup>32</sup> The specialised activity of graphic design takes place in a larger unit of action; ‘identification’ is the autonomous action in this wider context. Burke (1955:27) provides the example of the shepherd who, acting as a shepherd, aims to take good care of the sheep, but may be ‘identified’ with a project that is raising animals for slaughter. This observation is salient to the study of a life of a designer who, in acting for the good of the client, may be identified with a questionable project with which the designer, like the shepherd, claims to be ‘unconcerned’. Burke (1955: 31), writing in the aftermath of WWII, resists

the naïvely pragmatist notion that practical specialized work is a sufficient grounding of morality ... [A] science takes on the moral qualities of the political or social movements with which it becomes identified ... The rhetorical concept of ‘identification’ ... make[s] clear the fact that one’s morality as a specialist cannot be allowed to do duty for one’s morality as a citizen.

Here Burke raises difficult questions, also adumbrated, in different arguments, by Fallan and Buchanan, pertaining to the nature of biography in design studies. However, despite his concerns over claims for the autonomous morality of the arts, Burke (1955:267, 269, emphasis in original) ends *A rhetoric of motives* on “the borders of metaphysics” by postulating that,

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<sup>32</sup> Kinross’s (2017:107-116; 1981:122-130) concern with putatively ‘neutral’ information design emerged from an interest in *isotype* — a method of showing social, technological, biological and historical data in pictorial form — that had its origins in Vienna in 1925. His seminal essay, *The rhetoric of neutrality* (1989 [1985]), was reprinted in the same edited volume that features Buchanan’s (1989) essay on the visual rhetoric of design.

Pure persuasion involves the saying of something, not for an extraverbal advantage to be got by saying it, but because of a satisfaction intrinsic to the saying. It summons because it likes the feel of summons [...] [In pure persuasion] [h]uman effort would thus be grounded not in the search for 'advantage'... Rather, it would be grounded in a *form*.

In this argument for persuasion as pure form, Burke appears to prefigure de Jong's own credo that 'art is anything done essentially to achieve beauty'. Indeed, it is de Jong's preoccupation with aesthetics that both propelled him into the role of proselyte for the 'morality' of modernism and blinkered him to the hazards of identification.

In summary, then, rhetoric, in its "range of entrancements" (Burke 1955:333) — from the banal appeal of a pasta sauce advertisement to the principle of courtship and "divine mystery" (Burke 1955:234) — allows for the penetration of the entangled landscape of "the art of knowledge-making" (Covino & Jolliffe 1995:8) of which the specialty of graphic design is a province. However, remarkably little has been written about visual rhetoric as it relates to, specifically, graphic design practice. A local response to this *lacuna* is Anneli Bowie and Duncan Reyburn's (2014) study that illustrates how Burkean theories can be used to investigate the rhetorical power of information design. Bowie and Reyburn (2014), who reference Charles Kostelnick's (2004:215-242) rhetorical analysis of nineteenth-century statistical atlases, are primarily interested in countering the "general acceptance of infographics as objective, scientific representations of statistical realities". Bowie and Reyburn (2014) draw on Kinross's idea of a visual 'rhetoric of neutrality' to argue that

information visualization acts as an example of Kenneth Burke's notion of a 'terministic screen' in that it 'explicitly and implicitly turns our attention in one direction rather than in other directions' ... Following Burke's logic, it may even be deemed a form of 'magic'.

Most recently, Jeanne-Lois Moys (2017:201-220) also examines the rhetorical effectiveness of layout and typography. Moys (2017:208, 212), whose list of references reads like a historiography of visual rhetoric, acknowledges Kinross's scepticism with regard to objective communication, but focuses on a pragmatic explanation of the rhetoric of 'good' design. Moys (2017:218) does not problematise the idea of coercion, but provides guidelines of how an audience can be "encouraged", through the categories of genre, credibility, difficulty and usefulness, to ignore or engage with information. As such, Moys's text is an important reminder that rhetoric, for many, is a practical process, far removed from mysticism and, as in Burke's (1955:333) perception, a striving for God and the "end of all desire".<sup>33</sup>

Finally, the editorial statement of *The African Yearbook of Rhetoric* (2010- ) provides a striking example of the current enthusiasm for rhetoric in a local context. The publication is motivated by the belief

that a democracy that does not provide its people with the means to argue, [namely] rhetoric, is bound to be perverted ... [A] duty of deliberation ... is fundamental to the reasonable exercise of citizenship. Scholars, in turn, are duty-bound to interrogate rhetorical processes and truth-making beliefs that instruct, or destroy life in a democracy (*The African Yearbook of Rhetoric ... 2017*).

The yearbook is edited by Philippe-Joseph Salazar (1955- ), Distinguished Professor in Rhetoric and Humane Letters in the Faculty of Law at the University of Cape Town (UCT), and is part of the *Rhetoric Africa* initiative supported by the *Association for Rhetoric and Communication in Southern Africa* and the *UCT Centre for Rhetoric Studies* (Rhetoric Africa 2017).<sup>34</sup> Clearly, the disinterest in rhetoric observed by Perelman and Ohlbrechts-Tyteca (1971:5) in the 1950s has been reversed; moreover, persuasion is no longer regarded exclusively as an "underhand device" (Sauthoff 1999:111) and the notion that information and persuasion are oppositional modes, no longer tenable (Bowie & Reyburn 2014; McKoy 2000:80). Within the 'duty of deliberation', then, I interrogate the truth-making activities of EDJS as they instructed life *prior* to democracy in South Africa.

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<sup>33</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to engage with the entire contemporary discourse on rhetoric. Relevant texts include, but are not limited to, Brummet (2015); Wilkens and Wolf (2014); Dolmage (2014); Knape (2013); Atzmon (2011); Kempshall (2011).

<sup>34</sup> In 1994, while Dean of Arts at UCT, Salazar founded the Centre with the express purpose of studying the importance of rhetoric for peaceful democracy (Rhetoric and democracy 2017). Formerly a lecturer at the *College de Internationale de Philosophie* in Paris, Salazar has been awarded the prestigious *Prix Bristol des Lumières* for his book on the rhetoric of jihadism, *Paroles armées* (2015).

## 1.4 Scope of the study

The overall purpose of my study, as set out in the research proposal, was to describe and explore how domestication of American modernism is made manifest in the work and life of the designer Ernst de Jong. In order to answer to this purpose, I undertook to ...

- document and archive examples of de Jong's output, as well as examine and record personal documents, including photographs, in the collection of the designer
- describe the events, both personal and professional, pertaining to de Jong's life, with particular emphasis on the time spent in Oklahoma (USA), and the period following his return to South Africa in 1957 until the mid-1970s
- record, unravel and reconstruct anecdotes and recollections of the subject, in a series of interviews, in order to reflect upon the personal motivations of the designer
- demonstrate, by referring to specific examples of de Jong's design output, and drawing on the frameworks of *domestication* and *rhetoric*, the interaction of de Jong's personal interpretation of American modernism within the visual culture of a post-colonial Southern African state
- summarise findings and reach conclusions with regard to de Jong's legacy in terms of South African visual culture within the context of the historical process of modernisation.

In large part, the completed study has adhered to and met these objectives. However, as suggested in the Preface and more fully explained in Chapter Two, some goalposts shifted as the study progressed. The most notable change in focus is the increase in importance of the interviews in relation to the case studies selected for presentation: what was planned as an artefactual analysis of several design projects executed by de Jong and EDJS, underpinned by a restricted number of interviews, rearranged itself as an oral history project underpinned by a limited number of case studies. From the outset the study was delimited to de Jong's agency as a designer in the years 1957 to, roughly, 1977 since this period, as the Preface indicates, coincides with both de Jong's greatest influence and a very particular period in South Africa's history. Indeed, a key motivation for the study is the overlap of these two conditions. South Africa became an independent Republic as de Jong launched his studio; twenty years later both EDJS and the Republic had come to a crisis. In 1976 violent riots erupted in Soweto — a township on the outskirts of the city of Johannesburg — a watershed event that announced the gradual but inexorable demise of the apartheid system and the domination of a white government in South Africa. The Republic survived, as did EDJS, but after 1975 both entities constructed a different persona, and drew on alternative resources and strategies for survival. Although the next forty years promise their own story, it is the optimism of the first two decades that are the subject of this study.

In addition to this first limitation, it was necessary to identify a manageable sample of case studies. To this purpose, projects that engaged with systems of knowledge were identified, as opposed to design briefs more overtly aimed at commercial gain.<sup>35</sup> In adhering to this criterion, the study by definition excludes, amongst others, the narratives of Haak's Garages, the Okie Orange Juice campaign (Fig. 6), advertising for the United Tobacco Company and the liquor division of Rupert International, for which EDJS created the Pushkin Vodka animated cinema advertisements (Fig.4). The sample also excludes design for publications (Fig. 3), the Berg Beer campaign, launched in the early-1960s (Fig. 5), and the corporate identity for The Oklahoman Motor Hotel in Pretoria (Fig. 2), a joint venture launched in 1969 by de Jong and his brother, Gerrie. It also — in hindsight somewhat rather perversely — excludes identity design for EDJS itself (for example, Figs. 7, 8, 9, 95, 194 & 198).

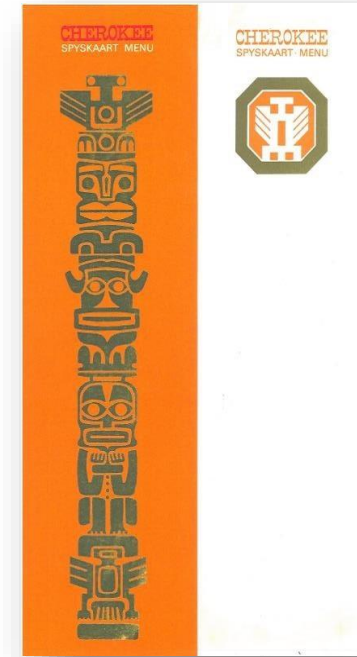
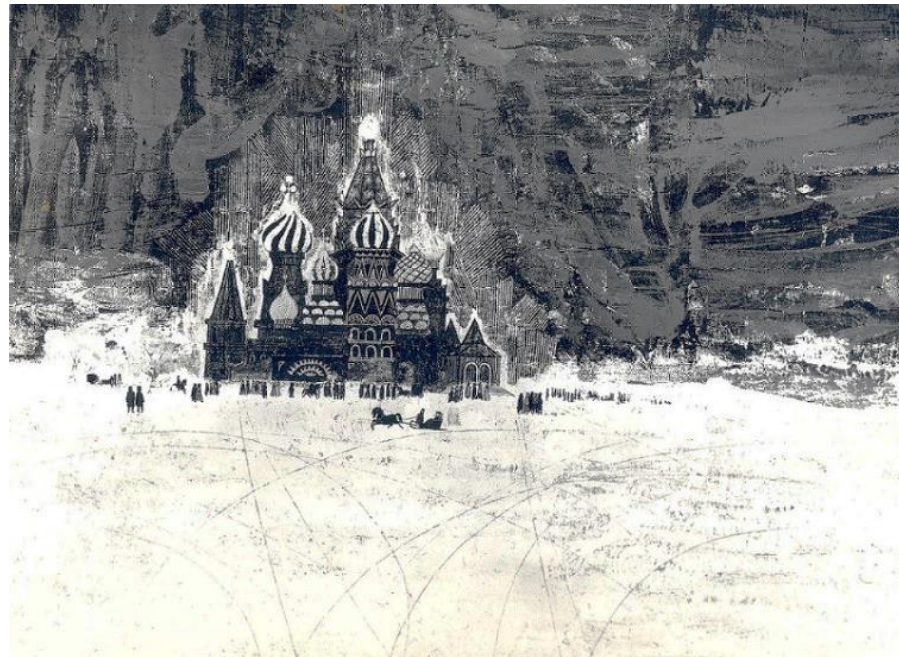
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<sup>35</sup> De Jong's mural designs that, arguably, fall under the category of applied design rather than fine art are also excluded. In this regard, it should be noted that no examples of de Jong's output as a gallery artist are considered except where the artwork has relevance to EDJS design.

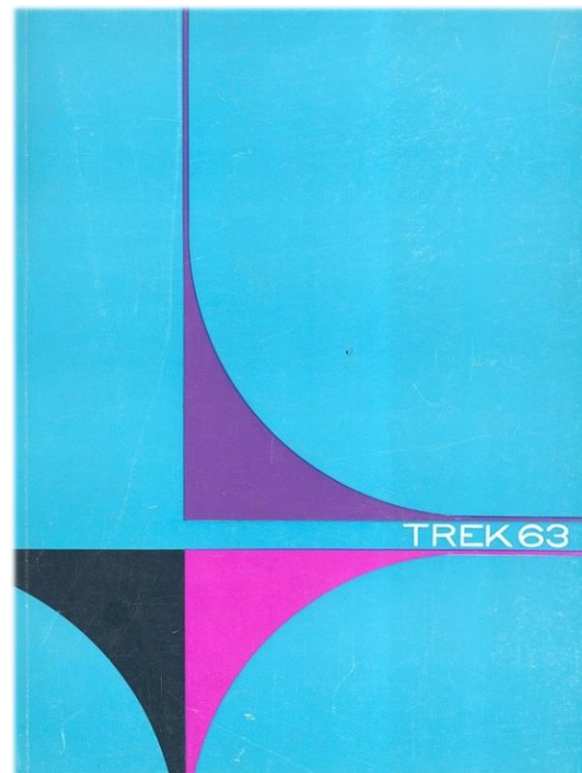
**Figure 2** EDJS (studio), Johan Hoekstra (designer), newspaper advertisement for Ouki Orange Juice, early 1960s (collection of Johan Hoekstra).



**Figure 5** EDJS (studio), Ernst de Jong (art director), illustrator unknown, graphic for animated cinema commercial for Count Pushkin Vodka, mid1960s.



**Figure 4** EDJS, in collaboration with Gerrie de Jong (designers), menu design for the Oklahoman Motor Hotel, Pretoria, 1969.



**Figure 6** Ernst de Jong (designer), cover for *Trek 63*, University of Pretoria student publication (collection of Cas Nel).



**Figure 3** EDJS (studio), Ernst de Jong (designer), packaging and promotional display for Berg Beer, early 1960s.



However, as the study progressed and responded to Buchanan's call for the 'particular conception of the design that stands behind the product', examples of projects that engaged with systems of knowledge were also culled to prevent the study from exceeding acceptable limits of word count and prescribed time limits for the project. What, in the end, serves — beyond interviews and conversations — as 'places' for my exploration of the output of EDJS, are the following case studies:

- Visual rhetoric of the cultural journal *Lantern* (1958-1963)
- Corporate identity design for the *Randse Afrikaans University* [Rand Afrikaans University] (RAU) (1975)
- Corporate identity for the *Afrikaanse Taalmonument* [Afrikaans Language Monument] (1975).<sup>36</sup>

In making decisions about what to retain and what to set aside, practical (and sometimes serendipitous) factors played a role. I had been liaising, on and off, with the South Africa Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) since the early 2000s; I was thus familiar with the SAASTA collection and, although I encountered new faces each time I required access to its storeroom, staff members were unfailingly friendly and helpful. As a staff member of the University of Johannesburg (UJ), I was familiar with its splendidly managed Rare Books Collection that houses material relevant to the planning and realisation of RAU (the forerunner of UJ); the chief librarian at the Collection, Riette Zaaiman, was keenly interested in my project and went beyond the bounds of duty to assist me. Moreover, a chance remark at a UJ event led me to Cas Nel, one of the original architects of RAU, who had in his possession, amongst other relevant items, the only extant copies of the proposal for the RAU architectural project and the EDJS corporate manual for RAU. The combination of these fortuitous circumstances made the case study of RAU, over and above its obvious relevance, a convenient choice.

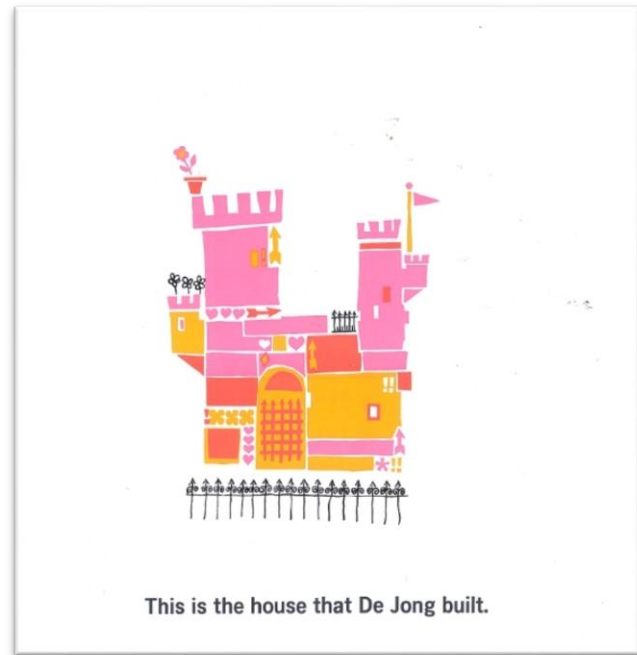
Less happily — at the time that I had to make decisions about selecting cases — the South African Post Office Museum was closed to the public and my repeated attempts to contact the curator met with curt and obstructive replies. Thus, while de Jong's designs for the Second Definitive South African stamp series calls for analysis, the eventual cooperation of the Museum management came too late for me to include the stamp designs in my sample (Fig. 10).<sup>37</sup> The curator of the newly re-opened archive at the South African Council for Scientific Research (CSIR), for which de Jong had designed a logo (Fig. 11.) and a mural (and possibly a show stand), was eager to assist, but the collection was in complete disarray. I was welcome, indeed encouraged, to engage with the uncatalogued boxes on the seemingly endless rows of shelves, but, however tempting, reorganising the CSIR collection on its behalf was neither feasible nor, necessarily, useful.

In contrast, the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum* [Museum of the Afrikaans Language] in Paarl near Cape Town offered a service to researchers that was both enthusiastic and organised. When I first contacted the Museum curator, Annemarie van Zyl, she knew of de Jong and his contribution to the identity of the *Taalmonument*; van Zyl was able to immediately identify, scan and send me relevant material from the archive. Moreover, van Zyl was in the process of finalising a co-authored, scholarly article on the signification of the Monument (Van Zyl & Rossouw 2016) and this mutual interest greatly facilitated our collaboration. Van Zyl was also friendly with Erna van Wijk, widow of the *Taalmonument* architect and erstwhile childhood friend of de Jong. Consequently, the *Taalmonument* identity was selected for analysis owing, partly, to expediency, but also in response to the apparently rich source of EDJS design available in this archive.

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<sup>36</sup> All translations from Afrikaans by the author.

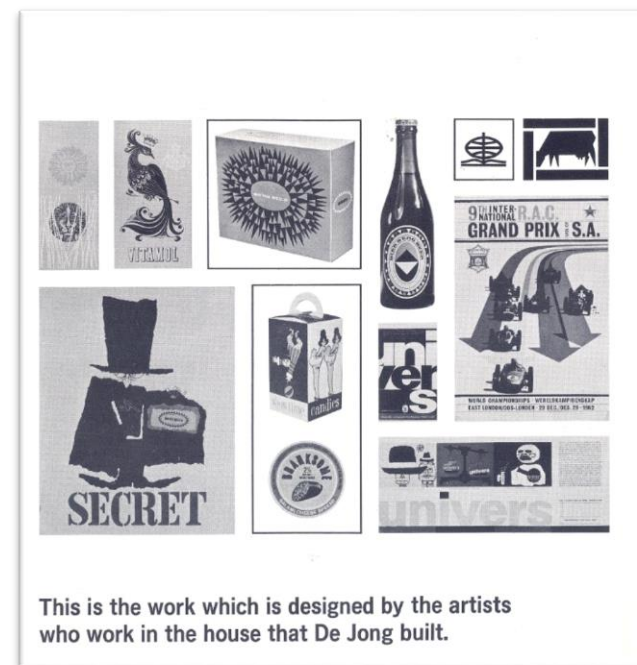
<sup>37</sup> In 2017, the interest and determined efforts of philatelist and erstwhile Registrar of the University of Cape Town (UCT), Hugh Amoore, prompted a hitherto uncharacteristic willingness of the Post Office Museum management to allow researchers to communicate with the Museum and, even more generously, view items pertaining to the Second Definitive Series. The historical circumstances of the Museum, shrouded in speculations of theft and mismanagement, remain obscure. Amoore, who was alerted to my research by Tamara de Jong after her father's death, and I made two visits to the Museum in 2017 — Amoore's interest being the production processes of the Second Definitive Series — but the meetings took place after I had started finalising the present study. It was, however, confirmed that all but one of the original de Jong designs had 'disappeared' from the Museum archive. Prior to these visits, I had engaged quite extensively with the philatelic community in Pretoria in my attempt to penetrate the bastion of the Post Office Museum. Interestingly, the pervasive opinion of stamp collectors is that the Second Definitive Series was a non-event in terms of its design, owing to the stylisation of the subject matter that fails, in the opinion of these experts, to capture the *detail* of South African national identity (Carpendale 2015; Steyn 2015). Amoore (2017:1) is alone in his positive assessment of the aesthetic merit of the series and the only philatelist that I encountered that showed any interest in its designer.



**Figure 9** EDJS (studio), Johan Hoekstra (designer & illustrator), cover design for EDJS promotional brochure, early 1960s.



**Figure 7** EDJS (studio), Johan Hoekstra (designer), page from EDJS promotional brochure, early 1960s.



**Figure 8** EDJS (studio), Johan Hoekstra (designer), page from EDJS promotional brochure, early 1960s.

In the event, the case of the *Taalmonument* took an unpredictable turn. The story that emerges from a close scrutiny of the campaign, while usefully expanding upon the act of modernist design in the service of individualisation, ruptures the ring-fenced narrative of EDJS to reveal an upheaval, both in the professional and private lives of creative practitioners and society in South Africa in the mid-1970s. It is also a cautionary tale about archives, authorship and, indeed, the effect of the personality cult of which Fallan disapproves so vociferously. By the time I discovered, as to my initial dismay I did, that the *Taalmonument* material (or, at least, the greater part of it) that I was analysing had *not* been designed by EDJS, the case study was well underway. The prospect of discarding my research and entering upon a new line of investigation at this late stage of the project was daunting and, in reality, impossible. Although two case studies might have sufficed, the misattribution itself, and its timely detection — had I not decided to travel to Paarl and view the items in person, the possibility exists that I would have based an extensive argument on erroneous information — offered an unexpected opportunity to break open what might otherwise have been a conventional conclusion to a series of three analyses of EDJS design. The *Taalmonument* case is therefore retained, but it differs from and serves to *make vulnerable* the preceding narratives in order to bleed into the capricious nature of human relationships and, indeed, history writing itself.



**Figure 11** Ernst de Jong (designer), logo design for the South African Council for Scientific Research, c1958.



**Figure 12** Photographer unknown, Ernst de Jong pictured with the EDJS exhibition design for the *Musicians in the sun* festival of South African music, 1961.



**Figure 10** Ernst de Jong (designer and illustrator), Second Definitive South African stamp series, 1974.

Another casualty of the vagaries of archival research was the EDJS branding for the *Musicians in the sun* music festival held in Pretoria in 1961. I had been aware of a brochure design for the event, but this in itself did not warrant a case study. In 2017, an envelope of photographs detailing a visually rich exhibition design for the festival (Fig.12), which spoke directly to the theme of systems of knowledge, came to light, but the discovery came too late. Within the context of the vast body of work produced by EDJS, these omissions are regrettable. The project is, however, an ongoing one; it has, to date, resulted in four conference papers (Groenewald 2013, 2014, 2015a, 2015b) and an exhibition at the University of Johannesburg's Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA) Gallery (11-31 August 2017). What emerged as a major theme, in both the conference papers and the exhibition, is the nature of the interview as a source of data, and this almost overwhelming aspect of the study is therefore considered more fully in Chapter Two.



## CHAPTER TWO: COLLECTING EVIDENCE

*Historians, unlike anthropologists, are used to adopting the role of the outsider ...  
we are less used to being part of the story*  
Lyn Abrams, 2010





**Figure 13** De Jong in full cowboy gear in the courtyard of 366 Hill Street, Pretoria, 2013 (photograph by the author).

## 2.1 Interviews

### 2.1.1 Hill Street blues: the interviewer vs the interview

**A**t the start of my enquiry into the visual rhetoric of EDJS, the recorded evidence deemed necessary to supplement an analysis of graphic design artefacts was tabled as a discrete set of five business-like interviews with the studio's director, Ernst de Jong. The interviews were ring-fenced by an ethically-approved list of questions, and scheduled to take place every fortnight; the encounter between questioner and respondent would be videotaped to ensure a transparent and rich record of the proceedings. However, this bold plan disintegrated from the very first interview, as the interchange drifted into uncharted regions: information was redirected, rationed, repeated or deliberately withheld. When the planned two-month process had not reached an end point after a year, it became clear that, as a design historian, I had to think in a more 'distinctive' way about oral evidence.

Several aspects of the interview situation presented challenges. The interviews were conducted in de Jong's home in Hill Street, Pretoria, and were preceded with the conviviality of tea and cake. While this arrangement made for an amicable atmosphere, it was, from the start, difficult to manage the moment when small talk became interview, or factual answer intimate anecdote. The presence of de Jong's fiancée, especially during the early sessions, inserted an additional layer of complexity in the interviewer/interviewee relationship, as did the presence of dogs, cats, pigeons and a very voluble cockatoo called Charlie. Very soon, familiarity with the respondent and his household eroded, if not scholarly objectivity, at least neutrality; I migrated from *interviewer* to *confidante* and very soon was invited to collaborate on de Jong's personal biography, as well as given carte blanche with regard to his personal papers and records of his design output.

De Jong was a natural showman. He would set the stage beforehand, preparing artefacts that funnelled the topic of conversation — a half-finished painting on an easel would preface a monologue on the degeneration of fine art practice (a topic in which I had no interest), or dressing up in full cowboy regalia (Fig.13) would be followed by a demonstration of his sharp-shooting skills. On one occasion the interview was enlivened by de Jong's fiancée executing athletic feats in a pair of skin-tight jeans. This performativity was delightful but time-consuming, and impossible for the interviewer to control. In addition to the carnivalesque mood, de Jong, while remembering individuals' names with remarkable clarity, was quite unable to recall dates. Certain experiences had been crystallised into well-honed anecdotes that were often repeated, but could as easily have described an event in the 1960s as in the 1980s. The interviews, once they got underway, therefore served a limited purpose with regard to empirical information-gathering, a complication I had not anticipated.

However, the real elephant in the room was the subject's implied complicity with the ruling order in the years 1958-1988. Although my belief in the value of the study prevailed, there were questions that were too awkward to ask, and statements that were too tough to challenge. Throughout, the need to retain trust outweighed the imperative to confront de Jong with the notion that he had accepted commissions that, despite their overt worthiness, tacitly supported an unequal society. For example, de Jong was extremely reluctant to talk about his parents and it was only after a year of conversations that he remarked, as an aside, that his father's sympathies with Germany during WWII had accelerated the latter's career after 1948. This wariness of being judged as an accomplice of the apartheid regime required a non-judgmental and patient interviewer. But, merely by engaging with this history — or perhaps by *avoiding* aspects of it — I felt that I, too, might be morally compromised: it was not only de Jong that was summonsed by Burke's (1955:31) admonition that 'one's morality as a specialist cannot be allowed to do duty for one's morality as a citizen'. Beset by these concerns, I undertook to investigate my position, and the validity of my study, as it articulated with the theory of interviews as a primary source in history writing. The sections that follow thus review key texts in this regard.

### 2.1.2. Whose is the voice of the past?

Applying myself to the literature, the first point that struck me was that the term ‘interview’, if it is associated with ‘history’, loses its journalistic urgency and intent.<sup>38</sup> When the purpose is to collect “memories and personal commentaries of *historical* significance” (Ritchie 2003:19, emphasis added), the interview is escalated to the level of *oral history*.

Thus Anthony Seldon and Joanna Papworth (1983:4, emphasis added), while noting that the term has been used to describe a number of activities, define oral history as “information transmitted orally, in a personal exchange, of a kind likely to be of historical or *long-term value*”. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (2005a:ix, emphasis added), drawing on the writings of Ronald Grele,<sup>39</sup> define oral history as “the interviewing of eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of *historical reconstruction*”. Historian Lyn Abrams, in her acclaimed *Oral history theory* (2010), reiterates the multifaceted nature of the term, but enlarges the definition:

Many other terms may also be used interchangeably with oral history, such as personal-testimony research and life-story research ... [b]ut historians seem to be most comfortable with ‘oral history’ as an umbrella term that incorporates both the practice and the output (Abrams 2010:2).

‘Oral history’, therefore, seemed an appropriate and useful methodological framework for that portion of my research that gathered ‘information transmitted orally’ and transformed it into a ‘history’. However, while it is absent from most definitions, what soon came to light was that a key aspect of ‘oral history’ is its concern with ‘history from below’. Paul Thompson (2000 [1978]:iv, emphasis added), in *The voice of the past: oral history* (1978), is clear: “The choice of evidence must reflect the role of history *in the community*”. Thus, from the 1970s onwards, oral history assisted those who were absent from mainstream histories to ‘speak for themselves’. This approach articulated well with the feminist aim of conducting an authentic and egalitarian research process since it enabled the perspectives of “the poor, the underprivileged and disenfranchised” (Abrams 2010:156) to be activated for social change.

During the last decades of the twentieth century historians also had to address the concern that many archives were strongly biased by the interests of a colonising power (Wallot & Fortier 2005:366). Jacques Derrida (1995:9, emphasis in original), in his seminal paper ‘Archive fever: a Freudian impression’, reminds his audience of the “only meaning” of the term archive, which comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*, signifying

at once the *commencement* and the *commandment* ... [a] physical, historical, or ontological principle — but also the principle according to the law, *there* where men and gods *command*, *there* where authority, social order are exercised, *in this place* from which *order* is given

The archive, Derrida (1995:10) argues, “keeps, it puts in reserve, it saves, but in an unnatural fashion ... It has the force of law”. Archival documentation thus came to reflect a discredited government rather than the resistance against it (Ritchie 2003:23); consequently, newly emerging nations used oral history to resurrect suppressed identities. As an example, Donald Ritchie (2003:23) refers to South Africans who “turned to oral history in their search for truth and healing in the post-Apartheid era”. Abrams (2010:160) similarly points to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa — although she concedes that this is not strictly ‘oral history’ — that allowed a history to be told “which had hitherto been silenced by an oppressive regime”. Notably, Abrams singles out the South African experience to point out that at least one commentator was critical of the fact that the “voices of the perpetrators” were also heard.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Not all historians agree: Robert Dallek, when asked why he relied more on manuscripts than interviews, retorted: “I am not a journalist” (in Ritchie 2003:25).

<sup>39</sup> Grele authored the landmark book *Envelopes of sound: the art of oral history* (1985) in addition to numerous other articles on oral history theory and method.

<sup>40</sup> In this regard, Abrams refers to Perks and Thompson (eds), *The oral history reader* (2005): unfortunately, since no page number is cited, it remains unclear who the commentator is.

In 2000, in the third edition of *The voice of the past*, Thompson (2000:xii) admits that his original argument was framed in a social and political context “which was more hopeful than today’s”. Yet he believes that his argument still holds, a position supported by Abrams (2010:160-161) when she summarises the reactionary agenda of oral history:

Oral history has been deployed to convey international shame for genocide, to foster religious and ethnic identity, to advance the power of marginalised groups, to diminish the power gap between academics and society and to contribute to the writing of alternative histories [...] and in many cases [these projects] have made a difference.

The work of South African oral historian Sean Field is an exemplar of history as a project for empowering marginalised groups. Field (2012:2) argues that many silences were only partially broken through the TRC hearings and focuses on people’s experiences before, during, and after forced displacement during the apartheid era. Field (2012:2) seeks to address human rights abuses and to assert the “fragile subjectivity of real selves under an oppressive regime”.

Thus, as one text after the other stressed Thompson’s (2000 [1978]:vi; xii) “socialist perspective”, the legitimacy of my project as ‘oral history’ appeared increasingly at risk. Not only was de Jong not one of the ‘underprivileged’, but, arguably, his was the voice of the discredited ‘perpetrator’. To my dismay, interviewing an individual that had risen to the top of his profession was accorded the pejorative descriptor of ‘elite’ oral history and, while briefly acknowledged by commentators, was made distinct from and inferior to ‘oral history’ proper. I found myself in a quandary: I was not recording life stories of the “rank-and-filers” (Seldon & Papworth 1983:6), but neither was I interviewing a celebrity. On the contrary, my purpose was to rescue a marginalised life from oblivion, but in doing so I was, seemingly, going against the grain. Admittedly, in choosing this route, I was also acting upon personal imperatives that might be open to question. Having argued for biography as a legitimate scholarly pursuit, I realised that I also had to define my methodological position within the broader discipline of oral history itself.

Alun Munslow (2010:8) argues that all historians should admit that — although hidden and indirect — “history is as much a personal, autobiographical and imaginative literary undertaking as it may be anything else”. This requires a move from the ideal of objectivity to an understanding of the nature of the historian as a “subjective, emotive and creative creature” (Munslow 2010:221). Abrams (2010:54-55) concurs that,

The interviewer as well as the narrator is present in the creation of the oral history; there can be no pretense at neutrality or objectivity [...] memory stories are manufactured in an interview environment pulsating with influences.

Abrams (2010:9) observes that few historians write candidly about interview experiences, yet “one can hardly think of anything more different to the conventional experience of sitting in an archive ... So the interview is not just a means to an end; it is a communicative event. And, as such, it needs to be given theoretical reflection”. My review of the literature thus took on a self-reflective turn, and, while I acknowledge that the general understanding, especially in a South African context, of oral history is “history ‘from the bottom up’” (Field 2012:5; Frisch 2005 [1979]:32),<sup>41</sup> I explore those approaches that intersect with my study of an exceptional individual and that enable me both to problematise and enliven my own role in the ‘manufacturing’ of these memory stories.

### **2.1.3 On being elite**

**B**oth Ritchie (2003:22) and Perks and Thompson (2005b:1) refer to Allan Nevins’s project at Columbia University in 1948 as “the first modern oral history archives”, and the “first organised oral history project”, respectively. Notably, Nevins’s interest was in living Americans who had led “significant lives” (Nevins, cited in Ritchie 2003:22); he interviewed the “major players” in government, business and society, and after his retirement from

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<sup>41</sup> It is of interest that while Field (2012:2) seeks to address human rights abuses, he is also interested to “develop anti-essentialist arguments about the construction of self and identity”, perhaps a more generalised pursuit.

Columbia University continued to interview judges, senators, business executives and the like (Ritchie 2003:22-23). Michael Frisch (2005:32) refers to Nevins's project as "the 'debriefing' of the Great Men before they passed on. Its nature was explicitly archival, informational, and elitist". According to Frisch (2005:32), Nevins's work "profoundly" shaped interest in oral history in the 1970s, although in a "largely negative and reactive way".

However, despite the unfavourable response — most noticeable in subsequent European oral history projects — Thompson (2000 [1978]:vi, emphasis added), as early as 1978, after stating his own belief in a socially conscious and democratic history, agrees that "a telling case could *equally* be made, from a conservative position, for the use of oral history in perserving [*sic*] the full richness and value of tradition". Although Thompson infers that this 'elite' history, by its very nature, is 'conservative', and that academics that value their reputation therefore engage with it at their peril, he appears to be acknowledging its value, perhaps as a binary of oral history proper, but in some sense its equal.

Three texts that specifically address elite oral history are Seldon and Papworth's *By word of mouth: elite oral history* (1983), Eva McMahan's *Elite oral history discourse: a study of cooperation and coherence* (1989) and Charles Morrissey's 'On oral history interviewing' (2005 [1970]). Seldon and Papworth's treatise takes up Thompson's challenge and makes a 'telling case' for an elite oral history. To this purpose, the authors state that their book is concerned with

the 'élites' in society ... those who rose to the top of their chosen occupation, and with whose activities much of modern scholarship, rightly or wrongly, is concerned ...[A]n élite figure is taken to be someone of interest because of the position he or she holds, rather than because he or she is representative or typical of a group. This emphasis ... does not imply a value judgment ... Our intention here is to survey an area of oral history hitherto neglected in Britain (Seldon & Papworth 1983:6).

Seldon and Papworth provide a history (of oral history), list the criticisms and advantages thereof, deal with methodology, and then present several case studies. McMahan, on the other hand, presents a highly technical treatise that focuses exclusively on interviews with American male elites: her purpose is "to reduce the number of variables impacting the communicative performances" (McMahan 1989:xiv). At the core of her analysis is the 'transactional' nature of the interview when viewed within a hermeneutical framework: her approach assumes that, in elite interviewing, the oral historian and the interviewee are "clear in their general agreement on the usefulness of history and ... there is a shared vision of historical process and causality" (Grele 1989:xi). McMahan (1989:xv) reviews interview records in which the interviewer chooses not to challenge the informant, as well as occasions where the interviewer "both elicits information ... and evaluates that information *for the record*" (McMahan 1989:xvi, emphasis in original). She explores storytelling "as a collaborative effort" (McMahan 1989:xvi), presents current conceptions about the nature of human communication, and ends by reflecting on the theoretical and methodological issues involved with video recording in oral history. The latter section — as Dan Sipe (2005 [1991]:384) points out — is unusually "thoughtful" in comparison to other, more operational discussions of recording options.

Grele (1989:xi) warns that McMahan is a text for "serious students". Although the author claims that her book "is not prescriptive" (McMahan 1989:xv), the text contains a considerable number of injunctions, for example in the following passage on storytelling:

The respondent is expected to be coherent in answering the questions. Storytelling must be managed accordingly; that is, the teller must constantly address the implicit evaluative response of the listener ... The teller must show that the story is both topical and meaningful ... The interviewer as story recipient is expected to ... agree to hear a story ... [and] refrain from taking a turn except to make remarks demonstrating that the story is being followed (McMahan 1989:81).

What McMahan is, in fact, demonstrating is not a how-to guide but an *a priori* set of constraints, what she refers to as "the norms of coherence and cooperation" (McMahan 1989:81), that interviewer and interviewee adhere to as a consequence of their 'shared vision' and the goal-related nature of the interview. Notably, McMahan (1989:xiv) likens the process and product of oral history to the act of listening to a symphony: the implication is that players and conductor execute a pre-existing score according to the norms of orchestral performance *and that the performance can be evaluated as such*.

In contrast to the 'seriousness' of McMahan's text, Morrissey's paper, first published<sup>42</sup> in 1970, presents a humorous and very human account of interviewing American male elites as part of what he refers to as the JF Kennedy project (Morrissey 2005 [1970]:108). It is a surprisingly helpful account, given its brevity, as the following extract demonstrates:

One of the things we emphasized was to let the interviewee talk. It's his show. Let him run with the ball ... In phrasing our questions, we found it most important to leave them open-ended ... We would avoid the loaded word ... We would of course avoid jargon ... One guideline I would stress ... is that a good interviewer should pursue in *detail*, constantly asking for examples ... When there were tough questions to be asked, we learned to postpone the tough ones until the interview was well under way ... Also, if you chicken out in an interview and don't ask the tough questions you can always ask them when you send the transcript back to be edited (Morrissey 2005 [1970]:108-112, emphasis in original).

In McMahan's paradigm, 'chickening out' never occurs since everyone agrees beforehand to play nicely, yet the 'tough question' is often at the heart of oral history. With regard to the level of belligerence in an 'elite' history interview, Seldon and Papworth present two opposite views, quoting both Beatrice Webb — "It is disastrous ... to argue: the client must be permitted to pour out his fictitious tales ..." — and Herbert Butterfield (cited in Seldon & Papworth 1983:81): "[O]ne thing is fundamental: the historian who is collecting evidence must pursue that work as a remorseless detective". For their part, Seldon and Papworth (1983:82) advise caution lest the informant becomes "defensive and unforthcoming".

Because these authors refer to conversations with prominent individuals, it may seem as if the 'remorseless detective' is the prerogative of an elite oral historian. However, Ritchie (2003:23-24) points out that the fierce debate about the respective merits of 'elite' versus 'non-elite' interviewing has tapered off as interviewers realised that "no one group had an exclusive understanding of the past". This did not mean that Nevins's valorising of 'significant lives' was reinstated, merely that "the best projects were those that cast their nets wide" (Ritchie 2003:24).

Consequently, more recent texts down play the distinction between the two approaches. Abrams's *Oral history theory* (2010), is, as the title suggests, concerned with theory as opposed to a practical guide. In her chapter on power and empowerment, Abrams (2010:161) dedicates a separate section to elite oral history, where she points out that,

Power resides not solely amongst the people en masse; it is also located amongst elite groups in positions of authority ... Oral history research must engage with these groups; speaking to those who made the decisions that affected the many is one way of discovering how power is distributed in society and how those with political, economic or cultural power use it to their or others' advantage or disadvantage.

Although Abrams (2010:161-162) concedes that in some respects this type of research may qualify as a different category of oral history, she is uneasy about the communicative strategies employed in such a situation and reflects that, within the dynamics outlined by McMahan, the potential power imbalance is likely to "tip towards the interviewee". However, Abrams (2010:162, emphasis in original) goes on to posit that,

Though there is a distinct literature on elite oral history interviewing, it is important to also consider how *undifferent* is the act of interviewing supposedly 'powerful' people. The assertion of power is equally possible from an elderly widow from a working-class home as it is from a politician or banker ... the awareness and strategies of the interviewer are rarely fundamentally different.

Ritchie's *Doing oral history: a practical guide* (2003) uses a question/answer format to offer guidance on a broad range of practical issues. Ritchie more or less conflates working-class widows and politicians. Rather than have a section that addresses 'elite' oral history *per se*, Ritchie (2003:101) asks: "Are there any differences in interviewing the famous and interviewing average individuals?". His answer, that it depends largely upon the respondent's previous experience of being interviewed,

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<sup>42</sup> In *Elite and specialized interviewing*, edited by LA Dexter, reprinted in 2012 by the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR).

posits that for the more “prominent” person the interviewer’s problem will be “to draw a distinction between an oral history and a newspaper interview”. This is valuable advice (as I discovered), but perhaps too simplistic.

For example, where Morrissey refers to the ‘tough question’, Ritchie (2003:96) refers to ‘embarrassing’ ones. To scratch the wound without appearing to do so, Ritchie recommends quoting a public source that has issued a challenging statement with reference to the interviewee, and then asking the interviewee to comment upon the reportage, but this strategy presupposes that the interviewee is either celebrated or notorious enough to warrant mention in news reports. With regard to ‘the poor and underprivileged’ Ritchie (2003:96) provides an example in which “gentle and persistent prodding” cajoled interviewees — in this case, inner-city black participants — to talk about difficult topics.<sup>43</sup> Like Morrissey, Ritchie (2003:97) recommends deferring confrontational topics until later in the interview; he describes an encounter involving the physicist Edward Teller in which shortage of time prevented the tactic of delayed attack, resulting in disaster.

What one can therefore take from the literature is a sense that interview situations differ, but that the difference is not necessarily that of ‘elite’ versus ‘non-elite’ interviewing. However, a question that remains is the graphic design historian’s position within this practice. Seldon and Papworth (1983:181) examine “some ways in which oral evidence can illuminate understanding of artists and their work”; although the ‘artists’ turn out to be mostly novelists, Seldon and Papworth’s discussion does include David Sylvester’s *Interviews with Francis Bacon* (1975) that they contrast to Robin Daniels’s *Conversations with Menuhin* (1979). Sylvester only uses a small proportion of the transcribed material in his book, whereas Daniels includes 90 per cent. Daniels (cited in Seldon & Papworth 1983:191) regards the role of the interviewer as “a fairly blank screen”; the result is a “self-portrait” of Yehudi Menuhin that reflects the “openness, awareness and sympathy” (Seldon & Papworth 1983:192) of the interviewer. Sylvester, on the other hand, has an agenda, and some of his ‘questions’ take the form of lengthy hypotheses that “some might feel ... [are] putting ideas into the interviewee’s mind” (Seldon & Papworth 1983:192).

The reference to ‘artists’ is useful, given the emphasis on politicians and bankers in the literature. However, more recently, Linda Sandino (2013, 2010a, 2010b, 2007, 2006) has introduced a specific examination of how oral history interviews enable creative practitioners to “situate the meaning of their creative processes in relational contexts arising out of events, and characters encountered in their lives” (Sandino 2007: 191). In doing so, Sandino takes on board many of the concepts and concerns reviewed elsewhere in this chapter; however, what makes her writing valuable is that, firstly, she “begin[s] to examine the encounter of *design* history with oral history” (Sandino 2006:275, emphasis added),<sup>44</sup> and, secondly, her advocacy of the use of oral history itself:

[A]lthough I would question Paul Thompson’s assertion that it makes for a ‘truer’ history, I support unreservedly the idea that oral history as an embodied account, and encounter, of and with the past, provides an opportunity to create a reflexive dialogue about the past as a ‘historical’ dimension (Sandino 2006:280).

Sandino (2007:191), who positions herself as an art and design historian (Sandino 2010a:5), raises the “fundamental question” for oral historians working with creative practitioners, namely: “[S]hould we focus on the life or the work?”. Sandino cites the criticism, levelled by art historian Abraham Davidson (in Sandino 2007:191) at Richard Cándida Smith’s *Utopia and dissent: art, poetry and politics in California* (1995), that, “we are given too much about the writer or artist, not quite enough about the achievements” (where the latter, one assumes, exclude sporting trophies). Since de Jong’s ‘life’ occupies a large, perhaps even the major, part of this study about his ‘work’, Sandino’s counter to Davidson’s critique is of particular relevance. She argues that Davidson overlooks Smith’s skill in “weav[ing] a compelling cultural history, situating individual lives within their socio-historical context, [and] stressing the importance of the interplay of the study of work and life” (Sandino 2007:191). Smith (1995:xxiii), in fact, motivates persuasively for his own project:

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<sup>43</sup> The interviewer was also blind, an apparent advantage when doing oral history, although how this is of use to sighted researchers is unclear.

<sup>44</sup> The fact that Sandino (2013:1) concedes that, as recently as 2013, a theoretical consideration of the role of oral history in design writing remains “disparate and dispersed” perhaps explains why, in the personal experience of the author, there is still some resistance to the idea.



Statements ... recorded in oral sources, spring from the ... sequestered life of conversation ... while creative work strives for an ... ostensibly independent, 'authorial' stance ... One of our tasks [is] to bring to the surface the discourses of familiarity that interweave with those of authority to create the matrix for a professional life. Neither analysis of work nor analysis of utterance alone is sufficient, because both contain each other ...

Sandino (2007:197) repositions Smith's premise as a matter of identity: the oral life histories of artists and designers

contain the polysemic complexity of an identity-in-process ... in which individuals situate themselves in time and place citing significant others who have contributed to shaping their identity as artists, and also as parents, children, teacher, [and] friend ...

To emphasise her point that the personal, even intimate, life of a participant is an indispensable circumstance in the 'encounter of design history with oral history', Sandino (2006:279) refers to the historian Dominick LaCapra, who lists the standard subject positions relevant to identity formation, namely sexuality, gender, family, language, nationality, ethnicity, class, race, religion or secular ideology, occupation, and disciplinary affiliation, all of which are interrogated, to a greater or lesser degree, in this study of de Jong. Sandino does not distinguish between 'elite' or 'non-elite' practitioners; in the example she provides of an interview transcript the participant is a ceramicist (Sandino 2007:194-195).<sup>45</sup> However, Sandino (2010b:116) acknowledges that, "in the arts ... [g]reat narratives of self-justification can pour out, while the interviewer is left to oscillate between admiration and scepticism" — an oscillation that is perhaps only too evident in my own study. The resultant project of both 'demystification' and 'restoration' may therefore, concedes, Sandino (2010b:116), "be as much fictive as it is historical" and, with this outcome in mind, she reminds design historians who do memory work that "not only are we recording experience, but as interviewers we are participating in an experience ourselves".

Consequently, one aspect of oral history on which McMahan, Abrams and Sandino agree is that the story told is *a product of communication between two individuals*. Abrams (2010:54) notes that these participants interact to produce an effect called *intersubjectivity* and the following section explores theories pertaining to this idea.

#### **2.1.4 Intersubjectivity: a three-way conversation**

Intersubjectivity refers

to the interpersonal dynamics between ... two parties and the process by which they cooperate to create a shared narrative ... [A] three-way conversation tak[es] place in the interview: the interviewee with himself/herself, with the interviewer and with culture (Abrams 2014:97).

Abrams (2010:55-58) draws on, amongst others, Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan to argue that the individual internalises the structures of the external world, and that these structures form a *habitus* — a "disposition" that conforms to the boundaries of these structures (Abrams 2010:57). This *habitus* is never fixed, neither for historian nor interviewee.

Thus, since the 1990s, oral historians encouraged self-reflection on the interviewer's own identity starting with an awareness, by the historian, of her or his own subject position. Similarly, the selves evoked in autobiographies "are actually invocations of a cultural representation of what selves should be ... not descriptions of actual lives" (Abrams 2010:58). Individuals can only narrate their 'experience' of the past by using existing discourses and linguistic formulations; moreover, for the scholar, neutrality is not an option because oral historians "are part of the story" (Abrams 2010:57, 58). One result of this 'turn to subjectivity' was that it rendered irrelevant the charges against oral history's 'unreliability'. Memory stories are not intended to be repositories of an objective truth; they are "creative narratives shaped in part by the personal relationship that facilitates the telling" (Abrams 2010:58).

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<sup>45</sup> For accounts of her oral history projects, some of which involved groups working together, see Sandino (2010a).

- *Mr Paterson's rounded testimony: sex and intersubjectivity*

Abrams provides several instances of how intersubjectivity may influence a narrative and her examples focus on the role of the female academic in an interview situation. On the one hand, she demonstrates that a female interviewer can liberate women's voices from patriarchal discourses, but points out that the approach is "not without its problems" (Abrams 2014:98). Some female respondents may treat the interview as a conversation between confidantes, but there can be no reciprocal confidences from the interviewer.<sup>46</sup> Abrams (2015:96) herself has found that when female respondents assume she is a feminist they tailor narratives to fit "neatly with the emancipatory discourse of modern feminism", and falter when the story cannot conform to this agenda. On the other hand, visibly pregnant interviewers can elicit "the unspoken ... messages of one female body to another" (Summerfield, cited in Abrams 2015:98) and encourage women to investigate the meaning of domesticity in their lives.

Women interviewing men present a different scenario.<sup>47</sup> Abrams (2014: 98) offers only one example, that of Hilary Young's interviews with elderly Glaswegian men, and suggests that here the intersubjectivity is likely to be somewhat unsympathetic, and even belligerent, owing to the interviewer being female, "modern, [and] liberated". Abrams, to make a point, notes that one of Young's interviewees refers deprecatingly to her research and blames educated women for undermining the traditional role and machismo image of the working-class male; the impression is created that female academics might face a difficult time interviewing older, non-elite males.

However, when one engages with Young's (2007) text itself, 'Hard man, new man: re/composing masculinities in Glasgow: c1950-2000', several things come to light. Firstly, Young — who was a student at the time — did not only interview men, but, in fact, two married couples and one divorced man. It is the latter who refers to Young's study of "sissies" (Abrams 2014:98), but the conversation is far more nuanced than Abrams implies. The respondent in question, Mr Paterson, was, in fact, very cooperative and only registered "some regret and loss at changing masculinities" (Young 2007:77, emphasis added), which he ascribes to a "growing electronic and technological job market that required an education that perhaps [many men] did not have". With regard to women's new "promiscuity" (Paterson, cited in Young 2007:78), it is also technology rather than feminism that is blamed: "[A]long comes 1960 and the pill ... the pill changed everything".

What is of interest in Young's article (but ignored by Abrams) is how the responses of the married couples differ when interviewed together, and then alone. In the case of the Irwins, married in 1951, Mrs Irwin, although uninvited, was determined to construct a 'manly' subjectivity for her husband during the interview. When he was later interviewed alone, Mr Irwin

[w]ithout his wife to contradict him ... attempted to realign the discourse on gender. He maybe felt comfortable acknowledging his role as a father to a younger woman, who would look favourably on men taking an active role in childcare.

The point that Young (2007: 80) makes is that "[p]ersonal subjectivities of the narrator, interviewer and whoever else may be present can shape any particular interview". So far so good. What is absent from both Abrams's and Young's accounts is a consideration of the sexual tensions that may exist when a younger, attractive woman interviews a man.<sup>48</sup> In referring to Young's study, Abrams (2010: 62) advises:

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<sup>46</sup> Although one may draw one's own conclusions with regard to the 'problems' in this interview dynamic, it is not quite clear what point Abrams (2014:98) herself is making, beyond the apparently questionable "understanding that interviews involving women [seem to be] characterized by 'natural communication encouragement work'". She does not elaborate on the latter quote (taken from researcher Miriam Zukas).

<sup>47</sup> See footnote 51.

<sup>48</sup> Curious about Abrams's suggestion that Young's male interviewees were hostile towards her, I searched for a photograph of Hilary Young on the internet. Ms Young, at the time of writing, was a Department Member at the Museum of London. I based my assessment of her appearance on her professional profile that was viewed at <http://museumoflondon.academia.edu/HilaryYoung/Papers> (Hilary Young 2015).

The intersubjective dynamics within the interview situation should always be acknowledged honestly ... It is reasonable to argue that the outcome of a conversation between a young female interviewer and an older male respondent would differ, both in style and possibly content, from the same interviewee's encounter with an older male interviewer.

But how 'honest' can, or should, the interviewer really be? Within the context of the title of her article, how does Young interpret Mrs Irwin's eagerness to reiterate (to a young female interviewer) that her husband was never 'soft'? Conversely, when left alone with the interviewer, why does Mr Irwin confide his commitment to 'the role as a father to the younger woman'? Young (2007:75) guesses that "maybe" her assumed feminist views enabled the man to feel less shame about preferring child care to replacing gutters, but is this all that is going on here?<sup>49</sup>

The Irvins were known to Young; Mr Paterson, on the other hand, contacted Young after reading about her project — and seeing her photograph — in a newspaper (Young 2007:81).<sup>50</sup> As an active trade unionist in the printing industry, he had knowledge of employment issues that had an effect on gender roles, and it seems as if Paterson approached Young as a man who knew he had something to offer. Whereas the married couples talked to Young in their homes, Paterson met Young in a pub: the interview therefore took on the quality of an assignation. From the outset Paterson, who at 62 was "a confident, larger-than-life man" (Young 2007:77), seemed to be showing Young what she, as a 'new' woman, was missing, namely a 'hard' man, who could take charge, and leave her well satisfied. Young (2007:78, 79), who might or might not be aware of the erotic tenor of her account, describes her experience with Paterson:

Mr Paterson's testimony as a whole was rounded. It has an introduction, middle and conclusion [...] [I], a younger female, who was less experienced in the 'ways of the world', was passive within the traditional discourse ... The narrator achieved subjective composure when he acknowledged at the end of the interview 'that should get you passed'. This emphasized his pride in the ... authority of his testimony.

Young (2007:79), despite stating that Paterson "dominated the interview", does not express dismay at what many might regard as an exercise of male hegemonic power. Her personal response to Paterson remains ambiguous, so that the 'honesty' goes so far, and no further. Admittedly, Young's subject matter was masculinity; an interview on the merits of the Heidelberg Letterpress may have produced a different text. It is more than 'reasonable to argue' that a male<sup>51</sup> interviewer would have elicited an altered narrative about both masculinity *and* the Heidelberg press, but the salient point is that men and women interview each other, and sexual attraction (or its opposite) is a powerful subjectivity in the manufacturing of stories.

Ritchie (2003:100) avoids the topic, only briefly acknowledging that differences in age and gender may influence both questions and answers. However, Valerie Yow, in *Recording oral history: a guide for the humanities and social sciences* (2005), reflects in some detail on the effect of gender differences on interpersonal relations in an interview. Yow (2005:171-175) outlines standard theories on how men respond to female interviewers, but reports that her own experiences have not necessarily borne out the published research: Yow (2005:173, 174) has found that most male narrators have "genuinely wanted to be helpful", and were often very open with their feelings.

She then deals with the topic of 'sexual attraction' (Yow 2005:175). Notably, male narrators that are pleased to have a younger woman show interest in them appear, for Yow, to be the most typical of these situations;<sup>52</sup> Yow points out that merely by being a good listener a female interviewer may arouse sexual interest in male

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<sup>49</sup> It is worthwhile studying the photograph of the Irvins (Young 2007:75), taken in 2006 by, one has to assume, the interviewer. Mrs Irwin wears her spectacles, but Mr Irwin has removed his, and holds them in his hand, perhaps to appear more 'favourable' to the photographer.

<sup>50</sup> Young makes a point of the fact that Paterson knew what she looked like before the interview took place.

<sup>51</sup> There are, of course, not only two genders that might be interviewing each other. Readers would tend to assume that both Young and Paterson are heterosexual, although this may not be the case. Furthermore, a gay man might have elicited different responses from Paterson than a heterosexual male interviewer. The dynamics of lesbian and gay intersubjectivity is addressed in Don Kulick and Margaret Wilson (1995). For the sake of brevity, and within the context of my own study, I restrict the signification of 'male' and 'female' to heterosexual categories, although I acknowledge the gendered nuances of these terms.

<sup>52</sup> Yow (2005:175) relates how she was 'felt up' by a 92-year-old man, who asked her, "You're not married are you?".

interviewees, but speculates that the same is probably true for (older?) female narrators. Yow (2005:175) asks: “Does this affect the course of the interview? Probably. But the ways that this sexual ‘chemistry’ is manifested vary with the individual”.

Yow (2005:176) advises that interviewers keep the expectations of the interviewing situation top of mind. If aspects of the encounter become physical, she cautions: “don’t linger”, but concedes that many interviewers not only linger, but also ‘get down and dirty’ (Terzian 2013). In her section on ethics in situations of unequal power, Yow (2005:137) states that it would be naïve not to acknowledge the potential for “sexual action” in a confidential, one-on-one situation such as in-depth interviewing. However, until the 1990s, the erotic interest between interviewer and informant either did not exist, or could not be mentioned (Yow 2005:138); more recently, though, Yow notes, there has been “a lot of discussion” around the topic and refers to Amanda Coffey (1999:78), who points out that,

There is a long tradition of describing the sexual availability, erotic pleasures and sexual lives of other people ... By contrast it is far more unusual to represent fieldwork ... as sexual, erotic, pleased or desiring. And yet the fieldworker, as emotional and embodied, cannot help but have a sexual positionality.

Coffey (1999:78) sets out to demonstrate how “a contemplation of the sexual and the erotic is epistemologically productive”, but Yow (2005:138) suggests that “these behaviors ... have to do with personal gratification, no matter what the rationalization”.<sup>53</sup> She concludes that “[a]cceding to a narrator’s desire for sex in order to get information is an ethical issue” (Yow 2005:138) and is clear that, in her opinion, an interviewer must exercise restraint:

If you feel attracted to the person you are interviewing, admit this to yourself — both feelings and intellect inform and enrich your work. But accepting feelings is different from acting on them ... Make the boundaries clear and respect them: this is a professional relationship.

Not everyone agrees: a passionate (if not altogether mainstream) argument exists for the complete immersion of the fieldworker in her/his subject’s life, and for the acknowledgment of this sexual intimacy in anthropological texts.<sup>54</sup> Yow (2005:138) alerts her readers to this “different slant”, but also offers Kate Altork’s (1995:81-105) study of Californian firefighters as a way to “integrate emotions and intellect”<sup>55</sup> while maintaining boundaries. It is not, therefore, merely a question of ‘having sex in the field’ — one anthropologist, in fact, suggests that the thought has as much impact upon the putative objectivity of the study as the deed (Terzian 2013) — but rather the recognition of an erotic intersubjectivity that is always/already present in much in-depth interviewing.

Sexual intrigue may be enhanced, or even triggered, by the *habitus* of academia as it intersects with the disposition of the ordinary citizen. In the case of anthropology, the exoticism of the other exercises a powerful mystique, but even where participants share a broader, national culture, scholarly researchers are unlikely to embrace the attitudes and values of their non-academic interviewees. Young and Altork encountered paternalism and sexism in their informants, but this otherness is not limited to working-class respondents: as Morrissey (2005 [1970]:109) points out, “Many people in Washington don’t like academic people and don’t understand academic publications”. Often, this alternative perspective may be the primary reason for a study, but it also poses a challenge.

- *The shark’s pretty teeth: empathy and intersubjectivity*

In the rush to defend oral history — gathering information from ‘eye-witness participants’ as opposed to consulting lifeless documents in an archive — it is perhaps forgotten that, occasionally, the historian may feel that it would be preferable if her subjects, too, were dead.<sup>56</sup> Choosing to write the biography of a powerful,

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<sup>53</sup> Rather curiously, Yow attributes this conclusion (unreferenced) to Coffey.

<sup>54</sup> In addition to Coffey, see Kulick and Wilson (1995).

<sup>55</sup> Yow is being a bit coy. Altork’s affective response was not ‘emotional’, it was powerfully sexual.

<sup>56</sup> This observation was made while de Jong was still alive and I was facing the challenges of the Hill Street interview environment.

complex or controversial person in itself presents challenges, but finding oneself in an intimate, face-to-face conversation with such an individual raises even more troubling questions.

Kathleen Blee (2005:333) remarks that “romantic assumptions” about the subjects of history ‘from the bottom up’ presuppose that members of the elite are, by definition, wielders of unequal power and should be treated with caution and lack of empathy, whereas non-elite interviews should be authentic and reciprocal. However, these perceptions are difficult to sustain when studying ordinary people who are intolerant and bigoted; consequently, historians have tended to avoid life stories of groups whose political agendas they find “unsavoury, dangerous, or deliberately deceptive” (Blee 2005:333). Yet, Blee (2005:341) argues, a need exists to understand the historical attraction of people to such politics. To this purpose, Blee (2005:334) interviewed former female members of the 1920s Ku Klux Klan, an organisation that recruited several million people across the USA into a political crusade for white, Protestant supremacy. Several salient observations emerge from Blee’s account of her experience.

Firstly, memories of individuals who have participated in campaigns for racial and/or religious supremacy are often embellished with “deceptive information, [and] disingenuous denials of culpability” (Blee 2005:334). Although Richie (2003:105) warns that an interviewer should never be too quick to presume that an interviewee is lying, Blee (2005:334) asserts that right-wing extremists have a “desire ... to distort their own political pasts”; not only are narratives biased by the narrators’ need to appear acceptable to an oral historian, but informants’ memories have also been shaped by subsequent public censure. In the Klan’s heyday, few members would have felt the need to justify their crusade; only later did stories intended to exonerate its participants appear (Blee 2005:335).

Blee (2005:336) sets out to examine the role that women played in the Klan’s campaigns of rumour, boycotts and intimidation; she found that many interviewees held “complicated” attitudes toward gender, race and nationalism, blending occasional progressive views with unquestioning adherence to dogmas of nationalism and racial hierarchies. Blee (2005:336) argues that “[i]t is through oral historical accounts ... that these contradictions can be recovered and explored” — but modes of presentation can be deceptive. One of the critiques of oral history is that “it is confined to a cosy view of the past” (Hay, cited in Blee 2005:337). Unlike the pro-Fascist sentiments of Turin workers interviewed by Luisa Passerini, Blee’s informants felt little need to obscure their political beliefs: “[N]one expressed any consciousness of having done wrong; few seemed even to appreciate why they might be viewed as intolerant or bigoted ... To them, life in the Klan was normal, a given, needing no explanation” (Blee 2005:337). Blee (2005:337-338) reflects that,

Such mundane reactions are not without value. They can reveal ... that Klan life became inseparable from non-Klan life. With the myriad of ... family picnics, athletic contests, parades, spelling bees, beauty contests, rodeos, and circuses, it is perhaps little wonder that the 1920s Klan is recalled by former members as an ordinary, normal, taken-for-granted part of the life of the white Protestant majority ...

... a point of view that she nevertheless regards as “staggering”. The lack of reflectivity in these interviews, Blee (2005:338) maintains, is a result of both the acceptability of white supremacist beliefs at a specific time and of a “conscious effort by partisans to deny the consequences of their political efforts”. Blee (2005:339) therefore suggests that, contrary to the general rule, encouraging empathy in oral histories of ordinary people can be problematic. Blee therefore made few efforts to avoid the ‘tough question’: she expected her informants to be wary of her, but this was not the case:<sup>57</sup>

These elderly informants found it impossible to imagine that I ... would not agree, at least secretly, with their racist and bigoted world views ... They simply discounted my spoken objections as ‘public talk’ and carried on the ‘private talk’ they assumed was universal among whites (Blee 2005:339).

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<sup>57</sup> Blee concedes that these were women who had volunteered to talk to a historian.

But Blee's preconceived ideas about her interviewees were also distorted: far from being the abhorrent characters of popular portrayals of Klan members, many of the people she interviewed were "interesting, intelligent, and well informed" (Blee 2005:339). Although fraudulent, Blee (2005:340) cautions that this type of empathy can be "surprisingly, and disturbingly, easy to achieve in oral history interviews". Blee (2005:341) concludes that the trajectory of institutionalised racism is not propelled by lower middle-class, poorly educated, and inarticulate or pathological individuals; rather, it lies deep within educated, middle-class, mainstream communities. But, whereas oral historians more usually encounter mass amnesia with regard to a racist history (Ritchie 2003:105-106), and often have to rely on the use of pauses and silences to construct meaning (Abrams 2010:128), it was the *lack* of silence and the ease of communication that revealed the views of these women (Blee 2005:340).

The point that Blee (2005:340) makes is that although feminist ethics require that researchers level the inequality between researcher and subject, the hazards of empowering a political vision of racial and religious bigotry are clear. An analogy therefore exists between the dangers (and opportunities) of intellectual and sexual empathy; although it is unlikely<sup>58</sup> that Blee felt erotic desire for her elderly informants, her experience is not that different from that of Altork (1995:86), who confesses:

I struggle to contain the cognitive dissonance I am feeling: the part of me that is attracted to these men that are, as a group, earnest and intelligent, charming and attractive, with the part of me that is unnerved and irritated by their blatant use of macho sexual imagery to discuss forest fires ... Even as I struggled to analyze their 'fire language', and to situate it as a language of power and appropriation, I felt myself to be seduced by it, and felt privileged to be privy to it as a temporary 'insider', an experience both uncomfortable and intriguing.

While Altork and Blee are 'seduced' by their informants' personal charms despite being at odds with their ideological positions, Daniel James's experience of interviewing a militant Peronist in Argentina is devoid of all empathy. Abrams (2010:10) cites James as "one of the few historians who has written candidly about his own sometimes difficult experiences as an interviewer"; his unsettling description of the Argentinian encounter reveals the "symbolic violence that [can] result from the insistence on the professional ideology of the historian" (James 2003:136). The bitter cold of Berisso and dreary house set the scene for what James (2003:130, 132) repeatedly refers to as a "deeply disturbing" experience: having set out to extract the untold story of rank-and-file Peronism, James, craving empirical information, found himself overwhelmed by a highly agitated informant who transformed the fact-finding interview into a confessional of personal disillusion and redemption. Arguably, the most haunting aspect of James's (2003:132) account is the spectre of the informant's partner who hovers sullenly in the shadows:

My physical discomfort was intensified by a sense of gloom that ... had much to do with the presence of his wife ... [H]er body language ... spoke of resignation and resentment that I intuited had to do with the poverty of the household ... I read in her presence an ironic comment on her husband's performance for the outsider. It was as if she was used to these claims and these emotions, as if she had resigned herself to the fact that these would never translate into anything substantial.

James (2003:131-132) finds that he cannot enter into the "bargain" being forced upon him; he leaves and never returns to formally interview the man. The reasons for his inability to show empathy, to change one interviewing mask for another, are not unambiguously clear to James, who concedes that the "simplest" answer might be that the man's religiously intense, right-wing Peronism repulsed him. However, James (2003:133) also confides his distress at his role of voyeur in the cold, concrete dwelling; he concludes that in pursuing the Western requirements of "truth and factuality", an oral historian may intrude upon intimate human dramas in a manner that can be equated to an act of physical violence.

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<sup>58</sup> But not impossible. Gloria Wekker (2006) writes about her sexual relationship with Misi Juliette Cummings, an 84-year-old woman who was Wekker's main informant in her study of women's sexual culture in Suriname.

Like the erotic, violence is therefore also always/already present in the 'unequal power' present in the interview situation, although whether the interviewer or interviewee holds the balance is not always clear. Notably, James imposes upon his readers something of the shift in agenda that the Peronist presses upon James: his detailed confession to a humiliating inability to control the interview and his consternation in the face of domestic despair, as well the need for exculpation in the face of these failures, is not, perhaps, what readers 'bargain' for when engaging with an account of social history. The researcher, too, has been violated, and demands that his audience bears witness to the unburdening of his feelings of guilt and shame; he needs, like the Peronist, to tell his story of defeat over and over, regardless of what the scholarly expectation might be. As such, James and the Peronist are *spliced* — smeared together — in this shared tale of unfulfilled needs.

James (2003:129) is unusually honest in that he confesses that he took it for granted that he was "smarter" than his informant, discovering, too late, his error; this is perhaps an unspoken (and unacknowledged) assumption of all scholars, even when interviewing prominent individuals. Altork and Blee are less forthright, but both researchers remark upon the 'intelligence' of their informants, as if this surprised them. Young harbours no *declared* prejudice towards her working class narrators, but she was not yet a fully-fledged academic when she conducted her interviews; she also knew some of her informants personally. James thus highlights academic hubris as another always/already intersubjectivity present in the interview situation.

However, it is of interest that while James's attempt to interview the male Peronist was a disaster, he developed a very warm ('intimate') and productive relationship with a woman from the meat-packing industry of Berisso. Doña María Roldán was an ardent supporter of Juan and Eva Perón, yet James does not feel the distaste for the woman's fervour that he felt for that of her male counterpart. James (2003:133) reflects upon this anomaly and urges oral historians to address their need to document an informant's life as it collides with the interviewee's hopes to make sense of her or his past.

Read together, Young, Altork, Blee and James evince thoughtful reflection with regard to interviewing individuals that inhabit different subject positions. Their texts also ask questions about what should be perceived to be more useful: a 'successful' interview — one that produces a 'nice' coherent and fluent narrative (Abrams 2010:11) — or the 'difficult' interview, in which information is secondary to the personal relationships that intertwine with the telling of stories. If, as James suggests, the latter has equal, or even greater, relevance to history writing, it is important to consider a factor that is present in all these encounters, namely *performance*.

### **2.1.5 Rising to the occasion: performing oral history**

**A**brams (2010:22) defines performance in oral history as the "understanding that the meaning or interpretation of the source lies not merely in the content of what is said but also in the way it is said", and proposes that the performance element of the interview should be evaluated alongside the content:

The oral historian can sometimes be fooled by all the textbooks, rules and procedures of our work ... into thinking ... the performance is a distraction. It is not. It is central. And from it we learn ... that our analysis needs to convey the emotions and effort which our respondents invest in recalling the past (Abrams 2010:152).

Although an oral history narrative is first and foremost "a performance of words" (Abrams 2010:130), as a communicative act it involves not just language, but also non-vocal signification for an interviewer who is usually both a listener *and* a viewer (Abrams 2010:131). Even if the audience consists *only* of the interviewer, the narrator is aware that he or she is communicating experience in a "heightened encounter" (Abrams 2010:132) which requires a mode of communication differing from everyday conversation. Thus,

most interviewees are aware that they are expected to perform and will rise to the occasion. From this, the oral historian can often make telling observations — about the moral code of a 'host' or 'hostess' in the culture concerned, for example, which may demand a clean home and plentiful tea and biscuits for the interviewer (Abrams 2010:22).

Moreover, oral history is a joint enterprise undertaken by respondent and researcher: what starts out as a personal exchange becomes a public statement (Abrams 2010:24-25). Therefore, Abrams (2010:132-133) argues that *all* oral history is performance: the respondent is led by the interviewer, but while the respondent might be given a script, she or he will nevertheless insert “some individual choice or flair” into the performance. The structure incorporates a number of conventions, described as ‘keying’ — special codes or ways of saying things, and contextual elements such as the place in which the performance takes place, or the clothes the performer is wearing (Abrams 2010:135). As such, the event “gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity” (Abrams 2010:133).

Abrams (2010:133) refers to the anthropologist Richard Bauman (1977) who notes a number of features that characterise cultural performances: they are set up in advance; they are temporarily delimited and performed within a marked-off space; they are programmed; they are public occasions; they are reflexive — “they call attention to culture itself” (Abrams 2010:133). This is the idea of performance as something set apart from the everyday; however, Abrams (2010:135) points to a branch of cultural theory called ‘performativity theory’ that locates performance in both everyday life and in every individual’s identity. Kirsten Langellier and Eric Peterson (in Abrams 2010:136), who have conducted research of storytelling in Franco American communities, find that narrative performance in ordinary settings has, as one of its purposes, the solidification of group identities as well as having the effect of mediating struggles over the meanings of particular events in the course of which the identity and the meaning of family is renegotiated; through performing narratives the ‘family narrates itself’.

The oral history interview takes place somewhere between the cultural performance and performance in everyday life. Thus Isabel Hofmeyr (1994:77, emphasis added) refers to an “oral *performance* culture” when writing about renditions of the Makapansgat Siege of 1854. Abrams (2010:136) suggests that, since interviewees often tell stories they have told before, and respondents often rehearse what they are going to say beforehand, practitioners might find considerable applicability of performativity theory to the oral history interview. Good storytellers know that their impact derives not from retelling stories, but from knowing *how* to tell the stories; the ‘etiquette’ of storytelling thus incorporates a code of aesthetics, linguistic and semiotic strategies — including structured speech and body language — to create absorbing dialogues (Abrams 2010:137-138). Furthermore, according to performativity theory, *every* speech act is a performance; this means that different interviews may produce different versions of an identity, and by “careful pursuit” of these variations, “important conclusions may be drawn” (Abrams 2010:137).

Abrams (2010:139) concedes that not all oral history interviews constitute stories, yet many researchers have conducted interviews in which the narrator has inserted some features of the storytelling mode. Abrams (2010:140, emphasis added) refers to the work of Barbara Myerhoff, anthropologist and filmmaker, to argue that focussing on the performance of an oral history narrative “forces us to think about how the story works *in the present* because the performance is usually before our very eyes”. Few respondents are natural storytellers, but many will narrate composed stories that enable them to assume “narrative competence” and authority in the interview — and when they do this, urges Abrams (2010:151), “we must pay attention because a story well told is being told for a reason”.

The examples Abrams provides demonstrate that not only is performance an intrinsic part of history-telling, but that oral narratives are more usually analysed for their performance elements, rather than for empirical data (Abrams 2010:141). As has been demonstrated, a key element in oral history is gender. Abrams (2010:59) refers to Judith Butler’s theory that gender is a performative act — people perform their gendered identity in everyday acts of dress, gesture, deportment and speech, drawing upon the culture and discourses of the time. Citing Myerhoff, Abrams (2010:142) points out that for older people there is a more elemental role for performance since it is a means by which they can “become visible and attract attention to themselves”; it is an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and to “perform a version of self that is not congruent with the image of the socially marginalised, physically limited, passive older person”.



This performance aspect of the oral history interview can be manifested in many different ways; Abrams's (2010:59, 147) summary reiterates how individuals "play a part on a stage":

Some respondents will make elaborate preparations of the interview setting — arranging chairs, side tables, laying out mementoes and photographs and even inviting a friend or relative to sit in (an unplanned eventuality that can disrupt the interviewer's preference for a one-to-one interview). Others may present prepared scripts ... The interviewee may adopt a particular performance model ... in order to present a confident and practiced narrative style whereby he or she takes control of the 'interview'.

This evocation of the practices of the theatre — props, script, costume and supporting actors, all of which were employed by de Jong — are vividly evoked by Erving Goffman's account of "individuals dramatising themselves" (Abrams 2010:59). Goffman's *The presentation of self in everyday life* (1969) is a seminal text in performativity theory and conversation analysis. Because de Jong's chronicle of EDJS — and indeed the stories of the other informants that contributed to the story — was as much about performance as it was about an account of the inception and workings of a design studio, it is useful to briefly examine selected aspects of Goffman's argument in the following section.

### **2.1.6 Front, back and asides: Goffman's theory of staging identity**

Goffman's (1969) often amusing and sometimes ironical text sets out to reveal the 'masks' that members of Anglo-American society put on in everyday life. His argument draws heavily on his 1953 study of crofters in the Shetland Islands, but he provides ample 'illustrative materials' from other sources. He never refers to a formal, or even informal, 'interview', merely to 'audience' and 'performer'; his concern is how people go about staging identity in the workplace, for example, doctors, waitresses, insane asylum workers, crofters, and young American female students.<sup>59</sup> However, because performance is an integral aspect of oral history, Goffman's observations allow for the construction of a lens through which to view the interview situation, and in particular de Jong's construction of self.

Goffman prefaces his more detailed arguments with a broad description of key elements of presentation of self. At the outset, he makes the observation that, given the fact that others are likely to "check up" (Goffman 1969:7) on verbal statements — as de Jong soon realised that I did — the individual will sometimes "try to exploit this very possibility, guiding the impression he<sup>60</sup> makes through behaviour". At one extreme, Goffman (1969:15) argues, the performer can be "fully taken in by his own act"; at the other, the individual may have no belief in his performance and "we may call him cynical". Goffman's point is that *deception*, whether intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual, is present whenever that individual presents a 'front'.

Goffman (1969:20-22) enumerates the standard parts of the *front*, the first being 'the setting' that involves furniture, décor, physical layout and other background items, exemplified, in de Jong's case, by the rhetoric of the Hill Street house and its eclectic contents. The setting is complemented by the 'personal front' that can be divided into 'appearance' and 'manner'. *Appearance* tells the audience of the performer's "temporary ritual state" (Goffman 1969:21), for example, clothing, sex, age, racial characteristics, size and looks; *manner* refers to posture, speech patterns, facial expressions and bodily gestures. One only has to view video footage of de Jong being interviewed to appreciate the careful meshing of a respectable, well-groomed appearance with the restrained, yet intelligent and self-aware manner of the 'legendary painter' that he was performing for the camera.

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<sup>59</sup> As well as academics, when they stage the performance of the urbane, scholarly text (Goffman 1969:38).

<sup>60</sup> In the 1969 edition of his book, Goffman refers throughout to the male gender; I have respected the original text in this regard.

Goffman (1969:23) identifies two important characteristics of information conveyed by the front, namely its *abstractness* and *generality*; this idea has relevance not only for the staging of individual identity, but also for the ‘performing’ of a corporate persona. Thus, many service occupations offer their clients a performance that is “illuminated with dramatic expressions of cleanliness, modernity, competence, and integrity” (Goffman 1969:23). Within the context of graphic design, the ‘clean’ and ‘modern’ corporate identity and its schematic presentation to the client comes to mind, but also, of course, de Jong’s own staging of himself as ‘clean’, ‘modern’, and ‘competent’. Goffman (1969:23) offers the laboratory coat as a signifier of that which is “standardized, clinical, [and] confidential” and it is perhaps self-evident why de Jong donned this particular garment when he painted and conducted classes in his studio.

Once the ‘front’ has been established, the performance has to “highlight ... confirmatory facts” (Goffman 1969:26) by means of *dramatic realisation*, an aspect of his practice that de Jong relished. The problem here, for Goffman (1969:28, 29), is that often the dramatic realisation may require the *opposite* of the performance itself, for example ‘simple, quiet dignity’ when presenting a concept to an illustrious client may be unattainable without ‘mad, frenetic effort’ beforehand — contradictory demands that dogged de Jong throughout his own, frenzied life.

Dramatisation is usually employed to achieve *idealisation*. Goffman (1969:30, 31) acknowledges the commonplace notion that a performance presents an idealised view of the situation, but prefers to stress the idea that a performer exemplifies the officially accredited norms of society. I should not have been surprised that, despite the colourful events that shaped his life, de Jong was fiercely protective, not only of his political reputation (which was understandable), but also of his moral character. However, Goffman (1969:38-39) posits that *all* attempts at idealisation require concealment to some degree, such as covering up “non-allowable” activities and mistakes, or showing only a polished end product although the task itself may have been abhorrent. Performers tend to cultivate the impression that they had “ideal motives” when taking on a performative role and practitioners may disguise the reasons why they chose a career (Goffman 1969:40-41). Performers may also foster the impression that the present act is their only one and that their current performance has something unique about it (Goffman 1969:42-43): many of the delightfully ‘spontaneous’ stories provided by de Jong for my benefit were in fact well-rehearsed tales told (and re-told) to his daughter, Tamara.

Once the performance is underway, the actor has to exercise *maintenance of expressive control*; one false note can ruin the whole show (Goffman (1969:46). De Jong remained remarkably vigilant when any recording device was switched on, but very occasionally there was a slip. In addition to accidental mishaps, Goffman (1969:51, 52) reflects upon deliberate *misrepresentation* of self in cases where the audience scrutinises the authority of the performer rather than the performance itself:

[I]t may not ... be necessary to decide which is the more real, the fostered impression or the one the performer attempts to prevent the audience from receiving. The crucial sociological consideration ... is merely that impressions fostered in everyday performances are subject to disruption.

To minimise this disruption, the performer usually discourages close inspection, drawing instead on the device of *mystification* as a way to generate awe (Goffman 1969:59). If the latter condition can be sustained, the audience is likely to leave those matters alone about which the performer would feel shame. Indeed, de Jong’s approach to the interview situation was often one of vagueness and evasion. His inability to recall dates suggests life as one astonishing achievement *in the present*, a singular event that should not be dissected within another, less congenial, context. Since performances can be carried off successfully with both complete dishonesty *and* complete honesty, Goffman (1969:61-62) interrogates notions of *reality* and *contrivance* and points out that an ‘honest’ performance is less firmly connected with the solid world than one might assume. Goffman (1969:63), in what appears to be a rejoinder to Roland Barthes’s deconstruction of wrestling codes,<sup>61</sup> argues that expressions regarded by some as a contrivance often “do not come from a script but from command of an idiom ... with little calculation or forethought”.

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<sup>61</sup> Barthes’s *Mythologies*, in which the famous wrestling essay appears, was first published in 1957 and Goffman was probably familiar with it.

Of further interest with regard to the present study is Goffman's concept of the 'front' and 'back' regions of a performance. The performance in a 'front region' may be seen as "the effort to give the appearance that activity in this region ... embodies certain standards" (Goffman 2015:93). A 'back region' or 'backstage' is where suppressed "facts" (Goffman 1969:98) make an appearance; here the performer "can drop his front". Goffman (1969:107, 109) points out that there is a tendency to make a division between the front and back parts of residential exteriors:

The front tends to be relatively well decorated [...] In back regions ... the very fact that an important effect is not striven for tends to set the tone for interaction, leading those who find themselves there to act as if they were on familiar terms with one another in all matters.

De Jong's division of his domestic space was an exemplar of Goffman's argument. The imposing double volume entertainment area (Fig. 15) displayed 'real' art and was inhabited by the legendary painter; the little kitchen adjoining de Jong's studio, cluttered with bric-a-brac, family photographs and naïf Dutch still lifes, revealed a more relaxed but also more vulnerable de Jong. Backstage language, according to Goffman (1969:111), consists of the use of first names, profanity, overt sexual remarks, griping, and playful aggression; frontstage language can be taken as the absence (and in some sense the opposite) of this behaviour. Thus Goffman (1969:116) posits that 'performance' mainly takes place frontstage. However, an argument can be made that the so-called 'relaxation' in the back region is as much a performance as the 'idealisation' taking place in the front: the key elements of a performance — dramatisation, concealment and contrivance — are all applied, albeit within a different set of norms and expectations.

But Goffman (1969:117-118) also hypothesises a third region, namely "all places other than the two already identified". The idea seems to hinge on the "inopportune presence" of outsiders who witness the performance by accident, an ever-present possibility in the de Jong household into which came and went an assortment of students, servants, lodgers and loved-ones. Goffman (1969:121) advises that an intrusion may be mitigated by having those present "switch to a definition of the situation into which the intruder can be incorporated", or, "to accord the intruder a clear-cut welcome as some-one who should have been in the region all along". To this comment one might add that the convivial action suggested here is contingent upon the status of the outsider: the property's caretaker, Piet, washing the windows, was never hailed as 'some-one who should have been in the region all along'.<sup>62</sup>

Although Goffman's (1969:2) introduction pointedly refers to the "individual" in the presence of others, the latter part of his book emphasises the dynamics of team performance in large corporations. Team identity — where 'team' may also equate 'family' — became increasingly relevant when reconstructing the history of EDJS. Goffman's (1969:123) premise is that sustaining the definition of the situation involves "the over-communication of some facts and the under-communication of others ... In other words, a team must be able to keep its secrets". How individual members of the EDJS team, now widely dispersed, responded to this expectation and the role of the historian in under- or over-communicating this response, is discussed in the following section. Goffman (1969:139, 140) notes that clients often attempt to transform their service specialist into confidant — the person "to whom the performer confesses his sins" — especially when "the work of the specialist is merely to listen and talk". Goffman cites the psychologist as an example, but the interviewer may just as easily straddle the two categories and Goffman thus touches on an important but challenging aspect of oral history.

Finally, Goffman (1969:220, 224) allows himself a "moral note", that articulates many of the oral historian's concerns and opportunities:

When one individual enters the presence of others, he will want to discover the facts of the situation ... Full information of this order is rarely available; in its absence, the individual tends to employ substitutes — cues, tests, hints, expressive gestures, status symbols, etc. — as predictive devices ... And, paradoxically, the more the individual is concerned with the reality that is not available to perception, the more he must concentrate his attention on appearances ...

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<sup>62</sup> However, the presence of the servant may have brought about a momentary 'switch in the definition of the situation'.

However, in any performance the audience, as Abrams takes pains to point out, is as much engaged with appearances as the performer, a condition of engagement that requires a consideration of the ethics of an oral history project and, more particularly, biography as design history.

## 2.2 The ethics of evidence

### 2.2.1 *The letter of informed consent*

Collecting evidence for this study entailed conducting interviews and documenting artefacts, the latter comprising texts and images in the public domain, as well as materials in the possession of human participants. It is a standard requirement of academic institutions that a researcher apply for ethical clearance for an undertaking that uses human subjects as a source of data; typically, forms are completed, letters of informed consent are distributed and participants are provided with a list of approved questions prior to the commencement of the interview. In order to be granted ethical clearance, I duly complied with these specifications and moved on with my research.

However, beyond this institutional gate-keeping lies a minefield of risk, temptation and error. As Abrams (2010:60) observes, intersubjectivity starts well before the interview, and usually at the moment when the letter of consent, printed on university-crested notepaper, is presented to prospective interviewees. The instrument that institutions rely on to ensure ethical enquiry often acts as the first manoeuvre in the 'battle of wills' between interviewer and participant. While most interviewees I approached signed the consent form without comment, one prospective participant — a collector of beer labels — vanished immediately he was confronted with the intimidating paraphernalia of academia. De Jong studied the document carefully, pointed out its shortcomings, asked me to re-word it and then agreed to sign it. In my relief to have his signature, I neglected to note that he had made use of the opportunity to add a comment to the agreement — a condition of participation that I only registered after his death, namely that I allocate equal weight, in my research, to his graphic design *and* painting endeavours.

The discovery of this condition left me in a state of momentary panic. In all my conversations with de Jong I had merely tolerated deviations into the realm of painting, unaware that my respondent believed, and was under the impression that I realised, that these communicative acts were a primary goal of the collaboration (and that the entire project was, in fact, predicated upon this one thing). The reality is that I have little interest in de Jong's painting beyond its relevance to his design output and, like James, I therefore find myself confessing to a humiliating failure: I did not enter into the 'bargain' being demanded from me. However, the stated wish to be remembered as an artist stands, and in accepting the bequest of his life, I also have to accept the conditions that govern this legacy. Consequently, although the present study cannot be expanded to address his request, there is a moral, if not necessarily ethical, compunction to accede to it in the future. The letter of consent, in this instance, took on an agency of its own.

### 2.2.2 *Asking questions, recording answers*

Accompanying the consent form is the pre-requisite list of questions, a necessary protocol but one that is, perhaps, of limited use. De Jong, although he was provided with it beforehand, never answered, or adhered to the programme implicit in, the questions over which I had laboured with such care. Other participants, with one notable exception, did not fare much better, so that I eventually abandoned the time-consuming process of constructing an interrogative framework prior to an interview. What I discovered was that participants had a story to tell, and this was the story that I was going to hear; all I could do was follow Morrissey's advice and let these performers 'run with the ball'. For the majority of participants, EDJS was not just a historical event; it was part of the

emotional fabric of their lives. They had little interest in recalling dates or the details of a long-forgotten brief; they wanted to talk about sex and betrayal. Above all, they wanted to talk about love.

Thus I became drawn into the mysteries of a Burkean intercourse far removed from the neutral data gathering suggested by the rules and procedures of institutional practice. I was speaking to people who were suddenly given the opportunity to reflect upon a personal, sometimes painful, past. I was offered confidences that I did not overtly request and that the ethics committees of the institutions under whose auspices I continue to conduct my research would not have approved had I done so. Although parts of these conversations took place in the interstices between taped interviews, respondents often forgot that they were being recorded, or ceased to be concerned about the consequences of what they said. De Jong, who had been so careful to construct his storytelling at the outset, eventually declared that he no longer cared *what* I wrote about him, an avowal that was, nevertheless made while the voice recorder was switched *off*. Yet, despite his increasingly expansive mood, certain anecdotes were still reserved for the out-of-doors where he was sure I did not have a recording device to hand. No matter how much he came to trust me, de Jong, more so than other participants, was nervous to maintain *idealisation*, a condition that, as Goffman (1969:38) points out, always requires concealment.

Thus, part of the moral burden placed on the biographer is her collusion in this concealment. The dilemma is not lessened by the death of the subject, since, as social biographer Heather Hughes (2013) cautions, family lives on. When it is family itself that demands revelation and some members are, moreover, eager to provide evidence to this end while yet another calls for silence the ethical challenge deepens. Transgressions in the domestic domain can be discarded or downplayed, but stories pertinent to the professional life of a subject require a finer judgement. Often, as I discovered, and as Sandino forcefully argues, the two spheres collide.

Within this scenario, professional ethics recede before more un-scholarly feelings of loyalty and, it must be professed, love. I do not believe that de Jong would be well-served by a hagiography — what is of interest here has turned out to be a complex personality within an equally complex historical landscape — but neither do I wish to slice too deeply into a life that has been entrusted to me, perhaps by default, but also by design. Hopefully, I am managing — the project continues — to walk the tightrope that the situation demands. For the most part, I have respected the understanding that only recorded conversations are to be used for the purposes of published research.<sup>63</sup> However, occasionally, relevant information was communicated as an unrecorded aside, and I have taken the liberty to draw on these remarks where necessary. There were also occasions when I took notes, rather than tape the conversation, simply because it was easier, at a particular point, to do so.<sup>64</sup> However, I have attempted to adhere to the expectation of veracity in these accounts and have, hopefully, resisted the temptation to put unspoken words in the mouth of a participant or, conversely, exploit a respondent's voluble but unguarded remarks.

The actual mechanisms of documenting the stories of participants differed. There is a gulf between the early, staged video recordings of de Jong, and the rambling conversations that I captured on my mobile phone in the latter stages of the project. The video recordings were made by my son, which arrangement, in addition to the occasional presence of de Jong's fiancée, introduced both a formality and a curious *knowingness* to the proceedings (Figs. 13 & 14). Despite the relatively amateur nature of the process, and my sometimes noticeable irritation with this condition, the series of recordings provides rich documentation of de Jong *performing Ernst de Jong* and goes some way to make visible the vivacious charm that informed his relationships with those individuals that were drawn into his ambit. It is also a record of my own performativity as *interviewer* in the architectural space that was as much part of de Jong's identification as his physical self — an example of Goffman's performance in the *front* (Figs. 14-16).

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<sup>63</sup> Owing to the minor role of the interviews in the project as I envisaged it in 2013, I did not believe it necessary to transcribe conversations that I had no intention of analysing in detail. In making this decision, I was also influenced by Abrams's (2010:13) observation that "the transcript is static and in comparison with the interview, flat". By the time that I realised that it might not only be useful but necessary to transcribe the interviews, the number of recordings had multiplied to the point where transcription seemed an impossible task. In the early stages of writing up the study, I decided not to include the exact timing of a voice-recorded statement in citations. Consequently, a few citations only refer to the recording itself, while the remainder include timing. Some citations, made in early drafts of the study, refer only to my rough notes of recorded interviews. The inconsistency is regrettable and inelegant, but preferable to the lack of detail entirely.

<sup>64</sup> During the first months of the project, I also wrote down my observations of the interview sessions when I returned home.



**Figure 15** De Jong and my son re-enacting their introduction for the benefit of my camera before the first interview session on 08 May 2013 (photograph by the author).



**Figure 14** Setting the stage in the dining room at 366 Hill Street, Pretoria, 2013 (photograph by the author).



**Figure 16** Daniel Hallinan (cinematographer), de Jong and the author discussing the process of design, screen grab from videotaped interview taken on 22 May 2013.

While the video recordings were, to a large extent, directed by de Jong, the recordings made on my phone commenced later and were made in response to my own research needs. There was no third party present and the conversations were purposive but informal, often over food in the little ‘Dutch’ kitchen. Although he was very aware that his speech was being recorded, de Jong talked quite easily about topics that he had been reluctant to explore in the video interviews. It was also in the Dutch kitchen that the performance in the *front* was gradually exchanged for the performance in the *back*, and where my role as specialist became that of confidant.

De Jong had something of a reputation as a lothario and, true to his nature, he had acted upon the impulse — perhaps even an *obligation* to the rituals of identification — during the early stages of the project to make subtle sexual overtures to me as a young(er), female interviewer. This potentially calamitous state of affairs prompted a review of literature on sexual intersubjectivity in oral history practice, an undertaking that I found both useful and enlightening. Rather than curtail the project, I followed Yow’s advice to ‘make the boundaries clear’, a strategy that nevertheless required some tact. Relieved of the duty of seduction, de Jong promptly refashioned me as middle-aged counsellor, a relationship that presented its own challenges, but that allowed the project to proceed. Indeed, Alan Munro (2016) has pointed out that researchers need to reflect upon the onus of *exchange* when appropriating the life and work of an artist. De Jong was giving me his story with which to generate conference papers, a postgraduate qualification, perhaps even a promotion. Although the notion of reward may appear to be counter-intuitive to the rules of institutional research, it was, arguably, only ethical that he should, in turn, receive what I suspect was a rare occurrence in his life, namely a non-judgmental ear.<sup>65</sup>

However, despite, or perhaps owing to, the bonhomie, it was, throughout the project, extremely difficult to hold de Jong’s attention and confine him to an agenda. As my writing progressed, I found it more productive, when I had a query, to send the question by means of a text message, rather than compile a long list with which to confront him in person.<sup>66</sup> Life in the Hill Street house was never sedentary, and whenever I arrived there was always urgent news to be communicated, even as I walked through the door. Providing background noise, like a Greek chorus, were the cockatoo, assorted tenants floating though the cluttered rooms, a hyperactive terrier and the taciturn, off-stage presence of Piet. In one recorded conversation, de Jong (2014\_ 16 December\_003\_33:15) responds with bemused contrition to my palpable and growing frustration at not being able to get a word in edgeways: “Now”, he says, turning from the adoring dog to face me, “I am all yours”.

After December 2015, I was never to see or speak to him again.

### 2.2.3 Constructing the archive

**A**s rich, dense and trying as the interviews<sup>67</sup> has been the collection of visual material. Critical to the study and, indeed, at the outset its primary focus, were the artefacts produced by EDJS. Rather unexpectedly, these proved quite difficult to locate. De Jong had closed his graphic design studio in 1994 and lived abroad for four years, before returning to South Africa in 1998. The studio, in fact much of de Jong’s life, was packed up into cardboard boxes. In 2013, these dishevelled containers still stood, dusty and brimming with unidentified detritus, on landings and vacated boardrooms in the Hill Street house. Thus started another process, that of sifting through the mundane to unearth the exceptional.

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<sup>65</sup> In the sense that de Jong and I (as an interviewer) skirted around the play-forms of sex on a variety of levels, it could be argued that we moved from Georg Simmel’s (1950: 50-54) sociability of *coquetry* to that of the sociability of *conversation* about coquetry. Simmel, writing in the early twentieth century, refers to the “coquettish woman”, and presents the man as a potential victim of the woman’s behaviour. While the contemporary reader may be riled by the stereotype, it does give pause for thought. Was I flirting with my male participant? It is, perhaps, de Jong who, in order to attain *sociability* deliberately orchestrated a situation in which he, in Simmel’s (1950:51) words, “ask[ed] no more than [a] freely suspended play which only dimly reflects the erotically definitive as a remote symbol” — social intercourse in which he was “no longer attracted by the lust of the erotic element or by the fear of it”.

<sup>66</sup> All my data was lost owing to the loss of my mobile phone in 2016. De Jong’s device disappeared from his house on the day of his death, so no personal record survives of our more than two-year texted conversation.

<sup>67</sup> Interviews with other parties also produced high drama, or were otherwise of interest in terms of narrative performance. It is, however, beyond the scope of the study to describe and reflect upon all these experiences.

Months were spent in a physical search for evidence of the workings of EDJS, a quest that was continually being hampered by de Jong's enthusiasm to talk about unrelated matters. Although I would have preferred to do the sorting on days when he conducted his painting classes, de Jong expressly forbade this arrangement so that he could be free to chat to me during my visits. Consequently, although he grew anxious that he may die before he saw the outcome of my project, the fact that this eventually happened is to some extent the result of his intense but distracting interest in the living present, rather than the past. To compound the problem, once I, per force, had to start writing up my research and my visits tapered off, de Jong, like a jilted lover, emptied and dispersed the contents of cupboards into which I had carefully placed and organised important documents. When I expressed my dismay at the violation, de Jong curtly replied that he thought I had lost interest in him.

However, although I had only worked through a third of the boxes, the sorting had resulted in a valuable body of archival material that I eventually managed to set aside for future cataloguing. Often small, seemingly unimportant details, such as the names of the directors of EDJS on a letterhead, alerted me to important shifts in the fortunes of the company. On other occasions, the presence of one artefact at Hill Street prompted further investigation and the subsequent discovery of complementary materials in the collection of other individuals and institutions. Regrettably, there were limits on what could be covered; some of the best preserved EDJS projects that survived at Hill Street, such as the identity for the Oklahoman Motor Hotel and the CS Stals bank note series, either fell outside the ring-fenced theme of *knowledge systems* or the designated period of 1958-1975. Nevertheless, although much of the physical, daily output of the studio seems to have gone the way of the world, an extensive, if chaotic, collection of photographs and colour slides survives and thus constitute a record of de Jong's family life, student work, his diving activities, show stand designs and EDJS logo designs, amongst other things. Owing to the vast amount of material, some pertinent imagery only came to light after de Jong's death as I was concluding the written study. The findings were therefore piecemeal and dispersed, but the Hill Street collection and its disinterment was critical to the deployment of this study.<sup>68</sup>

When de Jong died, his daughter, Tamara, decided to sell the Hill Street house and, having to vacate the premises, took on the herculean task of sorting through the remaining boxes herself. While this was, on the one hand, hugely helpful, this second sifting took place within a different context and with aims other than my own. The carte blanche given me by de Jong was, understandably, withdrawn by his daughter and I had to accept and reconcile myself to a process of censorship.

Perhaps this was a good thing. In wading through countless drawers, boxes and envelopes, like Goffman's janitor I had occasionally come across intimacies that provided provocative glimpses of the performances behind my subject's 'uncontaminated front'. I had to make decisions in which I was torn between retaining evidence that would provide depth to my writing, and the moral impulse to let sleeping dogs lie. The most tempting material was not, as the reader may suspect, of a libidinous nature, but rather documents that spoke of de Jong's relationship with his son, Marc. A *persona non grata* in the Hill Street camp, Marc was never mentioned by his father. Only once, when we were having an alfresco (thus beyond the reach of microphones) lunch at a small café, did de Jong talk about this aspect of his life. That the conversation should remain private was clear, but the fact of the matter is that Marc de Jong became a recognised designer in his own right and played an important role in EDJS in the 1980s. Scattered amongst the letters from Inland Revenue and invoices for horse-stabling was evidence of another, very different life. How much of this invisible story was saved remains unclear, but it is a story worth reconstructing.<sup>69</sup>

What one can then make of all of this is that the project of EDJS remains unfinished and that the present study merely afforded the researcher an opportunity to reconnoitre the landscape in which a few items of interest have been explored. What has been achieved beyond written text is the digital scanning of a large proportion of the print artefacts from the de Jong collection, including photographs from the de Jong family album. Whatever was regarded as potential archival material is now in storage and awaits a second unpacking, a collaboration with Tamara de Jong for whose generosity in this regard I am hugely grateful.

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<sup>68</sup> Part of the difficulty was that I was working towards two goals, one, a doctoral thesis, the other, a biography.

<sup>69</sup> Although I had not anticipated the encounter, I did eventually meet Marc de Jong when interviewing his mother, Gwen. Consequently, some of the mystery surrounding the disowned son has been clarified and it is hoped that Marc de Jong will collaborate with me on expanding the history of EDJS in the future. However, it is possible that examples of Marc de Jong's own design output, of which he would no longer have copies, might have been destroyed in the packing up of the house.



## 2.3 Reconstructing the performance

What, then, to do with the data? The main body of the study consists, firstly, of a narrative account of de Jong's early life and, secondly, a close reading of the visual rhetoric of selected examples of EDJS output. I do not attempt to impose a formal analysis upon de Jong's account of his life, although I reflect upon the performativity of the rendition and possible implications of these stories for the entity that was Ernst de Jong Studios. Some way into the narrative, the voice of Gwen de Jong takes over and here, too, the study took an unexpected turn: it was only after I was well into the project that I grasped the extent to which the wife had enabled her husband's professional persona. All the interviews I conducted can bear productive scrutiny in terms of performativity theory as these interactions articulate with the practice of rhetoric, but it is beyond the scope of this study to do so.

Similarly, in a study of this length and scope, a systematic and rigidly coded analysis of the visual material would have become tedious and repetitive for both author and audience. While acknowledging the value of a predetermined framework in a rhetorical enquiry, I have chosen to approach the deconstruction of the graphic design material in an open-ended manner, responding to the acts of persuasion as they rose to the surface through the investigative process. I do not necessarily identify rhetorical tropes by name, and certainly do not attempt to align all the categories of classical rhetoric with the persuasive strategies embedded in EDJS artefacts. However, Buchanan's (1989) application of *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* to the analysis of product design provides a useful point of reference, especially with regard to the broader theme of systems of knowledge.

Buchanan (1989:96), owing to his concern with product design, interprets *logos* as "technological reasoning". This meaning is extracted from the understanding of the term as a 'logical transaction', where *thought* is conflated with *action* (Covino & Jolliffe 1995:17). The element of *logos* in an argument is persuasive in that it has as its aim the addressing of real needs, where those needs are seen to be met in a reasonable, expedient way (Buchanan1989:96). Systems of knowledge purport to address 'real needs', and educational publications, directional signage and festival programmes can therefore be considered as visual rhetoric with high levels of *logos*.

*Ethos* is generally defined as "the good character and the consequent credibility of the rhetor" (Covino & Jolliffe 1995:15). Buchanan (1989:101) argues that products have character "because in some way they reflect their makers". Of particular relevance to this study is Buchanan's (1989:101, emphasis added) assertion that

part of the art of design is the control of [this] character in order to persuade potential users that a product has credibility in their lives. In essence, the problem is the way designers choose to represent themselves in products, not as they are, but *as they wish to appear*

It is therefore the dimensions of this 'problem' of de Jong's use of modernism as a vehicle for idealisation that is starting point of my analysis. Lastly, *pathos* activates the sympathies and emotions of the audience, causing individuals to attend to and, hopefully, accept certain ideas, propositions, or calls for action (Covino & Jolliffe 1995:16). Buchanan (1989:103) notes that design arguments bring about emotional persuasion when the audience comes into physical contact with objects or from "active contemplation" of artefacts before, during and after use. Emotion as a mode of persuasion offers no proof of practical solutions, yet, reasons Buchanan (1989:105), it helps an audience "entertain new possibilities for practical living".

Covino and Jolliffe (1995:16) list several emotions that Aristotle believed a rhetor could activate, namely anger, calmness, confidence, shame, kindness, envy, emulation and fear, amongst others. However, while one may be able to describe the character of an artefact with relative ease, it is not necessarily possible to know what emotion has been generated in the audience when it encounters this artefact. Certainly, in a historical context, unless there is empirical evidence of a response, one can only speculate. Given Buchanan's notion that designers choose to represent themselves in their products, it is also likely that the only audience that a creative practitioner considers is the universal audience of him or herself. Buchanan (1989:102) warns that designers who "believe they are advancing cultural standards ... have relatively little authority with mass audiences. Their designs often ... are so subtle that they go unappreciated". In this regard, de Jong's designs for the Second Definitive

Series of South African stamps, while exquisitely executed, are a salient example of misjudged emotional persuasion that failed utterly amongst stamp collectors; the EDJS identity for RAU, however, the opposite.

Thus, having set the stage for the reconstructed history of EDJS, the performance can begin.

## CHAPTER THREE: A LIFE

*Life has no plot. It is far more interesting than anything you can say about it because language, by its very nature, orders things and life really has no order*  
Isadora White Wing, in *Fear of flying*, 1974



**Figure 19** Gerrit de Jong and his brother, Jan Jacob, in Gerrit's motorcycle and side-car, 1922. The contraption is named 'Walkyrie', evidence of Gerrit's aspirations to Teutonic spectacle.



**Figure 18** Alma Alice Watson, undated photograph.



**Figure 17** Gerrit Andries Jacob de Jong, 1919.

**Figure 20** Alma Watson, in bohemian fancy dress, 1922.



**Figure 21** Alma and Gerrit on their wedding day, 17 August 1924.

### 3.1 What went before

**E**rnst de Jong was born in Pretoria on 29 September 1934, to Alma Alice and Gerrit Andries Jacob de Jong ((2013\_08 May\_125103). The couple had met in Pretoria during the 1920s, where Alma, according to de Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103), was the 'belle' of the fashionable set in which they moved (Fig. 18). Alma told romantic stories of carriage rides and picnics at Meintjieskop, where everyone wore white suits and hats; the crowd was, as Alma told it, very "swish and suave" (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103) (Fig. 19). Photographs attest to Alma's allure (Fig. 20), while Gerrit's piercing eyes and wavy blonde hair evoke a Dutch Siegfried (Fig. 21). The couple married in 1924 (Fig. 17). Beauty and aesthetics would dominate both parents' outlook on life, and construct the foundation for de Jong's own values and aspirations in both his professional and personal relationships.

Alma Alice was the daughter of Alice Catherine Wagenaar — de Jong's maternal grandmother — who in turn was the daughter of Heinrich Johannes Wagener and Anna Maria Schroder.<sup>70</sup> Alice Catherine had married Thomas Smith Watson, of Scottish extraction, in King Williamstown, in the Eastern Cape, on 20 December 1900.<sup>71</sup> Alma was born on 19 September 1901, in King Williamstown, and in the same year the family moved to Pretoria. Alma, the eldest child, would eventually have two brothers and one sister.<sup>72</sup>

In 1915, when de Jong's future mother was fourteen, disaster struck. Thomas Watson died on active service,<sup>73</sup> and the young widow encountered financial challenges of Dickensian proportions. However, she appears to have not been entirely destitute, eventually finding secure employment in the Department of Justice in the Union Buildings. Her husband had left her a small farm outside Pretoria, and, with the proceeds from the sale of this land, Alice Catherine was able to build — according to the chronicler of the Watson family history — a "ridiculously expensive" (The Watson Lineage [sa]) house at 739 Church Street, Arcadia. The only redeeming feature of the endeavour seems to have been that the property was close to Alice Catherine's place of work.<sup>74</sup> During WWII, the doughty Mrs Watson joined the War Records Department in Pretoria; she died in 1969.

Alma's future husband, Gerrit Andries Jacob Jan, was born in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, in December 1896 to Jacob Jan and Andriesje de Jong. Andriesje, whose maiden surname was Smit, hailed from the town of Ysbrechtum, in the parish of Sneek, in the province of Friesland in the north west of the Netherlands. Early evidence of artistic endeavours are apparent in a small painting executed by Gerrit Smit, Andriesje's father — dated 1879 and hanging in de Jong's 'Dutch' kitchen — of the Smit family home. Jacob Jan, Gerrit's father, was born on 25 April 1869, in the town of Sneek, to Jan and Tetje de Jong.<sup>75</sup> Once married, Andriesje and Jacob Jan moved to Marnixstraat 181, in Amsterdam, where a son, Jan Jacob, was born in January 1895, followed by de Jong's father, Gerrit, in December 1896. Jacob Jan (de Jong's paternal grandfather) was a cabinet maker by trade. In 1898, when Gerrit was two years old, Jacob Jan set out from Europe to reconnoitre the Transvaal. He returned to Amsterdam in 1901, and then brought out his wife and two sons to South Africa in 1904 when Gerrit was eight.

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<sup>70</sup> Heinrich and Anna Maria's marriage certificate gives the surnames as 'Wagener' and 'Schroder'; however, notes made a century later by an anonymous family chronicler refer to 'Wagenaar' and 'Schröder' (The Watson Lineage [sa]). It is likely that Wagener (or Wagner — see footnote below) evolved into Wagenaar in the predominantly Dutch / Afrikaans community in Pretoria.

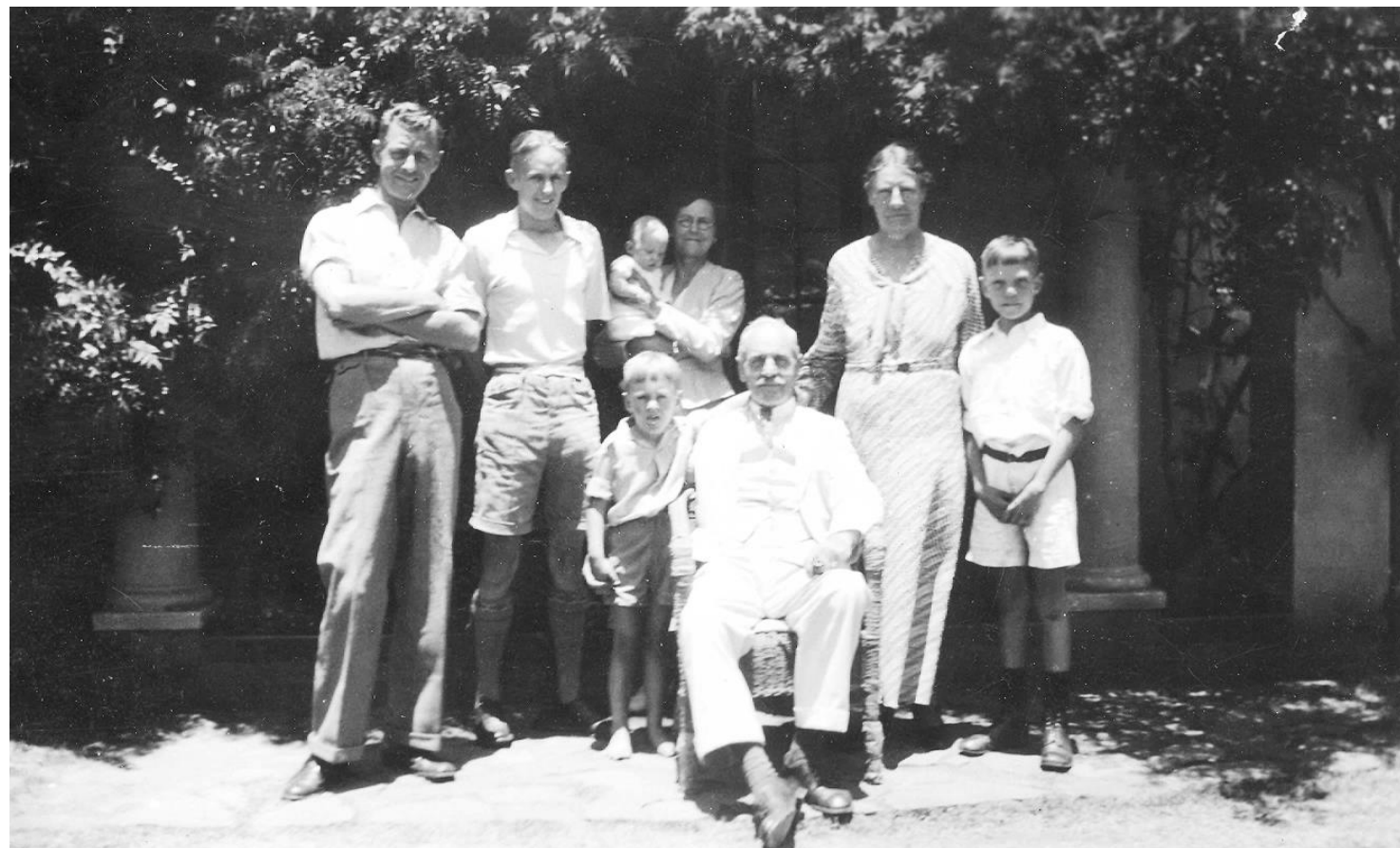
<sup>71</sup> King Williamstown was a centre of German settlement in Southern Africa, starting in the seventeenth century and continuing well into the twentieth, as names of neighbouring towns — such as Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Stutterheim — attest. *Wagner* and *Schröder* are common settler surnames (German Immigrants to the Dutch Cape Colony 1652-1806 [sa]).

<sup>72</sup> One brother, Douglas Lyall Watson, was to become an architect and the father of the biologist and often controversial author, Lyall Watson (born Malcolm Lyall-Watson, 1939-2008) (Barker 2008).

<sup>73</sup> According to de Jong (2015\_07 May\_2), Watson died in South West Africa (today Namibia) — but of an ailment, not in battle. Hew Strachan (cited in South West Africa campaign 2015) relates that more men succumbed to illness in the South West Africa Campaign in 1915 than in actual combat.

<sup>74</sup> The indignant chronicler notes that Alice Watson eventually sold this property to Alma's father-in-law in 1929 "at less than cost!" (The Watson Lineage [sa]). This transaction clearly rankled the Watson family; as such, it may also have coloured de Jong's own, future perception of his grandfather.

<sup>75</sup> Tetje's maiden surname was Lanting.



**Figure 22** The patriarch, Jacob Jan de Jong, taking centre stage at 16 Esselen Street, Pretoria, probably in the summer of 1935. A note on the back of the photograph indicates that it was a gathering of Watsons and de Jongs. The photographer was most likely Alma.



Once he was settled in Pretoria, Jacob Jan expanded his cabinet-making to the building trade; according to de Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542; de Jong 2013\_05 July\_124430), his grandfather built the State Library in Pretoria,<sup>76</sup> and erected (seemingly more than once) President Paul Kruger's statue.<sup>77</sup> De Jong family lore (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542; de Jong 2013\_05 July\_124430) asserts that, when the statue had to be moved from Prinsen Park to the Pretoria Station, the authorities advertised in the *Pretoria News* for the JJ de Jong who had overseen the first installation, since only he knew the 'secret' of disassembling the monument. The old man agreed to assist, but demanded a large sum of money. The authorities protested, but Jacob Jan refused to compromise, declaring that if they wanted him, '*Dan moet ze mij maar kom vinden!*'<sup>78</sup> Eventually, the authorities capitulated, and, as the story goes, Jacob Jan received his remuneration.

His grandfather's mercantile bent and concern with respectability — what de Jong refers to as "a Dutch thing" (de Jong, in Groenewald 2014) — made that de Jong's father and Jacob Jan were sometimes at loggerheads. Jacob Jan, despite his skill as a cabinet maker, was an astute businessman who disapproved of the artistic life; Gerrit was "an aesthete" and "a dreamer" whose ambition it was to become a painter, an occupation that his father forbade. His older brother was a Pretoria city councillor and city architect (de Jong, in Groenewald 2014); Gerrit thus followed suit and became a civil servant,<sup>79</sup> resigning himself to playing the violin and painting in his spare time (Fig. 24). De Jong believes that Jacob Jan preferred his older son, who appears to have inherited his father's temperament (de Jong, in Groenewald 2014), to the more introvert and sensitive Gerrit.

Andriesje and Jacob Jan lived at 16 Esselen Street in Pretoria (Fig. 22). De Jong's grandfather must have been a man of some standing — Anton Rupert, the South African industrialist, knew him (de Jong 2015\_07\_May\_001\_02:38), and an example of his cabinetmaking, a *pronkkas*,<sup>80</sup> is displayed in South Africa House, in London. Jacob Jan's involvement with the Kruger statue suggests that he may have known its sculptor, Anton van Wouw, who had also been born in the Netherlands, and came out to Pretoria in 1890 (Anton van Wouw 2015).<sup>81</sup> Andriesje, however, was a rather withdrawn invalid resigned to the collapse of her *gekke bene* (de Jong, in Groenewald 2014),<sup>82</sup> an affliction that generated little sympathy in her acerbic husband. Jacob Jan was a "cantankerous old guy" (de Jong 2013\_05 July\_124430), but de Jong nevertheless has fond memories of visiting him as a child on Sundays when he and his father enjoyed beer and herrings at his grandfather's house. The old man marinated the fish himself, and they would eat "*zoute haring ... goeie Gouda kaas ... uie ... bier, brood*" (de Jong, in Groenewald 2014). Jacob Jan would sit on his *stoep*<sup>83</sup> and watch the world with a wary eye. Notably, and perhaps somewhat unusually given the context of 1940s South Africa, neither Jacob Jan nor his son were religious, nor did they make any attempts to appear to be so; two days before he died, grandfather de Jong, although he was on his deathbed, had the *dominee*<sup>84</sup> chased out of his house (de Jong, in Groenewald 2014).

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<sup>76</sup> The *Staats-Bibliotheek der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (State Library of the South African Republic) came into being in 1887 thanks to a donation of books from the *Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*. The first Pretoria Public Library had opened its doors in 1878, but because of financial problems was closed down in 1890. In 1893 public support saw another library arise, this time under the wing of the Staats-Bibliotheek and with the book stock of the former Public Library. From that time onward until 1964, the State Library performed a dual role as public library and national library (History: before amalgamation 1999 2012). Since Jacob Jan arrived in South Africa in 1898, it is not clear what his role may have been the construction of the library building(s).

<sup>77</sup> Paul Kruger ('Oom Paul') was President of the Transvaal Republic prior to the South African War of 1899-1902. Samuel ('Sammy') Marks, a Lithuanian immigrant who became a millionaire industrialist in South Africa, commissioned Anton van Wouw to sculpt the Kruger statue. It was modelled and cast in bronze in Rome in 1899, arriving at Delagoa Bay on the eve of the South African War. Owing to hostilities, the pedestal waiting on Church Square stood vacant for several years. After the Union of South Africa, the bronze statue was rescued from storage and placed on a plinth – but only in Prinsen Park, where it was unveiled in May 1913. On 10 October 1925, the centenary of the President's birth, the statue was moved to the Pretoria Station. It was only installed on Church Square after considerable controversy, and unveiled by Dr DF Malan on 10 October 1954 (The Paul Kruger Statue Saga 2013; Krugerstandbeeld 2015). It is possible that Jacob Jan was contracted to install the statue in 1913, then again at the station in 1925, since the plinth was identical. The Church Square base was redesigned to accommodate four additional figures. On the other hand, Jacob Jan may only have dealt with the moving of the statue, not the construction of the pedestals.

<sup>78</sup> 'Then they will have to come and find me!'

<sup>79</sup> Central Government records (National Archives of South Africa Source: SAB\_Volume267\_Reference632\_Part1) note the "Confirmation of probationary appointment of GAJ de Jong" in 1916, when Gerrit would have been 20 years old.

<sup>80</sup> An elaborate, large cupboard.

<sup>81</sup> Notably, van Wouw was the godfather of the painter Jacobus Hendrik Pierneef (Jakobus Hendrik Pierneef 2015), also of Dutch extraction, whom de Jong greatly admired as a young man.

<sup>82</sup> Crazy legs.

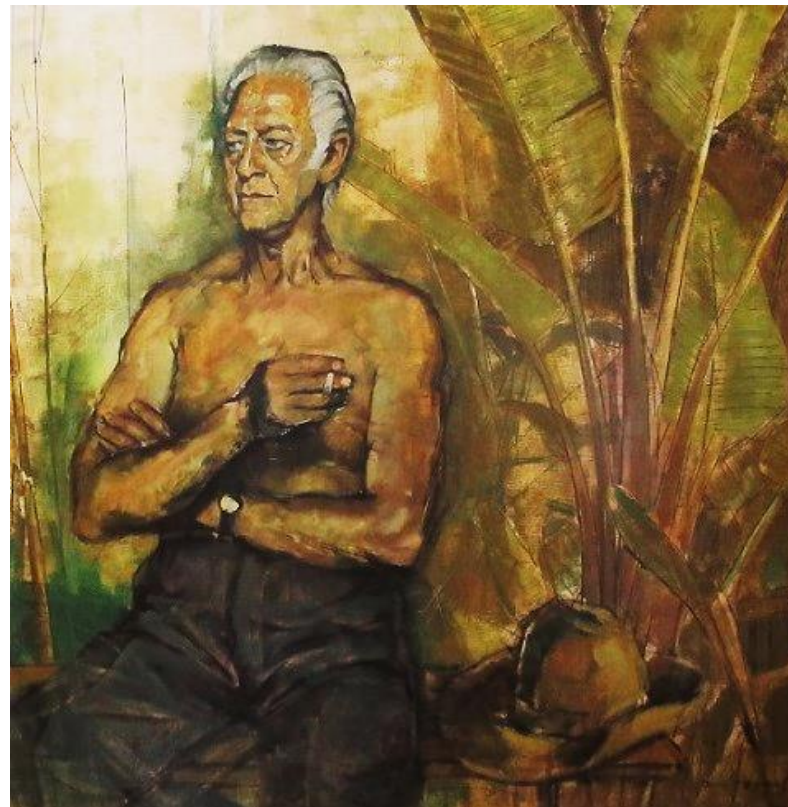
<sup>83</sup> Front porch.

<sup>84</sup> Minister of the church.



**Figure 24** Photographer unknown, Gerrit de Jong at his easel, 1930s. The King of Hearts painting survives in the de Jong collection.

**Figure 23** Photographer and date unknown, interior of one of the houses in which de Jong spent his childhood, most likely Burnett Street. The nude above the fireplace is by the artist, Fleur. To the left hangs a photographic portrait of Jacob Jan.



**Figure 25** Irmin Henkel, portrait in oils of Gerrit de Jong, 1960s.



Despite being denied the life of an artist, Gerrit adapted well to a career in the civil service. By the time de Jong was born, his father was installed in an office at the Union Buildings as the Principal Clerk, Lands Department, under the United Party Government. According to de Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542), his father was appointed Provincial Secretary of the Cape<sup>85</sup> and became a central player in the development of the foreshore in Cape Town (de Jong\_2014\_27 August\_125542\_12:54)<sup>86</sup> — an ambitious and sometimes controversial engineering project launched in 1935 (Botha 2013:34), the year after de Jong was born. De Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542\_11:45) also recounts that Gerrit travelled to and recognised that Mapungubwe, an iron age archaeological site in the far north of South Africa, was an important historical location requiring preservation.<sup>87</sup>

However, a barrier to Gerrit's promotion in the civil service was his declared love and support of Germany before, during and after WWII. According to de Jong (in Groenewald 2014), his father "admired everything German". In particular, he loved Austria. He travelled to Oberammergau to attend the Passion Play and was captivated by the landscape; he also collected postcards featuring German musicians.<sup>88</sup> During United Party rule, when the Union of South Africa was still a British dominion, de Jong's father, when asked about his position on the war — in de Jong's recollection — stated: "I do not want to see Germany destroyed". De Jong (in Groenewald 2014) claims that it was made clear to his father that such avid support for the enemy was a career-limiting position and, consequently, all promotion was withheld.<sup>89</sup>

At the conclusion of the 1948 election, de Jong went with his father to Church Square to hear the results: his father, de Jong (in Groenewald 2014) recalls, was "jubilant" at the Nationalist Party victory. Indeed, after the change of guard, the de Jong fortunes improved and Gerrit de Jong was appointed Secretary for State Advances & Recoveries.<sup>90</sup> Although they "never made it to Waterkloof" (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542)<sup>91</sup> the family — consisting of his parents, de Jong and two brothers, Paul, born in 1925, and Gerard ('Gerrie'), born in 1929 (The Watson Lineage [sa]) — lived in a succession of houses in relatively affluent areas of Pretoria. Gerrit's career probably reached a high point when he purchased a property in Veale Street, New Muckleneuk, a "nice address" (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542) with a house in the so-called 'Cape Dutch' style. Ownership of one of the more gentrified symbols of Afrikaner identity — that signified, albeit spuriously, Gerrit's Dutch ancestry — must have been gratifying, since de Jong states that his father "loved it" (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542).<sup>92</sup> Black and white photographs of the interior reveal typical South African middle-class living rooms that boast dark, carved wood furnishings and polished wooden floors (Fig. 23). De Jong's father eventually retired to a large property at 484 Charles Street, Brooklyn in 1951 where he lived with Alma until his death in 1967.

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<sup>85</sup> The appointment has not been confirmed.

<sup>86</sup> De Jong repeatedly stated that reclaiming the land from the sea in Table Bay was his father's "concept and idea"; however, a detailed account of the foreshore project (Botha 2013) does not refer to the involvement of a GAJ de Jong in any aspect of the undertaking. De Jong (2014\_16 December 004\_01:44) later amended his assertion by commenting that his father "used to say that it was his idea", leaving Gerrit's actual contribution open to speculation. Dredging and reclamation work was outsourced to a Dutch firm, the *Hollandse Aanneming Maatskappy*, in 1937 (Botha 2013:35), and it is likely that Gerrit may have had dealings with this firm.

<sup>87</sup> As with the foreshore project, Gerrit's role in the Mapungubwe find has probably been romanticised and enlarged. De Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542\_11:44) states that his father "found" the site, which is not the case. Mapungubwe came to light when a local inhabitant led one ESJ van Graan and four others to *Greefswald* farm in 1932 (Mapungubwe [sa]). However, in June 1933, *Greefswald* was bought by the Government. As Principal Clerk in the Lands Department, Gerrit de Jong may have authorised the purchase (that probably required a site inspection) and granting of excavation rights to the University of Pretoria.

<sup>88</sup> As can be expected, de Jong states that his father was unaware of the darker undercurrents of Nazi Germany. It is unclear at what time Gerrit visited Oberammergau; it is possible that he only travelled to Germany after 1948 when, in de Jong's words, his father "shot up through the ranks of the civil service" (de Jong, in Groenewald 2014).

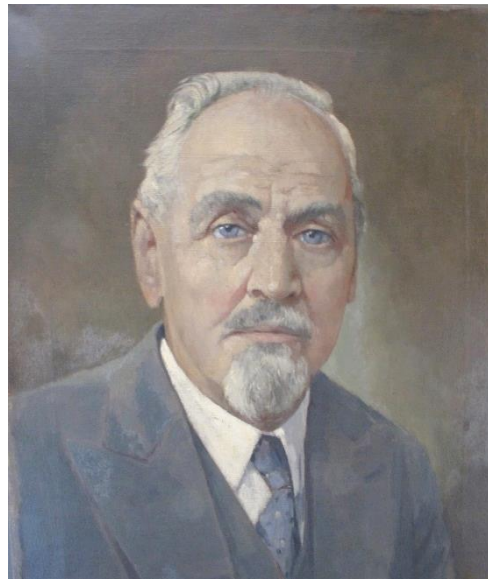
<sup>89</sup> Public Records of Central Government show that in 1942 — when de Jong was eight years old — a recommendation made by the Public Service Commission to promote GAJ de Jong was rejected in favour of the promotion of EF Klopper to the post of Assistant Provincial Representative, Department of Lands, Pietermaritzburg (National Archives of South Africa\_Source: URU\_Volume2021\_Reference1426). Given a prior recommendation, the rejection is unusual; it required special authorisation.

<sup>90</sup> The appointment has not been confirmed.

<sup>91</sup> The most elite suburb in Pretoria.

<sup>92</sup> De Jong possesses a small painting made by his father of a much earlier property in Du Toit Street, Pretoria, where Gerrit and Alma lived before de Jong was born. This modest house also sported a scaled-down 'Cape Dutch' gable and depicted a view of the Union Buildings in the background. 'Cape Dutch' homesteads — symmetrical in facade and plan, and decorated with ornate, baroque-style front gables (Hall 1994:175) — first appeared in the eighteenth century at the Cape of Good Hope when the latter was under Dutch control. The reference to Dutch building styles is tenuous; blending several European forms and adapted to local conditions, these homesteads were at once lavish and austere, leading Martin Hall (1994:175) to conclude that, "Achievement and social standing were mapped out for all to see in bricks and mortar". The importance of 'Cape Dutch' architecture in the construction of a colonial identity in South Africa has been interrogated by, amongst others, Hall (1994) and Noëlleen Murray (2007). Like the Du Toit Street house, the house at 160 Veale Street, New Muckleneuk, was a vernacular interpretation, popular in South African suburbia in the 1920s and 1930s, of the classic 'Cape Dutch' style. It typically eliminates the central gable over the entrance, replacing it with a wide, covered porch, with the gable(s) placed asymmetrically.

Although de Jong stresses the *ordinary* nature of his parents — they were, he insists, neither bohemian, nor very well placed in society — Gerrit continued to nurse his interest in the world of the arts. Somewhat surprisingly, since it is difficult to identify the spur, de Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542\_15:25) recalls that his father “fell in love with the dancing world” and admired and owned books on the dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. He both commissioned and purchased art and de Jong relates a family anecdote about his mother’s disapproval when her husband arrived home with a painting of a female nude (de Jong 2015\_01 October) (Fig. 23). He also posed as a model, both in EDJS advertisements and, on one occasion, for the acclaimed Pretoria painter Irmin Henkel (1921-1977) (Fig. 25). The portrait of Gerrit in late middle age depicts a handsome and forcefully virile man whom Henkel depicts with a tanned, bare torso, cigarette in hand and posed next to a ranch-style hat against a background of tropical foliage, the latter occupying half of the picture and, according to de Jong, included by his father’s request.<sup>93</sup>



**Figure 26** Kobie van Tilburg, portrait of Jacob Jan de Jong, undated, oil on board,

It is difficult to reconcile this sensual but faintly savage persona with the civil servant who laboured in the Union Buildings and who, when asked by his wife, could not slaughter his Rhode Island Reds for the family’s Sunday lunch (de Jong 2015\_13 May\_06:45). The portrait, both in style and composition, ignores the refined European aesthetics that Gerrit, according to his son, so admired; instead, it recalls a half-naked Ernest Hemmingway at his ranch in Cuba,<sup>94</sup> or, somewhat more darkly, Mr Kurtz in Joseph Conrad’s 1899 novel *Heart of darkness*. Indeed, de Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542) relates that his father had stipulated a portrait in the style of Paul Gauguin, an artist notorious for his flight from the *ennui* of the Northern European bourgeoisie to an exotic island culture.<sup>95</sup> That Gerrit’s interest in Gauguin extended to Tahiti itself is evidenced by a little book on the subject — *Tahiti: voyage through paradise*<sup>96</sup> — with his name on the fly-leaf that was found in the Hill Street house in 2017. There is a likelihood that the older man may have planned to travel there, although this may only have been a fanciful dream.

But escape from Pretoria he did, although not to Tahiti. After de Jong’s death, Gwen de Jong (2016\_29 April) revealed that, late in life, her father-in-law deserted Alma, sailed off to the Americas on a merchant ship and went to work as a manual labourer alongside, and in emulation of, the American Indians<sup>97</sup> in the Grand Canyon National Park. This dramatic bid for freedom did not last, however, since it was discovered that Gerrit had no Green Card and he was forced to return to South Africa and an orthodox retirement. Whether Henkel’s portrait references this episode is unknown; if it does, it might be the reason that de Jong — who never breathed a word about the Grand Canyon escapade — claimed that his father did not like the portrait, which may have reminded him (and his son) of a failed, and afterwards embarrassing, attempt by a respectable family man to reinvent himself as a ‘noble savage’.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Some uncertainty exists who commissioned this portrait, but de Jong believes that it was most likely Gerrit himself, although he was, apparently, not happy with the result, especially with regard to the inclusion of the hat, which was Henkel’s idea. The portrait hung in de Jong’s living room, but not in a prominent position.

<sup>94</sup> See <https://thegentlemanstopcoat.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/jean-patchett-and-ernest-hemingway-by-clifford-coffin-vogue-1950-big.jpg>

<sup>95</sup> Gerrit’s identification with the French painter, whose mother was of Peruvian extraction, and who led, some may argue, a depraved life in Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands, is intriguing. Although he is often assumed to have abandoned his middle-class wife and family, Gauguin had in fact been asked to leave by the latter, who found his beliefs untenable (Mathews 2001:62).

<sup>96</sup> By George Eggleston (1954). The book is liberally illustrated with black and white photographs, and contains eight pages of Polynesian vocabulary.

<sup>97</sup> There is an ongoing controversy about the terminology used to refer to the indigenous peoples of the Americas. While acknowledging the complexities surrounding the debate, for the purposes of this study, the term American Indian is used (as opposed to the more generic Native American) based on the 1995 finding that, of the persons identifying as such, over 50% chose the term ‘American Indian’ (Tucker, Kojetin & Harrison 1995:5).

<sup>98</sup> Gwen de Jong (2016\_29 April) surmises that Gerrit de Jong may have had tendencies to manic-depressive illness, a condition that, if it had indeed presented itself in her father-in-law, suggests a more complicated childhood for de Jong than he was willing to admit, even to himself.



**Figure 27** Ernst de Jong (photographer), Balthazar John Vorster (1915-1983) posing for Irmin Henkel in the latter's studio, Pretoria, c1968. The photograph is one of several that de Jong took of his friend painting the Prime Minister.



**Figure 28** Alma de Jong outside the house at 366 Hill Street, 1961.

Within this context, the Henkel painting stands in marked contrast to the portrait of Gerrit's own father, Jacob Jan, that hung in de Jong's kitchen (Fig. 26). Realised with painstaking care by Kobie van Tilburg,<sup>99</sup> and probably commissioned by Gerrit, perhaps after his father's death, the stern and faintly disapproving patriarch in suit and tie is the exemplar of a prosperous, morally upstanding citizen in a conservative, Western metropolitan community. While both portraits constitute a *performance*, what is of interest is how Gerrit de Jong, in collusion with Henkel, not only subverts the Calvinist respectability of Pretoria society in general, and the narratives of Henkel's political portraits in particular, but also reinvents his, Gerrit's, own adult identity that had been constructed in obeisance to his father's oppressive, if worthy, expectations. Consequently, the Henkel portrait is a curiously imaginative act, and worth noting.

The artist, who had been born in Germany in 1921, and first studied and then practiced as an orthopaedic surgeon during and after service in the German army, had come to South Africa in 1951 after relinquishing his medical career soon after WWII (Henkel ... [sa]). Henkel was a mostly self-taught painter, who came to be regarded, informally, as an official portraitist to Nationalist Party worthies (Fig. 27); his portraits were used for several commemorative stamp issues and he completed a large commissioned canvas depicting

the South African Cabinet of 1961 (the year that South Africa became a Republic) (Henkel ... [sa]). However, he also resumed his medical practice in Pretoria and therefore led something of a double life. Henkel, who became a close friend of de Jong, was, by all accounts, an attractive, charming and highly intelligent man whose remarkable skills as a painter bolstered the aspirations of Afrikaner nationalism; his German military background and brilliance as both a surgeon and portraitist might have recommended him to Gerrit, but, rather curiously, de Jong relates that his father disliked his friend.<sup>100</sup> By 1970, Henkel began to "seek diversion from the severity of exclusive portrait work" (Henkel ... [sa]); perhaps the portraits haunted him — he died suddenly and under mysterious circumstances in 1977.<sup>101</sup>

Alma, for her part, never had her portrait painted, and there is no evidence that she hankered for a life other than the one she lived (Fig. 28); having witnessed her own mother's battle as a single parent, financial security would, one assumes, have been a priority. According to her son, Alma never took on a paid job (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103).<sup>102</sup> However, she did take up bee-keeping — a hobby that was unusual, even more so for a woman, but at which she became an expert. Alma befriended Dr AE Lundie, who was a prominent figure in Pretoria (Basson 2015), and had been appointed as a honeybee specialist by the Department of Agriculture in 1923 (Lubbe 2005:1). Lundie encouraged the use of Langstroth hives and the standardisation of beekeeping equipment; he presented many beekeeping courses, to which de Jong accompanied his mother. The house, de Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103) recalls, was always full of jars of honey. She cooked memorable meals, and knitted

<sup>99</sup> Jacobina, or Kobie, van Tilburg was the daughter of Jacob Abraham van Tilburg (1888-1980) who had made his fortune in the building trade in the Netherlands and emigrated to South Africa in 1951, bringing with him 94 crates of art. In 1976, van Tilburg, who was a colourful and somewhat slippery character, eventually donated his collection, which includes the largest ceramic collection in the southern hemisphere, to the University of Pretoria (JA van Tilburg ... 2015). Kobie, who would have been about the same age as de Jong's father Gerrit, followed her father to Africa, and worked at the Pretoria Art Museum as a restorer. De Jong claims that his grandfather was a very good friend of Ms van Tilburg, but this seems improbable since the latter only settled in Pretoria after 1951 when Jacob Jan would have been in his mid-eighties. It is more likely that Jacob Jan knew van Tilburg's father, from whom, de Jong now speculates, his grandfather might have bought or bartered his collection of Dutch art. Van Tilburg used a photograph as reference for Jacob Jan's likeness, since the painting closely resembles a photographic portrait in the de Jong collection.

<sup>100</sup> A dislike that may only have emerged after the discomfiting portrait was completed.

<sup>101</sup> De Jong at first stated that Henkel had committed suicide, but, during a later interview, he admitted that he was not sure, merely that Henkel's sudden death suggested that the artist had taken his own life.

<sup>102</sup> De Jong has a vague recollection that his mother may have worked in a military hospital at one point. Alma's brother trained as an architect, and her sister-in-law was a radiologist (Barker 2008), so it is possible that Alma had received formal training of some kind, perhaps in the field of health care, but de Jong never questioned her about this. Neither, obviously, did Alma care to talk about it much.

homely jerseys for her men. Alma was a capable and pragmatic woman — de Jong (2015\_13 May\_07:02) recalls that his mother slaughtered chickens with aplomb — and yet one senses that Gerrit's word was law in the household.<sup>103</sup>

After her husband died, Alma continued to live in the house in Charles Street until ill-health forced her to move to, at first, de Jong's house in Hill Street, and subsequently a care centre. Asked whether he took after his mother or father, de Jong (in Groenewald 2014) mentions his mother first: "I have the tenacity of my mother — you could not pull the wool over her eyes. But, I have my father's aesthetics". A pragmatist who charmed bees and a civil servant who dreamt of Tahiti: into these footprints, then, steps de Jong.

### 3.2 Beginnings: 1934 – 1951

Perhaps his first memory was the baleful bellow of a cow — not in a pasture, but across a sea heavy with mist in Table Bay. The little boy lay in his bed, in a small stucco house, listening to the sonorous *mooo* being answered after a pause by a still deeper *maaaauw*, far in the distance. Many years later, as an adult, de Jong (1985:[sp]) would paint his 'cow' (Fig. 32), and explain that the melancholy lowing was not that of cattle, but the nightly foghorn conversations of the Mouille Point<sup>104</sup> and Robben Island Lighthouses.

Like foggy evenings on the bay that are intersected by the searching beam of a lighthouse, the lost landscape of childhood is sometimes difficult to navigate, with brief flashes vividly illuminating singular experiences, while leaving vast swathes of the nocturnal shore hidden and treacherous for the traveller wishing to map the rise and fall of the land. De Jong (1985) states that he was "a very young boy, probably about four" when he lived in the stucco house in Cape Town, "virtually in the shadow" of the lighthouse. There were many holidays in Cape Town, when de Jong and his parents stayed with Alma's sister Muriel, and her husband, Serfaas de Kock, in Sea Point (de Jong 2015\_13 May\_01:10). However, the bedroom in the shadow of the lighthouse was not Muriel's; it was, perhaps, a house that his father rented. De Jong thus spent parts of his childhood in the Cape, but exactly *which* parts is not a thing determined with ease. There is the "eerie and lonely" call of the midnight lighthouse — and then, abruptly, there is another, sunlit, memory of a house at 951 Government Avenue,<sup>105</sup> in Pretoria, where a "magnificent" red fire engine stops to pick up a little boy who is allowed to ride on the running board, and race off to battle veld fires in the *koppies* behind the nearby Union Buildings (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542) (Fig. 29).

Both memories are cherished, and often recalled (Fig. 32); they are also binary opposites. One is dark and moody, the other bright, and extrovert — but which came first is part of the forgotten topography of the past. Logic dictates that the thrilling (and, one would have to add, perilous) fire engine rides followed the sojourn at the lighthouse; it is of little concern. The stories offer two anchor points in the construction of an identity, in which, however, one has perhaps — outwardly — been favoured over the other: "I was", states de Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542) about his childhood, "physically quite a daredevil".

But, between the moody dreamer and the daredevil stands a third story. The last of three sons (Figs. 30 & 31), De Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103) often wonders if his mother had not wished for a girl and, when yet another boy arrived, could not resist giving in to some feminine impulses with regard to her last son's upbringing. In particular, de Jong remembers being dressed in a white silk suit for festive occasions, with a carnation pinned to his lapel. When he protested — a boy who rides fire engines is likely to resist silk trousers — he was told that all the little girls would love him for it. And, laughs, de Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103), "They did!".

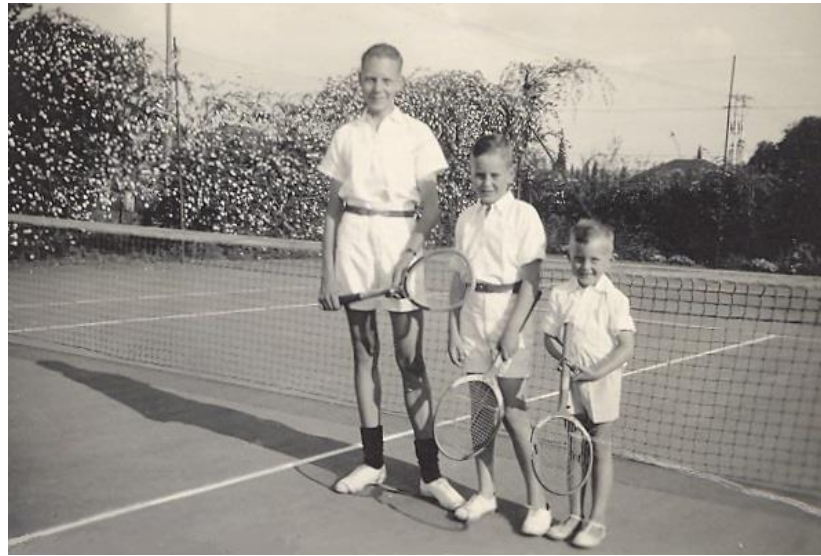
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<sup>103</sup> The nude hung above the fireplace.

<sup>104</sup> The iconic red and white building in de Jong's painting is, more correctly, called the Green Point Lighthouse, in the suburb of Mouille Point. The original Mouille Point lighthouse is no longer in existence; it was once located at the far end of the suburb, near Granger Bay (Mouille Point 2015).

<sup>105</sup> It is a frustrating function of human memory that de Jong is able to recall the street names and numbers of the houses in which the family lived, but not the dates of these residences.





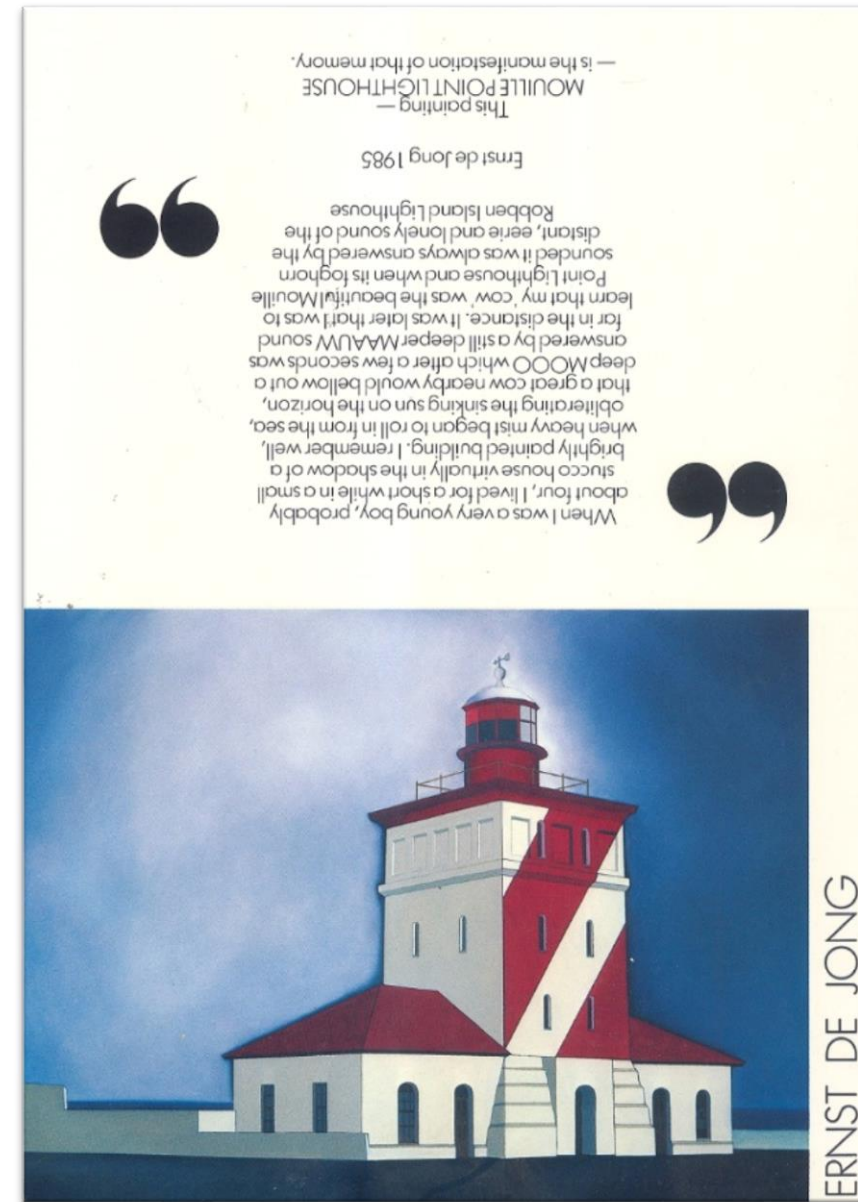
**Figure 30** A sporting start: Paul, Gerrie and Ernst de Jong, c1939.



**Figure 31** The de Jong brothers at the beach, c1935.



**Figure 29** A very English boy who rode on the red fire engine, c1944.



**Figure 32** Ernst de Jong (art director & illustrator), promotional flyer for de Jong, depicting the Mouille Point lighthouse, 1985.

Then, at about the age of seven or eight, a watershed moment occurred. While on a school trip to Margate,<sup>106</sup> on the Natal South Coast, de Jong wandered off on his own into the subtropical undergrowth of a lagoon. In the steamy stillness of the coastal jungle, he came upon a troop of blue vervet monkeys swinging on the vines that criss-crossed the limpid water. The scene was straight from a Tarzan film — Johnny Weissmuller was a hero<sup>107</sup> — and an excited de Jong climbed up into the trees to join the monkey troop. He found that he had a natural ability to swing on the vines and soon he was “flying over the lagoon” (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103). De Jong, who tends to deny any particular affinity with nature (de Jong\_2014\_27 August\_125542), relates, with some emotion, that it was “a moment in my life when I really felt *simpatico* with animals; they accepted me completely ... I ran with them. It was amazing” (de Jong\_2015\_07 May\_21:10). For the duration of the holiday, the monkeys became his “friends” (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103).<sup>108</sup>

The story, which is both remarkable and poignant, evokes the daredevil trope, but also reveals that de Jong pictures himself as a loner — there were “other children”, but they had gone to the beach — and that he was more comfortable with his simian companions, whom he emphasises “were very impressed” with his performance, than with his human peers. Back home in Pretoria, he built himself a tree house, and extended the platform with gangplanks that ran between the trees: he could run and swing through the branches at great speed, so much so that he was able to ignore all calls to come down to supper, since no-one — not even an older brother — was able to keep up with him in the treetops: he was untouchable. “I had a bit of an ego”, de Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103) admits, “at a very young age”.



**Figure 33** Ernst de Jong, pastel drawing, c1941. Rather poignantly, this childish work adumbrates both the successes and frustrations of de Jong’s adult life.

The flying monkey encounter is an important marker in de Jong’s unfolding identity:<sup>109</sup> it foreshadows a remarkable career in the type of sport in which agility is paramount, but it also signalled a risk-taking and insubordinate spirit. De Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542) describes his parents’ response to their offspring’s boyish narcissism as an overwhelmingly positive one: because his own self-expression had been stifled, Gerrit allowed his youngest son to “do whatever I wanted to do, whenever I wanted to do it”, and subsequently de Jong’s childhood was, in his recollection, “a very happy one”. Although he claims that his parents never “directed” (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542) him, his father encouraged his youngest son to “make things”, and to paint and draw (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103) (Fig. 33), and de Jong was always provided with ample space, in good light, for his creative endeavours (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542). Gerrit bought his son a microscope and suggested that the forms observed through the lens would make good subjects for paintings — thus de Jong cites as his first artwork an abstract drawing.<sup>110</sup> It was a self-absorbed existence: “I didn’t really have a great deal of close friends; I lived for my own painting, and I lived up in the trees” (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542). It was, states de Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103), his father who “started the ball rolling: he instilled in me that you do the thing that you wanted to do” — not what others demanded.

However, this show of defiant independence would soon, like his father’s loyalty to all things German, prove to be something of a two-edged sword. In 1940 he started attending *Laerskool Pretoria-Oos*, an Afrikaans primary school where much to the bemusement of his new teacher, the young de Jong (2015\_07 May\_2\_24:20; 2014\_16 Dec\_003\_38:17) primly demanded: “Please speak English to me ... because

<sup>106</sup> When pressed for details, de Jong (2015\_07 May\_2\_23:02) recalled it as a “swimming camp”, perhaps organised by Terry Collard who was connected to the Hillcrest Swimming Pool.

<sup>107</sup> As was Robin Hood. De Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542) recalls taking a bow and arrow to the nature reserve at Fountains Valley, to the south of Pretoria; the point was not to kill animals, but to practice accurate shooting.

<sup>108</sup> Gwen de Jong (2016), when asked about the flying monkey encounter, dismissed it out of hand as a fabrication, stating that in all the years of his marriage to her, de Jong had never mentioned it once. During a subsequent conversation with Tamara de Jong, de Jong’s daughter from a second marriage, it transpired that her father had told her the tale as a bed time story. Although Tamara suggests that in constant retelling the invention perhaps took on the quality of an authentic memory, it is difficult to believe that the intensity of the narrative performance was not prompted by an actual experience related, if not exactly identical, to its subsequent rendition.

<sup>109</sup> Curiously, his cousin Lyall is likely to be best remembered for his promulgation of the ‘hundredth monkey’ theory (Barker 2008).

<sup>110</sup> What exactly de Jong may have meant by ‘artwork’ is unclear; subsequent to de Jong’s death, his daughter Tamara unearthed a folder in the Hill Street house containing several childhood art projects, amongst which is an abstract gouache drawing, probably executed when de Jong was about 16 (Fig. 35). This work stands in some contrast to the other, realistic paintings of landscapes and still lifes from de Jong’s school days.

I am an *English* boy!” — an early manifestation of a lifelong impulse to set himself apart from Afrikaner culture, which, considering his father’s admiration of the latter, is of interest. De Jong (2015\_07 May\_23:50), who had already discovered the nearby Hillcrest Swimming Pool, had been drawn into its almost exclusively English milieu; moreover, his mother was English, and, by his own admission, de Jong (2015\_07 May\_24:25) would have preferred to attend an English school.<sup>111</sup> However, his father’s cultural preference prevailed and de Jong was set on a path that would lead him into the ambiguities of a cultural no-man’s land.<sup>112</sup>

However, despite his youthful resistance to an Afrikaans education, De Jong praises *Laerskool Pretoria–Oos* for its quality of teaching. He delighted in the “terrific ... fantastic ... wonderful” (de Jong 2015\_13 May\_2\_28:18-26) art classes in which he made paintings of “beautiful horses” — de Jong acknowledges the prescient nature of the latter — and other “elegant little things”. The class drew maps and “illustrated diagrams”. It was in his primary school art class that he first befriended fellow pupil Jan Mostert, who would later work for the industrialist Anton Rupert and collaborate with de Jong on Rupert’s advertising campaigns (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103). He also greatly enjoyed the extra-mural activities of the Afrikaner equivalent of the Boy Scouts, the *Voortrekkers*,<sup>113</sup> where his *kommandant*, or group leader, was Gerrit Viljoen (de Jong 2015\_27 April\_23:40) — later rector of the Rand Afrikaans University and Minister of National Education (Gerrit Viljoen [sa]).

The landscape took on a more challenging aspect in his high school years. Again, de Jong’s choice was an English school — Pretoria Boys High — because his friends from the Hillcrest Pool attended this institution (de Jong 2015\_07 May\_2\_24:25), but Gerrit overrode his son’s wishes: the father that admired autonomy enforced his will when to do the opposite would undermine his own sense of identity. De Jong plays down any family disagreements that may have erupted at Veale Street. Although he concedes that it was his father’s decision that he attend the prestigious *Afrikaanse Hoër Seunskool* (or ‘Affies’), de Jong justifies this imperative by positing that there was “a policy” that one’s home language determined the school one attended.<sup>114</sup> This is unlikely; school ‘zoning’ in Pretoria was not mooted until 1959 (Knowles-Williams 1959:6) and even then was not predicated upon language.<sup>115</sup> De Jong may have regarded himself as ‘English’, but Gerrit was “very pro-Afrikaans” (de Jong 2015\_07 May\_2\_01:09:09) and had clearly settled on the family’s identity as such. Arguably, the ‘policy’ was his father’s own line of argument, and was informed by Gerrit’s assimilation of Afrikaner ideals, as well as his position in the National Party government.<sup>116</sup>

Affies, since its founding in 1920, strove to uphold the Christian cultural life of the Afrikaner (Missie en beknopte geskiedenis 2010).<sup>117</sup> De Jong’s English friends and his family’s disdain for religion, as well as his esoteric interest in art, would have made him something of an outsider in this fervently nationalistic environment; consequently, de Jong’s high school education appears to have been a frustrating experience. In the first instance, Affies offered no art, thus this mainstay of de Jong’s primary school years could no longer ameliorate his boredom with academic subjects such as languages, mathematics, biology and science. Defiantly, he refused to attend the lessons he disliked: he skipped Bible classes and mathematics, in which, as a consequence, he did very poorly. He was also, on occasion, “told to get out” of class, because, de Jong (2015\_13 May\_2\_30:03) confesses, he was “always kicking up a fuss ... doing naughty things”. Unfailingly subversive, he recalls using the expulsion to go swimming in the school pool. Thus the punishment was not without its benefits: while at the pool, he was — perhaps by chance, perhaps by design — joined by a young student teacher, Larry

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<sup>111</sup> It may have been Alma herself that fostered her son’s antipathy to the Afrikaans schools.

<sup>112</sup> In the first interviews, de Jong was reluctant to discuss his schooling, and did not want to reveal that he had received an Afrikaans education since he considered this a “political” (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103) topic. It was more than a year before the information was communicated without reservation.

<sup>113</sup> Literally meaning ‘pioneers’, and alluding to the Boer families that trekked from the Cape into the interior of Africa in the mid-nineteenth century, this youth movement enlisted both male and female members. In the 1920s, several attempts were made by Afrikaner leaders to form an alliance with the Boy Scout movement for a joint South African youth organisation, but the initiative failed. Consequently, the independent *Voortrekker* movement was launched in 1931 (Die geskiedenis van die Voortrekkers [sa]). Originally an important element in the construction of Afrikaner nationalism, and pivotal in key events such as the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949, the movement has now shed its commando-like uniforms and nationalist imperatives (Dit is die Voortrekkers 2012:7).

<sup>114</sup> Pretoria Boys High is marginally closer than Affies to both Veale Street and the Hillcrest Swimming Pool, so distance was not a factor in the decision.

<sup>115</sup> The reason for the planned zoning in 1959 seems to have been the popularity of Pretoria Boys High that could no longer accommodate its huge numbers of pupils.

<sup>116</sup> One can only speculate whether Gerrit de Jong had aspirations to be recruited to the *Broederbond*, an “elite caste of privileged, powerful, politically influential Afrikaners” (Carlin 1993) established in 1918. It is unlikely that he would have qualified, since Afrikaans men with English wives were not eligible; regular church attendance was also mandatory (O’Malley 1991). Gerrit would thus have suffered a double exclusion: firstly, from promotion in the United Party Government, and then, after 1948, from the inner sanctum of *Afrikanerdom* owing to his English wife and non-compliance with regard to religious practice. The insistence on an Afrikaans school may perhaps have been a bid to ingratiate himself with the organisation.

<sup>117</sup> Its motto is *Laat daar lig wees* [Let there be light] — a quotation from Genesis; the school badge depicts a rising sun and Voortrekker ox wagon.



Lemmer, who managed the University of Pretoria’s gymnastics team. Lemmer invited de Jong to join the latter, which he did, and where he excelled. The teacher who ‘kicked him out’, de Jong (2015\_13 May\_2\_31:08) emphasises, also “forgave” him afterwards.

Overall, de Jong thus presents a divided picture in which his teachers were fond of him, but not of his work, because, in his view, it was “contrary to what they were teaching” (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103). The perception that his ideas are misunderstood by those who seek to judge him would also needle him later in life, but, as a teenager, the overarching feeling was that he was “not very good at school”. One way of legitimately avoiding the unrewarding tedium of the classroom was to feign



**Figure 34** Ernst de Jong, female figure, gouache on paper, c1951.

illness, a gentle deception in which, according to de Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103), his mother colluded. He believes that she knew he was unhappy at school, that she sympathised and would therefore allow him to stay in bed, where she would bring him Marmite toast and tea.

However, the truant’s day would not be without pedagogy, and de Jong relates a delightful “experiment” (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103) that his mother performed in his bedroom. Alma brought in a large bowl of brightly-coloured poppies, onto which she placed one bee from her apiary. De Jong was then presented with a finely tipped sable paintbrush and poster paints, and instructed to draw a line of bright yellow on the bee. This he did; the bee eventually flew off, but soon returned with two companions. Now de Jong was told to mark the second bee with green paint, and the third with red. In due course all three bees returned, each with two new ‘mates’. The process repeated itself until the room was filled with bees (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103). Thus Alma demonstrated to her son a predictable pattern of honey bee behaviour, and de Jong claims he learnt how to ‘draw’ — not ‘paint’ — with a brush.

Indeed, it was art that once again succoured the reluctant scholar, even if it was not on the official school timetable (Figs. 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 44 & 45). Neither of de Jong’s brothers were artistic; Paul was good with his hands in a practical way — giving Gerrit reason to get on well with his oldest son<sup>118</sup> — while Gerrie was academically astute and would go on to obtain a Master’s degree in petroleum technology (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103). Painting, his father’s unrequited love, would provide de Jong with a unique appeal to his parents. Perhaps as a consolation, or a compromise, for the loss of Pretoria Boys High, de Jong was allowed to attend private art classes, offered in the afternoon at (somewhat ironically) Pretoria Girls High. His teacher was the painter Ines Chlotilde Aab-Tamsen (1945-2009), who produced works with titles such as *Sunlit landscape* and *Flower study* (Auction results ... 2015).<sup>119</sup> A fellow student at these afternoon classes — as well as a pupil at Affies — was Lothar Neethling, a so-called ‘war-orphan’ who had been born in Germany, but adopted by a South African family in 1948 at the age of thirteen. De Jong would retain this acquaintance later in life.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>118</sup> This throw-away remark by de Jong is interesting, since he seems to infer that Paul had their father’s affection, whereas he, de Jong, did not. Yet, earlier in the same conversation, de Jong made a point of stating that his father liked him (i.e., de Jong) for his insubordination, and gave him special attention. However, one wonders how the senior civil servant responded to his son’s truancy and poor performance at school, and whether the gift of the microscope, for example, was not an attempt to encourage diligence in the sciences, rather than art.

<sup>119</sup> Most of de Jong’s extant works from his childhood are undated (some approximate dates were added later). However, several paintings are marked ‘9B’, that is, Standard 9’ when de Jong (2015\_13 May\_03:25), according to him, was attending school in Cape Town. These items cannot, therefore, be the results of Aab-Tamsen’s tuition. Other works are inscribed ‘AHS’, suggesting that they were made while de Jong attended Affies, and may well represent the results of private tuition.

<sup>120</sup> Neethling, who died in 2005, was both a celebrated and, later in his life, maligned figure, and de Jong is understandably reluctant to admit to a friendship with ‘South Africa’s own Dr Mengele’ (du Preez 2005). However, as with Henkel, the attraction to genius was inescapable. Following his harrowing experiences during WWII, Lothar Paul Tietz was adopted by the chairman of the German Children’s Fund (GCF) in South Africa, Dr JC Neethling, a “fiery Afrikaner nationalist” (Papenfus 2014). After matriculating from Affies, the young Neethling gained two doctorates in chemistry; he was a prominent member of the *Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns* [Academy of Science and Art] that also awarded him its gold medal. He was regarded as a brilliant scientist, and honoured by a number of international organisations. Neethling became a General in the South African Police, and established its forensic unit in 1971. During this time, Neethling challenged de Jong to a pistol shooting contest, which the artist, not the policeman, won (de Jong 2015\_07 May\_2\_01:06:09). Although he successfully sued the newspapers that published the story, Neethling’s reputation was irreparably tarnished in the late 1980s when he was accused of having developed a poison that was administered to anti-apartheid activists (Lothar Neethling [sa]). A biography by his adoptive sister and academic, Annette Jordaan, *Lothar Neethling – ‘n lewe vertel* (2013) has been hailed as a “brave, humble and sober” (Papenfus 2014) account of Neethling’s ultimately tragic life.



**Figure 35** Ernst de Jong, abstract design, gouache on paper, 1951 (labelled '9B').



**Figure 36** Ernst de Jong, landscape with houses, watercolour, 1951 (labelled '9B').



**Figure 37** Ernst de Jong, still life with wooden snake, gouache on paper, c1951.

However, in addition to the art classes with Aab-Tamsen and the future police commissioner, de Jong also made art at home. One self-driven project stands out — his Egyptian ‘masks’ — and he selects it, in the very first interview session, to bear witness to the essence of his creative output (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103). According to de Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103), he was fascinated by the stylised heads of the pharaohs, but since he did not have art history as a subject at school, the source of this interest is unclear, and a matter for conjecture. The inspiration may have come from a set of brass clips, or buttons, belonging to his mother, that he used as maquettes for the relief sculptures (de Jong 2015\_13 May\_2\_53:38), but de Jong reflects that it may also have been triggered by a display of artefacts in the Transvaal Museum (De Jong 2014\_26 March). Whatever the spark, de Jong recalls that he set about making his own relief masks from sculpted clay, drying these in the sun in his parents’ garden, and then painting dramatic bands of orange and gold onto the surfaces of the raised clay shapes.<sup>121</sup>

When talking about this youthful endeavour, de Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103) reiterates that, for him, the power of ancient Egyptian art stems from the notion that — archaeological interpretation aside — the visual symbols embedded in the decoration of the sacred artefacts have lost their narrative meaning and now function only as abstract elements of design.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, pure shape, colour and composition, as a form of aesthetic expression devoid of any narrative programme, became intrinsic to de Jong’s individual style as an adult, both in commercial work and gallery painting; evoking the monumental art of ancient Egypt provides a cogent support of this approach.



**Figure 38** Ernst de Jong, pen and ink drawing, undated, c1951.

However, there may have been another reason why the art of the pharaohs appealed to a boy who believed himself to be extraordinary; it was imagery made in the service of kings that were worshipped as gods. Some of de Jong’s most striking works as a professional artist — at a stage in his career when he was widely admired — would draw on motifs from Egyptian iconography, and especially on the signifier of the sun. The pleasure and apparent success of the early mask project counters academic underachievement, and the fact that this significant artefact was a mask, and one that invoked a deity, is noteworthy.

Besides his art, de Jong also pursued an impressive extra-mural programme that included swimming and diving (at the Hillcrest Pool) and gymnastics (at UP); he also dabbled in rugby, tennis and baseball at Affies.<sup>123</sup> He was captain of the Affies gymnastics and, briefly, captain of the Affies tennis team (de Jong 2015\_13 May\_2\_37:40). And yet, the urge to pursue a solitary life persisted: “I spent”, de Jong (2014\_26 March) confides, “a *tremendous* amount of time alone”. This solitude was partly owing to the age gap between himself and his brothers; de Jong regards himself as having been raised, to a large degree, as an only child. Paul, who would have been twenty when de Jong was ten, clearly was mostly a stranger to his youngest brother. Gerrie, on the other hand, would play a positive role directing de Jong’s sport and, later, design career. Yet, when they were children, the five-year age gap enabled the older brother to bully the younger one and deliberately undermine his self-esteem. De Jong (2015\_13 May\_05:19) recalls that Gerrie “always tried to catch me out in everything”. One trick was to ambush the little boy at night when he was sent out to round up his father’s Rhode Island Reds. For de Jong (2015\_13 May\_06:28), his brother was an ever-present “bogeyman ... that scared the daylight out of me”. Gerrie probably elicited both admiration and resentment in de Jong; they were not close, but neither did de Jong have many good friends amongst his peers.

Thus, instead of anecdotes of male camaraderie, de Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103) recalls catching swarms of bees for his mother — with his bare hands — and accompanying Alma to her apiology seminars. Much of his time as a teenager was spent painting in his mother’s kitchen, where Alma would loan her potted geraniums for subject matter. When not in his mother’s company, de Jong would make solitary trips to the Austin Roberts Bird Sanctuary — within walking distance of the de Jongs’ Veale Street home — and the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542). He regularly caught the number two bus from Brooklyn to Church Square,

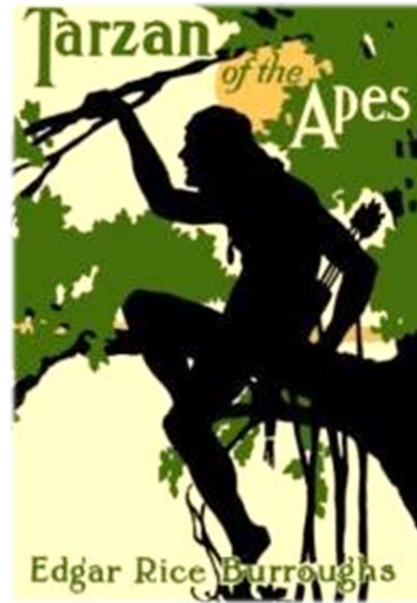
<sup>121</sup> No record of these masks survives.

<sup>122</sup> Because de Jong chose to talk about the Egyptian mask in the very first interview session, the story may have been selected and even refined to retro-fit an assessment of his life and work. This does not, however, diminish the importance of the emphasis that de Jong places on the influence of Egyptian art, and his declared aversion to notions of narrative, or ‘stories’, in his painting.

<sup>123</sup> De Jong (2015\_13 May\_2\_38:09) only ventured onto the rugby field in response to a taunt that he was “too chicken” to do so.



and then walked to the zoo, where he spent hours observing the animals (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542; De Jong 2014\_26 March).<sup>124</sup> The then Director of the Zoological Gardens, Dr Rudolph Bigalke, had instituted several expansion projects, the most noteworthy being the creation of ‘mountain area’ exhibits to the north of the zoo (The first 100 years ... 2010). These large enclosures, where de Jong spent most of his time, were an attempt to approximate a ‘natural’ African experience for visitors. De Jong’s expeditions to the zoo therefore extended the fantasy of his suburban treehouse, since, at the zoo, he could wander amongst, and study at close quarters, the beasts of this ‘jungle’ domain.



**Figure 39** Designer unknown, dust-jacket illustration of the first edition of *Tarzan of the Apes*, 1914 (Tarzan 2015).

De Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542) claims that his fascination with the zoo was not the animals themselves, but their behaviour. He recalls being intrigued by the hyenas and the large birds of prey, and fantasised about writing a film script that juxtaposed these creatures as signifiers of the extremes of human nature (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542; de Jong 2014\_26 March).<sup>125</sup> However, the most vivid memory of his zoo visits was an occasion when a storm came up and blew a dove out of its nest into the rhinoceros enclosure, which was separated from the viewing public by a fence and deep moat. Seeing that the rhinoceros had huddled against a wall for shelter, de Jong leaped over the fence, scrambled through the moat, retrieved the bird at some considerable risk to his own safety and clambered back out of the enclosure. The young dove was secreted in a paper bag, taken home, released into the garden at Charles Street and, according to de Jong (2014\_26 March), became a devoted ‘friend’.

The story is interesting on several counts. The rescue was a rash, impetuous act: on the surface it reveals courage, generosity of spirit, and — contrary to his disavowal — a love of animals.<sup>126</sup> However, the tale also plays like a scene from a Hollywood film: the lone, handsome youth exposed to the elements of the African savannah; the spectacular leap of the jungle prince across the putative ‘river’; the sense of power and control over a fearsome wild animal — de Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542) states that he eyed the rhinoceros and decided, “I’m going to test it!” — the saving of a weak individual from a stronger foe, and the adventure ending with the assimilation of the rescued creature into a human family.

De Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542) acknowledges his identification with Tarzan, and in particular with the Weissmuller films (de Jong 2015\_13 May\_2\_48:40), but the appropriation of this archetypal ‘feral child’ narrative, first published by Edgar Rice Burroughs in magazine form in 1912 (Tarzan 2015), is arguably more embedded in the construction of de Jong’s *persona* than he would care to admit (Fig. 39). The Tarzan (talking)

film franchise ran from the 1930s through to the 1960s. The first twelve films — starting with *Tarzan the Ape Man* in 1932 — were established with former Olympic swimmer Weissmuller in the title role (Tarzan 2015), and correspond to de Jong’s most impressionable childhood years.<sup>127</sup> Although the films deviate in some respects from Burroughs’s characterisation of Tarzan, the essence of the series remains the story of the son of an aristocratic couple marooned on the West coast of Africa. When Tarzan is an infant, his mother dies and his father is killed by the leader of an ape tribe that adopts the boy. Kala is his ape mother, to whom he is devoted. Notably, one of the few instances when Tarzan — who is typically portrayed as “courageous, intelligent, loyal, and steadfast” (Tarzan 2015) — acts unethically is when seeking vengeance after Kala is killed.

As a young adult, Tarzan meets Jane Porter, an American girl, who is also marooned on the jungle coast. Jane returns to America, and Tarzan leaves the jungle in search of her; eventually, they marry. Because Tarzan rejects the trappings of civilisation, the couple returns to Africa to settle permanently in a tree house on a large estate. In the early films, the household consists of Tarzan, Jane, a chimpanzee companion called Cheeta, and an adopted son known only as ‘Boy’. In his novels, Burroughs allows Tarzan to retain the language of his aristocratic origins, but in the early films de Jong would have seen Weissmuller portray the character as a ‘noble savage’ speaking broken English (Tarzan

<sup>124</sup> Once again, a parallel with his younger cousin presents itself; Dennis Barker (2008), in Watson’s obituary, comments: “Spending a lot of time watching animals laid the foundations for [Lyall’s] literary career”. De Jong may even have emphasised his own interest in animals as a result.

<sup>125</sup> As an adult he would try and interest an American producer in this project, without any success.

<sup>126</sup> In actual fact, de Jong surrounded himself with animals; they were, to a large degree, his last solace.

<sup>127</sup> The Weissmuller films ran until 1948.



**Figure 40** Johnny Weissmuller in *Tarzan, the Ape Man* directed by WS Van Dyke, 1932 (Argelas, Guiol & Pergeaux [sa]).



**Figure 41** George Hurrell (photographer), publicity shot of Johnny Weissmuller, 1932 (Johnny Weissmuller 2015). On the right, a 21-year old Gerrit de Jong.

2015) (Fig. 40). The famous ‘me Tarzan, you Jane’ trope not only heightens the erotic nature of the couple’s love-making, but underlines Tarzan’s rejection of schoolroom skills in favour of swinging on vines, wrestling gorillas, lions, crocodiles, and, of course, rhinoceri.

Probably owing to Weissmuller’s fame as an Olympic swimmer, images of water, plunging and swimming are very evident in these early films, including the infamous nude underwater scene with Maureen O’Sullivan in *Tarzan and his mate* (1934). In this encounter, O’Sullivan is entirely naked. Tarzan, predictably, retains his loincloth, but the action during the couple’s dolphin-like coupling, is highly erotic.<sup>128</sup> It is not clear whether South African audiences in the 1930s would have viewed this scene, but if de Jong saw it, he would have been riveted — especially since Weissmuller bears an uncanny resemblance to the de Jong men.

De Jong claims not to have registered the likeness, but on some level it must have made an impression. A studio portrait of Weissmuller (Johnny Weissmuller 2008) (Fig. 41) by photographer George Hurrell brings to mind the photograph of Gerrit de Jong as a young man. Unlike Gerrit’s run-of-the-mill studio portrait, Hurrell’s shot is that of a celebrity, and Weissmuller is posed with a satiny naked torso,<sup>129</sup> but the features of the two men are remarkably similar. The ten-year-old de Jong might have noted the correspondence between Tarzan and his own father, and, hence, himself. By the time de Jong was fifteen, and stalking through the *faux* exotic surroundings of the zoo, he would have looked very much like a young Weissmuller — lean and intense — in the 1930s films. It must therefore have been a gratifying experience to watch a carbon copy of himself perform Tarzan’s feats on-screen.<sup>130</sup> Not only

would de Jong be prompted to re-enact the jungle exploits of his hero, he would also keep close a beautiful, nurturing woman — in fact, a number of them. At first, this companion was Alma, and the parallels with Tarzan’s Kala are perhaps self-evident. Then, despite claims of a relatively lonely adolescence (de Jong 2014\_26 March), de Jong started to court a succession of ‘Janes’, one being a girl called Martha Bold, who was, according to de Jong (in Groenewald 2014), “absolutely gorgeously beautiful”, and with whom he snuck off to the Union Buildings at night, ostensibly to visit his father, who often worked late.

De Jong relates that he had several *girl* friends<sup>131</sup> — “nothing serious” (de Jong, in Groenewald 2014) — and reminisces that he “enjoyed girls, because they liked me”, implying that perhaps boys, in general, did not. Although Tarzan’s obsession with Jane to the exclusion of strong male bonds is echoed in de Jong’s propensity to surround himself with female companions, the correspondence breaks down inasmuch as Tarzan is devoted throughout to *one* Jane. In this, de Jong, who like Tarzan would travel to the USA and bring back to Africa an American wife, would more closely follow the off-screen exemplar of Weissmuller. An online biography notes that, “Johnny was a kid who never grew up. This perhaps explains why he was ideal as Tarzan, but less so as a husband” (Biography of Johnny Weissmuller 2000). Weissmuller had five wives; de Jong would only marry twice, but his life story, by his own admission, was shaped to a large degree by his attraction to beautiful women.

Over and above his role as Tarzan, one may speculate that Weissmuller’s swimming feats inspired de Jong to pursue diving as a competitive sport, but de Jong argues for a more pragmatic incentive. The Hillcrest Swimming Pool was a few blocks away from the house at 1268 Burnett Street, where the family lived when de Jong was in primary school, and he went swimming because “that’s what you did in Pretoria in the afternoon ... it was a fun place to be” (de Jong 2013\_08 May\_125103). He started diving with Julian Dyson, and met the latter’s father, Pop Dyson, who was the pool superintendent (de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542). Soon, de Jong’s brother, Gerrie, started to coach

<sup>128</sup> See (and hear) *Tarzan and His Mate* — River Scene, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPrWCCPADNs>

<sup>129</sup> The references in Henkel’s painting of Gerrit de Jong to images of Weissmuller are numerous.

<sup>130</sup> De Jong would eventually see his hero in the flesh in Fort Lauderdale (de Jong 2015\_07 May\_45:02).

<sup>131</sup> He emphasises the pause between ‘girl’ and ‘friend’.

diving at Hillcrest, and de Jong met Jan van Wijk, Gerrie's friend. Van Wijk, who fondly called his friend's younger brother 'blue eyes' (de Jong 2014\_16 December\_004\_07:57; de Jong 2014\_27 August\_125542), would become a prominent architect in South Africa, and be responsible for involving de Jong in two major design briefs in the 1970s. Hillcrest was thus a space in which de Jong could develop friendships with relative ease. It played a critical role in his formative years, so much so that, as an adult, he would reproduce it in his own image, so to speak, when he and Gerrie designed and built the De Jong Diving Centre in Roper Street, New Muckleneuk in 1973.<sup>132</sup>

There was, however — or there must have been — a brief hiatus with regard to the Hillcrest camaraderie. At some point, probably 1950 when he was sixteen, de Jong and his parents lived in a house in Pinelands, Cape Town (de Jong 2014\_16 December\_004\_01:56-04:20). De Jong speculates that it was the ongoing business of the foreshore development that required his father's presence there.<sup>133</sup> Whatever the reasons for the removal from Pretoria, de Jong states that he "liked Cape Town a lot; it was tremendous",<sup>134</sup> but, despite this positive recollection, there is uncertainty and a paucity of stories about this period. The two incidents that are recalled are, however, of interest.

Although de Jong had used busses in Pretoria, he seems to have noticed for the first time in Cape Town that the country's public transport was segregated. He recalls sitting in lone splendour in a virtually empty double-decker bus that was followed by the 'Coloured' bus, bursting at the seams. De Jong (2014\_16 December\_004\_02:48) was both upset and angered by the experience, and states that this was how he "learnt how bad the *apartheid* system was".<sup>135</sup> Perhaps needled by the bus encounter, de Jong then engaged in a single act of ideological subversion. While the family lived in Pinelands, he attended the Afrikaans *Jan van Riebeeck* high school. He was a drummer in the school's jazz band, and also played the drums at school assemblies. On the very last day of the school year, pupils and staff gathered in the hall for the end-of-year formalities, which were concluded with the singing of the national anthem. De Jong solemnly provided the percussion for the latter and then, after the last notes of *Die Stem* had died down, launched into an ear-splitting drum solo, after which he jumped up and "high-tailed it out of there" (de Jong 2014\_16 December\_004\_04:05).

By all accounts, the family returned to Pretoria after this act of musical sedition, and de Jong completed his high school education at *Affies* in 1951 (de Jong 2014\_16 December\_004\_04:10). He achieved some recognition in selected aspects of school life: he was the lead drummer in the school cadet band, and was awarded school colours for gymnastics. As with his diving, however, the latter was not the result of his success as a representative of the school: de Jong accompanied the University of Pretoria gymnastic team to the South African National Championships, where he won a Gold Medal in the open category for agility (de Jong 2015\_13 May\_2\_34:31).<sup>136</sup> His apparent aloofness from the institution notwithstanding, being an alumnus of *Affies* would stand de Jong in good stead: countless leaders in South African affairs shared this distinction, amongst them the already mentioned Gerrit Viljoen, and Gerhard de Kock, both of whom would play important roles in two of de Jong's future enterprises.

It was in de Jong's matric year that his life started to take on a purposive and exciting professional direction. According to de Jong (2013\_08 May\_125103), Gerrie had gone off to the United States on the strength of a sports scholarship from Ohio University; upon arrival, he discovered that the funding was not forthcoming, and he had to find employment to pay his bills. However, the University of Oklahoma (OU) spotted the South African's diving skills, and Gerrie transferred to OU on a full scholarship. Oklahoma was struggling to put a 'national' swimming team together, and Gerrie suggested that it augment its pool of talent with swimmers from South Africa.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> It is still there and is in good repair.

<sup>133</sup> As well as Gerrit's putative role as Provincial Secretary of the Cape.

<sup>134</sup> Gerrit and Alma appear to have sold the 'Cape Dutch' house in New Muckleneuk when they moved to Cape Town, which suggests that the relocation may have been anticipated as being permanent, perhaps with a view to retirement. De Jong (2014\_16 December\_003) states that his father retired in 1951 at the age of 65, but Gerrit was only 55 in 1951 (at which point he may, of course, have taken early retirement). Why the family returned to Pretoria in 1951 is not clear.

<sup>135</sup> The story raises several questions, both with regard to public transport demographics in Pretoria and Cape Town in the late 1940s, but also with regard to de Jong's own concept of race.

<sup>136</sup> De Jong's curriculum vitae refers to this award as a 'Gold Diploma'; the category has since been discontinued. There is some uncertainty as to whether the colours blazer was awarded for gymnastics, or swimming, or both. The blazer itself was, apparently, gifted to a girlfriend in Oklahoma.

<sup>137</sup> De Jong refers to it as a 'national' team, presumably because the OU swimmers would compete nation-wide. However, within the agenda promulgated by the new Governor in Oklahoma, 'national' may also have implied 'state' team.





**Figure 42** Affies swimming team, early 1950s. De Jong stands on the far left in the back row.



**Figure 43** Ernst de Jong, *Jan van Riebeeck arriving in Southern Africa*, gouache on brown paper, undated. The work was later dated as 1944, and attributed to a ten-year old de Jong, but the brown paper medium is identical to that of Figure 45, labelled '9B' (when de Jong was sixteen and attending *Jan van Riebeeck* high school in Cape Town).



**Figure 44** The de Jongs, dressed up for a special occasion (perhaps Gerrit and Alma's wedding anniversary), in the garden at Esselen Street, August 1950. Gerrie stands to Alma's left. The young woman to the right of Gerrit is probably Paul's first wife, Rosemary Angus.



**Figure 45** Ernst de Jong, *still life with bucket*, gouache on brown paper, 1951 (labelled '9B').

De Jong, in the meanwhile, had been winning both local and national diving championships in South Africa (de Jong 2014\_16 December\_004\_05:30-06:50), not as part of the *Affies* swimming team (Fig. 42), but as a result of his association with the Hillcrest Swimming Pool.<sup>138</sup> Although his diving then was not of a very serious nature — there was no coach other than Pop Dyson, who was not a diver — de Jong nevertheless represented the then Northern Transvaal region, and travelled out of town to compete in other provinces.<sup>139</sup> Consequently, when Gerrie drew up his list of top achievers in South Africa, de Jong found himself in the team of five young South African swimmers selected for sports scholarships at a university in the USA.<sup>140</sup>

It was a singular opportunity. South Africa, in 1951, was still very much a cultural outpost of Europe. De Jong's own father admired North European culture, and the South African artists JH Pierneef, Irma Stern, Maggie Laubser, Gregoire Boonzaier, Cecil Higgs, Bettie Cilliers-Barnard, Cecily Sash, Christo Coetzee, Alexis Preller, Cecil Skotnes and Walter Battiss<sup>141</sup> had all travelled to 'the old country' to receive training in either England, Holland, Germany or Italy. *Lantern*, a newly launched South African journal of adult education (whose cover designs de Jong would soon provide), chose to depict, on its first issue in 1949, the 'light' of Western culture as being distinctly that of the 'Old Masters'.

The USA, at this point, was emerging from the aftermath of WWII and aggressively establishing itself as a major player on the world stage. In 1951, it was embroiled in the Korean War (that lasted until 1953), and was still — officially — at war with both Germany and Japan (until October 24 and September 08, 1951, respectively). Despite the opening of the United Nations headquarters in New York in January 1951, atomic testing began in the same month in the Nevada Desert as the USA embarked upon a global strategy to challenge Soviet power (Cold war 2015; 1951 in the Unites States 2015; Timeline 1951 [sa]). The so-called 'Second Red Scare' — typified by the conviction of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg of espionage in March 1951 — markedly influenced the sentiment of American society and contributed to the popularity of films with themes of the invasion of America by un-American thought (Red scare 2015). October 1951 had also seen the scandalous Johnny Bright incident, a violent on-field assault on an African American player during an American college football game (Johnny Bright incident 2015). A six-photograph sequence of the incident won the photographers the 1952 Pulitzer Prize for photography, and eventually made the cover of *Life* magazine. The offending player, Wilbanks Smith, hailed from none other than the Oklahoma State University, in Stillwater, Oklahoma.<sup>142</sup>

This xenophobic community was not, perhaps, the most propitious destination for a self-opinionated young daredevil from Africa. On the other hand, 1951 also saw the American artist Franz Kline produce *Painting No. 11* (Fig. 50); Barnett Newman painted the colossal *Cathedra*; and Ben Shahn (1898-1969) produced *Composition for Clarinets and Tin Horn* (Timeline 1951 [sa]) (Fig. 46). Cars had become more luxurious and had more powerful engines (The year 1951 ... 2014), the first commercial colour telecast took place from the Empire State Building, the UNIVAC computer was demonstrated in Philadelphia, and the first rock and roll song — *Rocket 88* — was recorded (Timeline 1951 [sa]). Although it would only be published in 1957, Jack Kerouac completed his *On the road* manuscript early in 1951, while JD Salinger's *Catcher in the rye*<sup>143</sup> was released in June of that year (Timeline 1951 [sa]) (Fig. 49). Finlo Rohrer (2009), writing for the BBC News Magazine, says of the Salinger novel: "The book's publication in 1951 came at the dawn of the age of the teenager. A new social category, newly economically empowered and hungry for culture, was fed by music, films and novels".

De Jong was not entirely ignorant of American culture when he accepted the Oklahoma scholarship; Gerrie would have communicated at least some sense of the lifestyle there (Fig. 43). Nevertheless, 1951 was an auspicious year in which to leave the cosy confines of Pretoria for the USA. Gerrit and Alma already had a son studying in

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<sup>138</sup> The assertion that he did not win championships as part of an *Affies* team may be one more way in which de Jong chose to distance himself from this bastion of conservative, Afrikaans ideology. It is difficult to see, however, how he could have competed *outside* the ranks of an official, school team (of which he was, clearly, a member).

<sup>139</sup> Rather curiously, de Jong recalls these achievements very much as an afterthought.

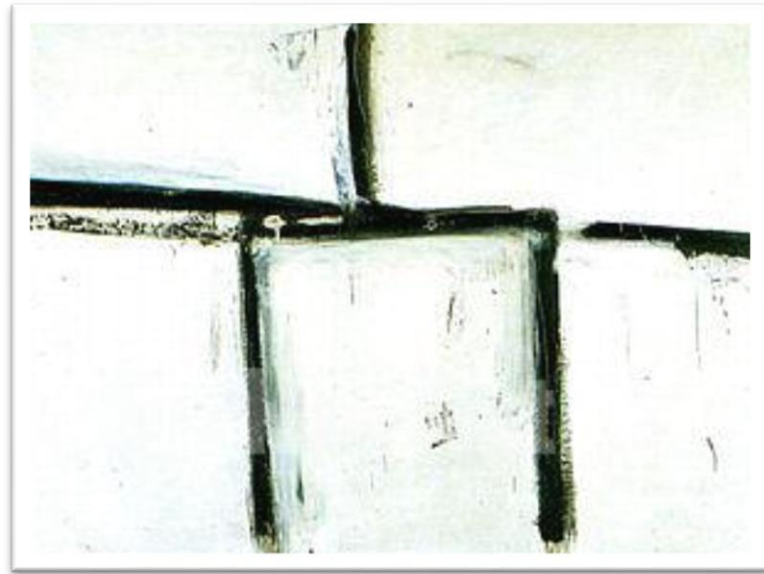
<sup>140</sup> Other members of the team were Peter Duncan, Lyn Meiring, Julian Dyson, and Mell van Helsing.

<sup>141</sup> Battiss first visited Europe when he was 32 (Walter Battiss 2015).

<sup>142</sup> De Jong (2013\_05 June\_007\_00:25) was recruited by The University of Oklahoma, in nearby Norman, Oklahoma and rather condescendingly likened Oklahoma State University to an "agricultural college".

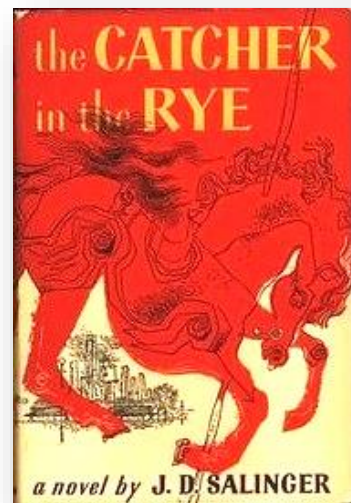
<sup>143</sup> The novel's sixteen-year old protagonist, Holden Caulfield, who has become an icon for teenage rebellion, before being expelled was the manager of his school's fencing team, a sport at which de Jong would later excel. The book that Caulfield reads in the novel, is, Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*. Caulfield's at various times "disaffected, disgruntled, alienated, isolated, directionless, and sarcastic" (Rohrer 2009) character evokes de Jong's own discomfiture with the rules and restrictions of the adult world.





**Figure 50** Franz Kline, *Painting No. 11*, 1951 (Painting No 11 ... 2015).

**Figure 49** E Michael Mitchell (designer), cover of first edition of JD Salinger's *The catcher in the rye*, 1951 (Rohrer 2009). In the novel, horses are used as a metaphor for the transition from childhood to adulthood.



**Figure 46** Ben Shan, *Composition for Clarinets and Tin Horn*, 1951 (Composition for Clarinets ... [sa]).



**Figure 48** Ben Shahn, *Everyman*, tempera and oil on board, 1954 (Circus [sa]).



**Figure 47** Ben Shahn, *Third allegory*, tempera on paper, 1955 (Ben Shahn, painting 'Third Allegory' ... [sa]).



Oklahoma, and they appear to have supported the scholarship. However, de Jong's crotchety grandfather, Jacob Jan, refused to sponsor his grandson's departure from the country in which he, Jacob Jan, had worked hard to establish respect and cultural roots. Consequently, Gerrit had to take out a loan to pay for his son's passage to America<sup>144</sup> and, according to de Jong, Jacob Jan, in an act of malicious ire, donated the equivalent sum as a bursary to the University of Pretoria Faculty of Engineering, reasoning that if de Jong wanted to sponge off his grandfather, he could do it locally (de Jong 2015\_7 May\_01).<sup>145</sup> The incident, and perhaps more particularly the telling thereof, reinforces, for de Jong, his father's unflinching support, and, simultaneously, evokes considerable bitterness with regard to his grandfather's truculence: having denied his son a career in painting, Jacob Jan once again attempted to impose his will with regard to his grandson's education.<sup>146</sup> There is a sense in which, even if he had personal reservations about de Jong's relocation to Oklahoma, Gerrit would have gone to considerable lengths to facilitate the disputed trip. Consequently, however unpleasant the circumstances surrounding its funding, the Oklahoma offer was secured and, by the end of his matric year in 1951, de Jong was set to be propelled into an exhilarating new world, an experience that would have far-reaching consequences.

That part of his life that had formed the essential de Jong was now in the past. It comprised a curious, and often contradictory, set of influences. On the one hand, the boy was immersed in the mainstream of emotions, rhetoric and symbolic actions of Afrikaner nationalism. It is likely that he may have met, as the son of a senior civil servant at a time when the tenets of *apartheid* were being entrenched in law, the very people who were introducing these laws. He was raised in the centre of Pretoria, the seat of the Nationalist government, and his entire school career was informed by the values of Afrikaans Christian nationalistic education; he sang the national anthem in Afrikaans.

Yet de Jong did not construct his ideological framework in these environments. In the first instance, the family distanced itself from all religion, thus removing de Jong from a critical arena of Afrikaner nationalist performance. Secondly, whether unconsciously or deliberately, and for whatever reasons, de Jong pulled away from his father's need for assimilation into the *volk*. Despite his apparent sympathy for Gerrit's character, and empathy with the latter's thwarted dreams,<sup>147</sup> de Jong, as a child, seems to have felt more at home with his surrogate father, Pop Dyson, and his English 'brothers' at the Hillcrest Pool.

Hillcrest, in the 1940s and 1950s, was the hub of social exchange in Pretoria (Basson 2015), and de Jong's attachment to it was not exceptional. However, swimming as an activity is reliant upon the element of water, whereas Afrikaner cultural tropes, grounded in a legacy of farming, forcefully evoke the earth, to the point where an Afrikaner intellectual bewailed his compatriots' antipathy to the sea.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, the very nature of swimming and, in particular, diving is a celebration of the streamlined, elegant and perhaps even effeminate body, as it courts the pure and weightless environments of water and air. As a symbolic act, few recreational activities could have differed more from the Afrikaners' national obsession, namely rugby, in which blood, sweat and soil mix with equal amounts of shuddering flesh in a grinding display of brute, masculine strength.

Swimming was therefore a means of signalling dissent, however politely, from the Germanic *Sturm und Drang* that his father so admired in the Afrikaner. Swimming aligned de Jong with his self-constructed sense of Englishness, gleaned from his mother. Alma, for her part, offered him an example of womanhood that was, if not exactly emancipated, somewhat unconventional; she fashioned an independent persona (and, arguably, source of income) by studying bees and managing her own apiary. There is also the possibility that Alma, being English, and Gerrit, being Dutch, supported different factions within the limited, if somewhat volatile, arena of white politics

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<sup>144</sup> De Jong could not recall how his brother's trip to the USA was funded.

<sup>145</sup> There is no record of a bursary donation from a JJ de Jong in the UP archives and the exact nature of Jacob Jan's fiscal spite therefore remains unclear. Somewhat illogically, the incident caused de Jong to hold a grudge against the University itself. Owing, in the main, to his weak marks in mathematics, de Jong did not secure entrance to a South African university, and he could not, therefore, benefit from a local university bursary even had he chosen to do so. However, the University of Oklahoma accepted him on the strength of his diving accomplishments. This unequal assessment of his worth may have rankled with de Jong.

<sup>146</sup> De Jong (in Groenewald 2014) has stated that the incident "almost killed" his father, but this may be an exaggeration. He claims that his parents had very limited means; however, there is evidence that this was not the case. The Charles Street property was extensive, Gerrit and Alma travelled to the USA to attend Gerrie de Jong's wedding in Oklahoma (de Jong 2016\_29 April), and Gerrit also collected paintings. Perhaps the reference is not so much to a fiscal killing as an emotional one.

<sup>147</sup> This empathy may have developed later in life; whether the adolescent de Jong actually cared much for his parents' inner lives, is a matter for conjecture.

<sup>148</sup> See Scholtz (1954).

in South Africa in the 1940s, and that this divergence neutralised political feeling in the household. De Jong, for his part, eschewed crowd mentalities and seemed to regard the utopian passions of Afrikaners with aloofness. Although he attended the opening of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949, it was not for the sake of patriotism: he was enlisted by one Fred Papke, who had obtained the concession for the event, to man a cool drink stand (de Jong 2015\_13 May\_2\_01:10:30).

However, *performance* is pivotal in the staging of identity, and the likelihood exists that de Jong, in recalling this latter experience, at least partially constructs an act of memory that is rearranged with the benefit of hindsight. The inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument must have been an important event for the de Jongs, since a rare bound volume of long-playing records of the speeches and songs delivered at the event has survived in the household. It is of interest that de Jong, in explaining his apparently disinterested presence at this triumph of Afrikaner nationalism, also related an anecdote pertaining to the propinquity of the cool drink stand to the girls' showers. De Jong offered this snippet informally, then refused to repeat the story for recording purposes lest undesirable inferences be drawn about his moral character. In doing so, he — perhaps deliberately — emphasised rather than suppressed the schoolboy escapade, and diverted attention from more awkward questions about his political affiliations at the time.<sup>149</sup> However, aspects of the censored account reiterate de Jong's othering of Afrikaners (and indeed his own father's fascination with the culture): they were an exotic race, commanding one's clandestine gaze — but always at a distance, never as an initiate.

Yet, for de Jong, there was no real alternative to Afrikanerdom. Despite his claim to 'Englishness', the story of the little boy disavowing his Afrikaner status was fondly recounted by his teacher precisely because the repudiation was regarded as spurious, and therefore amusing. What he actually 'was', is uncertain; like many South Africans — and most individuals who do not align themselves with the certainties of a religion — de Jong, as an 18-year old, stood outside an unambiguous cultural identity. Beyond Tarzan, Martha Bold and the Hillcrest Swimming Pool, there were few precepts to which he showed obeisance, and this unclaimed fealty would make the encounter with America more forceful in its impact and influence: more than sixty years after arriving in Oklahoma, de Jong still hung the American flag in his house, in his paintings and in his heart.

Undoubtedly his belief in his own exceptional self, and the accompanying craving for the recognition of this brilliance, was already at work in the boy who rode on the fire engine. However, the daredevil, the narcissist and the artist would meld into the force that was to become the man in a great, wonderful rush in Oklahoma. Whereas, for many, childhood offers the most magical and cherished memories, de Jong seems to have been waiting, poised as on a board, to launch himself into life in America. In a sense, until 1952, he had not yet been born.



**Figure 51** The South Africans, shortly after their arrival in Norman, Oklahoma, in 1952. Both de Jongs, the younger kneeling in the front, are wearing tam o' shanters, perhaps a gift (along with her home-knitted jerseys) from Alma.

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<sup>149</sup> His response to the segregated busses in Cape Town was still in the future.

## 3.3 Oklahoma 1952 - 1957

### 3.3.1 *Where the wind comes sweepin' down the plain ...*

**D**e Jong set sail for America with his South African companions at the end of 1951, arrived in New York — where he rushed to the Museum of Modern Art and was overawed by Constantin Brâncuși's *Bird in space* (1928) (de Jong, in Groenewald 2014)<sup>150</sup> — and then travelled by train through snow-covered rural America to the university town of Norman, in the state of Oklahoma (Fig. 51).<sup>151</sup>

Oklahoma was established in 1907 as the 46<sup>th</sup> state in the Union and became a focal point for the emerging oil industry; located in the South Central United States, it lies partly in the Great Plains. Its name is derived from the Choctaw words *okla* and *humma*, meaning 'red people' (Wright 1936:156), and it bears, despite the snow, many resemblances to the country of de Jong's birth. A geographically diverse state, Oklahoma boasts four primary mountain ranges, semi-arid high plains in the state's north-western corner, shortgrass prairie and scrublands in the western regions of the state and deciduous forests in the southeast. Most of the state is characterised by severe weather: it has one of the highest tornado strike rates in the world (Oklahoma 2015).<sup>152</sup>

Like Southern Africa, Oklahoma's history is bound up with colonialism, white settlement and displacement of native peoples. During the nineteenth century, thousands of American Indians were expelled from their ancestral homelands across North America and transported to the Oklahoma area,<sup>153</sup> defined then as the 'Indian Territory'. In the late 1900s, cattle ranches developed as cowboys drove their animals north and runs were held where selected territories were opened to immigrant settlement. Those who crossed the border before the official opening were said to have run 'sooner', leading to the term *sooners*, which became the state's official nickname: the Sooner state (Oklahoma 2015).

Oklahoma also has a rich African American history; by the early twentieth century, the city of Tulsa sported one of the most prosperous black communities in the USA. (Oklahoma 2015). Oklahomans thus demonstrate great cultural diversity, including a high rate of English, Scotch-Irish, German, and American Indian ancestry, with 25 different native languages spoken: Western ranchers, American Indian communities, southern settlers, and eastern oil barons shaped the state's cultural predisposition (Oklahoma 2015), resulting in a robust and eclectic mix.

Owing to its prior status as an "Indian commonwealth" (McWilliams 1956b: 25) — much like the so-called 'independent homelands' in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s — Oklahoma was, in the 1950s, still regarded as "a mighty young state". It was set, in 1957, to celebrate its 'semi-centennial' and Governor Raymond Gary launched a strident campaign to fan the fires of state pride, hitherto lacking in its citizens. The parallel with the Union of South Africa, poised to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1960, is striking: the editor of *Oklahoma Today* — the slick, revamped successor to the rather homely *Resourceful Oklahoma* — John McWilliams (1956b:25, emphasis in original), rallied to the cause (not surprisingly, since the Governor was chairman of the editorial board):

This unequalled, driving desire for the new is producing ... formidable results — John Steinbeck notwithstanding!<sup>154</sup>... the *new* Oklahoma has discarded the [*sic*] knee-britches and donned sleek tailored slacks; the prairie schooner has given way to the Jaguar; modernistic homes ... have replaced the mud hut; cowtrails have yielded to modern highways ... Oklahoma's insatiable desire for the

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<sup>150</sup> Referred to by de Jong as 'Bird in flight'.

<sup>151</sup> Norman lies on the outskirts of Oklahoma City.

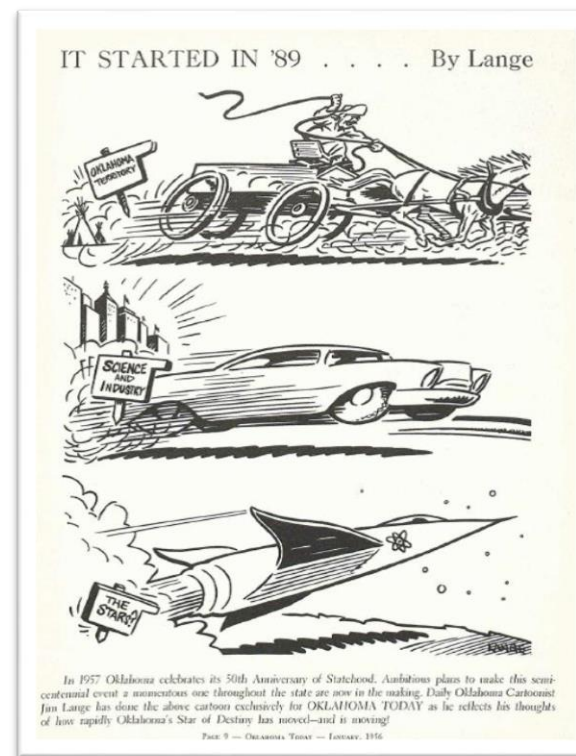
<sup>152</sup> Shortly after arriving in Norman in 1952, de Jong himself had experienced the terror of a tornado strike (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_08:14). Coincidentally, on the day that I interviewed him about his arrival in Norman, headline news was of a devastating tornado that had struck the American town the day before.

<sup>153</sup> Apparently, with their black slaves (Carter 1976:232).

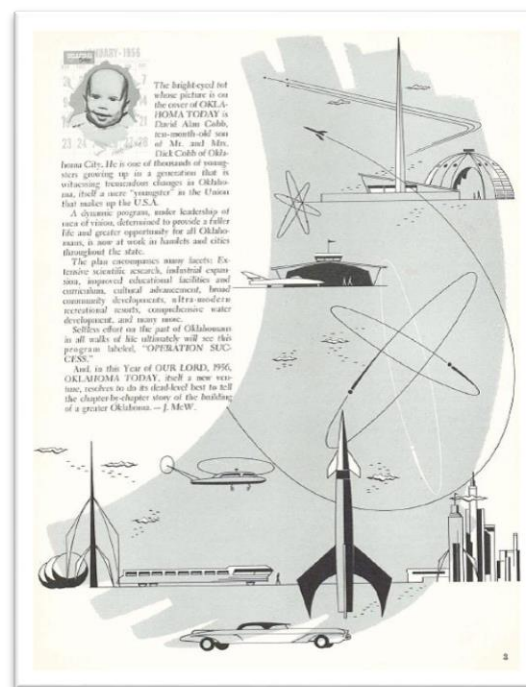
<sup>154</sup> Steinbeck's novel, *The grapes of wrath* (1939), describes the plight of uneducated dust bowl-era farmers in Oklahoma and thus popularised the negative cultural stereotype of the poverty-stricken 'Okie' (Oklahoma 2015).



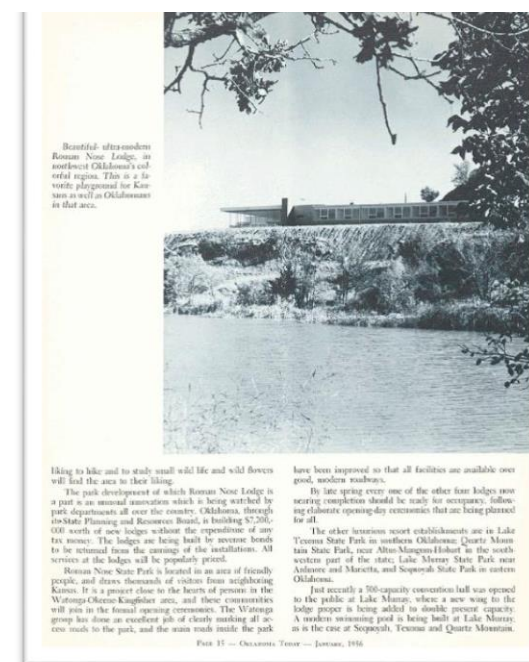
**Figure 52** Paul Lelevbre (art director), cover of *Oklahoma Today*, January 1956. The “bright-eyed tot” is David Alan Cobb, of Oklahoma City.



In 1957 Oklahoma celebrates its 50th Anniversary of Statehood. Ambitious plans to make this semi-centennial event a momentous one throughout the state are now in the making. Daily Oklahoma Cartoonist Jim Lange has done the above cartoon exclusively for OKLAHOMA TODAY as he reflects his thoughts of how rapidly Oklahoma's Star of Destiny has moved—and is moving!



**Figure 53** Paul Lelevbre (art director), futuristic Oklahoma (*Oklahoma Today*, January 1956: 3).



**Figure 54** Paul Lelevbre (art director), spread featuring the “beautiful, ultra-modern Roman Nose Lodge” (*Oklahoma Today*, January 1956:15).

modern day finds her far ahead of her older, more 'established', sister states in the drive for new industrial and cultural advancement ... So ... Let's all get proud together!

De Jong would have witnessed, in the oratory and emphasis on modern design, a precursor for the utopian mood back home. The cover of the first issue (January 1956) of *Oklahoma Today*, art directed by Paul Levebvre, departed from the anodyne pictures of nature used by its predecessor and featured a constructivist-type design that depicts a rather startling black and white photograph of a baby's head bursting through a calendar page (Fig. 52). Overseen by Governor Gary, *Oklahoma Today* (in the mid-1950s) presented a calculated balance between a sense of tradition, on the one hand — Oklahoma is part of the 'Bible belt', known for its politically and socially conservative views — and progressive modernism on the other (Figs. 53-55). The masthead and layouts showcased bold typographic solutions, including the use of slab serifs typical of nineteenth century novelty fonts — a trend that had been introduced by the ground breaking New York graphic designer, Lester Beall (1903-1969), but, in Oklahoma, also pointedly referenced the Western ranching roots of the state. Concomitantly, editorial content highlighted industry and science, including illustrations of futurist space travel (e.g., McWilliams 1956a:3; Anderson 1956:8; It started in '89 ... 1956:9).

Attention was also drawn to 'ultramodern' luxury park lodges, such as the Roman Nose Park Lodge (e.g., Hatfield 1956:15; Today's Oklahoma ... 1956:12), where nature and modernism bedded down in a new 'pay as you go' system. The name 'Roman Nose', contrary to expectation, refers to a prominent Cheyenne warrior, whose likeness dominated the entrance to the eponymous lodge (Fig. 56); it also signifies the rather ambivalent relationship between European settler and American Indian cultures. On the one hand, there was great interest in the artefacts of the 'native' tribes: OU prided itself on its American Indian collection that, in 1954, made up the largest section of the university museum (Museum has fine Indian pieces 1954:6). American Indian motifs were frequently incorporated into art and design produced by



**Figure 56** De Jong at the gate to the Roman Nose State Park, c1956.

'white' practitioners, notable examples being the state's flag,<sup>155</sup> and the OU campus itself. The deep connection of American Indians with regard to the land was acknowledged (e.g., New dam named ... 1954:5), yet, inevitably, the acknowledgment bordered on appropriation of the exotic for commercial ends. As an example of the latter, the Oklahoma Tourist Bureau's prize-winning 1955 travel attraction display included a large inset photograph of Dorothy Reid, the "vivacious Cherokee Indian attendant", who, like some piece of promotional equipment, "accompanied the exhibit to all shows" (This month will see ... 1956:20). Thus, despite inserting American Indians into the history of the state, the slogan adopted to signify fifty years of progress in Oklahoma — 'From tepees to towers'<sup>156</sup> — signifies the putative backwardness of their culture.

Yet, in comparison to African Americans — the pages of *Oklahoma Today*, in the 1950s, give no hint that black Americans live and work in the state — American Indians appear to have been an accepted part of everyday life in Oklahoma, and, on occasion, a source of intense pride. Most notable in this respect was the contribution that American Indian dancers in Oklahoma made to ballet in the USA. Five ballerinas with American Indian 'heritage'<sup>157</sup> attained international fame, and presented Oklahoma with "a supreme opportunity ... to develop a state-wide regional ballet of such merit as to create an international model" (Burchardt 1962:7, 9). Most pertinently, Yvonne Chouteau and her husband, Miguel Terekhov, developed the University of Oklahoma's dance program and directed the Oklahoma City Civic Ballet for ten years. Bill Burkhardt (1962:9), McWilliams's successor at *Oklahoma Today*, regarded the unique dance culture that emerged in Oklahoma as "a new art form equal to our nation's contribution in other areas of music, art, government, the dignity of man, and human rights".

<sup>155</sup> The flag was designed in 1925 by Louise Funk Fluke, who found inspiration in the collection of the Oklahoma Historical Society. She combined an "old Indian peace pipe, [and] a worn chieftain's shield" with "the white man's olive branch" (Hendley 1956:12;13). In 1955 de Jong's drawing lecturer, Joseph Taylor, sculpted a three-dimensional version of the flag, which was set into a bathhouse wall at the Lake Texoma lodge (A workman puts finishing touches ... 1955:12).

<sup>156</sup> See *Oklahoma Today* VI (9) November/December:14.

<sup>157</sup> See Home town and tribal background [sa].



All in all, although de Jong's (2013\_22 May\_132057\_19:30) recollection that Robert Bell — a prominent dancer and ballet teacher in Oklahoma in the 1950s — choreographed the famous musical, *Oklahoma*, is misplaced,<sup>158</sup> its title song aptly captures the feverish optimism of starting out life in this 'brand new state':

*There's never been a better time to start in life / It ain't too early and it ain't too late!  
Starting as a farmer with a brand new wife / Soon be livin' in a brand new state!  
Brand new state - gonna treat you great!  
... We know we belong to the land / And the land we belong to is grand!  
And when we say / Yeeow! Aye-yip-aye-yo-ee-ay!  
We're only sayin', you're doin' fine, Oklahoma! / Oklahoma OK!* (Oklahoma Lyric 2015).

### 3.3.2 The University of Oklahoma

The University of Oklahoma was founded as a coeducational public research university in 1890, and in 1896 it awarded its first degree in pharmaceutical chemistry; after WWII a period of rapid growth occurred and enrolment surged (University of Oklahoma 2015). As with the state itself, the history of the institution evinces parallels with South Africa's recent past, demonstrated in events that occurred shortly before de Jong's arrival in the early 1950s.

Prior to 1955, it was state law in Oklahoma that no school should enrol both white and black students, but in 1948 a court case forced the Board of Regents at OU to admit GW McLaurin, a black man, to graduate school. Although a *bona fide* student, McLaurin was directed to study and take his meals in segregated areas. In 1950, the US Supreme Court overturned the university's policy for segregation (however, at graduate school level only). The case was an important precedent for the more famous 1954 case of *Brown v. Board of Education* which disallowed 'separate but equal' policy at all school levels (University of Oklahoma 2015). The library in which McLaurin had been 'quarantined' has been designated a National Historic Landmark in the USA; it is also an example of the distinctive campus architecture, designed in the eclectic 'Cherokee Gothic Style' (Fig. 57) — a term coined by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright when he visited the campus (University of Oklahoma 2015).

When de Jong arrived at OU, its president was George Lynn Cross (1905 -1998), who, in a tribute to OU's "most famous and storied athletic programme" (University of Oklahoma 2015), justified an increase budget by declaring that he would like to build a University "of which the football team could be proud" (George Lynn Cross 2015) (Fig. 58). At the time of writing, OU still held the record for the longest winning streak in The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) history, when the Sooners won 47 consecutive games — notably, from 1953 to 1957. De Jong would therefore have been caught up in the institution's most exhilarating sporting moment, in which a sense of invincible power must have prevailed.

According to de Jong, he had been offered residency in several fraternities, but chose to join an athletics house. New students did not have to declare a major (a concentrated course of study) until their Junior (i.e., third) year. In his selection of subjects in his freshman (i.e., first) year, he was led by his brother, Gerrie, who proposed, amongst others, American history and geology (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057). De Jong (2013\_22 May\_145052\_41:36) states that, at this point, he "really didn't care" about his academic programme; there had been no grand plan when he accepted the scholarship.

**Figure 58** University of Oklahoma official logo and insignia of its sports teams (University of Oklahoma [sa]).



**Figure 57** Layton, Hicks & Forsyth (architects), entrance to the Bizzell Library, University of Oklahoma (Bizzell Memorial ... 2017).

<sup>158</sup> The show was conceived and launched in New York in 1943, with choreography by Agnes de Mille (*Oklahoma!* 2015). The film version was released in 1955, when de Jong was a student at OU. The January 1956 issue of *Oklahoma Today* ran a photographic spread of the premiere of the film in New York, which was attended by several Oklahoman celebrities.

However, in addition to his electives, one subject, namely English Junior, was compulsory; without this credit, no degree would be conferred. According to de Jong (2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:11:52), he had a “set-to” with the lecturer (a woman whose name he, rather atypically, cannot recall) about religion. Echoing his bitterness with regard to his earlier school experiences, de Jong states that she “didn’t like what I was writing”. He argued that the content of his prose was irrelevant, but the lecturer, predictably, disagreed, so de Jong resorted to his tried and tested strategy when thwarted: he stopped attending class.

In marked contrast, de Jong’s lecturers at the School of Art<sup>159</sup> are recalled with admiration and affection as “a super lot” (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_46:20). He would eventually register for object design (sculpture), drawing, painting and information design, and chose information design as his major at the end of his sophomore (i.e., second) year. De Jong describes himself, upon arrival, as a “very young painter” who, prior to leaving South Africa, had been “painting trees and *blommetjies*” (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_145052\_16.07).<sup>160</sup> He wryly confesses that he thought “Pierneef was something else”, and that he had it in mind to “show the Americans how to draw”. While this approach might have served him well at the outset — he proudly displays a skilfully drawn nude from this period in his Dutch kitchen — when he reached his senior years, his lecturers cast a sceptical eye over his ‘pretty pictures’, and drawled, “C’mon ... Get up with it!”.

Several of the teaching staff at the school were adherents of both modernism and abstraction. In the 1940s, primarily in New York, a group of artists<sup>161</sup> started to introduce radical new directions in painting; although not a formal association, the group broke away from accepted techniques and subject matter, producing monumentally scaled works that stood as “reflections of their individual psyches” (Paul 2015). According to Stella Paul (2015), the movement effectively shifted the art world’s focus from Europe to the USA. De Jong arrived in Oklahoma as abstract expressionism reached its mature phase. By the mid-1950s, when he was a senior student, these works were seen widely in traveling exhibitions (Paul 2015), one of which was mounted in the museum gallery attached to the OU’s School of Art.

Thus, one morning the principal of the school, John O’Neill (1915-2004), summonsed his senior students, including de Jong, and marched them off to the museum. Here the Pierneef enthusiast was confronted with a black and white painting that occupied almost the full length of the gallery and was riveting in its raw visual power — Robert Motherwell’s *Elegy to the Spanish republic* (c1950).<sup>162</sup> De Jong (2013\_0522145052\_07:31;09:41) recounts that this experience was “intensely important ... It was a sea change at that point for me” (Fig. 72). Exposure to the works of other abstract expressionists heightened this epiphany, in particular, according



**Figure 59** Patriotic ‘jungle bunnies’ waving the then South African flag in Oklahoma, c1953. De Jong hovers at the far back of the group (wearing a distinctly different type of sweater to the other South Africans).

<sup>159</sup> The School of Art and Art History at the University of Oklahoma. The School was established in 1915, and claims to be the oldest and most comprehensive school of art in the state of Oklahoma (School of Art and Art History Mission Statement 2014).

<sup>160</sup> Little flowers. Within the context of this remark, made two years after the interviews started, it is of interest that, in the very first interview, de Jong selected the Egyptian mask as an exemplar of his creative output while still at school. The work that he completed with Aab-Tamsen and the unknown art teacher in Cape Town may, in the light of his future championship of abstraction, have been considered inappropriate to the story of his life.

<sup>161</sup> Including Jackson Pollock (1912–1956), Willem de Kooning (1904–1997), Franz Kline (1910–1962), Lee Krasner (1908–1984), Robert Motherwell (1915–1991), William Baziotes (1912–1963), Mark Rothko (1903–1970), Barnett Newman (1905–1970), Adolph Gottlieb (1903–1974), Richard Pousette-Dart (1916–1992), and Clyfford Still (1904–1980).

<sup>162</sup> Although the work exhibited at Oklahoma would have been completed before, or very soon after, 1953, it is difficult to determine which version of this painting by Motherwell de Jong would have encountered in the flesh; the series, inspired by a small drawing Motherwell made in 1948, evolved into an ongoing exploration of the theme in more than 150 canvases (Thaw 1987).

to de Jong, paintings by Jules Olitski (1922-2007), Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb. De Jong grasped that a single texture could be a painting: “Everything opens, the whole world opens for you”.

Whether the ‘sea change’ that de Jong conveyed to Pretoria had in fact been triggered by these artists may be open to debate. Rothko, Newman, and Still pioneered *colour field painting*, a tendency within abstract expressionism promoted by the art critic Clement Greenberg that was distinct from action painting; these artists in turn inspired Olitski’s post-painterly abstraction (Colour field painting 2017; Colour as field ... 2015). Although de Jong (2013\_0522145052\_09:50) cites Olitski as a “hugely important” influence in the context of his student experience, it is not exactly clear when or how de Jong may have encountered his work since the artist’s first solo show in the USA was held in 1958. Only after this event did he receive widespread acclaim (Jules Olitski 2015) and, although older than de Jong, gained prominence more or less at the same time as de Jong himself. It is therefore likely that de Jong’s admiration of this artist and the latter’s “pink walls” (de Jong 2013\_0522145052\_09:50) of colour — that only appeared in 1965 — was cultivated at a later stage.<sup>163</sup> The evidence — including de Jong’s student works — therefore suggests that the much vaunted legacy of abstract expressionism grew *from*, not *in*, the American experience, although smudging the timeline makes for a more compelling tale. Nevertheless, by claiming the icons of Motherwell and Olitski as a seminal influence, de Jong reveals the choices that constitute the threads of his own identity construction.

However, although Motherwell is powerfully symbolic for de Jong as a catalyst in his transformation from a painter of *blommetjies* to, in his view, an *enfant terrible* of abstract art, in real terms the influence of artists and designers in his immediate surroundings probably had a greater impact. O’Neill, whom de Jong (2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:09:30) remembers as being “offbeat, and very tall — a gentleman”, was a writer concerned with art education, but also a painter in his own right (Figs. 60 & 63). He was best known for his abstract imagery and early modern styles and his work was exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Carnegie Institute, and the World’s Fair in New York (John O’Neill ... 2013). He made a “huge impression” on de Jong, perhaps because, unlike the English lecturer, he imposed no preconceived programmes on his students: “Start”, he would say, “and let’s see what happens!”.

This open-ended approach appears to have been intrinsic to the teaching philosophy at the school; a similar principle was applied by de Jong’s “chief lecturer” (2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:03:21) Eugene Bavinger (1919-1997). Bavinger, a native Oklahoman, joined the School of Art in 1947 (Eugene Bavinger [sa]), and taught painting, drawing and design. Like O’Neill, he was a prolific painter, who exhibited and sold work in New York and California (Figs. 61, 62 & 64). De Jong describes Bavinger as a “renegade”, and his painting style as “abstracty”, recalling that he executed impressive drawings with ballpoint pen. According to de Jong, Bavinger’s way of teaching was “almost one of osmosis”; he would provide a theme and ask for dozens of thumbnail sketches, finally selecting one sketch from each student for further elaboration. No justification was given; the aspirant designer would simply be told to “go with that one”. The funny thing is, marvels de Jong (2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:05:28), that Bavinger “was never wrong”. After attending his classes for two or more years, this perceived ability to discern a good idea from bad transferred itself to Bavinger’s students: “That’s what we learnt: how to choose ... we learnt taste, and style, and selection”.

It was in Bavinger’s class that de Jong executed his *Steel* composition (Fig. 79), the only surviving design project from his student years. As is apparent from this work, projects were not purposively client-driven. While the outcomes could be adapted to promote specific entities, and were distinct from painting and sculpture, the aim was to solve technical problems of typography, layout and visualisation rather than respond to a target audience within a pre-determined commercial context. Of interest is de Jong’s recollection that the dominant visual device of a ladder was inspired by a visit to Taos, a village in New Mexico (2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:08:02).<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> What is of interest is that Olitski’s work preceding the pink ‘Prince Patutsky’ series more closely resembles de Jong’s own hard edge, decorative abstraction of the 1960s and 1970s, although it is the dreamy layers of floating colour, unlike anything he ever produced, which has resonated with de Jong. Curiously, de Jong’s last work bears a notable likeness to Olitski’s last paintings, for example, *Bathsheba Reverie*, 2001.

<sup>164</sup> With regard to the theme of ladders, it is interesting to compare their use in Figures 79 and 33.



**Figure 60** John O'Neil, *City strata*, oil on canvas, 1949 (Past auction [sa]).



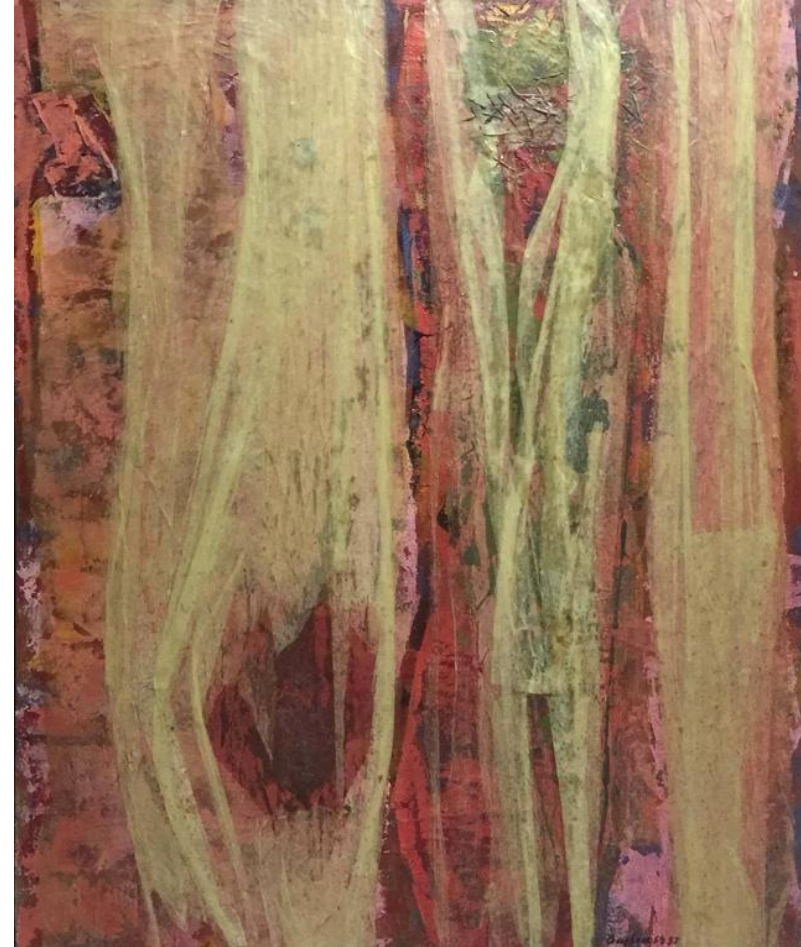
**Figure 61** John O'Neil, *Morning*, medium unspecified, 1958 (New arrivals [sa]).



**Figure 63** Eugene Bavinger, *Spring*, coloured cement on canvas, 1965 (Oklahoma State University Art Collection 2017).



**Figure 62** Eugene Bavinger, *Discovery*, medium unspecified, 1961 (Eugene Allen Bavinger (1919-1997) [sa]).



**Figure 64** Eugene Bavinger, *untitled*, mixed media polymer and acrylic, 1957 (Eugene Bavinger [sa]).



Although the relevance of pueblo architecture to steel construction is — notwithstanding the use of ladders in the former — somewhat quixotic, the story is a salient reminder that Oklahoma was a frontier town, with strong links to American Indian culture.

Bavinger, and his wife Nancy, would have an impact upon de Jong's sensibilities in other ways. Perhaps more famous than the artist himself, is the house that was designed for the Bavingers by the idiosyncratic architect Bruce Goff (1904-1982), who was chair of School of Architecture at OU.<sup>165</sup> Bavinger House was built over the



**Figure 65** Eugene Bavinger and his son, Bill, as depicted in *Life* magazine, 1955 (Space and saucer house 1955:155).

course of five years by the couple themselves, aided by a few of Bavinger's students and other volunteers (Bavinger House 2015). The Bavingers moved into the structure early in 1955, and *Life* magazine featured this “most gaped-at new house in the U.S.” (Space and saucer house ... 1955:155) in its 19 September 1955 issue (Fig. 65). The *Life* article throws some light on the Bavinger family as well: in 1955 Bavinger was “chairman of the department of design at the University of Oklahoma”, and Eugene and Nancy had two sons, one a young boy (shown playing with a boat in one of the interior ponds), the other a baby called Bill, who snoozes in his hanging bedroom in the main photograph. Bavinger appears as a handsome and youthful 44-year old (pictured in both instances with his sons), and Nancy, in a demure cotton dress, is shown packing laundry into a copper cylinder. *Life* refers to baby Bill as “a true 20<sup>th</sup> Century space child”; for the inhabitants of Norman, the Jetsons had arrived.<sup>166</sup>

De Jong did not assist in the construction,<sup>167</sup> but once the house was finished, he and his young wife spent a holiday ‘house-sitting’ this milestone of twentieth-century architecture, suggesting that de Jong was on very good terms with his lecturer and the latter’s family (Fig. 66). The experience made a lasting impression on de Jong, and he describes the extraordinary construction — the saucer-like ‘rooms’ were suspended from a 19-meter-high oil field drill stem — and tactile interior finishes (stone, smashed glass, black marble, spun copper, and fish ponds) with incredulous wonder (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_24:50-27:19). De Jong’s close encounter with the ground-breaking architecture, enhanced by its idealised inhabitants, could not fail to make an impression; only a few years later he would replicate the experience by designing and building, what he regarded as, the ‘first white house’ in Pretoria,<sup>168</sup> installing his own designer family, and furnishing the interior in avant-garde style. He



**Figure 66** Gwen and Ernst de Jong’s station wagon parked outside the Bavinger House.

would even better Bavinger by having his domestic triumph feature not in *Life*, but in *Vogue* (Figs. 108 & 109).

Three other lecturers who were influential were Joseph Taylor (1907-2000), James Henkle (1927-2015),<sup>169</sup> and Emilio Amero (1901-1976). Taylor, who became one of Oklahoma's most prominent sculptors (Everett 2009), was the drawing lecturer, and the only staff member who required adherence to a set task. This drawback was ameliorated by the fact that Taylor’s teaching was “astonishingly good” (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:22,10); drawing classes may also have been enlivened by the nude models, despite the latter, according to de Jong, being required to wear a tiny G-string.

<sup>165</sup> Goff became chair of the school in 1943 (Bruce Goff 2015). In 1955, while de Jong was a student at Oklahoma, Goff was forced from his position, allegedly for being homosexual. However, as Allison Meier (2012) remarks about Goff’s dismissal, in 1950s Oklahoma, a state which remains highly conservative, any lifestyle outside the norm was likely to cause irrational fear for young students’ morals.

<sup>166</sup> The ‘real’ Jetsons, a fictional family that live in a whimsical, futuristic utopia set in the year 2000, only entered American consciousness in 1962 (The Jetsons 2015), but Bavinger’s ‘space age’ family certainly anticipated this idealised future. The house itself survived into the twenty-first century, but in 2011 the structure was severely damaged by a windstorm; no funds were obtained for restoration (Bavinger House 2015). After his parents’ death, the house was completely destroyed by ‘baby Bill’ (Strout 2015), who, in a curious parallel with de Jong’s life, had as an adult become estranged from his father. According to Andrew Strout (2015), a colleague who was friendly with Bavinger before the latter’s retirement, the older son, Gene, had initially inherited the property, but was killed in an automobile accident while driving to Norman to claim this inheritance.

<sup>167</sup> De Jong reflects that the house might have been completed before he arrived in Oklahoma, but this seems not to have been the case.

<sup>168</sup> ‘White’ houses had, in fact, appeared in Pretoria before de Jong was born, for example 881 Government Avenue, in Arcadia, designed by William Gordon McIntosh and built in 1933 (881 Government Avenue ... 2011). The fact that de Jong spent part of his childhood at 951 Government Avenue riding on red fire engines suggests that he, more than most people, would have been aware of this early example of pioneering modernism in Pretoria, a rather curious circumstance given de Jong’s subsequent claim to priority in this regard.

<sup>169</sup> Henkle is the only lecturer mentioned by de Jong on whom there is, apparently, no information in the public domain, bar one reference to a group exhibition at the University of Oklahoma’s Museum of Art in 1981, at which occasion a James Henkel [sic] received “special mention for his desk” (Works of 74 artists displayed at OU 1981).

Henkle, who would become known for his modernist furniture (Oil and wood ... 2014), taught object design, and greeted de Jong at the beginning of each class with a theatrical “Good morning ... Mr Daay-djong!” (which moment de Jong re-enacts for the camera with delightful effect) (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_145052\_00:08). The lesson that has remained is not one of formal design principles, but the intriguing manner in which Henkle arranged the quotidian objects on his desk before the commencement of each lesson. De Jong’s engaging performance of this ‘do-ing of the desk’ (a strategy he employed in his own teaching) is a testimony to the enduring impact of a teacher’s personality on a pupil, as well as the pupil’s innate love of design (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_145052\_00:08-04:20). However, any three-dimensional work that de Jong may have produced for Henkle is lost; Amero’s influence, on the other hand, was more tangible and, of all de Jong’s lecturers at OU, he is the most celebrated creative practitioner.

Amero, like de Jong, was an *émigré* from a hot, exotic clime; he became a member of the first group of muralists commissioned during post-revolutionary Mexico, and he worked with many well-known artists, including Diego Rivera (Emilio Amero [sa]). In particular, Amero developed an interest in lithography; in the late 1920s, he went to New York City, where he worked as an illustrator, but returned briefly to Mexico, where he established a lithography workshop. Back in New York, he became a teacher, a commissioned Works Progress Administration (WAP) muralist, photographer and cinematographer. He developed a friendship with the poet Federico García Lorca, who wrote a script for one of Amero’s films. In 1946, Amero took a professorship at OU, where he established a print workshop that he managed until his retirement in 1968 (Emilio Amero [sa]).

In contrast to O’Neill and Bavinger, who both pursued abstraction, Amero’s work utilises powerful visual narratives that sometimes border on magical realism (Figs. 67 & 68). He painted several murals in the USA, of which his most notable was a WAP commission at the Psychiatric Building of the Bellevue Hospital in New York — destroyed shortly after completion in 1938, purportedly owing to its disturbing imagery (Adès & McClean, cited in Emilio Amero (biographical details)[sa]). Whether de Jong was aware of Amero’s vast cultural capital, beyond his association with Rivera, is uncertain; he comments that Amero had very little formal education, and thus regards his appointment as professor as rather incongruous (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:16:40). Yet, on a practical level, Amero offered important skills that de Jong would capitalise on later in life; he “taught a marvellous technical course” (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:18:40) and, as a result, de Jong would become well-known for his own skills in printing, and produce several series of acclaimed serigraphs. It is also probably not by accident that the erstwhile pupil took on mural design as a major aspect of his professional career.<sup>170</sup>

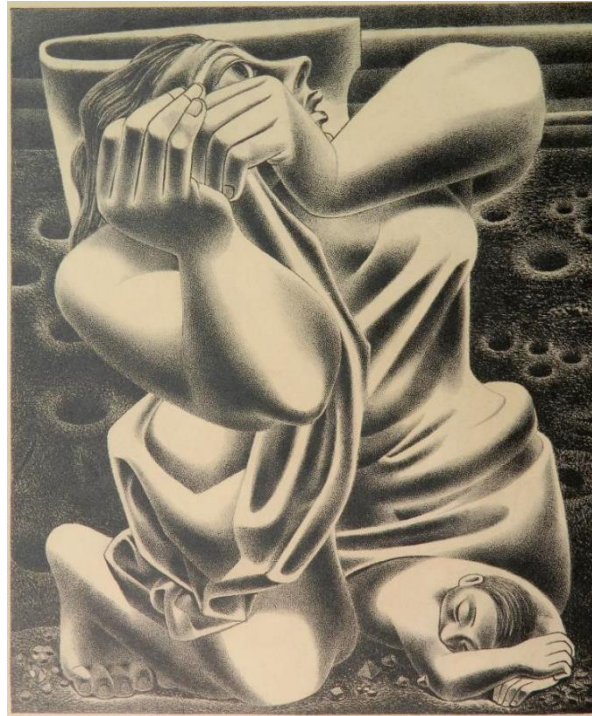
What de Jong does not comment on is Amero’s sometimes erotic subject matter. He describes, at some length, his lecturer’s “very careful, Mexican style of drawing on stone” and his construction of rounded, “tubular” (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:21:00) forms on a two-dimensional picture plane, but does not mention that these plump, shimmering shapes are often breasts, buttocks and splayed, naked thighs (Fig. 70). Notably, after relinquishing pure abstraction in the early 1970s, de Jong himself would embark upon a series of female nudes in which, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps coincidentally, he echoes the explicitness of Amero’s work (Fig. 69). On a more ideological level, the themes of some of de Jong’s surviving student works reflect the agenda of the Mexican muralists, namely an engagement with suffering and human despair (Fig. 71). De Jong, seemingly embarrassed by this show of social concern, however subtle, dismisses the earnestness of these early pieces as naïve student idealism, yet they are evidence that the young artist responded to the undercurrent of protest in the USA in the 1950s.

However, in their style and medium, de Jong’s student works at OU (Figs. 73-75) do not copy Amero’s glutinous realism, but evoke, to a remarkable degree, the whimsical eclecticism of the artist Ben Shahn. Shahn — who emigrated to New York from Lithuania and, like Amero, trained as a lithographer — dealt consistently with social

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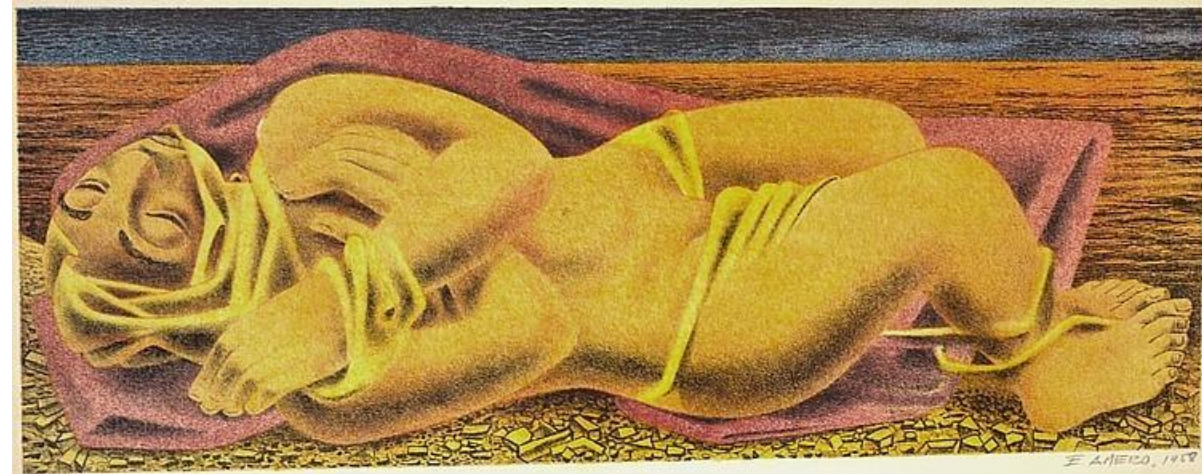
<sup>170</sup> De Jong was also an admirer of the WAP programme; it is likely that he was made aware of its projects by Amero.



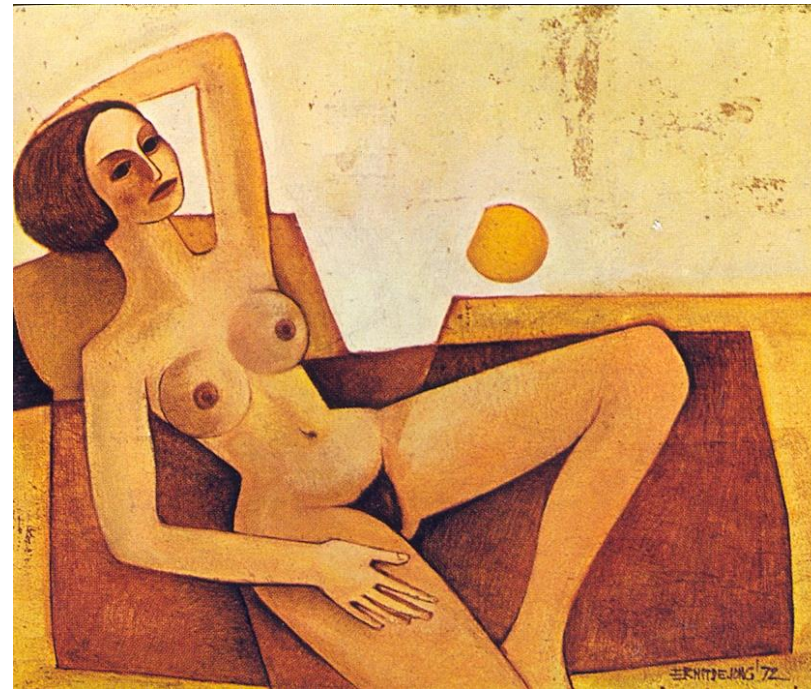


**Figure 69** Emilio Atero, *The innocents*, lithograph, undated (Emilio Atero auction price results [sa]).

**Figure 68** Emilio Atero, *Bound woman*, lithograph, 1958 (Emilio Atero auction price results [sa]).



**Figure 70** Emilio Atero, *Desnudo femenino reclinado*, medium unspecified, 1930 (Emilio Atero [sa]).



**Figure 67** Ernst de Jong, *Nude on beach*, gold leaf and oil on wood, 1972.

and political themes, and text and lettering often formed an integral part of his imagery (Ben Shahn ... [sa]). His style owed something to the nervous, distorted caricatures of George Grosz (1893-1959), and the visual poetry of Paul Klee (1879-1940) (Figs. 46, 47, 48 & 155). Bernarda Bryson Shahn (cited in Laurier 1999) observes that, “Shahn's art stood somewhere between the abstract and what is called figurative”. Like de Jong, he also ‘stood somewhere between’ the practices of graphic design and fine art, arguably with similar consequences. Joanne Laurier (1999), evoking Berman’s (1983) assessment of de Jong’s artistic worth, states of Shahn:

[W]hile his body of work cannot fail to ... impress the viewer, at the same time ... [t]he relative lack of complexity in his art — stemming perhaps from the artist's desire for a direct response or immediate acceptance — has a restricting character ... [and] it prevents the artist from entering the realm of truly great artistic endeavor.

It is not clear how and when de Jong became aware of Shahn, but the affinity is not invented: until the sale of the Hill Street house in 2017, a framed swathe of Ben Shahn calligraphy, illuminated with a line drawing of an angel, hung above the door of de Jong’s Dutch kitchen, and in one of the rare articles on design to which de Jong has put his name, Shahn is cited as an example of a ‘great modern master’ who also designed “for advertising” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:99). After de Jong’s death, an unusual little book by Alistair Reid (1960), with illustrations by Shahn (Fig. 133), surfaced in the de Jong collection, adding support to the premise that the latter was influenced by the artist. Amero may well have introduced his students to the work of Shahn; not only did the two artists share a background in lithography, Shahn — who was a sympathiser of the Russian Revolution— was also Diego Rivera's assistant on the ill-fated Rockefeller Center mural *Man at the crossroads* (1933) (Laurier 1999).<sup>171</sup>

Perhaps de Jong encountered Shahn’s graphic design as posters, or in magazines. Although Shahn’s images were a “relatively unmediated response” (Laurier 1999) to social issues, this easy charm may have been what appealed to de Jong. Moreover, when de Jong was an art student in the USA, Shahn reached the apogee of his painting career. Laurier (1999), in reviewing a retrospective exhibition of Shahn’s work, notes that the strongest pieces are from the 1950s; the imagery is “[f]igurative, yet with the juxtapositions and distortions of Surrealism”, and conveys “restlessness and disquiet”. Laurier selects *Composition for Clarinets and Tin Horn* (1951) (Fig. 48) to illustrate her review, a work that resembles de Jong’s paintings from this period. In Laurier’s (1999) opinion, *Composition for Clarinets* can be interpreted as

an anguished musician imprisoned by his instruments ... A solo tin horn, with a clown's face, is both mocking and pained. [Thus] [a]rtists are driven to create, sometimes as prisoners of their art.

A theme of ‘anguished’ genius, both ‘mocking and pained’, would have appealed to a young art student who was perennially at odds with the world. Notably, in addition to the rich colours and bricolage of texture and line, de Jong also used the signifier of a harlequin in his work (Fig. 75). Thus, despite his emphasis on the importance of Motherwell (encountered in his senior year), de Jong’s art works that have survived from the Oklahoma period (Figs. 71, 73, 74 & 75) demonstrate greater resonance with the poetic visual language of Bavinger, O’Neill and Amero, as well as Shahn’s illustrative surrealism, than with the stark monuments of abstract expressionism. Certainly, the capricious style that was the trademark of the early EDJS owes far more to Shahn than it does to Motherwell.<sup>172</sup>

His formal studies aside, part of de Jong’s experience as a student was taking on paid design work. Gerrie would eventually qualify as a petroleum biologist, and obtain a Master’s degree in this discipline; perhaps as a consequence of his brother’s studies, de Jong obtained part-time draughting work at oil companies in Oklahoma during university holidays. The job was tedious, but required precision — plotting spikes in geological readings to determine faults that could contain oil (de Jong, in Groenewald 2014).<sup>173</sup> More rewarding was his “first real design job, ever” (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_21:33), namely a cover (now lost) that he designed in response to a competition — most likely issued as a brief to students — for the Oklahoma City Civic Orchestra’s programme.

<sup>171</sup> The mural featured a likeness of Ilyich Lenin. Nelson Rockefeller, Rivera’s patron, asked the artist to remove the portrait; when Rivera refused, he was paid in full and dismissed. The mural was then destroyed (see Diego Rivera, *Man at the Crossroads* 2015).

<sup>172</sup> Although, as has been pointed out, Olitski’s joyful colour compositions of the early 1960s resonate in much of de Jong’s work. However, it is unclear whether de Jong was aware of Olitski at this time.

<sup>173</sup> These faults were called ‘eggs’; most were empty, but some contained oil. De Jong proudly recalls that he was responsible for identifying a productive ‘egg’.





**Figure 72** Daniel Hallinan (cinematographer), de Jong recounting the 'sea-change' brought about by Robert Motherwell's *Elegy*, screengrab from videotaped interview, 22 May 2013.

**Figure 71** Ernst de Jong, untitled lithograph, 1955.



**Figure 73** Ernst de Jong, gouache on board, undated and untitled student work.



**Figure 75** Ernst de Jong, *The successors*, lithograph, 1956.



**Figure 74** Ernst de Jong, *Hodge's store*, oil on board, 1955.



A much larger, and more lucrative, design project was commissioned by one Russell Pearson, for whom de Jong (with his fiancé Gwen Drennan) executed large information graphics detailing aspects of the oil industry (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_22:10) (Fig. 76).<sup>174</sup> Consequently, when de Jong came to compile his final show of work at the end of his senior year, he assumed the confidence of a professional exhibition designer, and set to the task of displaying the evidence of his talent with what must have appeared to his fellow students as manic, self-absorbed showmanship. He appropriated an entire floor of the art school (de Jong 2013\_0522145052\_20:15) and, anchoring the exhibition with bright yellow panels, approached the student show as if he were constructing a retrospective at MOMA (Figs. 78, 80 & 81). Indeed, in his curriculum vitae, de Jong (2014:4), refers to this event as a “solo exhibition held in [the] Oklahoma University Museum”. He was, once again, flying over the lagoon, and no-one could stop him.

Yet, despite — or perhaps because of — this spectacle, Bavinger seemed unsure as to whom he should award the prize for Best Student. How he would have learnt this is unclear, but de Jong (2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:16:00-38) recounts that it was Nancy, Bavinger’s wife, who exhorted her husband to, ‘Look at the exhibition!’. ‘Don’t you understand?’, she asks, ruling out all the other contenders: ‘He’s the best’ — at which injunction Bavinger then, one is required to imagine, nods sagely, strokes his chin, and replies: ‘Yes, Nancy, you’re quite right’. Underlying the bravado, there is something poignant about this story (and especially in its telling) in which the idealised mother pleads the case of her surrogate son’s worth before the Apollonian father, who has the power to honour or shame, and in which both parents then together bestow the highest accolade on the arrogant but exceptional child.

Except that it was not *quite* the highest accolade. Despite Nancy interceding on his behalf, de Jong was not judged the Best Student; the Letzeiser Gold Medal<sup>175</sup> in actual fact — if not in de Jong’s recollection — went to Robert Edmiston, a sculpture major.<sup>176</sup> As attested by a pamphlet featuring the recipients of the Roger Dougherty Memorial Awards (Fig. 77), de Jong was awarded a Silver Letzeiser, an exceptional achievement, but second prize nonetheless. De Jong may feel justified in upgrading his award to “best student in the faculty” (de Jong 2014:4; de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057) in that he certainly was judged the best *design* student, since both the Gold and Bronze awards went to fine art displays. It was remarkable that a student majoring in design should receive any medal at all, given the prejudice with regard to applied as opposed to ‘high’ art. However, after the fact, it is cumbersome to explain these circumstances; much easier to quietly chassé into the most recognised symbol of success — gold.



**Figure 76** Gwen and Ernst de Jong (designers & constructors), information graphics for the Petroleum Institute, c1956.

<sup>174</sup> There is no doubt in de Jong’s mind that the graphics were installed at the ‘Cowboy Hall of Fame’, which, according to de Jong, was “built” by Pearson. However, no reference to Pearson — in connection to the ‘Cowboy Hall of Fame’ — was found. Arising from an idea proposed by Chester Reynolds (National Cowboy ... 2014), the site for the *National Cowboy Hall of Fame* in Oklahoma City was indeed ‘dedicated’ in 1955 (Stewart 1956:7), placing de Jong in Oklahoma at the time that this project was launched. Gwen de Jong (2016) later confirmed that Pearson — who specialised in show-stand design — had no connection to the Cowboy Hall of Fame. However, de Jong’s putative “murals” for this establishment is one of the first things mentioned in his account of his student years, so there remains a possibility that there had been some involvement, subsequently confused or conflated with other undertakings, with the museum. No record of cowboy (or related) imagery survives.

<sup>175</sup> According to the OU official website (Letzeiser honor ... [sa]), the Letzeiser Awards are presented annually in memory of the late Alexander Letzeiser as a “stimulus of good citizenship and achievement”. The selections are made based on all of the following: academics, campus involvement, community involvement, honours and awards, and an essay response. Although the criteria may have been adjusted since 1956, the award is clearly open to all senior students at OU, and not limited to the School of Art.

<sup>176</sup> Bob Edmiston went on to teach sculpture in East Carolina University’s School of Art from 1962 to 1994, when he accepted emeritus status (Robert Edmiston 2017). His architectural commissions include facade, indoor and outdoor sculpture. Edmiston died on April 22, 2016, two months after de Jong.

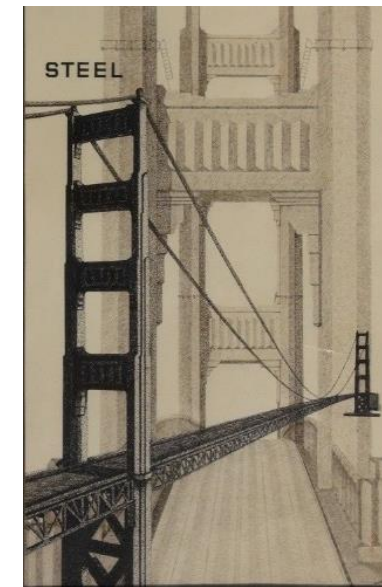


**Figure 81** Examples of de Jong's information design on display at his final exhibition of student work, 1957.



**Figure 80** De Jong's final year exhibition of student work, 1957. Except for the *Steel* drawing, none of these pieces had, at the time of writing, been located in the de Jong collection.

**Figure 78** The all-American artist / designer in front of his exhibition display. The captions and signage does not run diagonally, as de Jong remembers it. The use of yellow as a branding colours is of interest, since de Jong would later claim "an obsession with the colour blue" (A brilliant house... 1964:61).



**Figure 79** Ernst de Jong, *Steel*, concept drawing for Eugene Bavinger, c1955.



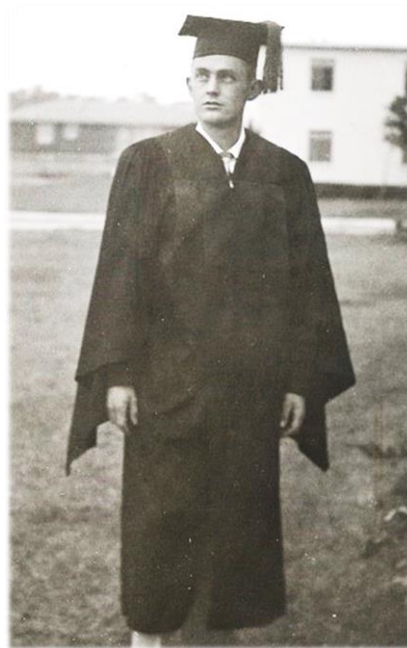
**Figure 77** Exhibition pamphlet page listing winners of the 1956 Letseizer Medals.



De Jong would, throughout his life, slide effortlessly from ‘truth’ into the realm of ‘embellished facts’. Never outright lies, de Jong’s versions of events are characterised by the advertiser’s skill in enhancing an already good story so that it becomes exceptional. Bronze, silver or gold, the fact is that the young South African had achieved star status; he also remained, in Bavinger’s (cited in de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:13:45) words, “very difficult”. At some point the matter of English Junior raised its ugly head: de Jong may have been Letzeiser quality, but, since he had never obtained this credit, he could not be awarded a degree.

The school therefore found itself in a tight spot. Bavinger informed de Jong that he would have to complete a special course in order to enable the School to award him both medal and qualification. De Jong, defiant in front of his yellow-themed tour de force, refused; if the institution was not prepared to acknowledge his exceptional work, that was “*fine*”. When Bavinger pointed out that he was being ‘difficult’ about the matter, de Jong, notably, responded: “Too bad — a degree is not that important to me”. The pupil had surpassed the mentor, and was imposing the rules of engagement.

What happened next is both remarkable and, perhaps, open to speculation. According to de Jong (2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:14:22), John O’Neill “stepped into the fray” by calling a meeting with the Board of Regents of the University, at which he proposed that the compulsory *passing* of English Junior should be waived in the case of foreign students: the individual in question had attended (at least partially) the course, and therefore satisfied the requirements of the institution. Upon his return from the meeting, O’Neill waylaid de Jong in a passage and — according to de Jong — called him over and rather abruptly informed him that a “new law” had been passed at the Board, and “it was all about *you*: we *are* going to give you your degree” (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_01:15:17),<sup>177</sup> before disappearing into his office. It was, states an amused de Jong, “a fun moment of my life”.



**Figure 82** Ernst de Jong in graduation gown, c1957.

But how much fun it actually was may be open to question. Although he stood his ground with regard to English Junior, de Jong must have been inwardly panicked about the possibility of not obtaining the degree.<sup>178</sup> In an informal conversation some months later, triggered by a photograph of himself in an academic gown (Fig. 82), de Jong (in Groenewald 2015\_22 January) repeated the story of the ‘missing’ degree with less good humour. The picture, he explained, was not taken at the graduation ceremony. In fact, he did not attend the ceremony at all because he was “angry with the university”; he had just put on a gown “for the photograph”. He was furious because — and here he emphasised each word as he recollected his outrage — “*they ... would ... not ... give ... me ... my ... degree!*”. Nothing in this second account suggests that the problem had been solved by a sympathetic Head of Department — in which case one might expect gratitude, not ire. On the contrary, the last statement implies that the matter had not been resolved at all; clearly, there had been more to the withholding of the qualification than de Jong suggested in his original account, or was even willing to concede later.<sup>179</sup>

Whatever the case, the issue of the degree was bound up with de Jong’s refusal to bow to the norm, his distaste for blinkered thought, obstructive academic conventions and institutional red tape in general, as well as his innate sense of pride and need for unconditional acclaim. Yet, in a reluctant nod to the trappings of the establishment, he posed, unsmiling, in an academic gown, complete with mortarboard. Since it is unlikely that he would have gone to the expense of hiring this apparel if he had no intention of attending the ceremony, the question arises: whose gown did he borrow, or was coerced to don, for the Kodak moment? It may have been his brother’s, or, it may have been that of his ‘brand new wife’, Gwen. As much as anything, de Jong’s romantic encounters shaped his American experience and, in equal measure, his future professional career.

<sup>177</sup> Bachelor of Fine Arts (de Jong 2014:4).

<sup>178</sup> Gerrie de Jong, who spent ten years at university, had already harvested a sheaf of qualifications at OU.

<sup>179</sup> That de Jong did, indeed, receive the degree has been confirmed by OU academic records (Anderson 2015\_17 July).

### 3.3.3 Swimmin' and spoonin' in the USA

De Jong married Gwendolyn Drennan in 1955, when he was in his fourth year of study. There was nothing unusual about this early marriage; OU provided married quarters for “the hundreds of married couples” (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_132057\_53:45) at the university, a measure taken, one assumes, to curb campus depravity. However, de Jong did not enter connubial bliss as an innocent; several anecdotes suggest that his arrival in the USA was an erotic as well as artistic rite of passage.

The early Oklahoma years were, de Jong reminisces, “grand days, amazing days ... American girls loved South African boys ... we were”, he adds smugly, “very popular” (de Jong 2014\_28 March) (Fig. 59). Thus, de Jong (2013\_22 May\_132057) relates that his first, albeit brief, date in Oklahoma was with a “Miss Ann Campbell [who] went on to become Miss America”. Although slightly exaggerated — Campbell was the fourth runner up in the 1956 Miss America pageant (Miss America 1956 2014) — the story is evidence of de Jong’s youthful bravado and need for approbation. De Jong’s daughter, Tamara (de Jong 2017\_04 February), explains that her father recalled asking the aspiring beauty queen whether she would pick him up in her car at a conspicuous point outside the male residence, to which request Ms Campbell gamely acquiesced.<sup>180</sup> Nothing came of the escapade — the ‘date’ only lasted an hour — but de Jong’s peers were, apparently, suitably impressed.

Then, in the first heady summer<sup>181</sup> after de Jong arrived, Gerrie and Julian Dyson took on a vacation job as managers of the municipal swimming pool in Elk City, Oklahoma, and Gerrie installed his younger brother as a life guard. According to de Jong (2014\_16 December\_004\_16:10) it was a very religious community, entirely Baptist controlled: the town councillors allowed “no dancing, no liquor, nothing”. It was, reiterates de Jong, “*exceedingly* conservative” and the de Jong brothers — irreligious, dashing and provocative (de Jong sported a cowboy hat as he reclined in his lifesaver’s chair) — caused a frisson of nervous expectation in the Elk City populace. True to form, the de Jongs organised for a group of revellers to be bussed to the neighbouring town of Clinton where dancing and alcohol were freely available (de Jong 2014\_28 March). As a consequence of this subversion, Gerrie was accused of being a communist and they were all “kicked out of Elk City by the mayor” (de Jong 2014\_28 March). Notably, de Jong recounts that, after this expulsion, a number of “ladies” from Elk City wanted to follow him to Oklahoma; one young woman persisted with her quest, but de Jong — tellingly — recalls that he only “saw her once”.

An entirely different setting was Fort Lauderdale to which the OU swimming team decamped, presumably to compete in a swimming event. The resort, to the north of Miami, is an important centre for swimming; it currently boasts The International Swimming Hall of Fame and Museum (ISHOF) that opened in 1965 with Johnny Weissmuller as its president (International swimming hall of fame 2016).<sup>182</sup> In a tale that echoes the Ann Campbell encounter — and might even have been prompted by the latter — de Jong (2014\_28 March) recollects that the OU diving team, wearing smart red jackets, came out of the pool complex at Fort Lauderdale and encountered a fine-looking girl who had stopped outside the entrance in a convertible Jaguar. The rest of the team restricted their response to shouting boyish remarks, but de Jong, acting upon his proclivity for reckless showmanship, “ran out and jumped into the car” (de Jong 2014\_28 March) and, to his delight and his fellow swimmers’ envy, the young woman promptly drove off with him. The sporting girl went by the name of Mish; de Jong saw her “every day and every night” (de Jong 2014\_28 March) for the entire time the team was in Fort Lauderdale, where her parents owned one of the beach front hotels, namely the ‘Cadillac Inn’.

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<sup>180</sup> Anne Campbell was Gwen Drennan’s roommate at OU, and possibly also registered for the same design programme since her ‘talent’ (as presented at the Miss America pageant) was a “furniture design display” (Miss America 1956 2014). Consequently, de Jong may have encountered Campbell and her car at the School of Art. Gwen de Jong (2016\_24 April) denies that de Jong could ever have dated Campbell (whose boyfriend was Tony McDonald, a star football player for OU), although it is possible that both de Jong and Campbell thought it prudent to refrain from mentioning the adventure to their future spouses.

<sup>181</sup> The timelines are rather scrambled in the recounting of this story. In a separate conversation, de Jong (2014\_28 March) indicates that the “summer of Elk City” took place in his second year of study. However, aspects of the story suggest a newness to American culture that places the occasion in his first year in the USA, but, as explained elsewhere, de Jong’s arrival in the USA half-way through the academic year has complicated the dating of events.

<sup>182</sup> It is possible that de Jong attended the opening event, or visited the centre soon after its opening, since he claims that he saw Johnny Weissmuller in Fort Lauderdale during one of his return trips to the USA (de Jong 2015\_13 May\_45:02), the first of which was indeed in 1965 (de Jong 2014:5).

There was, indeed, a Cadillac Motel in Fort Lauderdale, of which nothing now remains but a vintage postcard (Cadillac Motel 2013) (Fig. 83). The tourist image captures a quintessential American dream: blue sky, palm trees, a ludicrously elongated motor vehicle parked next to a Las Vegas-style neon sign and the American flag fluttering in the breeze. Set back from green, manicured lawns, is the hotel, a low slung modernist building announcing its apartment accommodation in racy, streamlined letterforms. Presumably, it was in one of these luxury apartments that the young couple met in their round-the-clock affair, but it seems as if de Jong, for a while, was



**Figure 83** Postcard depicting the Cadillac Motel, Fort Lauderdale (Vintage postcard ... 2014).

also drawn into the broader social culture of the resort. He went racing — ‘dragging main’ — in Mish’s convertible, and acquired a hanger-on bodyguard, a “large American boy who kept an eye out for me”.

Perhaps during this period (but certainly associated with it), de Jong performed stunt dives at the rate of \$15 per dive as part of the in-house entertainment at a Las Vegas hotel (de Jong 2014\_28 March). He also participated in a promotional film featuring his diving prowess.<sup>183</sup> The chronological order and exact contexts of these slightly fantastical exploits remains unclear, but it is not surprising that the maverick de Jong was eventually reeled in and reprimanded by OU authorities for neglecting the terms of his scholarship. So, it was back to Oklahoma, where he nevertheless managed to secure a room to himself in the student residence, allegedly because no-one wanted to share space with his clutter of modelling clay and half-finished canvases (de Jong 2014\_28 March), but also, perhaps, because it was difficult to share *anything* with this super-charged, individualist ‘jungle bunny’ from Africa.<sup>184</sup>

What is of interest in these recollections — beyond their revelation of de Jong’s delight in his machismo when compared to American men — is that, according to Gwen de Jong’s (2015\_04 April) account of their courtship, de Jong had already been in a committed relationship when these adventures took place. Gwen, whose considered responses to questions about her life contrast noticeably with de Jong’s often distracted recollections, states that she met her future husband in her second year of study at OU (de Jong 2015\_04 April). In a curious twist of fate, her father, in refusing to allow his teenage daughter to leave Oklahoma City and pursue a career as a ballerina in New York (de Jong 2015\_04 April\_05:30), and by insisting that she acquire a university education, put Gwen directly in the path of the man who would keep her off the stage, but in doing so would also remove her from the USA altogether.<sup>185</sup>

In a touching testimony to the bond that underpins a remarkable, if eventually untenable, relationship, both de Jong (2013\_22 May) and Gwen (2015\_04 April) independently offer, some sixty years after the event, identical recollections of their first meeting and the pivotal role played by Alma’s knitting. It was a bitterly cold day in January and Gwen, who was majoring in object design at OU, had been setting up her equipment in the drawing studio, when a latecomer burst into the room and rushed to claim the unoccupied donkey next to hers. What drew her attention to the new student — Gwen was six months ahead of de Jong<sup>186</sup> — was his exotic attire: a spectacular green jersey the nature of which, Gwen laughingly exclaims, “you would *not* see in America!” (de Jong 2015\_04 April\_06:21). Compelled by the strangeness of the garment, she enquired as to its origin, and de Jong, disarmingly boyish, replied, ‘My mother knitted it for me’. Thus they fell to talking, went for coffee, “and that”, said Gwen, “was that”.

<sup>183</sup> In a related anecdote, de Jong recalls seeing (prior to his own appearance on screen) another, earlier film featuring spectacular diving; this may well have been *Olympia* (1938).

<sup>184</sup> The South Africans were, according to de Jong (2014\_28 March), referred to as “jungle bunnies”, a rather ironic epithet since the definition is an “[e]xtremely ... contemptuous term used to refer to a black person” (jungle bunny 2017a). Within the context of de Jong’s narrative, the term is interpreted by him as a fond nickname. The *Collins Dictionary* extends the definition to “a person of African descent” (jungle bunny 2017b), which de Jong may or may not have been, depending upon one’s point of view. Interestingly, first usage of the term in print was recorded in the late 1960s, more than ten years after de Jong arrived in the USA.

<sup>185</sup> A detailed account of Gwen de Jong’s background, while both fascinating within the socio-cultural context of the USA in the mid-twentieth century and relevant to her relationship with de Jong, is unfortunately, beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>186</sup> A rather perplexing remark by Gwen de Jong is that she attended Oklahoma State University (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_05:40). Whether this was a slip of the tongue, or whether Oklahoma State and OU shared certain modules, is unclear. What both parties agree on is that de Jong met Gwen Drennan in the Second Semester of the academic year in which de Jong joined OU, the disparity in semesters being accounted for by de Jong’s arrival in the USA in the winter of 1952/1953. Although both parties refer to their meeting in Gwen’s ‘Second Year’ it may be a confusion with ‘Second Semester’, since Gwen, apparently, was only six months ahead of de Jong, although 1953 would, of course, have been her second calendar year at the university.



The relationship quickly matured: “We started going out all the time. Together. *That*”, Gwen (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_07:30-08:32) states with emphasis, as if, perhaps, some other important matters were not, “was quickly settled”. But the attraction, while mutual, was not equivalent. The first quality that de Jong (2013\_22 May\_1\_16:47-17:33) mentions when recalling their meeting is that Gwen “was a very bright woman”; after the coffee date, they went off to the South Canadian River, near Norman, Oklahoma, and “spent the afternoon talking about art”. What attracted de Jong was Gwen’s intellect. Gwen responded on a more visceral level: “He was”, she chuckles, “very dashing. I was — *enthralled*” (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_08:38).

Adding to de Jong’s good looks was his *otherness*; in particular, Gwen de Jong recalls his South African accent, perhaps an unlikely aid to amorous conquest,<sup>187</sup> but, in addition to the novelty of the un-American vowels, there beckoned the thrilling idea of an unknown, sun-drenched, tropical world. That they would get married and make their life in Pretoria seems to have been a foregone conclusion. When asked what had prompted de Jong’s decision to return to Africa, Gwen (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_11:45) responded, “Oh, I think the decision was *always* to come here ... he *always* wanted to come back”. Although this plan may have seemed unremarkable when South Africa offered a superb climate, boundless opportunities and a leisurely lifestyle for the white middle class, it is of interest that, of the entire swimming team that went to the USA from South Africa, only de Jong and his brother brought their American wives home.

Indeed, Gerrie’s marriage to Barbara Bale, Gwen’s “very best friend from childhood” (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_13:36), may have hastened the younger de Jong’s nuptials. According to Gwen de Jong (2016\_24 April), Ernst’s parents travelled to the USA to attend Gerrie’s wedding. The trip was a momentous occasion: although no record of the wedding ceremony survives in the de Jong collection, press photographs depict Gerrit and Alma, dressed to the nines, formally meeting none other than Governor Gary in his office (Fig. 84). De Jong, in a mischievous aside, confesses that the Governor — having been introduced to the Secretary of State Advances and Recoveries — thought that he was meeting the Secretary of State of South Africa, a misapprehension that, somewhat characteristically, no-one in the de Jong family felt the need to correct.<sup>188</sup> This ‘state visit’ also prompted a family tour of the region; perhaps during this trip, de Jong was photographed admiring the relief sculpture at the entrance to the pride of the ‘new’ Oklahoma, the recently opened Roman Nose Lodge (Fig. 56).

Gwen de Jong tells the story of this time as if each milestone was but a step towards the ultimate goal of ‘going home’. The first requirement was, of course, marriage, which duly took place four months after that of her friend. Even this celebratory occasion provided de Jong with an opportunity to cause consternation: instead of sober black, he insisted on wearing “a blue bow tie”, a show of bohemianism that, according to de Jong (2013\_22 May), infuriated the conservative Drennans. On the night before the wedding, he demanded to see his fiancée and, being refused admittance, had a violent argument with Gwen’s family outside her house. However, despite these upsets, photographs attest to a conventional marriage ceremony,



**Figure 84** Photographer unknown, Governor Gary discussing matters of state with Gerrit and Alma de Jong, 1955.

<sup>187</sup> Although, apparently, not so improbable. Henk Campher (2008), in reflecting upon the response to the use of South African English in the USA, states that, “It’s the only time I feel ... seductive and mysterious ... it [his accent] works wonders”. A general theory exists that “[t]he sound of a different ... accent signals our brains that the person we are talking with is not from our area. Therefore mating with that person would help diversify the gene pool” (Mikells 2015).

<sup>188</sup> Although de Jong told me this story of his parents’ visit to Oklahoma while he was a student, he did not let on that the purpose of the trip was for his brother’s wedding. In fact, when I had, in an early interview, asked whether his parents had attended his own wedding, de Jong answered, rather indignantly, that they had not been in a financial position to undertake such a costly excursion. Consequently, Alma and Gerrit’s American holiday had always puzzled me, until Gwen de Jong clarified the matter.



complete with tiered wedding cake in an elaborately wallpapered room (Fig. 85). Of interest is the bride's wedding dress that resembles the outfit worn by the outcast princess, eventually rescued by Prince Charming, in Walt Disney Productions' *Snow White and the seven dwarves* (released in 1937). Although it is possible to connote an elaborate sub-text to this choice of garment, Gwen de Jong (2016\_24 April) denies any reference to the fairy tale and claims that she chose the high collared design to mask her unusually long neck.

The next objective was de Jong's graduation. By this time, Gwen was working at a printing company in downtown Oklahoma City (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_09:33). The couple lived in married quarters on the university campus, and Gwen bussed to and from work. In addition to supplementing the funding from his scholarship, and preparing the meals in their little student apartment, Gwen apparently also assisted with de Jong's art history tasks as part of her wifely duties.<sup>189</sup> De Jong had lost little time in replacing Alma; Gwen provided a core of domestic stability, intellectual anchoring and, arguably, maternal support for the mercurial de Jong. Consequently, the first two years of his marriage was probably one of the most settled, focused and uncomplicated periods in his life. Here, for one brief moment, there are no stories of gorgeous women in convertibles, although they would, irresistibly, surface again in the future.

De Jong (2014:4) also seems to have made good on the contract of his swimming scholarship, although the circumstances of this success are somewhat opaque. According to his curriculum vitae (de Jong 2014:4), de Jong was, in 1956, the springboard diving champion at the "Big 7 Conference Colorado University, Boulder, Colorado" and "finalist at [the] National Collegiate Diving Championships, Yale University, New Haven Connecticut".<sup>190</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to unravel the complexities of North American sporting associations, but it seems fairly probable that the 'Big 7' event to which de Jong refers was the Big Eight Conference of 1956 (or was later renamed as such). OU dominated Big Eight swimming in the 1950s, securing the championship in 1950, 1952, 1953, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958 and 1959 (Men's swimming 2016) — a testimony to the talent of the South African swimmers. Individual achievements are not reflected in the results of the Big Eight Conference, but de Jong can certainly claim champion status as part of the OU team. Similarly, at the 1956 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Men's Division Swimming and Diving Championships, that did, indeed, take place at Yale University, OU was placed third (1956 NCAA Swimming ... ([sa]), technically therefore a team 'finalist'. It is noteworthy that in 1955, OU had tied with Iowa for seventh place with a paltry fourteen points as opposed to the winner, Ohio's, ninety. OU's sudden rise in the ranks may very well have been aided by de Jong's personal performance, but, rather characteristically, he transforms a team achievement into an individual one.

Scrutiny of the official OU athletics website confirms that the 1950s was a golden era in terms of the university producing national swimming and diving champions (OU swimming ... 2010). However, although the names of other South Africans feature prominently, including that of his brother and Julian Dyson as the 1954 300m 'All-American' medley relay champions, de Jong himself is, notably, absent from this list: in terms of diving, OU had, at the time of writing, only produced one national champion, namely Earl Hallum (in 1953 and 1954). Although he may have been an asset to the team, de Jong simply did not achieve the individual success that he, if only by implication, claims for himself.



**Figure 85** Photographer unknown, Mr and Mrs Ernst de Jong on their wedding day, 04 June 1955.

<sup>189</sup> Communicated by an amused de Jong in an off-the-record conversation.

<sup>190</sup> The 'conference' was founded as the Missouri Valley Intercollegiate Athletic Association in 1907 (Big Seven ... 2017). Oklahoma University joined in 1920. The unofficial name of this association changed from the Big Six Conference to the Big Seven conference in 1947. In 1957 it became known as the Big Eight. In 1964, the conference legally assumed the name 'Big Eight Conference'. It has not been possible to link either a Big Seven or Big Eight Conference to Boulder, Colorado, so the entry in de Jong's curriculum vitae perhaps stands to be corrected.

An enigmatic footnote to the list of Big Eight Conference Champions (Men's swimming 2016) states that

Oklahoma would have won the 1954 title, but after [OU was] found to be using an ineligible athlete they were forced to forfeit points, which meant that Iowa State [University] was awarded the 1954 Big Eight title.

That OU alone, of all the participating colleges in the USA from 1924 to 1996, would have been found to have broken the rules in a year in which de Jong was actively diving for this team, is perhaps more than a coincidence. Ever contrary, de Jong may conceivably have been the Achilles heel that lost his team the championship. At the time, freshmen were not allowed to compete in inter-university events (French 2012:35), a condition that de Jong (2013\_22 May\_145052\_41:50) himself mentions, and this seems the most likely reason for the OU athlete to have been judged 'ineligible'. It is possible that de Jong, in 1954, may still have had freshman status; it would also have been typical of him to suppress this state of affairs in order to gain entry to the Big Eight event.<sup>191</sup> If this was the case, it may have been even more important for him to embroider his achievement in this field, especially if the putative triumphs had taken place on a distant continent before the advent of internet search engines.

1956 was also the year of the Melbourne Summer Olympics. South Africa, prior to its ban from this event in 1968, participated at Melbourne and de Jong, who would immerse himself in South African Olympic affairs later in life, may have felt a chaffing frustration at being a small fish in the immense pond of the USA: his chances for selection to an Olympic team would have been more likely had he remained in Pretoria. One way to compensate for this missed opportunity was to construct an alternative narrative of excellence in foreign climes, although the reality may have been less than spectacular. Despite Gwen de Jong asserting that the return to South Africa had been a foregone conclusion, her husband's resolve may have been strengthened by the gradual realisation that Pretoria offered him more opportunities than New York.<sup>192</sup>

For his part, when asked, de Jong's (2013\_05 June\_007\_10:25) explanation for the homecoming — in the face of the thrilling American experience — was the exciting creative culture that prevailed, in the late 1950s, in Pretoria: it was, he enthuses, "pretty fashionable at the time ... the cultural hub of South African art". When referring to the decision to return, de Jong (2013\_05 June\_007\_06:25) emphasises his wife's choice to relinquish a promising career as a member of the New York Ballet in order to accompany him to Africa, suggesting that Gwen's lot was that of a dutiful spouse, setting aside her ambitions for the sake of her husband.<sup>193</sup> Gwen, for her part, places the decision not to go to New York firmly within the context of her father's disapproval, and well before she met her future husband.<sup>194</sup> The 'blue wedding' was most likely her idea as well, and although de Jong would have colluded in this deviation from convention, it was probably Gwen who put her foot down in the face of family disapproval.

The marriage was, in fact, an egalitarian partnership, sometimes in surprising ways. Gwen remained very active in the ballet community of Oklahoma, partnering Robert Bell — who had encouraged her to audition for the New York Ballet — and performing in professional shows. As a consequence, de Jong took up ballet himself and, while he could not perform complicated dance sequences, was able to partner with his wife in routines that called for impressive leaps and lifting. Photographs of de Jong, in full ballet gear — tights, pumps and make-up — attest to his immersion in his wife's world (Fig. 86). Naturally, there were incentives: he was surrounded by

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<sup>191</sup> Owing to the six months that he lagged behind, it is difficult to determine exactly what de Jong's academic status was at any given time. He entered OU in January 1952 and graduated at the end of 1956, a total of five years. In 1954 he should have been well past his freshman year. However, status may have been awarded on earned semester hours and not on years registered at the institution (see Definition of Freshman ... [sa]). In 1954 de Jong, never the most enthusiastic scholar, may have had incomplete modules, including the compulsory, but detested, subject of English Junior. The ban on freshman participation was designed to prevent students with sports scholarships from falling behind in their studies; if de Jong had not yet accrued the minimum semester hours he would still have been accorded freshman status in his third calendar year at OU. Adding to this puzzle is the rule that student athletes may only represent their college for a maximum of four years, unless granted 'red shirt' freshman status.

<sup>192</sup> When the Tokyo Olympics came around in 1960, de Jong, although back in South Africa, was again denied the opportunity to participate since the selectors decided not to include divers in the swimming team. This arbitrary exclusion led to de Jong (2014:6) "starting a movement for Diving [sic] to break away from the Swimming Unions worldwide".

<sup>193</sup> De Jong implies that Gwen did, indeed, audition at the New York Ballet and despite being offered a position there, nevertheless turned it down for his sake.

<sup>194</sup> Gwen de Jong's father died in a freak accident during the winter of her senior year at OU and was therefore not witness to either his daughter's wedding or her departure to Africa (de Jong 2015\_04 April\_14:15).

pretty girls, and his training as an athlete allowed him to show off his physique, but it was, nevertheless, an unusual pursuit. The act of putting on make-up and tights might have been partially legitimised by his father’s admiration of Nijinsky, but his interest was perhaps primarily fuelled by aesthetics.<sup>195</sup> Linked to diving in terms of the precision and grace required to execute physical feats, ballet also incorporates the visual arts: the design of costumes, backdrops and programmes. It was a delightful conjoining of his passions, including that for his American wife.

Ballet would remain an important, if somewhat tangential, interest throughout de Jong’s life. More central to his immediate future was Gwen’s ability to collaborate with him on income-producing graphic design projects. Thus, in the summer before they were married, the couple worked together on the Russel Pearson project (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_11:03): “That”, states Gwen (2015\_04 April\_11:14), “was quite fun, and we learnt a lot” — indeed, the first paid commission that the de Jongs would undertake in South Africa would be show stand design. Photographs of the Pearson project reveal an extensive visual system of image and text (Fig. 76); considering that neither of the de Jongs were, at that time, professional designers, the accomplishment is impressive. What is salient about this early achievement, however, is that it was a joint effort, and it set the pattern of collaboration for the next twenty years.



**Figure 87** Packing up to drive to New York., 1957.

Once de Jong had graduated — not, as has been explained, without controversy — the priority became purchasing their passage back to Africa. To this purpose, de Jong took up employment at “a little agency” (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_11:33) in Oklahoma City, namely the Graphic Arts Centre (de Jong 2014:4). By the end of 1957, the tickets had been purchased, and the de Jongs set off in their second hand station-wagon (Fig. 87), driving to New York, where they put the car and themselves on the *SS United States* and sailed to Liverpool. They spent a week in London, and then boarded the *Union Castle* bound for Cape Town, South Africa.



**Figure 86** Photographer unknown, Gwen and Ernst de Jong stage a *pas de deux*, c1955.

<sup>195</sup> De Jong, at the time that I interviewed him, had a horror of being perceived as gay. Although aspects of his life suggest that he may have lived it in an elaborate performance predicated upon a denial of gender ambiguities, it is beyond the scope of both this study and my interest to scrutinise the matter here.



### 3.4 The new stars: Pretoria 1957 - 1960

The journey to Africa, reminisces Gwen (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_15:30), who had never travelled much further than her home town in the USA, “was an absolutely stunning trip” (Fig. 88). The couple were met in Cape Town by de Jong’s parents and his oldest brother, Paul; together, the family drove back to Pretoria, taking in the scenic route along the Southern Cape ‘Garden Route’ before heading north to the Transvaal. Gwen was presented with the spectacle of an Africa that was luxuriant and exotic, yet at the same time modern and civilised: it was, she reflects, “a very exciting voyage” (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_16:20). The sky was blue, her husband handsome, and the horizon unfolding before them full of breath-taking promise. That she makes no mention of the social and political



Figure 88 The way out: Gwen de Jong on the deck of the *Union Castle*.

inequalities of the country to which she was being introduced, says as much about attitudes to race and privilege in Oklahoma in the 1950s as it reveals about the obsequious nature of coloured servitude in colonial South Africa.

When they arrived in Pretoria, the couple settled, temporarily, in Gerrit and Alma’s Charles Street house (Fig. 92). De Jong immediately started to look for work, and went off to show his portfolio to several advertising agencies<sup>196</sup> in Johannesburg — South Africa’s industrial heart and headquarters of the country’s mining industry some 60 kilometres south of Pretoria. “Well”, drawls Gwen, “he came home looking like the cat that swallowed the cream. And he said, “They *all* offered me a job!”” (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_17:10). One can imagine the excitement around the supper table; from unknown hopefuls the de Jongs had been transformed, in the space of days, into the experts from America. The advertising agencies, in Gwen’s (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_29:45) words, “were starving”. When coming to South Africa, the couple had had no preconceived notions about their future, “except that I think we saw ourselves with a design studio” (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_29:40). They realised that they could start their own studio without delay, “so *that*”, states Gwen (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_17:17), “is what we did”.

It is perhaps understandable that de Jong (2013\_22 May\_145052\_20:50-23:03), talking about his own life thirty years after separating from the wife that shared the experience, does not use the first person plural when relating this moment of self-actualisation. After the epiphany of being offered

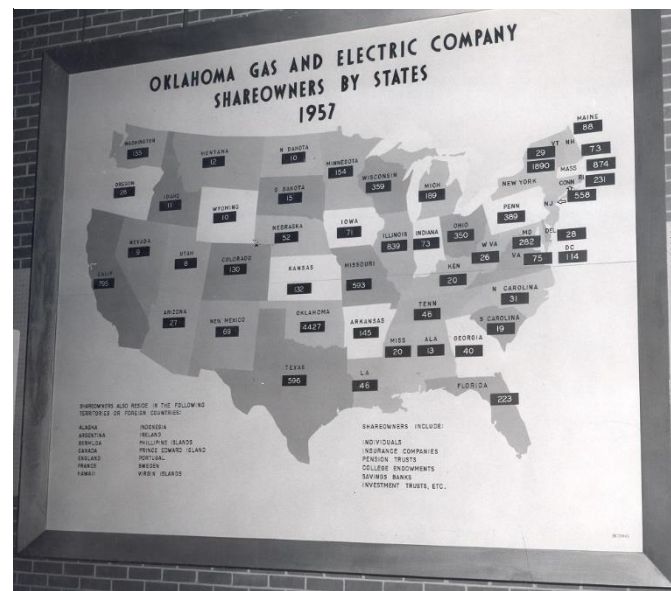
more than thirty jobs ... I never worked for anyone ... There was a lot of room for designers [in South Africa], and I think I capitalised on that ... When I arrived here ... I was at least twenty-five years ahead of any other designer. At least. If not more ... [In fact] there wasn’t anyone else ...

Not even Gwen, by the sound of it. Although she clearly regards the establishment of Ernst de Jong Studios as a joint venture, Gwen (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_34:00) herself is, uncharacteristically, self-effacing about her contribution: “I think ... I think I have an eye for design”, she concedes, tentatively: “I was always a little bit *behind the scenes*, and made a comment here or there, but my role was more a Jack-of-all-trades”. Erstwhile EDJS designer Johan Hoekstra’s (2014\_06 August) impression of Gwen’s involvement in the early years was that she was “very protective, almost motherly” with regard to her husband, an observation borne out by an anecdote concerning, rather fittingly, bees. On the very first commission the newly formed EDJS executed, the couple constructed, in the garage at Charles Street, an exhibition stand the nature and client of which is uncertain. Neither Gwen nor de Jong can remember precisely what the design comprised, although there is some recollection,

<sup>196</sup> In Gwen’s version of the story, “three or four” (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_17:00), in de Jong’s (2013\_05 June\_007\_11:30) version, “twenty or thirty advertising agencies”. The advertising industry —, agents that purchased advertising space in the media on behalf of clients and then supplied the advertisements to the media — was fairly well-established in South Africa in the 1950s (see Sinclair 1985:26-29). What de Jong would bring to the table was the concept of the graphic design studio that specialised in identity design, also known as ‘below-the-line’ advertising. The two fields would operate until the late 1990s as separate entities with different cultures and subject to different billing regulations (see Naidoo 2011:7). De Jong’s independent and individualistic personality, as well as his concern for aesthetics (as opposed to pure business principles and the dictates of the media), was perhaps typical of the graphic design profession, as it would become known in the 1970s. Currently, most large agencies offer a dual in-house service of both above- and below-the-line facilities to clients.

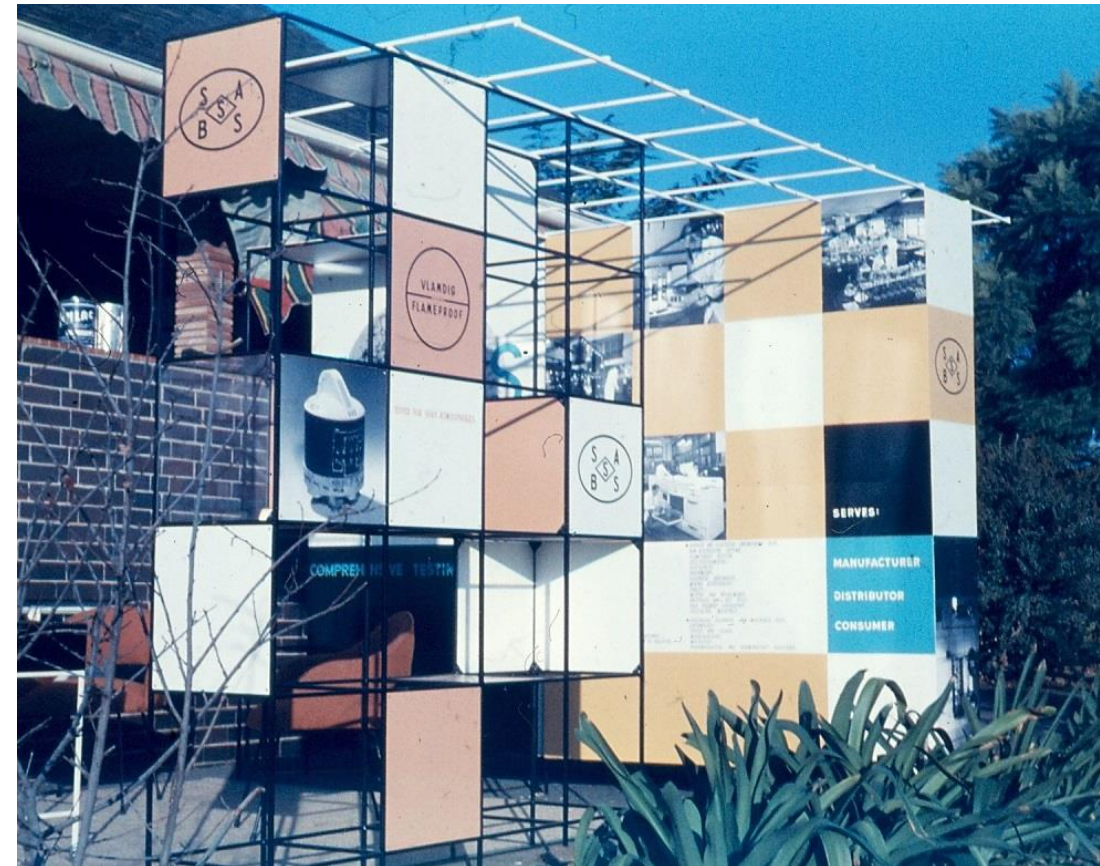


**Figure 89** Gwen and Ernst de Jong (designers & constructors), map for the Oklahoma Gas and electrical Company, 1957. In a rare instance of acknowledging the partnership, the installation is signed, 'De Jongs'.



**Figure 92** Gwen and a debonair Gerrit de Jong outside the house in Charles Street, Pretoria. De Jong was documenting his student artwork, shipped back from Oklahoma.

**Figure 90** Gwen and Ernst de Jong (designers & constructors), show stand for the SABS, c1958.



**Figure 91** Gwen and Ernst de Jong posing in front of the completed SABS show stand in the garden at Charles Street, c1958.

from both, that it was a large map, possibly for the CSIR in Pretoria. Photographs in the de Jong collection suggest, however, that the map in question may have been executed early in 1957 in the USA for the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company (Fig. 89), and that the undertaking at Charles Street was, instead, a show stand for the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) (Figs. 90 & 91).

Whatever the case, the background panels required spray painting, and to this purpose the construction was moved outside where, soon after the painting commenced, the fumes stirred up a beehive (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_34:57).<sup>197</sup> Terrified, de Jong ran inside and refused to come out of the house. But with a deadline looming, the painting could not be abandoned, so Gwen, overwhelmed by the urgency of the matter, cried, "I'll do it!" (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_36:38) and, donning an old overcoat and a large hat belonging to Alma, she completed the work, blending bees into the paint in her zeal. "I was always", Gwen laughs, "the practical one".

Practical, resilient, long-suffering. The story, told with humour, is nevertheless part of a performance that seeks to communicate the frustrations and injuries of the relationship. Although Gwen professes that she did not fully grasp the aggressive nature of African bees, thereby downplaying her pluck, her feelings with regard to securing her husband's professional reputation by risking her own safety must have been mixed. It would not be the last time that de Jong would flee in panic, or that Gwen would be required to step up for the rescue. The relevance of the incident to a study of EDJS is that, although Gwen de Jong did not necessarily contribute to the design of the SABS stand, she was indispensable in the larger process of executing it. The couple photographed one another in front of the completed construction, implying equal ownership of the work. The photographs suggest a merging of the creators with their artwork; a pensive de Jong and enigmatic Gwen are as aesthetically composed as their joint, modernist creation.

De Jong's (2014:5) curriculum vitae, as well as his personal recollection (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_145052\_23:40), indicates that a show stand, which he designed for the CSIR, won a Gold Medal at the 1960 Pretoria Show. However, somewhat unusually, there are no visual records in de Jong's personal collection of an exhibit for the CSIR. The institution itself has no records of any such stand and, since de Jong's description of the award-winning design tallies with the appearance of the SABS construction, it seems probable that it was the SABS stand depicted in the de Jong slide collection that collected the honours.<sup>198</sup> The design would therefore have been an important showcase and seminal work for EDJS.

It is regrettable that the events of this critical period in the history of EDJS are difficult to pin down. Gwen de Jong (2015\_04 April\_21:39) believes that her husband had not started teaching when they built the show stand for the CSIR (or, more likely, for the SABS) in her parents-in-law's garage. De Jong (2015\_04 April\_21:30), on the other hand, suggests that he was appointed as a part-time lecturer at the Pretoria Technical College *before* establishing EDJS later in 1958. Certainly, by January 1959 both de Jong and his wife were teaching applied design at the college. The line-up of lecturers, detailed in a 1959 newspaper article (Commercial art now persuades 1959:7) announcing Albert Werth's appointment as the new Head of the Art School, were "quite an extraordinary bunch of people" (de Jong\_2015\_04 April\_36:38). Apart from the de Jongs and Peter Eliastam (1934- ), who all taught applied design, Zakkie Eloff (1925-2004) taught portraiture; Robert Hodgins (1920-2010) painting, life drawing and basic design; Leo Theron (1926- ), mosaic; Maxie Steytler (?-?) fabric painting and design; Carol Hamilton (?-?) history of art and architecture; and Dulcie Campbell (?-?), pottery.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Photographs reveal a tin of 'Amlac' on the wall of the Charles Street house veranda (Fig. 90) , most likely the solvent-based preparation that caused the upset.

<sup>198</sup> At this time, de Jong also designed a logo for the CSIR and this brief may have led to confusion with regard to the two institutions, both of which are concerned with scientific research. De Jong (2013\_22 May\_145052\_23:37) states that he was given the commission for the map by Albert Werth at the CSIR. Two sources (Bridgeford 2015\_03 April\_1\_18:08; Dr Albert Johannes ... 2013) make no mention of Werth being employed at the CSIR, indicating instead that Werth was a graphic designer at South African Airways (SAA) in 1958, but a newspaper source states that Werth was, indeed, a "designer and layout artist at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research" (Commercial art now persuades 1959:7) prior to taking up the position as Head of the Art School at the Pretoria Technical College in January 1959. The possibility therefore exists that the de Jongs did, in fact, design a map for the CSIR. The award of a Gold Medal to EDJS at the 1960 Pretoria Show has not been verified.

<sup>199</sup> A comprehensive history of the college and its contribution to a South African art and design culture is sorely needed.



Undoubtedly, the de Jongs — svelte, stylish and ‘full of America’ (Figs. 111 & 112) — made an impact; in particular, Robert Hodgins (2002:29) was ‘intoxicated’ with “America-via-de-Jongh [*sic*]”. The artist attributes a major shift in his painting style to de Jong; the two men often worked together, and would combine their efforts in a two-man exhibition, opened by Monty Sack, at Gallery 101, in Johannesburg, in September 1961 (Gallery 101 ... [sa]). Although Hodgins was considerably older than de Jong, the latter seems to have taken on a mentoring role, extending it to the function of patron when he commissioned a sculpture from his colleague to form the centrepiece of a show stand for the festival *Musicians in the sun* in Pretoria (Figs. 12 & 108).<sup>200</sup>

However, de Jong must also have gleaned, in turn, an important and for him hitherto distant perspective on European art and design trends, especially from a colleague such as Eliastam, who had absorbed the cool, reduced language of Dutch modernism. It was an exhilarating time, and the de Jongs seized the moment by securing the lease of commercial premises — the Dursot Centre — directly opposite the college where they taught. Here EDJS was launched in earnest, and with masterful expediency (Fig. 98). As Gwen de Jong (2013\_22 May\_145052\_31:25) wryly comments, the college “was, *of course*, where we met all of these excellent students, and as soon as we had an excellent student — we brought them to the studio!”.

What his colleagues made of this harvesting of their best efforts can only be surmised. Eliastam (2015\_07 December\_01\_10:40-11:33), fifty-five years later, emphasises that he and de Jong “were *completely* different ... *very* different in temperament, purpose and disposition”. He then follows this distancing of his own moral compass from that of de Jong by reflecting that the latter “was successful ... some of our best students went to work for him ... He had a very successful studio”, as if this was, somehow, a slightly surprising state of affairs. Tellingly, Eliastam (2015\_07 December\_01\_12:10) concludes his assessment of his erstwhile colleague by stating that, “by all means, with his staff, a very competent guy”.

*With his staff* — the key component of the workings, impact and influence of EDJS. Although many young art school diplomates would pass through the doors of EDJS, a crucial — and, as it would transpire, indispensable — contributor to the burgeoning reputation of EDJS was Colin Bridgeford (Fig. 97). Born in 1938 in Pretoria to a Scottish immigrant father and Irish immigrant mother, Bridgeford was four years younger than de Jong (Bridgeford 2015\_03 April\_1\_10:21). If Gwen de Jong took on a mothering role at EDJS, Bridgeford would, eventually, become to his employer part father, part surrogate son.

Bridgeford, like de Jong, was one of three brothers. Still somewhat impish at 77, and with an impressive ability to recall names, places and events from the past, Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_14:51) remarks that, “one didn’t need a Matric in those days”, and, “not being much of an academic”, he left school — Clapham High, in Queenswood, Pretoria — after Standard Eight. With fellow school pupil, Donald Cowie, Bridgeford enrolled for the three-year art programme at the Pretoria Technical College in 1956 (Bridgeford 2015\_03 April\_1\_15:13). Consequently, de Jong’s last year of study in the USA overlapped with Bridgeford’s first in Pretoria. Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_17:30-18:08) recalls that the period spent at the college spanned the years 1956-1958, during which time de Jong was his lecturer. He also mentions the departure of the head of the art school — a Ms van Schalkwyk — and the appointment of her successor, Werth, who, according to Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_18:08), “came from SAA’s marketing department”. What one can conclude from this narrative is that the de Jongs did, indeed, start teaching in 1958, but that Werth probably did not appoint them.

What seems somewhat less certain in Bridgeford’s mind are the exact circumstances of his first period of employment at EDJS. An example of Bridgeford’s student work, along with that of fellow students Eric Smith, Anne Coote and Stephané Segrühn, was selected for inclusion in an article on advertising design that the de Jongs contributed to the periodical *Lantern* in November 1958.<sup>201</sup> It is highly likely that Bridgeford, along with these and other design students, were ‘brought into’ the EDJS studio on a part-time basis in 1958, and that this arrangement seamlessly carried over into permanent employment in 1959. There would, however, still have been close contact retained with the art school across the road, removing a clear separation between student days and professional life.

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<sup>200</sup> Photographs of the metal sculpture even suggests the influence, on Hodgins, of de Jong’s welded relief steel assemblages produced in the early 1960s.

<sup>201</sup> See Chapter Four.



Figure 97 Colin Bridgeford in the EDJS studio, c1959



Figure 93 Colin Bridgeford working on an EDJS mural, 1960s.



Figure 94 A youthful de Jong, taking a break from working on his steel assemblages in the Charles Street garage, c1960. On the shelf, to his right, stands an open bottle of Berg Beer, which suggest that the Berg launch took place soon after de Jong's return to Pretoria.



Figure 96 Master and apprentice: de Jong with Johan Hoekstra in the EDJS studio, c1960.

**DE JONG STUDIOS** was established in Pretoria in 1958. Mr. Ernst de Jong, Managing Director, and Mr. Johan Hoekstra, Art Director, are chief designers, presiding over a studio of 6 designers, layout artists and finished artists. Mr. De Jong received his BFA at the University of Oklahoma, U.S.A.; Mr. Hoekstra studied architecture at the University of Pretoria and design at the Pretoria Technical College. Both of these designers gained the top awards their faculties had to offer. The work of the studio has gained the recognition of design bodies such as INTERGRAPHICS, Montreal, and GRAPHIS PRESS, Zürich. The scope of the Studios is as wide as the field of applied design. We have been commissioned to design museums and murals as well as boutique invitations and ashtrays. The bulk of our work is, however, and most naturally, *advertising*: press, magazine, packaging, brochures, stationery, posters, direct mail, point-of-purchase, display and exhibition stands.


A feature of De Jong Studios that advertising agencies and printers may find particularly useful is our finished art service. Rough layouts are all that we require to produce complete finished artwork for any process.

In addition to the art services of the Studios, excellent staff is available for both imaginative and technical copywriting, and we are fully equipped for and experienced in the economical preparation and production of advertising material.

**DE JONG SCREEN PRODUCTIONS**, which produces silkscreen printing, display and exhibition material, is an associate company of De Jong Studios. Previously based in Pretoria, it was moved to Johannesburg early in 1963 in order to serve better its many customers in the Reef area. De Jong Screens prides itself on the extremely high quality of its silkscreen printing and is equipped in this field for the production of showcards, posters, all types of transfers, 48 sheet posters, conical printing, and printing on plastic, perspex, metal and textiles. De Jong Screens' preoccupation with craftsmanship has led to the development of a technique in halftone printing, both black and white and coloured, which constitutes a degree of excellence in the silkscreen medium unexcelled in this country. Moreover, De Jong Screens has established a reputation for promptness — delivery dates are met, a facet of our organisation which we feel is most appreciated by our clients. That the capabilities of this firm extend far beyond the usual in its field is due for the most part to the exceptional abilities of the Managing Director, Mr. John Kimber. The creativity and ingenuity of Mr. Kimber (our man Friday) and his team of artists have solved many clients' problems in the field of display and exhibition. Originality, practicality, and good design are the keynotes in point-of-purchase, display units, and exhibition stands designed and manufactured by De Jong Screen Productions.

**The PHOTOGRAPHIC AND FILM DIVISION** which is part of the Pretoria Studios was established in 1963 and represents the fulfillment of a long-held ambition to make the Studio's facilities completely comprehensive. Today this section is fully equipped to handle any and all photographic assignments whether 'location' or 'studio' shots. Every technical proficiency is available for the production of black and white as well as colour photography including 8" x 10" colour transparencies. Creative direction of the highest calibre is supplied from the ranks of the design studio. Personnel with special flair and talents for the various types of photography (product, food, fashion, situation, etc.) are at hand. In addition, artists are available for the particularised jobs of set, backgrounds and special effects production. These same advantages, created by the control of a strong and experienced design studio, are also shared by the film production unit. Advertising film productions of De Jong Studios are brighter, fresher and more effective because of the unique combination of international-standard creative ability, technical excellence, the best equipment, and solid marketing experience.

A special note to advertising agencies: We will be happy to work with an art director from your organisation on a storyboard supplied by you; or, if you prefer, we will prepare and produce storyboards and scenarios for your approval from your brief.



The De Jong enterprises, their directorates, and staff have no continuing contractual agreement with any advertising agency. We will undertake commissions from any advertising agency or advertiser. Work is always treated in the strictest confidence.

Figure 95 Johan Hoekstra (designer), promotional flyer and logo for EDJS, early 1960s (collection Johan Hoekstra).

What does stand out in Bridgeford's recollection of this time is his call-up for military service. Although conscription was only made compulsory for white males in South Africa in 1967 (Military conscription ... 2017), Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_21:19) recounts that, in 1959, a random system of training was in place; thus, he and his second brother were called up, but never the youngest sibling. Bridgeford was enlisted with the Pretoria Highlanders, and sent off to camp for three months. On his return to EDJS, perhaps hardened by the South African Defence Force and less starry-eyed with regard to the glamorous American couple, he re-evaluated his role within the de Jongs' domain. The inclusion of his work in *Lantern* attests to his status at the art school, and Bridgeford expected to cultivate a career as a leading designer at EDJS. Instead he found himself on all fours cutting stencils and climbing ladders to paint show stands and murals (Fig. 94). Even more demeaning, his duties included delivering parcels on a bicycle.

And so, encouraged by Cowie — who had secured a job at PM Barret advertising agency in Johannesburg — Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_22:55) resigned from EDJS less than a year after entering de Jong's employment and took up a position at the Johannesburg branch of Lyndsay Smithers, one of South Africa's largest advertising groups in the late 1950s (FCB Africa 2017). However, while he was working at Smithers, political upheaval overtook the country and, as a result of the Sharpeville shootings in March 1960, Bridgeford once again found himself being called up for military service, mostly for the purpose of guarding petrol installations, water reservoirs and aerodromes. His absence from Smithers lasted six months, after which he returned to the agency and worked there until 1963 (Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_23:50).

De Jong, meanwhile, had found a replacement for Bridgeford in the form of Johan Hoekstra (1939- ) (Fig. 96), who was also hand-picked from the Pretoria art school. Like de Jong, Hoekstra, born in Nylstroom, had a father, who had immigrated to Southern Africa from the Netherlands as a small child, and a mother of German extraction. However, Hoekstra's father was a dentist and his mother — Hanna Hoekstra — a school teacher who wrote and illustrated children's books (Hoekstra 2014\_06 August). Ms Hoekstra also translated children's literature from German for the publisher JL van Schaik (Mense agter boeke ... 2016). Unlike de Jong and Bridgeford, therefore, the young Hoekstra had one parent who was a member of a profession and another who was active in the design and publication field. He himself aspired to becoming an architect and enrolled at the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria, where he won prizes in both his First and Second Year for design (Hoekstra 2014).

Disastrously — and echoing de Jong's own experience — Hoekstra could not master the mathematical component of the degree programme, and he was forced to abandon his university studies: "It was", recalls Hoekstra (2014\_06 August), "a bitter pill". The alternative was a college education, and in 1959 Hoekstra entered into the Second Year art programme at the Pretoria Technical College, where he met de Jong, "who was already teaching there". Halfway through this second, although in reality a third, year of study, Hoekstra was asked to teach at the art college. He drew up his own curriculum and self-importantly took his morning tea in the staff room with Hodgins, Eloff and de Jong. As reparation for his failure at maths, he obtained "the highest marks *ever* for history of art" (Hoekstra 2014\_06 August). He also met and successfully courted the prettiest Fine Art student, Marietjie Eloff, whom he would marry in 1961.

It was during 1959 that Bridgeford left EDJS<sup>202</sup> and Hoekstra, a talented younger colleague with some university training, thus presented the de Jongs with an excellent and timely replacement. By 1960 Hoekstra was working after hours at the Dursot Centre studio, while also studying and teaching at the college. He recalls that the main aspect of EDJS work at that point was the design of letterheads — in other words, a logo design applied to stationery. The concept of an extended corporate identity had not yet been introduced and indeed 'design' — as a distinct function from media advertising — was not yet part of the official college curriculum, since the relevant unit of learning was still a catch-all subject referred to as 'advertising art' (Hoekstra 2014\_06 August). Nevertheless, while de Jong busied himself with his own art

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<sup>202</sup> It seems that, if only briefly, Hoekstra and Bridgeford were colleagues at EDJS, but precisely when remains unclear.



**Figure 98** Ernst de Jong Studios, c1960. Johan Hoekstra stands at the back, pipe in mouth. The identity of the other designers remains unconfirmed.



projects (Fig. 93), Hoekstra's quirky personal style and excellent illustration rapidly came to signify the identity of EDJS itself. In addition to an unusual and entertaining promotional brochure for the studio (Figs. 7-9), Hoekstra also designed the first EDJS visual identifier, a robust, hand-drawn illustration of a sun (Fig. 95).

What is of considerable importance, within the context of Bridgeford's and Hoekstra's college experience, is these designers' unprompted and undisguised veneration of Peter Eliastam. Both men refer to him as "brilliant" (Bridgeford 2015\_03 April\_1\_25:00; Hoekstra 2014\_06 August), Hoekstra's Afrikaans phrase, *absoluut briljant*, suggesting intellectual genius beyond mere artistic skill. In contrast, references to de Jong, while respectful and acknowledging the important role that de Jong played with regard to their own careers and South African graphic design in general, are tempered by a cautious air of politeness. Thus Bridgeford, who remains unfailingly loyal to de Jong despite a perceivable ambivalence with regard to his 'Uncle Ernie', thus qualifies his high regard of Eliastam by pointing to the fertile cross pollination brought about by the presence of both de Jong and Eliastam in the teaching programme (Bridgeford 2015\_03 April\_1\_16:00).

However, if de Jong's American zeal energised students, Eliastam's Dutch training<sup>203</sup> and minimalist European style seems to have impressed them even more. "The Dutch", remarks Bridgeford enthusiastically, "were very good at that stage with their design". Nevertheless, the combination of American and European approaches was, Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_16:32) insists, "definitely to our advantage". Interestingly, although Hoekstra (2014) can pinpoint what made Eliastam influential, namely his very pure graphic design style, neither men offer an equivalent quality that impressed them in de Jong. Hoekstra (2014) concedes that, "Ernst was *the* starting point of graphic design in South Africa", but this seminal contribution to the history of design seems to have been the result of a combination of skills that were not necessarily related to the act of design itself.

Eliastam, for his part, had been raised in the unlikely rural location of Varkfontein (Eliastam 2015\_07 December\_19:20) to the east of Benoni, in the then Transvaal. Born to non-practicing Jewish parents, who were the progeny of farming forebears who had immigrated to Southern Africa from Eastern Europe,<sup>204</sup> he eventually relinquished this cultural legacy, after which the pursuit and dissemination of the Christian faith became an all-consuming goal.<sup>205</sup> Eliastam's complex life and his contribution to South African design deserve detailed research and documentation, which is, regrettably, beyond the scope of this study. It is nevertheless of interest, and relevant to a study of EDJS, to consider how and why, as Eliastam claims, he and de Jong were so 'very different'.

A key contrast, and one to which Eliastam alludes, is that, while de Jong's life 'furnished a story of success', Eliastam's life was infused with rejection, betrayal and tragedy. Although de Jong cultivates an ambiguous sense of cultural identity, and would suffer from anxiety attacks throughout his adult life, Eliastam grappled with emotional, cultural and religious ruptures of far greater intensity. What should be borne in mind, however, is that Eliastam, in conveying this saga of turmoil and disappointment, constructs a performance, if dissimilar in its *ethos*, as deliberate and considered (and occasionally as contradictory) as that of de Jong strutting about with cowboy hat and pistol. Living with a severely ill adult daughter in a tiny and sparsely furnished, but nevertheless elegant, apartment in Johannesburg, Eliastam's quiet telling of suffering weaves its own compelling, rhetorical web.

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<sup>203</sup> Eliastam did not receive his formal design training in the Netherlands; he obtained a Diploma in London. However, it is of interest that Bridgeford perceives the former to be the case.

<sup>204</sup> The irony of Jewish farmers owning a farm called Varkfontein (Pig Fountain) is not lost on the author. English-speaking and/or Jewish intellectuals are perhaps reluctant to concede the intimate historical relationship between Afrikaners and Jews in rural South Africa. Charles Bloomberg and Saul Dubow (1990:148) cautiously state that "bonds between Afrikaners and Jews had been sympathetic", giving as possible reasons a "common Old Testament orientation [and] exclusion from the Anglo-Saxon establishment". However, popular histories (e.g., *Afrikaner Jewry in South Africa 2017*; *Afrikaner-Jews 2017*) reveal the phenomenon of the Afrikaner Jew (or *boerejood*). A Jewish blogger, Raphael Gamaroff (2009), whose parents immigrated to South Africa from the Russian Empire, explains: Yiddish is closer to Afrikaans than English. Consequently, Jewish households were often multi-lingual, with parents speaking Yiddish and Afrikaans, and the children only learning English at school. Jews who settled in the rural parts of South Africa usually evinced a strong sense of social responsibility, a characteristic well suited to a harsh, rural lifestyle, and were therefore welcomed by Afrikaner farmers (whereas relations between the Jewish and the English-speaking white population were not that cordial). Notably, the only scholarly text that appears to specifically address the symbiotic relationship between Afrikaners and Jews in rural South Africa is written in Afrikaans (see Burden & Weil 2002).

<sup>205</sup> Eliastam would be "born again of the Spirit of the God of Israel" (Peter Eliastam [sa]) in 1965.



Thus he recounts that, as an only child growing up on a farm, he had as his early childhood companions only Zulu boys with whom he roamed the veld, “doing what boys do”. Eliastam was the young “laird on the farm”, and as such was called *nkosana* — prince, in Zulu.<sup>206</sup> “I still dream and think in Zulu” (Eliastam 2015\_07 December \_20:00), he remarks. Consequently when, at the fragile age of five, he was plucked from this bucolic idyll and sent off to boarding school at King Edward School (KES) in Johannesburg, he “fled from the white community and sought the comfort of the [black] staff” (Eliastam 2015\_07 December\_19:50).<sup>207</sup>

Eliastam (2015\_07 December \_23:32) describes his young self as “a classic drip and nerd”, although he was not treated unkindly as a consequence. He spent eleven years at the colonial English, Christian-based school, where he gave “all [his] deliberation to avoiding sport, by whatever means, including lying” (Eliastam 2015\_07 December \_21:55): in order to be excused from gymnastics, Eliastam told the teachers that he only had one lung — an amusing but also illuminating anecdote given the tacit knowledge of de Jong’s sporting prowess.

A similarity with de Jong, as well as with Bridgeford and, to some degree, Hoekstra, is an unease with academic life. At school, Eliastam was awarded distinctions for English and Art, but battled with tasks requiring numerals. His parents, however, had high hopes for him and he was “sent” (Eliastam 2015\_07 December \_28:10), perhaps without much consultation, to study architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS). Like Hoekstra, Eliastam found that his “bad arithmetic” — he calls it a form of dyslexia — presented an insuperable problem: without maths, he declares, “it was hopeless” (Eliastam 2015\_07 December \_28:30) and he “backed off” after two months’ of study. He then tried his hand at fine art at WITS, but abandoned the latter as well, then left academia altogether and spent time as an assistant in an advertising agency creating “hairline rules with a sable brush” (Eliastam 2015\_07 December \_31:37). By now his father “was tearing his hair out” (Eliastam 2015\_07 December \_32:09) at his son’s failure to acquire a qualification, so Eliastam was, in his words, “dispatched”, once again, to the distant Central School of Art and Design in London.<sup>208</sup>

Unlike de Jong (2014\_28 March), who boasts of the ‘grand days’ of his arrival in the USA and his popularity with American girls, Eliastam (2015\_07 December \_32:40) confesses that he was “maladjusted, completely at sea in London”. The student work he produced in the period 1953 to 1955 was “tight and rigid”; it was, concedes Eliastam (2015\_07 December \_33:50), “ultra-refined”, but would not, in his opinion, have secured him a job in London.<sup>209</sup> A sense of failure and rejection pervades the story: he saw his colleagues from the art school go into leading advertising agencies, but says Eliastam (2015\_07 December \_34:10), “I was not a candidate for any of them”.

However, his student days in England were not entirely devoid of companionship and pleasure. Claiming very limited funds, Eliastam (2015\_07 December \_34:50) relates that he set off with a friend on a student hostel holiday in Europe. During this trip, he spent time in the Netherlands where he encountered promotional material for the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. He was captivated by the aesthetics of these designs: “It was”, he recounts, “a lodestar for me”. In particular, he was drawn to the visual language of de Stijl that he encountered in the Dutch museums, as well as in the aesthetics of the museum posters themselves.

“This”, states Eliastam, “is where [the story] gets significant”, and, indeed, within the context of the intersection between Eliastam’s life and that of de Jong, and both these men’s contribution to South African graphic design, it does. Eliastam (2015\_07 December \_36:17) was seduced by the art of Piet Mondrian, commenting that

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<sup>206</sup> He was also called “baas Piet”, suggesting that Eliastam probably spoke Afrikaans at home until he went to school.

<sup>207</sup> Service staff, such as cooks and cleaners.

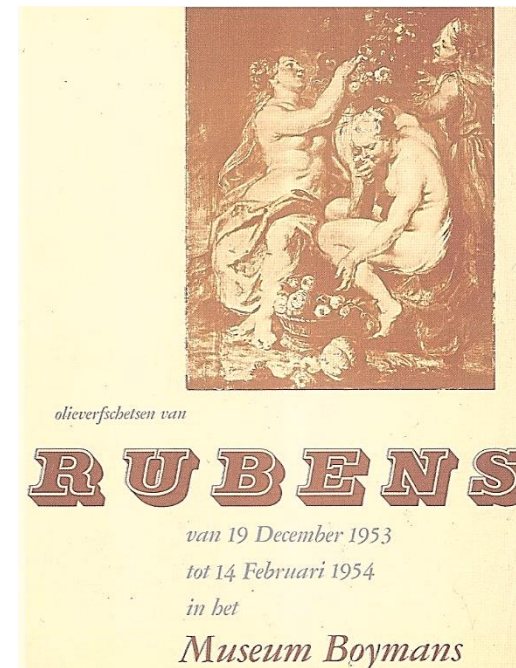
<sup>208</sup> The Central School of Art and Design was established in 1896; it grew directly from the Arts and Crafts movement. In 1989 it merged with Saint Martin’s School of Art to form Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design (Central School of Art ... 2016). Eric Gill, Lucien Freud and the South African painter, Gregoire Boonzaier, are alumni.

<sup>209</sup> What this work actually looked like is not known; Eliastam has not kept any records.

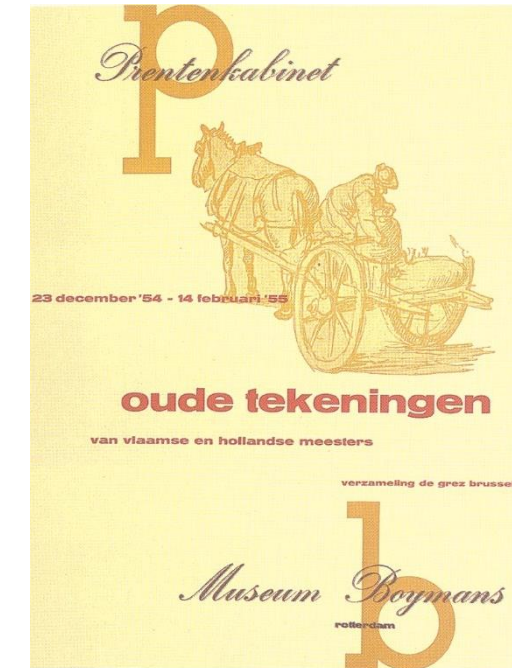




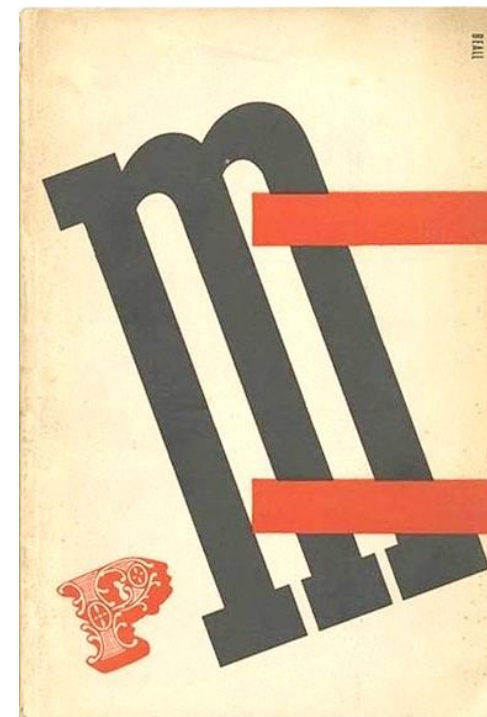
**Figure 100** Benno Wissing (designer), poster for Museum Boymans, 1952 (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:27).



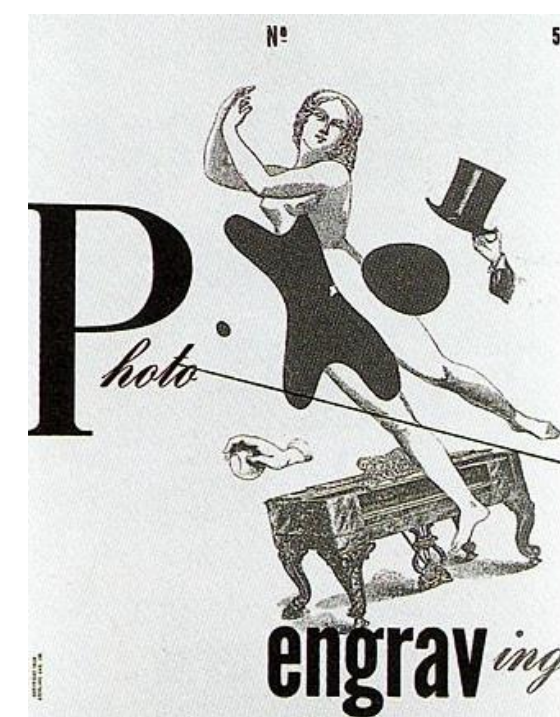
**Figure 101** Benno Wissing (designer), poster for Museum Boymans, 1953 (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:34).



**Figure 102** Benno Wissing (designer), poster for Museum Boymans, 1955 (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:23).



**Figure 99** Lester Beall (designer), cover for *PM*, a journal for art directors and production managers, 1937 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:337).



**Figure 103** Lester Beall (designer), cover for *Photo Engraving* No 5, published by the Sterling Engraving Company, New York, 1938 (Beall, Lester [sa]).



whereas many people thought of Mondrian as “sterile”, he himself believes that the latter was “as passionate as ever van Gogh was passionate. [Mondrian’s] analysis of the rectangle was so liberating ... he understood the DNA, the genetics of the rectangle”.

The Boijmans Museum’s posters, similarly, were graphic design “presented as rectangular forms ... The typography and rectilinear expressions and deductions were so, *so* beautiful” (Eliastam (2015\_07 December \_37:00). Thus, once the requisite — although for Eliastam less than useful — Diploma was obtained and his peers flocked to the flesh pots of the advertising world, Eliastam, now presenting himself somewhat incongruously as an “opportunist” (Eliastam (2015\_07 December \_37:40), set about tracing the designer of the Dutch exhibition posters. To this purpose, he managed to “scrape together enough funds” to cross the channel to Rotterdam where, through the Arts Association, he learnt that the designer of the Boijmans material was Bernard (Benno) Wissing (1923–2008).<sup>210</sup> Lapsing into Afrikaans to mimic his interaction with the Dutch-speaking designer, Eliastam (2015\_07 December \_38:14) recounts that he contacted Wissing and explained that he was

*maar net 'n Zulu-sprekende Joodse plaasseuntjie van Varkfontein. Ek het niks. Ek het nie eintlik geld nie. Ek kan nie 'n bydrae maak nie. Ek kan niks doen nie. Ek wil net kom sien hoe werk jy.*<sup>211</sup>

The upshot of this self-effacing, even grovelling, entreaty was that Wissing flew his Volkswagen Combi across the channel to London, where all Eliastam’s goods and chattels were loaded into the vehicle and transported back to Rotterdam where the Wissing family put Eliastam up in their home for a period of nine months (Eliastam 2015\_07 December \_37:20-39:01).<sup>212</sup>

The emotional, psychological and, eventually, spiritual impact that this act of generosity had on Eliastam was immense.<sup>213</sup> Still overwhelmed by the memory, he protests, “I am not worthy, I could weep about it. I am not worthy of what that man did for me” (Eliastam 2015\_07 December \_37:20-39:09). Having repeatedly been ‘sent off’ by his parents, rejected as being a failure, a problem to his father, an outsider and inferior to his fellow students in London, he was suddenly and voluptuously enveloped in the bountiful kindness of Wissing and his wife. A symbolic act of Christ-like sacrifice and unconditional love was being performed. Eliastam was the prodigal son to an as yet unknown and even unthinkable ‘heavenly’ father, an artist and successful designer that must have stood in notable contrast to his agrarian parents, ever anxious about failing crops, money and drought.<sup>214</sup>

Wissing, a founder member in 1963 of the pioneering Dutch design firm, Total Design — the first Dutch multidisciplinary design firm (Bos 2011:61) — would become well-known for his systematic approach to structuring information (Middendorp 2004:115). His formal education was cut short at seventeen, when the German army attacked the Netherlands, and then disrupted again when he was a student at the Academy of Arts during the German occupation. Despite these setbacks, Wissing became a prolific, self-taught graphic designer as well as an acclaimed architect, and interior and product designer (Bos 2011:61). It was, perhaps, this experience of a struggle against adversity that contributed to Wissing’s generosity and support of the younger Eliastam. During the early war years, Wissing himself had found a second

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<sup>210</sup> Willem Sandberg (1897-1984) designed the promotional material for the Stedelijk Museum.

<sup>211</sup> I am just a little Zulu-speaking Jewish farm boy from Varkfontein. I have nothing. I don’t really have money. I cannot make a contribution. I can do nothing. I just want to come and see how you work.

<sup>212</sup> Eliastam is fondly remembered by Wissing’s daughter, Charlot (Charlot Wissing ... [sa]), who was a small child when Eliastam lodged at their house. Charlot posts this information on a Christian blog in 2012, in the hope of contacting Eliastam again.

<sup>213</sup> Towards the end of his stay in Rotterdam, Eliastam was encouraged by Wissing to visit Le Corbusier’s Ronchamp where, standing in his sodden, red Austin Reed coat and mud-encased Bally shoes, “full of guilt, full of confusion” (Eliastam 2015\_07 December \_48:30), he experienced the “white benediction” that was the start of his conversion to Christianity. The retelling of this encounter with architecture and God is a riveting performance by Eliastam, the content of which cannot be given here in full.

<sup>214</sup> What the Eliastam family’s exact financial situation was is unclear. Eliastam (2015\_07 December \_18:32) hints at a certain desperation, the call on a god-like being to intervene when drought or floods threatened to destroy their agrarian livelihood; he also remarks in passing that the farm eventually failed. However, there were funds for boarding school, university and an overseas education, as well as, it turns out, very expensive shoes.

home in the form of the Begeer family in Rotterdam. Piet Begeer, the father, was an art critic and would initiate the first contact between Wissing and the (then) Museum Boymans (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:14).<sup>215</sup>

From 1949 to 1966, Wissing built an impressive client base, not only producing work for the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, but also for several other institutions such as the De Doelen Conference Centre and the Rotterdam Ballet Ensemble. His design gradually evolved into “a straightforward, clear style which used the grid as the basis for a dynamic layout” (Middendorp 2004:115). In 1956, as a Man Friday in Wissing’s office, Eliastam was allowed to observe the latter’s design process, “one moment of which”, Eliastam (2015\_07 December\_39:16) claims, “was worth more than one year’s curriculum at design school”.

The young Zulu-speaking *boerejood* was thus introduced to a design culture that would soon be dominated by a purist attitude exemplified by Wim Crowwel, co-founder of Total Design, who ascribes this functional approach to a Dutch Calvinist background — “that part of morality that forbids you to abandon a path once taken” (Crowwel, in Middendorp 2010:118). This maxim would certainly hold meaning for Eliastam beyond issues of layout and typography, but whether his commitment to the path of design purity was in response to Wissing or to the much earlier work of Mondrian is not altogether clear. In reminiscing about his transforming introduction to Dutch modernism, Eliastam seems to conflate Mondrian and Wissing’s vision, although the latter, in the 1950s, was not as committed to the grid as he would become in the 1960s. The Wissing that Eliastam encountered (Figs. 100, 101, 102 & 104) had more in common, in terms of style, with the New York School — American designers such as Rand (Fig. 107), Beall (Figs. 99 & 103) and Bradbury Thompson (1911-1995) (Figs. 106 & 137), who all had an ability to merge modernist typographic layout with novelty fonts and historic illustrations, an “affectionate” (Bradbury Thompson [sa]) and idiosyncratic approach that is typical of Wissing’s posters of the 1950s.

Thompson used letterpress plates of art and illustration borrowed from museums in a layering of eclectic text, images and colour (Meggs & Purvis 2006:377). His *Westvaco Inspirations*, a promotional magazine published by the Westvaco Paper Corporation, reached thousands of typographers, printers and students in the years 1939 to 1962 (Bradbury Thompson [sa]). Similarly, *PM* and *Photo Engraving*, for which Beall designed covers and spreads, were journals distributed to art directors and production managers. It is likely that Wissing, in his collaborations with the museum’s printer, *Gemeente Drukkerij*, was aware of these publications and examples of his poster designs for the Boijmans Museum suggest that he may have incorporated the Americans’ techniques and visual language into much of his own work up to, during and even after the time that he met Eliastam.

Of course, the collaging of disparate imagery and letterforms was also a Dutch preoccupation in the 1920s and it is notable that the Director of the Boijmans Museum, Chris Dercon (1999:5), in his Preface to a Wissing exhibition catalogue (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999), links the careers of Paul Schuitema (1897-1973) and Piet Zwart (1885-1977) to the city of Rotterdam. But in fact the watershed moment in Wissing’s artistic life appears to have been an encounter, in the Begeer household, with Paul Klee’s *Pädagogisches Skizzenbuch* (1925) (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:14). This ‘little yellow book’ introduced Wissing to the Bauhaus principles of systematic design, but, as early examples of Wissing’s paintings attest, the immediate impact was more poetic than a mere engagement with the fixed grid — *een vast stramien* — and curiously similar to de Jong’s student work.

What is intriguing is that there is a perceptible change in Wissing’s style after 1956, the year that Eliastam spent with Wissing. The latter starts to incorporate an overt reference to the primary colours and grid of de Stijl (Fig. 105), and the ‘genetics of the rectangle’ start to take precedence over the whimsy of earlier designs. Decorative letterforms are replaced by the rational rhetoric of sans serif typography.<sup>216</sup> Undoubtedly, Wissing would have been aware of the Swiss Style, but the latter had been in ascendance since the early 1950s, yet Wissing seems to have held back from the severity of this approach until after Eliastam’s return to Africa. Despite Eliastam’s

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<sup>215</sup> The son, Jan Begeer, would remain Wissing’s friend (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:12). In reflecting upon Wissing’s life, Begeer notes that the latter had never considered a career as a designer, but found himself becoming one both for financial reasons and the opportunities offered by the director of the Museum Boymans, JC Ebbinge Wubbe. He also remarks that there was no training for graphic designers in the 1940s: “*Je moest het vak zelf opsoeken, het zelf maken*” (Begeer, in Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:28).

<sup>216</sup> See Chapter Five.

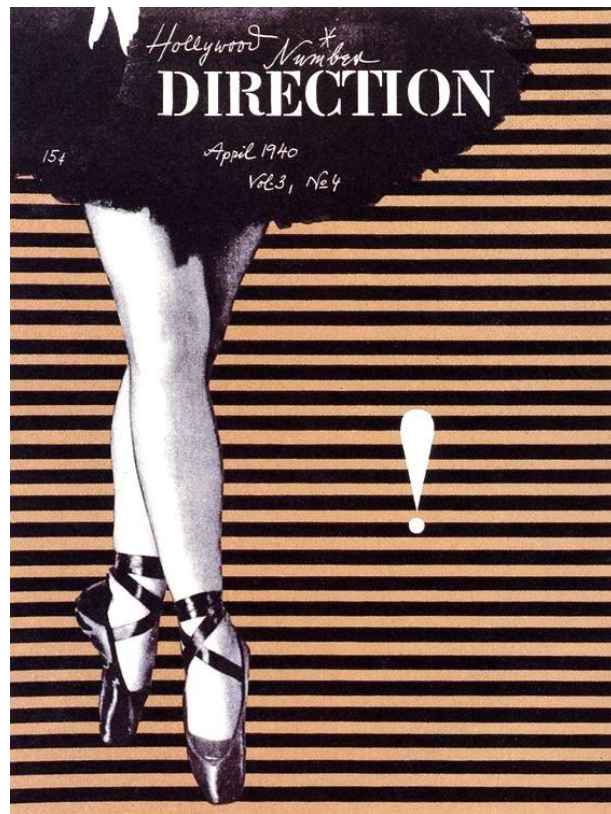


Figure 107 Paul Rand (designer), cover for *Direction*, 1940 (Cover design [sa]).

Figure 105 Benno Wissing (designer), poster for Rotterdams Ballet Ensemble, 1956 (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:60).

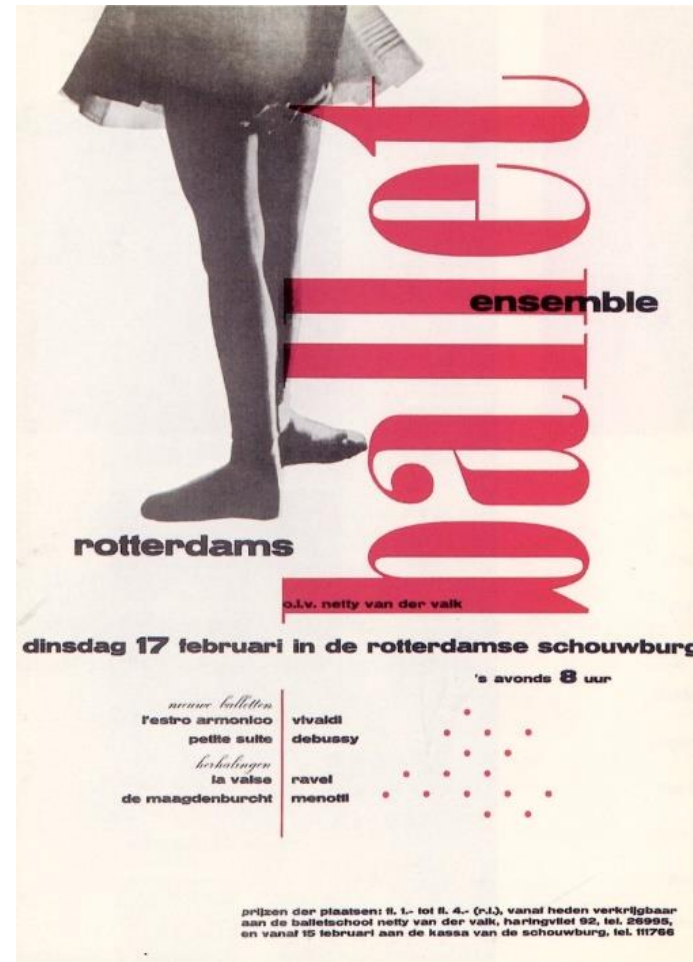


Figure 104 Benno Wissing (designer), poster for Museum Boymans, 1960 (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:42).

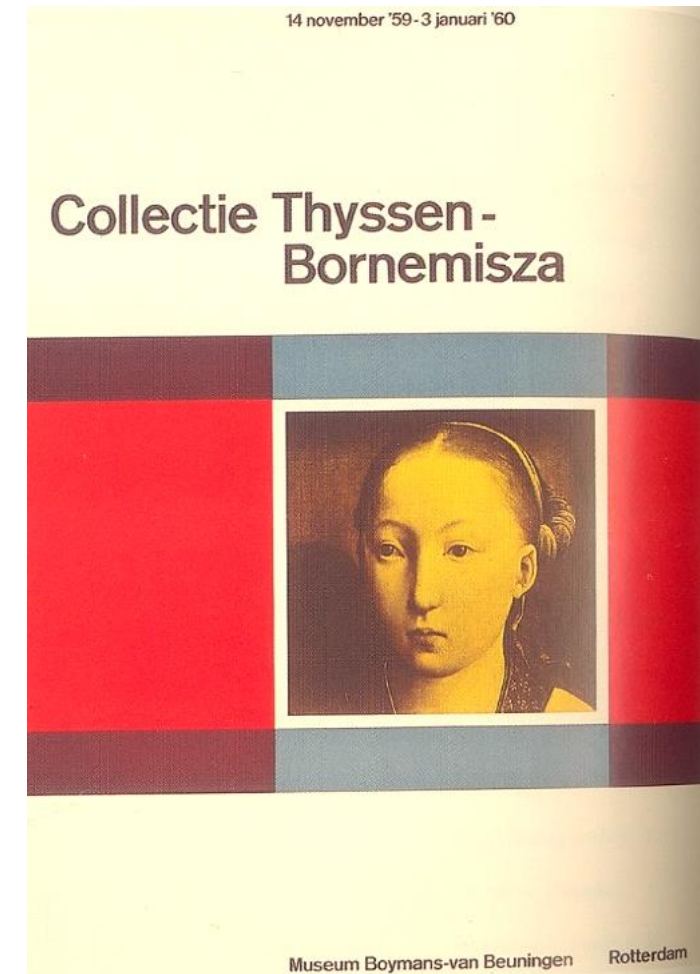


Figure 106 Bradbury Thompson (designer), spread from *West Virginia Inspirations for Printers*, 1953 (Bradbury Thompson 1911-1995 [sa]).





disclaimer that he 'did nothing' in Wissing's studio, the possibility exists that the South African may have transferred his outsider's enthusiasm for de Stijl to his Dutch counterpart. Be that as it may, Wissing's reputation for simplicity and purity would only be established in the 1960s after Eliastam had been teaching in Pretoria for several years.<sup>217</sup> Consequently, in the late 1950s, what Eliastam brought to the classroom and staffroom of the Pretoria Technical College was his own internalisation of the 'liberating' legacy of Mondrian, whose visual language de Jong who, unlike Eliastam, had not yet travelled to the Netherlands, absorbed by osmosis (or necessity, or stealth, or curiosity, or entitlement, or a combination of all the aforementioned) and appeared to make his own.

Eliastam (2015\_07 December\_01:01:02-01:02:42), however, is somewhat taken aback by the suggestion that de Jong was influenced by his, Eliastam's, work, stating that he and 'Ernie' "had a cordial but never close relationship ... [de Jong] had a very distinct graphic style, and it wasn't a style that electrified me, the sort of thing that lets one transform, as in Rotterdam". It is difficult to determine exactly what 'distinct graphic style' Eliastam is referring to when speaking about de Jong, since the two men's careers are coterminous and span more than 60 years. It is also not clear, upon reflection, whether Eliastam is referring to de Jong's fine art graphics, or the graphic design produced by EDJS. Perhaps it was de Jong's temperament rather than his graphic work that Eliastam found unappetising. The fact remains that Eliastam was not in awe of de Jong, and the latter, in his collegial exchanges with Eliastam, may have sensed a certain condescension when measured against the 'transforming' exemplar in Rotterdam.<sup>218</sup> Hugely competitive, de Jong might also have been needled by the reverence Eliastam inspired in his peers, and leaned in, so to speak, to glean some of the influences that made him so admired.

One way of achieving parity was for EDJS to employ the students to whom Eliastam had gifted his vision, thereby acquiring the 'brilliance' of the man while appearing to evince these qualities oneself. It is unlikely that this was a deliberate, Machiavellian strategy on the part of the de Jongs, but the implications for South African design are interesting. This shrewd relocation of intellectual goods has about it the feel of a Shakespearean tragedy as the introvert Eliastam, once more the outsider, witnessed the flamboyant de Jong realise a design legacy that was beyond his, Eliastam's, grasp, yet built upon the principles of design that he himself had imparted, indirectly, to EDJS through his teaching.

However, none of this speculation about Eliastam's putative contribution to the success of EDJS detracts from de Jong's remarkable achievement in harnessing the talent around him to forge a professional status for graphic design in South Africa. While Eliastam (2015\_07 December\_01:15:00), returning the compliment, could recognise Hoekstra as the "most exceptionally brilliant guy" at the Pretoria Art College, it was de Jong that offered Hoekstra the opportunity to put this brilliance to work. De Jong provided the glamour and aggressive energy necessary to attract both quality employees and clients, a self-serving circumstance fuelled by a deep need for approbation (and a steady income), but that nevertheless resulted in a community of designers that changed much of the cultural landscape of South Africa.

Eliastam probably sums up the reason why it was de Jong and not himself who stepped up in 1987 to receive the Dashing SDSA Crystal Award for Outstanding Design Achievement when he states, "I have no desire to have a monument to me". Eliastam longs for the grace of divine forgiveness; the monument, on the other hand, was an all-consuming obsession for de Jong. Curiously, both men experienced severe mental breakdowns in the 1960s, but Eliastam's "crack-up" (2015\_07 December\_01:07:55), as he refers to it, was the more devastating; he learnt, he reflects, "to live with adversity and affliction". Whereas de Jong spent his entire adult life, except for a break of four years when he lived in Norway, in the well-appointed house that he built for himself and Gwen in 1961, Eliastam's was an uncertain, wandering existence dogged by death and disappointment. In contrast, although de Jong would also experience personal set-backs, the glowing facade of his prosperity and personal achievement held firm until, in what some may argue is an instance of poetic justice, the edifice of the 'legendary painter' started to slowly crumple in the new millennium.

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<sup>217</sup> Wissing's rise to international fame came as a result of his iconic signage for Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport (1967) that was hailed as "a shining example of rational signposting" (Middendorp 2005:115). Seven years later, EDJS would apply very similar principles to the signage for the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg. See Chapter Five.

<sup>218</sup> The sting may have been sharpened by the annoying irony that de Jong was, in fact, Dutch, and Eliastam not.



**Figure 108** Designer unknown, cover and pages from *Vogue*, November 1964 (A brilliant house ... 1964). As evidence of their 'brilliance', the de Jongs feature in the American edition of *Vogue* in a special issue on South Africa. The sculpture, now lost, by the then relatively unknown artist Robert Hodgins, was commissioned by de Jong for the *Musicians in the sun* festival in Pretoria in 1961. The photographs of the 'brilliant house' and its owners were taken for *Vogue* by the South African-born photographer, Sam Haskins. That de Jongs were singled out for this honour (no other architecture, domestic or otherwise, is featured), speaks volumes for their reputation and networking skills in South Africa in the early 1960s.

### 3.5 The next 50 years

*Each layer here seems to gape slightly, as the lips of a wound, permitting glimpses of the abyssal possibility of another depth destined for archaeological excavation*

Jacques Derrida, 1995

**W**ithin the limitations of this study, it is impossible to describe in any detail the trajectory and vicissitudes of EDJS or the events in de Jong's personal life after 1959, when his first daughter Giselle was born, to de Jong's sudden death in 2016. Various 'chronologies' of his achievements, compiled by de Jong himself, exist. The most extensive of these documents (de Jong 2014) provides a useful framework within which to position de Jong in a historical timeline. Births, marriages, and divorces are recorded, but, as has been suggested, professional highlights are often enhanced, occasionally to the point of fabrication. This is not to sit in moral judgement of de Jong, who certainly is not the first person, famous or otherwise, to embellish his curriculum vitae, but to point out that the document falls somewhat short as an accurate record of events. Having journeyed from the position of a researcher who may have anticipated inaccuracies in spoken narrations of a subject's life, but nevertheless took written accounts at face value, to the enervating realisation that every assertion had to be checked, every confidence questioned, every silence pried open, I found myself battling an impulse to reconstruct the next fifty years of de Jong's life in order to shatter the gilded, but obfuscating, carapace that he so fiercely fashioned.

It is an impulse that must be resisted. The period in need of excavation and documentation, as determined in the proposal for the study, comprises these first 25 years. The present enquiry cannot transgress this limitation, despite the fact that, as the study got underway, layers of context were revealed that eroded the usefulness of de Jong's official chronology and called for scrutiny beyond the original objective of providing a straightforward account of a bright young designer's domestication of American modernism in post-colonial South Africa.

To some degree I have already exceeded my tender, groping deeper into the viscous cavities of Derrida's 'wound' than originally proposed. However, a full account of the many lives of Ernst de Jong is a project for the future. Nonetheless, the case studies, while primarily vehicles for the analysis of inert artefacts, by the very nature of these artefacts being reflections of their creators — not as they are, but as they wish to appear — mobilise both biographical and historical contexts that supplement, if only in part, the truncated history that has been provided here.

The first case study, of EDJS designs for *Lantern*, thus offers a view of the critical years from 1958 to 1963, and is presented in Chapter Four.



**Figure 109** The 'white house' at 366 Hill Street, Hatfield, Pretoria, 1961. No matter how avant garde, a household with a baby still needs a washing line.



**Figure 110** Dynasty: Jan Jacob, Ernst, Gwen and newborn Gigi de Jong, 1959.

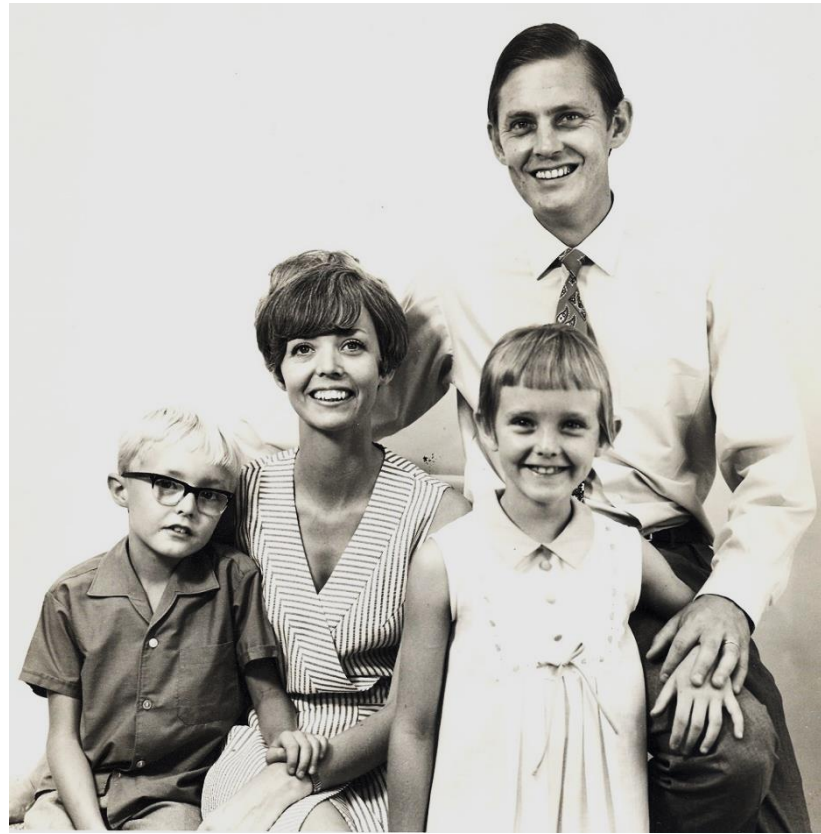


**Figure 112** Svelte, stylish and 'full of America' — Gwen de Jong with Gigi and Marc de Jong, 1961.



**Figure 111** De Jong performing American abstract modernism, early 1960s. It is likely that the work pictured here formed part of de Jong's solo exhibition at Gallery 101, Johannesburg, in 1962 where he showed gold leaf paintings and lithographs.





**Figure 114** Family man, mid-1960s.

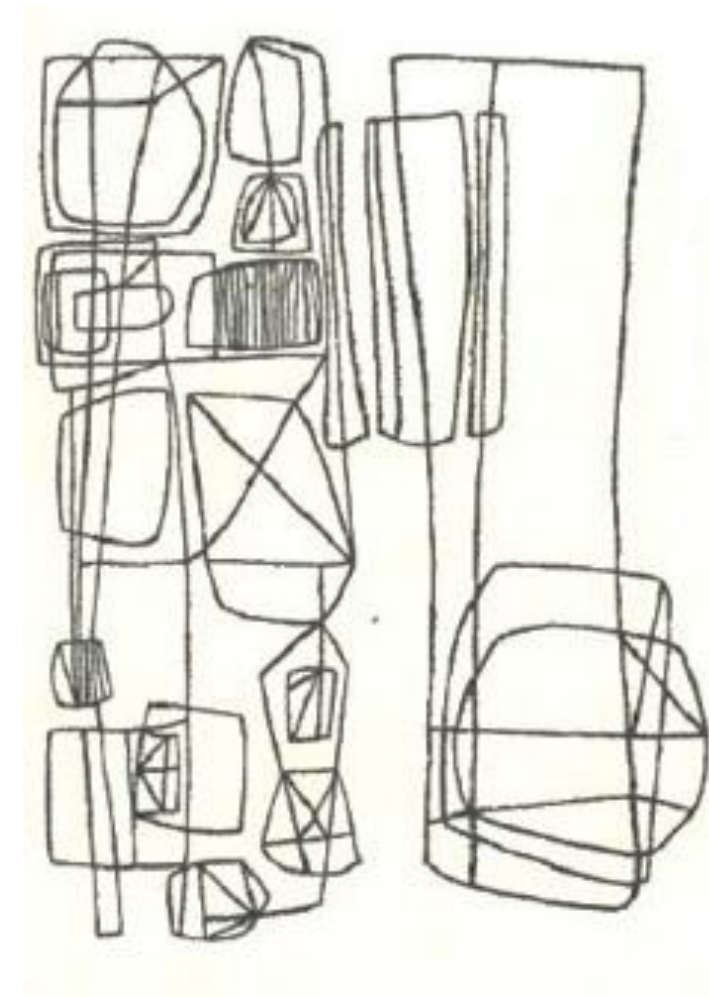


**Figure 113** Playboy, mid-1970s.



## CHAPTER FOUR: **LANTERN**

*Books, newspapers, radio, travel and human contacts provide masses of food for the mind, but we believe that there is an urgent need in South Africa of a scientifically planned journal of adult education ... which will supply the vitamins of the mind*  
Advocate AAA Roberts, Secretary of the Union Education Department, 1949







## 4.1 New hearts and minds — adult education in 1940s South Africa

John Aitcheson (2003: 126), an activist who played a seminal role in the changing landscape of adult education in South Africa (John Jacques William Aitcheson [sa]), notes that prior to the beginning of the twentieth century, adult education in South Africa was limited and directed “primarily towards the westernisation of black (African origin) adult learners and closely related to Christian religious education”. An early attempt, in 1905, at more secular adult education was undertaken by the University of Good Hope — the precursor of UNISA — when it set up evening classes for an initial 144 adult learners (Quan-Baffour 2000:24-25).

By the end of WWII there were “great hopes” (Aitcheson 2003:127-128) that, with the defeat of fascism in Europe, South Africa would become a “true democracy”, an expectation that Aitcheson posits was reflected in the growth of night schools, university extra mural classes, as well as the setting up of the GW Eybers Commission in 1945. This commission — instituted by the Minister of Education, Arts and Science, JH Hofmeyr, in 1945 under the auspices of Jan Smuts’s United Party Government — had as its aim a study of the educational and social needs of the country.<sup>219</sup>

Although Aitcheson (2003:126) concedes that management seminars, professional refresher courses, or Bible study groups, art classes, voter education and university extra-mural classes are all some form of adult education, his concern is with “literacy and adult basic education”, the necessity of which he addresses in relation to “black (African origin)” adult learners for whom, with the triumph of the apartheid forces, “this brief false spring soon withered” (Aitcheson 2003:128). After 1948 the National Party Government began to implement a series of laws to segregate the country, and teaching black people in other than a registered school became a crime. By the early 1960s, “virtually all night schools [for black people] had been deregistered and closed” (Aitcheson 2003:128).

Although Kofi Quan-Baffour (2000:24) implies that this oppressive strategy had as its “raison d’être” the guarantee of an endless supply of unskilled labour for industry, Aitcheson (2003:125) suggests that the Government’s “paranoia” with regard to black adult education undertaken by white English liberals was engendered by “radical literacy work and innovations in alternative educational media under the influence of a heady melange of Paris 1968, [Paulo] Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed, ‘black consciousness’ and liberation theology”.<sup>220</sup> Consequently, Government sought to bring all South African education “under tight central government control and to exclude church influence on the system” (Aitcheson 2003:130-131).<sup>221</sup>

However, while adult education in night schools for black people was suppressed, Aitcheson (2003: 131) observes that this did not mean that Government “did not take adult education very seriously for whites”. Indeed, as a result of recommendations in the Eybers report, a National Advisory Council for Adult Education (NACAE) was instituted by the Union Education Department (later the Department of Education, Arts and Science), and regional organisers of adult education appointed in the major cities in 1948 (van Zyl 1994:4). One consequence, Aitcheson (2003:131) points out, was a “well produced educational magazine, *Lantern*, [that] was distributed via schools so that parents could receive cultural education”. Thus, Aitcheson (2003:131) continues,

adult education programmes were arranged in collaboration with Afrikaans-speaking churches, provincial library services, the National Thrift Association and others. Overall, as a programme of educational and economic upliftment it was a remarkable success. Unfortunately it was also racist, thoroughly anti-democratic in temper, and built upon the legal exclusion of the rest of the population.

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<sup>219</sup> Dr Eybers was appointed the first Director of the Commission in 1946 (Eybers commission 2010).

<sup>220</sup> Aitcheson (2003:134) points out that the National Party Government was, at first, more tolerant of the South African Student Organisation (SASO) — an amalgam of United States Black Power ideology, Africanism and Marxist (but not Communist) socialism — because it admitted black students only.

<sup>221</sup> That is, the English — Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist — churches (Aitcheson 2003:128).

As a result of the systematic suppression, by Government, of black adult education initiatives undertaken by white liberals, it may be that Aitcheson leans somewhat towards the Manichean in his dismissal, by implication, of *Lantern* as ‘racist, thoroughly undemocratic, and built upon the legal exclusion of the rest of the population’. It is, in the first instance, not clear where Aitcheson sourced his information about the publication, since the comment about its distribution is somewhat off the mark. *Lantern* was never distributed free of charge to schools, as Aitcheson implies.<sup>222</sup> In the second instance, *Lantern*, after its first trial issue in 1949, was *not* issued by the Education Department, but by an independent company inspired by the goals and ideals of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (van Zyl 1994:5), and founded with the express purpose of publishing a journal of culture that would “help the nation” by supplying “essential mental pabulum” (Roberts 1949:7).<sup>223</sup> While it could easily be assumed that, in the Union in 1949, ‘the nation’ would be understood to comprise white members only, this qualification is never brought to bear on the mission statement of the journal that describes its target audience as “*iedere landsburger*” [each and every citizen] (Stals 1949:6).<sup>224</sup> Therefore, *Lantern* — a bilingual publication — arguably deserves a more nuanced review with regard to its contribution to systems of knowledge in South Africa in the 1950s and 1960s than Aitcheson’s brief reference allows. With regard to the present study, what is of particular interest is *Lantern*’s use of visual rhetoric in support of its goal to “acquire new habits of thinking and acting ... to find new depths in our hearts and minds, and to adjust ourselves to the world around us” (Roberts 1949:7).

The article, ‘Cloudless skies’ versus ‘vitamins of the mind’: an argumentative interrogation of the visual rhetoric of South African *Panorama* and *Lantern* cover designs (1949 – 1961) (Groenewald 2012) is an attempt to broaden the conversation with regard to mainstream and state-supported South African publication design prior to 1994, the year of South Africa’s first democratic election. The following sections emphasise and enlarge upon the conditions that surrounded the founding of *Lantern*, and the role that EDJS played in visualising a “scientifically planned journal” (Roberts 1949:7) that set out to bring about ‘new hearts and minds’.

## 4.2 The origins of *Lantern*

In order to elucidate the arguments embedded in the visual narratives of *Lantern*, it is useful to contrast the journal with the glossy tabloid magazine *Panorama* that emerged in 1956 as a result of the need for promotional material at South African information offices overseas, and that was published, and entirely funded by, the State Information Office in Pretoria (Groenewald 2012:58, 60). *Panorama*, with its large, full colour photographic representations of the South African landscape and, in particular, its beautiful (white) women, serves as a salient point of departure from which to interrogate the notion of *propaganda* as defined by rhetoricians Chaim Perelman and Lucie Ohlbrechts-Tyteca (1971). Since it is “the audience which has the major role in determining the quality of argument and the behaviour of orators” (Perelman & Ohlbrechts-Tyteca 1971:14–16), Perelman and Ohlbrechts-Tyteca (1971:51) argue that a clear distinction can be made between education and propaganda. Propaganda “profits from the spectacular aspect of the visible changes it seeks to ... bring about” (Perelman & Ohlbrechts-Tyteca 1971:54), whereas the educator is commissioned by a community to be the spokesperson for the values the community recognises. Educators are therefore those who defend the traditional and accepted, not the new and revolutionary values in a society.

<sup>222</sup> The first issue cost “one shilling and sixpence” (Van Zyl 1994:5), but annual subscribers paid £1 for four numbers. Initially, free copies were sent to school-leavers, not in the hope of vicariously instilling culture in backward parents, but as a marketing ploy, in the expectation that young adults entering the workplace would then subscribe for themselves (Van Zyl 1994:22). Only after 1991 did the nature and target audience of *Lantern* change; it was now “marketed especially through schools”. One half of every edition was dedicated to the matric syllabus, and the magazine had as its purpose the “enrichment” (van Zyl 1994:22-23) of pupils, parents and, notably, teachers.

<sup>223</sup> *Pabulum* is a solution of nutrients (pabulum 2015).

<sup>224</sup> Whether black, coloured and Indian people were *bona fide* ‘citizens’ of South Africa in 1949 is a moot point; much depends upon one’s definition of ‘citizen’. The long-term goal of the ‘homelands’, or ‘Bantustan’, system — spearheaded by British colonial administrations in the nineteenth century but prioritised by Verwoerd’s ‘native policy’ from the 1951 onwards (Oakes 1994:378) — was to *divest* black South Africans of their citizenship, an objective that implies that, in 1949, this citizenship was very much in place. It was only the Black Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 that formally designated all black South Africans as citizens of the ‘homelands’, and cancelled their South African citizenship (Bantustan 2017).

In the 1950s and 1960s, *Panorama* presented a utopian narrative of leisure, blue skies, natural abundance and beguiling feminine fecundity, and therefore served to reinforce existing beliefs and aspirations amongst white South Africans in particular, but arguably amongst the citizenry as a whole. As Aitcheson (2003:134) points out, although black people were excluded from the vote, during most of the apartheid period South Africa “had a well-functioning ‘democracy’ for whites, and opposition parties and the press existed in relative freedom”. As far as *Panorama* is concerned, the *speaker* was thus a putatively ‘democratically’ elected Government, and as such the publication’s argument was constructed to align with the ‘traditional and accepted’ values of its audience.

Within this context, it is important to reiterate that, although the state was again to become a patron in 1957 (Van Zyl 1994:13), *Lantern’s* early existence was an independent one; what Aitcheson misses is that what he terms ‘the well produced educational magazine’ was, in fact, launched in 1950 as a commercial enterprise. To this purpose, The South African Association for Adult Education was registered under the company act of 1926, and undertook to conclude an agreement with the Wiseacres Company in which the latter was “to receive all subscription and advertisement payments and other revenues” (van Zyl 1994:8), as well as one third of the gross income, in return for sponsoring *Lantern* branch offices in Pretoria, Cape Town and Johannesburg and “all publication and printing expenses and the salaries of staff”. This splendid — but hugely optimistic — agreement was planned to last for fifteen years (van Zyl 1994:9), an indication that the Executive Committee of *Lantern* wished to operate without Government subsidy (and, arguably, interference).

In the event, Wiseacres reneged on its undertaking to pay the printers, and, as a result of what Dr AJ van Zyl (1994:11-12) — a member of the Association — describes as the “Wiseacres drama”, the agreement was cancelled.<sup>225</sup> Despite this setback, the Association would remain an independent organisation, although it would change to a ‘company not for gain’ under Section 21 of the Companies Act in 1958, at which time its tagline also transformed from ‘Journal of Adult Education’, to the ‘Journal of Knowledge and Culture’ (van Zyl 1994:14-15).<sup>226</sup> In this first, important sense then, *Lantern* was the mouthpiece of a self-appointed group that wished to facilitate the acquisition of ‘new habits of thinking and acting’. What is more, the call for change was necessitated by the perceived “directionlessness, superficiality and social disruption, so typical of our time” (Theron 1949:7), a putatively deplorable state of affairs that was roundly condemned by the Afrikaans intellectual, GD Scholtz who, for one, found little virtue in his fellow citizens and urged a turnaround.

Scholtz (1954:17; 18-24), in the early 1950s, was deeply troubled by the isolationist nature the Afrikaner and the latter’s disregard for European culture, claiming that a severance of its ‘umbilical cord’ would be ‘fatal’. The moral decay, in Scholtz’s (1954:83) opinion, was the result of urbanisation, a loosening from the church, materialism, a love of dancing, the cinema, *boeremusiek*,<sup>227</sup> rugby, too much sunshine and a weakness for sentimental novels and popular magazines. To remedy the situation, he recommends the study of foreign languages — including Latin — European literature and ‘real’ art (Scholtz 1954:28-31). Notably, Scholtz’s misgivings extend to South Africans’ careless attitude towards the environment; unless the exploitation of natural resources for the exclusive purpose of monetary gain was curbed, Scholtz (1954:69) warned that the sub-continent of Africa would degenerate into “The Great Uninhabitable South African Desert’.

Scholtz, in his ire, captures the spirit of the time, as well as the social and intellectual context of *Lantern’s* target audience. Stella Viljoen (2006:18), in her review of gendered nationalism on the covers of *Die Huisgenoot* — a popular local magazine that had started publication in 1916 — selects the 1950s as a period of interest precisely because of the “particular tension between idealism and profit at that time in South Africa”, when the Afrikaner community found itself poised “between a

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<sup>225</sup> Van Zyl (1994:9), in a charming justification of the Association’s decision to sign the contract with Wiseacres, points out that Mr Ramus (the manager of Wiseacres) had, after all, paid for the celebratory lunch at Polleys Hotel. The gathering would have been one of the last parties at these premises; the hotel was demolished in 1950 and the Wachthuis, headquarters of the South African Police, erected in its place — a commission of the architect, Norman Eaton. The naming of Polley’s Arcade was to commemorate the hotel which once stood at its place (Wachthuis, 231 Pretorius Street ... 2012), the arcade itself becoming a landmark and signifier of Pretoria’s alignment with the international design world.

<sup>226</sup> According to van Zyl (1994:14, 20) the Association also changed its name in June 1958 to the South African Association for the Advancement of Knowledge and Culture. In July 1964, the reference to culture was dropped and education reinstated when the name changed to the Foundation for Education, Science and Technology (FEST). In December 2002, FEST was incorporated into the National Research Foundation (NRF); it is currently known as The South Africa Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA).

<sup>227</sup> The Traditional Boeremusiek Club defines *boeremusiek* as informal, instrumental folk music, played in a particular manner, that is primarily intended as an accompaniment at social dancing (Wat is Boeremusiek? [sa]).

vernacular politics and identity and a secular, globalised paradigm". *Die Huisgenoot* had, in its early years, carefully balanced light entertainment with more serious objectives, and had, for example, provided a respectable forum for Afrikaans writers and poets (Viljoen 2006:18). However, starting in the 1950s, changes in the magazine's content signalled "a move from 'idealism and formalised cultural life' to 'profit-driven populism'" (Froneman, in Viljoen 2006:18). Readers who were increasingly exposed to the titillating nature of Hollywood films and overseas magazines, now found *Die Huisgenoot* "too distanced, too exclusive, too set on dignity and good taste and intellectual curiosity, too formal" (Spies, in Viljoen 2006:26). In response to financial imperatives, content was therefore adjusted to cater for populist interests that, arguably, were not limited to white Afrikaners. In other words, although *Panorama*, on its covers, depicted 'whites only' on South African beaches,<sup>228</sup> it did not mean that citizens who were not classified as white were not pleased as much as their white counterparts by the idea of alluring women in bathing suits under blue skies and a hot African sun.

Jacob Dlamini, in *Native nostalgia* (2009) ventures to posit that it is possible for "black" South Africans to remember their past, and their lives under apartheid, "with fondness". His point is not that blacks were 'fond of apartheid', rather that "the majority of black South Africans did not experience apartheid in its spectacular form" (Dlamini 2009:13-15). Dlamini (2009:19) contends that the disenfranchised were not zombies living in "one vast moral desert ... as if blacks produced [or enjoyed] no art, literature or music". On the other hand, perhaps *most* South Africans in the 1950s — black and white — would have preferred to quaff beer on a beach rather than chardonnay in the winelands, and arguably 'Cape Dutch' architecture had little appeal for a teenager living either in Katlehong *or* Kempton Park. The leisurely life and American style fashion, amidst bountiful nature, or cities bristling with skyscrapers, that *Panorama* so generously spread before its audience, would have appealed to a broad working-class citizenry, black and white alike. Dlamini identifies a cultural schism in the community of his childhood in which GD Scholtz finds his equal in 'Mrs M', the teenage Dlamini's elegant, but stern, headmistress, who "would not pass on a chance to remind us, barely in our teens, that she was well educated. This was more than could be said for our parents, and we daren't forget it" (Dlamini 2009:79).

Dlamini (2009: 79) speculates that the parents of the *ama-high soss*<sup>229</sup> who were on first name terms with the headmistress "regularly swapped LPs, from Beethoven to the latest in choral music". Dlamini (2009:81) links Mrs M's obsession with music to Pierre Bourdieu's assertion that nothing more clearly affirms one's 'class' than taste in music, which, in the case of the Dlamini family was Jim Reeves, the American country music singer. Dlamini (2009: 82) reminisces that,

We had a whole stack of Reeves's vinyls when I was growing up ... Reeves had armies of supporters among the black working class in South Africa ... I suspect Reeves would have been too low-class for her [Mrs M], too common. But it did not bother us one bit. There were millions of other working-class families like ours and we had a culture all our own.

It perhaps goes without saying that the readers who found *Die Huisgenoot* 'too set on good taste' also stocked up on Jim Reeves rather than Beethoven, and it was, then, precisely this 'populist taste' that the publishers of *Lantern* wished to counter: while the nation might *want* junk food, what it *needed* was "vitamins of the mind" (Roberts 1949:7), 'pabulum' that would be provided by boldly publishing the *opposite* of the audience's avowed desire, namely a dignified, formal journal that promoted good taste and intellectual curiosity.<sup>230</sup> In this sense, *Lantern* was propaganda, in that it attempted to deflect citizens from, at best, their penchant for being 'low-class', at worst, a headlong rush into hedonism.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> *Panorama* regularly featured essays on coloured, Indian, and, especially, black African cultures. However, because of the latter's absence from the covers, the material inside the publication operates mostly as a valorising backdrop to the putative excellence of South Africa's white community. Nevertheless, despite its commitment to sell apartheid as 'separate development' (Adendorff 2001), *Panorama's* role in documenting a broader African culture should not be dismissed out of hand.

<sup>229</sup> The 'high society', pupils that were "literally in a class of their own, regardless of their academic ability" (Dlamini 2009:78).

<sup>230</sup> The realisation that it was seeking to bring about a laudable, but 'spectacular', change also explains the urgent need to secure independent financing.

<sup>231</sup> *Panorama*, despite its epideictic objectives, would embrace South Africans' fascination with popular culture, especially that of America, and purposively modelled its visual rhetoric on that of *Life* magazine (Adendorff 2001).



To this purpose, then, in January 1949, in the wake of the Eybers Commission and responding to the ‘superficiality and social disruption’ in South African society, the regional organiser of adult education in Cape Town, Dr AJ van Zyl (1994:4), recommended to the Secretary of the Union Education Department, Advocate AA Roberts (1890—1964), that a “journal of adult education” be published. The first issue of *Lantern* duly appeared in August of that year under the joint editorship of Vivian C Wood, editor of publications at the Education Department, Eldred Green and Denna Smit. The name *Lantern* was chosen because “it was synonymous in Afrikaans and English and because it was conceived as throwing light on the subject of ‘adult education’” (van Zyl 1994:4).

Initially, the editorial board did not include an art department and a young architect, Wynand Smit, was called upon to advise upon style and typography. Smit designed the cover of the 1949 trial issue, Volume 1(1) (Fig. 118) that captures the earnestness and Eurocentric nature of the task and places *Lantern* firmly in the camp of GD Scholtz and Dlamini’s Mrs M. Two solemn young (white) people — the man with a tie and wristwatch, but in shirtsleeves, the girl in a Coco Chanel-style pullover and braided chain around her neck — gaze intently and perhaps with some misgiving at what appears to be a portfolio of reproductions of Gainsborough-style portraiture.<sup>232</sup> The young man hovers protectively over the girl, who, lips pursed, holds a pen in her right hand. The photograph of the couple is placed in a shape of the map of Southern Africa. To the left of the page an illustration of an elaborate gothic Florentine wall sconce signifies the ‘lantern’ of the eponymous journal, while the masthead consists of condensed sans serif letterforms evocative of the Art Deco style popular in the 1930s. This mixing of visual metaphors — with the addition of a skittish ‘1/6’ price tag — results in an ideologically forceful but stylistically rather disjointed design. The whole is presented in a purple and orange duotone that serves to draw the disparate elements together, but the “mystic and royal qualities” (All about the color purple 2017) of purple also evoke the monastic scholarliness required by intellectuals such as Scholtz.<sup>233</sup>

The bi-lingual taglines — separated by the South African Coat of Arms at the bottom of the cover — read, *Tydskrif vir Volksoopvoeding* [Magazine for the Education of the People] and *Journal of Adult Education* respectively, and suggest a subtle difference between the objectives of the language groups. It was an ambitious effort, totalling 144 pages, with articles in both English and Afrikaans on topics as diverse as art, home economics, the flowering plants of Africa, ‘Know your own sewing machine’, anthrax, Dr Julian Huxley, the Afrikaans Bible, fashions in wool, atomic bombs and the charms of Switzerland.

Although mostly printed in black and white (with some duotone), the publication boasts a full colour photo-essay (pp. 8-12) on the city of Pretoria that neatly intersects with de Jong’s childhood experiences: here is the red fire truck parked outside the Fire Station, the kiosk in Fountains Valley where de Jong played at being Robin Hood, the Union Buildings where his father worked, the rather unexpectedly modernist entrance to *Affies* (de Jong may very well be one of the boys cheerfully running below the concrete arch), and a municipal swimming pool set in utopian surrounds.<sup>234</sup> This patriotic gesture with regard to the administrative capital is preceded by a colour illustration, sponsored by Volkskas Bank, of the recently inaugurated Afrikaner cultural icon, the Voortrekker Monument, on the outskirts of Pretoria.<sup>235</sup> The latter feature was planned to be the first in a collectible series of monuments, presumably celebrating Afrikaner history.

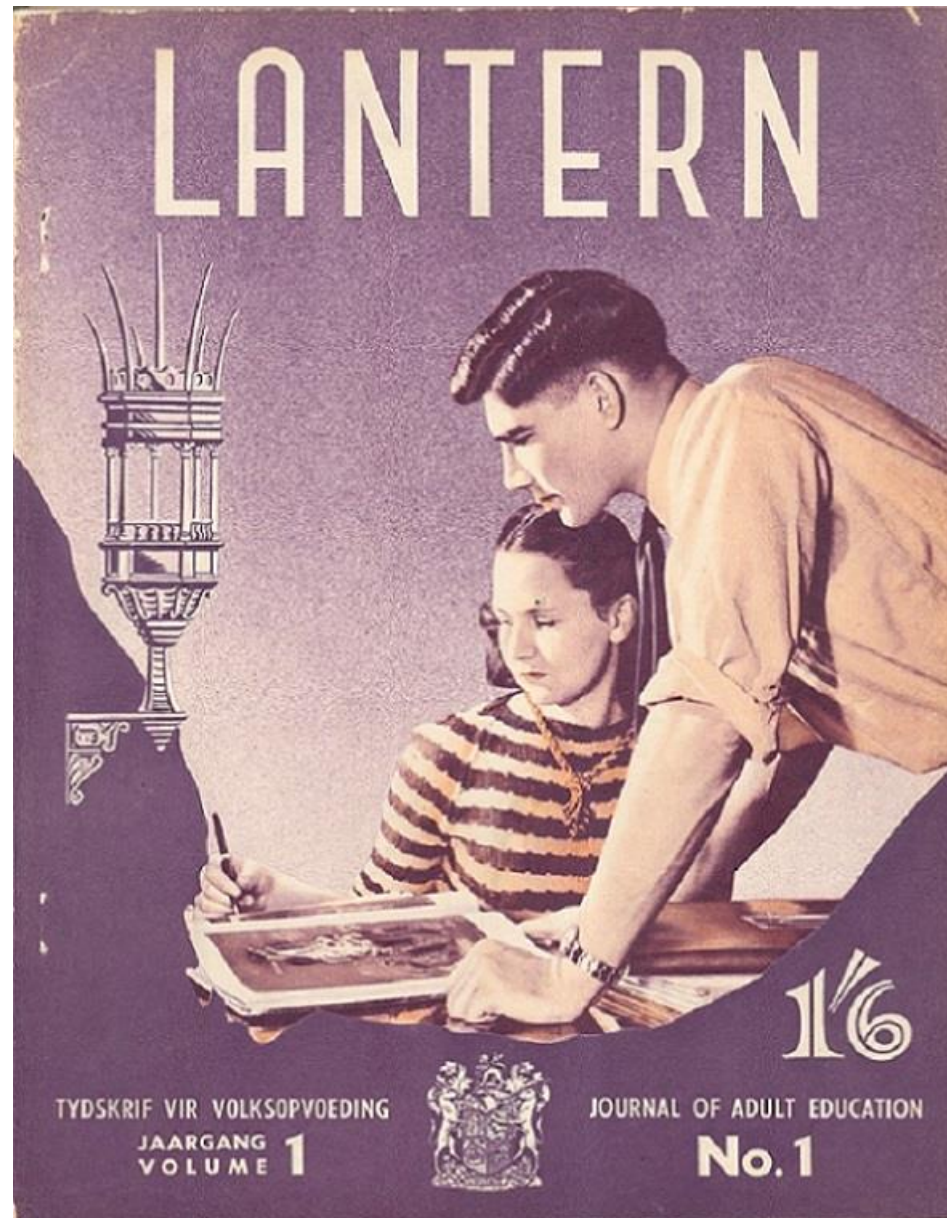
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<sup>232</sup> It has not been possible to match the rendering of the figure in the reproduction with any known artwork. Page 13 of the trial issue features Francisco Goya’s portrait of Dona Antonia Zarate, part of the collection of Sir Alfred Beit. The painting was being exhibited at the South African National Gallery at the time and it is possible that it is Goya’s work that is alluded to on the cover.

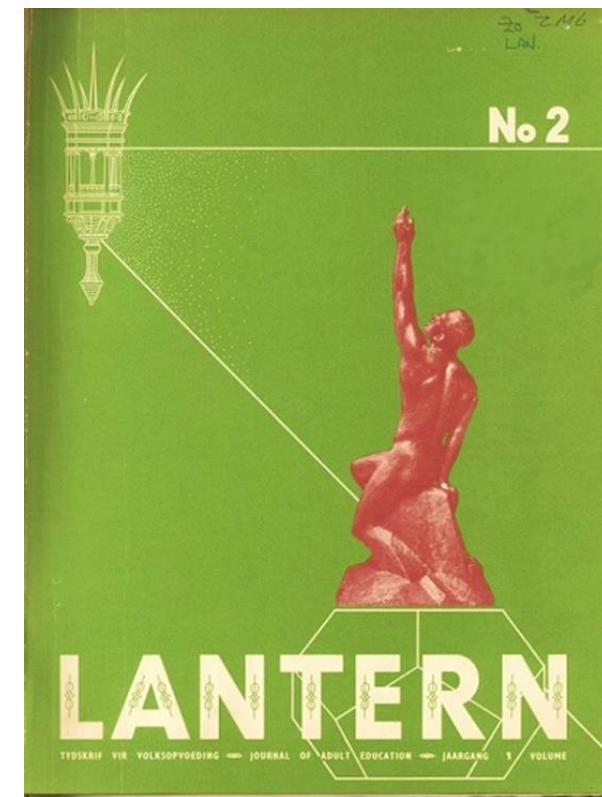
<sup>233</sup> Interestingly, the University of Johannesburg adopted, in 2017, purple and orange as its corporate colours.

<sup>234</sup> It would be good to be able to claim that this is the Hillcrest Swimming Pool, but the caption, that identifies the location as being in Pretoria-West, informs otherwise.

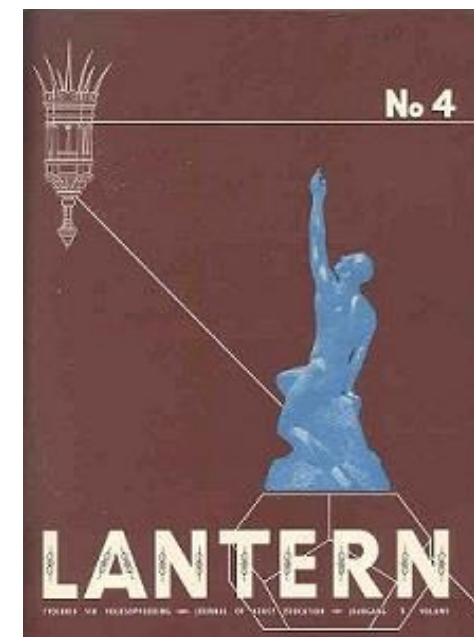
<sup>235</sup> Notably Cape Town, that after 1806 was associated with British imperialism, is afforded a one-page, one column article with two black and white photographs, at the back of the magazine (p. 96).



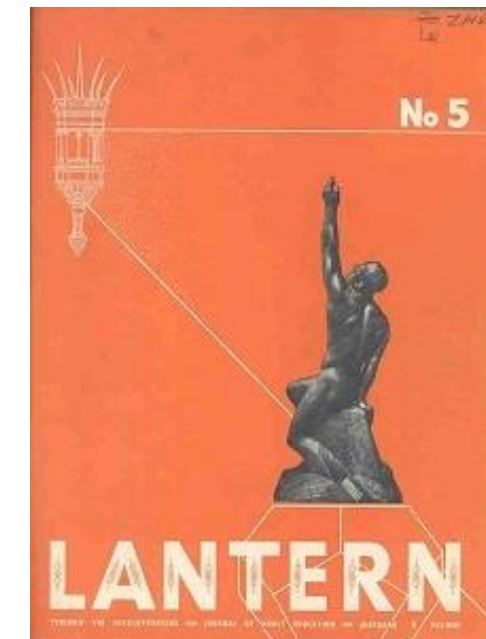
**Figure 118** Wynand Smit (art director), cover design, *Lantern* 1(1) (collection of the author).



**Figure 116** Wynand Smit (art director), cover design, *Lantern* 1(2) (collection of the author).



**Figure 117** Wynand Smit (art director), cover design, *Lantern* 1(4) (SAASTA collection).



**Figure 115** Wynand Smit (art director), cover design, *Lantern* 1(5) (SAASTA collection).

Yet, despite its origins in a State Department and visible allegiance to the interests of the ruling party, the trial issue carried several advertisements, ranging from the inside cover promotion of the Vacuum Oil Company (manufacturers of Mobil oil), Stag Beer and Barclays Bank, to a full page advertisement for Milo, Nestlé's Fortified Tonic Food, that depicts a svelte couple striding purposefully against a backdrop of sunlit skyscrapers. The back cover carries an advertisement for the Witwatersrand Technical College (WTC) in Eloff Street, Johannesburg, emphasising its correspondence courses and dual medium instruction. The journal's commitment to progress, adult education and the value of English as a medium of communication is thus reiterated in its advertising content

In its effort and scope, the publication encapsulates a heartfelt attempt (perhaps even a noble struggle) to balance both 'idealism and formalised cultural life' with 'profit-driven populism', as well as to integrate the aspirations of an emerging Afrikaner elite with the liberalism of its English antecedent. However, its 144 pages may have been too much to swallow. By the time that the trial issue of *Lantern* appeared, Advocate Roberts had retired (Brits 1973:273)<sup>236</sup> and been posted overseas as High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa in Canada (Mansergh 1968 [1958]:432). After his departure, the Education Department, with HS van der Walt as Roberts's successor, promptly dropped the *Lantern* project.

The reason for the State terminating the publication is unclear. The trial issue had included a small buff postcard that could be completed and returned to the Secretary of Education.<sup>237</sup> It reads (in both Afrikaans and English): "*Lantern* is the people's journal and whether its publication is to continue, depends entirely on you. Kindly indicate your desire by inserting a cross after (1) or (2)", where (2) signified the wish that the publication be discontinued. Whether the Department of Education was inundated with demands that *Lantern* cease publication, or whether readers merely did not bother to reply, is unknown, but it can be fairly assumed that the response was not one that encouraged confidence in the popularity of the endeavour. On the other hand, it should also be noted that in 1991 the South African Communication Service (the successor to the State Information Office) conducted a survey (Profiel en behoeftes van die lesers van *Suid-Afrikaanse Panorama*: 'n kernopsomming 1991) as to *Panorama's* South African readership; despite the overwhelmingly positive response recorded in the survey, *Panorama* ceased publication in December 1992. In some cases, clearly, political considerations may outweigh popular demand.

Van Zyl (1994:5) does not offer an explanation for the decision to discontinue *Lantern*, but one may speculate that van der Walt felt that the undertaking was a pet project of Roberts, who was too removed, too English, and too liberal in his approach to 'people's education' in a new South Africa. In this context, it is interesting to contrast the messages — in the trial issue of *Lantern* — of the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr AJ Stals, who writes in an Afrikaans redolent of its agrarian Dutch origins, to Roberts's elevated metaphors and alien Latin terms (such as *pabulum* and *luceat lychnus*) that not even a picture of the Voortrekker Monument could ameliorate.

Roberts, indeed, signified an allegiance to English liberalism that, in 1949, would have needled the ruling party. The son of Alfred Brooksbank Roberts, Arthur Adrian Roberts completed his schooling in 1907 at Selborne College, East London. He graduated with his first BA degree at the Transvaal University College (a forerunner of WTC), and earned his Law Degree at Trinity College, Cambridge (Ellis 2004:35). In 1944, he was appointed Secretary of Education in the recently re-elected United Party Government, a position that GW Eybers occupied before him (Boucher 1973:207). As such, Roberts would have signified "the outward-looking vista" (Austin 2001:311) that typified the style of government under Smuts.<sup>238</sup> Indeed, Saul Dubow (2006:253) notes that when Roberts was "packed off to Canada", it signalled the end of English influence in the newly created National Council for Social Research. It also seemed to put an end to *Lantern*.

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<sup>236</sup> Brits, who provides the autobiographical inserts in Maurice Boucher's (1973) history of UNISA, states that Roberts retired in 1949. Roberts was, however, not quite 60, which suggests that he was persuaded to vacate his post as Secretary of Education earlier than strictly necessary.

<sup>237</sup> Despite the prominent and overtly Afrikaans cultural signifier of the Voortrekker Monument in the pages of *Lantern*, the return address of the postcard has as its heading OHMS-IDVSM — On His Majesty's Service—*In Diens Van Sy Majesteit*, a salient reminder that South Africa remained a British dominion.

<sup>238</sup> Roberts was appointed to the Council of UNISA in 1930 — in 1938 he became the most vociferous lobbyist for the right of the university to enrol 'external' students, a condition that would allow for the registration of Indian, Coloured and black learners — and served as Vice-Chancellor at UNISA from 1944 to 1946 (Boucher 1973:206, 211, 220). Roberts was also a member of the Union's delegation at UNESCO from 1946 to 1948 (Ellis 2004:35), a privilege that fell to van Zyl in the next few years.

## 4.3 *Lantern* and the South African Association for Adult Education

### 4.3.1 Wynand Smit's serial constructivism 1950-1953

It was after his return from a UNESCO General Meeting (and a chat with Roberts aboard the ship that, coincidentally, had taken them both to Europe) that van Zyl (1994:5) discovered that the Department had shelved the *Lantern* project, and he immediately took action. Joining forces with Dr SH Pellissier — at that time Chairman of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (Brits 1973:196), as well as Member of Council at UNISA<sup>239</sup> — van Zyl formed the Association for Adult Education, with the assistance of prominent South Africans such as JE Conradie (wife of the Administrator of the Cape), Charles Theodore te Water (erstwhile President of the Assembly of the League of Nations and South Africa's High Commissioner in England), Dr AW Rowe (Principle of WTC) and Professor JYT Greig of the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS). Vivian Wood, who had, in the interim, also left the Union Education Department and been appointed as the Head of Publications at the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), relinquished this latter post to become the full-time editor of *Lantern* (van Zyl 1994:6).

This little band of idealists could hardly be described as an instrument of Nationalist Party ideology, although the Association took care to approach both the then Prime Minister, Dr DF Malan, and the Leader of the Opposition to serve as patrons. This show of neutrality was strategically extended by inviting both the Minister of Education, JH Viljoen, and Sir Ernst Oppenheimer, founder of the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa, to serve as additional patrons (van Zyl 1994:9). Every measure, it seems, was taken to follow a process that communicated a liberal, scientific and independent position with regard to — initially, at least — adult education.

The determination of the Association to maintain a 'high standard' is admirable. Van Zyl (1994:13) emphasises that in the early years "there were sufficient people who believed in a journal of adult education, and the authors of articles did not insist on payment". The first issue of *Lantern* published by the Association appeared sixteen months after the trial number; it features 53 articles ranging from the poem *Too late?* by "the famous writer Longfellow" (van Zyl 1994:11)<sup>240</sup> — perhaps van Zyl's choice, since he reproduces it in his review of the Association's origins more than 40 years later — to step-by-step instructions (in Afrikaans) on how to iron a shirt, a book review of AT Bryant's *The Zulu people as they were before the white man came* (1949), and 'Advertising: an essential element in modern business practice'.<sup>241</sup> Issue number two contained even more advertising than its predecessor, including advertisements for Pelican Brand Pilchards, The Standard Bank, Grosvenor Motors, the Central News Agency (CNA) and the South African Wool Board. The back cover advertises the Rapid Results College that had done much to pioneer the concept of the so-called 'external' student in Southern Africa (Boucher 1973:198, 215, 270).

There is a discernible, if subtle, shift in the editorial content. As with its predecessor, Volume 1(2) features selected colour pages, but the planned series of monuments has been jettisoned in favour of a series of articles — accompanied by large colour reproductions — by Walter Battiss (1951:2) on 'The source of art', featuring "South African petroglyphs ... [that] represent the most ancient habitual expression of man's artistry that the world possesses". At the outset, the independent *Lantern* thus acknowledges that other cultures populated Southern Africa 'before the white man came', and, what is more, that these cultures were arguably *superior* to those of the Egyptians and Assyrians. As if to drive this point home, another colour section features Robert Broom, who had "found a considerable number of specimens of two types of ape-man" in South Africa — heady stuff when compared to the shrubberies and swimming pools of Pretoria in the trial issue.

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<sup>239</sup> Pellissier was a member of the UNISA Council from 1927 to 1954, and had served as Vice-Chancellor for this institution from 1932 to 1934 (Brits 1973:196). The vision and objectives of UNISA therefore played a considerable role in the ethos of the early *Lantern*.

<sup>240</sup> The poem, strategically placed on page one, is framed by a dramatic scraperboard illustration, by 'GM'. Longfellow (in *Lantern* 1951 August:1) declares: "Goethe ... toiling to the last, Completed Faust when eighty years were past" — an erudite, but rather arcane, argument for adult education in Southern Africa in the twentieth century.

<sup>241</sup> The article cleverly uses advertisements of *Lantern's* sponsors to illustrate its argument; it also provides a useful diagram of the structure of an advertising agency (West 1951:99-101).



More contemporary concerns are also of interest. Facing the homage to Broom, is an article — ‘Tourist business is everybody’s business’ — that features colour reproductions of promotional material for The South African Tourist Corporation (SATOUR). As is perhaps to be expected, two large brochures depict black African women in traditional garb, but their prominence and dignity when compared to the scantily-clad white girl on the cover of a z-fold is notable. Echoing Scholtz’s warnings about exploitative agriculture, the edition presents a grim black and white photo essay that highlights the consequences of overgrazing and destructive ecological practices by, notably, “man — and woman” (What man is there of you ... 1951:136-140). Religion is not left out, but the bilingual contribution ‘To save the world’ is not only supplied by The British and Foreign Bible Society, it is also decorated with illustrations of angels — a symbol of idolatry and therefore anathema to staunch Afrikaners.<sup>242</sup>

To announce its transformation from a state-controlled entity, the front cover of the first independent issue (Fig. 116) is strikingly different from that of the trial issue. Also designed by Smit — who was retained as the “honorary art advisor” (van Zyl 1994:20), but who no longer had the Education Department peering over his shoulder — the bold design references both Russian Constructivism and American Modernism in its use of photomontage, stylisation and clean sans serif letterforms that are, nevertheless, softened by a delicate ornamental cartouche in the masthead. The line photograph of the heroic sculpture, depicting a man raising his arm in the air as if in supplication, is reproduced in a spot colour, a reddish brown, which is intensified by the use of its complementary, green, in the background. The gothic scone has been simplified and anchors a linear device that evokes mathematical and scientific diagrams. The magazine would use the same design, printed in different colourways, for its next seven issues (for example, Figs. 115 & 117).

Several aspects of this cover design are of interest. Firstly, and rather surprisingly given its repeated use, the creator of the sculpture is not credited. It could, conceivably, have been Coert Steynberg (1905-1982) who is associated with emotive representations of Afrikaner ethnic nationalism;<sup>243</sup> another possibility is the *volkskunstenaar*<sup>244</sup> Hennie Potgieter (1971-1992) whose main interest was the human figure (van der Westhuysen 2011). Potgieter appears to have sculpted a work titled *Strewe* (‘Striving’) (Opperman 2008), an apt descriptor for the rhetoric on the cover, but no visual reference to *Strewe* has been found. Secondly, owing to the colouring, the figure does not unambiguously signify a white audience. Smit retained the device of an Italianate lantern, but although the beneficence of western enlightenment shines down on him, the overall composition of the design suggests that the brown figure may be resisting this salvation, pointing to an alternative goal above and beyond the confines of European hegemony.

The choice of a dull green background on the first independent cover is also intriguing; later editions would use far more striking reds, oranges and purples. On the one hand, green might have been chosen to signify newness, or regeneration, but it also suggests a wish to appear amiable, and not too radical. Nevertheless, Smit’s use of photomontage, bold sans serif and repeatable, mechanistic design evokes the style and serial nature of Alexander Rodchenko’s constructivist covers for *Left Front of the Arts* (1923) and Marietta Shagnian’s ‘Miss Mend’ books — a link to the Soviet socialist cause and design in the service of communism of which Smit may, or may not, have been aware.

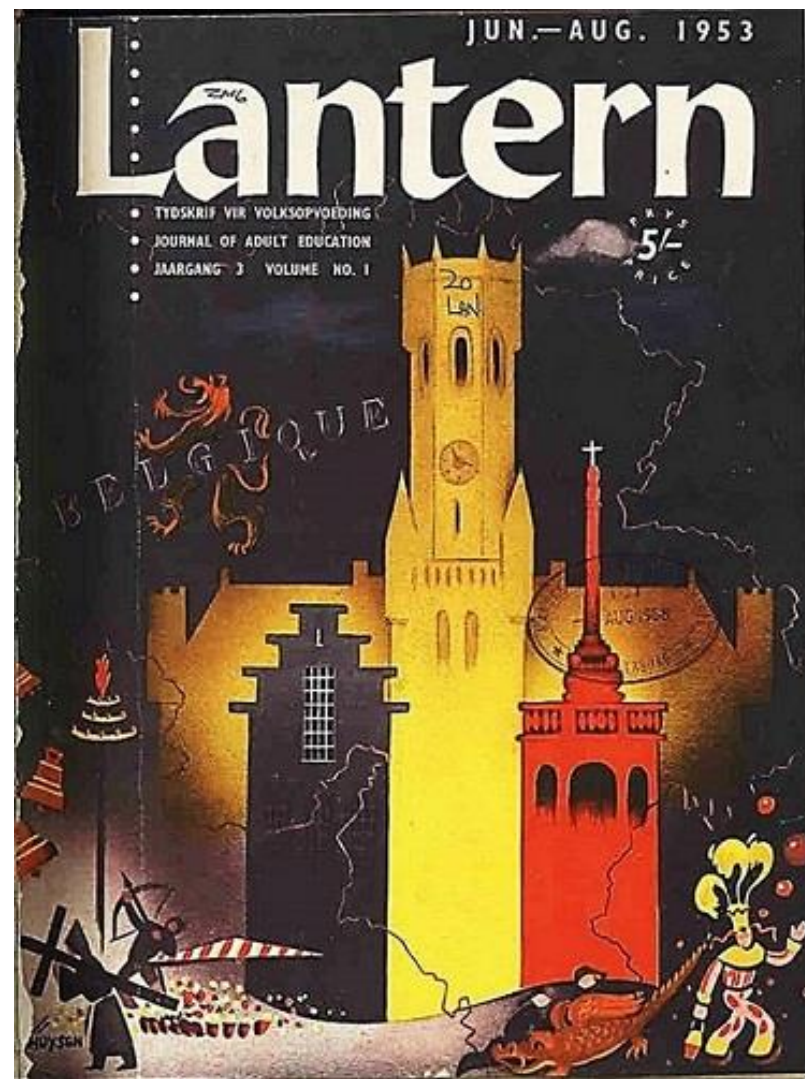
Despite its indirect references to insurrection, the independent *Lantern* appears to have met with success. The first issue of the second volume carried more than twelve pages of advertising, and its range of subject matter continued to impress. Volume 2(1) commences with an article on Jan Buys — ‘Painter of paradise’ (but also,

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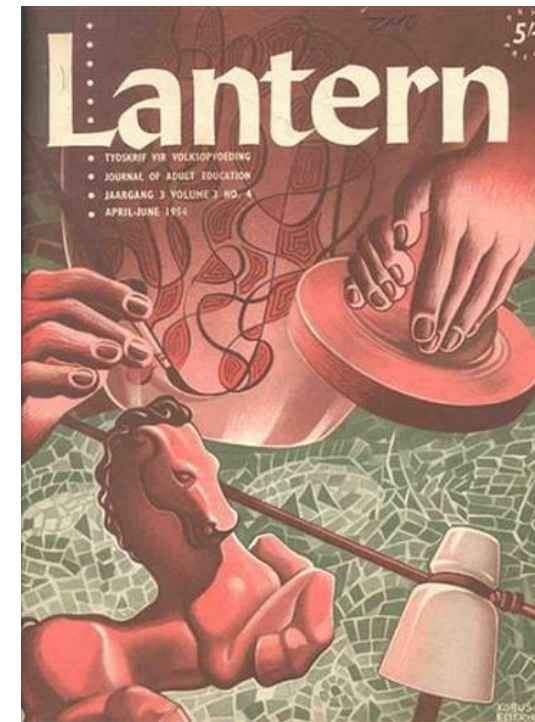
<sup>242</sup> Afrikaner fundamentalist Calvinism had its roots in the protest against the excesses of Catholic France inspired in Geneva by John Calvin (Leach 1989:112). Consequently, as Jonathan Jansen (2009:xvii) points out, the *Roomse gevaar* (the Roman Catholic threat), along with the *swart gevaar* (the black threat) and the *rooi gevaar* (the communist threat), was an ever-present danger. Intrinsic to puritan Calvinism (and to its othering of Roman Catholicism) is an abhorrence of the worship of ‘graven images’, a practice forbidden in the Christian Bible (see MacMahon 2017). Afrikaans churches, even more so than their Presbyterian and Methodist counterparts, were austere and, typically, devoid of representative imagery. Although Afrikaners accepted the notion of angels as they were referenced in the Bible, depiction of these beings would have been regarded as popery by many in the 1950s. As a child, in the mid-1960s, I was subjected to the unsettling performance of an Afrikaans teacher making exactly this point as he ripped out the image of the angel banishing Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden from a large classroom poster depicting this Biblical scene.

<sup>243</sup> The supplicant figure resembles another work by Steynberg, namely the Sarel Cilliers Memorial in Kroonstad, unveiled in 1950 (see Sarel Cilliers ... 2017).

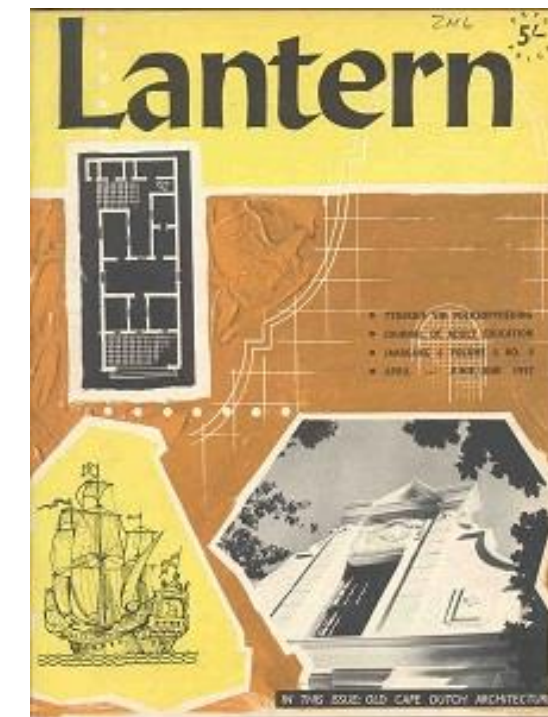
<sup>244</sup> Approximately, ‘artist of the people’, or ‘folk artist’.



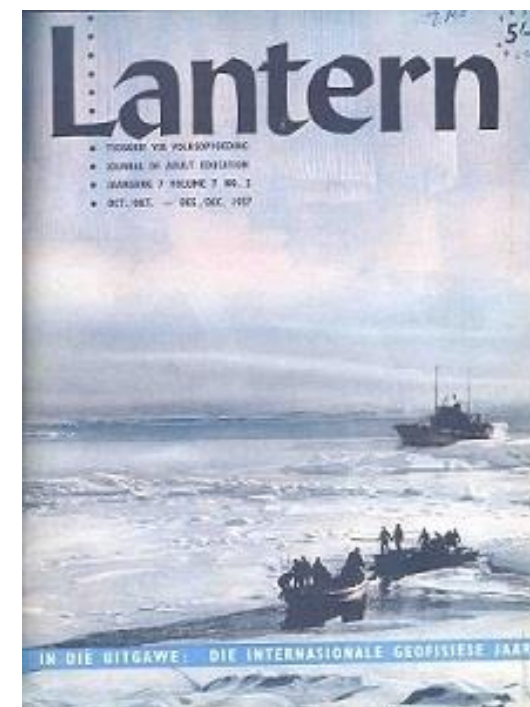
**Figure 120** Kobus Esterhuizen (art director & illustrator), cover design, *Lantern* June /August 1953 (collection of the author).



**Figure 121** Kobus Esterhuizen (art director & illustrator), cover design, *Lantern* April / June 1954 (collection of the author).



**Figure 122** Georges Duby (art director), cover design, *Lantern* April /June 1957 (collection of the author),



**Figure 119** Georges Duby (art director), cover design, *Lantern* October / December 1957 (collection of the author).

perhaps, copyist of Marc Chagall), to be followed by such offerings as *Die kleurling-vissers van Kalkbaai*,<sup>245</sup> ‘Marriage: its preliminaries and consequences’, ‘Modern Art ... pathological, or a pose?’, *Bantoekunde*,<sup>246</sup> ‘Punchline: the drama of letters’, water conservation, vultures in the Pretoria zoo, the city of Welkom,<sup>247</sup> interior design, and the size of the brain. The article on letterforms was penned by Georges Duby (1911- ?), who would later become *Lantern*’s art director, and signifies an interest in the field, and professional merit, of ‘commercial art’ on the part of the journal. By including a feature on “the fascinating background of letters” (Duby 1952:56) alongside articles on town planning, modern art and interior design, *Lantern* afforded the field of typography a respectability it seldom enjoys. Duby’s informative history from cave art to the emergence of Baskerville, Bodoni and Gill Sans provides a useful and still highly readable synopsis of some of the major innovations in letterforms. Duby (1952:56) expresses the optimistic hope that readers would now “look at advertisements with a more critical eye”.

### 4.3.2 Kobus Esterhuysen and Georges Duby: 1953-1957

The mood of *Lantern* itself would be transformed when, in 1953, “the well-known Kobus Esterhuysen” (Van Zyl 1994:20) was appointed as art director. Esterhuysen<sup>248</sup> was probably de Jong’s closest rival with regard to pioneering the profession of graphic design in South Africa. Much older than his American-trained counterpart, Esterhuysen had studied fine art and architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand and then spent two years at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, where his studies were interrupted by the upheavals of World War I (WW I) (The South African Military History ... 1984).<sup>249</sup> He became a political cartoonist for *Die Transvaler* newspaper (see Kobus Esterhuysen 2013a) and in the 1940s and early 1950s, as a member of the *Volksteater*,<sup>250</sup> designed posters, programmes and handbills as well as sets for numerous Afrikaans theatre productions (Kobus Esterhuysen 2013b).<sup>251</sup>

His connection with South African theatre probably brought Esterhuysen into the orbit of *Lantern*, since PP Breytenbach, a member of the Board of Control of the journal, was also Director of the National Theatre Organisation (NTO). The latter body had achieved notable success in 1952 with two plays for which Esterhuysen had provided designs, namely *As ons twee eers getroud is* (by Gerard Beukes), and *Die jaar van die vuuros* (by WA de Klerk) (Kobus Esterhuysen 2013b; Kruger 1952:6). Starting with the June/August 1953 issue, Esterhuysen replaced Smit’s diagrammatic cover designs with painterly and often very complex illustrations (Figs. 120 & 121). Thus, his first cover presents a somewhat uncanny representation of Belgium (or, as it is identified on the cover, *Belgique*). Although stylised, the illustration is dense and reflects the designer’s preoccupation with the theatre in the dramatic up lighting and the tiny, costumed actors that cavort in front of the ‘scenery flats’. Esterhuysen’s technique is reminiscent of the airbrushed poster designs of the French graphic designer Adolph Mouron (‘Cassandre’) (1901-1968), who was Esterhuysen’s contemporary. Indeed, several *Lantern* cover designs during this period display the Cubist/Futurist influence evident in the French designer’s work,<sup>252</sup> although as many covers tend towards the garish and, occasionally, superficially slick.

<sup>245</sup> The coloured fishermen of Kalk Bay.

<sup>246</sup> The study of the Bantu.

<sup>247</sup> This article was reprinted from *Optima*, and accompanied by two artist’s renderings of an utopian aerial view of the future town of Welkom, planned to serve the new gold mines.

<sup>248</sup> Esterhuysen’s dates of birth/death are not known.

<sup>249</sup> Munich was regarded as “the capital of poster design in southern Germany” (Graphic art ... [sa]) in the early 1900s, but was also at the centre of political unrest (History of Munich 2015). Esterhuysen, in a talk given to The South African Military History Society in 1984, indicated that he had been interned in Prussia in September 1919, but escaped and made his way home through Europe. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to pursue Esterhuysen’s life story in any detail, available information suggests ample opportunities for further research.

<sup>250</sup> People’s Theatre.

<sup>251</sup> De Jong recalls Esterhuysen as a prominent show stand designer in the late 1950s; like de Jong, Esterhuysen would also design South African bank notes and stamps. He was an avid philatelist and had a particular interest, apart from the collection of old maps, in the study of postal history (The South African Military History ... 1984).

<sup>252</sup> Cassandre had also designed sets for the theatre (Biography 2014), with, amongst others, the painter Balthasar Klossowski, or ‘Balthus’ (1908 –2001). It is perhaps of interest that both these artists had roots in Eastern Europe, since Esterhuysen himself had apparently been travelling in Eastern Prussia in 1919 (The South African Military History Society July Newsletter: June meeting 1984).

One aspect of Esterhuysen's art direction that is of interest is his choice of letterforms. He replaces Smit's sans serif masthead with a calligraphic font reminiscent of Carolingian miniscules, thereby suggesting the exemplar of medieval monastic culture, whilst removing the more literal gothic wall sconce.<sup>253</sup> The idea of an illuminating beam of knowledge has been retained, however, in the whimsical line of dots trickling down and past the upper case 'L'. Although the choice of a calligraphic signifier might be regarded as historicist, the robust letterforms and playful patterning suggest a peculiarly modern, yet humanist, *ethos*. While it may have been unintentional, the use of calligraphic forms also engages more emotively with the context of an African culture than a sans serif, embedded in narratives of mechanical production, is perhaps able to do. Esterhuysen's masthead, introduced in 1953, would survive until the end of 1965, after which it was replaced with a condensed sans serif and a rigid adherence to the International Style. What is notable is that, as the journal gasped its last in 1995, and after the cover designs had descended into the vale of listless computer-assisted design, Esterhuysen's masthead was resurrected in an attempt (or so it seems) to conclude the *Lantern* project with some dignity and, perhaps, nostalgia for a more virile chapter in the journal's past.

Esterhuysen, for his part, departed long before his masthead, and was replaced by Georges Duby who became a part-time 'art advisor' at *Lantern* in mid-1956 (Van Zyl 1994:20). Duby had been born in France, but raised by missionary parents at the Paris Evangelical Mission Station in Morija, Lesotho (Duby 03 August 2015). He studied at the Michaelis School of Art in Cape Town (Duby 04 August 2015), and at the time that he became an 'advisor' to the *Lantern* team, he was permanently employed at SATOUR (Duby 03 August 2015).<sup>254</sup> Only in 1972, at age 60, did Duby join the Association — by then known as the Foundation for Education, Science and Technology (FEST) — as a full-time 'art editor'.

While Esterhuysen had designed and illustrated the covers of the issues that he handled and signed his artwork — thus affirming the 'individual genius' of the designer-as-artist — Duby, in his part-time capacity, took on the role of art director, selecting designs and illustrations from other sources. Consequently, a rather eclectic batch of covers followed Duby's appointment, ranging from the innovative juxtaposition of red patterning and black type (October/September 1956) — Duby's first cover — to the lugubrious reproduction of Heinz Pulon's etching of 'gemsbuck' (July/September 1957) and the melancholy blandness of an Antarctic snowscape (October/December 1957) (Fig. 119).

#### **4.3.3 De Jong takes the stage: *Lantern* 7(3) January / March 1958**

The introduction of full-bleed stock photography on October/December 1957 cover (Fig. 119) — an anomaly in the *ethos* of the journal — suggests a momentary collapse of the imagination at year's end. However, the cover of the first issue of 1958 sparkles with confidence, wit and energy. The theme is 'The orchestra and its instruments', and the design, comprising two capricious line drawings superimposed on flat planes of intersecting colour, is signed: *Ernst de Jong* (Fig. 123). Unlike Esterhuysen's signature, which is always obscured by his restless background textures, de Jong ensures that his name floats in a clear block of bright orange, and lines up with the date and issue information, so that the signature is not an afterthought but a considered element in the overall scheme. The dotted line in the masthead not only matches, but also enhances the whimsical illustration style and the device is repeated, in miniature form, in the stylised drawing of the French horn.

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<sup>253</sup> The delicate line drawing of the sconce does, however, survive on the Contents page.

<sup>254</sup> Duby worked for SATOUR from the early 1950s until 1972, spending the last three years of his employ managing the organisation's office in Paris, France. Like Esterhuysen, Duby's life and work call for further study.



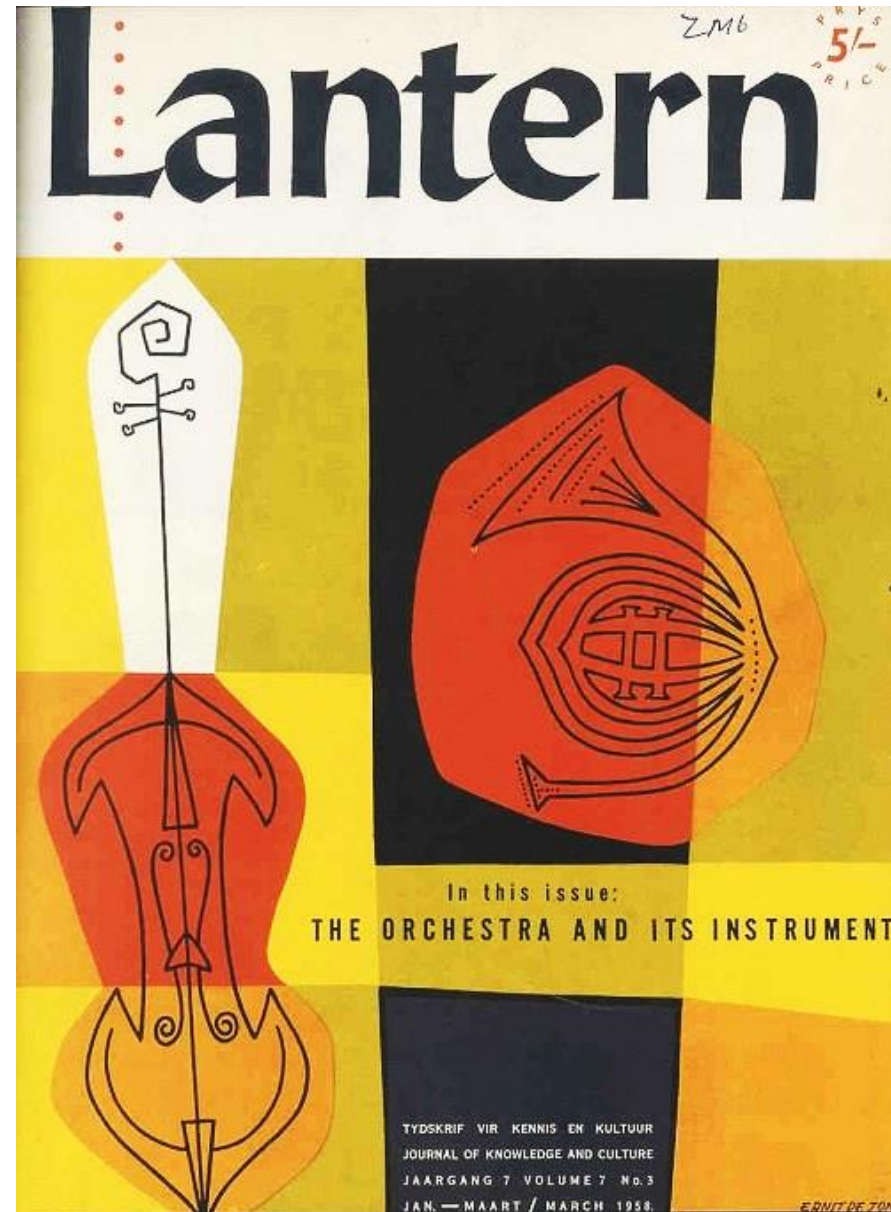


Figure 123 Ernst de Jong (designer & illustrator), cover design, *Lantern* January / March 1958 (collection of the author).

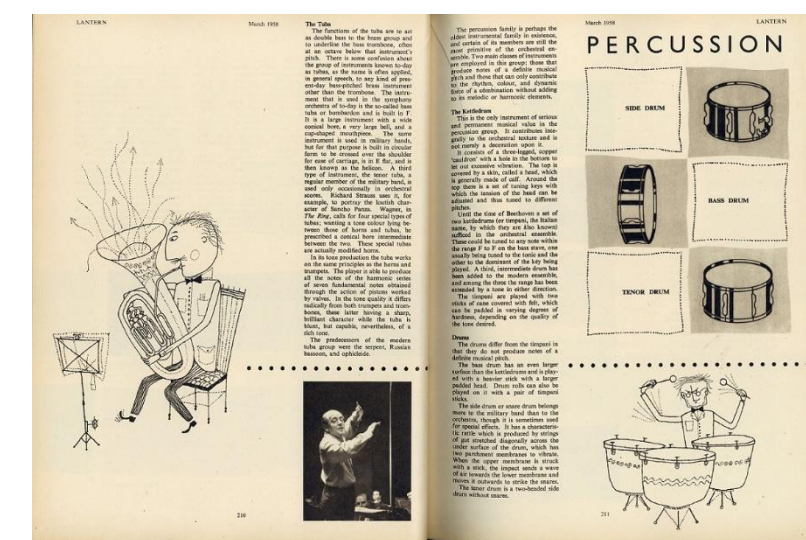
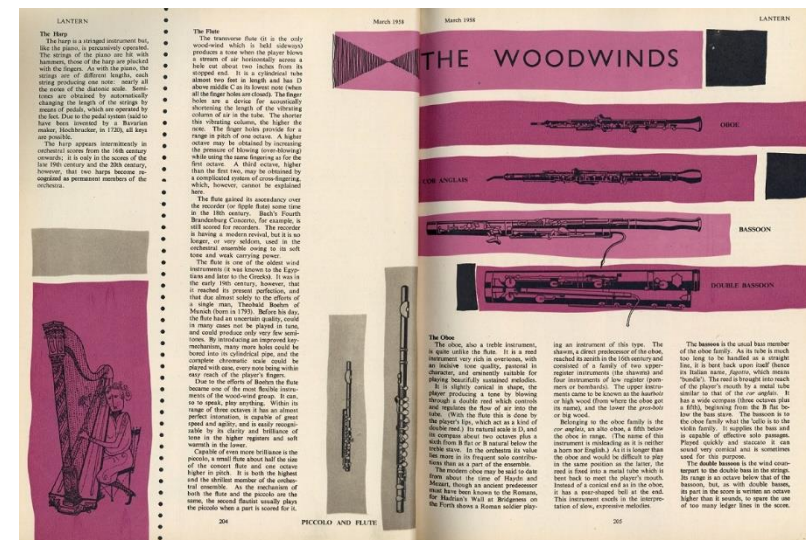


Figure 124 Ernst de Jong (designer), pages from *Lantern* January / March 1958 (collection of the author).

It is of interest that although Duby is credited as ‘art advisor’ in this issue, it was, according to de Jong (2015\_04 December), the editor, Vivian Wood and not Duby who commissioned EDJS to design the cover. In fact, de Jong recalls that Duby regarded him, de Jong, as something of a threat, and was, he suspects, “a bit jealous of me”. While Wood should then be credited with introducing the ‘American’ style of EDJS onto the covers of *Lantern*, the studio’s own interruption of the publication’s programme is important within the context of this study. How de Jong came to Wood’s attention is unclear, but a likely link is Dr AJ van Zyl, who was both Director of the Pretoria College for Advanced Technical Education, where de Jong had started lecturing, and a Board Member of the Association for Adult Education. It may also have been Duby, who had links in the advertising profession, who was alerted to the arrival of the ‘new star’ from Oklahoma.

Whoever made the connection (and it may have been de Jong himself, scouting for commissions), de Jong’s recent return from the USA “after five years of academic and practical study” (Our cover design 1958) is noted on the contents page of the January / March 1958 issue.<sup>255</sup> The opportunity to promote the new “artist” and his studio was not lost on the de Jongs; it is the first cover to be expressly designed for the journal where the designer is acknowledged on the cover, the contents page as well as in the credits of the article itself.

Without doubt, the January/March 1958 cover signals a declaration of intent. Although there is perhaps a superficial resemblance to an earlier cover (April/June 1957) (Fig. 122),<sup>256</sup> the latter, while innovative in its incorporation of modernist design devices such as collage, montage and even a hint of postmodern irony — the dotted line has been turned on its side — draws quite heavily on the element of *logos* (diagrams, grids and documentary photography), while de Jong’s frivolous interpretation of ‘orchestra’ favours *pathos* by evoking a feeling of child-like joy in the viewer who is encouraged to adjust her or his perceptions with regard to the ‘high art’ of classical music-making. However, in relinquishing the, for the most part, realistic illustration of earlier covers, *Lantern* demands that its audience be both visually literate and culturally sophisticated in order to assimilate the stylised forms as ‘orchestra’, and to appreciate the subtle joke that is being made. It is also noteworthy that on this cover the journal’s original tagline *Tydskrif vir Volksopvoeding* / Journal of Adult Education is replaced with *Tydskrif vir Kennis en Kultuur* / Journal of Knowledge and Culture, where the stated nature of the publication is now identical in both languages. References to ‘adult’ or ‘people’s’ education (and with it the implied *lack* of education in the people) are replaced with a descriptor that addresses *Lantern*’s audience as its equal — an informed community with a shared interest in ‘knowledge’ and ‘culture’.

In this shift one can perceive a change with regard to the idea of ‘nation’ in late 1949 — when the journal was launched — to 1957 when de Jong arrived back from Oklahoma. Citizens who eight years previously had required assistance with the technological challenge of ironing laundry were now taking their place on a world stage with urbane confidence. The fact that de Jong chose to return to the Union rather than pursue a career in the USA is evidence of the optimistic, even utopian, spirit that preceded the fiftieth anniversary of the Union in 1960, for which elaborate preparations were already being made in 1958. The fact that de Jong’s cover both captures and amplifies this mood is, of course, partly owing to his own coming-of-age in the USA and the youthful enthusiasm with which he regarded the future landscape of his

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<sup>255</sup> The description of the cover on the contents page might have been penned by Gwen de Jong, who did the studio’s copywriting. It reads in full, “Our cover was designed by Ernst de Jong and reflects the orchestra’s several sections working as a harmonious unit. The simple and bold design, the colours used, and the mode of stylization [*sic*] suggest the vitality of music. The artist has recently returned to South Africa after five years of academic and practical study in the United States of America” (Our cover design 1958: 197). It is notable that the narrative prioritises the ‘academic’ aspect of the designer’s studies.

<sup>256</sup> The theme of this issue is ‘Old Cape Dutch architecture’. Although the designer of the cover is not identified, it was probably supplied by Wynand Smit, who is credited with providing the sketches for Renate von Geyso’s feature article. The issue also contains an article – in Afrikaans, but also summarised in English — on ‘The trek before the great trek’ (de Kock 1957:372-379) in which it is made very clear that the legendary ‘voortrekkers’ were not the first pioneers “who carried civilisation across the Orange River”. Mention is made of Coenraad de Buys, who, after living for some time with the Xhosa, in c1815 trekked with his family of ‘mixed race’ as far as the Soutpansberg (now the province of Limpopo).

success. However, his design was also responding to the synchronous emergence of a ‘new’ South Africa and the arrival of European modernism that had started to trickle into the country as artists and architects returned from studies abroad, or emigrated from Europe to settle in this country.<sup>257</sup>

Abstraction was not a wildly radical concept in Johannesburg and Pretoria in 1958, but it was a very recent trend. John Fassler (1961:246) remarks that Johannesburg-based sculptor Eduardo Villa’s (1915-2011) *Rhythmical group* (1955) marked the stage when representation disappeared from his work. Cecil Skotnes (1926-2009), who held his first solo exhibition at the Pretoria Art Centre in 1957, dates his abstract woodcut compositions from this year (e.g., *Landscape* (1957)).<sup>258</sup> Pretoria artist Bettie Cilliers-Barnard (1914-2010), whose early works are conventional still lifes, started producing “figuratively abstract statements” (Three small sketches ... [sa]) during a study tour to France in 1956. All three artists represented South Africa at the São Paulo Art Biennial in 1957 (Fassler 1961; Cecil Skotnes Chronology [sa]; Bettie Cilliers Barnard Artist CV [sa]) — Villa with a forged steel composition entitled *African rhythm* (1955) — suggesting that the ‘nation’ was already defining itself (if only selectively) in terms of a reduced, neutral, and international visual language by the time that EDJS designed its first *Lantern* cover.

What arguably sets de Jong apart is that, firstly, despite his aspiration as a gallery artist, he fearlessly — if in the end, perhaps, disastrously for his painting career — ventured into the field of commercial art. It is likely that, in 1958, he may have been the only creative practitioner in South Africa who had obtained a university degree that encompassed skills not only in the fine arts (painting, sculpture, and printmaking), but also information design, a merging of disciplines that would have been, and perhaps continues to be, regarded as antagonistic. De Jong was not an easel painter co-opted to provide an image for a journal cover, but neither was he limited to the standard formulae of ‘advertising art’. Cecil Skotnes is a good example of an artist whose work — owing to its graphic quality — was well suited for application on formats such as book covers, calendars and wine labels, although he himself was not necessarily the designer of the cover or label.<sup>259</sup> De Jong, on the other hand, intuitively combined ideas gleaned from his fine art training with language-based rhetoric, such as typography and layout, and brought to the design task the importance of constructing a brand — even if the client only requested a cover.

Yet, despite his insistence upon the interrelationship between art and design, de Jong separated the two functions as final outcomes of the creative process. A design was not a layout with the reproduction of a painting or woodcut inserted onto it; a design was, in its totality, an artwork that responded to certain criteria, just as an artwork was also a design, but perhaps (although not necessarily) with a different set of criteria. Consequently, de Jong’s first *Lantern* cover is not an uneasy splicing of ‘modern’ art and the rhetoric of design, as many of, for example, Esterhuysen’s cover designs appear to be, but a total, cohesive visual argument. Following from this observation is the recognition that the January/March 1958 *Lantern* cover evokes the playful *ethos* of American modernism as opposed to the austerity of its European counterpart. This is the earliest dated design output bearing de Jong’s name<sup>260</sup> and scrutiny of the article itself reveals that de Jong is credited for both its “illustration and design”.

However, according to de Jong’s (2014:4) curriculum vitae, the de Jongs had started teaching at the art college in 1958, so the possibility must be considered that the couple had access to, and were therefore also influenced by, this rich source of designerly skills when accepting the commission for *Lantern*. For de Jong, EDJS was primarily a means to pay the bills: “I think”, he says in one of the early interviews, “the reason one does the graphic design *is* in order to live” (de Jong 2013\_22 May\_145052\_21:35). This admission is not to deny his passion for the discipline of design, but to reiterate that de Jong’s primary goal was recognition as a studio painter.

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<sup>257</sup> Examples of European émigrés to South Africa are Eduardo Villa (1915-2011), Larry Scully (1922-2002), Nils Burwitz (1940- ), Maurice van Essche (1906-1977,) Jean Welz (1908-1975), Hellmut Wilhelm Ernst Stauch (1910-1970), Wilhelm Bernhard Pabst (1905-1964) and William Gordon McIntosh (1904-1983). The latter’s House AG Munro (c1931) in Pretoria is considered to be the earliest example of the International Style, in terms of buildings built, in the then Transvaal (McIntosh, William ... 2017). This list of immigrant artists and architects very nearly included Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris (Le Corbusier) (1887-1965), who, in 1939, wrote to the architect RD Martienssen from a threatened Paris enquiring about possible work in Johannesburg (Martienssen ... 2017).

<sup>258</sup> Works by period 1951-1960 ([sa]).

<sup>259</sup> In one instance Skotnes did take on more completely the role of designer when he provided four highly stylised stamp designs to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Republic of South Africa in 1966 (The South African stamp colour catalogue 2005/2006 c2005:259). In this, Skotnes was ahead of de Jong, who designed his first stamps in 1968.

<sup>260</sup> Known to the author at the time of writing.



To this purpose, he threw himself into preparing for a solo exhibition, which opened at the South African Association of Arts, Pretoria, the following year, and the possibility therefore exists that as early as January 1958 he may have delegated EDJS design briefs to student assistants. These apprentices would have been exposed to Eliastam's teaching for at least a year before the de Jongs' arrival at the art school, and the influence of the former may thus have been apparent in EDJS output from the start.<sup>261</sup>

What exactly the scope of this influence may have been is difficult to determine since Eliastam has kept no examples of his own work from this period and online internet searches have revealed only one design from 1966 (Fig. 197). As has been pointed out, Eliastam's mentor, Benno Wissing, cultivated a style reminiscent of American modernism in the period that Eliastam met the Dutch designer. There is therefore some likelihood that, however improbably, the brightly coloured shapes and intuitive line drawings that are so evocative of the work of American designers such as Rand (Figs. 127-129) and, in particular, Alvin Lustig (1915-1955) (Figs. 125 & 126) in the early 1950s may have found their way to the *Lantern* cover via Rotterdam and not Oklahoma.

In partial support of this premise is de Jong's assertion that — despite being a student in the USA in the 1950s — he was not aware of Rand or his work until later in his life (although *how* much later is uncertain). Lester Beall and Lustig seem never to have entered de Jong's consciousness at all, although he may have absorbed the elements of their style, vicariously, through the American media. As has been suggested, Ben Shahn (Figs. 133 & 155) might have been a taught influence at OU, although it is the name of Saul Bass (1920-1996) that comes readily to de Jong's mind, perhaps because Bass was immortalised by his title sequence for Otto Preminger's film *The man with the golden arm* (1955) (Fig. 157).<sup>262</sup> The de Jongs very likely saw this film in Oklahoma City and, in the October/December 1958 issue of *Lantern*, refer to the title sequence, as well as Bass's design for Michael Anderson's 1956 film *Around the world in 80 days*, as "excellent examples" (de Jong & de Jong 1958:106) of graphic design. Certainly, the quirkiness of the title design for Anderson's film is evident in the early visual language of EDJS, but it is an eccentricity largely absent from de Jong's Oklahoma design projects that are, for the most part, earnest exercises in the formal principles of design (Fig. 81). As such, there is an odd discrepancy between his painting and design styles of this period.

In the 1950s quasi-naïf line drawings increasingly emerged as a characteristic of graphic design as illustration's traditional function was usurped by improved photography. The USA saw a transition from 'heavy' illustration — highly realistic imagery that "exaggerated value contrasts, intensified color, and made ... details sharper than life" (Meggs & Purvis 2006:428-429) — to 'light' illustration that reinvented itself as ironic, self-aware visual narrative.<sup>263</sup> Saul Steinberg (1914-1999), a long-time *New Yorker* cartoonist, whose book *The passport* was first published in 1954, was, like Shahn, an Eastern-European émigré, but unlike the latter's politically edgy work, Steinberg's bemused use of line comments on its own magical properties (Fig. 130). *The passport* is therefore "an artistic act and at the same time a witty and profound commentary on artistic action" (Hollander 1979:[sp]). Another American artist with Eastern-European roots who turned to gentle parody of his discipline was Andy Warhol (1928-1987) who in the 1950s, prior to his transition to fine art, was a successful commercial illustrator (Success is a job ... 2017). Warhol popularised his version of a unique, whimsical style of drawing in fashion magazines such as *Glamour* and *Harper's Bazaar* and then extended this client-based activity into a self-published portfolio of drawings — the now famous *A la recherche du shoe perdu* series (Burgoyne 2016) (Fig.131).

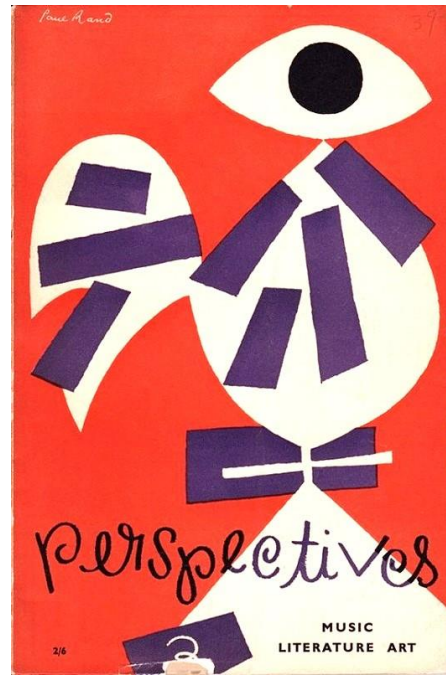
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<sup>261</sup> Some time after writing this chapter, I spoke to Johan Hoekstra (2017\_28 August) about the EDJS designs for the *Archimedes* journal. Although he is not sure *who* designed *what* in the case of *Archimedes*, he remarked that de Jong "insisted" on designing the *Lantern* covers himself. While this statement seems to confirm the authorship of all the covers, at least one cover (September/December 1960) was not entirely de Jong's work, while two (January /March 1961 and June 1963) are accredited to the studio, not de Jong himself.

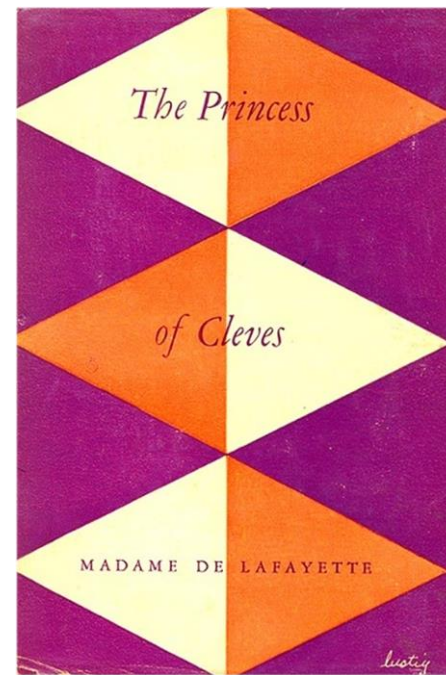
<sup>262</sup> The EDJS collection of photographs contains a photographic storyboard prepared for the United Tobacco Company that clearly reflects the influence of Bass's iconic title sequence. Johan Hoekstra (2017\_28 August) recalls compiling the storyboard, but whether the cinema advertisement — television was not introduced in South Africa until 1976 — was ever produced is uncertain. An exploration of the film division of EDJS is beyond the scope of this study but remains a project for future research.

<sup>263</sup> One consequence of the shift to 'light' illustration was the founding of the Push Pin Studio in 1954 in New York, but its impact would only be felt in the mid-1960s. Push Pin's most iconic output is Milton Glaser's *Dylan* poster, distributed in 1967 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:430). The eclecticism and conceptual playfulness of the Push Pin style never gained a strong foothold in South Africa that had, it can be argued, established a relatively humourless indigenous design language by the 1970s, perhaps best exemplified by the work of Willem Jordaan (see Chapter 6).

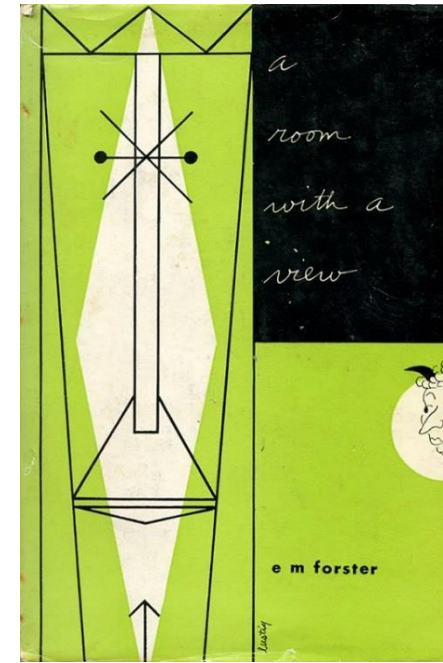




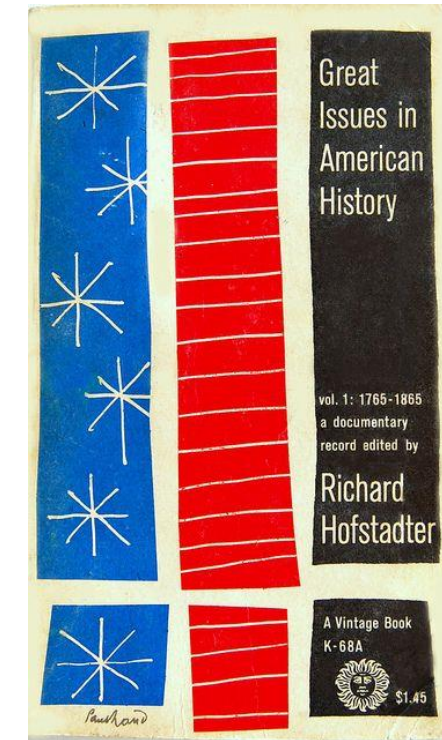
**Figure 126** Paul Rand (designer), Alvin Lustig (art director), cover for *Perspectives*, 1953 (Cover design [sa]).



**Figure 129** Alvin Lustig (designer), cover for *The Princess of Cleves* by Madame de Lafayette, 1951 (Alvin Lustig book covers 2014).



**Figure 128** Alvin Lustig (designer), cover for EM Forster's *A room with a view*, 1943 (Alvin Lustig book covers 2014).



**Figure 125** Paul Rand (designer), cover for *Great issues in American history*, 1958 (Cover design [sa]).



**Figure 127** Paul Rand (designer), logo for Coronet Brandy, 1941 (Identity [sa]).

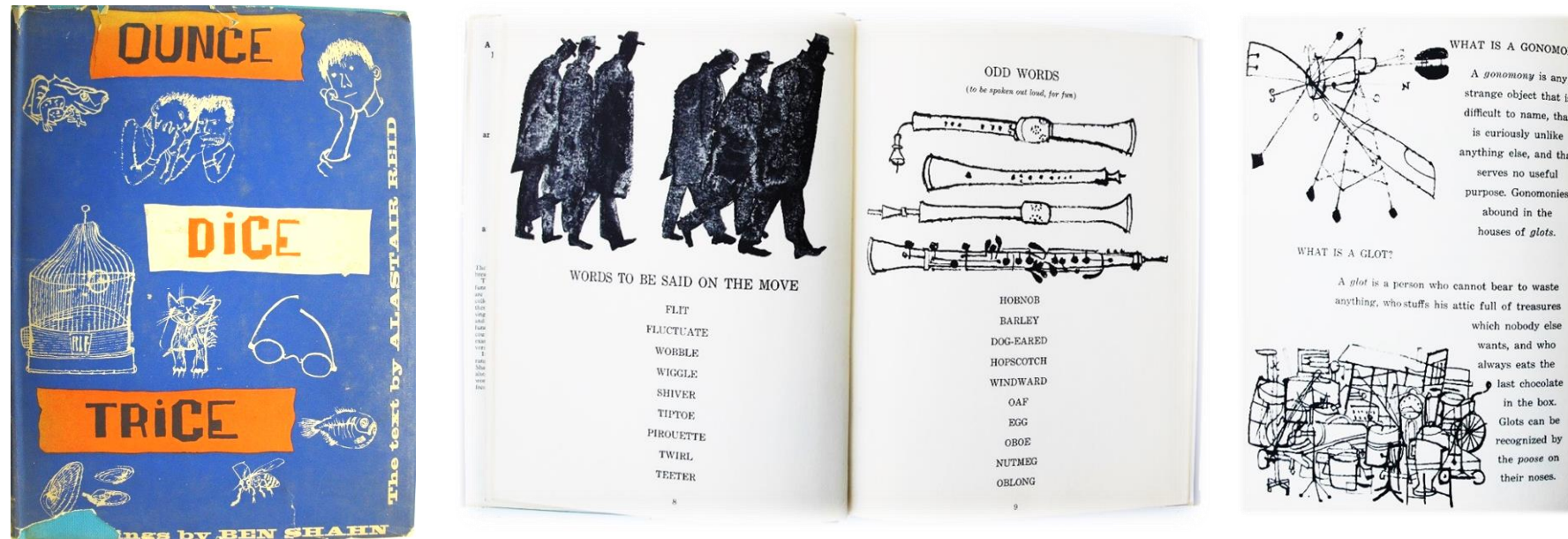


Figure 133 Ben Shahn (illustrator), cover and pages from Alastair Reid's *Ounce dice trice*, 1960 (de Jong collection).

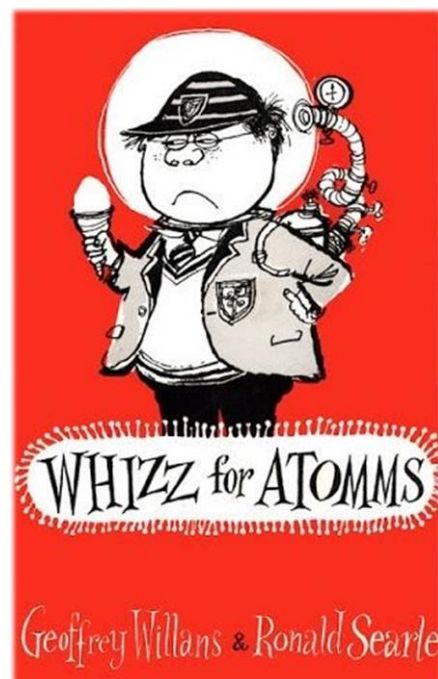


Figure 132 Ronald Searle (illustrator), cover design for Geoffrey Willans's *Whizz for atoms*, 1956 (Lysus 2012).

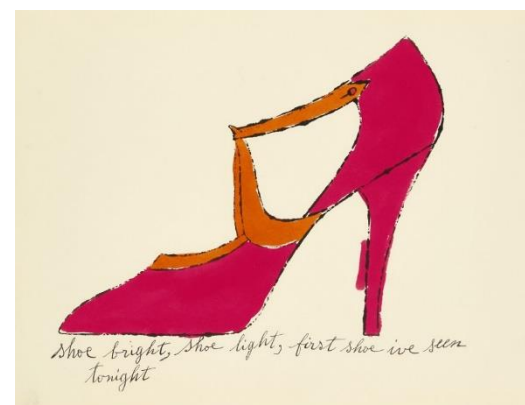


Figure 130 Andy Warhol, *Shoe bright*, lithograph, c1955 (Hancock 2016).

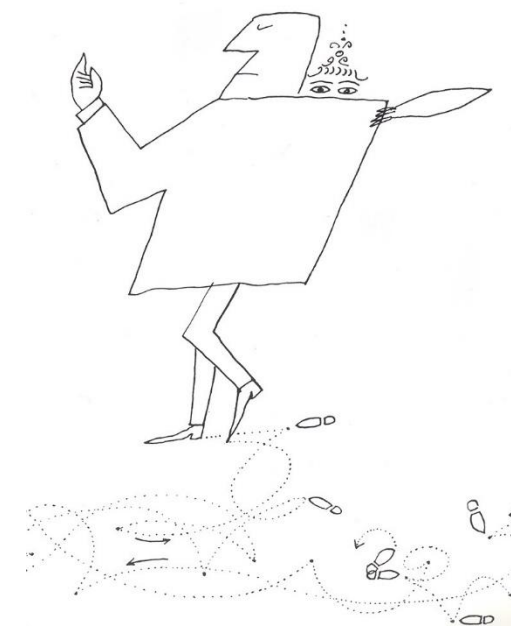


Figure 131 Saul Steinberg cartoon (detail), from *The passport*, 1954 (Steinberg 1954:[sp]).



On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, an influential British illustrator, Ronald Searle (1920-2011), employed a similarly nervous drawing style (Fig. 132), producing illustrations for *Punch*, *Life*, *Holiday* and *The New Yorker* (Ronald Searle 2017). Searle and Steinberg both contributed illustrations to the British pocket journal *Lilliput* that had a reputation for publishing what was, for the time, titillating content.<sup>264</sup> These expressions of popular culture were almost certainly excluded from the curricula of university art faculties in which, if design was taught at all, the sobering maxim of *form follows function* was the rallying cry.

However, Gwen de Jong was a snappy dresser and it is likely that copies of *Glamour* and/or *Harper's Bazaar* reached the de Jong household. In January 1957, *Life* magazine ran a feature titled 'Crazy golden slippers', a series of shoe drawings by Warhol based on famous personalities (Shoes's shoe in America [sa]). It is probable that the de Jongs saw this feature before leaving the USA. Trends in commercial art were also filtering into South Africa from the United Kingdom — the Union was still part of the British Commonwealth — and advertisements in the *Pretoria News* in early 1959 attest to a sophisticated advertising culture in the city in the years immediately before the establishment of the Republic. The January/March 1958 *Lantern* cover was designed more than a year after de Jong had graduated and it is probable that, having encountered the South African advertising industry as a freelance designer/illustrator, he would have been exposed to these trends in local agencies. On the other hand, it might have been de Jong himself who prompted, at least in part, this trend to what is perhaps best described as modernist *chic* in local advertising design. Several advertisements suggest de Jong's influence, although it is now impossible to establish his authorship beyond mere speculation.<sup>265</sup> Whatever the case may have been, the point that needs to be made is that the January/March 1958 *Lantern* cover does not show an obvious and direct link to de Jong's graphic design style as practised in Oklahoma, although there are perhaps subtle references to aspects of his painting and lithographs (Figs. 74 & 75).

As with some of the later issues, EDJS not only provided the cover of the January/March 1958 issue, but also the layout and illustrations for the leading article by Renate von Geyses (1958:200-213), assistant editor at *Lantern*. The concept of a *total image* is therefore carried through into the editorial content, although only to a limited degree since articles on the Renaissance sculptor Donatello, the Castle of Good Hope and the Fehr Collection are still presented as rather dour exemplars of Western cultural capital. Von Geyses's text, however, offers an alternative (Fig. 124). Here the layout artist appropriates the dotted line from the masthead and inserts it as a humorous signifier of tempo and rhythm throughout the thirteen pages of text. The columns of type are enlivened by whimsical line drawings that argue for the eccentricity of musicians rather than their anonymous status in an orchestra. It is, for example, interesting to compare the *ethos* of the 'factual' photograph of an orchestra on page 213 with that of the individual illustrations. Music itself is rescued from a rarefied sphere and rendered as animated filaments of sound that are the result of an intimate, human relationship with musical instruments (including the occasional false note), rather than a virtuoso performance.

The gentle irony and clear line of these drawings suggests the influence of Steinberg. John Hollander (1979:[sp]) refers to Steinberg's "famous musicians, playing plucked strings, whose hands disappear into the calligraphy of motion" and argues that what is being mocked here is "the viewer's cliché of interpretation". In the case of the illustrator's visual treatment of von Geyses's text, the cliché that is mischievously undone is that classical music affords the *ama-high soss* preeminent social standing. Yet the article's visual rhetoric is not wholly dismissive of the *logos* of serious music: juxtaposed with the caricatures of the dishevelled musician tootling away on his trumpet and the furiously concentrating drummer are accurate — that is, 'scientific' — renderings of the non-human instruments of the orchestra. This dual approach to 'mental pabulum' was perhaps peculiarly American, and also particular to the 1950s when American modernism enjoyed the consequences of an egalitarian society that

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<sup>264</sup> There is some evidence that Wissing may have been influenced by Searle's work. Searle and Steinberg were to become friends; both published visual commentaries on American public culture (see Jones 2016).

<sup>265</sup> Numerous advertisements in the *Pretoria News* of early 1959 display de Jong's trademark slab-serif letterforms, for example Afflacks Furniture (January 8 1959:4), Senator cigars (January 15 1959:15), Frigidaire (January 23 1959:7), Opel Kapitan (January 23 1959:15), Rambler (February 17 1959:12) and Opel Rekord (February 18 1959:11). Several other advertisements are noteworthy for their striking design, including promotions for Stanley Motors (January 15 1959:7), the Austin Healey Sprite (January 17 1959:3) and Lion Beer (January 9 1959:14; January 23 1959:16). In the *Pretoria News* of 14 February 1959, an advertisement for a Fiat 600 utilises cartoon-like illustration on the front page of the newspaper, evocative of the EDJS style. The same edition carries an advertisement for Haak's Garages for which EDJS would design a corporate identity (and certainly, in the 1960s, print advertising). This small sample, gleaned from fewer than two months' editions of the *Pretoria News*, suggests a rich source for future research on advertising design in Southern Africa. However, alongside this enlightened visual language, is editorial content that reveals the tensions and contradictions evident in South African society as it approached independence.

had recently stepped on to the world stage and was exploring its new-found fascination with its European predecessor, which it did not hesitate to adapt to its own exuberant persona. Compared to the trial issue, the EDJS cover and page layout stood in marked contrast to the original austerity of *Lantern's* pedagogical objectives.

Here it might be apt to comment that it is de Jong who humorously conveys his own scepticism of 'high art' while acknowledging the technology and skill required to achieve it: he had, after all, been a drummer in his school band. However, when shown the illustrations, de Jong (2015\_04 December) — in the last conversation I was to have with him — was adamant that it was not his work: "I would", he asserts, "have been able to *do* the illustrations, but I would have done them *differently*". He had, however, no idea who the illustrator might have been, thus raising perplexing questions about the identity of the artist.<sup>266</sup> At the time of the interview, I did not question his statement, but after his death I noticed, for the first time, the printed credits that attribute authorship of *both* the editorial design and in-text illustrations to de Jong. Upon reflection, I believe that it is reasonable to conclude that he supplied both layout and drawings; by 2015 their quaintness of style had most likely become foreign to de Jong's artistic identity cultivated in the intervening years.

In the larger picture, so to speak, the answers to these questions cease to be of primary concern. The team — whosoever its members may have been, and however the constituent parts of the team may have fluctuated over the years — was EDJS. Like the OU swimming team, EDJS would triumph and de Jong, who designed many but certainly not all of the outputs of the studio, was the volatile but glittering glue that held the enterprise together. With the January/March 1958 issue, knowledge is presented as purposively designed, accessible, fashionable, and *American*. As a consequence, and by association with its specifically South African editorial and advertising content, the transported visual languages of Lustig, Rand, Bass, Shahn, Warhol and Steinberg come to signify a modern, emancipated *South Africanness* at a particular point in the history of the country.

Clearly, the January/March 1958 cover was a success, since EDJS supplied another nine EDJS attributed covers and selected layouts between April 1958 and June 1963. In particular, the four covers issued consecutively in 1958 present a powerful argument for a youthful, democratic, modern and putatively 'international' cultural identity; in particular, internationalism was signified by the use of stylisation, abstraction and absence of individual mark-making. Indeed, in the covers that followed, there is a perceptible transition from the more personalised hand-drawn 'cartoons' on the January/March cover to the October/December 1958 cover that consists of pure abstract form.

#### **4.3.4 *Lantern 7(4) April / June 1958***

**T**hus, in the April/June 1958 issue designed by EDJS (Figs. 134 & 135), the line of dots vanishes from the masthead and is pressed into service as bullet points for the journal tagline. De Jong is credited as the originator of the cover and designer of the layout of the article, but referred to as an *artist*. What is emphasised in this issue is that the cover image is not only "highly stylised" and "entirely contemporary" (Ons buite-blad ontwerp 1958: 293), but that the 'artist' also has an intimate understanding of, and is therefore able to express, the quintessential identity of his "primitive" subject:

In the simplicity of this highly stylised landscape, the artist Ernst de Jong has created a world that is only suitable for the Bushman. It reflects the simplicity and earthy existence of these primitive people. The landscape, which is entirely contemporary, harmonises with the genuine Bushman symbols, and the work in its totality has been adjusted to the Bushman's idea of himself.

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<sup>266</sup> Hoekstra (2017\_28 August) also denies authorship.



De Jong's name is, once again, boldly inserted on the rich yellow background of the landscape and, in this instance, he has a clear recollection of executing the illustration. The stark, black letterforms of the journal's name hover in a white rectangle above a lively representation of a mountainous landscape that the de Jongs later describe in rather less pejorative terms:<sup>267</sup>

The red sun vibrates strongly against a brilliant blue sky. The solid black mountain forms are complimented [*sic*] by linear arrangements of green and yellow which suggest geological strata. By showing two layers of mountains broken by a rock-like textural pattern, an impression of past ages is created, and deep below the record of Bushman life is painted in red, oranges and browns on the walls of mountains and caves (de Jong & de Jong 1958:102).

The 'solid black mountains' cleverly repeat the black letterforms of the masthead. Intense heat is evoked by undulating, yellow lines that zig-zag across mountain tops and desert plains, while the insignificance of the small group of hunter-gatherers stalking their animal prey in this inhospitable environment is emphasised by the relegation of the humans to 'deep below' — the bottom right hand corner of the image.

Although the illustration can easily be dismissed as one of countless decorative applications of 'Bushman'<sup>268</sup> art reproduced in a variety of South African cultural contexts — perhaps most notably in more recent years the 2010 FIFA World Cup logo — the cover deserves some scrutiny. In the first instance, the reference is to a culture that predated European settlement in Southern Africa by thousands of years and it is displayed in the context of other covers that feature, for example the challenge of the spaceship (*Lantern* September/December 1953), the flowering of western civilisation (*Lantern* October/December 1954), and the people and land of the Bible (*Lantern* July/September 1956).

As mentioned previously, *Lantern* had dropped the planned 'monument' series in favour of Battiss's feature articles on 'The source of art' (commencing in the first independently published issue) that highlight rock engravings and "so-called Bushman paintings" (Battiss 1951:3) in the Union of South Africa. In 1951, Battiss (1951:3) notes that while many of the images are fairly recent, underlying the latter are 'prehistoric' paintings in a very different style, executed by mysterious, "unidentified predecessors" of the later artists. Moreover, Battiss (1952:108) — in the fourth article in the series — rejects the notion that cave art was not "a forced accomplishment ... unnaturally developed to serve magic or religion", but rather "a natural spontaneous gift ... a talent". He equates "the Bushman's genius for balanced composition" with the skill of "we who make pictures today" (Battiss 1952:109). This latter quote is taken from the leading article of the 1952 issue and, although it is followed by a short piece on the Dutch-born South African painter Pieter Wenning (1873-1921), the implied message is that *authentic* local art making had been practised with 'superb skill' since time immemorial in an unbroken line to the present day.

Given this context of ancient local art making, the simultaneous emphasis on "Bushman symbols" and the "artist Ernst de Jong" (Ons buite-blad ontwerp 1958:293) is of interest. Apart from the appropriation of images of the work of an uncredited sculptor, *Lantern* had not featured and/or credited South African artists on its cover before April 1958.<sup>269</sup> Although artists were featured inside the publication, there seems to have been a decision that *Lantern* was not an art journal per se, and that it should not characterise itself as such.<sup>270</sup> Perhaps for this reason, the note explaining the April/June 1958 cover avoids the use of the word 'painting' using instead

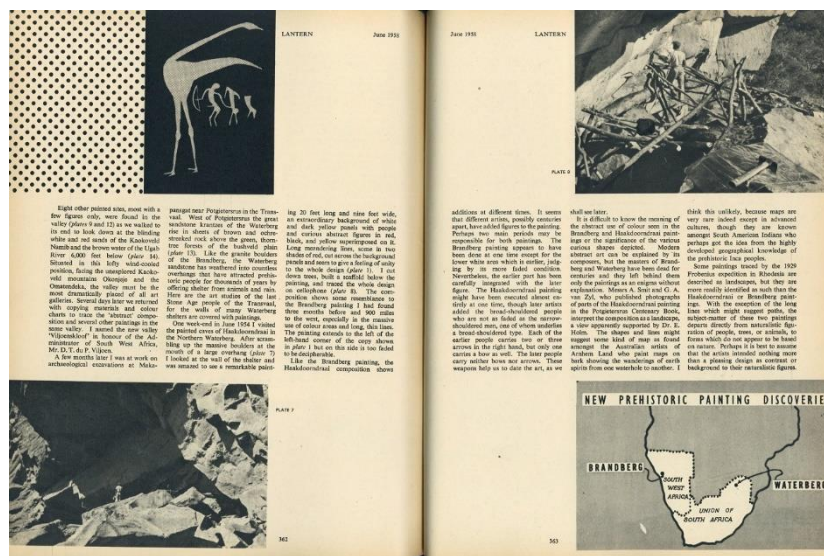
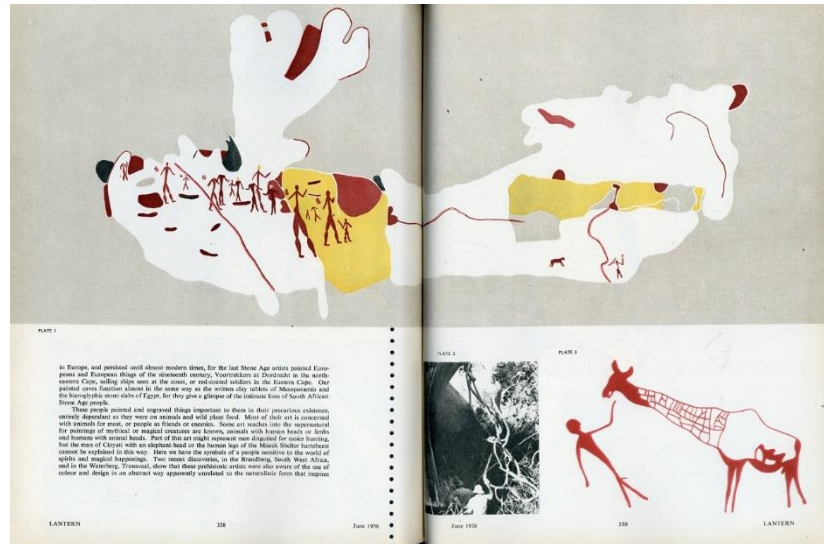
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<sup>267</sup> In the December 1958 issue of *Lantern*, in which the cover design is discussed by the de Jongs.

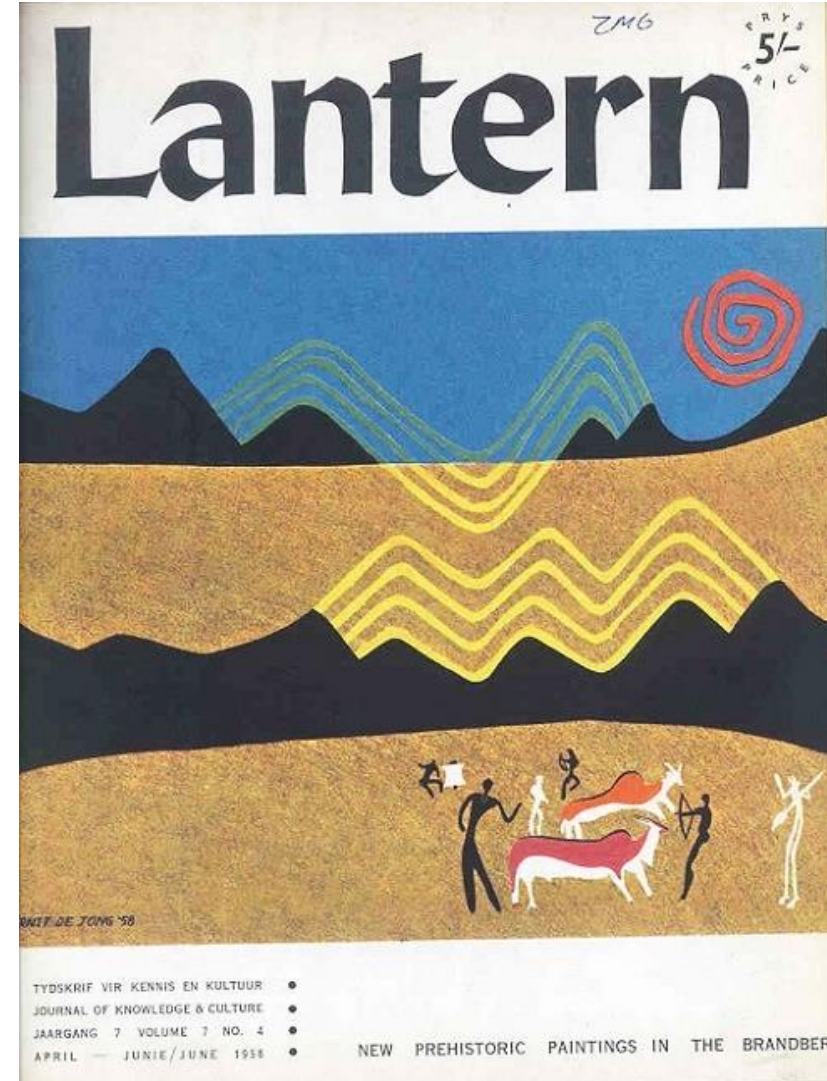
<sup>268</sup> The term used in the note on the cover (Ons buite-blad ontwerp 1958: 293). Bushmen (also known as Khwe, Basarwa, or San) peoples of Southern Africa have lived in this region for at least 22,000 years (Bushmen 2013). Traditionally, the group has had a hunter-gatherer culture and are known for their cave paintings. As with the descriptor 'American Indian', the term 'Bushman' is contested. In South Africa, the term 'San' has become favoured in official and academic contexts (Bushmen 2013); however, the latter term was historically applied to this group by their rivals, the Khoikhoi, it means 'outsider' in the Khoikhoi language and is consequently regarded as derogatory. For this reason, some members of the group prefer to be called Bushmen, and the term is widely used in popular media (sometimes with the prefix 'San'). However, opinions vary on whether the term 'Bushman' is appropriate, given that it is also sometimes viewed as pejorative.

<sup>269</sup> The July/September 1957 issue featured a reproduction of an etching by the "outstanding graphic artist of South West Africa, Heinz Pulon" (Our cover design 1957), but this was an issue dedicated to 'South-West Africa — land of promise'. Although, in 1957, South West Africa (now Namibia) would have been unofficially regarded as a fifth province of South Africa, the territory was never formally incorporated into South Africa (South-West Africa 2015) and was therefore, technically, a neighbouring country. While Esterhuysen signed his cover illustrations, these remained uncredited in the journal itself. The January/March 1958 cover credits de Jong as the *designer* of the cover, a function distinct from 'artist'.

<sup>270</sup> There was, however, reference to craft on the early covers, for example embroidery and ceramics.



**Figure 135** Ernst de Jong (designer and illustrator), pages from *Lantern* April / June 1958 (collection of the author).



**Figure 134** Ernst de Jong (designer and illustrator), cover design *Lantern* April / June 1958 (collection of the author).



the term 'landscape', so that the image is neither 'design' nor 'fine art', but something in-between. Despite this prevarication, de Jong is singled out as a young, 'entirely contemporary artist' who skilfully reflects "the simplicity and earthy existence of these primitive people" (Ons buite-blad ontwerp 1958:293).

Bearing in mind his passionate engagement with "our rock painters" (Battiss 1952:108), it is perhaps surprising that it was not Battiss who provided the cover for the April/June 1958 issue that featured a lengthy article on 'New [*sic*] prehistoric paintings in the Brandberg, South West Africa, and the Waterberg, Northern Transvaal' (Mason 1958:357-368). A possible reason suggests itself as early as the explanatory note on the contents page. In the article itself, strikingly laid out by EDJS, the author Revil Mason (1958:357) makes it clear in the very first paragraph that the Stone Age people of Southern Africa only became imaginative enough to want art thousands of years after "our ancestors in Europe".<sup>271</sup> Mason (1958:357) notes that, "The Stone Age people of Eurasia and Egypt eventually learned to live in cities ... and write, becoming civilised a long time ago, but life in South Africa [*sic*] never changed", and then feels compelled to reiterate that, "Pre-historic art in South Africa began much later than in Europe".

Although this is an unpromising introduction, that with the benefit of hindsight reads as spurious and Eurocentric, in the remainder of the article Mason frequently demonstrates an enthusiastic admiration akin to that of Battiss, referring in his conclusion to the "genius of these prehistoric artists" (Mason 1958:368), but a nagging sense prevails that he felt duty-bound by his Western position to present the same artists as 'primitive', and their art as relatively recent.<sup>272</sup> The very title of the article reveals ambivalence with regard to the implications of prehistoric art in Southern Africa. By categorising it as 'new', the burden of history is put aside to allow for an aesthetic experience *in the present*, and an experience, furthermore, that was claimed by a member of the 'civilised', white English-speaking elite, namely Mason himself.<sup>273</sup>

Mason, who taught at the University of the Witwatersrand (1953-1989), was to become a well-known South African archaeologist (Professor Revil Mason Seminar 2013)<sup>274</sup> and he is regarded as the first 'pre-historian' in South Africa to use statistical methods when analysing artefacts (Davie 2009). The fact that Mason learned these techniques in the South of France, working with a French archaeologist in Bordeaux, perhaps explains his commitment to the pre-eminence of 'our ancestors in Europe'. More recently, Mason (in Davie 2009) has framed his career as enabling an alternative South African history, stating that, "Archaeology was patriotic and scientific, and helped to replace Boer history". If this agenda was in part the purpose of the *Lantern* article, the effect was perhaps the opposite: Mason's assertion that indigenous peoples of Southern Africa (unlike the Australian artists of Arnhem Land) were too backward to be able to draw or understand a map would have been highly gratifying to racially biased members of the South African community — 'Boers' and English alike.

What is presented here is a complex and even dichotomous engagement with the element of *time* as a rhetorical strategy in the construction of identity. The editors, Mason and even Battiss grapple with, on the one hand, the desire to present South African cultural heritage as *ancient*, and, on the other hand, the reality that this heritage is *alien* not only to the present-day editors and authors (whose ancestors are European) but to the very notion of a modern journal of knowledge and culture. Since the creators of the cave art cannot be identified and, like a Renaissance sculptor, hailed as individual geniuses with whom readers can identify, a substitute 'genius' is commissioned to create a 'landscape' that "harmonises with the genuine Bushman symbols" (Ons buite-blad ontwerp 1958:293). The substitute artwork on the cover,<sup>275</sup> readers are informed, has "been adjusted to the Bushman's idea of himself" (Ons buite-blad ontwerp 1958:293). It is therefore *authentic* in terms of the ancient culture being interpolated, but because it is also 'entirely contemporary' it, and the ancient culture, can be understood, celebrated, and owned in the present by

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<sup>271</sup> Both Battiss and Mason claim ownership, Battiss of 'our' rock-painters, Mason of 'our' European ancestry.

<sup>272</sup> The very use of the term 'prehistoric' implies that these people and their experiences must be kept separate from 'our', that is, Mason's, ancestors in Europe.

<sup>273</sup> In his list of acknowledgments, all the names are European.

<sup>274</sup> Mason was married, for a period of time, to the South African artist, Judith Mason (1938-2016).

<sup>275</sup> It is repeated on page 357 as a preface to the article itself.



an audience that is also ‘entirely contemporary’ and that has little or no connection to ‘real’ Bushmen, yet wish to appropriate and feel part of a tradition reaching back thousands of years.

The pursuit of ‘Africanization’ in order to signify modernity had a notable precedent in the work of the South African architect Gerhard Moerdijk (1890-1958), whom, as Roger Fischer (1998:222) notes, traced his source of motifs on the Merensky Library (1933-6)<sup>276</sup> and the Voortrekker Monument (1936-7) (Fig. 210) to indigenous African culture, in particular Great Zimbabwe.<sup>277</sup> In the case of *Lantern*, this conflation of ancient and contemporary aesthetics is carried over in the art direction of the article itself. EDJS once again recycles the dotted line from the masthead and inserts it as part of the layout, cleverly echoing the stippling used by the original artists (Mason 1958:360-361). On page 362, the dots are herded together in a rectangular grid, suggesting, perhaps, the driving of game into a trap or *kraal*, but also referencing the mechanical halftone dots of a printer’s screen. The latter are then duplicated and overlaid in miniature, forming a moiré pattern that fills the negative shape of a stylised ostrich in an adjacent and matching black rectangle. It appears as if the moiré pattern — usually regarded as a printing error — is deliberate, generating additional texture and variegated tone on a stark black and white page. This device is repeated on page 367.

By introducing references to what has arguably been the most impactful cultural event to emerge from ‘our ancestors in Europe’, namely the perfection of moveable type, EDJS both underscores Mason’s emphasis on the contrast between ‘primitive’ African culture and western ‘progress’ and assimilates the ancient mark-making into a contemporary context. The designer is assisted in this sleight of hand by Mason’s (1958:360) caption to Plate 4 in which the latter compares the “ethereal world of abstraction” on the walls of the Tsisab Ravine shelter to the work of Klee, Mondrian and Georges Braque (1882–1963), and later, in the text, to Jean Arp (1886–1966) and Sophie Taueber (1889–1943). The de Jongs selected this cover as an outstanding example of the principles of modern art applied to ‘advertising’ design in their December 1958 *Lantern* article (de Jong & de Jong 1958:98-109). The association with famous twentieth-century painters would have made sense to, especially, Gwen de Jong (whose knowledge of the history of art was more extensive than her husband’s) and validated not only de Jong’s approach to the cover design, but his own painting style as well.

Mason’s text and copied images, and de Jong’s manipulation of both, serve to validate but also, perhaps, to impoverish the original voices that risk being reduced to *chic* 1950s designs for tablemats and curtains.<sup>278</sup> However, as with all the examples in this study, the context of both the verbal and visual argument must be acknowledged: it is likely that Mason, given the opportunity 50 years later, would have reconstructed his introductory paragraph on page 357. He may also have been more circumspect with regard to valorising African art through the filter of European modernism. De Jong, who with his wife, Gwen, appears to have provided the descriptive blurb on the contents page,<sup>279</sup> might similarly refrain from referring to either ‘Bushmen’ or their ‘primitive’ culture. De Jong might also decide (or be advised), that the original art was sufficient unto itself and did not require a *contemporary* artist to communicate the essence of this ‘other’ culture.

Nevertheless, in 1958, an article in a journal of knowledge and culture in South Africa that highlighted *ancient* cultures in Southern Africa on its cover was unusual and, on the one hand — as Mason infers — a counter to conservative programmes that argued for the emptiness of the land prior to European settlement.<sup>280</sup> On the other hand, de Jong’s simultaneous *domestication*, as Meikle (1994) interprets the process, of both American modernism and ancient African art can be seen to

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<sup>276</sup> At the University of Pretoria.

<sup>277</sup> For a detailed interrogation of the politics of the decorative programmes of public buildings of 1930s South Africa, see Federico Freschi (2006).

<sup>278</sup> Which may, or may not, have pleased the original artists, who might very well have regarded their cave ‘art’ as *chic* home décor 1000 years ago.

<sup>279</sup> See ‘Design in advertising’ (De Jong & De Jong 1958:102).

<sup>280</sup> In a much earlier issue, *Lantern* itself suggests this condition in a diagram (without caption) — depicting the ‘probable’ (but undated) occupation of Southern Africa by the Bantu — that is inserted in an Afrikaans article on ‘our neighbours’ in Africa (Bruwer 1952:121). The latter article, which emerges from a cultural anthropological context, is notable in that, despite its othering of its subject, it presents the Bantu culture in an overwhelmingly positive light. The article, in conclusion, acknowledges problems that are the result of a *kultuurinenting* (the abrupt ‘cultural inoculation’) of the Bantu with Western and especially Christian values and concludes with a plea, strikingly current in its tenor, that, “Only through mutual knowledge of one another’s traditions and cultural capital, by reciprocal trust and respectful understanding of one another’s honest aspirations and hopes, can these problems be solved through collaborative actions”. The author was a lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch and associated with “a more liberal interpretation of separate development” (An overview of the history of social anthropology ... c2015) in the 1960s as opposed to the orthodox Pieter Coertze at the University of Pretoria.



'trivialise' these phenomena; by rendering them familiar and harmless, they could be appropriated. Lu (2011), Wilk (2006:17) and Calvera (2005) might view this process of absorption in a more pragmatic light, as a means for individuals to grapple with the disruptions of modernisation, to make it their own, to make themselves *modern*. As Fischer (1998:235) speculates in reference to the appropriation of so-called 'prehistoric' cultural motifs by Afrikaner architects: "For some, perhaps, an association with distant times and ancient traditions holds out the promise of permanence". De Jong sanitised cave art, but he also legitimised it in terms of collective identity construction, something that Battiss's more scholarly approach was perhaps unable to do.

#### 4.3.5 *Lantern* 8(1) July / September 1958

In contrast, the July / September 1958 issue of *Lantern* focuses exclusively on the USA. The cover (Fig. 136) depicts a reinterpretation of the American flag as a flat, chequerboard pattern or 'quilt' of blue and white shapes, one of which is dissected by three red bars. Whoever appropriated the American flag and turned it into a geometric pattern on the cover of *Lantern* understood, and was responding to, the ongoing use of the flag as a sophisticated graphic device by American designers, arguably starting with Beall's poster campaign for the Rural Electrification Administration in the 1930s (Fig. 138). In 1954, artist Jasper Johns (1930–) began exploring the boundary between abstraction and representation in his reconstructions of the American flag, in which endeavour he shifts the emphasis from the flag's emblematic meaning to the geometric patterns of the picture surface, thereby "alienating the image from its political and ideological context" (Halder 2012).<sup>281</sup> Interestingly, in the same year Bradbury Thompson's cover of the 33<sup>rd</sup> edition of the *Annual of advertising, editorial art and design* (1954) (Fig. 137) features a similarly 'alienated' flag, devoid of stars, yet instantly recognisable as a signifier for its referent, which is used to suggest, in an subtlety of allusion, content from both local (USA) and international contributors. Whether Johns may have provided inspiration for Thompson, or whether both looked to Beall, is open to speculation, but it appears as if the designer of the *Lantern* cover was attuned to current trends in the visual and applied arts in the USA.

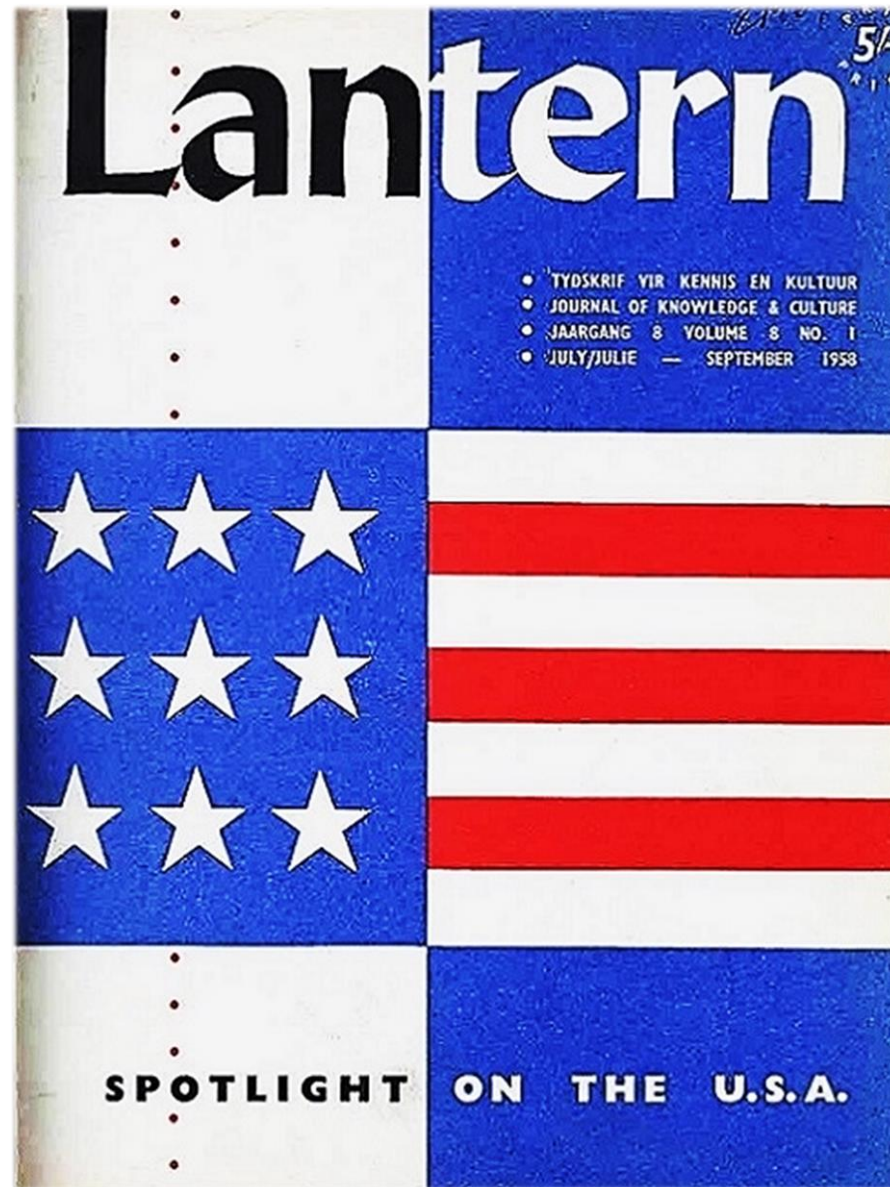
However, this bold treatment on the cover of *Lantern's* American issue is almost entirely absent from the editorial content that has about it a cluttered fustiness that is introduced on the very first page — a message from Dwight D Eisenhower, then President of the USA. The editors (and, perhaps, the American advisors to the editors) of this edition of *Lantern* sought to capture a nineteenth-century grandeur, the "great heritage of the past" that Eisenhower (1958:1) refers to in the opening line of his presidential message. Although attempts have been made to incorporate the grid suggested by the cover design into the layout of text and images, the device is not applied consistently, or very intelligently. The plethora of black and white photographs — many of historical figures or events — crammed around dense text, provides almost no respite for the eye so that the impression is of an overall, dull greyness. As a result, two opposing constructions of national identity are presented here: firstly, a brand new, modern nation (on the cover), and, secondly, a nation that has a lot of whatever it takes, but the plenitude is stifling and staid.

Rather curiously, the cover design is not credited. Although it bears every resemblance to de Jong's style, and captures his own delight in American modernism and America in general, what is missing is his trademark signature on the design itself. De Jong himself is unhelpful in this regard.<sup>282</sup> Certainly, the resemblance in layout and style to the January / March 1961 cover (Fig. 166) suggests that the July / September 1958 cover was likewise designed by the studio (if not by de Jong himself), but unfortunately the editors are silent on the matter. Whereas, in the April / June issue, the designer is credited and the cover explained, the contents page in this edition features instead a list of acknowledgements of people who had made the special edition possible; de Jong's name is not amongst them. Georges Duby is thanked for his "advice in connection with the general lay-out" (Acknowledgement 1958:1), but no mention is made of the cover.

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<sup>281</sup> One can perhaps draw a parallel here with de Jong's treatment of Bushman art.

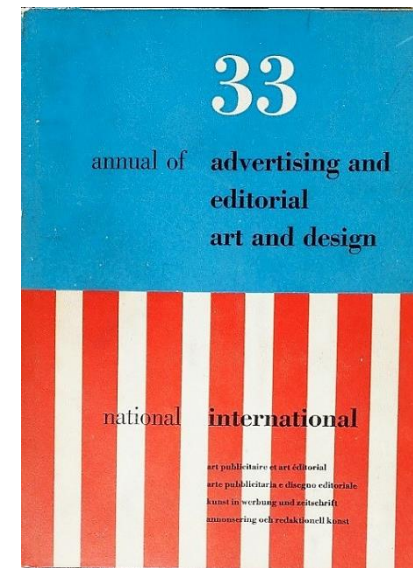
<sup>282</sup> When sent an image by phone, de Jong immediately responded that the cover "probably did come from my studio" (de Jong 2015\_04 December\_18:18), but when confronted with the actual journal itself, he changed his mind (de Jong 2015\_04 December\_24:33). However, since he was equally adamant that his studio had not designed the cover for the June 1963 issue, which in fact it had, it is difficult to ascribe veracity to either response.



**Figure 136** Designer unknown, cover design *Lantern* July /S eptember 1958 (collection of the author).



**Figure 138** Lester Beall (designer), poster for the Rural Electrification Administration, c1937 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:338).



**Figure 137** Bradbury Thompson (designer), cover for *Art Directors Annual of Advertising Arts 33*, 1954 (Art Directors Annual ... [sa]). Thompson designed the entire publication.

One may speculate that it was deemed inappropriate to display a South African designer's signature on a rendition of the American flag, or that in the rush to get the special edition to print, acknowledgment of the cover designer was overlooked.<sup>283</sup> Whatever the case, it is not possible to establish without doubt that EDJS provided the design. However, if it was the work of someone else, the influence of de Jong's visual language — established on the previous two covers — is undeniable. Yet, it remains a considerable irony that, in this homage to the country that shaped his identity, de Jong is so screened from view, especially since the editors make a concerted attempt in this issue to identify cultural and academic links between South Africa and the USA. It is even more puzzling when one discovers that de Jong takes centre stage in the very next issue of *Lantern*, and then specifically as a graduate of the University of Oklahoma, who returned to South Africa with his wife, Gwen, who readers are pointedly informed "is an American" (Wood 1958:98). Whatever the case may have been, the uncredited July/September 1958 cover forms a natural transition between the stylisation of the two earlier covers and the full abstraction of the subsequent October/December issue, which lends some support to the premise that de Jong designed the 'American' cover.

#### 4.3.6 *Lantern 8(2) October / December 1958*

As if in recompense, then, the 1958 October / December cover (Fig. 139), and accompanying article on 'Design in advertising' (de Jong & de Jong 1958:98-109), epitomises de Jong's *ethos* as designer, artist, husband and educator immediately after his return from the USA. The issue highlights de Jong's own profession, namely the 'commercial forms of advertising', but allows him to engage with the cover design as if it were a work of art. In contrast to the January / March and April / June covers, the October / December cover is completely "abstract in mood" (The cover 1958:97), a feature that is emphasised on the contents page, but qualified by the observation that the composition "is symbolic of the complexity of advertising". It suggests, readers are told,

a crescendo in art as well as suggesting the many directions of advertising. The design finally builds up to the main point of impact, suggesting the importance of art in advertising, with the use of the purest of all form — a circle (The cover 1958:97).

The effervescent yet precisely controlled arrangement of geometric shapes set against a dark turquoise background is a daring deviation from the expectation, prior to 1960, of pictorial art on the cover of a mainstream publication in South Africa. However, while acknowledging the playfulness of American modernism, it is not a bland copy of the latter. Perhaps deliberately, de Jong inserts a peculiarly Dutch edge to the design. The lead article confirms that the de Jongs were aware of the work of Mondrian (de Jong & de Jong 1958:102), since they ascribe to this artist a critical role in the emergence of advertising art:

The modern movement in painting began about the same time as advertising art, and it is in the paintings and writings of the modern masters that advertising design has found its finest inspiration, notably in the work of Piet Mondriaan [*sic*].

This accolade is noteworthy in the light of de Jong's subsequent and voluble references to Motherwell as a seminal influence, and it begs the question whether his reinterpretation of de Stijl forms emerged as a cultural meme or was cultivated by some forgotten source, or event. De Jong himself, when asked about the circumstances of his discovery of Mondrian, had no recollection of the moment (de Jong 2015\_04 December); Eliastam, on the other hand, recounts an exact and vivid epiphany of his encounter with the artist's work in Dutch museums. Consequently, a case can be made that the Jongs' enthusiasm for this 'modern master' may have been fostered in the staff room at the Pretoria College so that, once again, Eliastam's cultural capital was disseminated vicariously. In partial support of this premise is the use of the old,

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<sup>283</sup> Even Georges Duby's first name is misspelt ('Deorges') in the acknowledgment, suggesting hurried proofreading at this stage of the process.

Dutch version of Mondrian's name in the de Jongs' article, which suggests that the authors had gained knowledge about the artist from a verbal source, rather than from contemporary art historical literature.<sup>284</sup>

Be this as it may, de Jong utilised his awareness of de Stijl's visual rhetoric to produce a singularly striking cover design, which nevertheless — and notably — deviates from the purism of Mondrian himself. Rather, the design evokes a language of form as expressed by lesser-known Dutch practitioners, such as Vilmos Huszár (1884-1960) (Fig. 146), Bart Anthony van der Leek (1876-1958), Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931) and Piet Zwart (1885-1977) (Fig. 148), who all applied de Stijl principles to advertising and publication design. The simplicity of the shapes on the October/December cover, also evident in de Jong's trademark for his brother, Gerrie (Fig. 144), suggests a child's wooden building blocks,<sup>285</sup> an allusion to the aim of purity in Dutch design, but also reminiscent of the *Mechano-faktura* theory developed in the 1920s by Polish designer Henryk Berlewi (1894-1967) (Fig. 149). Berlewi 'mechanised' painting and graphic design into a "constructed abstraction that abolished any illusion of three dimensions" (Meggs & Purvis 2006:304) and, like the de Stijl designers, believed that the spirit of art could permeate society through architecture, product and commercial advertising design.

Yet, despite the congruity with this European movement, de Jong's approach is not mimicry since he appears to be unaware of Huszár, van der Leek, Zwart and Berlewi, as well as the more general fact that de Stijl artists produced design for publications and other commercial endeavours.<sup>286</sup> Moreover, any deviation from a horizontal and vertical construction was considered heresy by Mondrian (Meggs & Purvis 2006:301);<sup>287</sup> in his suggestion of a diagonal, de Jong therefore toys with a cardinal tenet of de Stijl. Notably, the description of the cover design also bites its thumb at Mondrian in this regard: the 'crescendo' that is reached is visualised as a circle — the 'purest of all form' (The cover 1958:97) — and a dominant theme in de Jong's art work after he returned to Pretoria (Fig. 142)

The cover thus suggests universal order on the one hand and playful change on the other. De Stijl designers favoured red not only for its visual impact, but also because it signified revolution (Meggs & Purvis 2006:303). De Jong chooses a cool, deep green, its binary opposite. Turquoise suggests — even more so than Smit's 1951 pea-green background — introspection, a state of mind in which 'progress' is observed from the emerald depths of a tropical lagoon, sublimated in de Jong's mind's eye with the iconography of his *habitus*, the swimming pool (Fig. 140).

In many ways, the October / December 1958 cover is a seminal piece in both de Jong's personal output and within the broader context of design in Southern Africa. Clearly in line with European and American modernism, and yet without direct parallel, or any overt indebtedness, to either, this design suggests an independent arrival at pure abstraction in visual communication design.<sup>288</sup> Here change is about shifting style, not one's comfort zone, yet a change in style might also prompt a change in

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<sup>284</sup> Although Mondrian, prior to 1906, was known as Pieter Mondriaan (Piet Mondrian 2017), it is more likely that, in the late 1950s, an Afrikaans-speaker, rather than an English one, would use the artist's original name. It is therefore curious that the de Jongs — more particularly Gwen de Jong — should do so. In a subsequent edition of *Lantern*, the unidentified author of an Afrikaans article on the culture of the Netherlands refers to 'Pieter Mondriaan' (Kultuur 1960:176), and the de Jongs' usage may have been an editorial decision. However, it should also be noted that Eliastam probably spoke Afrikaans to his colleagues and students, who would have been mostly Afrikaans speaking themselves. An alternative explanation that presents itself is that de Jong's father alerted his artist son to the family's Dutch heritage with regard to the modernist tradition, but, when asked about this possibility, de Jong (2015\_01 October) had no recollection (as unlikely as this assertion seems to be) that he had ever discussed art with his father. In an earlier interview, de Jong (2014\_27 August\_125542\_16:10), in emphasising his father's attachment to European culture, stated that he — de Jong — had "grown up with Gauguin and van Gogh"; Mondrian did not, therefore, seem to be part of de Jong's formative education.

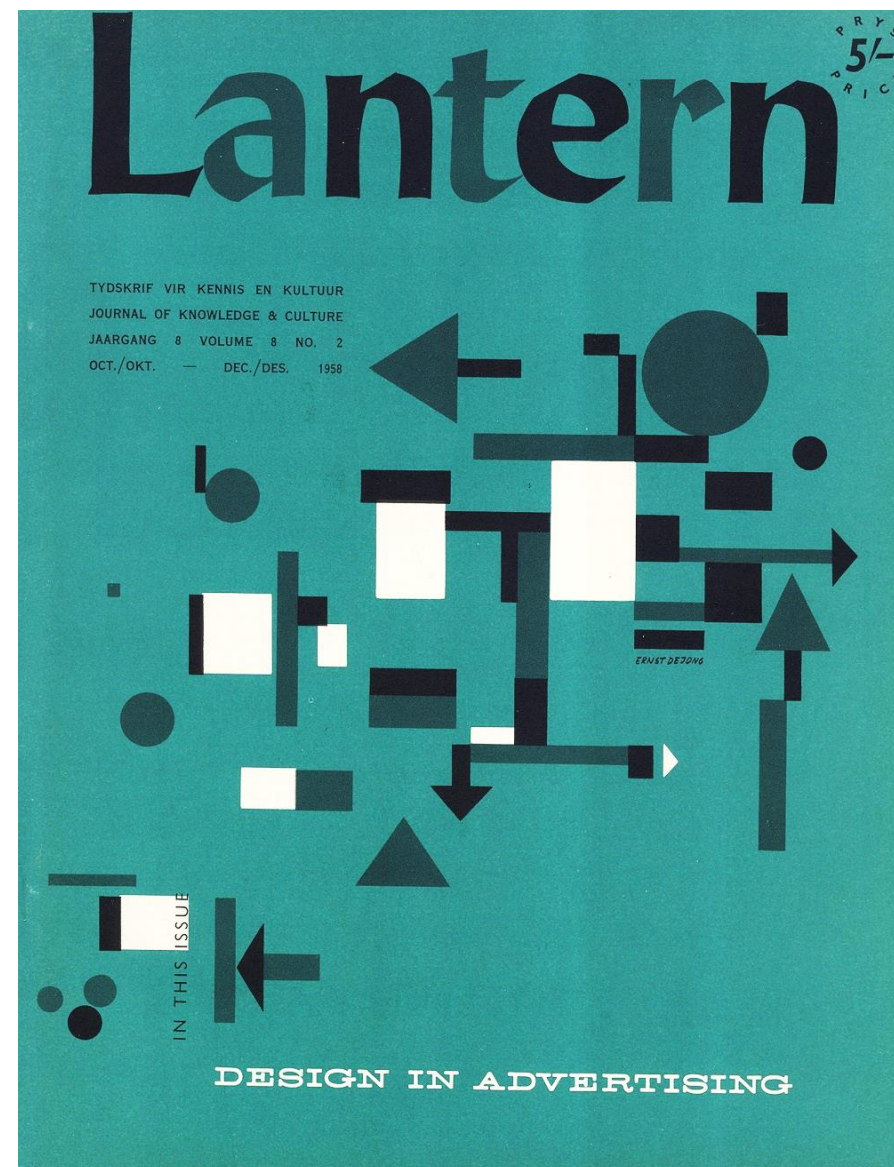
<sup>285</sup> For the role of building blocks in Friedrich Froebel's kindergarten curriculum, and its subsequent influence on modular design, see Chapter 5.

<sup>286</sup> Ignorance of these practitioners is not surprising since interest in their work only re-emerged in the 1980s with the advent of postmodernism's fascination with early twentieth-century design.

<sup>287</sup> In 1924 the renegade van Doesburg declared the diagonal as more dynamic in his theory of elementarism (Meggs & Purvis 2006:301), after which betrayal Mondrian stopped contributing articles to the *de Stijl* journal (of which van Doesburg was the editor).

<sup>288</sup> Although it may appear unlikely that local practitioners could be pioneers of new directions in design, Nikolaus Pevsner, the German and later British scholar of history of art and architecture, when covering the architecture of the Commonwealth, made particular note in 1953 of the Pretoria architect Helmut Stauch's 1952 Meat Board building as "a style well in the vanguard of what was being built in Europe" (Stauch ... 2017). Clive Chipkin (1993:278) points out that in the post-WWII years Pretoria architects were "more cohesive and better disciplined" than their Johannesburg counterparts, and also evinced "greater regional sensitivity"; many came from the new School of Architecture at Pretoria University and were "imbued with the ethos of modernity and renewal". It is beyond the scope of this study to present a detailed overview of trends in architecture in the 1950s in Pretoria, but the influence of this enthusiasm for modernity on regional graphic design (and on de Jong in particular), would have been substantial.





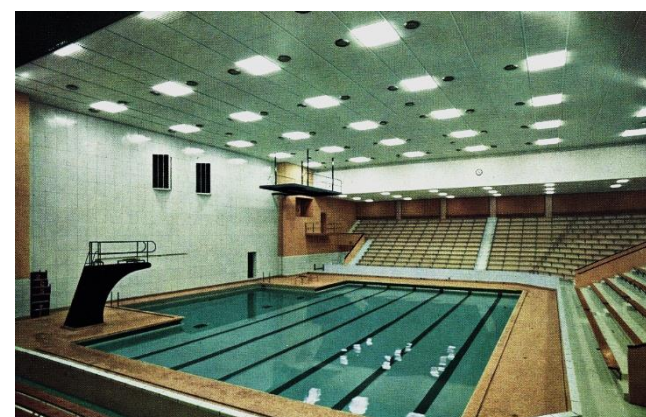
**Figure 139** Ernst de Jong (designer and illustrator), cover design *Lantern* October / December 1958 (collection of the author).



**Figure 142** Ernst de Jong with examples of his gallery painting, c1959.



**Figure 141** Ernst de Jong (designer), trademark for Paul de Jong, c1957.



**Figure 140** Michigan University, Ann Arbor, indoor swimming pool, 1950s. The photograph appears on p.27 of Dietrich Fabian's *Modern swimming pools of the world* (1957), loaned to de Jong by a Mr Perry in Johannesburg (probably at the time that the de Jongs were designing their diving centre), but never returned. It was discovered in the Hill Street house after de Jong's death.



**Figure 146** Ernst de Jong (designer), corporate identity for Gerrie de Jong, c1958.



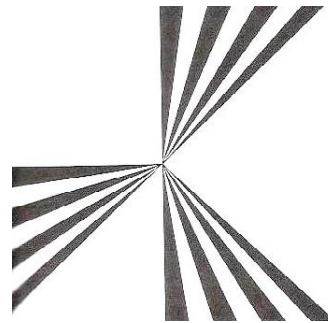
**Figure 147** Vilmos Huszár (designer), cover design for *de Stijl*, 1917 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:301).



**Figure 148** Piet Zwart (designer), advertisement for the Laga Company, 1923 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:328).



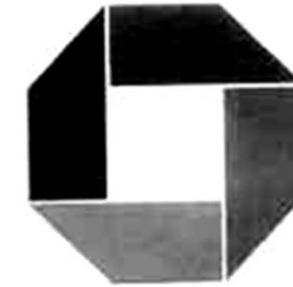
**Figure 149** Henryk Berlewi (designer), exhibition poster, 1925 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:307).



**Figure 145** Anton Stankowski (designer), trademark for Standard Elektrik Lorenz AG, 1953 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:359).



**Figure 144** Norman Ives (designer), trademark for Eastern Press, 1958 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:404).



**Figure 143** Chermayeff & Geismar Associates (designers), Chase Manhattan Bank trademark, 1960 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:406).



values and attitudes. A similar application of this ‘neo-mechanical’ approach and the use of purely abstract form, is the — according to de Jong (2015\_04 December) — very first commissioned trademark he designed, namely a logo for his brother Paul (Fig. 141). Paul de Jong was a “jack-of-all-trades” (de Jong 2015\_01 October) connected to the timber industry, and while the grid-like arrangement of rectangles could therefore conceivably signify construction, or logs of wood, the design remains a placement of simple geometric forms generated by using the pica and em metal slabs from a typesetter in order, according to de Jong (2015\_01 October), to bypass the expense of finished artwork. In this, de Jong’s logo shows a remarkable congruence with Piet Zwart’s 1923 advertisement for the Laga Company (a manufacturer of rubber floor coverings) (Fig. 148), for which Zwart used an identical technique, although it is almost certain that de Jong had no knowledge of the Laga design or of Zwart himself. Moreover, the use of a purely abstract trademark was practically unheard of until 1960 when Ivan Chermayeff and Tom Geismar’s hugely influential logo for Chase Manhattan Bank (Fig. 143) proved that a completely abstract form could successfully function as an organisation’s visual identifier (Meggs & Purvis 2006:406).<sup>289</sup>

Although less known, there were precedents to the Chase Manhattan logo. The German designer Anton Stankowski’s (1906-1998) 1953 trademark for Standard Elektrik Lorenz AG (Fig. 147) and American Norman Ives’s (1923-1978) trademark for Eastern Press (Fig. 145), designed in 1958, share a similar timeframe to and reveal an affinity with de Jong’s style. Ives’s work in particular is evocative of the early work of EDJS. Notably, Ives’s approach was a response to, amongst others, the work of Dutch designers Willem Sandberg (1897-1984) and Hendrik Werkman (1882-1945), as well as his teacher at Yale University, Joseph Albers (1888-1976). Meggs and Purvis (2006:405) point out that the influence of Albers — and consequently the Bauhaus legacy<sup>290</sup> — is particularly evident in the Eastern Press trademark.

Here it would seem appropriate to posit that both de Jong’s logo design for his brother and his cover design for *Lantern* owe a debt to the visual language (if not necessarily the underlying philosophy) of the Bauhaus, yet there is no reason to believe that de Jong had been aware of, or impressed by, the latter. Certainly, none of his lecturers at Oklahoma had close links to the German design school, despite a general commitment to modernism in the Faculty. Nonetheless, it is interesting that Albers started teaching at Yale a mere three years before de Jong arrived in the USA, and Ives received his Master’s degree in Fine Art in 1952, the year in which de Jong took up the scholarship at Oklahoma. It is difficult, at this distance, to establish what exchanges of ideas may have taken place between OU and Yale. The latter was to become a leader in design education internationally — its teaching staff has included Rand, Ives and Stankowski (Meggs & Purvis 2006:382-383) — and it is not inconceivable that the Bauhaus philosophy percolated through to OU, although de Jong may not have recognised it as such. However, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it does appear as if de Jong may have arrived at this ‘mechanical’ style independently. Despite his claim that Abstract Expressionism was a seminal influence, there is little congruity between the raw sensuality of Motherwell’s *Elegies*, and the controlled, mechanical nature of Paul de Jong’s logo and the 1958 *Lantern* cover design.<sup>291</sup>

What is clearly American in its origin (and again, contrary to the conventions of de Stijl) is the extended font used for the caption on the cover of the October/December 1958 *Lantern*. Evocative of nineteenth-century Western style slab-serif style fonts, the typography references de Jong’s Oklahoma experience and imparts a ‘frontier’ spirit to the otherwise cool language of abstraction. Of interest is that the font is also employed in the accompanying article that, once again, differs markedly in terms of layout from other editorial content in this issue.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> De Jong’s logo for his brother Paul also brings to mind Muriel Cooper’s logo for MIT Press, designed a few years later in 1963 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:408).

<sup>290</sup> Albers was a student, and later lecturer, at the Bauhaus, a German design school that was the consequence of a concern for design in industrial society (Meggs & Purvis 2006:310). In 1950, Albers was appointed director of the art school at Yale (Meggs & Purvis 2006:382).

<sup>291</sup> Although de Jong (2015\_04 December) is adamant that the journal cover design was constructed with ruling pen and ink, I am not convinced that this was the case; it certainly suggests the use of typographic elements as was the case with Paul de Jong’s logo.

<sup>292</sup> It seems to have been a favourite font since de Jong also used it on the catalogue for the South African Association of the Arts reproduced on page 108 of this issue of *Lantern*.

The lead article, credited to Gwen and Ernst de Jong (but almost certainly written by the former), provides “general outlines of design and the designer’s function” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:99). As such, it is a valuable document with regard to the influences the couple chose to acknowledge, and which principles they set store by, in the period immediately after de Jong’s return to South Africa. Although one is aware that it is Gwen de Jong’s research and writing ability that constructs the article, her husband’s voice and ideas about ‘advertising’ and modern art are very evident in the text.<sup>293</sup>

A key — and enduring — tenet is that “[i]t is not always possible to set a boundary between painting and advertising art” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:100). The article goes to some length to defend the newly acquired *gravitas* of advertising, which, the authors argue, “is at last emerging from its adolescence”. In support of this premise, the de Jongs offer three examples of fine artists who have “design[ed] for advertising purposes”, namely Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Hans Erni (1909-2015), and Ben Shahn. Picasso was, arguably, an obvious choice,<sup>294</sup> but Erni and Shahn are more interesting. As has been pointed out, de Jong’s early work reveals parallels with Shahn’s painting and illustration style, and the reference to the latter, in the *Lantern* article, provides evidence that the artist was both known to and admired by the de Jongs. Erni is the most obscure of the three practitioners, but, although considerably older than de Jong, his life nevertheless evinces a remarkable synchronicity with that of his younger counterpart.<sup>295</sup>

Erni is represented in the *Lantern* article by means of an illustration that he provided for a series of advertisements, entitled the *Great scientists*, for The British Aluminium Company (de Jong & de Jong 1958:106) (Fig. 151). The image is a realistic portrait of Albert Einstein, who sits with his back to a blackboard on which lines of text (and an enigmatic cartoon) have been scribbled. However, Erni had *not* ‘designed for advertising purposes’; he merely provided the portrait. As if to emphasise the disconnect between image and commercial message, de Jong, despite his argument for the blending of fine art and advertising forms, in the *Lantern* layout crops most of the text that identifies the example *as* an advertisement. The viewer is therefore left with the (probably correct) impression that ‘art’ can be utilised as an element in a commercial appeal, but by its very nature remains apart from the operations of advertising itself.<sup>296</sup>

Although one accepts that the de Jongs were making a point about the *presence* and *use* of painterly elements in advertising design, the choice of this particular example of Erni’s work is perhaps inappropriate within the context of de Jong’s argument that “advertising is the applied use of the theories of modern art” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:102). De Jong himself hardly ever utilises an approach in which an artist’s creative output, separately conceived, is transformed into an ‘advertisement’ merely by the addition of text by another agent, and there are more appropriate examples of the articulation of fine art and graphic design evident in Erni’s work of which, one assumes, de Jong was aware.<sup>297</sup> Indeed, it is likely that the South African first noticed, and grew to admire, the Swiss designer as a consequence of the latter’s presence on the cover of the 1956/1957 *Graphis Annual*. De Jong certainly was perusing copies of *Graphis* in 1958,<sup>298</sup> since several of the examples in the *Lantern* article have been gleaned from this source,<sup>299</sup> including Erni’s illustration from the *Great scientists* series.

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<sup>293</sup> In retrospect, after interviewing Gwen de Jong, I am no longer so confident that she was merely the scribe to her husband’s ideas.

<sup>294</sup> Although some may question whether Picasso’s posters qualify as ‘advertising’.

<sup>295</sup> Not the least of which is the duplication of names. Erni was a Swiss graphic designer, painter, and illustrator who admired Picasso. Like de Jong, he illustrated postage stamps, and executed several murals and theatre designs. He created the artwork for a series of Swiss bank notes (printed, but never issued, owing to Erni’s perceived communist sympathies in the 1940s) and realised about 300 posters (Hans Erni 2015). Like de Jong, Erni was also a keen sportsman (Hans Erni Biography 2015). He completed a series of paintings for the International Olympic Committee when he was already in his eighties (Swiss artist Hans Erni dies ... 2015) and received the United States Sports Academy award for sport artist of the year in 1989 (Hans Erni 2015). Horses would also play an important role in his life. In 1958, when the de Jongs singled him out as an exemplar of a ‘modern master’ that crossed the divide from painting to advertising, they also identified, whether consciously or not, a type of avatar for the young South African designer.

<sup>296</sup> Other scientists depicted by Erni in The British Aluminium campaign include Arturo Toscanini, Leonardo da Vinci, Ernest Rutherford, and Alexander Fleming (see issues of the *New Scientist*, 26 February, 02 July, 27 August, 29 October and 24 December 1959). The layout of the advertisements differs somewhat from the reproduction in *Lantern*.

<sup>297</sup> De Jong (2015\_13 October), when asked about his interest in Erni, stated that, “I was a great fan of his posters in the sixties”.

<sup>298</sup> It is likely that he had access to this imported and expensive magazine in the library of the Pretoria College where he had already started teaching.

<sup>299</sup> Which is acknowledged, but apparently without copyright permission from either publication or designers.



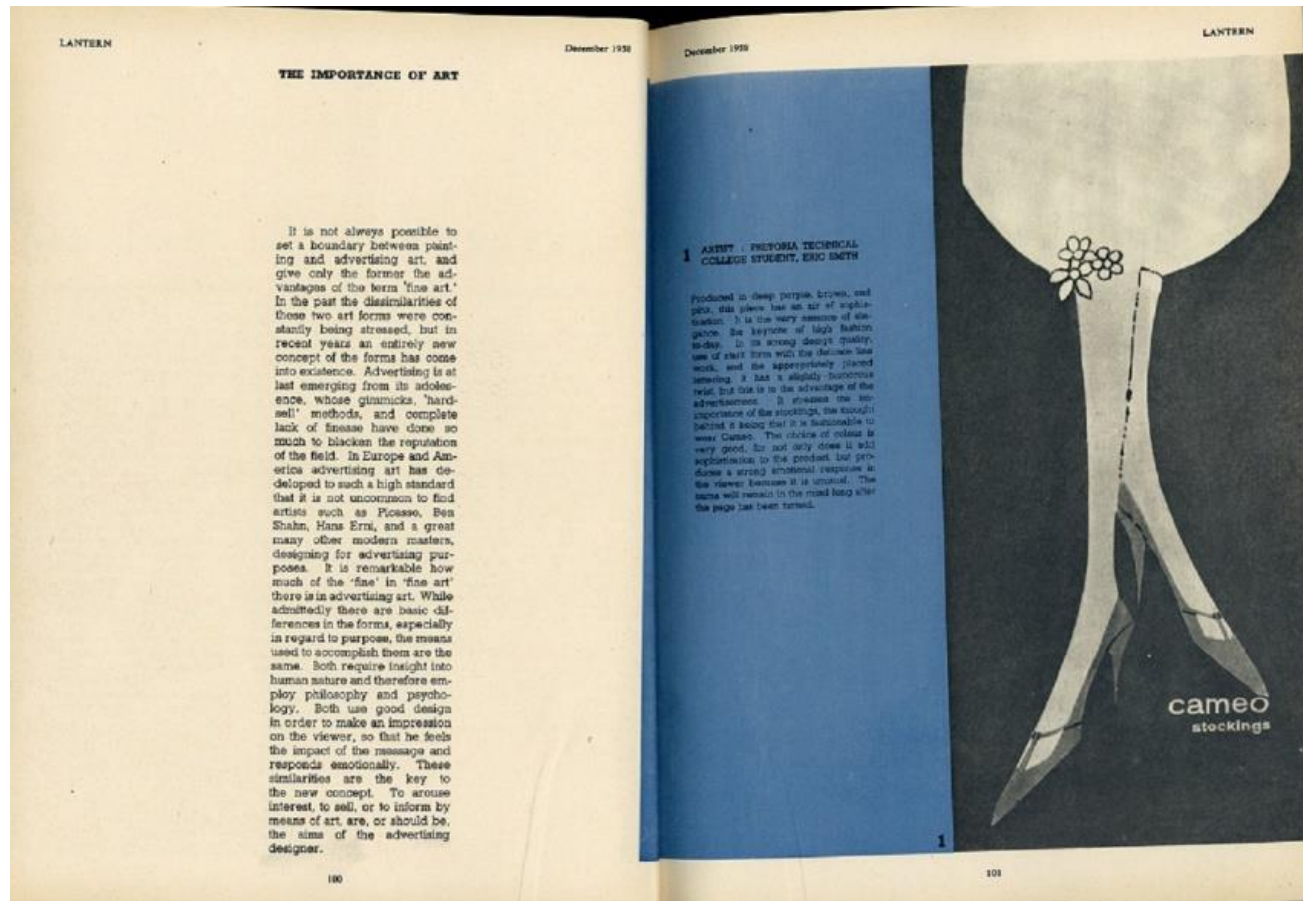
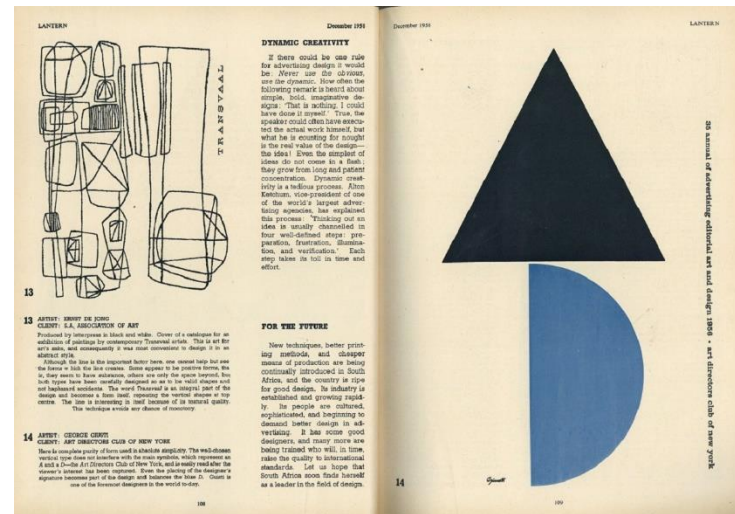


Figure 150 Ernst and Gwen de Jong (designers), pages from *Lantern* October / December 1958 (collection of the author).





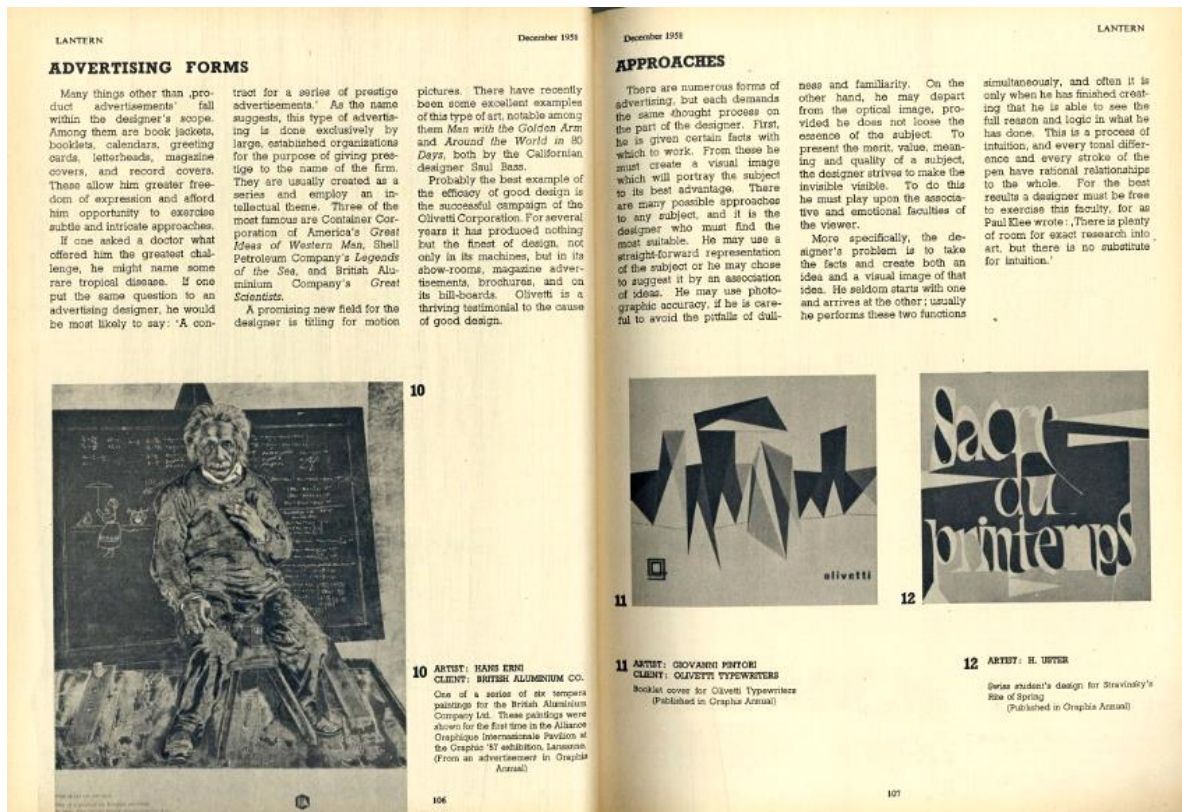


Figure 152 Ernst and Gwen de Jong (designers), pages 106-107 from *Lantern* October / December 1958 (collection of the author).

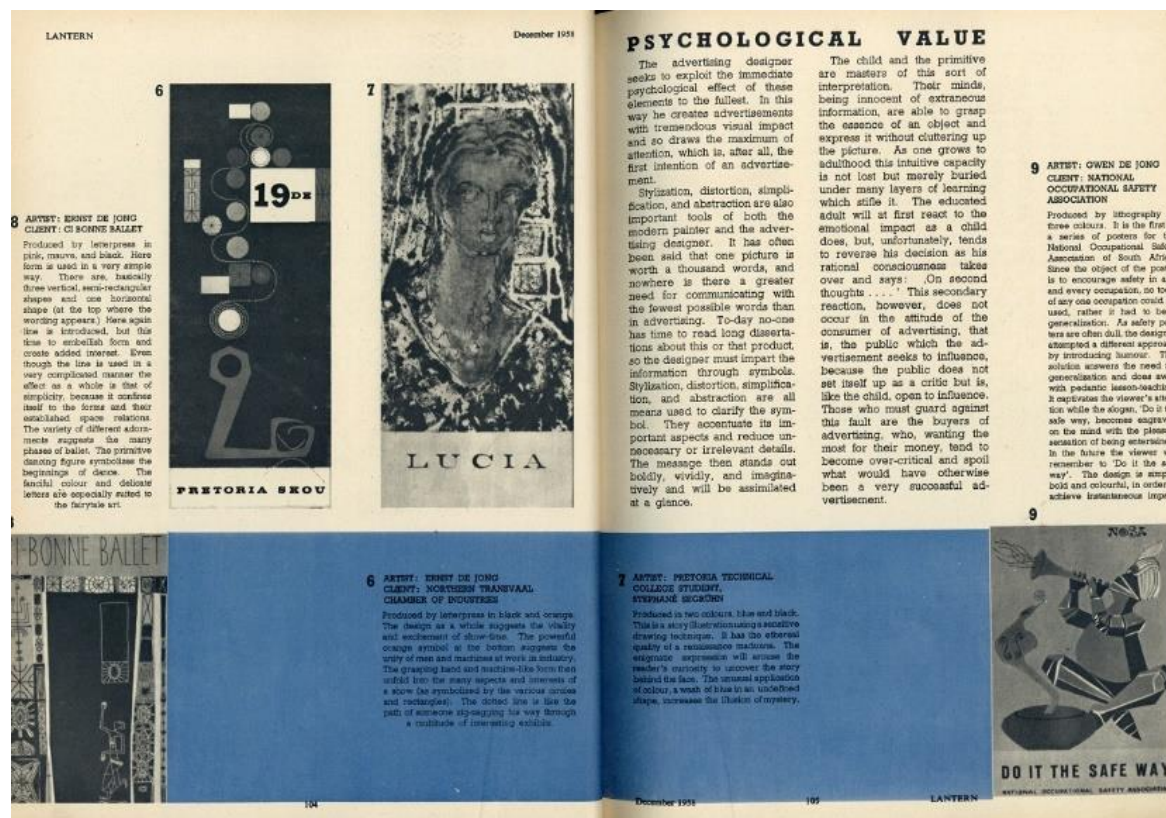


Figure 153 Ernst and Gwen de Jong (designers), pages 104-105 from *Lantern* October / December 1958 (collection of the author).



Figure 151 The John Keel meme (John Keel 2010).



One reason for the inclusion of the British Aluminium campaign may have been that it resembles (and was almost certainly referencing) the famous *Great ideas of Western man* series of advertisements launched by the Container Corporation of America (CCA) in the 1950s. The de Jongs refer to both initiatives as examples of “prestige advertisements ... [that] employ an intellectual theme” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:102) and that may present “the greatest challenge ... to an advertising designer”. Described by Meggs and Purvis (2006:347) as “one of the most brilliant institutional campaigns in the history of advertising”, the CCA campaign would have appealed to de Jong because, superficially, the CCA campaign suggests the integration of fine art and commercial objectives. However, the format more often than not separates the artwork from the text and company logo, which was, typically, laid out by a designer — not the artist — and set against a white background that functions like a blank wall in an art gallery. Thus, the division between *high* and *low* art is kept intact. Despite the superb aesthetics, none of the images in and of itself argues for the merits of paperboard containers (just as a portrait of Einstein cannot persuade an individual to purchase aluminium). As such, these examples do not convincingly support the contention that the means used to accomplish the purpose of both fine art and advertising overlap.

The de Jongs are more successful in their choice of George Giusti’s (1908-1990) 1956 cover for the 35<sup>th</sup> annual of the Art Directors Club of New York (de Jong & de Jong 1958:109) (Fig. 150, bottom right).<sup>300</sup> Although Giusti’s design has undergone a sea change owing to the use of duotone printing in this issue of *Lantern* (the original being in black and yellow), the stark arrangement of geometric forms functions both as a statement of abstract art *and* clever reduction of the title of the publication to two, basic elements of design — triangle and half-circle. De Jong’s own design for the cover of a catalogue for an exhibition of “contemporary Transvaal artists” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:108) mounted by the South African Association of Art (SAAA), and which is expediently juxtaposed with Giusti’s design on the double page spread, similarly utilises pure abstraction, but does not engage on a conceptual level with the content of the catalogue. Although the caption to de Jong’s design states that the work of the artists represented in the catalogue “is art for art’s sake, and consequently it was most convenient [*sic*] to design it in an abstract style”, the quirky line drawing, removed from the cover, unlike Giusti’s visual pun, references nothing except its own aesthetics.

It is, then, the formal principles of art making that the de Jongs (1958:102;105) stress in their article:

[M]odern art has amplified those elements of painting which ... were previously considered only as they defined the subject-matter and not for their own sake alone. These elements are form, line and colour. Each has its own psychological and aesthetic set of values [...] Stylization, distortion, simplification, and abstraction are also important tools of both the modern painter and the advertising designer ... [The] designer must impart the information through symbols ... The message then stands out ... and will be assimilated at a glance.

However, this avowal of a belief in the efficiency of and adherence to the rhetoric of formal design elements is, as this study hopes to demonstrate, not necessarily typical of the early EDJS style. Although the October/December 1958 cover may, to some degree, offer a neutral rhetoric of form, line and colour, several other EDJS covers for *Lantern* engage with visual subtexts, expressive illustration and self-aware wit. Moreover, Hoekstra, although never given to complex visual punning, in the design of his promotional brochure for EDJS, comments wickedly on de Jong’s self-appointed role as ‘king’ of the EDJS castle (as well as his, Hoekstra’s, true position in the de Jong court) (Fig. 7). Hoekstra’s humorous illustration, in general, lent EDJS the light-hearted sense of fun that set it apart from its more serious counterparts.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> The source of Giusti’s design is not credited by the Jongs. The reproduction of this cover, and the alteration thereof, without copyright permission, appears problematic from the vantage point of the twenty-first century. However, in the 1950s, Pretoria was a long way from New York, and the concept of intellectual property — especially in the case of commercial art — underplayed. Notably, other examples of graphic design featured in the same issue of *Lantern* (i.e., brochures and posters from the USA) are neither credited nor, it seems, had copyright been obtained. In an article on opera, portraits of composers, as well as illustrations of set designs and paintings, are reproduced in the journal with no credits or indication of copyright permission. It clearly was not *Lantern*’s editorial policy to credit images, or obtain copyright, and the de Jongs should therefore not be singled out for their oversight in this regard.

<sup>301</sup> The de Jongs’ advocacy of the formal principles of design was a mind-set that would, however, serve EDJS well in the construction of corporate graphics in the 1970s, of which the visual system for RAU is a good example (see Chapter Five).

Apart from Erni and Giusti, the *Lantern* article also refers to Giovanni Pintori (1912–1999) — famous for his work for Olivetti — and Saul Bass (although no visual example of the latter’s work is included). Notably, the de Jongs’ students at the Pretoria Technical College get ample recognition. Within the context of the de Jongs’ obeisance to Mondrian and the power of abstract symbols, it is somewhat ironic that Eric Smith’s concept for an advertisement for Cameo stockings takes pride of place (de Jong & de Jong 1958:101) (Fig. 150); besides Guisti’s cover design it is the only work that occupies an entire page. The caption describes it as “the very essence of elegance, the keynote of high fashion”, an effect that is in large part owing to its exotic use of colour — deep purple, brown and pink. The de Jongs (1958:101) applaud the “delicate line work”, but “the slightly humorous twist” requires some justification within the earnest tone of the article.<sup>302</sup> In fact, Smith’s image is hugely evocative of Warhol’s shoe illustrations. The splodgy ink line and exaggerated rendering of the shoes, as well as the choice of pink and purple, are strikingly similar to examples in the Warhol collection. The theme of the student project itself, namely hosiery, suggests an awareness of Warhol’s footwear fetish and his work for I Miller. How the connection was made remains unclear — Warhol is not amongst the ‘modern masters’ that the de Jongs enumerate — but it seems that Pretoria in 1958 was well aware of international advertising trends.

On the other hand, the authors describe Colin Bridgeford’s illustration for a book of poetry as “a stirring interpretation of mystery and beauty” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:102) (Fig. 150, bottom left).<sup>303</sup> The sombre colours and stylised hornbill are somewhat Byzantine in tone, and arguably closer to de Jong’s own decorative style of the period. Interestingly, and also perhaps problematically, the most conceptual contribution from the de Jong school, and a reminder that she was both designer and teacher, is Gwen de Jong’s poster design for the National Occupational Safety Association, in which an Indian fakir — identified as such by his turban — is shown beguiling a cobra while wearing a full suit of armour (de Jong & de Jong 1958:105) (Fig. 153, bottom right; poster enlarged in Fig. 151).

From a contemporary perspective, Gwen de Jong’s representation of the fakir, especially in the context of 1950s South Africa, can appear to be insensitive. In 1958, the year in which *Lantern* featured the image of the fakir, the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (in Reddy 2012) acknowledged the discrimination suffered by “people of Indian descent” as part of the “deliberate, acknowledged and loudly proclaimed policy of the [South African] Government ... to maintain ... segregation”.<sup>304</sup> Although Gwen de Jong, newly arrived in the country, may not have been knowledgeable about the plight of South African Indians or even knowledgeable about Indians, beyond essentialising stereotypes such as that of the wily snake charmer, one might perhaps question the judgement (or lack of insight) of the editor of *Lantern*.

However, it is also necessary to consider the context of Gwen de Jong’s design. In 1955, an American cartoonist, writer and adventurer named John Keel rose to international fame after being pictured in the *Times of India* ‘charming’ a cobra in Bombay (Fig. 153),<sup>305</sup> reportedly with a rock and roll tune (John Keel 2010). The incident was widely publicised in North America, Europe and Australia and became what one might now refer to as a *meme*. Keel, who had set about to penetrate the ‘mysteries of the orient’ and then debunking them, was not well-received in the countries where he conducted his research and his exploits, from a contemporary Western perspective, appear to be, at best, inappropriate, but at the time he was widely admired in the West.<sup>306</sup> Notably, Keel wears only a T-shirt in the photograph and Gwen de Jong’s re-interpretation of this meme, while unwittingly stereotyping them as ‘tricksters’, nevertheless suggests that, by wearing protective clothing, Indians have more common sense than Keel himself.

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<sup>302</sup> It is excused on the grounds that “it is to the advantage of the advertisement”, although exactly how or why is not explained.

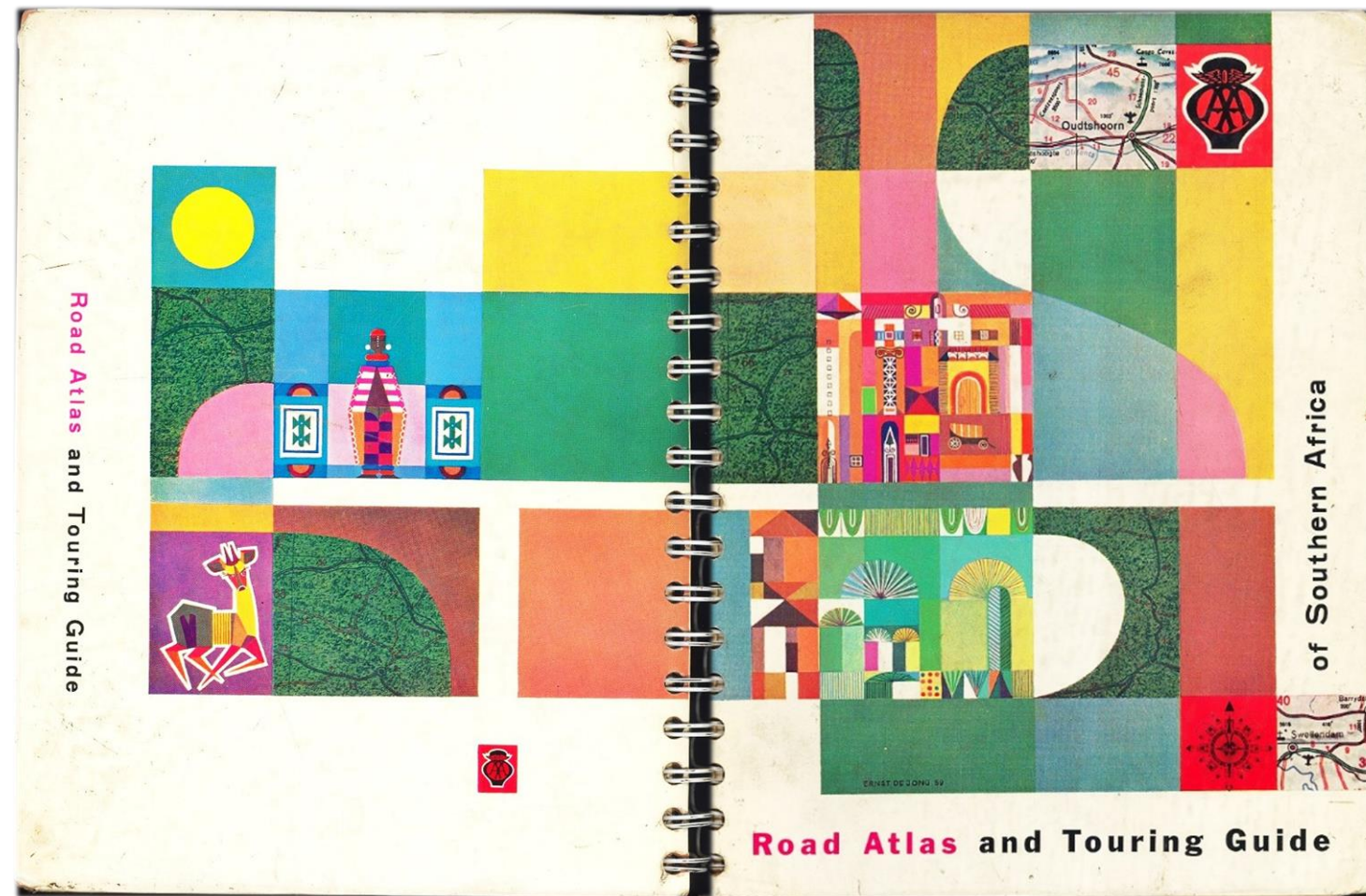
<sup>303</sup> Other students whose work is featured are Anne Coote and Stephané Segrühn.

<sup>304</sup> In the late 1800s, British settler farmers in the then colony of Natal arranged with the Indian Government to recruit indentured labour (Reddy 2012). The first labourers reached Natal in 1860 and were then followed by traders; as a consequence, white farmers and businesses soon encountered unwelcome competition. Whites launched a campaign to make it impossible for Indians to live in Natal except as indentured labourers, and in 1893 the Natal Government duly began to enact a series of restrictive measures against free Indians that eventually became part of the system of segregation in the Union of South Africa after 1910 (Reddy 2012). By 1952, the South African Indian Congress had joined the ANC and the Coloured People’s Organisation in order to launch a ‘Campaign of Defiance against Unjust Laws’ in the face of the National Party’s expansion of discriminatory legislation.

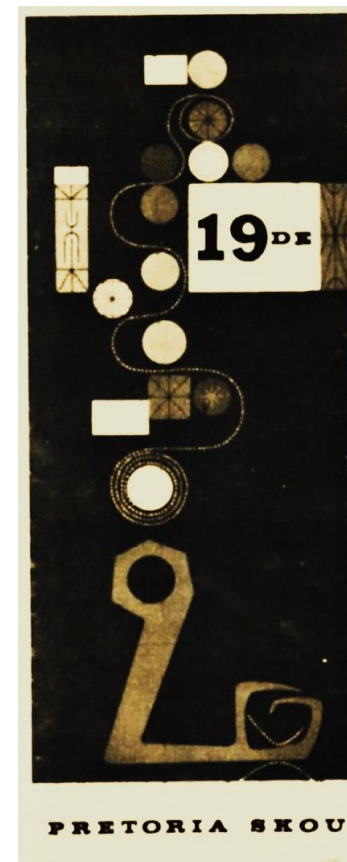
<sup>305</sup> Now Mumbai.

<sup>306</sup> Keel responded to childhood influences such as the mysterious feats depicted in Ripley’s *Believe it or Not*. His *tour-de-force* was uncovering the secret of x-ray eyes, a phenomenon that was first demonstrated in the USA in the late 1950s when a Pakistani magician, Kuda Bux, performed the trick on American television shows (John A Keel [sa]). Keel penned a popular book, *Jadoo: the astounding story of one man’s search into the black magic of the orient*, which was published in 1957, the year in which Gwen de Jong designed her poster.



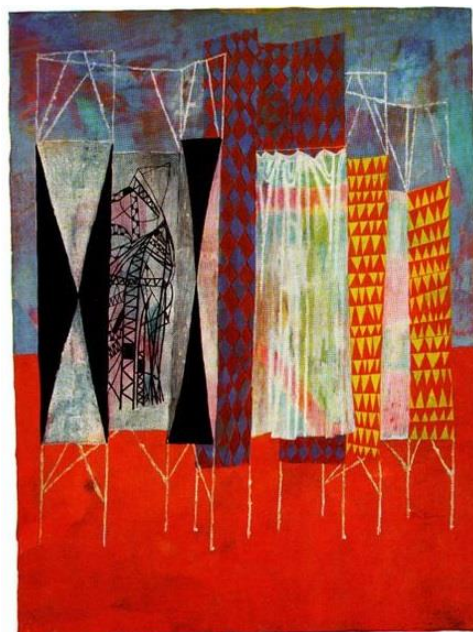


**Figure 154** Ernst de Jong (designer & illustrator), cover *Road atlas and touring guide of Southern Africa*, 1959. The cover illustration was executed in 1958.



**Figure 156** Ernst de Jong (designer), promotional items for Joyce Seaborne ballet and the Pretoria Show, respectively, detail from *Lantern* October / December 1958:104-107.

**Figure 155** Ben Shan (illustrator), advertisement for the Container Corporation of America, the Great Ideas of Western Man Campaign No.5, 1950 (Great Ideas ... 2013).



De Jong also used the *Lantern* article to showcase other recent work such as his *Panorama* (December 1958) cover design — a rare example of illustrative abstraction in a series that chose to use full-bleed photography<sup>307</sup> — and the aforementioned April/June 1958 cover of *Lantern*, on which “the record of Bushman life is painted” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:102). In contrast to the magazine covers, two undated, but presumably earlier, designs — one promoting the nineteenth Pretoria Show and the other for Ci-Bonne Ballet (Fig. 156),<sup>308</sup> bear traces of de Jong’s student style of painting, utilising ethnic patterning and delicate dotted lines. Although these examples (like all the illustrations for this article, with the exception of the Giusti cover) are reproduced in black and white, one can intuit “the fanciful colour” and “fairytale” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:104) effect as it was transposed from de Jong’s student art works onto commercial applications.

This, what one might refer to as de Jong’s ‘Ci-Bonne’ phase, transported from Oklahoma, seems to have been short-lived. After its application in the design of the Automobile Association’s *Road atlas and touring guide of Southern Africa* (1959) (Fig. 154), the delicate, “primitive” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:104) motifs, that with their fragile intimacy suggest an engagement with the magical, rapidly gave way to a bolder, cleaner and more objective stylisation. By the time de Jong was designing the October/December *Lantern* 1958 cover, he had moved on from his ‘fairytale’ approach. Consequently, the authors seem to feel compelled to justify the inclusion of the Ci-Bonne design in this issue by stating that “[e]ven though the line [in the Ci-Bonne design] is used in a very complicated manner the effect as whole is that of simplicity” (de Jong & de Jong 1958:104) — which, perhaps, it is not.

The original SAAA catalogue, Ci-Bonne and Pretoria Show designs appear to have been lost; however, their inclusion in this issue of *Lantern* provides evidence of a transitory phase in de Jong’s design output. One can only surmise what prompted the change, which is also reflected in his gallery painting. It is of interest that in the *Lantern* article, which sets out to defend not only the ‘art of advertising’ but modern art in general, the only ‘modern master’ to whom the authors refer as an exemplar is Mondrian (de Jong & de Jong 1958:102). This is a rather odd choice, given the timeframe (the late 1950s), de Jong’s recent American experience and painterly, expressive style while at OU, as well as the claims with regard to the ‘huge impact’ on his thinking of American Abstract Expressionism. Arguably, the latter movement, while sharing a commitment to abstraction, is the binary opposite of Mondrian’s obsession with the limited vocabulary of straight horizontal and vertical lines (Meggs & Purvis 2006:299). However, despite the enigma of where and how de Jong fell under the spell of de Stijl, the influence of the visual language of this Dutch movement is evident in de Jong’s designs for *Lantern* from 1958 to the early 1960s, and, to some considerable degree, set the modernist tone for the publication for the next thirty years, long after EDJS ceased contributing to the publication.

What is noteworthy is the closing paragraph of the article that discloses de Jong’s missionary zeal with regard to the utopian project of a modern identity for the nation. The de Jongs (1958:108) write: “South Africa ... is ripe for good design. Its industry is established and growing rapidly. Its people are cultured, sophisticated, and beginning to demand better design in advertising.”

Perhaps. It was also important that the de Jongs *made* it so.

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<sup>307</sup> Whereas de Jong’s cover includes a photograph, Eric Smith would design what at first appears to be an entirely abstract interpretation of a symphony orchestra for the cover of the 1959 *Panorama*; both these covers are anomalies in the visual rhetoric of this publication.

<sup>308</sup> The captions do not indicate whether these are posters, brochures or programme covers, neither can de Jong (17 October 2015) recall exactly what purpose these designs served. ‘Ci-Bonne’ is a homophone for the surname of Joyce Seaborne, a South African ballet instructor with whom both de Jong and Gwen danced immediately after their return to Pretoria. Seaborne emigrated to the USA in 1981 (Faculty and staff [sa]).

#### 4.3.7 *Lantern* 8(3) January / March 1959

The October / December 1958 cover and Paul de Jong's logo are seemingly the only extant examples of de Jong's 'mechanical' phase; the very next cover for *Lantern* (January / March 1959) (Fig. 157) utilises a combination of loosely rendered abstract shapes that overlay a line drawing — a 1929 portrait of an elderly man by the South African artist, Erich Mayer (1876-1960) — where, in contrast to the brooding depth of its predecessor, the design elements are placed on a crisp white background. Although the cover design is signed by de Jong, no credit is given to the cover designer on the contents page (Duby is cited in his regular role as 'art advisor'). It is highly likely that it is de Jong's own work, but it should be borne in mind that by January 1959 de Jong had a fully functioning studio with Bridgeford and Hoekstra, amongst others, on board. De Jong may have art directed the design, which was executed by a studio employee. Whatever the case, de Jong affixed his signature to the final product and, as such, one can examine the latter as an expression of de Jong's own vision and persona.

The layout of the article on Mayer (authored by Renato von Geysso, and presumably designed by Duby, since no credits are provided) displays some bold, modernist design elements, but it lacks the flair of the EDJS layout for the April/June 1958 issue. What is more, the relevance of the geometric, orange and black Bauhaus-style patterning that accompanies the article is questionable, since Mayer's art bears no resemblance whatsoever to European modernism. Mayer's portraits and landscapes are naturalistic, romantic and conservative, a quality which is conceded by von Geysso (1959:211, 213), who also feels compelled (Mayer was still alive when the article was published) to justify the inclusion of Mayer in this issue by reiterating that contemporary South African artists "express the greatest respect for Erich Mayer's work, even if their artistic viewpoint is the opposite of his".

Notably, these 'contemporary artists', one of whom von Geysso (1959:211) quotes at length, preferred to remain anonymous. The same issue of *Lantern* carries an article on another South African artist Sydney Goldblatt (1919-1979), whose work vividly demonstrates this 'opposite viewpoint' in its vigorous depiction of "the crowded predicament of ... the Bantu world" (Menell 1959:236-241). Goldblatt was only 39 when the article appeared, and Mayer 84, which explains the latter's presence on the cover, yet the juxtapositioning of these two artists in the same issue of *Lantern* underscores the urgency with which the publication wished to usher in a new order while still acknowledging the old (notably, Mayer is referred to as a 'pioneer artist').

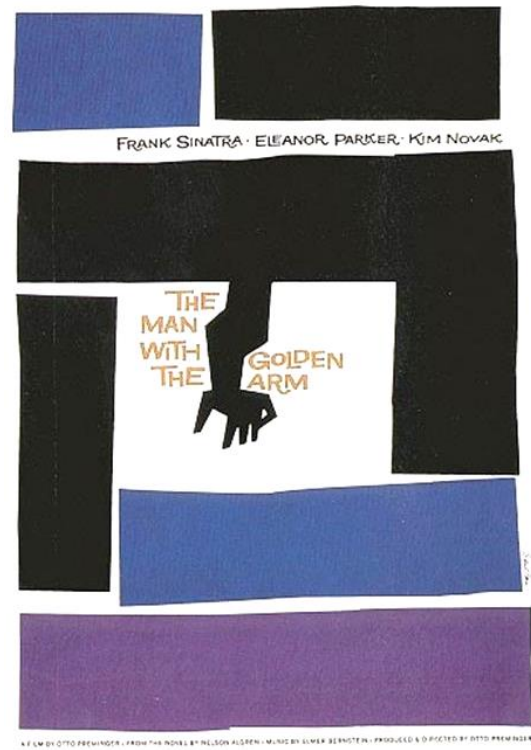
The Mayer article is in Afrikaans, followed by an English summary, while the Goldblatt article is in English only — evidence that Afrikaans readers tended to be bilingual, but perhaps also a ring-fencing of cultural values and tastes. It is of interest that both painters were Jewish, although this fact is not mentioned. Mayer, for his part, was required to vicariously signify the artistic identity of the Afrikaner. However, in an implied reference to the artists' ethnicity, a review by Dr H Abt of the Jewish Museum in Johannesburg is sandwiched between the two articles. Abt (1959:229, 231), on the eve of South Africa's independence from Britain and in reference to the newly founded State of Israel, declares that, "Jewish art can never be *'l'art pour l'art ... There can be no true art without a national background'*"; it can only be born from "the deeply rooted cultural values of a specific people".<sup>309</sup>

Clement Greenberg (who was Jewish) and de Jong (who was not) probably disagreed, yet the latter found himself engaged in precisely this task of visualising the 'cultural values of a specific people'. Faced with the dilemma of imparting a contemporary look and feel to the journal while dealing with the rather backward-looking subject matter, de Jong subtly integrates the informality and abstract language of American modernism with a traditional line drawing of a nineteenth-century patriarch.

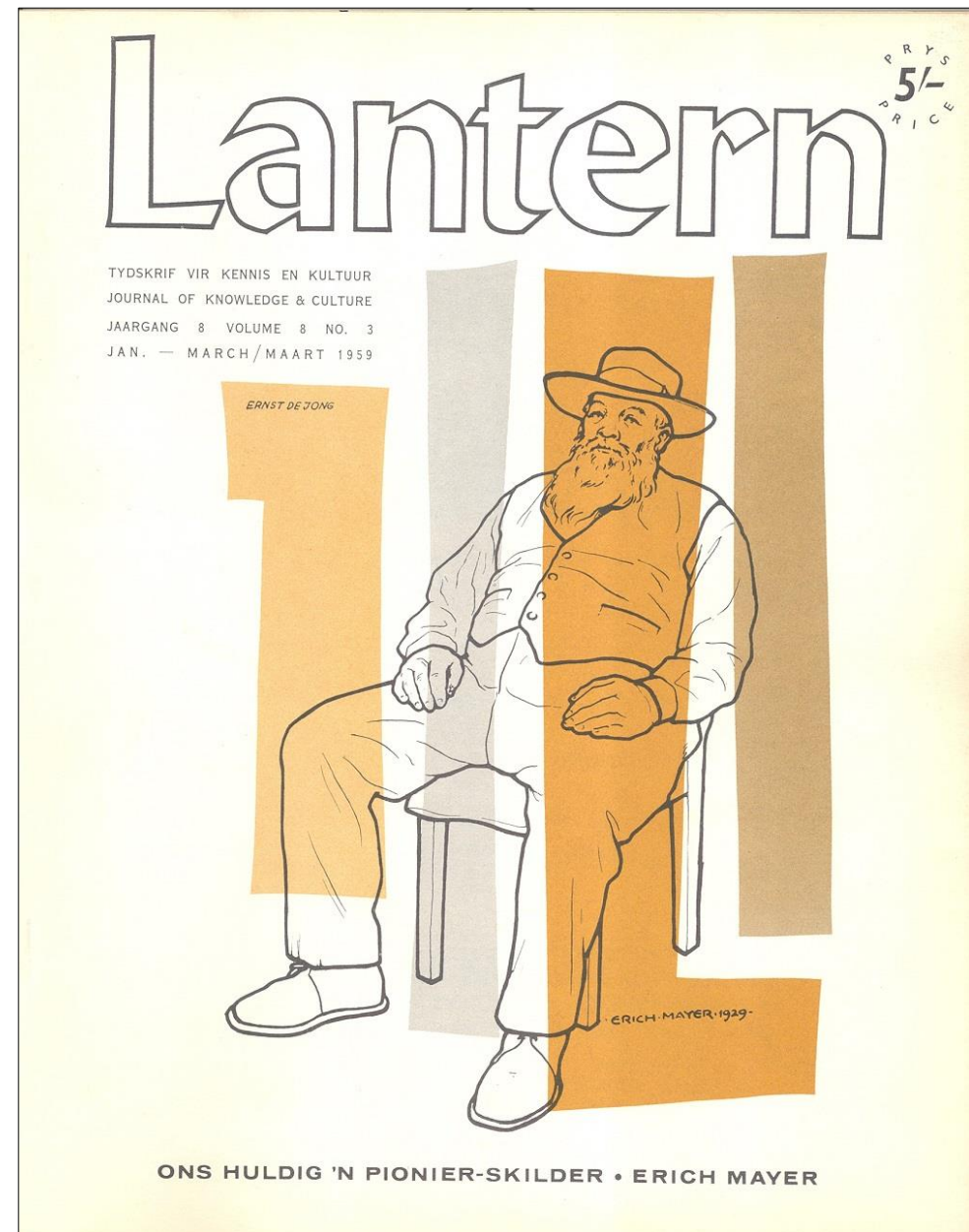
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<sup>309</sup> The idea that there is a thing such as 'Jewish art' brings to mind Derrida's (1995) deconstruction of the argument that psychoanalysis is a 'Jewish science'. Abt was, apparently, one of the few rabbinical personalities in South Africa that supported the kibbutz movement in the early 1950s (Modlin 2003).





**Figure 158** Saul bass (designer), logo for *The man with the golden arm*, 1955 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:380).



**Figure 157** Ernst de Jong (designer), cover *Lantern* January / March 1959 (collection of the author).



The understated grey, fawn and raw umber tints that weave over and under Mayer's drawing, evoke the artist's poetic interpretations of rural Africa, but also, rather ingeniously, make the drawing 'disappear', so that what the viewer retains in her mind's eye are the elegant abstract forms that are wholly contemporary and urban, as opposed to the narrative of a bearded farmer in rustic waistcoat, hat and shoes.

Thus, even in this seemingly innocuous cover design, de Jong grapples with his personal, but also a broader cultural legacy of a perceived 'backwardness' of nation. Mayer, of German origin and a sympathiser with the *boer* cause during the South African War (von Geyses 1959:213), visualised the pioneering mythology of the Afrikaner in which "man, his family, his home, his cattle, his wagons are the main concern" (von Geyses 1959:211). De Jong 'overpaints' this colloquial narrative with the slick visual language of the New York School (Fig. 158). In its quiet way, this cover design signals both the acknowledgment and rejection of the values of de Jong's father, values that were personified, most particularly, in the mythology of the Voortrekker, but also in many other cultural narratives that informed the imagined identity of the white, Afrikaner *ethnie* and its affiliation to the land.

In the January / March 1959 issue there is a concerted — if, in hindsight, Eurocentric and paternalistic — effort to establish a *pan-African* awareness in readers. Two articles directly address South Africa's relationship to the rest of Africa: 'Science unites Africa' (van Huyssteen 1959:220-227) and 'African studies in American universities' (Snyder 1959:250-259). Although the main photograph of the gathering of the *Conseil scientifique pour l'Afrique au sud di Sahara* (CSA) (van Huyssteen 1959:220) is, to an observer in the twenty-first century, disconcertingly white in its composition, other images do include black African role-players — sitting elbow to elbow with their white counterparts — in the "brave attempt to bring the light of Western civilisation" (van Huyssteen 1959:220) to Africa. Of interest is the observation, by *Lantern's* editor Vivian Wood (1959:251), that the "timetable of [change in] Africa of which the Union is so integral must be accepted".<sup>310</sup> Of equal interest is that the American centres for African Studies (including the University of California at Berkeley) in 1959 appear to be populated entirely by white American academics and students, depicted in the main photograph as hovering warily around a collection of 'African art' objects.<sup>311</sup> Notably, Kenneth Snyder (1959:251), the public affairs officer at the American Embassy in Pretoria, takes as the point of departure for his article the erstwhile "isolationist sentiments" of America, and presents the "massive reversal of [this] national mood" as an exemplar for South Africa to follow.

This 'reversal of mood' clearly included cultural proselytising, since Snyder's (1959:259) review of "sound, well-thought-out university programmes ... which ... educate Americans in the responsibilities of African interests", is preceded by an eight page, anonymous biography of Abraham Lincoln — in Afrikaans. The relevance of Lincoln's "love of justice" (Abraham Lincoln 1959:243) and his "strongly worded" (Abraham Lincoln 1959:248) *Emancipation proclamation* would not have been lost on South African readers who, on the following pages, are told that they must 'accept the timetable of Africa'. Mayer's subject matter — the impoverished, illiterate but God-fearing and hard-working rural Afrikaner — finds a counterpart in Lincoln, born in a "rough wooden hut" (Abraham Lincoln 1959:243, 242), who taught himself to read and, as a young man, had to splice "1400 pickets to pay for a pair of trousers", yet rose to become "one of the most respected and beloved statesmen in history". The editors of *Lantern* had a fondness for the USA<sup>312</sup> and, seemingly, a very cordial relationship with the American Embassy in Pretoria.<sup>313</sup> Whether intentionally or not, de Jong's cover reflects the 'civilising' effect of American culture in a local context, a moral tale of sorts that suggests that injustice, poverty and poor artistic taste could be 'moved backstage' by looking to the emancipating and modernising influence of America.

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<sup>310</sup> Made a year prior to Harold Macmillan's famous speech in February 1960. However, Wood (1959:251) prefaces his otherwise enlightened injunction with the less promising statement that it is "our bounden duty [to carry] the torch of Western Christian Civilization in Africa".

<sup>311</sup> In the latter half of the article, some black people appear, for example that of Professor Absalom Vilakasi and Professor Mark Watkins. However, Vilakasi's role at the Hartford Seminary Foundation is to provide a "cultural and linguistic orientation for [white] missionaries" on their way to Africa, and Watkins is on the staff of "one of America's foremost Negro universities" (Snyder 1959:255, 259), a condition that here legitimises South African separatists policies. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Watkins served as a visiting lecturer at the University of Natal, in the then Union of South Africa, in 1958.

<sup>312</sup> And a marked coolness towards Britain. While the journal produced several special issues during this period that highlight the culture of individual nations, the British nation was not amongst them.

<sup>313</sup> A state of affairs that de Jong himself would cultivate and benefit from during the ensuing decades.

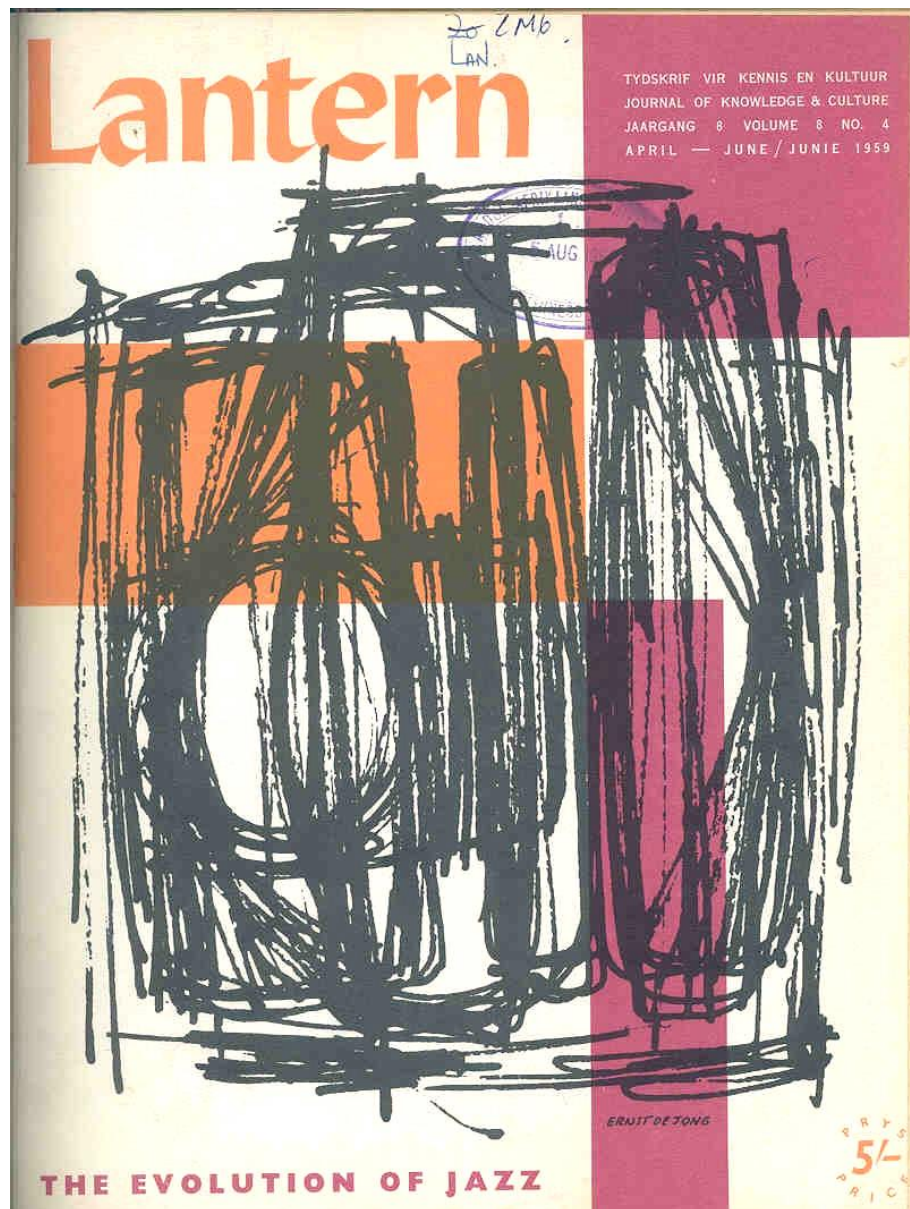


Figure 159 Ernst de Jong (designer), cover *Lantern* April / June 1959 (collection of the author).

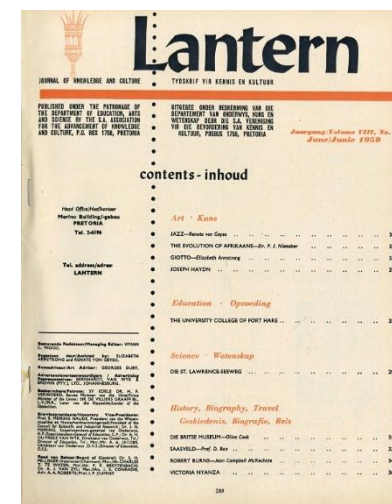
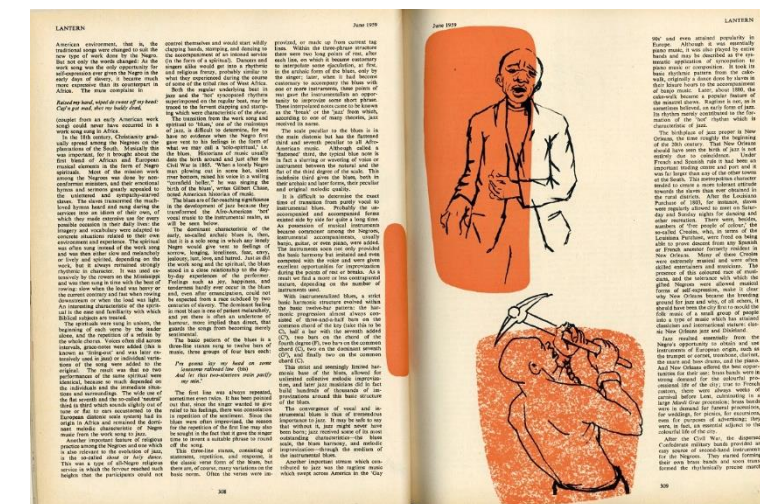
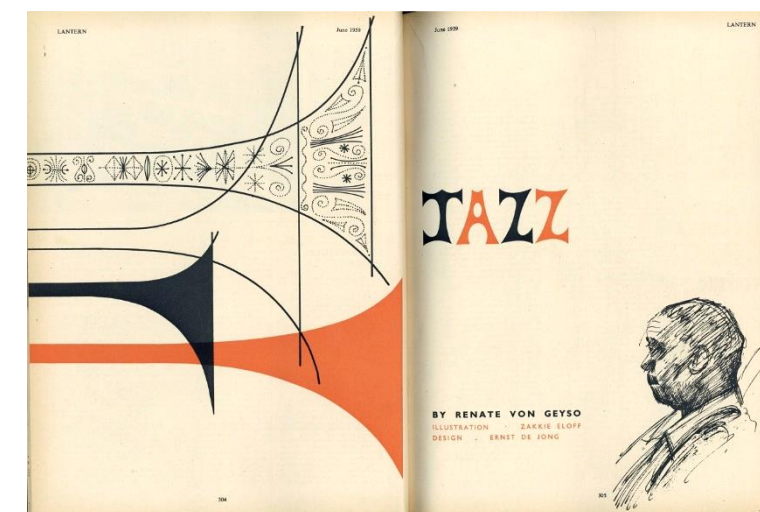


Figure 160 Georges Duby (art direction), Ernst de Jong (layout), Zakkie Eloff (illustrations), pages from *Lantern* April / June 1959 (collection of the author).



#### 4.3.8 *Lantern* 8(4) April / June 1959

What follows in the next issue of *Lantern* is a fierce obliteration of Mayer's bucolic idyll. The theme of the April/June 1959 issue is jazz, and the emphasis is, once again, on the USA. The first, unauthored, article in the issue details the wonders of the St Lawrence Seaway (Die St. Lawrence-seeweg 1959:293-303). Although this engineering feat was the result of collaboration between the USA and Canada, the leading page only depicts President Dwight Eisenhower signing legislation that formalised the undertaking, and while Queen Elizabeth and Eisenhower jointly opened the seaway on 26 June 1959, the former is never pictured. Rather, a large photograph of the Dwight D Eisenhower lock allows the American president to make a second appearance, if vicariously, within the context of this technological marvel. Readers are informed (both in the Afrikaans article and the English summary) that, "On the American shore [of the seaway] there are 57 harbours, compared to South Africa's four!" (The St. Lawrence seaway 1959:303). The point is taken that the USA dwarfs local industry, but how many harbours Canada has the reader is not told.

Then, once the supremacy of the USA has been established, the journal turns briskly to an American cultural phenomenon in which "the sensorial interests greatly outweigh the intellectual" (von Geysso 1959: 306). Von Geysso's article on jazz works hard to differentiate "this entirely new and original form of musical expression" from "the vulgar sensibility of many other forms of popular music" (von Geysso 1959:306). Whether jazz, was indeed, 'popular', is open to question, since von Geysso is quick to point out that it has suffered "much abuse", and the reader is exhorted to approach it "with an open mind". In her defence of the genre, Von Geysso (1959:313) demonstrates a remarkable knowledge of her subject, providing seven pages of dense text on the roots and transformation of jazz, from 'archaic' jazz, to *riffs*, *bebop*, *hot* and *cool* jazz, to the latest, "the so-called *Progressive* school". De Jong is credited with the design and layout of the article itself, but perhaps one should assume that it was a team effort at EDJS. Although the copy (in comparison to the de Jongs' article on the art of advertising) is set in the same conservative font and reduced size of the rest of the issue, von Geysso's contribution is notable for its elegant use of white space. De Jong, ever the impresario and opportunist, employed his colleague Zakkie Eloff (1925-2003) to provide the line drawings (Fig.159).

Eloff would become well known for his graphic drawings and paintings of wildlife; the human figure was not, perhaps, his *metier* and the line drawings of musicians, with the exception of the portrait on the opening double-page spread, are slightly awkward in their execution. Nevertheless, the delicacy of the line work makes for a fresh and sophisticated visual argument when compared to the often lugubrious nature of the rest of the publication. The EDJS design is, once again, an exemplar, a forceful argument for the modernisation of the nation in the face of a persistent conservatism (which, in terms of *Lantern* itself, must — in the absence of evidence to the contrary — be attributed to DUBY as its declared 'art advisor'). The title page of the jazz article is particularly striking in its juxtaposition of different illustration styles, bold use of negative space and innovative contrast between the expressive headline and modernist sans serif credits. The stylised trumpets that blare out the title of the article combine energetic use of shape and colour with the delicate whimsy of de Jong's 'primitive' motifs and quirky dotted lines.

There is, however, nothing whimsical about the cover (Fig. 160). In what de Jong (2015\_04 December) admits is perhaps his most direct (and, perhaps, only) reference to American Abstract Expressionism, he mimics the 'cornfield holler' (Chase, in von Geysso 1959:308) of sorrow, fear, lust, love and hatred that was the birth of the blues. Although the same approach, namely a line drawing overlaid by geometric shapes, is used on both the January / March and April / June covers, de Jong's jazz cover reverses the hierarchy of visual elements, so that the intensity of the coarse, black line overpowers the signifiers of logic and harmony, despite the latter's strong colouration. Entirely abstract, there is impatience and frustration in the rendering, as if its energy is about to spin off the page. Von Geysso, with what level of irony, given the South African context, points out that, "Feelings such as joy, happiness, and tenderness hardly ever occur in the blues and, even after emancipation, could not be expected from a race subdued by two centuries of slavery".

Certainly, de Jong captures the ‘wail of the lonely Negro’, the “‘dirty’ intonation” and “piquantly discordant” (von Geysso 1959:310) characteristic of improvisational jazz, and as such the design answers to its purpose. There is, however, some discrepancy between the cover and the way in which jazz has been visualised in the article itself. Although the editor may have selected any other feature from this issue, the theme of jazz, once chosen, potentially presented the necessity to depict African Americans on the cover. A non-figurative interpretation both precluded this potential problem and allowed de Jong to signify his allegiance to Motherwell. Nevertheless, the cover is wholly atypical of de Jong’s style, a condition perhaps best demonstrated by the contrast between the tightly-scripted signature and the fury of the drawing itself. Since he is almost obsessively concerned with control, the hard edge and meticulous finish, this expressive outburst might even suggest that the drawing is by another hand, except that de Jong can, and does, produce highly expressive sketching — but only on a small scale and not for public consumption.<sup>314</sup>

The complete lack of evidence of other work by de Jong, both in terms of design or gallery painting that evinces the influence of Abstract Expressionism is perplexing. De Jong (2015\_04 December) agrees that the *Lantern* cover is probably his only piece of Abstract Expressionism in existence. In reflecting upon this matter, he recalls that shortly after returning from the USA, an exhibition of paintings in this line (perhaps his solo exhibition at the South African Association of Arts in Pretoria in 1959) was slated by a critic. De Jong seems to have been extremely upset by the negative reaction, and claims that he did not pursue Abstract Expressionism after this humiliation. The spontaneous line is thus hidden from view, reserved for thumbnail sketches, filed away in folders, obliterated by larger, ponderous and careful reworkings of the original. On the *Lantern* cover, however, the control breaks down, and ‘hollers’ to be let loose.

On the one hand, the singular nod to American Abstract Expressionism is a logical consequence of the polite dismissal of Erich Mayer on the January/March issue. De Jong is signalling his own adherence to abstract art, and *Lantern*, by featuring de Jong’s design, is constructing an image of nation that is unquestionably *modern*, and modern in an *American* sense. Drawing on van Geysso’s allusion to jazz as the music of a ‘subdued race’, one might even read into the design an emancipatory rhetoric. On the other hand, the highly uncharacteristic display of emotion may have illustrated more than the ‘sensorial interest’ of jazz, since about this time, de Jong had, what Colin Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_31:53) describes as “a slight mental relapse” and de Jong more bluntly refers to as his ‘breakdown’. It is difficult to put a date to this event; what is clear is that it was connected to the design and simultaneous construction of several show stands for an industrial exposition (but exactly which one and in which year is unclear). According to de Jong, he simply blacked out on the site of the Rand Easter Show, was taken home, prescribed sedatives and seemingly recovered within a few days.<sup>315</sup> Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_34:08) presents a somewhat different scenario: “He used to walk into the studio when we were at the Dursot Centre, he would see a red dot, and he would flip. He went through a *difficult* stage, for six months”.

The Dursot Centre, opposite the Pretoria College, was the building in which de Jong had his first studio. EDJS moved to Burnett Street in Pretoria in 1963 (Bridgeford 2015\_03 April\_1\_28:02), which places the date of the ‘breakdown’ in the late 1950s, since Bridgeford left EDJS for a period between 1959 and 1963. When pressed for an exact date, Bridgeford estimates that the ‘difficult stage’ occurred well *after* 1963, but his first, unprompted recall of the setting perhaps suggests otherwise.<sup>316</sup> Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_33:15) also recounts that during this six-month period when de Jong was out of action, “Gwen and myself held it together”.

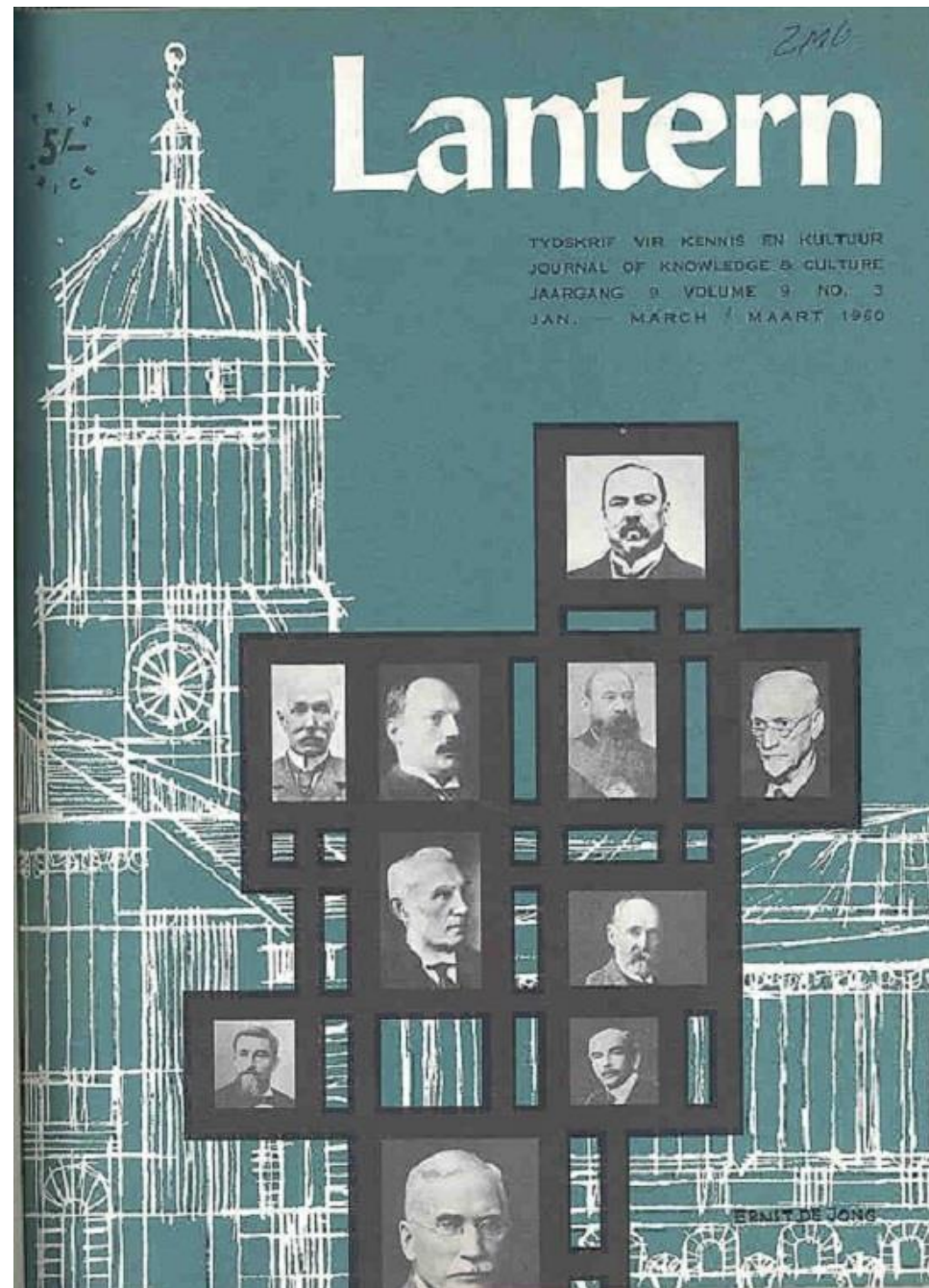
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<sup>314</sup> De Jong, despite his fervent belief in the value of thumbnail sketches to visualise the creative process, evinced bafflement at the thought that his scamps should be exhibited as artworks. He did exhibit figure drawings, but these, while slick, do not have the depth and intrigue of the thumbnails that remain, for me, the most eloquent evidence of his innate talent and sense of design (see page 1 of this study).

<sup>315</sup> A visit, or visits, to a therapist did ensue; de Jong claims to have the tape recordings made from these sessions. The telling of this story was repeated several times in casual conversation.

<sup>316</sup> Bridgeford (2015\_03 April\_1\_31:55), in hindsight, feels that the budget cuts associated with the construction of a show stand promoting the planned new Johannesburg Civic Centre (a project to which WO Meyer contributed), was a leading cause of de Jong’s emotional turmoil. If Bridgeford is correct, it would indeed place the crisis in the 1960s, since the winners of the architect’s competition for the centre was only announced in a supplement to the *South African Architectural Record* in January 1963 (Johannesburg Civic Centre [sa]).





**Figure 161** Ernst de Jong (designer), cover *Lantern* January / March 1960 (collection of the author).



**Figure 162** Benno Wissing (designer), poster for Metz & Co (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:55).



Figure 164 Designer unknown, back cover *Lantern* January / March 1960 (collection of the author).

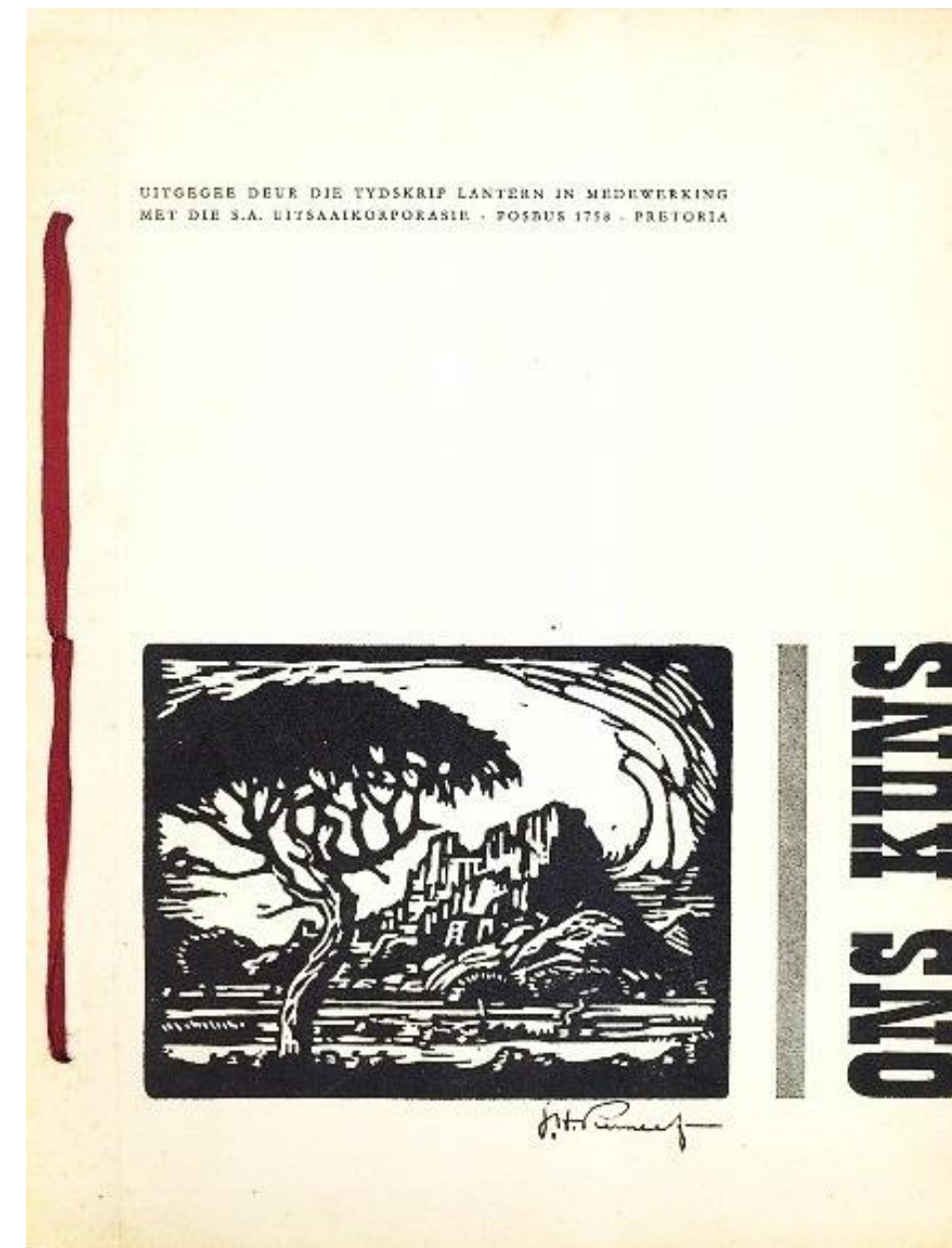


Figure 163 Designer unknown, cover *Ons kuns*, c1959 (collection of the author).



Since the studio, in terms of staff members, had grown considerably by 1963 (Bridgeford 2015\_03 April\_1\_24:37), the earlier date, when EDJS had fewer resources, again appears to be a more likely context for the crisis. Further evidence that links the April / June 1959 cover to de Jong's collapse is that the Rand Easter Show in 1959 would have taken place at the end of March, so that it is likely that de Jong was both directing the construction of show stands in Johannesburg, and having to deliver the cover for *Lantern's* April deadline. Notably, in the six months that followed the Rand Easter Show, EDJS executed no cover designs for *Lantern*.

Despite this conjecture, the exact date of the trouble remains unknown. De Jong (2015\_04 December) surmises that it took place when he was about 45, but by that time Bridgeford had not been with EDJS for several years. It is also possible that there was more than one occasion when de Jong, driven to establish himself and his studio as a creative force *sans pareil*, pushed himself beyond reasonable limits. Bridgeford's reference to a 'relapse' (as opposed to a 'collapse') may be an unintentional recollection that the out-of-control de Jong, who 'flipped' when he saw a red dot, had done so before. Bridgeford does not mention the singular incident of the blackout at the show; de Jong does not let on that he was given to outbursts in his studio. It is both frustrating and strange that an event that impacted on Bridgeford, de Jong and his wife — and put EDJS at risk — cannot be dated with any degree of accuracy by any of them.

Be this as it may, a breakdown did occur: the super-confident facade of the multitalented, modernist, all-knowing *enfant terrible* from America imploded. Whether or not the April / June 1959 cover precisely coincided with the events that culminated in the collapse, cannot be established, but the former certainly captures the feelings of anxiety and pent-up frustration that must have preceded the cave-in. Afterwards, control was regained and purposively maintained; to what degree is made evident in the next cover de Jong designed for *Lantern*, after a break of two issues.

#### 4.3.9 *Lantern* 9(3) January / March 1960

The first issue of *Lantern* in the 1960s marked the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Union of South Africa. The lead article, written in English and titled, 'The making of a nation: the story of the evolution and creation of the Union of South Africa' (Kruger 1960:216-227) is authored by Professor Daniel Wilhelmus Kruger who was an Afrikaans historian at the University of Potchefstroom.<sup>317</sup> It is a surprisingly sober and objective account of the events it details;<sup>318</sup> what is more, instead of the self-congratulating tone that one might expect on such an occasion from an Afrikaans academic, a sense of misgiving can be detected. At the outset, Kruger (1960:216) dispels all notions regarding the 'birth' of a nation, and bluntly states that the new State was "an artificial construction", thus anticipating Hobsbawm's (1991:10) emphasis on "the element of artefact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations". Indeed, social engineering and its consequences is the theme of Kruger's article, and he, perhaps presciently, concludes that political unification left Southern Africa with "a legacy both splendid and terrible" (Kruger 1960:227).

It is difficult to ascertain whether the January / March issue was compiled prior to January, or during the first quarter, or indeed only *after* March 1960. The compilation date is of some relevance, since this issue coincided with the Sharpeville massacre that occurred on 21 March 1960. Sharpeville was not the first incidence of

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<sup>317</sup> Kruger would publish a full-length book, *The making of a nation: Union of South Africa 1910-1961*, in 1969.

<sup>318</sup> Historian Albert Grundlingh (1990:1) points out that from about 1920 to approximately 1965, "Afrikaner historians, without compromising the political interests of Afrikanerdom, established a tradition of historical writing in which the notion of 'objective-scientific' history was elevated to an inviolable principle". A major proponent of this approach was Prof HB Thorn who headed the Department of History at Stellenbosch University between 1937 and 1954, and who, according to Grundlingh (1990:5), recommended Kruger in 1954 as the ideal historian to represent the country at a seminar on South Africa at London University. During this period of growing Afrikaner nationalism, Grundlingh (1990:3) reports, Thom was not a "rebel-rousing propagator of Afrikaner history; on the contrary ... he promoted the linkages between the 'volk' and their 'true' past in a sober, calm, dignified and at times even detached manner". Although Kruger's account in *Lantern* strikes me as remarkably 'detached', Grundlingh (1990:23) concludes that this commitment to 'facts' remains "essentially that of a resilient Afrikanerdom marching inexorably to its pre-determined destination as the legitimate rulers over non-Afrikaners in South Africa".

violent death in the growing opposition to National Party policies; in fact, a “particularly horrifying” (Saunders 1994:386) riot in East London in 1952 — in the wake of the Defiance Campaign launched while de Jong was in the USA — precipitated a “battery of laws designed to silence dissenters and protest”. As a result, there was a lull in black political action after 1952, but by the time de Jong returned from Oklahoma in 1957, the so-called ‘Treason Trial’, following the arrest of 156 activists in 1956, had opened in Johannesburg (Saunders 1994:389) and, in the same year, various bus boycotts began in Johannesburg and Pretoria, the latter lasting into 1958.

The Pass law protest, that had its origins in the Pan-Africanist Congress’s (PAC) breakaway from the African National Congress (ANC) and launched on the morning of 21 March, had as its outcome the shooting of 69 inhabitants of Sharpeville by panicked police (Saunders 1994:399-403). The event was received with consternation in South Africa and around the world. Locally, whites stocked up on guns, share prices plummeted and foreign consulates were inundated with enquiries about emigration. Serious rioting broke out in Johannesburg’s townships, and the government declared a state of emergency. African activists believed that the “hour of liberation was at hand” (Saunders 1994:407), but over the next ten days, throughout the country, strikes were “swiftly and brutally” broken. Nevertheless, the events in March 1960 were a watershed in the history of the African liberation struggle, since it marked the point after which non-violent protest action would be replaced with a commitment to violent insurrection (Saunders 1994:407).

In the midst of this turmoil, the January / March *Lantern* appeared. The cover (Fig. 161) is signed — with more confidence than on the April / June 1959 issue — by de Jong, who is, however, not credited for the design in the journal itself. Set against a cool, green background similar to the October / December 1958 issue, the design is a bold signifier of bureaucratic structure and control, and a visualisation par excellence of a white, patriarchal, ‘engineered’ and quintessentially English nation. The theme of the cover takes its cue from the editorial content — the ‘architects of union’, that is, members of the National Convention<sup>319</sup> — and depicts Sir Leander Starr Jameson, Sir Henry de Villiers, Sir Frederic Moore, John X Merriman Esq., General CR de Wet, President MT Steyn, FS Malan Esq., General JBM Hertzog, General Louis Botha, and General Jan Christiaan Smuts,<sup>320</sup> who (readers are told) are “inset in a bold structural pattern against a backdrop depicting, in delicate lines, the Union Buildings, Pretoria, administrative seat of the Government of the Union of South Africa” (Our cover 1960:209).

The ‘bold pattern’ evokes even more forcibly than the October / December 1958 cover, a reference to de Stijl. The dramatic black grid of mechanical shapes is, as with the previous two covers, juxtaposed with a line drawing, but in this case, rather unusually for de Jong, also with black and white photography. The inclusion of the tiny portraits, reminiscent of passport photography, evokes Herbert Bayer’s iconic poster for Wassily Kandinsky’s sixtieth birthday exhibition in Dessau in 1926, an icon of modernist graphic design that, notably, employs the diagonal as a principle of its composition. De Jong’s modernist ‘container’ adheres strictly to the vertical and horizontal: the men, unsmiling and dressed in apparel that was, for the most part, 50 years out of date in 1960,<sup>321</sup> are incarcerated in a modular, modernist cage from which there is no escape.

Appropriate to the theme of an anniversary, de Jong engages, once again, with the trope of *time* in his argument for the identity of nation. Not only is the past evoked in the Edwardian portraits of men now all dead, but also in the ghostlike rendering of the symbol of ‘reconciliation’ in 1910 — the Union Buildings,<sup>322</sup> in the corridors of which de Jong’s own father had, until recently, laboured. This imposing structure, designed by Herbert Baker (1862-1946) and completed in 1913, proffers

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<sup>319</sup> In May 1908, Transvaal Colonial Secretary Jan Smuts, who exercised considerable influence on public opinion, proposed that the interests of South Africa would be best served by a union of the self-governing colonies under the British crown. In order to discuss the form of union and draft a constitution, the National Convention met in October 1908 (Saunders 1994:271; Kruger 1960:227).

<sup>320</sup> The composition of the National Convention included several other knighthoods, namely Sir Thomas Hyslop, Sir Thomas Smartt, Sir Edgar Walton, Sir Meiring Beck, Sir George Farrar, Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, Sir A Brown, Sir T Watt and Sir John Fraser. Of the total members of the Convention, sixteen were of British stock and fourteen were Afrikaners (Saunders 1994:271).

<sup>321</sup> While all the other members of the National Convention are represented by photographs from the early twentieth or even late nineteenth century, JC Smuts is afforded the advantage that his photograph is more recent. Consequently, rather than a faded, historical oddity, Smut’s portrait conveys a sense of journalistic immediacy that the others lack. However, the portrait of Smuts *inside* the journal depicts him as a young man, and decidedly Edwardian. De Jong seems to have made a deliberate decision not to use the latter image on the cover, even although it was, clearly, available. The replacement may have been for practical reasons — Smuts as a plump young man is scarcely recognisable as the sharp-featured, bespectacled statesman of the 1940s — yet the concern that Smuts should, indeed, be easily identified is of interest.

<sup>322</sup> Initially called the Government Administration Building.



its own ideological programme, as Lawrence Vale points out in his seminal text *Architecture, power and national identity* (2008 [1992]). Designed “in anticipation of the Union in 1910 rather than its aftermath”, the buildings were not only to house the administration of the new Union, but to exemplify it as well (Vale 2008:77). According to Vale (2008:77), Baker later claimed that his design symbolised the “reconciliation of the two races of South Africa on equal terms”, by which, as Vale points out

he meant, of course, not whites and blacks, but Boer and Briton [...] Though exemplifying a symmetry that could signify an egalitarian balance, the buildings are open to other interpretations. [T]he strong influence of Sir Christopher Wren left little doubt ... about Baker’s own cultural affiliations ... [P]olitical union did not yet imply a break from the British Empire.

A planned hilltop ‘Temple of Peace’ was never carried out, and without this centrepiece, Vale (2008:77-78) argues, even Baker’s rough sketch of the ground plan signifies nothing so much as “a pair of battling rams”. South Africa’s black, Coloured and Asian population was for the most part deliberately excluded from Baker’s vision, typified by an unexecuted design for a partially open space “where, without coming into the building, Natives may feel the majesty of government” (Baker, in Vale 2008 [1992]:78).<sup>323</sup>

However, despite Vale’s emphasis on its imperial and divisive narrative, the interiors of the Union Buildings were created in the so-called Cape Dutch style with “carved teak fanlights, heavy doors, dark ceiling beams contrasting with white plaster walls and heavy wood furniture” (Herbert Baker 2015). Born in Kent, England, Baker relocated to Cape Town in 1892 where he met Cecil John Rhodes who asked him to restore his house, Groote Schuur. From this relationship sprang an appreciation of Cape Dutch architecture and domestic artefacts (Baker, Sir Herbert [sa]). The Union Buildings was therefore not a wholly alien imprint on African soil, but the culmination of Baker’s twenty years in Southern Africa. At some variance with Vale’s argument, other commentators conclude that “the architectural idiom was not a derivative from Britain but an interpretation of a style taken from an area with a similar climate to South Africa, namely the Mediterranean” (Union Buildings [sa]).<sup>324</sup> Whether Pretoria’s climate resembles that of the Mediterranean is questionable, but as far as possible locally available and manufactured materials were used. The furniture was custom designed and manufactured for the building (Union Buildings [sa]) that authors, less cynical than Vale, regard as “a remarkable ... contribution to the legacy of the country” (Union Buildings [sa]).

Surrounded by the grandeur of this “Cape-Italianate spirit” (Baker, Sir Herbert [sa])<sup>325</sup> in his everyday working life, it is little wonder that de Jong’s father desired to emulate this ‘regional’ style in his domestic architecture. De Jong himself, however, chooses a detail of the building that neither references the ‘egalitarian balance’ of the semi-circular colonnade, nor an indigenous vernacular, but a single, strident tower that underscores the decidedly British and masculine *ethos* of nation. Nevertheless, although the delicate tracery of the drawing provides, on a formal level, an effective foil to the bold grid in the foreground of the cover design, the tentative rendering unsettles the notion that artefacts outlive their creators. Here the building (that, in material terms, outlived all the men pictured with it) is relegated to the past while the staid Edwardian ‘architects of union’ are deftly transposed into the swinging sixties by means of de Jong’s bold graphic treatment.<sup>326</sup>

Despite its apparent rigidity, the modular grid, upon closer scrutiny, may be seen to suggest a diagonal, as well as a hierarchy in the uneven pattern of cells. Botha, who became the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa and who was a “tireless campaigner for reconciliation between English and Afrikaner” (Saunders 1994:296) sits firmly ‘top of the heap’, while Hertzog, an “outspoken watchdog of Afrikaner rights” (Saunders 1994:296), although afforded the largest portrait, languishes

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<sup>323</sup> Vale cites a memorandum from Baker to the Secretary of Public Works (in Metcalfe 1989:194).

<sup>324</sup> This style is elsewhere termed the ‘Empire Style’, while its idiom in the Cape Dutch revival has been termed the ‘Union Style’ (Union Buildings [sa]).

<sup>325</sup> Notwithstanding Vale’s identification of what certainly *appears* to be the influence of Wren, it is generally held that the inspiration for the Union Buildings probably came from Edwin Lutyens (1869 - 1944), whom Baker had met in 1887 (Herbert Baker 2015).

<sup>326</sup> Here it may be useful to reflect that modernism in popular British culture probably was filtering into the de Jongs’ frame of reference over and above their adherence to American iconography. Mary Quant (1934- ), for example, exactly de Jong’s contemporary, had opened her first boutique in Kings Road, Chelsea, London, in 1955 (About Mary ... 2015; Cifuentes & Gorman 2012). Quant’s fashion made use of bold geometric patterning and her official website design makes overt reference to de Stijl’s visual language.

at the foot of this evolutionary tree. Exactly how informed the 26-year old de Jong was about South African history is unclear.<sup>327</sup> However, the juxtaposition, on two opposite poles, of Botha and Hertzog was an insightful reflection of the “bitter showdown” (Saunders 1994:296) between the two men in 1912 that would eventually result in Herzog founding the National Party of South Africa in January 1914. Smuts moves sideways, to the right, on the opposite side to Merriman; De Villiers — fittingly, since he was Chairman of the National Convention — is placed at the centre.

These worthies all played central roles in a critical and fiercely contested aspect of the constitution drafted by the Convention in 1909. Unable to reach consensus with regard to franchise qualifications in the Union, the issue was referred to a committee under de Villiers, where a proposal from Smuts and Merriman — that each ‘colony’ retain its existing arrangements — was adopted (Saunders 1994:271). What this meant was that the Cape retained the existing, if limited, voting rights of their “black people”, while the Transvaal, Orange River Colony and Natal rejected any and all enfranchisement of blacks. In his *Lantern* article, Kruger (1960:227) reflects that although this compromise “was the only way out”, it nevertheless signalled “a victory for the northerners, for they brought the Trojan horse within the walls”.

Kruger’s metaphor of deceit, foolishness and eventual extirpation is of interest. A ‘northerner’ himself, he clearly condemns the compromise — the Trojan horse — that was cobbled together and trundled in as a ‘gift’ to the National Convention, and enabled it to finalise and ratify unification. However, if one follows the analogy, it is somewhat unclear whose horse this was, and who was being tricked. Who (in Kruger’s opinion) would benefit from the refusal — and, more to the point, the Convention’s *legitimation* of this refusal — of the “Boer delegates” (Saunders 1994:271) to grant voting rights to black people? Unlike the outcome of the Trojan War, there would, in fact, be no victors, a gloomy prospect that Kruger seems to have divined. In the short term, however — if one can refer to a period of 80 years as such — the putative victors were whites in South Africa and Kruger, writing in 1960, would still have another 30 years, as a white Afrikaner, to enjoy the fruits of this prize. It is Kruger’s discernible discomfort with these spoils of war, and the means by which the advantage was orchestrated, that gives the reader cause for reflection, especially given the unsettled political context in which Kruger’s article appeared.

In terms of the cover design, whether consciously or not, de Jong captures Kruger’s metaphor with admirable subtlety. The duplicitous receptacle — that carries, within its chambered belly, the enemy — forces itself upon the ‘delicate’ walls that are being breached, in this case the Union Buildings, symbol of reconciliation and the idealised State. What is more, the awful apparatus has momentum. Virgil (2002: line 240) describes the wooden horse entering Troy: “Up it glides and rolls threateningly into the midst of the city”, much as de Jong’s machine leans forward, intent upon its trajectory. It is drawn forward not so much by Botha, as by Smuts, but dragging at its base, rooted to the ground, is Hertzog, who, perhaps not only for designerly ends, is afforded the largest presence.

De Jong is not given to irony, yet here he accomplishes it with intuitive skill. The design, which on the surface appears to be a valorisation of the architects of a thoroughly modern nation, on another level reads as a feminist dystopia in which a moustachioed patriarchy propels the people towards their doom. Yet there is also a sense that the hapless passengers, having constructed the incarcerating device, have little control over the destiny of their own design. As with the wooden horse standing immobile on the windswept plain beyond the gates of Troy, it was the strenuous efforts of the Trojans themselves that moved the “accursed creature [to] the top of [their] sacred citadel” (Virgil 2002: line 245). Kruger’s likening of the founding of Union to the fall of Troy does therefore allow for a ‘birth of nation’ of sorts, signified by the subsequent spilling of Greek soldiers from their equestrian ‘womb’, although it is a birth predicated upon guile, risk and male hubris, and where the consequence was violence.

The dark blue-green background evinces no contiguity with the colours in the then South African flag, a reference that may conceivably have been regarded as appropriate on the cover of this commemorative issue. Turquoise, as a variation of green, signifies harmony and idealism (The colour turquoise 2015) — an appropriate reference to the founding of Union — but also suggests fence-sitting and aloofness. De Jong, while engaging with a political theme, signifies his disinterest in the machinations of

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<sup>327</sup> His father would, of course, have been to hand to provide details.

politicians and bureaucrats (of which latter group his father had, notably, been a member). He neither applauds nor criticises the circumstances of union; he is, above all else, concerned with formal design principles such as texture, composition, contrast and scale. However, these apparently neutral elements leak complex meanings.

Viewed with the benefit of hindsight, the cover, of course, appears to comment with even greater irony on the more immediate political upheavals in the Union. After 21 March, the white men trapped in the black scaffolding seem not so much to signify the plotting Greeks as the Trojans themselves. Barricaded in their 'sacred citadel', while elevated above and shielded from the threatening hordes, the group of grim white men are nevertheless under siege — prisoners, eventually, of their own fatal compromise. It is almost certain that de Jong would have designed the cover before March, but even if this were not the case, it is highly unlikely that the design served as any kind of *knowing* observation, let alone criticism, on the structures of government at the time.

As has been pointed out, it was the first cover that de Jong provided for *Lantern* since June the previous year. Despite the 'Wind of Change' speech made by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to the Parliament of South Africa on 3 February 1960, the tropes of citadel, security and control that are so evident in the *ethos* of the January/March 1960 cover perhaps reflect a more personal concern with the consolidation of his creative and teaching practices, establishing a family and building a house that would (somewhat like the Union Buildings, but on a smaller scale) exemplify a 'coming together' of these private and public achievements.

De Jong's daughter, Giselle, had been born in November 1959, and a group photograph shows de Jong, his wife and elderly grandfather — the irascible Jacob Jan — grouped around the baby (Fig. 111). A sense of history, of establishing a genealogy, may have been at the back of de Jong's mind when he drew up the de Stijl 'tree' and populated it with portraits. Certainly, Kruger's theme of *architects* would have appealed to the young designer on whom the Bavinger House had made a vivid impression and who would work closely with architects throughout his life. The de Jong family was, moreover, immersed in the building trade — Gerry de Jong, having returned to South Africa, was following in Jacob Jan's footsteps — and the Union Buildings, while an obvious choice for a backdrop for the 'family' of politicians, was also the setting within which the de Jong family itself had constructed its *ethos* as a result of Gerrit de Jong's life-long career as a civil servant in the same location.

Of interest, then, is that Baker's monumental structure is treated here with a certain off-handedness, as if the importance of the thing in the de Jongs' lives is being dismissed, or even denied. The imperial *gravitas* of the administrative complex is reduced to a loosely rendered cartoon that tends to playful patterning and recalls aspects of de Jong's decorative 'Ci-Bonne' phase.<sup>328</sup> However, while the drawing is sensitive and expressive, it is also exquisitely controlled; de Jong reduces the material existence of the building to a diagram, a blueprint and therefore signifier of scientific process, but one that has been nonchalantly conceived. Rather perversely, considering the laws that were being enacted within its 'Mediterranean' colonnades, the effect is to signal that nothing malign could emanate from this design. De Jong repeatedly states that Gerrit de Jong was a 'good' man; it may have been inconceivable to the son that the building, which had perhaps, in the designer's mind, become synonymous with his gentle father, could be a symbol of anything other than quiet, civilised reason. Although almost certainly without intent, it is perhaps more than coincidence that the October / December 1958 cover, which typifies de Jong as designer, in so many ways both resembles and counters the narrative on the January / March 1960 issue.

Another point of interest is de Jong's signature. On all the covers preceding the commemorative issue, de Jong's name, as has been pointed out, was deliberately placed to be visible and operates as an integral element of the design. However, these early signatures suggest the caution of a student carefully signing off a completed project. On the January / March 1960 cover, after a break of six months, the signature is bolder and has taken on the characteristically self-assured and gestural quality that it would retain for the rest of de Jong's life. One may speculate about the reasons for this apparent coming-of-age: he was now a father, had exhibited as a gallery painter, had run a professional design studio for a year, was building his own house and, according to his curriculum vitae, had also won a Gold Medal in show stand design. In visualising the architecture of the Union, the overlap of de Jong's design career with his father's sphere of influence may also have been a cause for pride. It is,

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<sup>328</sup> The rendering of the colonial building as a skeletal diagram against a solid coloured background is strikingly similar to material produced by Benno Wissing for Metz & Co, a department store in Amsterdam (Fig.162). Echoing the cover design for *Lantern*, Wissing uses the distinctive cupola (designed in 1930 by Gerrit Rietveld) (The Metz ... 2017) of the building as a prominent graphic element in his promotional designs for the store (Hefting, Sierman & van de Vrie 1999:55). It is tempting to posit that Wissing's imagery may have found its way to EDJS and onto the *Lantern* cover, but in fact the EDJS design preceded Wissing's examples by about three years. EDJS in some instances thus anticipated international trends.

however, the last *Lantern* cover that de Jong would sign as an individual. Although EDJS would produce another three covers for the journal, de Jong himself gradually disappears from the credits.

It is also of interest that, in this issue, the de Stijl grid and turquoise colour, utilised with such impact on the cover, is not only taken up as part of Kruger's article on the fabrication of the nation state, but also, quite forcibly, on the back cover (Fig. 164) that promotes the publication of the Association's (undated) *Our art* publication — a "beautiful art album" (Do you possess ... 1960) that features mostly black and white (but also a few colour) reproductions of paintings by South African artists, accompanied by explanatory texts.<sup>329</sup> The publication features, amongst others, Pierneef, Mayer, Steynberg, Thomas Baines, Irma Stern and Maud Sumner and had been conceived as an accompaniment to a series of radio programmes broadcast by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) between 14 June 1959 and 1 May 1960 (*Our art* 1959). Several issues of *Lantern* had carried advertisements for *Our art* prior to January 1960, and it is interesting to note the tentative nature of the former when compared to the powerful visual rhetoric of the latter.

It is possible that de Jong, perhaps in collaboration with his studio, also designed the back cover of the January / March 1960 issue on which South African painters are subjected to the same trope as the 'architects of union'. The central image is a naturalistic portrait — by Hugo Naudé (1869-1941)<sup>330</sup> — of an elderly, brown washerwoman.<sup>331</sup> As such, the theme is redolent of colonialism, subjugation and 'the other', yet the overarching effect of the promotion for the album is one of European modernism, and, in particular, de Stijl. As is the case of the founding fathers, the artists are safeguarded by, as well as made accessible to, the gaze within a modular grid. The cultural context in which both the nation and its cultural signifiers are presented is therefore the Dutch avant-garde, which here, populated with the work of Pierneef, Naudé and Pieter Wenning (1873-1921), takes on a uniquely South African character. The stark, unforgiving modernism, which signifies both Europe and the stylised character of much African art, combined with elements of traditional Western realism, suggests an intriguing hybrid identity.

The cover design of *Our art* (Fig. 163), which features as an illustrative element on the back cover of *Lantern*, is itself notable. Instead of a picturesque painting, a dramatic linocut by Pierneef has been chosen to signify the nation's cultural capital, and with it, 'our' land. The austerity of the layout, the combination of generous white space with stark, black and white imagery and vertical, slab serif lettering offset with the sensual addition of a dark red silk ribbon as binding device, constructs a sophisticated manifesto for South African cultural life on the eve of independence. The featured artist is white and of Dutch descent, but the choice of artwork admits to a kinship with African artefacts rather than a Renaissance tradition. Although the relationship of non-western — so-called 'primitive' — art to German Expressionism is often problematic, a link is made on the cover of *Our art* to both genres. The medium of lino- or woodcut references radical forms of artistic expression such as *Die Brücke* in Northern Europe, a cultural sphere with which many white South Africans could identify, but that also, however indirectly, valorises the visual language of pre-industrial cultures beyond *fin de siècle* Berlin. Pierneef's image, which does not directly appropriate indigenous African imagery, nevertheless constructs a subtle bridge between Africa and the west. The silk ribbon, that provides the only colour on the cover, reiterates the placement of the grey vertical bar separating the image from the title, but also suggests a sly dialogue between this spare, modernist device and a frivolous signifier of bourgeois conceit.

The designer is not credited, but it could be de Jong. When asked, he claimed the design as probably his own (de Jong 2015\_04 December), but it is the choice and placement of letterforms that most persuasively argue for EDJS authorship. Not only does the cheerful slab serif bring the rodeo of Oklahoma to the wind-swept plains of Africa, but the title, turned on its side, runs from bottom to top, breaking a cardinal typographic rule. It is a transgression that de Jong favoured and defended, claiming to have encountered it in MOMA exhibition signage as a student. Consequently, Europe, Africa and the Americas are thrown together in *Our art* as they were in de Jong himself.

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<sup>329</sup> In itself, this series of publications — there would eventually be four — deserves scholarly attention.

<sup>330</sup> Naudé had received tuition at the Slade, in London, and in Munich (Meiring [sa]:25).

<sup>331</sup> Described as an 'Ou wasmeid' (Meiring [sa]:26) in the caption.



#### 4.3.10 *Lantern* 10(2) September / December 1960

After a break of two issues, de Jong once again asserts his Dutch heritage, on the September / December 1960 cover, and in this instance quite literally, since the theme of the special edition is *Ons stamland – Nederland* (Our land of descent – The Netherlands). Volume 10(3) is entirely dedicated to the Netherlands,<sup>332</sup> and, since only Afrikaans is used on the cover, the *ons* ('we') referred to here not only excludes all non-Afrikaans readers, but also suggests that all Afrikaners are descended from the Dutch — a sweeping and rather questionable claim. Although this impression is somewhat tempered in the editorial,<sup>333</sup> it is the bold statement on the cover that gains the attention and evokes the greater *pathos*.

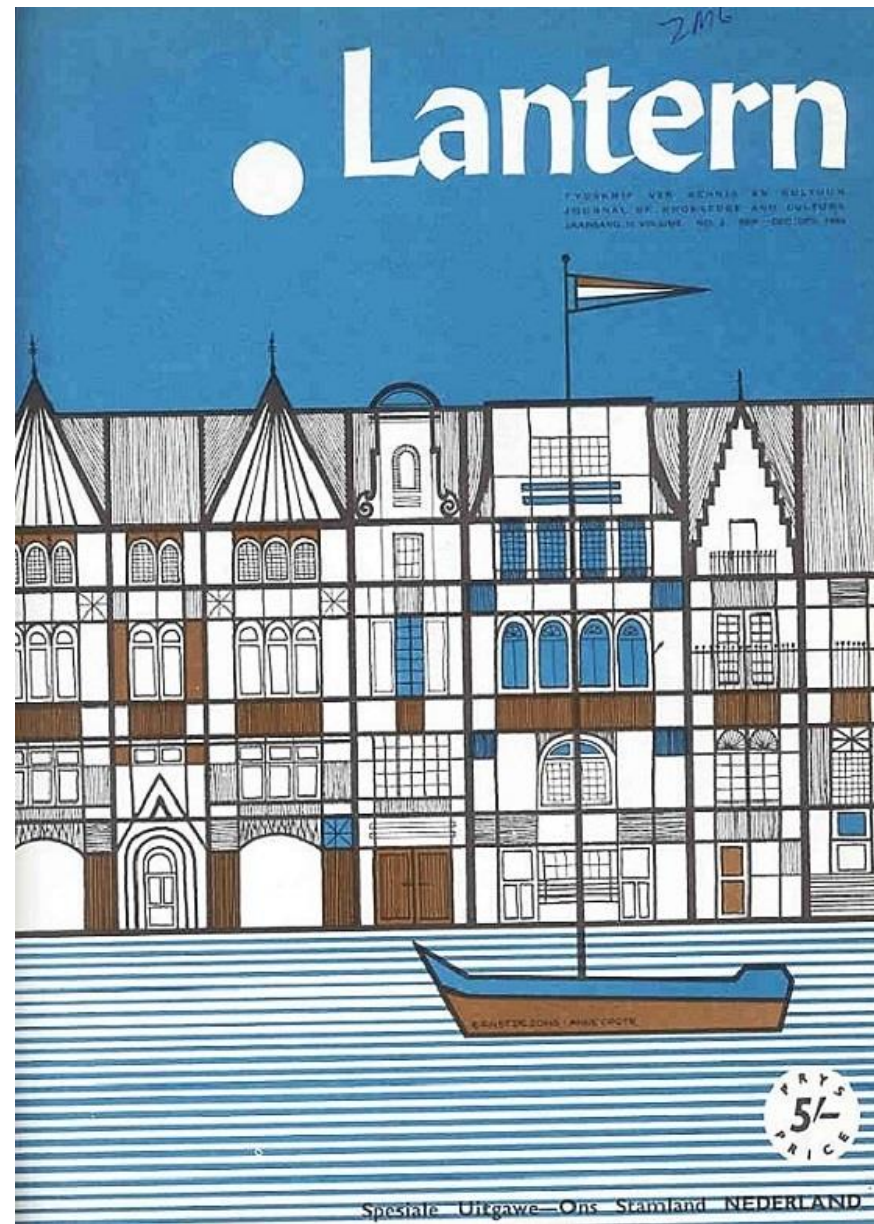
The aim of the special edition is the identification and strengthening of ties (seemingly) between Afrikaners and their putative country of origin, which, according to the editor, were sadly lacking owing to apathy on the part of the South Africans. Vivian Wood (1960: 103) notes that he had gathered material for this issue during a tour of the Netherlands, sponsored by the Dutch government, in 1959. Whether the latter would have been quite so hospitable after March 1960 is open to debate; certainly, most Dutch acknowledged little or no sense of 'kinship' with Afrikaners, and feelings towards South Africa cooled markedly following the coming-to power of the National Party in 1948 (Schrevel [sa]a). The Dutch were very alert to the Nationalists' pro-German stance during WWII, and in the apartheid policies many perceived parallels with German Nazism. However, once the Cold War broke out, conservative pre-war attitudes were re-established, and by 1952 Dutch Members of Parliament were warning that abolishing apartheid in South Africa would only serve to boost communism in the region (Schrevel [sa]a). South Africa, to bring its part, was one of only a handful of United Nations member states to support the Dutch position that the issues the Netherlands faced in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea were of a 'domestic' nature. In turn, the Dutch government declared that the race issue in South Africa was, similarly, a 'domestic' affair.

Thus the two countries "grew towards one another" (Schrevel [sa]a). In 1952, the only parliamentary members refusing to endorse a cultural treaty between the Netherlands and South Africa were those of the Communist Party. Most media, including the socialist press, had come to uphold the 'familial' ties between the Netherlands and white South Africa. Prime Minister Drees, during an official visit to the Union in 1953, referred to the Netherlands and South Africa respectively as the 'mother' and 'grown-up daughter'. However, five days after Sharpeville there were demonstrations in Amsterdam (Schrevel [sa]b) and in April 1960 the Labour Party leader in the Dutch parliament introduced a motion in the Dutch Lower House condemning apartheid. Although the De Quay government, a coalition of the Christian Democratic and right-wing liberal parties, refused to take immediate action, in the following year the Netherlands was the only Western country to vote in favour of an anti-apartheid resolution in the United Nations, but nevertheless refrained from supporting resolutions aimed at sanctions, or expelling South Africa from the United Nations itself (Schrevel [sa]b). Within this context of strained loyalties and growing opposition, it is not surprising that the *Lantern* editorial concludes on a cautionary note:

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<sup>332</sup> An earlier article on the Netherlands, by Dr AJ van Zyl, appeared in the first independent issue of *Lantern*.

<sup>333</sup> In the editorial, written in Afrikaans — although announced as an 'Editorial' in the list of contents — Wood (1960:103) more correctly introduces the topic by stating that the issue is dedicated to "een van ons stamlande" ('one of our countries of descent'). What should be remembered, however, is that Verwoerd, the South African Prime Minister at the time, was of Dutch descent, having been born in Amsterdam in 1901 (Schrevel [sa]b).



**Figure 165** Ernst de Jong and Anne Coote (designers), cover *Lantern* January / March 1960 (collection of the author).

Much must still be done, but there are already sufficient connections ... that can lead to greater cooperation and mutual understanding. In the crisis in which the world finds itself today, not only do South Africa and The Netherlands need one another, but so do all Western countries amongst themselves (Wood 1960:192).

The contents of the September / December 1960 issue, much like that of the issue dedicated to the USA, is dense, dark and unappetising to the eye. Contrary to expectation, almost half the articles are, in fact, written in English and English summaries are provided for Afrikaans contributions (albeit printed in a miniscule point size that renders them practically illegible). Consequently, who the exact audience that needs to be persuaded of its debt to Dutch culture may be, remains unclear. The greater part of the publication provides information on Dutch geography, engineering, industry, history and culture, but much is also made of the historical and cultural links between former Dutch citizens and Southern Africa. Amongst others — apart from the infamous Jan van Riebeeck — mention is also made (and examples supplied) of the painters Frans Oerder and Pieter Wenning, the sculptor Anton van Wouw, as well as Gerhard Moerdijk, designer of the Voortrekker Monument (Fig. 210). General JC Smuts, in the presence of Queen Juliana, is depicted receiving an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Leiden in 1948. This section, as well as the contribution on the history of the Netherlands, was supplied by Dr Jan Ploeger, a South African historian, military figure, journalist and teacher who had emigrated to the Union from the Netherlands in 1936 (Van der Waag 1994:3). Unsurprisingly, advertisements for the Phillips Corporation, the *Nederlandse Bank* of South Africa, the Shell Film Library and the Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM) appear in the journal.<sup>334</sup>

As is the case with the special USA edition, the cover of the Dutch issue stands in contrast to its stodgy contents. It is jointly signed by de Jong and his erstwhile student, Anne Coote, whose work the de Jongs featured in the October / December 1958 issue and who probably designed the cover independently under de Jong's watchful eye.<sup>335</sup> The stylised rendition of a row of gabled houses overlooking a rectangle of blue, parallel lines on which glides a jaunty little boat, its Dutch pennant blowing stiffly in the wind, is a fresh and, again, somewhat ironic visualisation of the country described in the ponderous pages that follow.<sup>336</sup> A deep cyan is the dominant colour (pulled through on selected pages inside the journal), combined with accents of warm brown and crisp whites. Above the skyline floats one of de Jong's favourite symbols — the sun — but it is the cold, white orb of a northerly geography and evokes a moonlit rather than a daytime prospect. The canal houses have been given a similar treatment to the Union Buildings on the January / March 1960 cover, but here the black grid has been incorporated into the spidery construction lines of the buildings, and the picture plane divided into three severe horizontal bands — air, land, water — intersected only by the tall, vertical mast of the boat.

The designers have used seventeenth-century architecture as a vehicle to project a brisk, modern identity of the Dutch nation, an idea that, despite the photographs of highways, airports and 'modern' hospitals, otherwise eludes the compilers of the publication. Although 'Pieter Mondriaan' [*sic*] and Bart van der Leck are mentioned in the Afrikaans text,<sup>337</sup> no examples of Dutch modernism are featured in the section on Dutch art; Van Gogh's *Yellow chair* (reproduced in black and white) is about as avant-garde as it gets. Van der Leck is grouped with 'contemporary painters' whose output is gingerly described as "experimental" (Kultuur 1960:176-177), while Mondrian is more or less dismissed from the Dutch tradition — perhaps with some relief — since, the article states, he worked mostly in Paris and the USA. Instead, pride of place is given to Frans Hals, Rembrandt van Rijn and Johannes Vermeer, which approach is understandable, given the fame of these painters, yet a sense prevails that the veiled reference, in the editorial, to the growing threat of communism may have prompted the avoidance, in the imagined nation, of all radicalism in the visual arts.

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<sup>334</sup> After Prime Minister DF Malan visited The Netherlands in 1949, KLM secured extensive landing rights in South Africa, and impediments to Dutch emigration were removed (Schrevel [sa]a).

<sup>335</sup> The designers of the cover are only indicated on the cover itself; no mention of the cover is made on the contents page.

<sup>336</sup> An exception is the bold double page spread advertising *Lantern's* sister journal, *Archimedes*, that had as its purpose the dissemination of knowledge about the wonders of science and technology to the people. *Archimedes*, also designed by EDJS, deserves attention, but detailed description and analysis is beyond the scope of the present study.

<sup>337</sup> Van der Leck is omitted from the English summary.

Within this context, the Netherlands that de Jong and Coote create on the cover is almost perversely rational, clean, and modern, but it is also a scene devoid of people: the jolly Dutch family barrelling along on their bicycles and the skaters on the Aalsmeer — pictured inside the publication — have been whisked away by some invisible hand. The empty doorways and abandoned boat lend the scene a melancholy and even sinister quality. Although the Netherlands is arguably one of the most picturesque tourist destinations in the world, the cover presents a cerebral but rather removed reference to the behind-the-scenes quaintness of clogs, tulips, and cows. In 1960 de Jong (and, one assumes, Anne Coote) had not set foot in the Netherlands, although de Jong had close ties to the creolised Dutch culture in Pretoria as a consequence of the Sundays spent at his grandfather's house. However, Esselen Street was not the Heerengracht. Perhaps de Jong was, on some level, aware that he was *absent* from this watery, northern world to which he, some might argue, quite naturally belonged; his father had, after all, been born in Amsterdam. While, on the one hand, the design is typical of de Jong's stylisation of illustrative elements, the sense of *not being there*, of being unable or unwilling to imagine human beings in the country of his ancestors, suggests that de Jong was not only apathetic but also *antipathetic* to Dutch culture. He perhaps had reason to be; his Dutch grandfather, according to de Jong, was a difficult man whose outlook on life centred on material gain and social standing — what de Jong refers to as 'a Dutch thing' — and whom de Jong blames for his father's miserable life as a civil servant. Consequently, de Jong offers, to a South African audience, a Netherlands that is clean, but cold and inhuman, a visual argument that probably did not do much for the editor's call for a greater sense of kinship with this nation.

The focus of the cover is the row of gabled houses, perhaps subconsciously a reference to de Jong's grandfather's trade, but not an unexpected choice considering the theme of the issue. What *is* interesting is that the detailing of these structures is eclectic and does not accurately reflect Dutch architecture. What visual reference Ms Coote had to work from, and to what degree De Jong specified the detail, one cannot know, but the end result is an amalgamation of Bavarian, Cape Dutch, and even Mediterranean architecture. One house sports what appear to be wrought-iron balconies that are certainly not the norm on Dutch canal houses. Two facades are surmounted with triangular 'hats' that seem to be neither gables, nor metal domes, and have no parallel in Dutch architecture. Most of the casements are surmounted by half-circle windows, a style associated with Spanish colonial architecture, while the severe grid-like patterning across the facade evokes gothic, half-timbered buildings in Eastern Europe. The central gable in the illustration, while superficially referencing a typical Dutch building style, upon closer inspection is more closely aligned to South African vernacular gable design, a rather amusing anachronism. The whole edifice seems to be sinking below the water-line, which further belies the Dutch nation's pride in pushing back the onslaught of the North Sea.

Since it could not have been difficult to source images of Amsterdam's famous canal houses, even in an era before Google™, the reasons for the inaccuracies are a mystery. De Jong and Coote seem to be deliberately *misimagining* a nation, creating an alien, no-where place, perhaps a fantasy of an European *other*, despite the Cape Dutch gable, the presence of which may, indeed, signify the reluctant fit of South Africans into the editorial narrative, *Ons stamland — Nederland*.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> The construction of an imagined national identity by an individual or group that is not part of the nation in question is an endeavour that perhaps deserves closer attention.



#### 4.3.11 *Lantern 10(3) January / March 1961*

In contrast to the coolness of the Dutch landscape, the cover of the next issue of *Lantern* — January / March 1961— is a resolute celebration of the heat and boldness of Africa; it is also one of de Jong’s most ‘political’ statements, although he no longer signs the design, which is attributed, on the cover, to ‘De Jong Studios Pretoria’. Perhaps, by 1961, de Jong had grasped the advantages of advertising his studio, rather than himself. The notion of neutral, corporate branding, epitomised by the European-based International Style, was also on the rise and it would become the mainstay of EDJS in the 1970s as opposed to the whimsy of early American Modernism of the 1950s. However, another reason for shifting from crediting an individual to crediting a corporation was that it removed the difficulty of dealing with designers on his staff that, like Anne Coote, would expect to be acknowledged for their work, even if it was executed in response to a directive from de Jong. Using the company name solved this problem. Apparently neutral and business-like, it was still de Jong’s name that was touted, irrespective of what de Jong’s actual contribution may have been to the design.

Indeed, de Jong was extremely busy with other things in the year leading up to the January / March 1961 issue. He mounted a solo exhibition at the South African Association of Arts in Pretoria, and, according to his curriculum vitae, won the South African three metre springboard diving championship in Cape Town. There may have been frequent absences from the studio, leading to the ever-present danger that his talented underlings might upstage the studio director and deflect work away from EDJS itself. There had already been a clash of personalities when the young Bridgeford had resigned from EDJS. Hoekstra would follow in 1963, ostensibly fired because he took on a freelance design brief without permission from de Jong, but probably also because, by his own admission, he had become “too big for his boots” (Hoekstra 2014).<sup>339</sup> De Jong’s insistence, in the years to come, of promoting his own name (and/or that of the studio) and underplaying the contributions of his staff, would eventually lead to Bridgeford (who had returned in 1963 to replace the departed Hoekstra) again ‘bailing out’ of EDJS in 1975, this time for good.

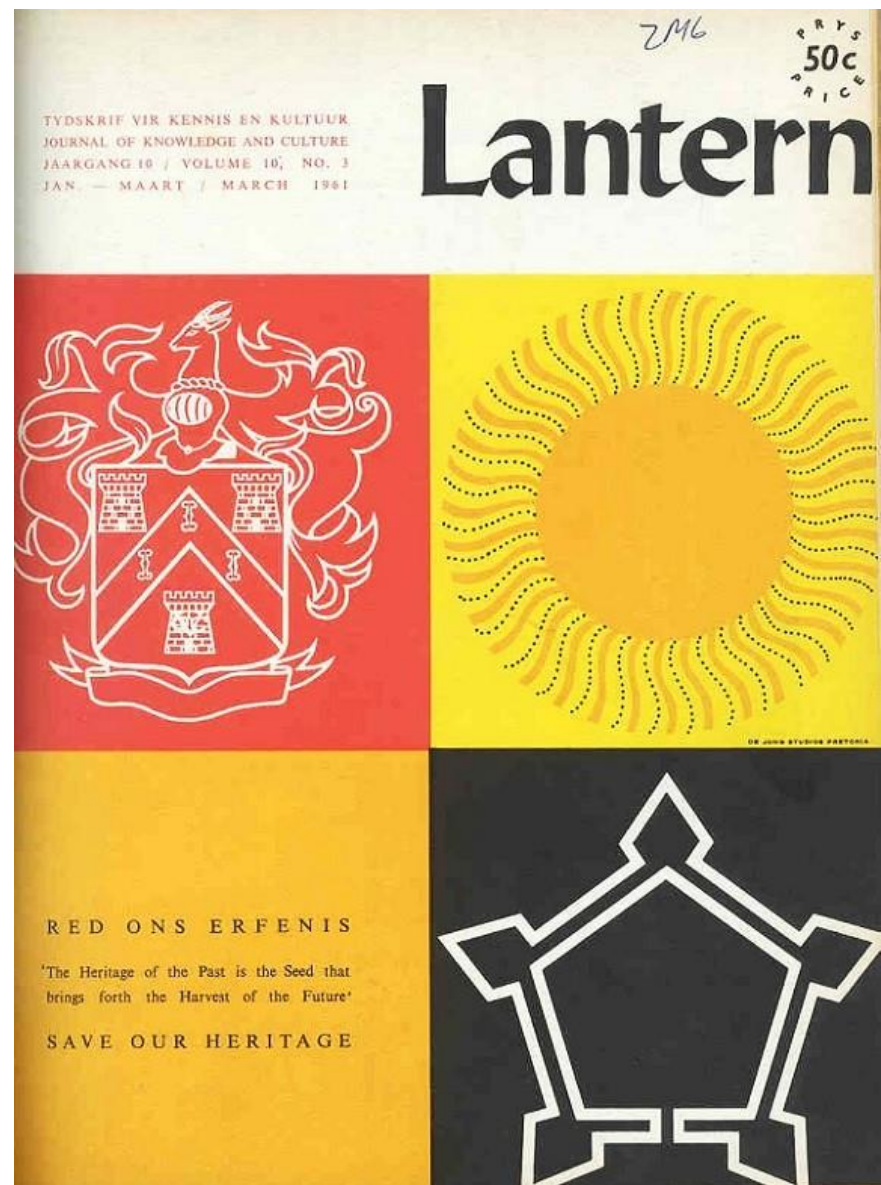
After 1960, it therefore becomes difficult to unravel the contributions of individual studio members to any design, advertisement or campaign produced by EDJS. As Bridgeford (07 July 2015), in defence of de Jong, diplomatically points out, the product of any design studio or advertising agency is the result of teamwork — if not always materially, then at least contractually — and de Jong (2015\_04 December) insisted that he oversaw each and every design that bears the EDJS stamp. Certainly, the January / March 1961 cover (Fig. 166) carries every sign of de Jong’s signature style. Divided into four equal quadrants, the golden sun with its delicate stippled waves of radiating heat is placed in the top right quadrant of the design; two of the other quadrants are filled with bold stylisations of the ground plan of the Castle of Good Hope, and the coat of arms of the Simon van der Stel Foundation, respectively. The fourth quadrant contains text that announces the theme of the issue: *Red ons erfenis/Save our heritage*.<sup>340</sup>

In 1960, the Simon van der Stel Foundation<sup>341</sup> was a relatively new organisation, founded in April 1959 at a ceremony at the Castle. The keynote speaker at this occasion was the then Prime Minister, Dr HF Verwoerd, who, according to the newspaper *Die Burger* (van Bart 1999) called for an organisation that would regard itself as a national body and would not “preference one region or population group over another”. The purpose was to “promote conservation of South Africa’s National Heritage” including “buildings, sites, townscapes, squares, objects and environments” (Simon van der Stel ... 2012). The foundation took its name from the man who, as an employee of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), took command of the European settlement at the Cape of Good Hope in 1679 (Saunders 1994:54). The feature

<sup>339</sup> De Jong’s recollection is that Hoekstra had left of his own accord.

<sup>340</sup> The overall design, both in its chequerboard pattern, splitting of the picture plane into two symmetrical hemispheres and reference to celestial bodies, bears a strong resemblance to the July/September 1958 (USA) cover.

<sup>341</sup> Now known as Heritage South Africa.



**Figure 166** Ernst de Jong Studios (designers), cover *Lantern* January / March 1961 (collection of the author).

article — *Monumentesorg bevorder nasietrots*<sup>342</sup> — is penned by the founder and then director of the Simon van der Stel Foundation, Dr Willem Punt, and the ever-enterprising Dr Ploeger. Both men had strong ties with the Netherlands and were editors of the journal, *Bulletin*, a mouthpiece of the Foundation that sought to raise awareness with regard to the conservation of monuments and cultural landscapes (Koot 1983:14).

Unlike the overcrowded layout of the previous issue, the January/March 1961 edition reflects something of the clarity of its EDJS cover design. Rather surprisingly, the text does not confine itself to South African artefacts: Punt and Ploeger provide examples of heritage sites in such diverse locations as Curaçao (a former colony that currently remains within the Kingdom of the Netherlands), Wales and Devonshire. What is entirely absent from the authors' overview of heritage worth 'saving' are references to any objects and environments that are *not* the product of a white, European culture.<sup>343</sup>

It probably goes without saying that a cover that is required to capture this, 'our' heritage, and in particular the "power" (Ons buiteblad 1961:193) of the Simon van der Stel Foundation, must *per force* construct a Eurocentric and, again, notably Dutch identity. Although it seems clear that the original VOC commander, van Riebeeck, had no intention to lay claim to the land at the southern tip of Africa (Saunders 1994:36), the fortress which he erected not only evokes the colonial imperative, but also the development of the star fort (or *trace italienne*) in Renaissance Europe, in particular, the sixteenth-century Dutch *vesting* Bourtange, which is arguably one of the best-known examples of this type of military defence in Europe (De vesting 2015). The latter is also, coincidentally, situated in the Dutch district of Groningen in which both Punt and Ploeger spent part or all of their childhood. Although designed to repulse rather than initiate attack, the multi-spiked ground plan of the star fort (as opposed to the 'passive' ring-shaped fortifications of the medieval era) suggests a highly aggressive defence (Star fort 2015). However, the *trace italienne* also offered a fascinating aesthetic that could be endlessly elaborated with polygonal fortifications, outer earthworks and moats. Consequently, according to the historian Sigfried Giedion (2003 [1941]:43), the star-shaped fortification had a formative influence not only on warfare, but also on the utopian scheme of the Renaissance ideal city.

WM Bisset (1979:5) remarks that "[t]he symbolic importance of the Castle [in Cape Town] is something which is perhaps seldom realised even though the pentagon is so well known", an observation that has arguably increased in relevance in recent years. While the latter may not, at the time of writing, be as readily recognised as it would have been in 1979, it is interesting to note that the so-called castle, as a physical structure, engendered little historical interest — neither academic nor popular — prior to the Van Riebeeck Festival in 1952. It was proclaimed a national monument in 1936, but, despite the fact that it is the oldest surviving European construction in Southern Africa, had played an important role as a military headquarters since 1674, and was the seat of colonial government until 1811, it was not on the itinerary during the British Royal Visit of 1947 (Bisset 1979:1-4). The disinterest — the British garrison made three attempts to demolish it (Bisset 1979:1) — was arguably owing to the fort's "[l]ack of glamour", but also perhaps its mute yet annoyingly solid testimony to Dutch imperialism. In the mid-1960s, once South Africa had left the British Commonwealth, the castle would experience a "renaissance" (Bisset 1979:4), partly as a result of a spectacular production titled *Son et lumière*, organised by the Department of Education, Arts and Science with the aid of the French Association for the Preservation of Historical Monuments that presented

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<sup>342</sup> The care of monuments generates national pride. The heading of the English summary is, simply, The preservation of monuments.

<sup>343</sup> Other articles in this issue address museums, and conservation, the theatre and, notably, the abstract art of Eduardo Villa (Fassler 1961: 242-252). Scant reference is made to culture that is not European, although the article on the Albany Museum in Grahamstown includes images of Palaeolithic implements, a mummy from Luxor, ornaments worn by "some of the Bantu tribes" (Barry 1961:225) and small woodcarvings from Nyasaland. Less happily, perhaps, the article on the Voortrekker Museum features a photograph of a diorama depicting Dingaan's hut, his wives and "a Zulu warrior [who] stands on guard with spear in hand" (Leverton 1961:266). The issue also includes an unauthored article on 'The Franco-African Community', which, by means of the rhetorical device of a map, provides some context for Southern Africa within the larger African landscape. The editor was, however, obliged to point out in a note that, "Since going to press, the situation has changed". Several African states had left the 'community' after October 1960, when the article had been written.

the fort's history between 1666 and 1890. It was, at the time, put about that the structure was the product of Louis XIV's famous military engineer Sebastian de Vauban, designer *par excellence* of the *trace italienne*, a hopeful assumption that was, however, generally discredited by the 1970s (Bisset 1979:1).<sup>344</sup>

Nevertheless, in the latter part of the twentieth century, the stylised ground plan of the castle had become a familiar and recognisable device. In 1957 it was chosen to replace the crown as a South African Defence Force rank badge and was subsequently used in several other heraldic symbols. Until 2003, the emblems of the South African Defence Force, Army, Air Force and Navy all incorporated this pentagonal design (South African National Defence Force Flag ... 2015; Bisset 1979:5). For several decades and more than one generation, the symbol thus effected an instantaneous identification with both military preparedness and European culture in a twinned signification that made the one idea seem the natural consequence of the other.

However, this observation has the benefit of hindsight. In January 1961, the five-pointed star fort would perhaps have been as alien in its meaning to a general audience as it may indeed, again, have become after 1994. The castle device was only adopted by the South African Air Force in 1958 (Ensign 2015), and much later by the Defence force and Navy (South African Defence Force ensign ... 2015; South African Naval Ensign ... 2013) to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Republic in 1981. The use of the ground plan of the castle — in essence an abstract mark — on the cover of *Lantern* is therefore likely to be one of the first uses, in the public domain, of the device to signify, in the Afrikaans explanation on the contents page, the “founding of the nation” (Ons buiteblad 1961).

In and of itself, the pentagon — in geometry, a five-sided polygon — leaks a plethora of meanings. A star pentagon is called a pentagram (Pentagon 2015), a figure that suggests ancient and complex interpretations, ranging from the cosmogony of Pherecydes, the five wounds of Christ and Renaissance-era occultism to Aleister Crowley's Thelemic system of *magick* in the early twentieth century (Pentagram 2015). It is beyond the scope of this analysis to unpack, in any detail, the possible signification of the star pentagon as symbol for ‘the foundation of nation’, but its occult associations should be noted. The pentagram has long been believed to be “a potent protection against evil, a symbol of conflict that shields the wearer and the home” by means of its “five spiked wards and a womb shaped defensive” (Purvis [sa]).

Unlike the military ensigns that are impenetrable symbols of fortification, the plan on the *Lantern* cover allows for a narrow entrance into the citadel, that here signifies not so much a womb as an avatar of George Lucas's imperial Death Star in the *Star Wars* series. Placed in stark white outline against a solid black background, the sharp-edged pentagon contrasts markedly with the organic and benign sun hovering above it. On a purely formal level, the black surrounds of the ground plan reiterate the black lettering in the masthead, yet the layout and choice of colours argue strongly for a binary relationship between day and night, good and evil, freedom and oppression, and a benevolent Africa and oppressive, enslaving Europe. The designer places the sun in ascendancy, an intuitive gesture that nevertheless suggests a remarkable prescience since, when the castle was eventually removed as a symbol of the defence force, it was replaced by none other than a golden, scalloped device “representing the warm sun of Africa” (South African National Defence Force Flag ... 2015).

Although the comparison is perhaps fanciful, the destruction of the Empire's stronghold in Lucas's film is predicated upon a design flaw that enables the main protagonist to fire a torpedo into a “small thermal exhaust port” (Lucas 1977; Fictional history 2015) along the Death Star's equatorial trench. Did the designer of the *Lantern* cover, albeit subconsciously, provide a similar orifice in anticipation of the torpedo of societal change? It was, after all, a mere few weeks before the severance of the Union's ties to the British Commonwealth and the establishment of a South African republic. The apotropaic use of the pentagram (called a *Drudenfuss*, or ‘wizard's foot’, in German) is referred to by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in *Faust* (1808), in which tale a pentagram prevents Mephistopheles from leaving a room, because one of the angles of the *Drudenfuss* is “not quite closed” (Pentagram 2015). While showing the citadel as being similarly compromised, the EDJS designer, on one level, merely replicates the material conditions of the ground plan of the castle, yet on another level, the decision to allow whatever forces of darkness, hovering outside, to squeeze

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<sup>344</sup> Bisset (1979:1) suggests that it was Jan Ploeger whose research reclaimed the castle for Dutch, not French, engineers.



into — but not be able to exit, or be ‘born from’ — the womb-shaped defence cannot be ignored. The clash of black and white forces in the bottom right quadrant of the cover design is so overt that its deliberate implementation seems improbable; nevertheless, the choices that the designer made construct an intriguing puzzle.

Less enigmatic but nevertheless of interest is the depiction of the coat of arms of the Simon van der Stel Foundation. Traditional heraldry was perhaps the obvious choice for an emblem, given Punt’s Eurocentric position and the organisation’s concern with history. However, unlike the abstract geometry of the castle’s ground plan, a coat of arms presents a greater challenge to the designer wishing to convey a sense of the modern nation. Yet, as on earlier *Lantern* covers, EDJS manages to drain the medieval imagery of its heavy-handed illustrative traditionalism and transforms the image into a delicately balanced line-drawing that functions, in a formal sense, as a foil to the cushion-like quality of the stylised sun and the dramatic stamp of the pentagon. To further reduce the literal reference to historicism, the designer removed the Latin motto (*Amoena servate nostra*) from the fluttering banner below the shield.<sup>345</sup> Ironically, the main visual devices on the shield are three, ring-shaped fortresses — the more vulnerable forerunners of the impregnable *trace italienne* employed in the design of the Cape Town castle. In terms of defending the nation’s heritage, the foundation thus seems to be somewhat out of date and even anachronistic; there were never any (authentic) crenelated medieval towers erected in Southern Africa, nor were any battles fought by soldiers wearing suits of armour.

The sum of its parts, then, as far as the cover is concerned, is a design that is *present* in the proud moment of an imagined national identity, where national pride is overtly focused upon a European heritage which is, moreover, conservative and traditionalist in character. As such, the design operates within the epideictic genre, seeking to educate by reinforcing existing values of the target audience and aspirations of the ruling elite. However, the *style* in which this identity is imagined introduces another layer of meaning that can, perhaps, be regarded as subversive. The stark geometry of the design — the unusual division into four equal, symmetrical squares — and the bright, flat colouring, suggests a child’s board game, an innocence and openness that parodies the oppressive burden of a baroque European culture. On the one hand, the severely stylised forms appear to argue for the modernity of nation, yet the symmetry, anathema to committed modernists but an essential element of ancient heraldry, suggest that ‘our heritage’, while drawing on these principles, may lie beyond both historicism *and* the modern, northern ideal.

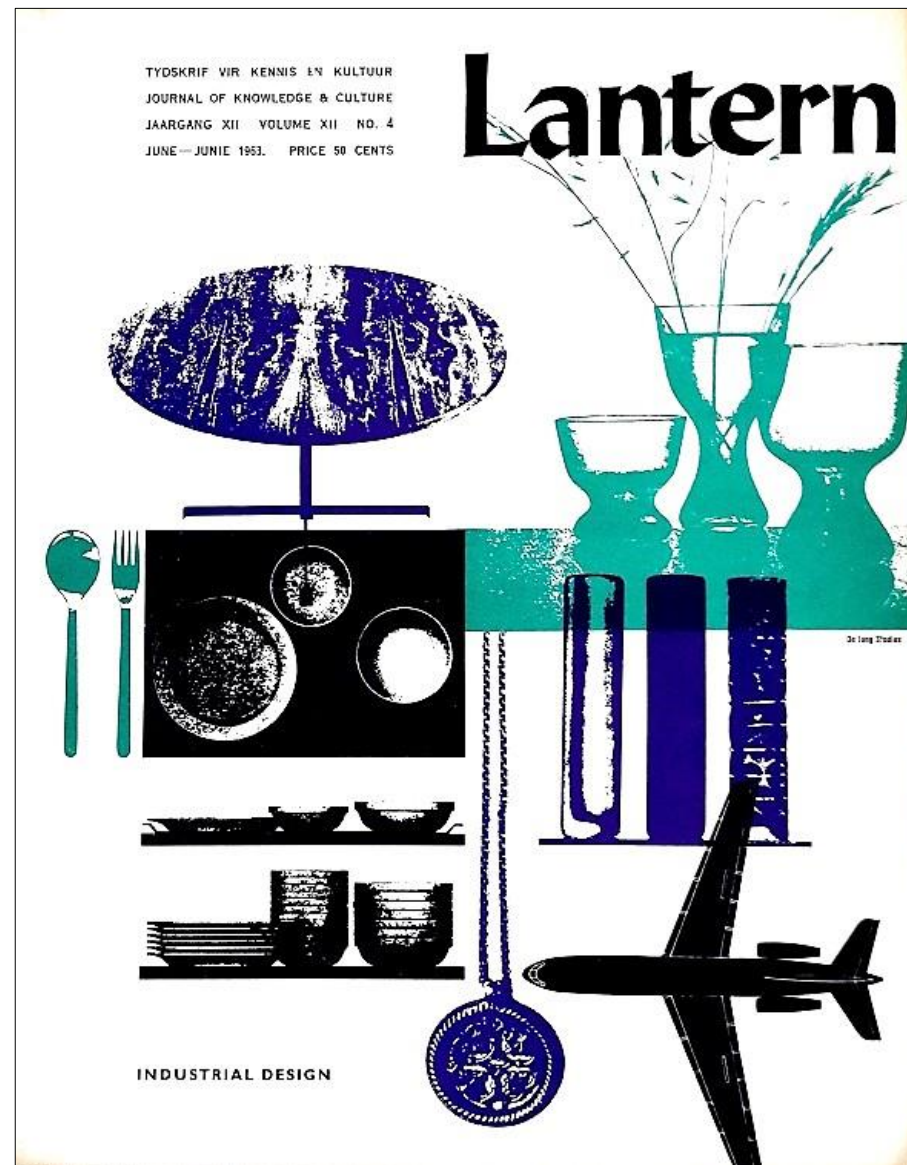
#### 4.3.12 *Lantern XII(4) June 1963*

The last cover (Fig. 167) that EDJS designed for *Lantern* is remarkable in several ways. In the first instance, de Jong (2015\_04 December) has no recollection of the design and, when shown the cover, instantly declared that EDJS had not designed it, although the neatly printed credit on the cover belies this protestation. By 1963, it would appear, de Jong was increasingly removed from the output of the studio; it was the year that Hoekstra departed and Bridgeford returned, but which one of these designers would have been managing the studio in June of this year is unknown. The design, which is fresh and delicate, yet simultaneously bold and arresting, is not typical of de Jong’s flat patterning, utilising instead photographic montage. However, the ubiquitous turquoise makes a final appearance, this time off-set by purple and black. A hint of the de Stijl grid remains, suggested by the emphasis on the vertical and horizontal placement of the black and white elements, but the latter, rendered photographically, sets the design apart from EDJS’s earlier visual language.

The theme of the issue is *industrial design*, a new and largely unknown field of applied design in Southern Africa; it was, in fact, a “fairly young” (Wood 1963:35) discipline worldwide. The lead article is penned by Vivian Wood, who dedicates 29 pages to the topic. Wood (1963:35) points out that the lengthy overview “is necessary

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<sup>345</sup> Rather curiously, the design presented on the cover of *Lantern* does not correspond with later versions of the coat of arms as seen for example on the foundation’s publication, *Bulletin*, its medals or the blue plaques that commemorate historic persons and sites. The difference is intriguing: the head of an African antelope is replaced in later versions with an eagle with outstretched wings, thus rendering the emblem overwhelmingly ‘northern’ in its *ethos*.



**Figure 167** Ernst de Jong Studios (designers), cover *Lantern* June 1961 (collection of the author).

to create a yardstick for measuring South Africa's shortcomings and requirements in the field" and warns that "the Republic would never become an advanced country industrially ... if it did not immediately give concentrated attention to industrial design".

There is no art director cited for this issue and the layout may have been undertaken by the designer(s) of the cover, in other words, EDJS. In comparison with most *Lantern* articles of this period, Wood's text (as are all the other articles in this issue) is well laid out, despite the small, dense type. There is occasional use of refreshing white space to enliven the information, and some thought is given to the rhythm and scale of the images. Examples of crockery, stoves, typewriters, carpets, jewellery, light fittings and glassware, mostly from Sweden and Finland, but also Japan, Israel, West Germany and Britain, are paraded across the 29 pages in a paean to modernist forms and, above all, 'good taste'. Within this context, the narrative takes a rather gloomy view of the South African situation: not a single image on the 29 pages depicts a local product, and several columns of agitated text explain why this is the case. Wood (1963:61) concludes that, when faced with the choice of a casserole from Finland and one from South Africa, "the words 'Buy South African' could not induce any sensible buyer to choose the South African product". As if to underscore South Africans' lack of cultural integrity, Wood (1963:62) highlights a cutting quote by the architect Adolf Loos, who stated that, "The lower the standard of the people, the more lavish are its ornaments". Wood (1963:56) also aims a thinly disguised dart at South African manufacturers when he refers to firms that are

still stuck in the mire of reproduction ... and [produce] designs on a hit-or-miss basis without calling in the services of a competent designer, with the result that what they produce is a hodge-podge of ideas from the directors, sales staff, foremen, milkman, and all.

What is of interest here is that the three-dimensional product and/or interior, in this instance, can only be communicated to the reader by means of the two-dimensional experience of graphic design. As such, Wood's article can be compared to the response in print (in the 1950s in the USA) to the exhibition of Scandinavian arts and crafts and industrial design, *Design in Scandinavia*, which was shown across the USA and Canada during the years 1954 to 1957. Jørn Guldberg (2011:49, 53) points out that the very concept of the exhibition forced the author of the exhibition catalogue, Gotthard Johansson, to mobilise all his rhetorical skills to construe a somewhat specious argument, aimed exclusively at Americans, about Scandinavian 'unity'; yet, notes Guldberg, Johansson said "absolutely nothing about Scandinavian things and their qualities as concrete, physical entities to be touched, moved around, and used by humans".

Wood (1963:42) similarly relies on photographs to project the putative 'fitness for purpose' pursued by the Scandinavians; when he denounces the South African casserole, he does not explain why the Finnish artefact should be regarded as more *functional* or have greater *simplification of operation* — two terms that Wood prints in bold to emphasise the essence of *industrial* design, as opposed to an "ugly and clumsy" vernacular. The fact that the Finnish product would have "a smoother, more modern look" (Wood 1963:42) as a result of its putative functionality is taken for granted and predicated only upon the accompanying photographs of *other* Finnish designs.

However, it is an article in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* (6 June 1954) (Guldberg 2011:53) that most aptly foreshadows Wood's recommendation of the Scandinavian arts to South African designers. The final and published version, 'Do Americans have good taste?', was a second rewrite by the editor of an original draft, 'Taste: America vs. Scandinavia', by Leslie Cheek. As Guldberg (2011:53) points out,

the real issue and motivation of the authors is: telling Americans what to do about their insecure attitude toward craft and artistic qualities ... In this process, Scandinavia, Scandinavians, and Scandinavian things were projected as a background for a correction of American attitudes — that is, for addressing the inferiority of average Americans.

Within this context of creating 'a yardstick for measuring South Africa's shortcomings', it is therefore notable that South African *graphic* design (as opposed to ceramic, interior, jewellery, product and textile design), and in particular EDJS, is regarded as 'Scandinavian' enough to not only appear in the company of the exemplars, but also to *encapsulate* their superiority on the cover. In this task, EDJS, one feels, succeeded admirably, and the cover, given the present nostalgia for the 1960s as well as all things Scandinavian, retains its currency and contemporary appeal. However, in its slickness of technique and self-assured styling, the design lacks something of the charming Dutch *Mechano-faktura* character of de Jong's earlier work: the shift to the neutral language of the International Style at EDJS was underway.

### 4.3.13 Lantern after EDJS

Ernst De Jong Studios had constructed a modernist *ethos* for *Lantern* and by so doing normalised the visual language of early American modernism within the context of education and culture in South Africa. The journal would continue to cultivate its allegiance to the modern, jettisoning the calligraphic masthead and moving, in the mid-1960s, to the severely formal language of the International Style (Figs. 168 & 169). In 1966, the art direction for *Lantern* was taken over for several issues by the design studio *Image 3*, after which the layout was handled by JL Theron. During this period, until the early 1970s, *Lantern* became an exemplar of the Unimark approach, the latter being an international design firm, founded in Chicago in 1965, that rejected individualistic design and that used, as its basic tool, the grid (Meggs & Purvis 2006:411-412). Unimark had offices in Johannesburg, South Africa, and its influence would have been considerable.

Issues of *Lantern* during the late 1960s thus utilised a rational standardised grid format, in which all topics, ranging from op art to HG Wells, are presented in similar layout and typographic style, with bold headings in a standardised, condensed sans serif font and generous use of white space. Columns of text and images are often separated by black bars, a typical Unimark device (but one that also evokes Van Doesburg's layouts for the journal, *de Stijl* (1921), and El Lissitzky's *Isms of art* (1924)). In terms of functional communication design these issues are sophisticated and self-assured; they stand in marked contrast to the earlier, overcrowded and somewhat naïve, if more beguiling, editions. Wood, who was still the Managing Editor, deserves the credit for embracing this supremely modernist and universal *ethos* for the journal, but arguably de Jong laid the foundation upon which others built.

The commitment to elegance and visual harmony faltered in the 1980s. Wood finally left in 1981 (van Zyl 1994:18) and by the 1990s the design of *Lantern*, in any sense of a thoughtful, rational or aesthetic endeavour, had ceased to exist. Cover designs and the presentation of the contents are chaotic, inconsistent, unappealing and sometimes merely tasteless.

*Lantern* ceased publication in 1994.

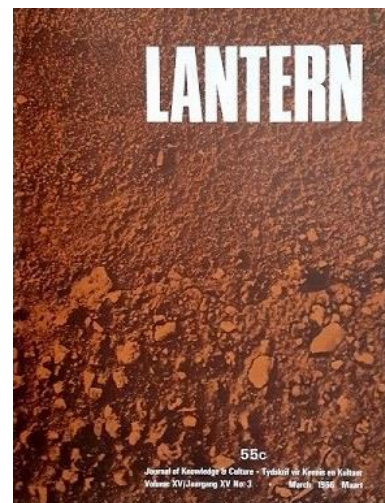


Figure 169 Image 3 (designers), cover design *Lantern* March 1966 (SAASTA collection).

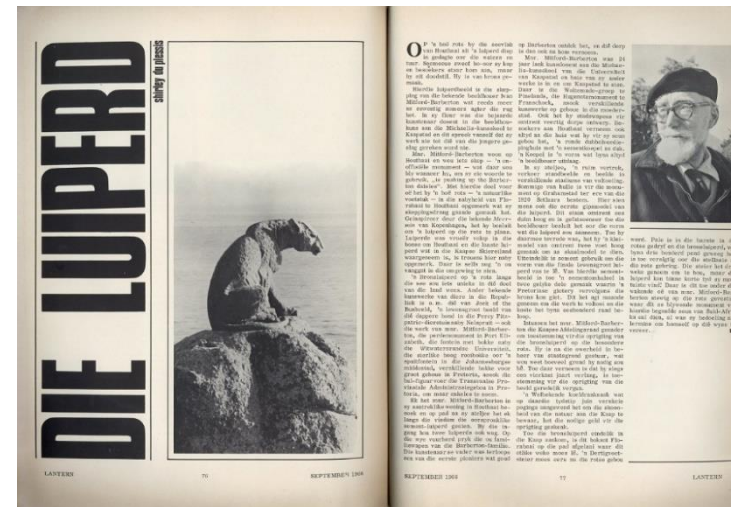
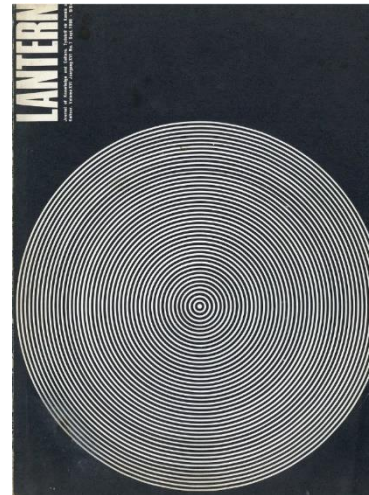


Figure 168 Image 3 (designers), cover and pages of *Lantern* September 1966 (SAASTA collection).



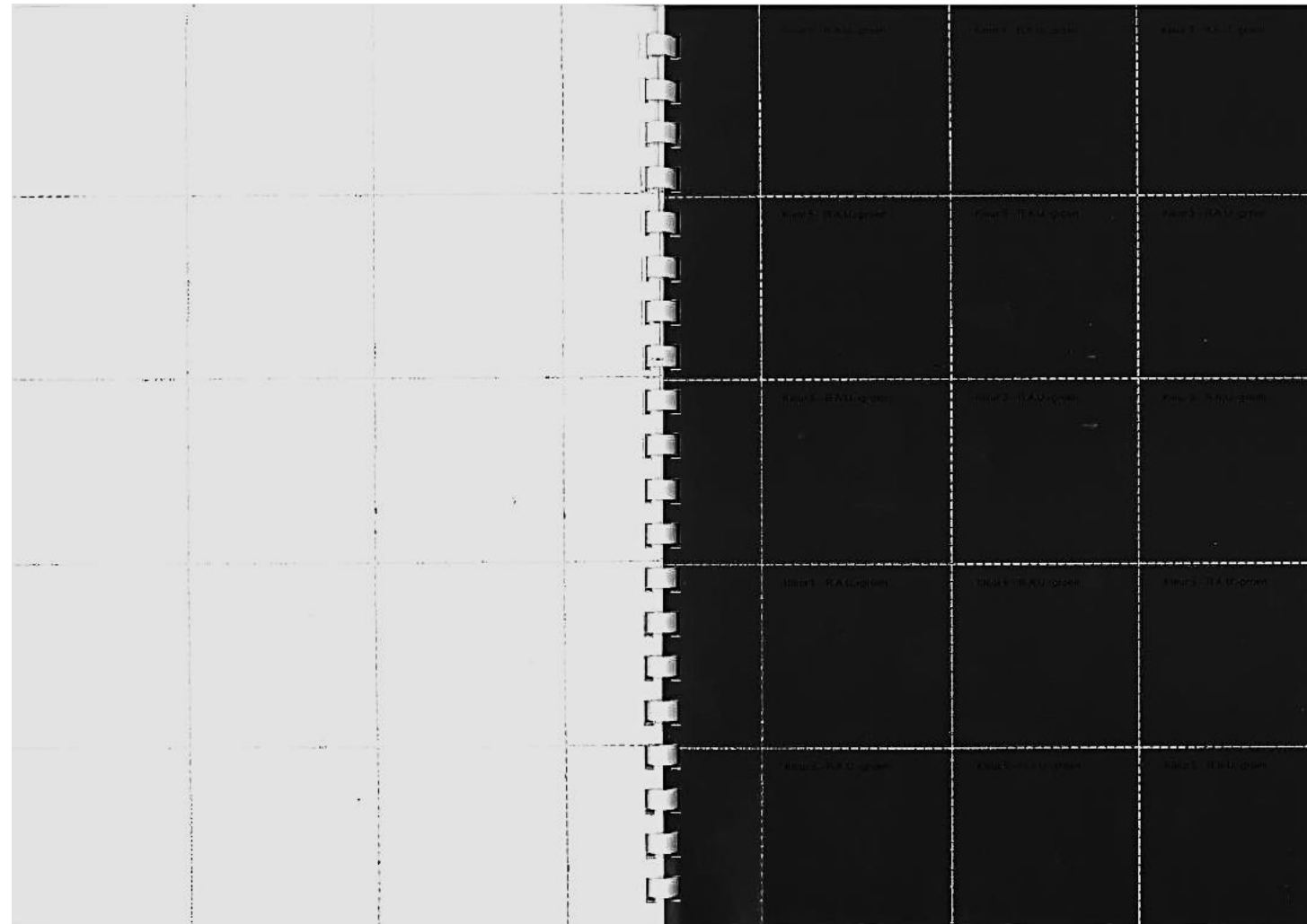




## CHAPTER FIVE: RAU

*Thus its aesthetic meets our material and psychological requirements alike ...  
we have learnt to seek concrete expression of the life of our epoch in clear and crisply simplified forms*

Walter Gropius, 1971





**Figure 170** University of the Witwatersrand Great Hall facade (History of Wits 2015).



## 5.1 A modern university for our time

**O**n 14 August 1967, the Council of the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) officially appointed Wilhelm Olaf Meyer (1935-2006) and Johan Carel van Wijk (1926-2005) as the architects who would execute the brief for the planning, design and erection of its new university buildings in Johannesburg (Langtermyn fisiese beplanning 1967:1). At the time it was the largest construction project in the Southern hemisphere (Meyer Pienaar legacy [sa]) and a singular signifier of the values and aspirations of Afrikaner intellectuals twenty years after the National Party came to power. As the project drew to a close, EDJS was briefed to design a wayfinding system for the new campus, a commission that resulted in a distinct identity for the institution. RAU, as this Chapter demonstrates, became, for many, a byword for *apartheid* ideology and, if one is to heed Burke and consider de Jong's moral accountability as both specialist and citizen, it is important to clarify what the ideas, processes and people were that EDJS would valorise in its final design.

RAU — as the name suggests — was established with the precise purpose of offering Afrikaans-speaking residents of Johannesburg the option of tertiary education in their home language; although other universities existed that were primarily Afrikaans in their offerings, Johannesburg, the economic capital of South Africa, boasted only one university, namely the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS). The origins of the latter lie in the South African School of Mines, which was established in Kimberley in 1896 and transferred to Johannesburg in 1904, becoming the Transvaal University College in 1906 (Birth of a university 2017). Full university status was granted in 1922. The institution's roots in and allegiance to the aims of British colonialism and Empire are suggested by the choice of the University's first Chancellor, Prince Arthur of Connaught (then Governor-General of the Union of South Africa), the dignitary who opened the main block of the campus in 1925 — the Prince of Wales (History of Wits 2015) — and indeed the Palladian architecture of the Great Hall itself (Fig. 170).

As its official website attests, WITS is also inextricably linked with political and civic activism: when the National Party government passed the Extension of the University Education Act in 1959 — thereby enforcing racial segregation in universities — the WITS community protested strongly, and maintained a consistent stand against *apartheid* (History of Wits 2015). However, notwithstanding its claim that it was founded as “an open university with a policy of non-discrimination — on racial or any other grounds” (History of Wits 2015), WITS, in its historical legacy, its demographics and imperial architecture, indeed its very claim to English liberalism, presented a powerful argument for the hegemony of European, and in particular, British, interests in the economic heartland of the country.<sup>346</sup> Despite the fact that the Afrikaans-dominated National Party had come to power in 1948, it would have been a brave Afrikaans teenager that applied to study at WITS in the 1950s.

Nevertheless, there were Afrikaans alternatives within striking distance of Johannesburg, including the University of Pretoria (UP)<sup>347</sup> and the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, that had fought to retain the epithet of ‘Christian’ in its title (The NWU ... 2015),<sup>348</sup> as well as the double-medium (i.e., Afrikaans and English) distance learning University of South Africa (UNISA) based in Pretoria. The latter, by its very nature, was accessible from all regions of the

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<sup>346</sup> Notably, in 2009 the central block on the WITS campus, that includes the Great Hall, was still being referred to by a prominent WITS academic, Professor Katherine Munro (2009), as the “jewel in the crown”. Munro, whose family is closely associated with the institution, is described as “WITS royalty” (Rowland 2009).

<sup>347</sup> Both WITS and UP had their origins in the Transvaal University College (TUC) in Johannesburg; UP is still commonly referred to as “Tuks” (History of the University of Pretoria 2015).

<sup>348</sup> Other predominantly Afrikaans universities extant in the 1950s in Southern Africa were the University of the Orange Free State and the University of Stellenbosch. The University of Port Elizabeth (UPE), the country's first ‘dual-medium’ (i.e., English and Afrikaans) residential university, came into being in January 1964 (The University of Port Elizabeth ... 2013). It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive overview of the evolving landscape of tertiary education in Southern Africa in the mid-twentieth century. However, it is worthwhile to note that, as Afrikaners agitated for an Afrikaans university in Johannesburg, other culturally ring-fenced universities were being established as part of the government's policy of separate, ethnically-based institutions of higher learning. The University of the North, under the trusteeship of UNISA, was established in 1959 for three groups (Sotho, Venda and Tsonga) and gained full university status in 1970 (University of Limpopo 2017). In 2005, it merged with the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) and was renamed the University of Limpopo. The University of Zululand was established in 1960 as the University College of Zululand (also affiliated to UNISA) mainly for Zulu and Swazi groups; it was also granted university status in 1970 (University of Zululand 2017). A much older institution, the University of Fort Hare — initially the South African Native College, established in 1916 — enjoyed a measure of autonomy until the passing of the *Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act* in 1959; in 1970 it, too, became a designated ‘black’, strictly government controlled, university (University of Fort Hare 2017).

country. Consequently, the call for yet another Afrikaans university in the (then) Transvaal Province would require considerable lobbying from the would-be founders of the proposed institution.

As Juan Klee (2010:133, 155, 134) points out, the establishment of RAU is popularly ascribed to Broederbond machinations; certainly, as he himself concedes, the key players were Broederbond members, but Klee's summary of the founding of the institution attempts to provide a scholarly — as opposed to a politically mythologised — account that, as he observes, has perhaps been lacking in the institutional histories of South African universities. As such, and notwithstanding the corrective agenda of its author, Klee's article is useful in that it draws together archival evidence for a complex process that had various role-players chancing their arms with regard to their participation, collusion in, and opposition to — what Klee (2010:156) describes as — the realisation of an “Afrikaner dream”.

The first point of interest is that the National Party Government — under the leadership of HF Verwoerd — initially opposed the project (Klee 2010:145; Boucher 1973:334). Indeed, the University of Johannesburg archives attest to the voluminous memoranda and impassioned pleas addressed to the then Minister of Education, Arts and Science, J de Klerk, by the proponents of the scheme, under the leadership of Dr PJ Meyer (Fig. 172). Meyer had entered the fray as early as 1955 as chairman of a sub-committee of the liaison committee of several Afrikaans cultural organisations that set itself the task to plan for an Afrikaans teacher's training college and Afrikaans university in the Johannesburg region (Klee 2010:141). In March 1956, this sub-committee was constituted as the *Randse Afrikaanse Universiteitskomitee* (RAUK),<sup>349</sup> a group of prominent Afrikaners that would lobby for the founding of the new Afrikaans university. However, despite Meyer's prominence in the Broederbond, Government coolly referred the request for an Afrikaans university in Johannesburg to a sub-committee, which duly recommended that existing tertiary institutions were either adequate or expected to expand existing facilities in order to deal with the needs as set out by the petitioners (Klee 2010:146).

A key question was what these ‘needs’ actually might entail. In a hand-written note, presumably by Meyer (RAU By wie het die gedagte... [sa]), the author lists, as the first and foremost concern, the rapid growth in Afrikaans schools in the Witwatersrand area. There had been an increase of 40 per cent in the numbers of Afrikaans pupils between 1941 and 1951, which situation naturally resulted in a desire, by the community, for tertiary education in these pupils' mother tongue (Klee 2010:140). Moreover, the Transvaal education authorities eventually agreed to the establishment of an Afrikaans teacher's training college in 1961,<sup>350</sup> which concession lent support for the founding of an Afrikaans university as well.

The first sign that Government, buckling to the “relentless insistence” (Klee 2010:146) from its champions, was prepared to support, to some degree, the establishment of a second university in Johannesburg, was the injunction from the Minister of Education, in September 1963, that UNISA should move from Pretoria to Johannesburg (Boucher 1973:355).<sup>351</sup> However, once the first rampart had been breached, UNISA, while apparently showing willingness to collaborate, raised one difficulty after another.<sup>352</sup> In hindsight, as Klee (2010:150) suggests, it would appear as if Meyer and the rector of UNISA, Prof SA Pauw, had agreed to feign interest in the move, merely to keep the project going. In the event, the plan to relocate UNISA was dropped, but not before considerable time and argument had been expended upon the question of a suitable terrain for the new institution.

The issue of location would take on convoluted dimensions. When the UNISA move was being contemplated, a strong argument was made by UNISA and the Johannesburg City Council for a location to the east of Johannesburg, at Bruma — the site of an old sewage works (Klee 2010:151; Boucher 1973:343). Meyer's

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<sup>349</sup> In essence, the standing committee of the eventual university.

<sup>350</sup> The *Goudstadse Onderwyskollege* (Goudstad College of Education).

<sup>351</sup> For an account of these deliberations that were regarded as one of the tensest epochs in the annals of UNISA, see Boucher (1973:333-348).

<sup>352</sup> A core, and unresolvable problem, was that UNISA would not relinquish its dual medium offerings in order to transform into an exclusively Afrikaans institution, neither would it limit its demographics to white students. In addition, the cost of moving the institution was prohibitive (Klee 2010:148) and the logistics of relocating all its employees extremely challenging. In June 1965 the staff of UNISA overwhelmingly voted against the move (Klee 2010:149).

committee rejected this idea: an outraged report by Professor JA Lombard (1964:4) protests that, “Bruma is literally and figuratively ... in a no-man’s-land, in a spiritually unacceptable circumstance”. For these Afrikaners, the soil from which a symbol of ethnic pride and intellectual ambition was to arise had to be pure. At first, the counterproposal was to build the university on the sites of the ‘unspoilt’ Emmarentia Dam Park and the adjacent nature reserve of the Melville Koppies, but objections to the latter, by the architect Brian Sandrock (1965) — who was, at the time, engaged in the design of the new building for UNISA (Boucher 1973:321, 375) — would be only one voice of dissent in the ongoing wrangle over land, long after the Department of Education had sanctioned the establishment of a new Afrikaans University on 4 August 1965 (Boucher 1973:347).

The Government statute (Republic of South Africa Act .... 1966) stipulated that the new university would be built in Auckland Park, which announcement then generated a public outcry from the affluent residents of this suburb, who feared that their properties would be expropriated (Klee 2010: 151).<sup>353</sup> The Auckland Park site also required bartering with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (RAU Notule ... 10 April 1967:1), of which PJ Meyer was conveniently the Chairman and, less propitiously, with the Johannesburg Country Club, a bastion of English interests in the city. The Country Club owned a golf course, the acquisition of which was necessary to implement the Auckland Park project. However, although it initially agreed to sell the land to the university (RAU Notule ... 17 April 1967), the management of the Club then back-pedalled, apparently because it could not be seen to be aiding and abetting the establishment of what was perceived to be an Afrikaner onslaught on Johannesburg (Klee 2010:152).<sup>354</sup>

In addition to the negative publicity generated by the possible expropriation of properties the notion of an Afrikaans university in Johannesburg had been met with considerable alarm in the English press. Indeed, Klee’s (2010) paper has as its aim the repudiation of the perception that the RAU had been brought into being by the Broederbond with the explicit purpose of ‘breaking WITS’, that the reason for the new university was mainly political and that a campaign against WITS was being fought “on both political and financial grounds” (*Sunday Times* 10 November 1963 [sp], cited in Klee 2010:133). Undoubtedly, the Country Club counted several WITS academics amongst its members, and generally signified the interests of the moneyed English community in Johannesburg; it was therefore agreed that the golf course should be expropriated by the State, and that all negotiations would be managed by the Department of Agricultural Credit and Landownership — not the university itself (RAU Notule ... 22 April 1968:3). The golf course was duly expropriated — not ‘purchased’ — in June 1968 (RAU Notule ... 7 Junie 1968:4), an arrangement that allowed the club to save face while in fact enabling the university committee to realise its dream.<sup>355</sup>

All the while that these deliberations were going on, the university operated from rented premises in Braamfontein, at a semi-industrial site vacated by South African Breweries (SAB) — the hoardings advertising beer were still in place when official university business commenced (RAU Notule van samesprekings ... 10 Mei 1967) — and within a stone’s throw from the Palladian WITS precinct.<sup>356</sup> Although Klee’s premise that RAU was not a Broederbond attack on WITS *per se* is reasonable, one cannot ignore the impudent nature of the RAU founders’ strategy that was an exemplar of the Afrikaans adage, ‘*n boer maak ’n plan*’.<sup>357</sup> The launch of the institution from a brewery run by a British firm, that was at the time locked in a fierce battle with Afrikaner-owned breweries for domination of the South African liquor market (see Mager 2010), lent a fine irony to the situation (Fig. 171).

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<sup>353</sup> There was also, at one point, the possibility that properties adjacent to the Westdene Dam (RAU Notule ... 9 Februarie 1968:5-6; RAU Notule ... 15 Maart 1968:7) could be expropriated. Notably, the residents of Westdene, mostly working class Afrikaners, launched no protest action. A university opera house (RAU Notule ... 26 April 1968:3), as well as a medical school (RAU Notule ... 4 Desember 1967:6-7) were envisaged, neither of which materialised. All these discussions were regarded as “exceedingly delicate” and subject to the “highest secrecy” (RAU Notule ... 27 November 1967:3).

<sup>354</sup> The Country Club was, in fact, in the process of establishing a new golf course in Rivonia (Still 06 June 1968:2) and clearly welcomed the unexpected windfall of the University’s offer.

<sup>355</sup> Based upon statements by PJ Meyer with regard to the outcry that it would have caused, Klee (2010:153) questions whether any expropriation actually took place; however, it is recorded as such in RAU Council minutes. The Club was, nonetheless, paid for the transaction.

<sup>356</sup> Quite literally, apparently. In an informal conversation with the author, the South African journalist Denis Beckett (2015) recalled that RAU students threw stones concealed in fruit at WITS students from the safety of the brewery premises. However, Henning Viljoen (2016), who was a young lecturer at RAU at the time, describes the occasional altercation between RAU and WITS students as student pranks, rather than vindictive acts.

<sup>357</sup> To make do with what is to hand.

The first meeting of the Council of the *Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit* took place on Wednesday 7 Desember 1966 (Notule ... 7 Desember 1966:1) not at the brewery<sup>358</sup> but at the *Goudstadse Onderwyskollege*, in Cottesloe, Johannesburg. Dr PJ Meyer was unanimously elected Chairman, and reported that negotiations pertaining to the terrain of the new university had reached “a very delicate stage” (Notule ... 7 Desember 1966:3), the details of which were not divulged. The meeting agreed to approach Professor Gerrit van Niekerk Viljoen (1926-2009) (Fig. 172) with regard to the position of rector of RAU, an offer that Viljoen accepted; he was officially welcomed on 14 January 1967 (Notule ... 14 Januarie 1967:1). Notably, Viljoen hailed from UNISA’s Department of Classic Languages and several of his colleagues followed him to RAU, bringing with them “the ideals that had ensured the success of the older institution” (Boucher 1973:347-348).<sup>359</sup>

There would be another, more indirect, connection to UNISA in the early years. Soon after Viljoen’s appointment, the temporary premises were hired (Notule ... 18 Maart 1967:3) and minutes of meetings indicate that the contract to upgrade the brewery buildings was awarded to the Pretoria firm Pauw & Botha Architects (Notule ... 10 Mei 1967; Notule ... 12 Julie 1967; Notule ... 19 Julie 1967). Samuel Pauw, who had graduated from the University of Pretoria School of Architecture in 1961 (Pauw, Samuel [sa]), happened to be the son of the rector of UNISA (Brink 2012:11), who, despite the collapse of negotiations with regard to his institution’s relocation to Johannesburg, had pledged that UNISA would do “everything in its power” (Boucher 1973:347) to assist RAU.<sup>360</sup> This task of ‘renovating’ the brewery was not a very glamorous one (Fig. 172), but there is evidence that the young architects may have had expectations of larger commissions from the university in the future.<sup>361</sup> What is, however, of interest to the present study is that Pauw & Botha Architects boldly displays what appears to be the first RAU corporate identity on proposals submitted to the Council with regard to the Braamfontein campus (Fig. 173).



**Figure 171** Photographer unknown, from left to right, Nico Diederichs, PJ Meyer and Gerrit Viljoen (Dr. N. Diederichs ... [sa]). The tea drinking was on the occasion of Diederichs’s first visit to RAU in January 1968. He was inaugurated as Chancellor on 24 February of that year.



**Figure 172** Photographer unknown, the Rector and senior officials during a visit on 29 March 1967 to the brewery site in Braamfontein (The rector and senior officials ... [sa]). The architect, Samuel Pauw, is fourth from the left, to the right of Gerrit Viljoen.

<sup>358</sup> Negotiations, at this point, were still underway for a temporary location for the university (Notule ... 7 Desember 1966:3).

<sup>359</sup> Viljoen was the son of Hendrik Viljoen, an early editor of *Die Huisgenoot* and, like Meyer, a member of the Broederbond, serving as its chairperson from 1974-1980 (Gerrit Viljoen dies 2009).

<sup>360</sup> Pauw (senior) has been implicated in the “continuing commissions” (Brink 2012: 11) granted to Brian Sandrock with regard to the University of Pretoria, although it is not clear how Pauw — then a sociology professor (Boucher 1973:308) — could have influenced decisions of this nature. However, a convivial arrangement between PJ Meyer (who also sat on the *Toekomskomitee* of UNISA) (Boucher 1973:339) and Pauw, once the latter was rector of UNISA, is not unlikely.

<sup>361</sup> See Raamwerk vir ‘n algemene langtermyn ontwikkelingsplan ... ([sa]), which was prepared, upon request, for RAU by Pauw & Botha. A letterhead designed by EDJS suggests that Pauw & Botha, in conjunction with Moolman, van der Walt, Vlok & van der Westhuizen had also been approached to work on the ill-fated Johannesburg Opera House Project.





**Figure 176** Pauw & Botha Architects (designers), cover design for building proposals for the Braamfontein brewery site submitted to the RAU Council, c1967 (UJ Rare Books Collection, PJ Meyer Collection).



**Figure 173** Photographer unknown, Professor Gerrit van Niekerk Viljoen, Rector of RAU, addresses the first full-time students of RAU on 13 February 1968 (The Vice-Chancellor addresses ... [sa]). The abstract logo is prominently displayed.



**Figure 175** Invitation to the official opening of the *Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit* on 24 February 1968 (detail) (UJ Rare Books Collection, PJ Meyer Collection).



**Figure 174** Application of the 'atom' logo to RAU stationery items, designed c1965 (UJ Rare Books Collection, PJ Meyer Collection, photograph by author).

## 5.2 Risking the unknown — a new brand of university: 1965-1968

**D**espite considerable effort, it has proven impossible to establish who designed this first logo (Figs. 173-176) that appeared in printed form as early as November 1965 and was used to signify the RAUK long before the official constitution of RAU in October 1966 (RAU word 20 1986:4). The logo, an abstract device consisting of two intersecting capsule shapes, fixed in the centre with a single white dot, the whole reversed from, and contained within, a dark blue disc, might be taken to reference diagrammatic depictions of an atom — an appropriately scientific referent, but also one that evokes associations with friendlier natural forms such as flowers or the sun. The central dot, or nucleus, enclosed by visually dynamic ovals, suggests protection, but also procreation. The colour blue readily signifies tranquillity and stability, but also mystery and intuition (Blue [sa]).<sup>362</sup>

Notably, then, in its early usage, the logo is accompanied by a tagline, *Kennis ontsluit die onbekende* [Knowledge unlocks the unknown], a forward-looking maxim that not only acknowledges the unexplored terrains of knowledge production, but announces an intention to engage with the same. The symbol was bold, differed markedly from conventional university identification and was extensively and consistently — if not always sensitively — applied to all items of stationery, memoranda and official forms, an exceptional practice before the 1970s. All of this suggests that the RAUK used the services of a professional designer, or at least someone who had experience or exposure to the field of visual communication design. At the very least, the decision to confidently brand a committee that was still only acting in a planning capacity indicates an understanding of the power of design to construct *presence* in relation to both present opponents and future clients.

Once the university had been established, the logo was accepted as the signifier of the new institution and it appeared on proposals submitted by outside organisations to the RAU Council and/or Planning Committee. It was used with considerable impact on both the cover of the programme and during the inauguration of the University on 24 February 1968 (Figs. 174 & 176), publicity photographs (Fig. 177) and the cover of the student newspaper, *Die Heraut* (Fig. 178). Yet there is no reference to the symbol, or its application to RAU branding, in the minutes of the RAU Council or Standing Committee meetings in the years 1966 to 1968.<sup>363</sup>

In the absence of any available documentation as to the originators of the device, one can surmise that the ‘atom’ logo emerged from the offices of Pauw & Botha, since this firm had established a working relationship with the founders of RAU at a very early stage. An erstwhile partner at Pauw & Botha, Claus Schütte — who joined the firm in 1971 — has indicated that Samuel Pauw (1936- ) had a lively interest in art and design, and drew up the logo for his own firm in later years, after seceding from his partner Roelf Botha. In particular, the use of the lower case *a* in the type accompanying the use of the RAU logo on plans for the temporary campus suggests Pauw’s hand, since, according to Schütte, this was a favoured device (Schütte 18 June 2015 08:58). However, Schütte (18 June 2015 08:58) speculates that the symbol itself may be the result of a collaboration between the two partners, since Botha would have placed greater emphasis on the importance of a logo for a company than Pauw (Schütte 19 June 2015 09:07).

Pauw & Botha Architects itself sported a distinct, modernist house style and an extended sans serif font was used in all its written communications.<sup>364</sup> In this latter application, Pauw & Botha demonstrated its awareness of international graphic design trends and, in particular, the visual language of the Chase Manhattan Bank corporate identity already referred to in Chapter Four. The Chase Manhattan programme (Fig. 143), introduced in 1960, was a seminal project in the field of identity

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<sup>362</sup> There are two, slightly different versions of the atom logo. The device, as it appears on the RAU stationery, is arguably a more refined design when compared to the device as applied by Pauw & Botha, and later WO Meyer & Jan van Wijk, on documentation submitted to RAU.

<sup>363</sup> Regrettably, the Council minutes are not always complete. For example, a report by the *Skakelkomitee* [Public Relations Committee], apparently attached as an Addendum, is missing from the bound volume. Minutes of the RAU Public Relations Committee, that would most likely have dealt with issues of brand identity, as well as other archival material relating to the founding of RAU, was permanently removed by the university authorities from the UJ Rare Books Collection at the end of 2014 and was inaccessible at the time of writing (June 2015).

<sup>364</sup> In the late 1960s, Magda Bregge at EDJS would design the identity for the combined team of Pauw & Botha and Moolman, van der Walt, Vlok & van der Westhuizen that worked on proposals for the Johannesburg Opera House, planned as an adjunct to the RAU precinct — a project that never got off the ground.



Figure 177 Designer unknown, cover for Die Heraut, 08 November 1968 (UJ Rare Books Collection, PJ Meyer Collection).



Figure 178 Photographer unknown, Gerrit Viljoen, 1968 (Prof. G. van N. Viljoen. 4 October ... [sa]). Here Viljoen appears to identify his own persona with the atom logo.



design. Besides the use of an extended sans serif font, the trademark utilised pure abstraction, namely four geometric shapes enclosing an inner square, as opposed to the natural forms (e.g., mountains, lions and eagles) that more traditionally served to communicate ideas of strength and security (Chase Manhattan Bank [sa]).

Similarly, the original RAU logo, four years later, utilises pure abstraction and consequently aligns itself with this watershed moment in corporate design. What is notable, however, is that, while the Chase Manhattan template rapidly became the prototype for financial institutions (Meggs & Purvis 2006:406), the designers of the RAU symbol applied this idea in the context of a university. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to embark upon a comparison of the RAU identity with contemporary symbols of other universities world-wide, the possibility exists that RAU's abstract device was, in 1965, unique within its field. One important international example of university identity to which one can compare RAU is that of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) that, from the early 1950s, endeavoured to cultivate a considered design culture in all its printed material (Meggs & Purvis 2006:372-373). In the late 1960s, Jaqueline Casey (1927-1992), director of the Design Services Office at MIT, led a team of designers who were committed to the grid and sans-serif typography. Their output is a celebrated example of the adoption of the International Typographic Style (ITS) — a variant of the International Style in architecture — in the USA and, by inference, MIT's adherence to the tenets of modernism. However, MIT did not adopt a logo, or even a coherent brand identity, until 2003, before which date it utilised a heraldic seal, designed in 1861, as a symbol of the Institute (MIT graphic identity [sa]).<sup>365</sup>

One reason for MIT's reluctance to forego this nineteenth-century persona might have been that, like WITS, the MIT campus is dominated by an impressive neo-classical structure that declares an overt allegiance to historical concepts of universities as ancient seats of learning. RAU, on the other hand, unencumbered by pillared



**Figure 179** UNISA's official symbol, 1973. Special permission had been granted by the British Crown to use the Rose of York (Boucher 1973:123).

porticos, adopted an abstract logo at the moment of its inception, thereby signalling its commitment not only to forward-looking scholarship, but also to the rapidly expanding globalism of the modern corporate world. Like MIT, other South African tertiary institutions continued to utilise traditional heraldry that signified fealty to a medieval (and thus quintessentially European) university system (Fig. 179). In its logo, RAU thus jettisoned its ties to a backward-looking colonial legacy, an approach that was both enabled by and taken up in its architecture. Interestingly, this commitment to modernism did not extend to the roman style letterforms that accompanied the logo on printed material issued by the RAUK, resulting in a slight disunion of elements that implies opposing sensibilities amongst members of the planning committee. The choice of roman letterforms signifies a (perhaps unconscious) desire to be associated with Renaissance scholarship, a connection that references the even more ancient cultural norms of classical antiquity. Perhaps it was felt, by some members of the committee, that using a sans serif — signifier of modernity, the machine and egalitarian society — was a bridge too far, despite, one imagines, being urged by Pauw & Botha to style the university's communications in the image of a modern American bank.

Whatever the extent of Pauw & Botha's initial design input, in March 1967, the RAU Council tasked a sub-committee, including the Rector and the Chairman of the Council, to appoint, after investigation, a suitable architect for the permanent campus of RAU (Notule ... 18 Maart 1967:3). An undertaking of the founders was that Afrikaans architects "would be given a share" (Notule ... 18 Maart 1967:3) of this work, and to this purpose a list of Afrikaans architects in Johannesburg and Pretoria had been compiled (see Afrikaanse argiteksfirmas ... 1966) — presumably by request of PJ Meyer — by Daan Kesting, Brandt and Partners in January 1966 (Kesting 11 Januarie 1967:1).

The proposed project was prestigious and lucrative, and, from a creative perspective, exciting. Various firms made overtures to, or were 'felt out' by, the Council in this regard. Pauw & Botha supplied a framework for a "general long term development plan" (Raamwerk vir 'n algemene ... [sa]) for RAU, and Brian Sandrock (1965)

<sup>365</sup> The 2003 logo — that bears a startling resemblance to the geometric symbol that de Jong designed for his brother Paul in the late 1950s — was developed internally by the MIT Publishing Services Bureau (apparently in the face of some resistance). The design was executed by Tim Blackburn, in collaboration with well-known type designer Matthew Carter (Spaeth 2007). The stark, vertical geometry of the new logo references the pillared portico on MIT's neo-classical facade. Somewhat belatedly, the logo's iconic modernism now serves as a template for further branding of university departments (see Brownlee 2014).



involved himself in the debate with regard to the RAU site location. However, the most confident bid for the commission seems to have come from Daan Kesting,<sup>366</sup> whose partnership appears on the aforementioned list of Afrikaans architects, and is, moreover, presented as having the largest capacity in terms of qualified staff.<sup>367</sup>

Kesting (3 October 1966:1), apparently on his own initiative, approached the Boston-based architect Richard Brooker, situated at the offices of The Architect's Collaborative (TAC) in Rome, "to prepare a master plan for a new University project in South Africa". TAC was the firm of the celebrated modernist architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969) (Muthesius 2000:9). Kesting — who had met Brooker in June 1966 — envisaged a strategy that would bring Brooker on Council to compile the masterplan, which would then be executed by a 'local' (read, 'Kesting's') firm. However, the proposal clearly fell flat, since Brooker is never mentioned again, and Kesting writes to Meyer, late in December 1966, informing him that he, Kesting, now saw his way open to undertake the masterplan himself (Kesting 22 December 1966:2). Kesting's rhetoric hints that he is intimate enough with Meyer to be bold in these suggestions, but, despite the bonhomie, Meyer did not comply with Kesting's invitation to a confidential discussion of his plan.<sup>368</sup> Kesting (11 January 1967), stung and perhaps even panicked,<sup>369</sup> responds to Meyer's cold-shouldering on 11 January 1967 with a petition that is both begging letter and wounded recrimination. However, Kesting's plea fell on deaf ears: three days later, Viljoen took up the position of Rector and would, from that point onwards, drive the planning and execution of the 'masterplan' himself. Whatever alienated Kesting, or eliminated Pauw,<sup>370</sup> Viljoen's approach — notably — set aside old loyalties and sullied patterns of collaboration.

### 5.3 The most appropriate team — Meyer, van Wijk and de Jong

Thus, Viljoen announced at a meeting of the RAU Council on 14 August 1967 that the ad hoc committee appointed to investigate the appointment of an architect, "recommend the appointment of Wilhelm O Meyer, in collaboration with Jan van Wijk and further consultants as may be necessary" (RAU Notule ... 14 Augustus 1967:4). Here it is important to note that Viljoen, in justifying his choice, stressed that the selection committee had been given "full powers" [*volmag*] in this regard, and he reminded the Council that the "valid criterion" had been "the most appropriate team that also understood and exemplified [*uitleef*] the Afrikaner spirit" (RAU Notule ... 14 Augustus 1967:5). Neither of these conditions is spelled out in the Council Minutes of 18 March 1967; they are, rather, after-the-fact justifications and it therefore appears as if Viljoen was countering behind-the-scenes dissent, most likely involving Kesting and PJ Meyer,<sup>371</sup> with regard to his recommendation.

The proposal to accept Viljoen's selection was enthusiastically put forward by JFP Badenhorst, who, emphasised that the Council could "regard itself as fortunate that it had found persons — and Afrikaners — *in the Republic* that were considered good enough for this important task" (RAU Notule ... 14 Augustus 1967:5, emphasis added). Reading between the lines, one might conclude that Kesting's proposal to execute the project in collaboration with an American firm had, in fact, enjoyed support amongst Council members, and that Badenhorst's defence was designed to silence objections; PJ Meyer's voice in the matter is notably absent in the Minutes. Certainly, the thirty-one-year old Wilhelm Meyer (1935-2006) would not have been an obvious candidate: although he had some experience in civic design, his firm was new, very small, and did not even appear in the group of minor architects on the list provided to Council.

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<sup>366</sup> Kesting received his degree from the University of Pretoria in 1958 (Kesting, Daniel Pieter [sa]).

<sup>367</sup> From later correspondence, it would appear as if Kesting himself drew up this list (Kesting 11 January 1967:1).

<sup>368</sup> Kesting (11 January 1967:1) bitterly remarks that no date could, apparently, be found in the Chairman's diary for such an occasion.

<sup>369</sup> Kesting's correspondence implies that his firm had taken on additional staff in preparation for executing the commission.

<sup>370</sup> Fischer (1998:234) notes that Samuel Pauw "turned a blind eye to the New Brutalism", and in particular to architecture in the "Sandrock mould", an attitude that may have excluded him from the overall vision for RAU.

<sup>371</sup> The presence of a ground plan for the University of Baghdad — designed by TAC — in the PJ Meyer collection, UJ Rare Books Collection, suggests that Meyer supported Kesting's proposal.

Meyer (1997a:66-67) recounts the unnerving appraisal meeting that he had with Viljoen, a man who, Meyer reflects, “generated some anxiety”. The interview was held not in the Rector’s office, but at the premises of the fledgling architect’s firm, where the drawing office was set up in the kitchen of a house in Johannesburg. In contrast to Kesting’s self-assurance, Meyer, in his excitement, accidentally flung a cup of steaming hot coffee over Viljoen, who, luckily, was wearing a raincoat: “The ice”, states Meyer, “was broken”, and the men eagerly chatted for the next two hours about “what a university should be”.

Some weeks later, Meyer was called in to the brewery and offered the task of directing the design of RAU, in collaboration with the architect Jan van Wijk, who would manage the execution of the project (Peters 2011a: 69).<sup>372</sup> Meyer, a WITS graduate, had attended Master classes with the renowned architect Louis Kahn at the Graduate School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania, USA in the early 1960s. On his return to South Africa, he worked on several apartment blocks in Pretoria, as well on the Johannesburg Civic Centre, before being offered the RAU commission (Peters 2006:28-31). Van Wijk was nine years older than Meyer and had also worked in the USA. Prior to founding his own practice in 1963, he had, rather ironically, been employed at Daan Kesting’s partnership. In 1965 van Wijk won a competition to design the *Afrikaanse Taalmonument* [Afrikaans Language Monument] on Paarlberg, Paarl (Van Wijk, Johan Carel (Jan) ... [sa]),<sup>373</sup> of which more in Chapter Six.

At this point, then, the professional lives of Meyer, Viljoen, van Wijk and de Jong began to be drawn together into the construction of an identity for RAU. They were all loosely associated: Meyer, like de Jong, had known Viljoen when the latter took on a mentoring role in the Voortrekker movement (du Toit 1997:14); van Wijk was a good friend of de Jong’s older brother, Gerrie, and also a member of the Hillcrest Swimming Pool clique. Viljoen, like de Jong, had attended *Laerskool Pretoria Oos* and, like the latter, sang the praises of this institution (du Toit 1997:10-11). Viljoen, van Wijk, Meyer and de Jong all attended *Affies*, although not at the same time (Viljoen and van Wijk were contemporaries). Their university experiences differed: Viljoen and van Wijk studied at UP, Meyer at WITS, and de Jong at the University of Oklahoma. Viljoen would pursue postgraduate studies at Cambridge and Leiden (du Toit 1997:15-19), while both van Wijk and Meyer gained post-university experience in the USA (Meyer, Wilhelm Olaf [sa]; Van Wijk, Johan Carel (Jan) ... [sa]). Viljoen had an impressive academic record, and in particular a love of classical languages, resulting in his appointment, at UNISA, as lecturer in the discipline in 1955. Thus, while the call was for local expertise, the team that set about concretising the dream of RAU could draw on intellectual and social capital gained in an international arena.

## 5.4 Closed and open — the designers’ brief

**A**lthough a firm brief to the architects remains elusive, an undated and anonymous document provides some background to the initial considerations (and perhaps disparate arguments) with regard to the physical planning of the campus. The first point that is made is that the “buildings and layout should embrace a genuine Afrikaans-Christian character” (Oorwegings met die fisiese beplanning ... [sa][sp]). To this purpose, the “heart and forum” was to be visually striking, and call to mind “the idea of a church spire”.<sup>374</sup> Here it is important to note that, although the Christian character of the Afrikaner is pivotal to the stated vision of its founding members,<sup>375</sup> RAU had been persuaded — in the opinion of some, coerced — to relinquish its plan to require, as part of its constitution, a statement

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<sup>372</sup> This division of responsibilities would, apparently, lead to the unravelling of the eight-year collaboration of Meyer and van Wijk. According to Peters (2011a:71), a few months after the opening ceremony of the first phase of the RAU complex, van Wijk was given the “solo appointment” for Phase 2 and the erstwhile partners thus parted “in enmity”. The commission for Phase 2 appears to have been an “appeasement” to the office of Van Wijk that had been denied independent design input in Phase 1, but, intriguingly, the Phase 2 appointment would become the prelude to “an architectural hegemony which lasted for nearly three decades” (Peters 2011a:77) during which time all architectural work on the RAU campus was awarded to the practice of Jan van Wijk, or its successors in title (at the time of writing, SNOW Consultants Incorporated). Indirectly, Kesting had his revenge.

<sup>373</sup> An online biography (Van Wijk, Johan Carel (Jan) ... [sa]) states that van Wijk was a founder member of RAU; however, the Minutes of the founding meeting does not include a list of persons present and van Wijk’s role, if any, in this regard is therefore unclear. Although the Minutes are a verbatim record of the proceedings (including the prayers) several of the speakers are identified only as ‘unknown’. Van Wijk is not mentioned (Die stigtingsvergadering ... 1963:22).

<sup>374</sup> This singular statement of symbolic intent is notable in the light of subsequent speculations that the client required the design to evoke an ‘impenetrable laager’ of nineteenth-century ox-wagons.

<sup>375</sup> See, Die beplanning van die Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit ([sa]:5).

of Christian belief from staff and students (see Klee 2010:153-154). Having forfeited this ideal for pragmatic reasons, the institution — or perhaps an individual — nevertheless wished to communicate its/his Christian character in concrete if not in law by raising a defiant, ecclesiastical finger in the sky.<sup>376</sup>

However, once this matter of religious fealty is acknowledged in the document, it vanishes off the table. The points that follow demand, “The newest ideas ... on the level of global, modern development ... A vision of unrestricted future expansion ... [and] a harmonious aesthetic that is both classical and modern”. The design was required to be flexible enough to enable future architects to “generously exercise their creative freedom” (Oorwegings met die fisiese beplanning ...[sa][sp]). In addition, the architecture was to be “narrowly woven together with the creative arts” — with an emphasis on the Afrikaans artist — but, above all, the designers had to “keep up with trends in the most modern developments in the built environment, even engaging with experimental design in order to provide leadership in the field”.

The proposed process to meet these aims was, initially, a closed design competition, and the suggested list of judges included Brian Sandrock and, more ambitiously, Walter Gropius (Voorgestelde prosedure ... [sa]).<sup>377</sup> The judges were required to draw up a clear brief, provide tips for the competitors, and then rate the submissions in order of preference. For unknown reasons, the competition, and with it a comprehensive brief, never materialised, since Viljoen’s ‘ad hoc’ committee took matters in hand in March 1967. In the event, what emerges in the RAU Planning Report No.1 is that the commissioned architects, in the main, gave shape to their own brief that “was in fact worked out with their [the architects’] help during lengthy discussions” (Viljoen 1968:1). The project was exhaustively researched, both through a literature review and overseas study tours, undertaken by Viljoen and, later, the architects themselves. Meyer and van Wijk visited a staggering thirty university campuses in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, the USA and Canada (Meyer & van Wijk [sa]). The draft typescript for an article by Viljoen ([sa]), on the eve of the opening of the new building in May 1975, provides a synopsis of the conclusions reached during subsequent discussions. After a lengthy list of practical requirements — including stipulations with regard to departmental museums, bookshops, banks, television facilities in lecture halls,<sup>378</sup> access for wheelchairs, and noise control — the rector summarises the architects’ task:

[I]t was required of the architects to design an aesthetic and monumental building complex with a striking and characteristic structure that could serve as the focal point of the university’s identity (Viljoen [sa]:4).

A fair amount has been said, often anecdotally, about the realisation of this injunction as concretised on the RAU campus. A typical point of view is that of Basil Brink, a University of Cape Town graduate and until recently a senior lecturer in the Town & Regional Planning Department at the University of Johannesburg (Alumni update 2011), who restates the popular narrative surrounding the design of the university:

The covert role that the Afrikaner Broederbond (AB), a secret organisation ... played in the physical development of universities for the white Afrikaans-speaking section of South African society remains by and large hidden from history. From the early 1960s ... members of the AB controlled the ... Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) [and] made it possible for them to influence ... campus development decisions with major financial implications. AB members in executive positions could also ensure that the ‘modern monumental’ style, a style which sought to assert the power of the apartheid modernity project, was made manifest on the campuses under their control (Brink 2012:7).

Brink (2012:7) then, rather illogically, both implicates and exonerates the architects from this agenda of the ‘apartheid modernity project’, by stating that

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<sup>376</sup> The inclusion of a spire, or chapel, was not that uncommon in plans for modernist university architecture. See, for example, the proposed plan for Coventry University College (1958) and competition design for Cambridge Churchill College (1959) (Muthesius 2000:66).

<sup>377</sup> It is unclear who drew up the proposed list of judges. Despite his advanced age, Gropius was still alive in 1967 and the possibility of involving this master of campus design in the project probably stemmed from Kesting’s contact with Richard Brooker. Pretoria architects Helmut Stauch and William Gordon McIntosh also greatly admired Gropius (as opposed to the more traditionalist approach at WITS). The inclusion of Sandrock as a judge effectively excluded the latter as a competitor.

<sup>378</sup> South Africa would only receive broadcast television in 1976.

... it is quite likely that the furthest thing from Wilhelm Meyer, principal design architect, and his associate Jan van Wijk's minds when they developed its horshe [*sic*] shoe-shaped ideogram was a laager of wagons that turns its back on the city.<sup>379</sup>

However, Brink (2012:7) not only concludes — despite a lack of evidence to support this claim — that in his opinion, “this [the *laager* of wagons] is the distinct impression formed as one approaches the megastructure”, but also surmises that the signification of a *laager* was what Gerrit Viljoen had in mind all along, and, apparently through some sinister process, had persuaded the architects to provide (while, in fact, believing they were doing something else entirely). In support of his belief, Brink cites Daniel Herwitz, Professor of Comparative Literature, Philosophy, History of Art, College of Literature, Sciences and the Arts at the University of Michigan (Curriculum Vitae Daniel Herwitz [sa]), who indulges in an imaginative interpretation of the purpose and signification of the RAU architecture and has, as a result of his prominence as a scholar, probably broadly influenced opinion in this regard.

Herwitz, who holds a South African residency permit and was an Andrew Mellon Visiting Research Fellow, Department of Anthropology, at the University of Cape Town in 2010 (Curriculum Vitae Daniel Herwitz [sa]), but who manages to state that RAU, in 2006, was “called the Rand African University” (Herwitz 2006:151), voices his dismay that the RAU architects did not turn to the “wonderful and humane legacies of the Afrikaans’ [*sic*] settler past: the Cape Dutch house, [or] the Karoo dwelling”, since, as he speculates, “in private, the state functionaries that commissioned ... RAU might have wanted to build themselves a little place (or a big place) of precisely this kind” (Herwitz 2006:149) (see Fig. 225). Regrettably, states Herwitz (2006:149-150), the modernist principles of architecture, as exemplified at RAU, “leave little room for mythological referencing”, a shortcoming that he nonetheless feels called upon to remedy, since Herwitz reads into the U-shaped structure a fanatical narrative of the Great Trek, which, he declares, is “critical [i.e., indispensable] to everything that RAU is”.

Herwitz (2006:150) repeats the allegation that RAU “is meant to be a building that directly opposes the ‘liberalism’ of the University of the Witwatersrand” — an accusation that Klee attempts to deflect, but that might, indeed, have some validity.<sup>380</sup> The difficulty is that Herwitz inserts an emotive narrative of ‘Voortrekkers fighting and beating the Zulu’ in his critique that, in itself, reads as the mythologised counterattack of an English, liberal scholar on an Afrikaans — therefore ‘other’ — community.<sup>381</sup> In some instances, Herwitz is simply in error: no ‘state functionary’ commissioned the building, and if Viljoen secretly coveted a cosy Cape Dutch cottage, complete with thatched roof and slave bell, one has to ask why he did not simply ask for it.

For his part, Brink either misinterprets or misquotes Herwitz. The latter never refers to Viljoen — it is unclear whether the Michigan scholar is even aware of the Rector’s role in the planning of the building — and, as has been pointed out, Herwitz believes that, if anything, the architects steamrolled the client into relinquishing a homely, regional style, rather than being duped into executing the so-called *laager*. To his credit, but somewhat after the fact, Herwitz (2006: 151, emphasis in original), after his vigorous extrapolation of an embattled, imprisoned, oppressed and tribalised Afrikaans youth, takes an apologetic step back and admits that

what was taken by me to be a laager was quite possibly in the architect’s mind merely a Roman amphitheatre ... This reading<sup>382</sup> of the building is indeed convincing, which to my mind proves how dominant *context* is when constructing meaning for a building.

One would have to agree with Herwitz that context is paramount when ‘constructing meaning’ for any artefact, but the only context that Herwitz appears to explore is that of his own assumptions.<sup>383</sup> It is not only *possible* that the client and architects wished the building to signify the democratic principles of classical civic

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<sup>379</sup> *Laer* is the more correct Afrikaans word used by contemporary authors when referring to a ring of wagons. ‘Laager’ — which is an outdated form of the term — was derived from the Dutch (*leger*) and/or German (*lager*) and denotes a ‘place to sleep or camp’ (Laager 2015; Lager 2015).

<sup>380</sup> See, for example, *Ons Suid-Afrikaanse Universiteite en Universiteitskolleges: ‘n Ontleding* (1963). This anonymous essay is in the PJ Meyer Collection, UJ Rare Books Collection. However, the thoughts voiced in this document, most likely by PJ Meyer, have no material bearing on the design of the building itself, which would only take shape several years later under the direction of Viljoen.

<sup>381</sup> From the outset, there had also been considerable concern within the Jewish community at the idea of an Afrikaans (and therefore ‘Christian’) university in Johannesburg. See Klee (2010:153-154).

<sup>382</sup> Here Herwitz refers to Douw van Zyl’s reference to WO Meyer’s ideas; Herwitz has not engaged with Meyer’s explication first hand.

<sup>383</sup> In fairness, Herwitz does provide a photograph of the ‘Rand African University’ campus to support his argument.



architecture; it is, indeed, the case. WO Meyer (1968) collated a comprehensive development plan,<sup>384</sup> ignored by Herwitz, that was presented to the RAU Council on 17 June 1968 and in which Gerrit Viljoen (1968:7-8, emphasis in the original) expresses his desire that

the whole university must be such as to be readily viewed *in its entirety*, and this by people viewing it at ground level, and not only theoretically on a plan ... But the whole must not overwhelm nor depress the individual by its massiveness and volume, nor should [the individual be] confused by its complexity. It must be a living university; not a colossal human factory ...

Viljoen is mindful of both the identities of individuals and that of the institution. He regards as an essential characteristic of a university that it should “bring its students in their formative years into frequent, lively and fruitful contact with a *wide variety of people* — different personalities and people of different backgrounds” (Viljoen 1968:8, emphasis in the original).<sup>385</sup> Meyer (1968:20) responds to this criterion by positing that, while “the idea of cross-fertilization can by no means be forced ... planning should at least place no unnecessary barriers in its way”. Consequently, a critical assumption in the proposed design is the “erasure of boundaries” (Meyer 1968:20):

If the group is the all-embracing whole, it remains merely a mass of individuals and ignores the fact that the university consists of unique individuals and groups ... The pulling down of boundaries ... militates against isolation ... but an equilibrium must be achieved.

Thus Meyer (1968:21) gradually moves towards the idea of “establishing a central area which symbolizes the university as a whole”, which space he refers to as the “focal area or forum”. It was important, for Meyer, that this forum should be complete from the first day of the new campus so that it could “serve in future as the historical heart”. This central space — that Meyer argues is what is “carried in the memory” rather than the building itself — was not only symbolic in its function, but was also to serve as a material factor in the generation of “historical beginnings”. If anything, the design was required to signify the *erasure* of a troubled past and to ignite a brave, new future.<sup>386</sup>

Yet Meyer (1968:26) emphasises that outward appearance is not the architects’ primary concern: “The important first step is the solution of all functional relationships and requirements, of which the outward structure will evolve as a natural consequence”. The architects’ research revealed that there were two approaches in planning new universities, one being a pedestrian line of movement, open at both ends (Meyer 1968:29), the other a radial development in which routes radiate out like the spokes of a wheel. Meyer (1968:29) suggests a solution that is influenced by both patterns:

The university [i.e., RAU] is born in a form that permanently establishes the *symbolic heart as Forum* ... The Forum is the place which ... will establish that the University is more important in spirit than the mere agglomeration of its elements. It is fitting that in our climate the centre is thought of as an open heart [...] The Forum space flows down and out between the library and student centre. In this way a huge window is created which, in the northerly direction, takes in the view of nearby hills (Meyer 1968:30, 33, emphasis in original).

Here Meyer retains the initial requirement of the ‘heart’ and ‘forum’, but quietly drops all reference to a church. Notably, the construction of this ‘heart’ is not a closed ring, as is so often assumed, but (as Brink correctly notes) a U-shape, and one that is, moreover, open at both ends. A crucial influence in this regard was the scale and functionality of the Piazza del Campo, in Sienna, Italy, with seating banks that catered for outdoor events (Peters 2011b:46; Diagram S8, RAU Ontwikkelingsplan 1968) (Fig. 182). Meyer (1968:35) also proposed a plan to sink the main road passing in front of the university and construct a city square — or ‘piazza’ — across the thoroughfare:

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<sup>384</sup> The Development Plan was drawn up in Afrikaans, but an English summary was made available as well; citations in this study are taken from the English translation.

<sup>385</sup> In this, Viljoen was expressing his awareness of a world-wide trend in university culture, planning and administration in the 1960s. For a comprehensive overview of the philosophy of education and the corresponding responses in campus planning in the mid-twentieth century, see Muthesius (2000).

<sup>386</sup> It is tempting to suggest that Herwitz’s rancour is precisely owing to the annoying confidence of this vision, and that the threat was experienced by those without, rather than within, the RAU campus.

This square ... can become a captivating site ... the foyer to the University entrance ... and proposed cultural centre ... The whole complex becomes a further point for cultural life in the city, and will automatically bring about a rejuvenation of the whole area ... A future tube train could also have a stop in the square, thus bringing pedestrians directly to the cultural centre or the university.

None of this hugely optimistic rhetoric provides evidence for a covert desire to construct a panoptic fortress, let alone an “impenetrable laager” (Herwitz 2006:150) in which Afrikaners could huddle darkly in hatred and fear. The fact that the architects sought to emulate the latest trends in modern university planning, rather than explore vernacular forms, may be considered, by some, as unfortunate, but it is rather churlish to describe it as an “apartheid building” (Herwitz 2006:151) merely because it is, in the assessment of an author, in questionable taste. Herwitz (2006:149), despite himself, describes the building as “indeed formally excellent”, which begs the question as to why he chooses to denounce it with such vehemence.

One probable explanation of the vitriol that often accompanies commentary on the RAU architecture may be the *style* as opposed to the *design* of the campus: RAU was planned at the exact moment when utopianist campus design had become a globalised, architectural movement (Muthesius 2000:1). According to Stefan Muthesius (2000:4-8), in his review of the post-war university as a utopian space, the idea that the educational institution itself should be an ideal community reached its apogee in the 1960s. This aspiration drew on the strand of modernism espoused by Gropius (Muthesius 2000: 8) who started teaching at Harvard in 1937 and who, with his firm, designed a number of university buildings world-wide, the most ambitious being the University of Baghdad, started in 1957 (Muthesius 2000:34).<sup>387</sup>

One aspect of this international trend was the university structure as “the pride ... the chief new building of a whole state or country” (Muthesius 2000:249) that was, more often than not, expressed in terms of *brutalist* architecture. The latter term is derived from the French *betón brut*, meaning ‘raw concrete’, and refers to a style of late modernist architecture that emerged during the 1950s, particularly evident in the work of the French architect Le Corbusier (Stewart & McClelland 2007:12; Muthesius 2000:252). Exposed concrete, left rough and unfinished, would become the defining trait of ‘brutalism’ (Meades 2014). Although often associated with socialist utopian ideology, *betón brut* also signalled that the designer’s role had become more high-profile and more domineering than ever before (Muthesius 2000:138). The results, Muthesius (2000:138) comments, were “awe-inspiring mountains of concrete” and criticism was almost a foregone conclusion. The exemplar of this approach in terms of university architecture is Denys Lasdun’s design for the campus of the University of East Anglia (UEA) that opened in 1966 and which is overtly referenced in Meyer and van Wijk’s proposal to the RAU council in 1968 (Meyer & van Wijk 1968, Diagram S10).

UEA was celebrated by architectural journals all over the world, but also “analysed sceptically [by some] ... and unloved by a great many others” (Muthesius 2000:139). Underlying this disaffection was Reyner Banham’s (1966) popularising of the term in the title of his 1966 book *New brutalism*, where the slippage of the French *brut* into the English *brutal* shifted the denotation from “practical, honest and no-nonsense attitude” (Stewart & McClelland 2007:12) to something more sinister. Although Banham himself posited brutalism as an expression of ‘moral seriousness’ (Brutalist architecture 2016), Jonathan Meades (2014) points out that, by conflating *brut* and *brutality*, Banham handed opponents of *betón brut* “the ammunition ... of culpable aggression”. Consequently, brutalism has routinely been mocked and misunderstood.<sup>388</sup> In this vein, Theodore Dalrymple (2009) jibes that Le Corbusier was to architecture “what Pol Pot was to social reform” and denounces *betón brut* in general for its “totalitarianism ... spiritual, intellectual, and moral deformity”. Herwitz and Brink’s value judgements must therefore be understood within the broader culture of *betón brut* critique that has little, if anything, to do with Afrikaner nationalism per se.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Planned from 1957, but only completed in 1980s (Muthesius 2000:34). Gropius’s involvement with a monumental, overseas tender in a hot, dry climate perhaps fuelled Kesting’s enthusiasm to draw the master into the Southern African brief. Indeed, Muthesius (2000:36) surmises that the Baghdad project “possibly [had] more influence overseas than in the USA itself”. Arie Sharon’s Obafemi Awololo University Campus in Nigeria, referred to in Chapter One, is another example of modernist campus architecture as nation building in a hot climate (see Gitler 2011).

<sup>388</sup> In defence of the style, Meades (2014) reviews 27 examples of *betón brut* that he claims “produced some of the most sublime, awe-inspiring buildings on the planet”.

<sup>389</sup> Muthesius, at the time of writing his book, taught at the University of East Anglia. His account of the “quagmire of indecision, mistrust and rows” (Muthesius 2000:142) that accompanied the planning and execution of this campus, as well as the hubris of the architect, makes for interesting reading within the context of the RAU project. Muthesius is clearly sceptical of Lasdun’s affection for Le Corbusier, and he supplies ample photographic evidence of the ‘brutalism’ of the monumental, concrete structures (that he wordlessly juxtaposes with the mock-medieval academic gowns of the institution designed by Cecil Beaton), but he does *not* attempt to interpret the ‘ziggurat’ buildings as an expression of paranoid English nationalism.

In Muthesius's compendium of post-war university education and architecture, Meyer and van Wijk's Johannesburg campus design is mentioned in passing: once in the frontispiece as an example of the generic 'central type' of university plan,<sup>390</sup> and again briefly in a discussion of campus designs that present "an agglomeration of separate parts" — in this case, "the open forum" (Muthesius 2000:257).<sup>391</sup> Arguably, the architects' failure to publish, in the public domain, a detailed account of their project (Peters 2011a:78) has contributed to the pernicious local mythology surrounding the RAU agenda.<sup>392</sup> However, in 1997, Meyer (1997b: 69-77) elucidates the "idea behind the architecture" in an edited volume of essays on the life of Gerrit Viljoen (Louw & Van Rensburg 1997). Herwitz might have done well to peruse this piece; although it is an after-the-fact and often poetic reflection on the completed design,<sup>393</sup> Meyer nevertheless faithfully revisits his original vision.

The recorded reaction, at the time, to Meyer's proposed design is of interest. About two weeks after the Council presentation in June 1968, at which the architects' development plan and in particular Diagram S.5 was recommended for approval (Notule ... 17 Junie 1968:4), a follow-up discussion took place (RAU Samesprekings ... 4 Julie 1968). There were ten people present, including Viljoen (who chaired the meeting), two RAU lecturers, a consulting engineer, the architects, and two external consultants — Professor DM Calderwood and Professor EWN Mallows — both from the WITS Department of Architecture. Wilfred Mallows had been appointed at WITS in 1957 and would become the first Professor of Town and Regional Planning in South Africa. Doug Calderwood's appointment was more recent, prior to which he had the distinction of becoming the first Doctor of Architecture in South Africa (Lexicon University of the Witwatersrand ... [sa]). The external consultants were, therefore, both English, and distinguished.

The conversation opens with Calderwood's congratulations to the architects for their "magnificent and inspired idea" (RAU Samesprekings ... 4 Julie 1968:1), which, if executed, would be "without compare in the Republic". This fulsome praise is seconded by Mallows, but abruptly followed by the Rector, who wastes no time to express "his fear that the concatenated [*aaneengeskalde*] building complex would result in an overpowering and depressing effect that would make a person, surrounded by such massive building structures, feel utterly lost" (RAU Samesprekings ... 4 Julie 1968:1). Notably, this concern had been emphasised in the Development Plan (Viljoen 1968:7-8), and one intuits a level of irritation that this stipulation — that the university should not signify 'a colossal human factory' — had been ignored. But Calderwood immediately rushes to the defence of Diagram S.5, protesting that the merit of the plan "was precisely the effect of monumentality": diversification was not required in the structure itself, but could be introduced, he suggested, by means of "exhibitions, etc", and colour coding, to enhance the user experience.

With regard to the side-lined church spire, Calderwood explains that "the structure will, in any event, be so monumental that a tower will not only be unnecessary, but may in fact detract from the overall impression" (RAU Samesprekings ... 4 Julie 1968:2). Mallows then diplomatically suggests that "a high, characteristic structure might be beneficial from a city planning point of view", and that the Administration block could fulfil this function,<sup>394</sup> at which point an unidentified person (or persons) suggests that,

A possible symbolic interpretation of the ring structure is that it may signify a *laer* by which means the University wished to protect itself from being assailed from without. However, an open gateway was left for selected admission, because the University cannot dare isolate itself from the world, and welcomes external influences that promote and build upon that which is its own (RAU Samesprekings ... 4 Julie 1968:2).

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<sup>390</sup> Identified in the caption as the "Johannesburg Rand Universiteit" [*sic*] (Muthesius 2000:285), a variation on Herwitz's 'Rand African University'. Muthesius does, however, get it right in the text.

<sup>391</sup> Of interest is that Muthesius's reproduces the architect's original, expansive vision (dated 1970) of the RAU complex on page 255; the planned piazza ('town square') and opera house complex are clearly visible, as well as the five radial structures that were to house medical, sciences, engineering and humanities faculties. Only one extruding 'arm' was completed; RAU never acquired a faculty of medicine.

<sup>392</sup> For a recent, and thorough (but rather belated), account of the architectural planning and execution of the RAU campus, see Peters (2011b; 2011c).

<sup>393</sup> For example: "... a dynamic space that is at once closed and open, massive and intimate, breath-taking and relaxing, strong, yet gentle, as its various levels of wave-like greensward and foliage rush in with a sound like foaming breakers as they surge past a harbour wall" (Meyer 1997b:77).

<sup>394</sup> Neither the city square spanning the road, nor the tower block, materialised. It is of interest that Peters (2011b:45), who interviewed Viljoen in 2002, relates that "the concept of an administrative tower as the visual landmark of a university bordered on the anathema to Viljoen, who was aghast by such a choice at UPE".

Because it is not recorded who proffered this comment, nor whether the observation was made in response to a question or complaint — or perhaps as an appeasement for the exclusion of the tower — no conclusions can be drawn with regard to the import of the statement. It is not recorded whether anyone agreed, or disagreed, or whether, in the opinion of the meeting, the commitment to ‘welcome external influences’ surpassed the need for control. The comment hangs in mid-air, and is followed immediately by Calderwood praising the proximity of the student residences to the library, thus enabling female students to use the facility at night (RAU Samesprekings ... 4 Julie 1968:2). Nevertheless, someone voiced it: the sense of being under siege, and the wish to exclude. However, no useful meaning can be attached to the reference to a ‘laer’, except to point out that it reflected neither the brief to the architects, nor the latter’s rationale for the proposed plan.

On the other hand, what *is* clear from the Minutes is that it was Calderwood who vigorously defended the monumentality of the architecture and consequently, were one able to suspend one’s disbelief, one may even conclude that Herwitz is correct in his assumption that the architects ganged up on Viljoen. If this is the case, then RAU has an English ‘liberal’ academic to thank for its building. It is also Calderwood that ensured that no phallogocentric tower was erected, thereby saving RAU from future ridicule in one respect, but, in doing so, also caused the wished-for vision — namely the ascendancy of Christian education — to be suppressed.

However, Cas Nel (2015), who as a young partner of Jan van Wijk, sat in on planning meetings where Viljoen was present, confirms WO Meyer’s description of the Rector as an intimidating man that, according to Nel, not only displayed a formidable intellect but was unnervingly knowledgeable about other people’s fields of expertise and cut his opponents off at the knees. It is, therefore, somewhat odd that — after Viljoen’s first salvo — what was termed a ‘consultation’ [*samespreking*] by and large consisted of Calderwood taking ownership of the proceedings. If, as Nel suggests, Viljoen was able to synthesise complex webs of argument and counter-argument, the Rector may have used Calderwood as a vicarious champion for a plan that might not have conformed to the values of all the interested parties in the meeting. The fact of the matter is that, if the RAU building indeed opposed the liberalism of the University of the Witwatersrand, a member of the latter institution, at Viljoen’s invitation and with high irony, sanctioned this opposition.<sup>395</sup>

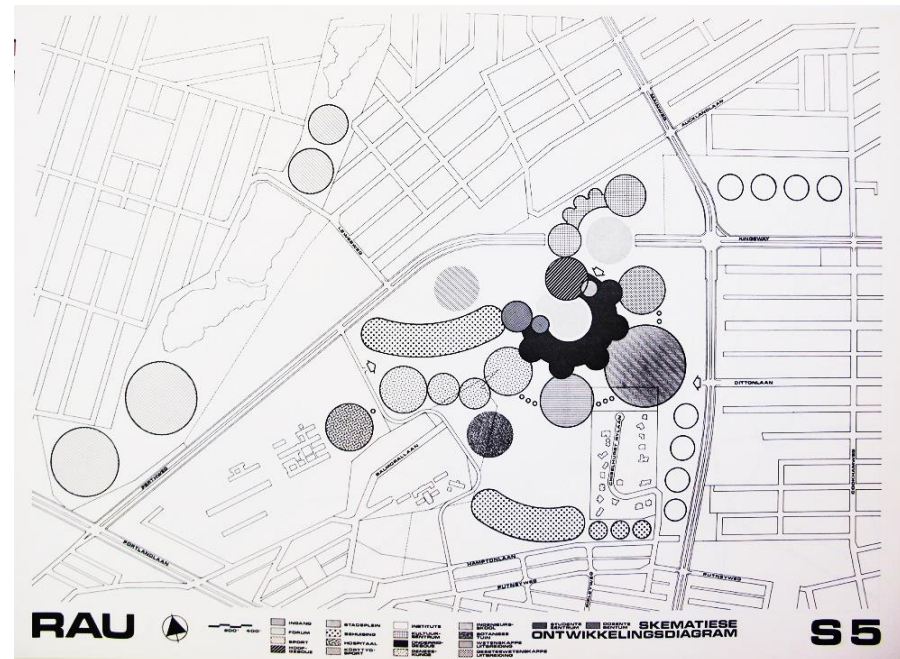
Consequently, what RAU was ‘given’ at this meeting was a peculiarly pagan, and, in terms of symbolic value, yonic structure (Figs. 180-182). Herwitz, had he wished to do so, could easily have made an argument that the design signifies the act of conception, the undulating U-shaped construction serving as a pulsating womb into which semen joyously spurts from the central fountain. Indeed, if one desires a semiotic explication, there is arguably far more evidence for the latter interpretation than for a truculent re-enactment of the Great Trek.<sup>396</sup>

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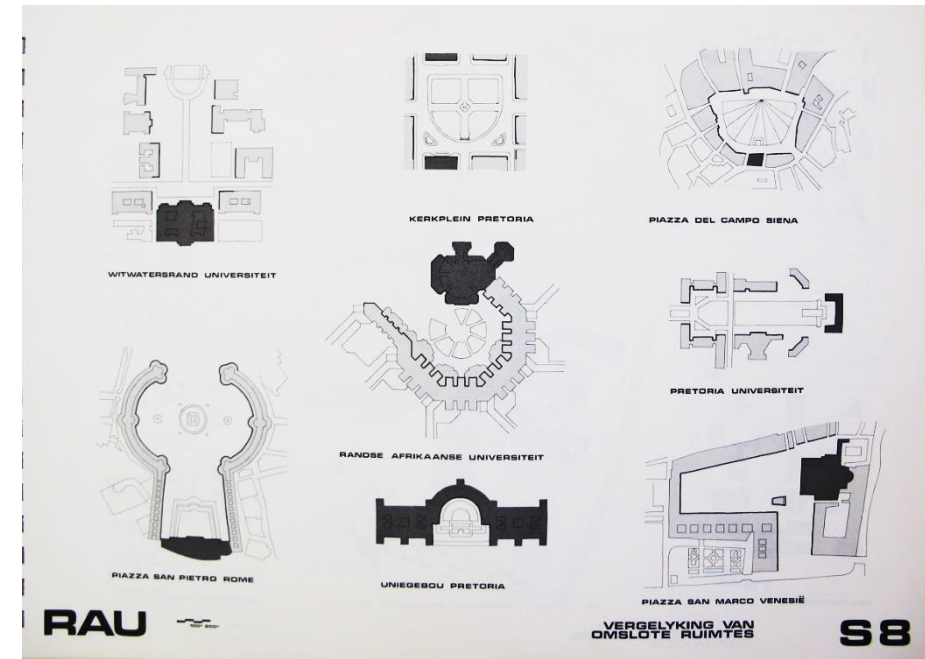
<sup>395</sup> Viljoen, at the end of the meeting, thanks Calderwood and Mallows for their “friendly willingness to assist with the critical analysis of the long term plan” (RAU Samesprekings ... 4 Julie 1968:4). Whether Viljoen, as chair of the meeting, requested this analysis, or whether it was Meyer who recommended Calderwood and Mallows’s evaluation, is open to speculation. See footnote 409.

<sup>396</sup> See Meyer’s (1997b:77) verbal metaphor of foaming waves rushing into a harbour. Even Peters (2011b:45) refers to the “orifice” — not arch, window or entrance — of the U-shaped structure.





**Figure 182** WO Meyer, in collaboration with Jan van Wijk (designers), campus concept for RAU (Meyer & van Wijk 1968, Diagram S5, collection of Cas Nel).



**Figure 181** WO Meyer, in collaboration with Jan van Wijk (designers), comparison of pre-existing architectural 'wombs' within the context of the RAU design (Meyer & van Wijk 1968, Diagram S8, collection of Cas Nel).



**Figure 180** Photographer unknown, WO Meyer, in collaboration with Jan van Wijk (designers), interior of RAU auditorium, c1975 (collection of Cas Nel).

## 5.5 God and grid — the RAU visual system

### 5.5.1 A retreat into conservatism: RAU identity 1967-1974

However one interprets the symbolism of the building, the new RAU campus was officially opened on 24 May 1975, and client and designer were in warm accord. Walter Peters (2011a:69-70) relates the mutual backslapping at the opening ceremony and Viljoen ([sa]:6), at the end of his article on the planning of the university, adds a handwritten note:

Now the building work has also been completed, and it can be vouchsafed that the architects succeeded superbly in incorporating all the requirements demanded of them by the planning committee into this grand scheme.

Finally, and of considerable importance to the ‘grand scheme’, was its corporate identity programme. Viljoen ([sa]:4) makes a point of listing all the “consultants and experts” brought into the project; in addition to advisors on traffic control, landscape and interior designers, a consultant was also appointed “to advise on the design of way finding and signage” (Viljoen’s [sa]:5). Regrettably, although the architectural planning and building process is documented in detail, evidence of the decisions made regarding the signage are almost non-existent; moreover, the minutes of the meeting — on 24 July 1974 — at which the signage programme was presented and, one has to assume, was approved, are missing from the bound volume in the UJ Rare Books Collection. However, a copy of the agenda survives, and this document identifies the designer of the signage programme as Ernst de Jong Studios. Happily, the Addendum containing the outline of the programme found its way into the bound volume, and, although there is no record of the comment on the latter, it is of interest to note what was presented to the meeting.

Besides the reams of technical data, what strikes the viewer is the application of a revised RAU logo on the proposed signage (Fig. 206). In the year after the official opening of the university, the original blue ‘atom’ logo had been given a rather abrupt make-over. Although the parties responsible, and the reasons for the change, remain unknown, someone was clearly paying attention to the visual identity of the emerging institution. By May 1967, the upbeat tagline referencing the ‘unknown’ had already disappeared but the original symbol was still used on official stationery and appeared as part of the masthead of the 2 May 1969 issue of the RAU student magazine, *Die Heraut*. However, two weeks later it had been replaced, in the *Die Heraut* masthead, by a device in which the ‘atom’ signifier had been reduced in size, and made subservient to a stylised book, both symbols being incorporated into a shield device underpinned by a heraldic scroll containing the maxim: *Diens deur kennis* [Service through knowledge] (Figs. 185 & 190). The corporate colour had changed from a bright blue to a dull green. This green logo was used consistently and extensively for the next five years. Notably, the archival copy of *Die Heraut* featuring the original logo has a sticker displaying the new green badge firmly glued over, and therefore obliterating, the original, blue disc (Fig. 189).<sup>397</sup>

The green badge is disappointing in terms of innovative trademark design, but nevertheless of interest with regard to its visual rhetoric. The primary argument that it makes is that of a return to the traditional medieval heraldry used by other universities in South Africa; rather than setting itself apart, RAU now chose to appear to be as ancient and, by association, as august as its antecedents.<sup>398</sup> While simplification of the heraldic elements is a nod in the direction of modernity, the re-insertion of a motto, inscribed, moreover, on a scroll, signals a withdrawal into conservatism, which is reiterated by the message of the motto itself. Students and staff were no longer exhorted to explore the mysteries of the universe, but to ingest existing knowledge in order to *serve*, presumably God. Within this context, the stylised book takes on the

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<sup>397</sup> Since the University was actively acquiring books at this stage, many older publications in the UJ Libraries — at the time of writing — continue to display the green badge, which was affixed to the covers of all printed matter.

<sup>398</sup> Including the *Goudstadse Onderwyskollege*, whose green, heraldic device (Fig. 183) the RAU logo now closely resembled.

quality of a Bible, the *codex* format design traditionally signifying Christianity.<sup>399</sup> Here the putative Bible is placed on an invisible pulpit, raised above and beyond the 'heart of the forum', namely scientific enquiry, and the view is not *into*, but *up* to the open volume. What is more, the pages of the book are dark and arched, imparting a menacing quality to the pictogram rather than the idea of the illuminating light of knowledge (Fig. 185).

The reason for the retreat into defensive mediocrity is not spelled out, and it is beyond the scope of this study to pursue the matter in any detail. However, some points are of interest, the first being that the monumental Auckland Park campus was still being constructed, and RAU, for eight years, operated from temporary premises in a brewery — far longer than the period initially anticipated. It might have been difficult to impart a sense of *gravitas* to the academic programme, a predicament that the abstract logo, carrying no immediate reference to scholarly excellence, did little to counter. Consequently, it may have been decided to signify more directly that the institution was not a new-fangled, fly-by-night college, but a *bona fide* university (with a *bona fide* heraldic device). Clearly, there was still the need to appear *modern*, thus the elements are simplified, rather than decoratively illustrative as on, for example, the UNISA device, a compromise that somewhat ironically denies both modernism *and* history in the RAU version.

This being said, it remains unknown who advised the RAU Council on the university's corporate identity, or who may have had, perhaps even informally, an influence on the graphic design elements of the institution's brand. One possibility might be the editorial team that put together the *Die Heraut*. The latter started publication in August 1968, and the last editions of this year, edited by one Joep Joubert, were printed on glossy paper and displayed a fresh, modern layout that utilised condensed, sans serif headings and grid-like columns of flush left, ragged right sans serif text (Fig. 178). However, when Joubert is replaced by Gustaf Pienaar, early in 1969, the overall appearance of the newspaper reverts to a sombre, traditional format of Times New Roman, justified, dense columns of text, and cheap newsprint. The change from a youthful-looking publication to one that was indiscernible from a staid church circular coincided with the disappearance of the 'atom' and the arrival of the 'school badge' logo on the masthead. It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that Pienaar might have had a hand in both transitions (Figs. 186 & 187).

Without embarking upon a history of student politics in the 1960s, it is nevertheless important to note that the years 1967 to 1969 had been a watershed moment with regard to resistance movements in South Africa. Whilst there had always been a small minority of radical students influenced by Marxist ideas on the WITS campus, the arrival of Rick Turner from the Sorbonne in late 1967 allowed ideas of the 'new left' to find a powerful voice within this group (National Union ... [sa]). Amongst other activities, Turner was a contributor to the publications of the *Study project on Christianity in apartheid society* (SPRO-CAS),<sup>400</sup> and he advocated more radical actions than those prescribed by traditional liberalism (Richard Albert David Turner 2008). The year 1969 would also see Steve Biko break away from the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) to form the South African Students Organisation (SASO) owing to the domination of white individuals in the former body and its failure to act in a radical manner in issues pertaining to black students (National Union ... [sa]).

It is therefore not inconceivable that a young, Christian Afrikaans student leader might feel the need to signal RAU's opposition to, in the main, Marxism, especially as it pertained to the church. It might have been felt that the 'atom' logo, referencing science, not God, and making apparent the forces of nature that operated independently of a Christian deity, might in fact be more appropriate to signify NUSAS rather than an institution that, in the opinion of the student editor, had as its aim conservative, Christian values (Fig. 188). Abstraction reeked of the European avant-garde, perennially associated with the left, and the colour blue too ungrounded, too suggestive of freedom of thought and also identical to the corporate colours of what was now increasingly regarded as 'the enemy', namely WITS.

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<sup>399</sup> During the rise of Christianity, pagan writings were traditionally presented on scrolls, whereas Christians sought the *codex* — sheets of parchment folded and stitched together like modern books — to distance themselves from the pagan format. Meggs (1998:37) thus points out that, "Graphic format ... became a symbol of religious belief". Indeed, Christianity elevated books to far greater importance than their roles in the ancient world. What is, of course, of interest is that the 'pagan' scroll is also present in this emblem, but subservient to the Christian 'book'.

<sup>400</sup> SPRO-CAS was established in 1969 by the South African Council of Churches and the Christian Institute of Southern Africa. It focused on the need for change in South Africa, examining economics, education, law, politics, sociology and the Church and marks a critical stage in the birth of the Black Consciousness Movement (The Study project ... 2015).

While this account is only supposition, the change was nevertheless made and clearly regarded as permanent; it was, amongst other things, applied to the institution's crockery (Fig. 184). The unexpected discovery, by the author, of a branded saucer of the now defunct *Goudstadse Onderwyskollege* (Fig. 183), revealed that the green RAU device not only duplicated the corporate colours of its forerunner and ally in Johannesburg, but also closely copied the motto of religious servitude and 'school badge' rhetoric of the latter. What Viljoen thought of the change, remains unknown. Considering the modernist nature of the development plan that he had just facilitated (Fig. 178), it is difficult to imagine that he found the heraldic symbol either appropriate or attractive, let alone that he requested the adaptation. Viljoen may have been able to side-step the church tower, using Calderwood as his front man, but perhaps the call to alter the logo was not a battle that he was prepared to fight at that point. It must be assumed that the implementation required the approval of the rector, and maybe Viljoen conceded to the backward-looking device secure in the knowledge that logos can be updated more readily than concrete edifices, to which endeavour he was committing most of his time.

### 5.5.2 Going global — Colin Bridgeford's vision for RAU: 1974-c1990

Whatever the reasons for the school badge phase may have been, an opportunity to rehabilitate the logo arose when the building, nearing completion in 1974, required a wayfinding system. As has been pointed out, Viljoen had been concerned that the individual should not be 'lost and confused' in the monumental structure, and the architects were tasked to bring on board an expert consultant in this field. As Nel (2014\_08 December\_04:50) suggests, van Wijk's shared swimming interests with the de Jong brothers may have played some role in the appointment of EDJS. De Jong had designed van Wijk's own company logo, which was already in use when Nel joined the firm in 1966 and, after Nel became a partner, EDJS updated the logo several times (Nel 2014\_08 December\_05:00-06:00). However, Nel (2014\_08 December\_02:45), as a student editor of the UP publication *Trek* in 1963, had independently admired de Jong's modernist style and approached the artist to design a cover for the magazine, which he promptly agreed to do (Fig. 3). Overall, EDJS was, by the early 1970s, a highly regarded design studio run by a native South African and it therefore had much to recommend it to the Planning Committee.

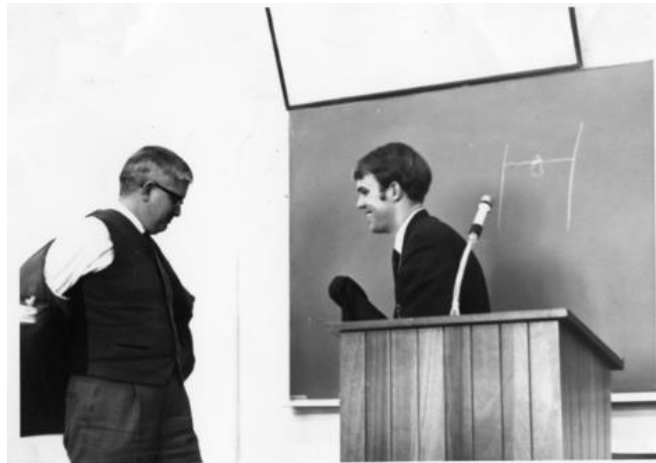
Exactly how the process was managed remains unclear — a perennial reminder that graphic design, as a corporative function, receives short shrift in official records. Nel (2014\_08 December\_21:07), at first, asserted that de Jong received the brief from the architects and had had no contact with the client. However, de Jong (2015\_28 June\_20:48-21:35) remembers meeting Viljoen in the Rector's office — a "small office", therefore most likely at the brewery — at which time, de Jong recalls, Viljoen tasked him to construct a *totaalbeeld* [comprehensive identity] for the institution. De Jong was immensely impressed by Viljoen's intelligence and courteous manner, and repeatedly stated that the core injunction from Viljoen was that the identity should be *modern*.

In a subsequent conversation, Nel (2015\_02 July\_00:29), who had given the matter some thought, recollected that there had, indeed, been a meeting with Viljoen at which de Jong had been present.<sup>401</sup> The designer had been "very outspoken" (Nel 2015\_08 December\_37:20) with regard to his dislike of the existing logo, a remark that suggests that EDJS may have been expected to incorporate the objectionable item, unchanged, in its signage programme. Although Nel (2015\_08 December\_38:00) himself states that the logo "was a given", de Jong would have put this rigid injunction out of his mind even as he left the meeting. Unable to redesign the symbol from scratch, he nevertheless undertook, in Nel's (2015\_08 December\_38:14) words, to "rearrange" it. De Jong (2015\_28 June\_20:48-21:35) confirms that this was, typically, how he dealt with briefs — overruling the client's (to de Jong's mind) limited vision and often going well beyond the original framework of the tender.

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<sup>401</sup> There is no record of this meeting, or who else attended it. De Jong must have made the Rector's acquaintance at some point in the project since Viljoen, according to de Jong, undertook to champion the EDJS-directed bank note designs fifteen years later.





**Figure 187** Photographer unknown, Viljoen removing his own jacket in exchange for the blazer presented to him by the RAU Student Representative Council (Student representative ... 1969).



**Figure 185** Photographer unknown, Viljoen wearing the blazer displaying the 'school badge' logo, August 1969 (Prof. G. van N. Viljoen. 25 August ... [sa]).



**Figure 186** The 'school badge' logo printed on RAU crockery, a serendipitous discovery during a visit to Ms Lizzy Montshiwa, Emdeni, Soweto, 2016 (photograph by the author).



**Figure 183** Detail of logo of the Goudstadse Onderwyskollege on item of crockery (photograph by the author).



**Figure 184** The green 'school badge' logo applied to an invitation to the 1970 RAU Graduation Ceremony (UJ Rare Books Collection, PJ Meyer Collection). When reduced, the open book starts to resemble a bat or, rather curiously, Viljoen's moustache.



**Figure 188** Designer unknown, cover of *Die Heraut*, 29 August 1968 (UJ Rare Books Collection, PJ Meyer Collection). The atom logo had been covered by a disc bearing the 'school badge' logo. Notably, this edition carried a lead article by the first RAU Chancellor, Nico Diederichs, who was "inclined to mobilise racist concepts or divine sanction" (Louw 2004:28) in the formulation of the apartheid concept.



**Figure 190** Designer unknown, spread from *Die Heraut*, 08 August 1969 (UJ Rare Books Collection, PJ Meyer Collection). A disconnect exists between the editorial content (that warns about the lapsed morals of Western youth and threatens students who fail to adhere to the dress code of the university) and the visual rhetoric of advertisers.



**Figure 189** Designer unknown, cover of *Die Heraut*, 21 May 1969 (UJ Rare Books Collection, PJ Meyer Collection). Although the logo and typography have become more conservative, the publication promotes cigarette smoking amongst young Afrikaners by accepting advertising from the United Tobacco Company.



However, the instruction was conveyed, de Jong would have been given the same briefing materials issued to the architects in which the call for modernity is repeatedly spelled out. Whether reconsideration of the logo was a tacit understanding between Viljoen and de Jong, or de Jong and the architects, or the inevitable result of the process of developing the *totaalbeeld* remains unknown. Since there is no surviving brief for the signage system, it is not possible to determine to what extent de Jong exceeded or subverted his tender.

Suffice to say that, according to Nel (2015\_08 December\_18:20), the solution presented to the client was extremely well-received, accepted unanimously and without any changes (Figs. 191, 192, 199 & 200). While the dark green was retained as the RAU corporate colour, the 'school badge' was jettisoned, and replaced with a more robust version of the original 'atom' design. Thus, although the logo that most RAU alumni associate with the institution appears in the EDJS portfolio of corporate identities, it is not an altogether original design. The visual system itself was also not designed by de Jong himself, but by the studio manager of EDJS, Colin Bridgeford.

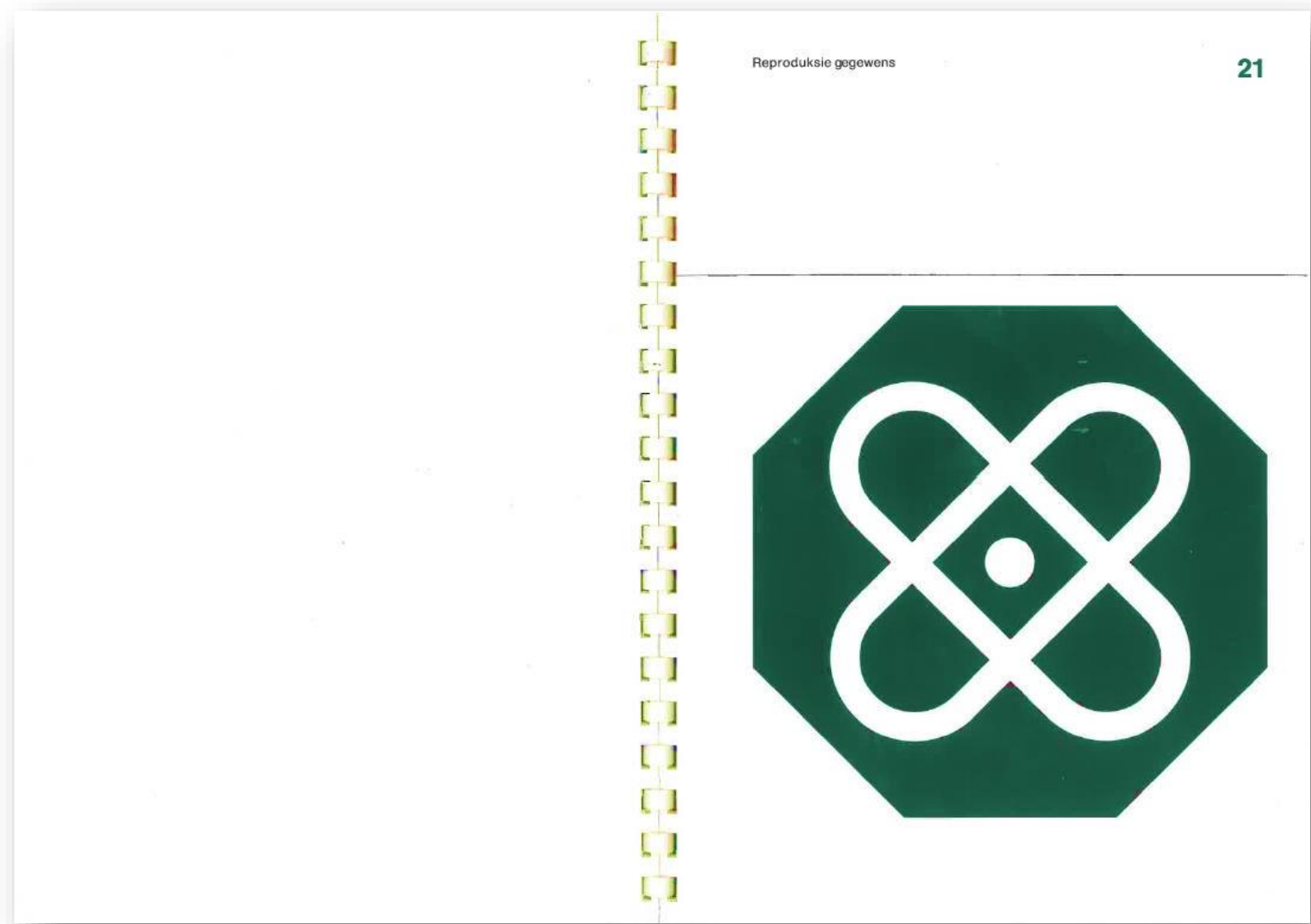
Nel (2015\_02 July\_b\_57:42), when asked about the work-in-progress of the visual system, recalled an "unbelievably talented" young designer to whom de Jong often deferred in meetings. Nel identified Bridgeford from a photograph and Bridgeford (2015\_17 July) himself subsequently confirmed that the RAU identity had been his project, hastening to add, however, that all EDJS outputs were a "combined effort". Bridgeford, by all accounts rather reticent, thus operated as a foil to de Jong's flamboyant personality. De Jong was, essentially, the impresario who provided the necessary rhetoric, style and ambition to acquire important commissions and to persuade clients that the EDJS solution was not only a necessary business function, but that it would enhance the client's enterprise by being associated with the de Jong legend. The actual *content* of the experience was, however, provided by the troupe, of which Bridgeford was, in the early 1970s, the star performer. No doubt de Jong exercised quality control, but his importance to the undertaking was that he, as Hoekstra has remarked, provided the ideal 'climate' for highly talented young designers to channel their skills and knowledge of international design trends into memorable and even iconic graphic design experiences, one of which was the RAU brand.

The EDJS visual identity for RAU is notable in that it demonstrates an important shift in the style and design philosophy of both the studio and, more broadly, mainstream graphic design in South Africa in the 1970s (Figs. 194 & 197). Whereas *Lantern* and other outputs of EDJS in the 1960s — most notably those designed by Hoekstra — reflect a personal, idiosyncratic approach typical of early American modernism, the RAU identity is evidence of the turn, world-wide, to the tenets of the ITS. Swiss graphic designers, in the 1950s, extracted ideals of objectivity and neutrality from the radical innovations of the avant-garde and converted these ideals into "rational, systematic approaches that centered on the grid" (Armstrong 2009:9). American modernism would not remain immune to this homogenising force, as is evident in the work of Jaqueline Casey, James K Fogelman (1919-2003), Tom Geismar (1931- ) and Massimo Vignelli (1931- ). Through zealous adherents such as Vignelli — a co-founder of Unimark International — the USA would play an important role in spreading the gospel of the 'Swiss Style' to South Africa. Bridgeford, who designed the impressive EDJS corporate identity guidelines (Figs. 194 & 198), was clearly in touch with, and excited by, the universalising possibilities of the ITS, so much so that EDJS "was given flack" (Bridgeford 2015\_07 July) when its trademark design for the Sunnypark Shopping Centre (Fig. 195)<sup>402</sup> in Pretoria too closely resembled that of the 1972 Munich Summer Olympics (Fig. 196)<sup>403</sup> — an event that de Jong himself attended and from which he gleaned branding items of which official posters survive in the de Jong collection.

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<sup>402</sup> Opened in 1974 (Sunnypark ... 2017).

<sup>403</sup> Bridgeford does not deny the appropriation, merely stating that he was 'very careful' after this incident. Notes taken during a telephone conversation with Bridgeford (in Groenewald 2015\_07 July) suggest that it was the architect Monty Sack (1924-2009) that took EDJS to task over the matter.



**Figure 191** EDJS (studio), Colin Bridgeford (designer), logo for RAU, page from RAU corporate manual, c1975 (collection Cas Nel, used with permission).



The visual system for Munich remains a superlative example of the application of the principles of the ITS to a complex communication problem and the logo in question had been designed by Coordt von Mannstein, a member of Otl Aicher's team at *Büro Aicher* (Otl Aicher ... 2008).<sup>404</sup> Aicher (1922-1991) was a pioneer and designer *par excellence* of the “closed identity system” (Meggs & Purvis 2006:411) and his visual program for the German airline *Lufthansa*, designed a decade earlier in 1962 (in collaboration with his *Gruppe E5* student group at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung*, Ulm), is an iconic prototype for the genre (Fig. 193). Whereas Chermayeff and Geismar conventionalised the abstract trademark, *Lufthansa's* identification program, although utilising the narrative symbol of a flying crane, pursued the absolute uniformity of an entire system; grid systems and detailed typographic specifications were worked out to take into account every visual communication need (Meggs & Purvis 2006:411). Aicher's *Lufthansa* identity, set out in meticulous detail in the corporate manual, is therefore hailed as “one of the most groundbreaking corporate design solutions of the 20th century” (*Lufthansa and graphic design ... [sa]*).<sup>405</sup> As such, it could serve as a sophisticated exemplar for the identity of a ‘modern’ university.

What is also noteworthy, and relevant to the present study, is that this celebrated campaign, although forever associated with Aicher's name, was not the work of Aicher alone. The effort relied heavily on Aicher's students and colleagues at Ulm, who are occasionally (but not always) acknowledged by name. Photographs of Aicher in the classroom show a forceful, muscular figure who may have exerted a similar machismo as did de Jong. Interviewed by *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen* (ZDF) in 2012, Fritz Querengässer, a typography lecturer who collaborated with Aicher on the *Lufthansa* project, still seems uncomfortable — five decades later — about his (i.e., Querengässer's) on-screen credit as “Grafik-Designer Lufthansa” (*Das Lufthansa-Design ... 2012*).

Although a standard reference work such as *Meggs' history of graphic design* (2006) cannot unravel the context of a designer's legacy in any detail, its account of the visual system for the 1972 Munich Summer Olympics, while referring to a “design team” (Meggs & Purvis 2006:417), nevertheless leaves the reader with the impression that Aicher himself designed the iconic spiral configuration. Certainly, no indication is given that this legend of identity design was fallible, and had his own attempts at an Olympic logo rejected twice (Otl Aicher ... 2008).

Thus, despite Fallan's (2010:7-8) reservations with regard to the ‘heroic approach’ in design histories, detailed biography is perhaps necessary precisely because it affords the opportunity to intrude upon what Fallan refers to as the ‘personality cult’. To this purpose, Markus Rathgeb's *Otl Aicher* (2015 [2007]) provides an extensive account of the circumstances surrounding two of the most influential branding projects in the history of graphic design, yet, somewhat ironically, the paperback version splashes the *Lufthansa* logo very large on its cover, a logo that neither Aicher nor a member of his team generated from scratch.<sup>406</sup> Conversely, the ZDF documentary shows how the team struggled to escape and improve upon architect Otto Firlé's 1918 design, returning eventually to the latter's elegant (and astonishingly modern) rendering of a stylised crane in a circle (*Das Lufthansa-Design ... 2012*). No doubt the original was ‘cleaned up’, and redrawn on a grid, but the logo design must be attributed to Firlé, not Aicher, even if the spurious attribution is implied rather than overtly stated on Rathgeb's cover.<sup>407</sup>

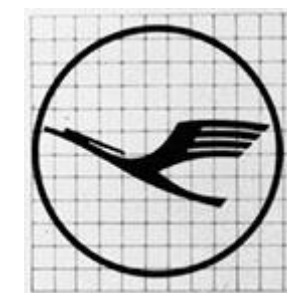
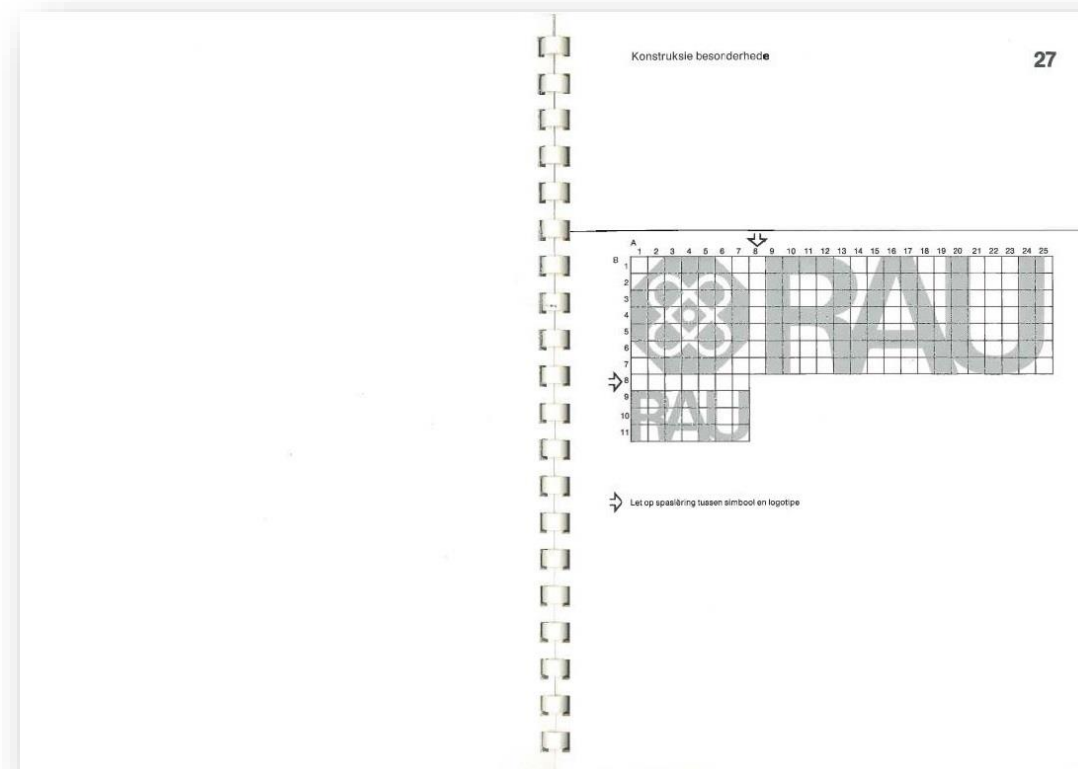
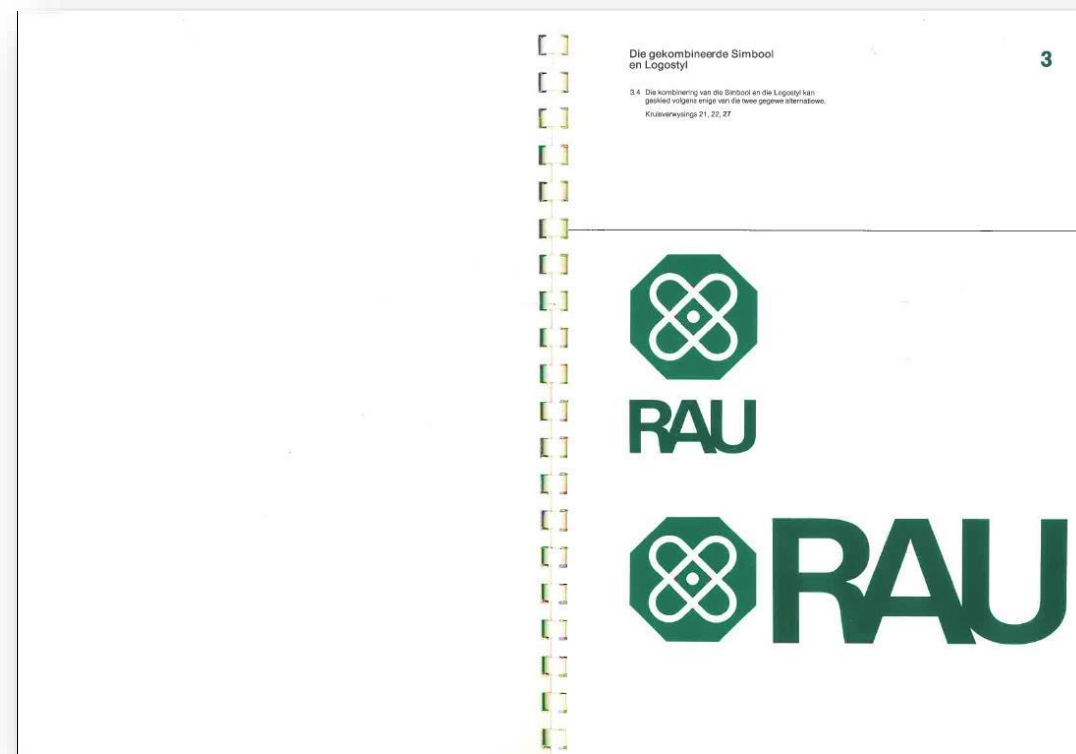
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<sup>404</sup> Von Mannstein merged Aicher's uninspired “radiant garland” (Otl Aicher ... 2008) with a spiral structure arrived at by means of a mathematical calculation.

<sup>405</sup> So much so that in 2012 (50 years after Aicher's rebranding of the airline) Lars Müller published a coffee table book, edited by Jens Müller and Karen Weiland (2012), celebrating this utopian moment of 1960s design. Although the casual observer may assume that *Lufthansa* employs Helvetica as its corporate font, the latter, according to Hans Stol (1999), is in fact a proprietary typeface, namely *Lufthansa*, which is based on but not identical to Berthold Helvetica. A documentary compiled by *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen* (*Das Lufthansa-Design ... 2012*), does however suggest that Helvetica was used in the original design. Stol provides a useful list of corporate identities, identifying designers, colours and fonts; he also features a ‘portfolio’ of Dutch corporate identity design, including two examples of Benno Wissing's work for Total Design in 1965 (Portfolios of Dutch designers [sa]).

<sup>406</sup> The 2007 hard copy also features the crane logo, but not as prominently as the 2015 paperback version.

<sup>407</sup> Fallan might argue that it is irrelevant whether Firlé or Aicher designed the *Lufthansa* logo and that its interest for design history lies in its meaning for users. In this Fallan may be right, but trademarks do not spring from nowhere; people create them, change them, discard them and these choices are of interest to *other* people who are in the business of creating, changing and discarding the signs that shape human identity. It is often Fallan's *bête noir* — the ‘personality’ — that shapes design decisions, or makes them possible in the first place.



**Figure 193** Otl Aicher, in collaboration with *Gruppe E5* (designers), grid construction of *Lufthansa* trademark, 1962 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:410).

**Figure 192** EDJS (studio), Colin Bridgeford (designer), cover and spreads from RAU corporate manual, c1975 (collection Cas Nel).

However, while this reverse appropriation may be confusing, if not uncharacteristic, of the graphic design profession, without Aicher's intervention, both Firlé and his striking logo may have been lost. By the late 1950s, the crane had all but vanished from *Lufthansa* branding, giving way to a bland assortment of American-inspired design devices (Das Lufthansa-Design ... 2012). What the team at Ulm brought about, then, was not only to rescue the brand from mediocrity, but to reinstate an original vision that arguably drills down to the core identity, not only of the organisation but of the community that brought the latter into being. Interestingly, Robert Blinn's (2007) review of Rathgeb's book alludes to this idea, namely that,

[Aicher's] graphics that retain their impact seem to be those that explore a variety of historical antecedents and carry with them a strong set of internal rules rather than exclusively pushing the boundaries of technology and fashion.

Although EDJS, in its brief from RAU, was not presented with a forty-year old design that had emerged from one war and then traversed another, it also resuscitated a historical concept that had been diluted after its inception. Exactly what the device was that de Jong and Bridgeford inherited is, however, a matter of some conjecture. According to Nel (2015\_02 July\_a\_03:50) the official RAU logo, when de Jong was briefed, was (what Nel refers to as) the 'circlip' logo, in other words, the atom design. However, what became apparent is that Nel (2015\_02 July\_b\_01:08-14) mistakenly believes that the atom logo, which he refers to as the "new" logo, *replaced* the school badge — in Nel's opinion, the "old" logo. However, when Meyer and van Wijk received the RAU commission in 1968, the atom logo was still in official use, and they would have been supplied with branding materials that displayed the original blue device. Presumably, when the atom logo vanished in the following year and was replaced by the green school badge, the architects, who were not RAU personnel, remained unaware of the suppression of the blue orb and, if and where they encountered the 'school badge', not surprisingly — given its conservative rhetoric — incorrectly assumed that it was a remnant of an earlier and misguided attempt at university branding. Consequently, what may have transpired is that the architects provided EDJS with the original, but now defunct, blue logo. As a result, when de Jong asked whether he could redesign the logo and Viljoen insisted that the logo remain unchanged, rector and designer were quite possibly talking about two different things. However, what is curious about the story is the matter of colour. Nel (2015\_02 July\_b\_04:38-53) very confidently states that, when de Jong was given the brief, RAU's corporate colour was green and, until shown evidence to the contrary, denied that the 'circlip' logo had ever been blue. What this suggests, in turn, is that EDJS may very well have been given the official, green 'school badge' as reference, but perhaps also black-and-white photocopies of the first, circular device that had been retained, in miniature, in the shield and scroll design.

In comparison to the awkward heraldic hybrid, the EDJS logo can probably be regarded as a complete redesign, something that must have startled Viljoen if, indeed, the rector was expecting the school badge to prevail.<sup>408</sup> In Nel's (2014\_08 December\_16:50) opinion, EDJS worked from the atom logo and the designer's stroke of genius was to slice off the edges of the original circle, resulting in an octagon that "no longer spun around" (Nel 2015\_02 July\_a\_0:55), but sat firmly on the ground. For Nel (2014\_08 December\_16:55), who was never much taken with the 'circlip' device and its obscure symbolism, the integration of the atom device into the eight-sided shape was a brilliant solution, because, "suddenly, the logo just *worked!*".

Although Nel's observation is made with the benefit of hindsight, an interesting question that arises when considering this apparently inspired decision to exchange the circle for an octagon is whether Bridgeford's RAU logo perhaps paid more than just passing homage to its celebrated precursor, the Chase Manhattan Bank symbol. Bridgeford was aware of the Munich Olympic symbol and does not deny 'copying' it; consequently, he may have borrowed from Chase Manhattan as well. An octagon is

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<sup>408</sup> Once Nel had been made aware of the replacement of the 'circlip' logo with the school badge, he reflected that it may well have been Viljoen that sanctioned the shift to conservatism. Viljoen, according to Nel (who claims to have known the rector well), had a "huge intellect" (Nel 2015\_02 July\_b\_35:27) but was "a left-brain man" unable to make decisions that required feelings, such as in the matter of aesthetics. Consequently, a scheme of orange bookshelves in the student residences was only sanctioned by the rector once the architects had managed to present the plan as the outcome of rational thought (Nel 2015\_02 July\_b\_36:10). What this anecdote implies with regard to decisions made in terms of the greater concept of the RAU architecture, can only be surmised. Nel (2015\_02 July\_b\_36:10) nevertheless cautions against according sole agency to Viljoen in the matter of the school badge, pointing out that the RAU council, under the leadership of Piet Meyer, had considerable influence. It nevertheless remains a mystery why the design of the university logo was never discussed in council meetings.

not a copyrighted device, and the four 'arms' of the atom easily suggest its enclosure in an octagon; what is more, EDJS had previously used the octagon as an organising principle in its identity for The Oklahoman Motel, launched in the late 1960s (Fig. 2). Nevertheless, the awareness of design achievements featured in international design journals and the desire by designers on the periphery to emulate their avatars at the centre remain problematic factors at the core of the *domestication* of modernism in a local context.

Be this as it may, what EDJS provided was not only signage, but an entire corporate identity. The geometric logo, applied with precision and mathematical logic to signage and clearly set out in the corporate manual, eloquently conveys the notion of a 'modern' university, as well as Meyer's ideal of a forum where 'cross-fertilization' could take place. The 45-degree angles generated by the octagon shape (Fig. 199) not only reinforce the cross angles of the 'atom', but, according to Nel (2015\_02 July\_a\_04:09), echo the 45-degree construction angles of the building itself, while the central dot evokes the fountain at the heart of the complex. The 'arms' of the symbolic device suggest the radial nature of the campus, as it was planned (Fig. 182), although only one of the extruding corridors was eventually completed. What is interesting about the symbolic alignment of the logo to the architecture is that the atom device had been adopted by the planning committee before either Viljoen or Meyer had been appointed, and certainly before any plans for the building had been conceived. If indeed Pauw and/or Botha constructed the original, they appear to have been remarkably prescient in their anticipation of the physical identity of the completed university.

But not altogether clairvoyant. Despite the allusions to wombs suggested previously, it is perhaps unthinkable that the campus complex could have been communicated symbolically as an orb. The nature of the building argues for an angular ruggedness that a circle cannot convey. Undoubtedly, the architects were responding to the tenets of *béton brut*, but, over and above a response to an international trend, they may also have been drawn to the raw honesty of the style because it signified a no-nonsense, pioneering and morally serious identity. Afrikaners and the motley groups that comprised their antecedents had been called upon in the past to defend their integrity, indeed their very existence, and were (perhaps unconsciously) signalling that they were able to resist future onslaughts — not with peasant cunning and guerrilla warfare as before, but through the cerebral language of international design. Within the context of *brut* architecture's ability to reference, simultaneously, physical strength and utopian ideals, the closed octagon shape does — if one wishes to pursue the analogy — evoke a fortification. Notwithstanding my scepticism of Herwitz and Brink's interpretation of the campus, narratives of cultural impregnability were arguably always/already in the visual identity of the institution.

Partly, one imagines, the inclination to signal *weerbaarheid*<sup>409</sup> as opposed to an 'exploration of the unknown' was a consequence of the altered political and educational landscape in the 1970s. RAUK's first symbol was adopted in 1965 when the founders of the university were still glowing from the thrill of South Africa's transformation to an independent Republic in 1961. However, in 1966, Verwoerd was assassinated, and in 1967 the *Terrorism Act* was passed. Jonathan Cohen (2015) posits that the latter was one of the most important pieces of legislation introduced by the South African apartheid regime: it was used to prosecute various organisations and individuals who resisted state control, allowed for unlimited detention of suspects and could be used to arrest someone for almost any crime. In 1968 the government passed the *Prohibition of Improper Interference Act*, thought to have been enacted to prevent the growth of the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA), a "left-of-centre" (Saunders 1994:535) group made up of South Africans of various races, but whose founders were mostly white, English-speaking liberals (Formation of ... 2009).<sup>410</sup> The sense of 'us' and 'them', first expressed at the brewery in Braamfontein in a spirit of carnivalesque rivalry, deepened in 1969 when Biko founded SASO.

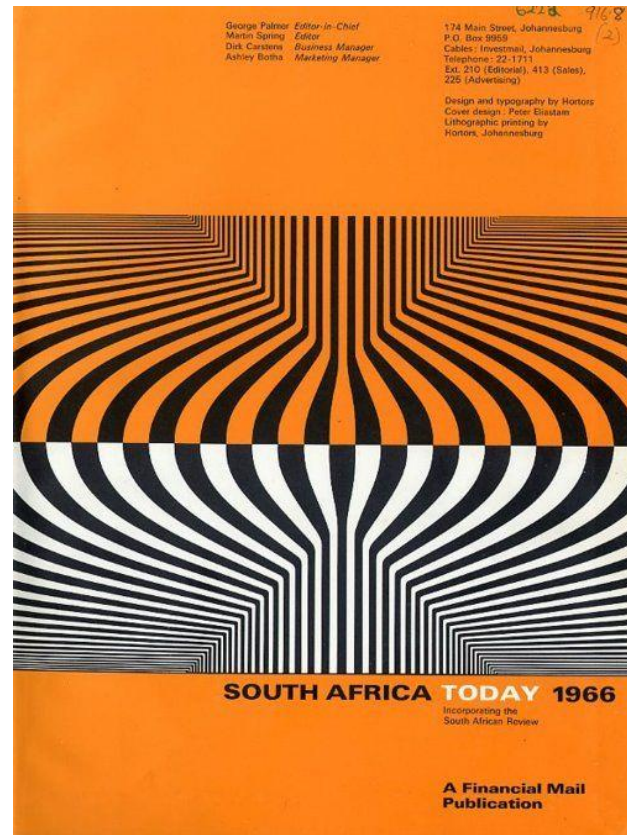
In addition, as the Auckland Park campus took shape and the school badge was raised as talisman in the fray, several watershed moments in South Africa's international affairs crowded in on the coming-of-age of the fledgling Afrikaans university. In 1970 South Africa was formally expelled from the Olympic movement; in 1971 the United Nations revoked South Africa's mandate in South West Africa; in 1974 — most likely, according to Nel (2014\_08 December\_20:16), the year in which

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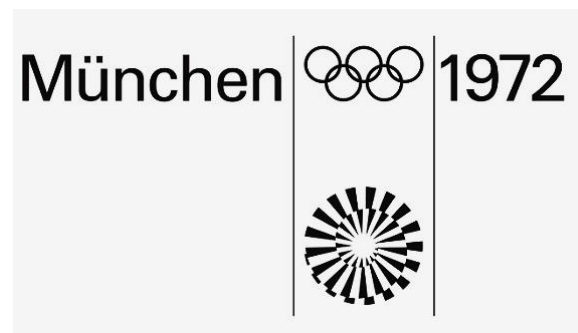
<sup>409</sup> The ability of an entity to be properly prepared to defend itself, both on a moral and physical front.

<sup>410</sup> Including the author Alan Paton, Leo Marquard (founder of NUSAS) and Margaret Ballinger, the party's first president and, according to *TIME* magazine, the "queen" and "white hope of some 24 000 000 blacks" (South Africa: queen of ... 1944) in South Africa.

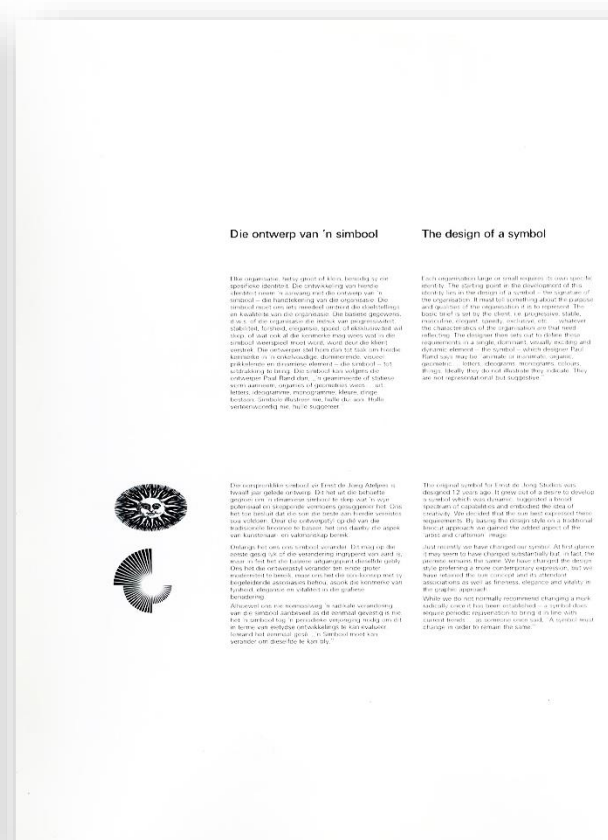
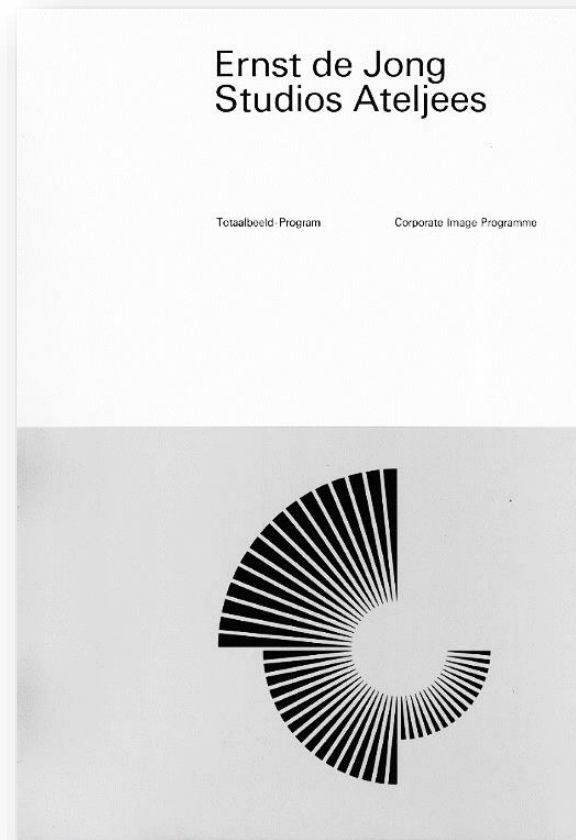




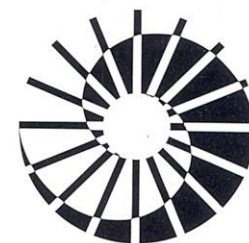
**Figure 197** Peter Eliastam (designer), cover of *South Africa today 1966* (1966) (Towards a history ... [sa]) — the only example of Eliastam’s design from the 1960s the author could locate.



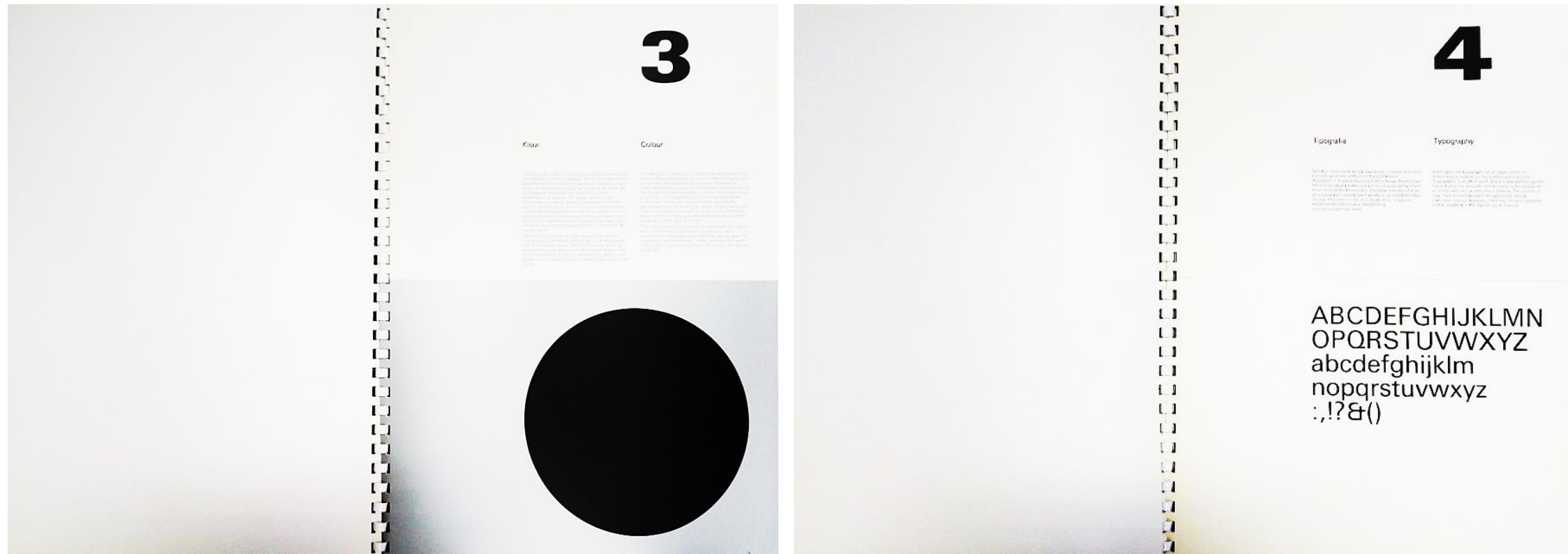
**Figure 196** Büro Aicher (studio), Coordt von Mannstein (designer), logo for 1972 Munich Summer Olympics (Memorial commemorating ... 2017).



**Figure 194** EDJS (studio), Ernst de Jong (art director), Colin Bridgeford (designer), cover and page from *Ernst de Jong Corporate Image Programme*, c1973. By this time, Colin Bridgeford had re-imagined Hoekstra’s casual smiling sun logo as a clinical, but sharply sophisticated device.



**Figure 195** EDJS (studio), Colin Bridgeford (designer), logo for the Sunnypark Shopping Centre, c1974.



**Figure 198** EDJS (studio), Ernst de Jong (art (director), Colin Bridgeford (designer), pages from *Ernst de Jong Corporate Image Programme*, c1973. The rationale for a controlled visual system is presented luxuriously and indulgently as if it were a work of art. The explanation of the role of colour in identity construction unconventionally utilises a black disc on a rich, silver background. The text, as was usual at the time, is presented in both Afrikaans and English; Gwen de Jong was probably the copywriter. Although there is no overt reference to a grid in this exposition of rational design, the organising principles and visual language of the International Style are forcefully employed (the recommended font is Helvetica). The contrast with Hoekstra's humorous, self-aware and gently mocking, promotion of EDJS in Figures 7-9 is notable.

EDJS received the brief for the RAU signage — Prime Minister Marcello Caetano was toppled in Portugal, with dramatic repercussions in its African colonies (Saunders 1994:369). Understandably, within this atmosphere of onslaught and change, a symbol of stability and order was required for the leap of faith that was RAU.

Yet, by introducing an angular device, the designers do not lose sight entirely of Meyer’s stated vision of an ‘open heart’. As is the case with the pentagon on the cover of the January/March 1961 *Lantern*, an exhaustive examination of the diverse symbolic meanings of the octagon cannot be undertaken here. Suffice to say that, by fixing on an octagon, EDJS constructs a symbol that hovers *between* the binaries of circle and square. In the number symbolism of medieval Europe eight was seen as representing cosmic balance and rebirth (Reynolds 2010). During the Renaissance

the three shapes were traditionally drawn vertically, with the circle at the top representing the cosmos, and the square placed at the bottom to represent the earth. The octagon was drawn in between as that shape that connects the two (Reynolds 2010).

The octagon can therefore be read as a signifier for *transition* — a community metamorphosing from one ontological condition to another. While the comparison may be fanciful, it is nevertheless of interest to note that the concept of the octagon as intermediary between cosmos and earth is also taken up in the *vastu-purusha* mandala (Fig. 201), a sacred shape that functions as the metaphysical plan of a Hindu temple (Kumar 2003). Both the RAU logo and mandala progress towards a central square; in the case of the latter, this inner sanctum is known as the “womb-house” (Kumar 2003) and enshrines the main deity. In the RAU logo, the connotative meaning of the central dot was, presumably, the nucleus of an atom; however, RAU students and staff members may have attributed their own meanings to the device, since it appears that no official explanation was provided.

Whether the enshrined dot in the RAU logo signified God, nuclear fission, an ovum or — as averred by Brink and Herwitz — the embattled Afrikaner, entering the inner sanctum of the mandala implied “participating in a power-field” (Kumar 2003). Consequently, the octagon — product of first and foremost the designer’s adherence to the cult of utopian modernism — retains something of the defensive heraldic rhetoric that it replaced. The octagon is not as optimistic as the original, blue orb. Indeed, it is perhaps this loss of innocent idealism that characterises the EDJS design (and consequently the RAU brand). The dark green emblem, especially in its presentation to the client as part of a closed visual system, is not only more self-assured and self-aware than the earlier blue circle, but also more intent upon control.

### **5.5.3 The will to systematise — grids as signifier of identity**

**W**ith the aim, then, of signifying control, the use of grids underpins the construction of the visual elements of the RAU program — not the open-ended and variable lattices of de Stijl that surfaced on the covers of *Lantern*, but the uncompromising ‘universal laws’ promulgated by the practitioners of the ITS. Bridgeford, in his adherence to this style, was partly employing the device in response to a graphic design trend, but also for reasons of clarity and coherence. However, with the advent of postmodern critiques of modernism, grids have prompted a culture of criticism comparable to that heaped upon *betón brut*. In her seminal text on the topic, art historian Rosalind Krauss<sup>411</sup> (1979:52, emphasis in original) posits that the grid is an emblem of modernity by being just that: “the form that is ubiquitous in the art of *our* century [i.e., the twentieth] ... By ‘discovering’ the grid, cubism, de Stijl, Mondrian, Malevich ... landed in ... the present, and everything else was declared to be the past”. In Krauss’s view, the relationship of the grid to the modern devolves from the separation of the grid from nature. The grid, for Krauss (1979:50) is ...

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<sup>411</sup> In 1976 Krauss (1941- ) co-founded the journal *October*, a politically-charged journal that introduced American readers to the ideas of French post-structuralism (Rosalind E Krauss 2015).

[f]lattened, geometricized, ordered, it is antinatural, antimimetic, antireal ... In the overall regularity of its organization, it is the result not of imitation, but of aesthetic decree.

However, information historian Hannah Higgins (2009:222-223) has challenged Krauss's position, claiming that, "Far from the geometricized, ordered, and merely flat surface proposed by Krauss ... Mondrian's paintings engender ... a state of radical flux". Higgins (2009:6-7), as Lorraine Wiid (2009:[sp]) remarks, takes it upon herself to 'rescue' the grid from whatever claims modernism has made on its behalf. Tracing its origins to brick walls and inscribed clay tablets in Sumer c3000 BCE, Higgins (2009:182) devotes a chapter of *The grid book* (2009) to type, pointing out that Johann Gutenberg's 42-line Bible was "organized on a gridded, adaptive armature" that not only allowed for standardisation of form and content, but also reproduction on a large scale, leading to what Marshall McLuhan (in Higgins 2009:185) would call the "typographic man".

Higgins (2009:9,257) argues persuasively for the grid as embedded within nature and intrinsic to human drives, and "not a mere expression of social control",<sup>412</sup> but tends to ignore examples that may undermine her thesis. Higgins (2009:191) describes Geoffroy Tory's (1480-1533) geometric construction of an 'anatomical' alphabet, but omits, for example, mention of the *Romain du Roi* typeface created by order of Louis XIV in 1692 to signify the power of the French court (Meggs & Purvis 2006:117-118). In this latter exemplar of the grid in the service of an 'aesthetic decree', the design team, headed by a mathematician, constructed each letterform on a grid of 2304 tiny squares (Macmillan 2006:93). This idea of the grid as 'social control' was exemplified by a law that made use of the *Romain du Roi*, other than by the *Imprimerie Royale*, a capital offense. Neil Macmillan (2006:25) considers the *Romain du Roi* a precursor to the rationalism exemplified by Swiss typography in the mid-twentieth century, an episode that Higgins, apart from a cursory reference to the Bauhaus and the typographer Jan Tschichold (1902-1974), never addresses.<sup>413</sup>

However, whether one agrees with Krauss or Higgins in the matter of the 'antinatural' nature of the grid, what Higgins emphasises, and what is important about her argument, is that the grid, despite its powerful presence in the rhetoric of modernity, is not a Northern European invention of the early 1900s. The preoccupation with the typographic grid in the twentieth century emerged from the nineteenth-century theory of 'conventionalisation' in which the underlying premise was that "the highest form of art was not making something look real, but the representation of it in pure geometric forms" (Alofsin 1993:120). Conventionalism was extolled by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), who, in turn, had been educated in the nineteenth-century tradition of Friedrich Froebel's Kindergarten curriculum (Hauze 2016:211-212; Higgins 2009:223) that utilised a set of educational toys comprising spheres, cylinders and cubes.<sup>414</sup> Froebel believed that playing with building blocks helped children progress from the material to the abstract; its symbolic value was a reminder of God's plan for moral and social order (Friedrich Froebel 2017; The kindergarten curriculum 2017; Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) ... 2007).<sup>415</sup>

Wright would share an affinity with a Dutch architect, JLM Lauweriks (1864-1932) (Alofsin 1993:108), who, in the 1890s, used underlying grids for defining architectural forms (Alofsin 1994:117) that, like a mandala, always began with a circle circumscribed by a square (Meggs & Purvis 2006:236). This system appealed to the German designer, Peter Behrens (1868-1940), who, Anthony Alofsin (1993:119) speculates, was not only interested in the rationality of Lauweriks's grid configuration, but also its "cosmological basis".

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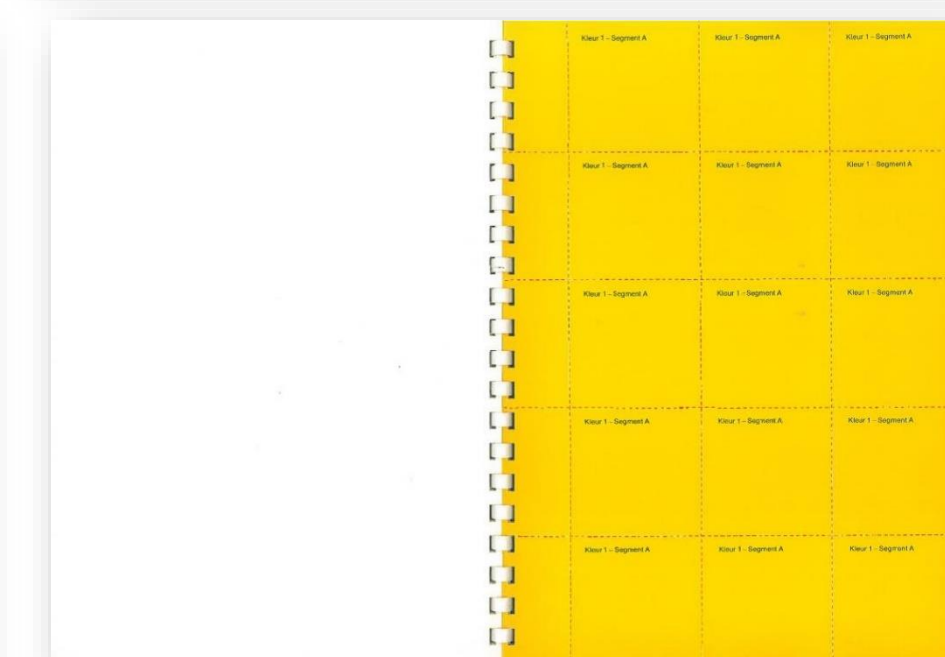
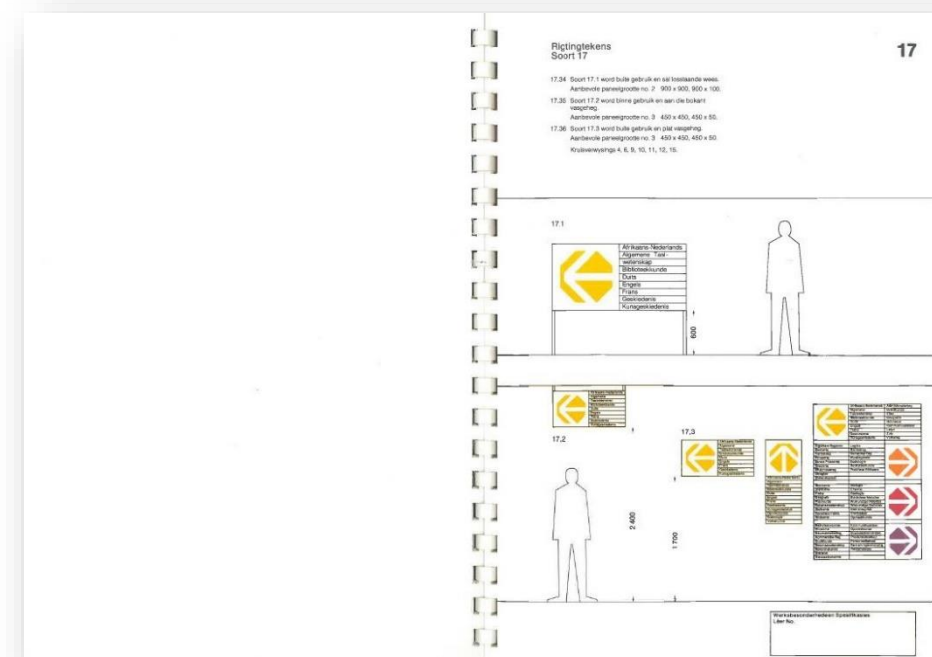
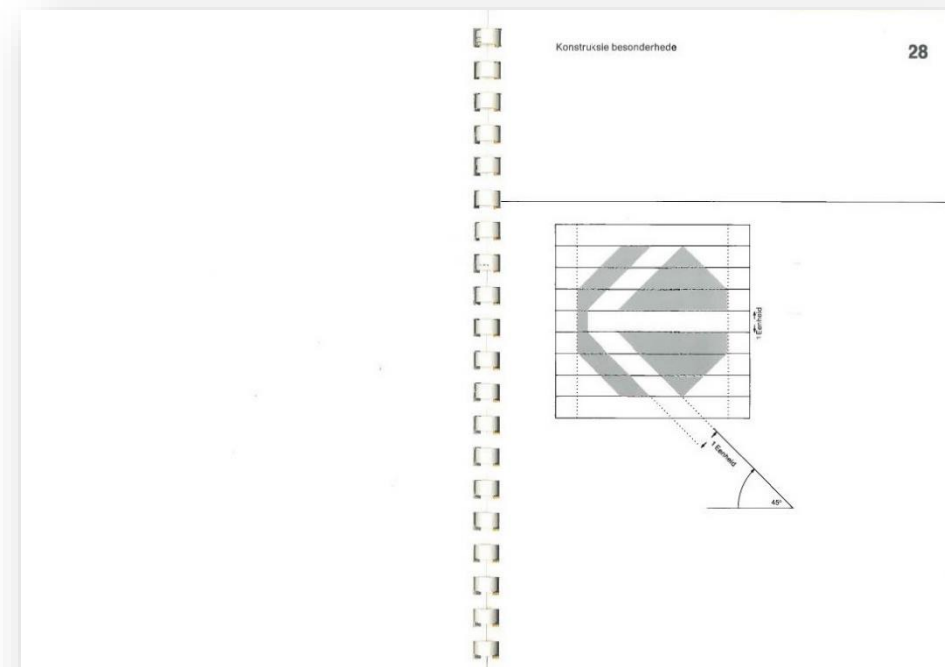
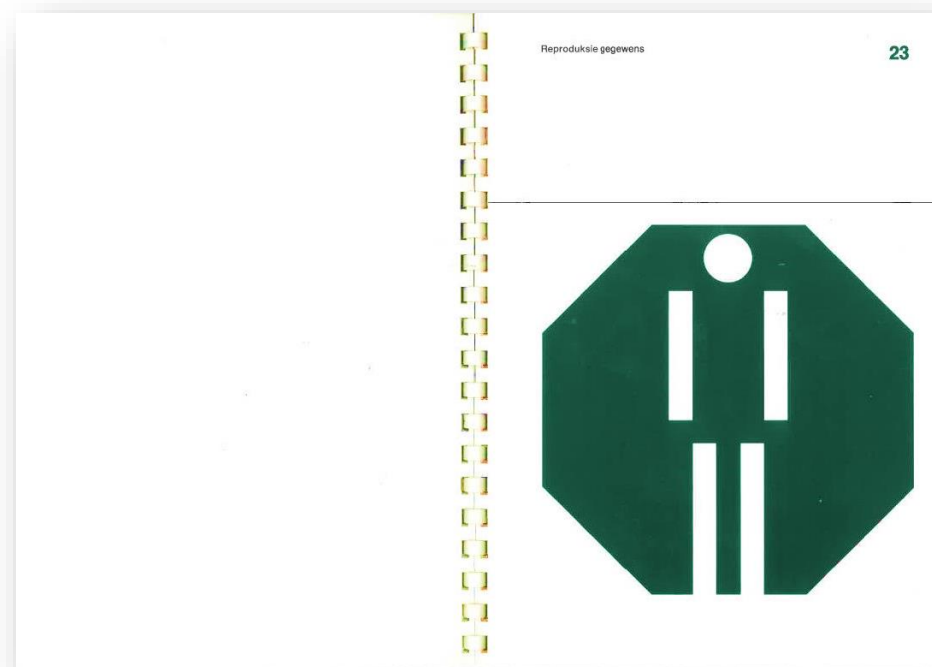
<sup>412</sup> One could, of course, argue that social control is a basic human drive.

<sup>413</sup> Higgins (2009:7-8) concedes that, as an art historian, she cannot bring an exhaustive knowledge of her theme to the project.

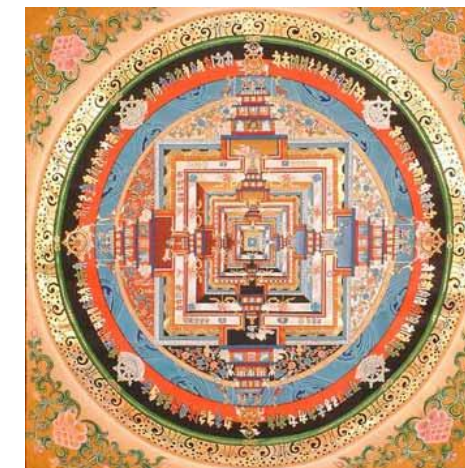
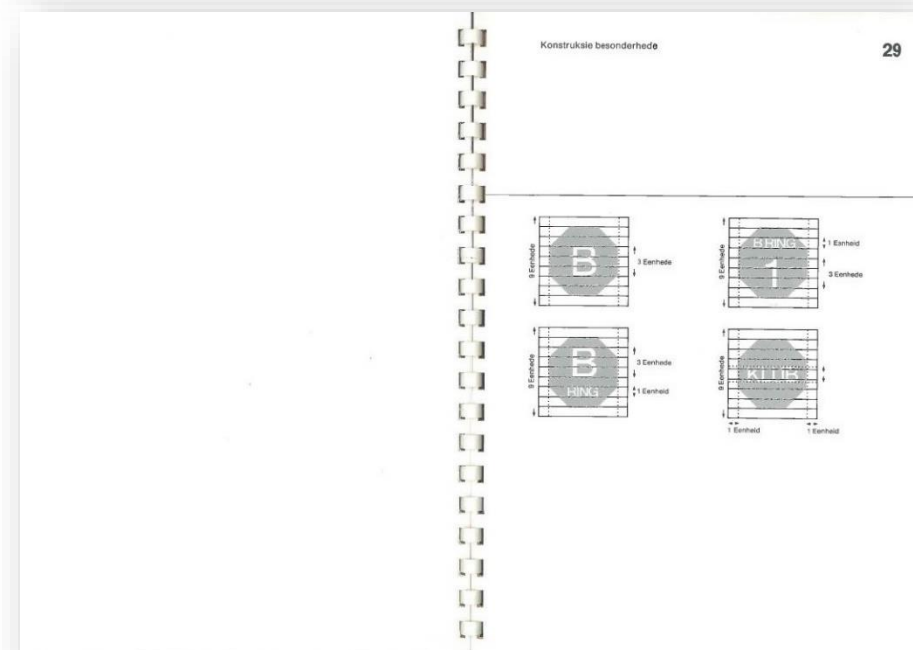
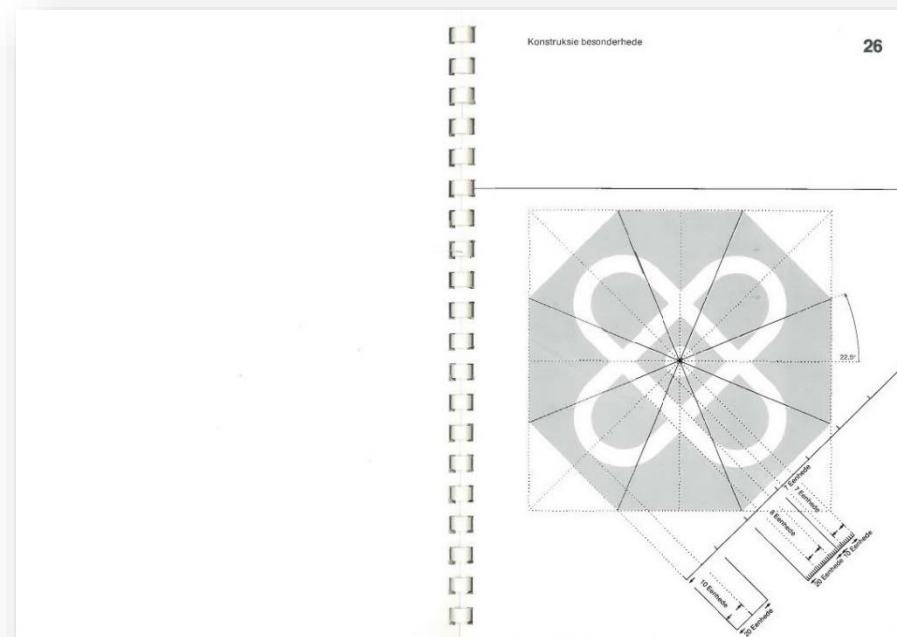
<sup>414</sup> Other creative practitioners who were exposed to this broad programme of early childhood education were Piet Mondrian, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Le Corbusier, George Santayana and Buckminster Fuller (Higgins 2009:223).

<sup>415</sup> Froebel himself had been led to his idea of the "building blocks of nature as the divine handwork of God" (Houze 2016: 212) while working in the University of Berlin's Mineralogical Museum where he had been introduced to the grid-base, geometrical structures of crystals.

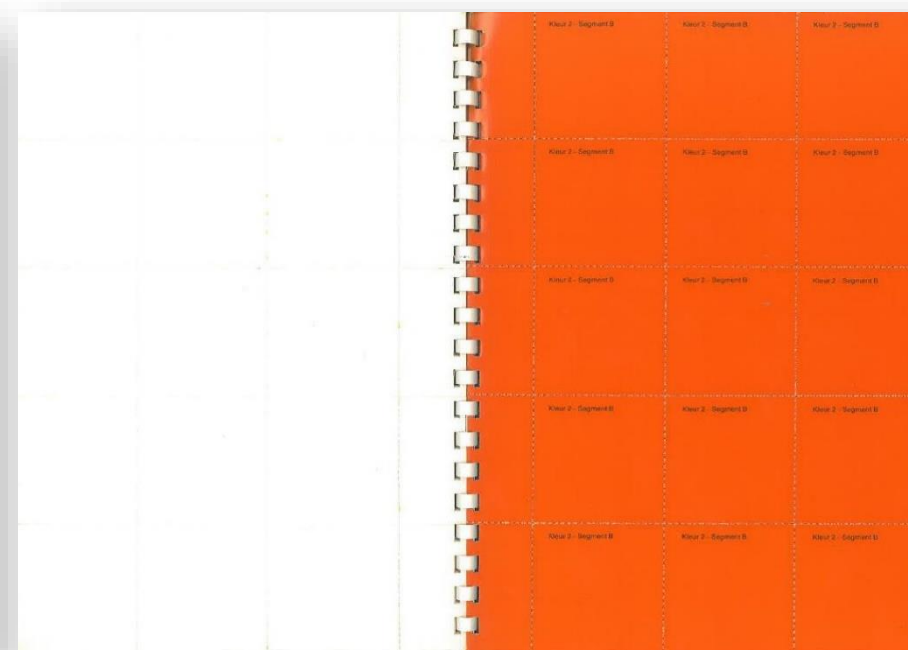




**Figure 199** EDJS (studio), Colin Bridgeford (designer), spreads from RAU corporate manual, c1975 (collection Cas Nel). Colour was used to differentiate sections of the vast ring-structure of the RAU complex. Perforated swatches were included in the brand manual to encourage consistency in applications.



**Figure 201** The basic plan of a Hindu temple visualised as a grand mandala (Kumar 2003).



**Figure 200** EDJS (studio), Colin Bridgeford (designer), spreads from RAU corporate manual, c1975 (collection Cas Nel).

Walter Gropius, director from 1919 to 1928 of the merged Weimar Arts and Crafts School and the Weimar Art Academy,<sup>416</sup> had served an assistantship in Behrens's office, and the latter's theories thus filtered through into the student work that, in turn, impressed the young Jan Tschichold, who subsequently published his influential *Die neue typographie* in 1928.<sup>417</sup> By insisting on functional design by the most straightforward means — yet design that also sought “spiritual content” (Meggs & Purvis 2006:321-322) — Tschichold provided much of the ideological groundwork for the direction taken by Swiss graphic design, in particular the pioneering work of erstwhile Bauhaus students Max Bill (1908-1994)<sup>418</sup> and Theo Ballmer (1902-1965) (Hollis 2006:169).

Subsequently, the work of fellow Swiss designers such as Josef Müller-Brockman (1914-1996), a leading theorist of the ITS, came to exemplify the objective clarity and rational design of the ITS. In addition to the formal qualities of order and simplicity, a concern emerged with regard to ‘individualism’ in design. In 1957 Robert Gessner (in Hollis 2006:160), writing in *Graphis*, separated “traditional” from “progressive” lines of development, where the ‘progressives’ renounced “the manifestation of personal artistic attributes”. Richard Hollis (2006:164) cites Müller-Brockman's practice as an example of this shift from ‘individualist’ illustration to ‘anonymous’ graphics. Twenty years older than de Jong, Müller-Brockman also launched his design career in exhibition design; his ‘conversion’ took place when he was well into his thirties. Hollis (2006: 164) surmises that, for Müller-Brockman, it was a matter of “switching to the winning side in what became a war of styles”.<sup>419</sup> Much the same can be said of EDJS, where the studio's ‘individualist’ work would shrivel away before the imperative of the grid system and the “laws of universal validity” (Müller-Brockman 2009 [1981]:63). Müller-Brockman (2009 [1981]:63), who could still, in 1981, declare that “the designer's work should have the ... objective ... and aesthetic quality of mathematical thinking”,<sup>420</sup> produced his most powerful work in the period 1954 to 1960 (Meggs & Purvis 2006:364-367). It is therefore unsurprising that a perception grew that the graphic design grid had been ‘invented’ in Switzerland at this time.

Outside Europe, the Swiss movement had a major impact on post-war American design during the 1960s and 1970s (Meggs 1998:333). Aicher's prototype for identity systems was taken up with fervour by the Chicago-based design firm Unimark that had, as has been pointed out, offices in South Africa (Meggs & Purvis 2006:412). Although Bridgeford never worked for Unimark, he was aware of the design produced by the Johannesburg branch of this American firm through his acquaintance with Mike Barnett, a designer whom Bridgeford met while dealing with Hortors, a large printing house run by Bill Ford (Bridgeford 2015b\_03 April\_32:50). Praised by both Bridgeford and de Jong (2014\_27 August\_00:30), Ford appears to have exercised considerable influence on the design of materials produced by the company, especially annual reports for South African mining houses. In differentiating one mining house from another in these reports, Hortors pioneered consistent brand design in the country. Notably, Peter Eliastam (2015\_07 December\_01:01:40), for whom Bill Ford became a father figure, was also employed by Hortors for a period of time. Eliastam's predilection for the square and a ‘pure’ approach to design, as well as the inspiration he took from Benno Wissing, thus presupposes a pre-existing affinity between the visual language of Hortors and Unimark.

Although the relationship is far from clear, Bridgeford (2015b\_03 April\_33:08) recalls that Unimark was “brought out” from the USA by Hortors. In any event, Barnett appears to have moved several members of his in-house design team from Hortors to Unimark. Bridgeford (2015b\_03 April\_34:00) reflects that Barnett, working within the Unimark philosophy of absolute conformity, was probably the first South African graphic designer to oversee the compilation of a corporate manual.

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<sup>416</sup> Later renamed *Das Staatliche Bauhaus*.

<sup>417</sup> Richard Hollis (2006:47) concludes that “[i]n Tschichold's view, the way to ensure the survival of art ... was to integrate it with graphic design”. This philosophy parallels de Jong's fervent belief in the reliance of painting on design principles, and vice versa.

<sup>418</sup> Bill later became the director of the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* in Ulm, Germany, where Aicher — one of the cofounders — collaborated with staff and students on the *Lufthansa* programme.

<sup>419</sup> For Müller-Brockman's account of his reasons for relinquishing illustrative work, see Schwemer-Scheddin (1995).

<sup>420</sup> Appropriately, in his book *Grid systems* (1981).

The RAU visual system was therefore not the first of its kind in South Africa; however, which systems preceded it are a matter for speculation.<sup>421</sup> Bridgeford could therefore draw on celebrated international prototypes, but also exemplars close to home. The basic tool in the Unimark approach was the grid, and consequently EDJS engaged overtly with this device in its design for RAU.

At one, utilitarian, level the grid is, of course, a practical device that ensures consistency. However, as has been suggested, it is also a powerful rhetorical instrument and thus becomes part of, and integral to, the nature of the entity that employs it. Images and letterforms, when visibly overlaid with a grid, are imbued with *presence*. The grid's first level of connotative meaning is therefore its signification of rational thought. Any design ordered by a grid is no longer the result of or subject to whim: the design is fixed and repeatable and its logic appears inevitable. In contrast to Higgins, Müller-Brockman (2009 [1981]:63) declares that the use of the grid implies

the will to systematize ... the will to cultivate objectivity instead of subjectivity, the will to rationalize the creative and technical production processes ... the will to achieve architectural dominion over surface and space [and] the will to adopt a positive, forward-looking attitude [as well as] the recognition of the importance of education and the effect of work devised in a constructive and creative spirit.

This militant call to subjugate the designer's *ethos* to systemised production processes certainly supports Krauss's appraisal of the grid as 'aesthetic decree', and explains Tschichold's eventual disenchantment with the new typography owing to what he perceived to be its despotic nature (Meggs & Purvis 2006:323). On a subtler level, references to 'architectural dominion over spaces' and a 'forward-looking attitude' within the context of 'education and work', appear to describe rather well the aims of the RAU project, so that the use of the grid as a rhetorical device in the visual identity system is not only appropriate but, in fact, indispensable.

In its ability to 'achieve dominion', the grid thus connotes permanence and ownership — it is no coincidence that Higgins includes hunting nets in her overview of ancient grids — but even more useful, from a rhetorical point of view, is the signification of scientific skill. The grid references charts, graphs, Cartesian coordinates and the foundation of analytical geometry and sets the design apart from what it is always in danger of appearing to be, namely the product of "placid aesthetes".<sup>422</sup> The presence of a grid in a visual system ensures the removal of the artist's mercurial hand. In its visible form, the grid persuades the end-user that the proposition is *of the mind* rather than *of the heart*: the *Romain du Roi* saw the calligrapher replaced with the engineer and Firlé's crane was just an "elegante Vögel" (Das Lufthansa-Design ... 2012) until Aicher trapped it within a grid, at which point it became a 'logo'. More telling, perhaps, is the comparable situation in which the Nazi emblem was just a folkish good-luck charm until Adolf Hitler converted it into a five-by-five diagonal grid of seventeen squares (Swastika 2016).<sup>423</sup>

What one is left to conclude is that the grid is an ambiguous device that signifies both the dehumanising mechanism of social control as well as cosmological mysticism. Over and above its allusion to the mandala, the powerful articulation of the RAU identity with the architecture of the university was also embedded in concerns for the 'purity' of the soil upon which the buildings should arise. The aversion to the Bruma site was primarily driven by its relatively recent status as a dumping ground for sewage (From grazing land ... 2015), but other tropes of defilement were also at play. The name, chosen in 1931 for the sewage works by the Johannesburg City Council, is Portuguese (still a marginalised culture in South Africa in the 1960s)<sup>424</sup> and signifies 'fog' or 'gloom' (bruma 2017a).<sup>425</sup> The adjoining,

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<sup>421</sup> A detailed account of Unimark and Bill Ford's contribution to the history of South African graphic design is sorely needed. De Jong (2014\_27 August\_00:30) regards Ford as his equal, stating that in the 1960s and 1970s Ford "employed practically all the top designers in Johannesburg". According to Bridgeford, other printing and reproduction companies that moulded mainstream design language of 1960s and 1970s South Africa were Kiley Baker (still in existence at the time of writing), Sparham & Ford (Bill Ford was a partner), and Douglas & Barry.

<sup>422</sup> Adolf Hitler (1939:151) complaining about the influence of the avant-garde in relation to the design of mass communication.

<sup>423</sup> Design historian Steven Heller (in Edwards 2011) emphasises that Hitler, in branding Nazi Germany, "had an instinct for uniformity". Hitler was impressed by AEG's design program (created by Peter Behrens) and he produced "carefully thought-out manuals, describing fonts, symbols and flags" (Kristoffersson 2014:82).

<sup>424</sup> Many Portuguese who immigrated to South Africa from an economically depressed Portugal in the 1960s were marginalised by other populations of European descent owing to their Roman Catholic faith and the fact that few Portuguese immigrants could speak either English or Afrikaans (The Portuguese heritage 2016). Prejudice was heightened by the community being stereotypically associated with "horticulture and commerce" (Portuguese South African 2017), in less euphemistic terms, the growing and vending of vegetables.

<sup>425</sup> 'Bruma' has the same meaning in Spanish (bruma 2017b), but it is likely that the name for the wetland was first coined by Portuguese market gardeners. In English, the word *brume*, in a poetic context, also means fog or mist (brume 2017).



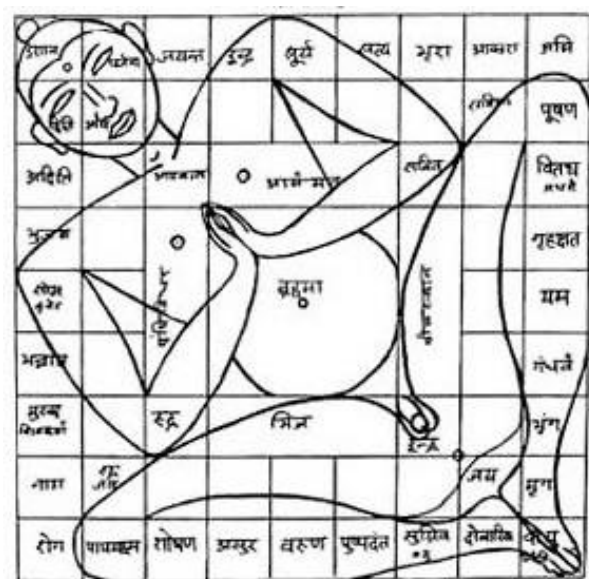


Figure 202 The *vastu-purusha* (Vashtu Shastra 2017).

working class areas of Cyrildene and Linksfield were not, as may be expected, Portuguese in composition, but overwhelmingly Jewish, a condition that presented no less of a challenge. All in all, the soil in the north-east was sullied; however, the suburb of Auckland Park, while sanitary and Protestant, had nevertheless first been claimed by English colonial interests, and this condition, too, had to be excoriated. In the quest for a clean slate for the RAU site one can thus discern another parallel with the *vastu-mandala* that, in terms of Hindu temple construction, signifies a purification process in which the earth must be reclaimed from the demon Andhaka (Kumar 2003). This ritual is known as the ‘pacification of the site’ and the traditional diagram depicting the demon being pinned down by a grid of 81 squares (Fig. 202) evokes an uncanny similitude to the layout of the RAU device. If one is reluctant to entertain Hindu thought as an underlying principle of Bridgeford’s design, it is nevertheless notable that the grid underpinning the RAU logo comprises 49 squares. The square root of 49, seven, is one of the most prominent numbers in Judeo-Christian texts where it is imbued with considerable symbolic significance, in particular ideas of penitence and forgiveness (Smith 1939:[sp]). Knowingly or not, by engaging with a grid — a seemingly neutral, ‘progressive’ and modernising device — EDJS aligned its client with ancient mystic thought, where the connotative meanings are those of purification, fulfilment and completion.

In summary, the RAU logo serves to interpolate the multiple significations of the octagon-as-grid. It communicates, first and foremost, modernity — what the architects and client considered to be ‘their’ century. Everything that was *not* the logo ‘was declared to be the past’, where ‘the past’ alluded not only to British imperialism, but also to the Afrikaner’s own legacy of parochialism. The grid-based logo thus ‘crowds out’ the visceral experience of the Afrikaner in order to declare its opposite: a rational, scientific persona at one with, and indeed an exemplar of, the internationalism of the post-WWII era.

Undoubtedly, the logo also signifies control, both in its adoption of the angular octagon and in the subjection of the whole to the grid. In part, the control is that of the visual system itself (i.e., consistency in mechanical reproduction), but also the idea of a disciplined and ‘morally serious’ community. Although EDJS resuscitated the atom logo, the original motto — *Kennis ontsluit die onbekende* — was never reinstated: at RAU, staff and students would not run amok<sup>426</sup> exploring the unknown. Rather, the institution offered, at one and the same time, stability and a ‘positive, forward-looking attitude’ by adhering to and enforcing accepted values in the community.<sup>427</sup> However, on a deeper level, one may venture that not only people, but also the past was being controlled. The supine but ever-present demon of history, without which nothing can come into being, is acknowledged, but the authority of the grid offers the promise that it can never rise up again.

### 5.3 Full circle to square

Despite its potentially rich and nuanced signification, the EDJS logo could not stave off, indefinitely, the yearning for traditional university regalia. Owing to the suppression of archival material relating to the history of the institution, it is difficult to establish an exact date for the ‘upgrade’ of the RAU symbol on stationery and other printed material. Suffice to say that, probably in the late 1980s, the octagonal logo was, once again, reduced and incorporated into a heraldic-type device that acknowledged the decorative patterning of much postmodern graphic design (see Rand Afrikaans University 2018).

<sup>426</sup> After writing this thought, I learned (when browsing the UJ on-line archive) that during its early Braamfontein brewery years, RAU’s student rag was, in fact, called AMOK.

<sup>427</sup> In a telling example, all RAU male staff members were required, well into the 1990s, to wear ties when on the university campus. RAU, and later its progeny, the University of Johannesburg, would be notable for its comparatively low-key profile with regard to violent student protest actions, a characteristic that was still evident well after 2006 (e.g., Monama & Mabotja 2016).

In 2006, when RAU was merged with the Technikon Witwatersrand (TWR) to form the University of Johannesburg (UJ), the corporate identities of both institutions were scrapped. Design staff from the local office of the international design consultancy Interbrand Sampson workshopped the conceptualisation of a new logo with communication and design students from both institutions. As a lecturer in the Department of Graphic Design at the former TWR, the author sat in on these workshops. It is of interest that a group of young people (including the professional designers) reverted to the stereotypes of traditional heraldry and religious symbolism: an open book flanked by two 'rampant' animals, in this case not antelope or eagles, but hoopoes (*Upupa epops*) (Fig. 207).<sup>428</sup> The hoopoe was deemed as an appropriate signifier of the 'new' university because of its prevalence in suburban Johannesburg, as well as its belligerence. The objective was for the 'new' institution to signify its 'Africanness' and to aggressively challenge its competitors.<sup>429</sup> The young designers could not have divined the various ironies inherent in the design, yet the eventual inability of modernist principles of abstraction and objectivity to satisfy the human need for a tribal, collective identity is notable.

As a result of the rebranding, the dark green of the RAU identity was replaced by its opposite, namely bright orange. Undoubtedly, orange — associated with frivolity and extroversion — was chosen not only to signify an ideological break with the parent institution, but also to differentiate itself from the *gravitas* of its closest rivals, WITS and UP. In line with this transformative agenda, the university's sports insignia (Figs. 205 & 206) transformed the mild-looking hoopoe into a predatory woodpecker evocative of Universal Studios's lunatic cartoon character, Woody Woodpecker (Fig. 204). Here any pretence at being 'African' was abandoned by the professional design team that unabashedly emulated the visual language of American college sport mascots (Fig. 203).

There was a precedent for using the woodpecker as a symbol of extreme sport — in both cases the result of Universal Studios sponsorships<sup>430</sup> — and thus the re-imagined university, consciously or unconsciously, aligns itself with popular Hollywood culture. In this valorisation of American tropes, there is an echo of de Jong's fascination with the American way, although the appropriation in the case of the UJ identity is less *domesticated* and more coarsely grafted onto its South African context. It is ironic that, when de Jong had the opportunity to re-inscribe his American persona on a local university, the dictates of corporate identity in the 1970s demanded the neutrality of the International Style. However, if de Jong had, in fact, looked to his alma mater, Oklahoma University, for inspiration when working on the RAU project, the resulting identity would have been little different from the one EDJS eventually produced. The OU logo, both in its official and sporting applications, consists of — atypically and rather uncannily — an austere typographic device resembling two overlapping octagons (Fig. 58).

In 2017, UJ announced the latest phase in the ongoing metamorphosis of its brand. Ten years after its zealous attempts to distance itself from a staid scholarly persona, the definitive and *only* format of the logo was declared to be a square (Fig. 207). Much like the hapless founding fathers of the Union on the 1960s *Lantern* cover, the hoopoe now finds itself confined to an immovable cage. After a tumultuous year, in which disgruntled students and staff vandalised university property,<sup>431</sup> the message was clear: the fortress has gone up, the citadel barred. Overall, the changes in the logo design and identity of the university, from the first appearance of the blue orb in 1965 to the orange square 52 years later, provides an important example of the on-going construction of collective identity for a community engaged in knowledge transfer and production within the context of a transforming society.

In this process EDJS, and in particular Colin Bridgeford, played a pivotal role.

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<sup>428</sup> In the official seal of UJ, rays of light emanate from the open book; this 'radiating' device is a tempered version of the original design that more closely resembled a crudely stylised African sun. In its use of an open book, wings and sharp rays of light, the UJ logo, unwittingly, reproduces the symbolic elements of its precursor, the *Goudstadse Onderwyskollege* (Fig. 183).

<sup>429</sup> There is some debate about whether the African Hoopoe and the Eurasian Hoopoe are two separate species or simply subspecies of *Upupa epops* (The African Hoopoe .... 2016). At any rate, the bird is not endemic to Africa.

<sup>430</sup> In 1998 Woody appeared, as part of a controversial livery change, on the nose cone of Williams Formula One Team's FW21 (Formula 1 2016) and in 2000 the bird became the official team mascot of the Honda Motorcycle Racing Team (Honda meets Woody ... 2000).

<sup>431</sup> Most notably the RAU architect's splendid asymmetrical auditorium (Fig. 182), which was gutted by fire. While the university could have used the opportunity to re-imagine this space, it was restored exactly to its previous state.



**Figure 203** Grid Worldwide (design agency), University of Johannesburg logo, 2017 (About UJ 2017), based upon an earlier updated version by brand strategy consultancy Yellowwood.



**Figure 205** UJ sports logo, 2016 (UJ sport 2017).



**Figure 204** UJ sports mascot, 2015 (Bergh wants UJ ... 2015).



**Figure 206** The Woody Woodpecker/Honda Racing Team logo (Honda racing ... [sa]).



**Figure 207** Iowa State University sports logo (Iowa State ... [sa]).





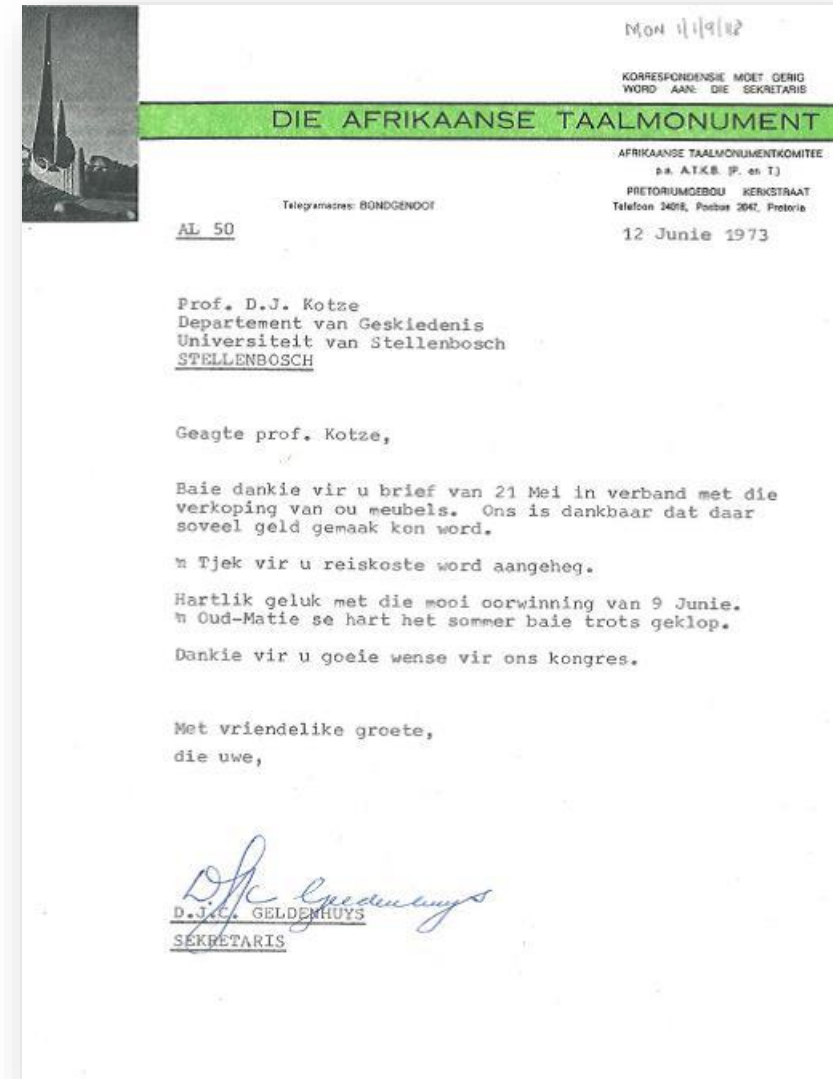
## CHAPTER SIX: AFRIKAANSE TAALMONUMENT

*Want die tyd vir die rolspelers loop uit en netnou, netnou word die verhaal net verdigsel — eie vertellings en sienings en bespiegelings oor dit wat daar tydloos, datumloos teen die berg in die Paarl staan<sup>432</sup>*  
Jan van Wijk, 2014



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<sup>432</sup> Because the time of the role players is running out and soon, very soon, all that is left are fables — stories and opinions and speculations about that which stands, timeless and ageless, against the mountain in Paarl.



**Figure 208** Designer unknown, letterhead used by the *Afrikaanse Taalmonument* committee, 1973 (collection of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum*).

## 6.1 ‘Sy wat van vêr af kom ...’<sup>433</sup>

**A**lmost exactly coterminous with the RAU project and in many ways inseparable from the forces and personalities that shaped it, is the construction of the *Afrikaanse Taalmonument* that rises up from a granite outcrop on the outskirts of the town of Paarl in the Western Cape Province, South Africa.

Although the drive to erect a monument to the Afrikaans language had a longer preamble than the planning of RAU, the realisation of both undertakings spans the decade 1965-1975. Central to both projects was the ‘golden thread’ of Afrikaans as an instrument of empowerment in a previously marginalised community, and the desire that *design*, as a function of identity construction, should make visible and fuel the nascent nationalism of this “white tribe of Africa” (Harrison 1981:vii). In both cases central figures in the endeavour were the architect Jan Carl van Wijk and van Wijk’s acquaintance, Ernst de Jong.

Although the call for designs for the monument had gone out in December 1964, the first initiative for the erection of a language monument in Paarl dates back to 1942, at a ceremony — in the Dal Josaphat Cemetery outside Paarl — commemorating the founding of the *Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaners* (GRA)<sup>434</sup> on 14 August 1875 (Van Zyl & Rossouw 2016:299). As a consequence of this proposal, the *Afrikaanse Taalmonumentkomitee* (Afrikaans Language Monument Committee) (ATMK) was immediately called into being with the fervent aim of raising funds for the project (Fig. 208).<sup>435</sup> However, it would be more than twenty years — and a notable reluctance by ordinary Afrikaners to contribute to the monument fund — before the Committee, eventually supported by the *Afrikaanse Taal- en Kulturbond* (Afrikaans Language and Culture Union) (ATKB),<sup>436</sup> was able to announce the design competition for the long-awaited “dignified” (ATMK minutes 26/10/1942, in van Zyl & Rossouw 2016:299) tribute to Afrikaans.

In popular versions of the origins of the Afrikaans language, such as that of Amanda Kreitzer (1999), 14 August 1875 marks the moment when the notion of Afrikaans as a vehicle for nation building was thought into being by the eight men<sup>437</sup> who met at Gideon Malherbe’s house to discuss the necessity of translating the Bible into a regional dialect. At the core of this objective was the inspired insight of a young Dutch immigrant, Arnoldus Pannevis, that the creole language, ‘Afrikaans’, could serve as a bulwark against the “hegemony of the world language, English” (Kreitzer 1999).

It is beyond the scope of this study to explore either the history or the historiography of Afrikaans in any detail; suffice to say that, from 1875, a version (and mythology) of Afrikaans was systematically constructed that would be known as “standaard-Afrikaans” (‘standard Afrikaans’) (du Plessis 1997:35). This metanarrative treats the emergence of *standaard-Afrikaans* as a natural and linear evolution of Dutch — introduced with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape in 1652 — into a *suiwer* (‘pure’) Afrikaans that was eventually acknowledged as an official language, alongside English, in the Union of South Africa in 1924. A key tenet of this narrative is that the history of Afrikaans is the history of the Afrikaner; however, as Theo du Plessis (1987:35) points out, there were several Afrikaans dialects and more than one community utilised non-standard Afrikaans as a mode of transaction and identity construction. For example, Muslim Afrikaans, written in Arabic script, has possibly been in existence since 1830 (van Rensburg 2015:320).

There is also nothing ‘natural’ about *standaard-Afrikaans*: it is the direct result of political struggle and a conscious standardising process (du Plessis 1987:38).<sup>438</sup> In fact, Christo van Rensburg (2016:455) argues that the Khoi language did not, as the traditional view holds, influence Dutch in the latter’s putative transformation into

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<sup>433</sup> ‘She who came from far away’ — Jan van Wijk (2014:90), in reflecting upon the metaphorical pregnancy and birth of the *Afrikaanse Taalmonument*.

<sup>434</sup> Van Zyl and Rossouw (2016:296) translate the phrase as ‘Society for Real Afrikaners’, although ‘Society for True Afrikaners’ may be closer to the Afrikaans meaning.

<sup>435</sup> The intention was also to make bursaries available to students committed to an “intensive” (ATMK minutes 26/10/1942, in van Zyl & Rossouw 2016: 299) study of Afrikaans.

<sup>436</sup> The ATKB joined the fundraising campaign in 1963, took over all administrative functions and donated a large amount to the cause from its own coffers.

<sup>437</sup> Gideon Malherbe, CP Hoogenhout, DF du Toit, another DF du Toit and his brother SJ du Toit, August Ahrbeck, Petrus Malherbe and SG du Toit.

<sup>438</sup> This artificial but nevertheless admirable construction of a language is described in detail in JC Steyn’s *Ons gaan 'n taal maak: Afrikaans sedert die Patriot-jare* (2014).

Afrikaans. On the contrary, claims van Rensburg (2015:329), Khoi-Afrikaans, which probably came into use as early as 1595, *was already* Afrikaans, to which language the *taalmakers*<sup>439</sup> then *added* Dutch as a shortcut to elevate the status of the coarse “farmers’ dialect” (van Rensburg 2015:320-321).<sup>440</sup>

The prevalence of Afrikaans in a rural and ‘uncivilised’ African interior dictated its *ethos*. Up until the first decades of the twenty-first century, the use of non-standard Afrikaans in a community or by an individual signified backwardness. Groups that harboured anti-Afrikaans sentiments referred to the language (and by extension its users) as ‘deviant’, ‘corrupt’, and ‘mongrel’ (van Rensburg 2015:337). As du Plessis (1987:44) points out, prejudice in this regard was intertwined with racist ideologies: Afrikaans was often derisively referred to by non-Afrikaans speakers as a *hotnotstaal*, that is, a language of the Hottentots — the Dutch name for the Khoi. Of course, this is exactly what van Rensburg argues it was and the term (if one looks beyond its pejorative usage) also provides evidence that in 1857, when the GRA was founded, the majority of users of Afrikaans were probably not ‘white’ (du Plessis 1987:44).

Needless to say, as *standaard*-Afrikaans was increasingly called upon to signify the identity of a white, middle-class elite, the community of Afrikaans speakers was rent asunder by *taalmakerpolitici*<sup>441</sup> who deliberately suppressed its history and tirelessly laboured on the myth of a language imported from, and embedded in the culture of, the Netherlands (van Rensburg 2015:332). Consequently, although “Dutchification” (van Rensburg 2015:320) resulted in the marginalisation and eventual loss of earlier, well-known rural constructions, the association with the Netherlands (and by extension, Europe) not only strengthened *standaard*-Afrikaans’s bid for official status in the Union, but also offered ideologues opportunities to argue for the ‘separateness’ of the white Afrikaner from those communities that spoke non-standard Afrikaans.<sup>442</sup>

Accompanying the need to insist that Afrikaans was a *witmenstaal*<sup>443</sup> was the fervent desire, especially after 1948 when the National Party came to power, to eliminate all traces of the language of the colonial oppressor, resulting in what van Rensburg (2015:328) terms an *anglismevrees* — a phobia of contamination by English words and syntax of *standaard*-Afrikaans. Thus, *standaard*-Afrikaans was shaped into an ‘artificial language construct’ (Kotze, in van Rensburg 2015:339) in order to signify the purity of yet another artificial construct, the Afrikaner *volk*. In Van Rensburg’s (2015: 339) opinion, *standaard*-Afrikaans is a faceless code for a *sprekersboklas* — that is, a language of the elite — and, since it is seldom used spontaneously, it cannot be regarded as a variation, or dialect, of Afrikaans; it is, rather, an *elitolek*.<sup>444</sup>

The context of a monument that was required to signify “the triumph of Afrikaans” (Hattingh, in van Wijk 2014:70) thus provides an example par excellence of Benedict Anderson’s (1993:6) ‘imagined community’. As du Plessis (1987:42) points out, Afrikaans was neither spoken nor written for the first time in Paarl, neither was Paarl the place in which Afrikaans was first used in a religious text, or as a medium for instruction. Although the rationale of the two organising bodies, the ATMK and ATKN, does not claim these events for Paarl, it nevertheless implies them by stating in their brief to the architects that the monument is not only required to celebrate the victory of Afrikaans, but at the same time to honour the “*manne*” (Hattingh, in van Wijk 2014:70)<sup>445</sup> who founded the GRA in Paarl and thus launched the so-called *Eerste Afrikaanse Taalbeweging*<sup>446</sup> in that town.

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<sup>439</sup> Language creators.

<sup>440</sup> It was precisely the difference between Dutch and GRA Afrikaans that enabled English newspapers to question the latter’s right to be acknowledged as a proper, that is ‘European’, language (van Rensburg 2015:324).

<sup>441</sup> Makers of the language with a political agenda.

<sup>442</sup> According to du Plessis (1987:44), there were far more Afrikaans speakers before 1925 than in 1987; the number started to shrink after Afrikaans became recognised as an official language.

<sup>443</sup> A white person’s language. In 1914 the prominent Afrikaans author CJ Langenhoven famously declared this to be the case (van Rensburg 2015:332; du Plessis 1987:33).

<sup>444</sup> Van Rensburg appears to have coined this term for the purposes of his own argument; it parodies the structure of ‘dialect’ — a term that denotes conversational use of a language — to signify its opposite.

<sup>445</sup> *Manne* translated literally means ‘men’; however, the form used here signifies a tough masculinity and a no-nonsense character. Interestingly, mention of the *manne* is absent from the formal competition brief (Boukundige prysvraag ... [sa]) in the *Taalmonumentmuseum* archive; here the only motivation for the monument’s placement in Paarl is that it was the site of the founding of the GRA. However, the text of the letter from the committee to van Wijk inviting him to participate in the design competition, the content of which is reproduced in his book *Taalmonument* (2014), shifts the emphasis from the GRA to its male founders. Similarly, the idea of the ‘triumph’ of Afrikaans is also absent from the formal competition brief, but appears in an additional paragraph inserted in the letter written to Van Wijk by the secretary of the *Taalmonumentkomitee*, JH Hattingh (in van Wijk 2014), in 1964.

<sup>446</sup> First Afrikaans Language Movement. Du Plessis (1987:42) argues that there were at least five *taalbewegings*, most of which are not acknowledged by traditional histories of Afrikaans since these events involved marginalised communities.



What is ironic about this foundation myth, and especially its importance in the motivation for the monument, is that the vernacular *write-as-we-speak* approach propounded by the GRA in its publications was unacceptable to, and thereby rejected by, Afrikaans intellectuals (most notably, in the nearby university town of Stellenbosch). The latter regarded GRA Afrikaans as unsophisticated and too indebted to Khoi-Afrikaans to be able to answer to the cultural needs and status of ‘upper class’ Afrikaans speakers (van Rensburg 2015:321-322). Moreover, one of the *manne* who had gathered at Malherbe’s house, Stephanus Jacobus du Toit — editor of and driving force behind the GRA’s mouthpiece *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*<sup>447</sup> — became enamoured with Cecil John Rhodes and hostile to Dutch influence in the Transvaal Republic (Stephanus Jacobus ... 2016). Du Toit, who used the *Patriot* to express his sympathies with British interests in Southern Africa, was widely denounced as a political traitor by Afrikaners, a primary reason put forward by historians for the opposition to GRA Afrikaans (van Rensburg 2015:323). By 1900, largely owing to du Toit’s controversial politics and unorthodox religious beliefs, the *Eerste Afrikaanse Taalbeweging* had ceased to exist, yet it is this very phenomenon that the monument committees place at the heart of their endeavour, singling out SJ du Toit by name in the competition brief.

More appropriate, as a founding narrative, may have been the story of the *Tweede* [Second] *Afrikaanse Taalbeweging* that got underway after the South African War (1899-1902) and during which time several individuals set about, with remarkable determination and rapid success, to rid the language of its GRA characteristics and hasten the ‘Dutchification’ of which van Rensburg writes. However, this second, more calculated and scholarly wave of reform does not offer the charm of the eight young bloods, huddled around a lamp-lit table on a wintery evening in the heart of the Cape winelands. Clearly, the colourful figure of du Toit, despite his promulgation of a *write-as-we-speak* rule and treacherous hobnobbing with Rhodes, satisfied the desire for a romantic, nineteenth-century frontier hero.

Yet, as is frequently the case in the construction of an imagined ethnic identity, the rhetoric is Janus-faced. The *prysvraag*,<sup>448</sup> while initially stipulating that the monument should honour the men who founded the GRA, moves on to issues that are concerned with the achievements of *standaard*-Afrikaans in the modern world, notably in the fields of literature, education, science, technology, commerce and industry. But, “more important than anything else” (Hattingh, in van Wijk 2014:72), the prospective architects are told, is that Afrikaans had reached equivalence with English and that these two cross-pollinating cultures had now been conjoined to form one nation — *een volk* — that stood strong in its future task owing to its secure knowledge, in the “burning bush of time”, of a “Higher presence”. Thus, the most critical function of the monument was to be a religious one. English speakers were, interestingly, included in this spiritual community, but all reference to the Khoi, the Griekwas, the Muslims, indeed all peoples that spoke non-standard Afrikaans, had been obliterated.

In offering this vision as framework for the participating architects, the *Taalmonument* project reveals parallels with the RAU undertaking that initially required the architecture to “embrace a genuine Afrikaans-Christian character” and call to mind “the idea of a church spire” (Oorwegings met die fisiese beplanning ...[sa][sp]). The *Taalmonument* brief is more nuanced in its reference to a ‘Higher presence’, yet it was the monument in Paarl that was gifted the spire — all 57 meters of it.

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<sup>447</sup> The Afrikaans Patriot.

<sup>448</sup> Competition brief.

## 6.2 Timeless and ageless against the mountain

Van Wijk, the architect designer of the *Taalmonument*, in justifying his decision to write about this, his own creation, in *Taalmonument* (2014) — a personal telling of the ‘saga’ of the concept, design and execution of this striking but oftentimes controversial structure — voices his concern about the inevitable rapture that leaves all art open to subjective interpretation after the death of its creators. Somewhat poignantly, given van Wijk’s realisation that his time was ‘running out’, *Taalmonument* (2014) was published posthumously, presumably to herald the upcoming fortieth anniversary of the inauguration of the monument that took place on Friday 10 October 1975.<sup>449</sup>

Yet, these misgivings about future misinterpretations in the absence of the designer are voiced with hindsight, and within the context of the already existing stories, opinions and speculations about the monument even as it was being built (Van Zyl & Rossouw 2016:298). In fact, by 2005 — the year of van Wijk’s death — although controversy surrounding the monument was still in evidence, criticism surfaced to a much lesser degree than in the first years of the structure’s existence, during which time van Wijk, perhaps wisely, refrained from any written defence of either the concept of a monument to the Afrikaans language or an explication of the design itself.

However, much like was the case with RAU and the mythologies of its ‘laager’ architecture, by his silence the *Taalmonument* architect enabled the analogies of “concrete penises” (Van Zyl & Rossouw 2016:305) and accusations of white, Afrikaner supremacism to proliferate. In 1975, at the time of the monument’s inauguration, I was a first-year student at Stellenbosch University. Mainly in response to my mother’s aversion to the concept, I pointedly stayed away from the celebrations in Paarl.<sup>450</sup> Subsequent commentary on the structure, in the *verligte* (‘enlightened’) group of Afrikaans students that comprised my social milieu, was not so much politically outraged as it was cruelly amused by the inadvertent, but nevertheless unmistakable, sexual narratives in what was, for them, an embarrassing piece of National Party propaganda.

However, forty years later and reading it for the first time, I find van Wijk’s original rationale for the design (Boukundige prysvraag vir die ontwerp ... [sa]) unexpectedly moving. It is of interest that the architect, as he became aware of his own mortality, only felt able to state the case for the monument long after the ideological machinery that had produced it had been replaced by a regime antagonistic to the language that the monument valorises. One perceives, perhaps, in van Wijk an anxiety not necessarily for the loss of ‘true’ accounts of the project — the ‘untruths’ had already been uttered — but a realisation that the time of Afrikaans itself may be running out. It is also a curious irony that the narrative of the *Taalmonument* (as imagined by van Wijk) perhaps sits more comfortably within the present, rather than within the past where it was conceived. Even the detractors of the monument may have found it difficult, in the 1970s, to swallow a rhetoric that so ardently embraces Africa as a wellspring of cultural innovation.

Be this as it may, van Wijk’s stated purpose with his account is to provide *information*, to set the record straight. His account thus relates that in December 1964 twelve architects — all members of the Institute of South African Architects — were invited to submit proposals for a monument that would signify the “triumph of Afrikaans” (van Wijk 2014:19;70; Notule van ’n vergadering van die werkskomitee gehou op Woensdag 11 November 1964 ...).<sup>451</sup> Van Wijk provides not only his personal account of the experience, but also several addenda that include the competition brief from the monument committee, van Wijk’s rationale for his proposed design, the committee’s report on van Wijk’s entry, and a project report by the contractor, Murray & Steward. Van Wijk describes, in some detail, the entire process,

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<sup>449</sup> Van Wijk’s text is augmented by the more contemporary comment of Leoni Schmidt, Head of the Dunedin School of Art in New Zealand, and Hennie van Coller, Head of the Department of Afrikaans, Dutch, German and French at the University of the Free State.

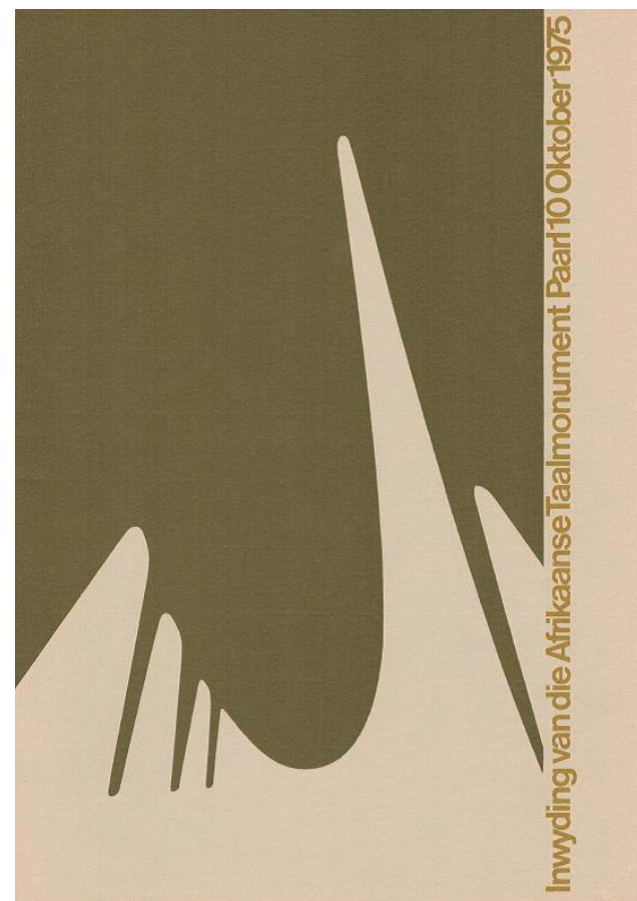
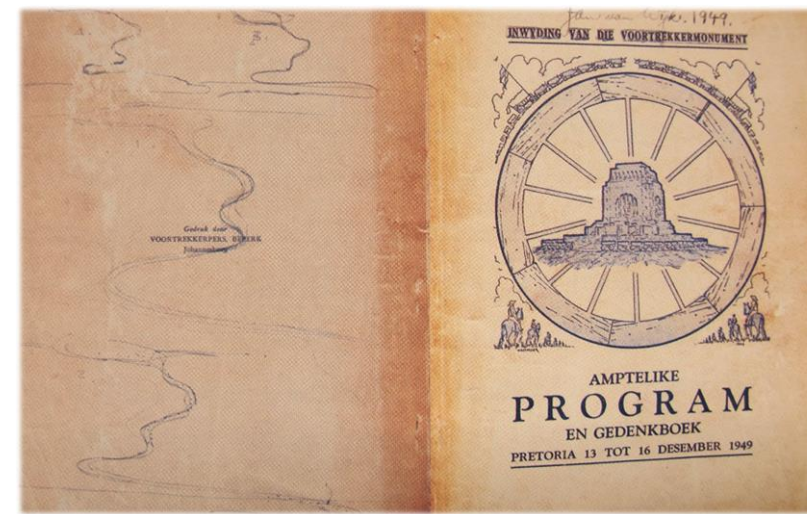
<sup>450</sup> My mother was a great admirer of the Afrikaans intellectual, WA de Klerk, who opposed the monument in this particular location and form (Van Zyl & Rossouw 2016:304).

<sup>451</sup> Unsurprisingly, the majority of the invitees listed in the ATMK minutes have Afrikaans surnames, but the Transvaal contingent includes the well-known architect Norman Eaton at whose practice van Wijk had interned c1947 as part of the practical component in the final year of the latter’s Degree in Architecture at the University of Pretoria (van Coller 2014:15). During the judging process, undertaken by two architects and a poet, the entries were allocated numbers to ensure anonymity (van Wijk 2014:19); van Wijk’s entry was No.8. He was informed of his successful bid in January 1966 (Van Wijk 2014:41).

**Figure 209** Photographer unknown, Gerard Moerdijk (architect), the Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria, inaugurated in 1949 (Gallery [sa]).



**Figure 210** Designer unknown, front and back covers of van Wijk's copy of the official programme for the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument, 1949 (van Wijk 2014:13).



**Figure 211** Willem Jordaan (designer), cover and page from the official programme for the inauguration of the *Afrikaanse Taalmonument*, 1975 (collection of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum*). This is the cover that is reproduced in van Wijk's book, and attributed to de Jong.



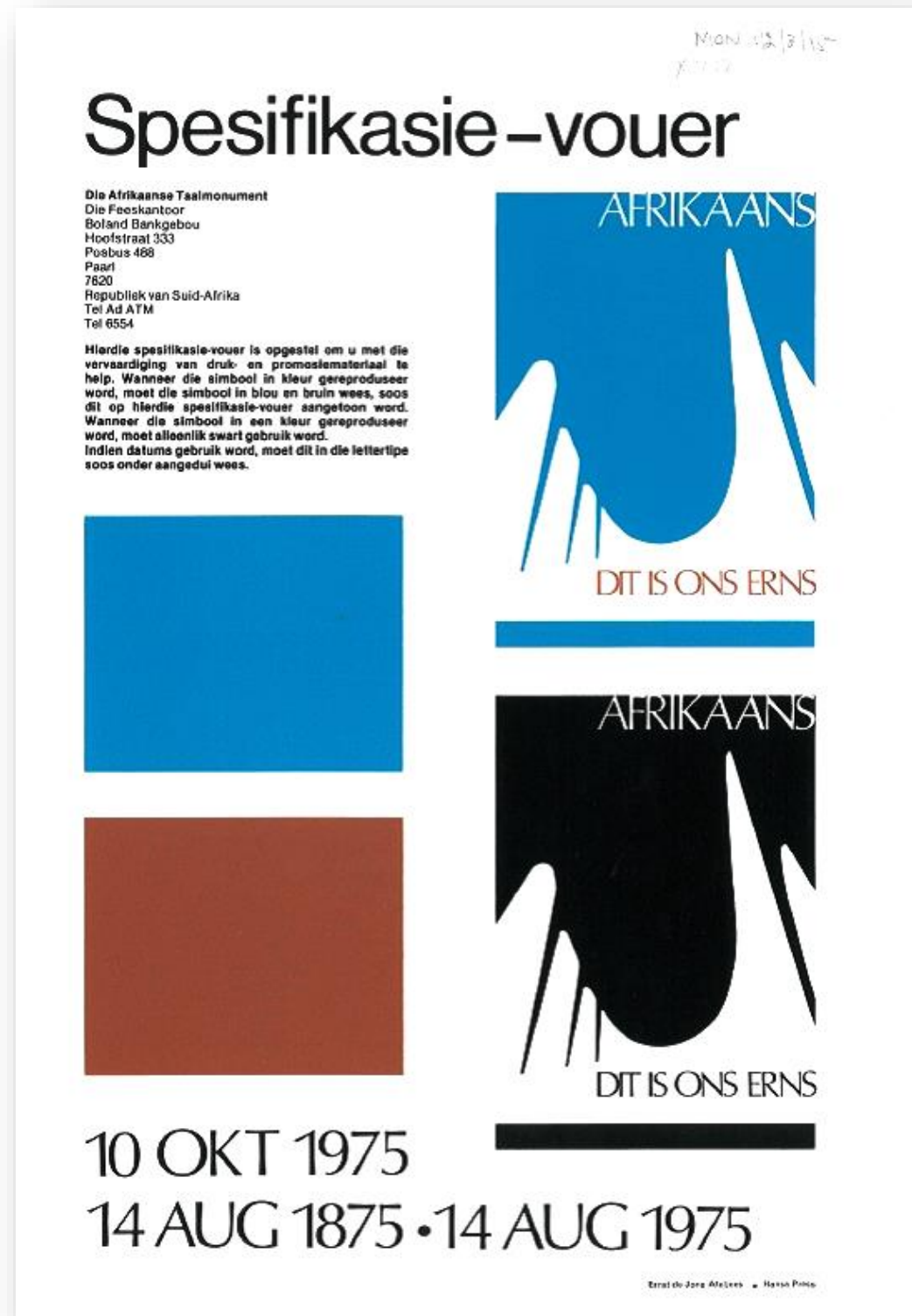


Figure 213 EDJS (designers), specification sheet for the logo and visual system for the Afrikaanse Taalmonument, 1973 (collection of the Afrikaanse Taalmuseum).

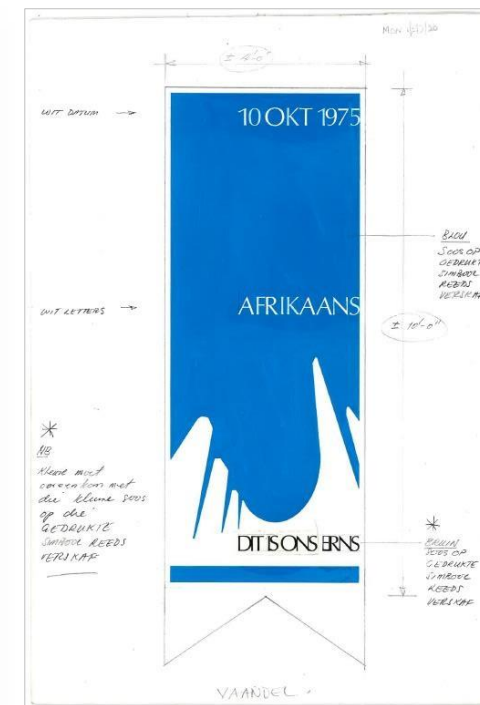


Figure 212 EDJS (designers), specifications for festival banners, 1975 (collection of the Afrikaanse Taalmuseum).

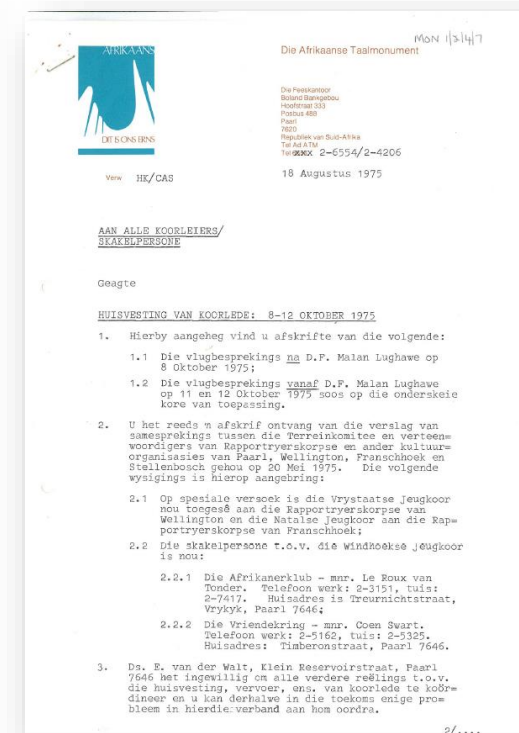


Figure 214 Designer unknown, letterhead and ticket for the Afrikaanse Taalmonument festival committee, 1975 (collection of the Afrikaanse Taalmuseum). The application of the EDJS logo on the stationery deviates from both the colour and font specified by EDJS. The use of Helvetica on the letterhead suggests that Jordaan may have directed the design of this element.



starting with his initial bewilderment at the invitation, followed by the subsequent excitement and passionate immersion in the research that preceded the design. He takes pains to mention by name all the role players, from quantity surveyors (CP de Leeuw & Associates, whose corporate identity Magda Bregge at EDJS designed) to the individual in van Wijk's office, Heinz Dullaart, who, over a period of years, calculated the complicated geometry of the "folding curves" (van Wijk 2014:51) and soaring steeple of the design.

Within the context of this commitment to shared authorship of the monument it is notable that, on page 62 of *Taalmonument* (2014), the editor, Nissa Vosloo, inserts a reproduction of the cover of Van Wijk's personal copy of the programme of the inauguration event. Its aesthetics aside, the 1975 program design here serves a broader ideological purpose since, on page thirteen, another auspicious programme cover, discovered amongst Van Wijk's papers after his death, is reproduced, namely the cover of the programme for the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949 (Van Wijk 2014:13) (Fig. 209). On this latter cover, Van Wijk had dashed off his inspired thoughts about what a monument to the Afrikaner nation *should* have looked like as opposed to the mausoleum perching on Monument Hill. The defaced programme evokes the image of a young, idealistic Afrikaans architect attending the opening of Gerhard Moerdijk's reinterpretation of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* (Monument to the Battle of the Nations) in Leipzig, Germany,<sup>452</sup> and who, sitting in the sweltering heat only half-hearing the patriotic speeches, fell into an exasperated conversation with a companion about the architectural travesty that had been allowed to rise up on the hill outside Pretoria. To make his urgent point, the young man had scribbled, on the only paper to hand, undulating and then rapidly rising lines: a heaven-bound nation, surely!

What is strongly suggested in *Taalmonument* is that Van Wijk's vision of a modernising Afrikaner ethnicity superseded the backward-looking, insular and mostly irrelevant Germanic identity<sup>453</sup> encapsulated in the icon of the Voortrekker Monument (Fig. 210) and, moreover, that this new, modern nation had already taken shape in the mind of an Afrikaans intellectual as far back as 1949. In *Taalmonument*, the old-fashioned illustration on the 1949 programme, in which a wagon wheel encircles an illustration of the Voortrekker Monument, is contrasted with the slick stylisation of the 1975 cover: here was a new brand of Afrikaner that did not dwell on ancient animosities but looked skyward, upward and outward to Africa. At least, that was Van Wijk's intention, although whether any of this symbolism was perceived by the public at the time or since, is debatable.

The two programme covers are reproduced in the same publication 39 years after the inauguration of the *Taalmonument*, and the comparison between the two designs is proffered in hindsight. However, like van Wijk, a proportion of the audience attending the 1975 celebration would also have attended the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument, and, since these were the two most auspicious cultural edifices erected by Afrikaners for Afrikaners, comparisons must have been inevitable. Perhaps, just as Van Wijk had sat fanning himself with the 1949 programme, fiercely wishing to bestow upon his people a modern African identity, attendees at the 1975 event dropped their happy gaze from the gleaming white granite spire splicing the azure sky, saw the vision replicated on their programme, and felt that they had, indeed, arrived.

### 6.3 A case of mistaken identity

In the general scheme of great undertakings, the contribution and importance of graphic designers tends to be overlooked. It is therefore notable that *Taalmonument* makes reference not only to the 1975 programme design, but — even more unusually — also acknowledges its designer by noting in the caption to the image that the cover "was designed by Ernst de Jong" (Die voorblad van ... 2014). Here then is a confluence of the creative lives of two designers who first encountered one another at the Hillside Swimming Pool in Pretoria thirty years previously. As was the case with RAU, familiarity and family ties may

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<sup>452</sup> The Monument at Leipzig was completed in 1913 and commemorates Napoleon's defeat at this location (Monument to the Battle of Nations 2016).

<sup>453</sup> Despite the Monument's striking resemblance to an existing German war memorial, its architect claimed influences from indigenous African culture (see Chapter Four).

have played a role in the commission, but arguably van Wijk required EDJS's by now legendary association with an emancipating modernism to consolidate his own argument.<sup>454</sup> As has been noted, de Jong had recently, in 1974, completed a major commission for the South African Post Office, namely the Second Definitive Issue of South African stamps (Fig. 10), a seminal design output in which the signifiers of nation are reimagined as sophisticated graphic forms. Thus, even after the architect's death, the compilers of van Wijk's posthumous publication evoke de Jong's name as evidence of the forward-looking nature of van Wijk's undertaking. So closely was de Jong associated with the project that van Wijk's widow, Erna, excitedly telephoned de Jong from Hermanus to inform him that a book had been published on the monument and that his — de Jong's — programme design was in it (de Jong 2014\_16 December\_004\_09:00).

Except that, in truth, it isn't. The programme cover (Fig. 211), the programme itself, indeed most of the collateral for the inauguration of the *Taalmonument* was not designed by EDJS, but by a Cape Town based designer, Willem Jordaan. This rather startling discovery was made in the *Taalmonument* archive in Paarl while I was attempting to scan the material identified as designed by EDJS and set aside for me by the museum curator, Annemarie van Zyl.<sup>455</sup> While paging through one of the programmes, I noticed a miniscule credit, unobserved by the museum staff, at the bottom of the last page. It subsequently transpired that EDJS had only supplied the logo, a specification for banners and a one-page style sheet (Figs. 212 & 213), a set of imperatives that Jordaan promptly ignored in his subsequent designs. This hijacking of the project by Jordaan was subsequently confirmed by Colin Bridgeford (2016\_29 April), who, unprompted, referred to his Cape-based competition with a measure of bitterness.<sup>456</sup>

Why did the event organisers decide to drop EDJS from the project? Jordaan's geographical proximity may be an obvious explanation, but other interesting possibilities — from a broader South African graphic design perspective — present themselves. One scenario is that EDJS had, from the outset, only contracted to provide a limited set of applications; the specification sheet suggests that the organisers were given the logo and basic guidelines, and then left to their own devices. That these devices were, to some degree, lacking is evident in the branding elements that *do* acknowledge the directives from Pretoria. The azure sky shifts to something more turquoise (Figs. 214 & 217), Optima — perhaps not available at the local printer in Paarl — is not consistently applied, and the professional nature of the campaign goes seriously adrift in an invitation to a series of festival concerts that were part of the inaugural celebrations (Fig. 216). It is possible that Jordaan, as a staunch supporter of Afrikaans, received the latter in the post and, appalled, decided to intervene, perhaps as a *pro bono* gesture in the service of his mother tongue.

What the exact circumstances of the 'take-over' may have been is not known. However, what is clear is that the EDJS vision for Afrikaner identity was set aside and that Jordaan was able to persuade the organisers to do so. As has been demonstrated, de Jong regarded himself as 'an English boy'; conversely, according to Warren Clark (2016\_01May), who, as a recent diplomate of the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town (UCT), was a design assistant to Jordaan in the early 1970s, the latter "was passionate about the Afrikaans language". Jordaan designed several books and covers for the Afrikaans publishing houses Tafelberg and Struik in Cape Town, and it is evident that he, much more than de Jong, was known for excellence in publication design, which attribute would have recommended him (and his interpretation of the idea of *Afrikaans*) to the organisers of an event celebrating the written word.

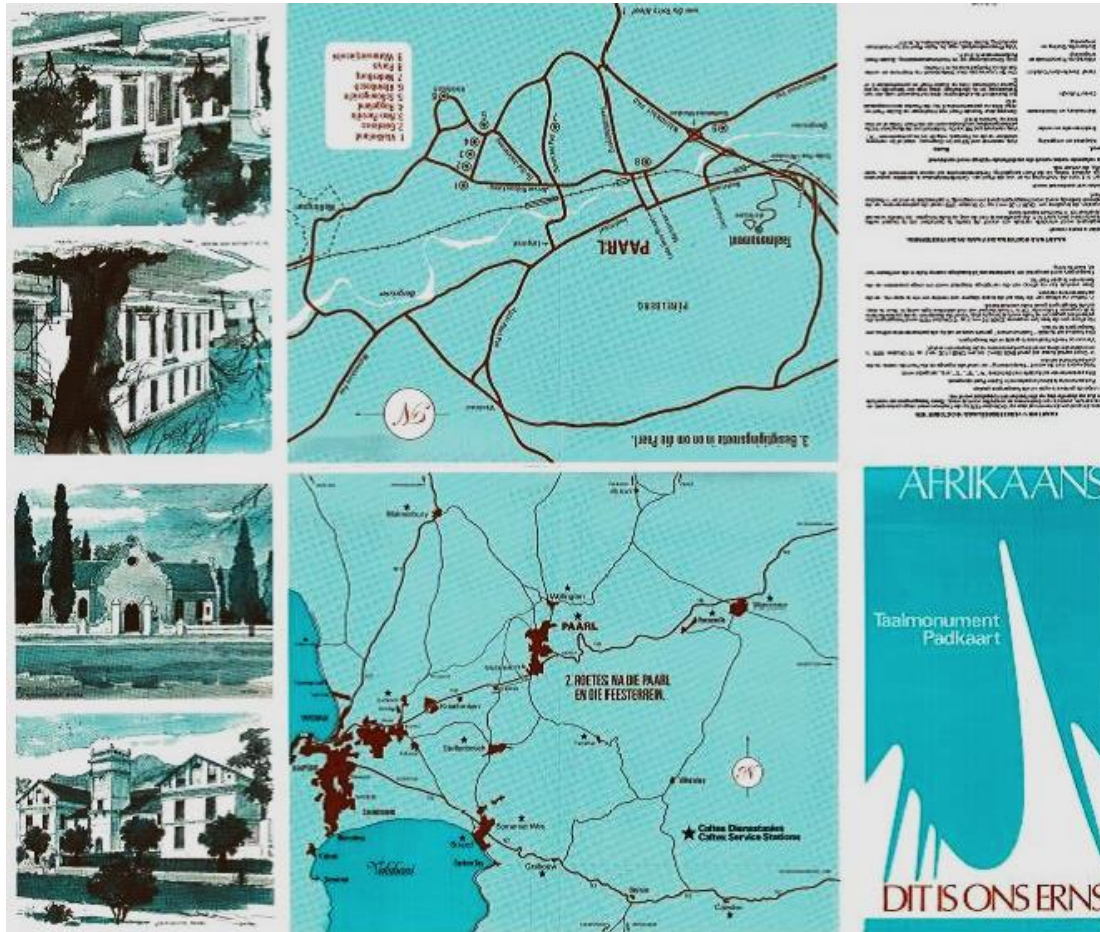
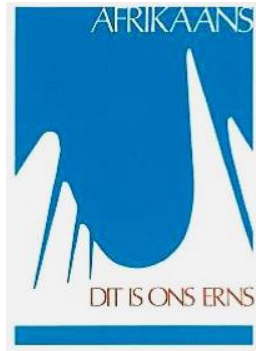
What is more, Jordaan was associated with a particular type of book — publications on heritage, architecture and botany — and had designed Alfred Harold Honikman's tribute, *Cape Town: city of good hope* (1966), a coffee table compilation of illustrations (many of them by Jordaan) and stories about the city. Honikman, an architect by profession, was the mayor of Cape Town from 1960 to 1962, after which he was elected Chairperson of the city's Executive Committee (Scott 2009) and served as the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the South African National Gallery (Shear 1998). Honikman thus wielded influence in the cultural community of the

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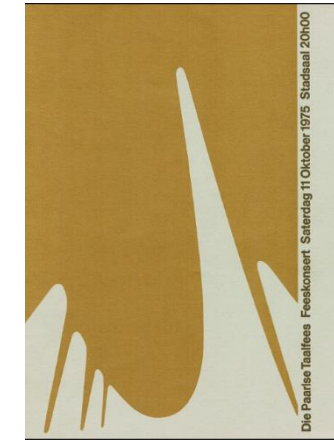
<sup>454</sup> De Jong (2014\_16 December\_004\_08:40) did not claim van Wijk as a close friend; the latter was Gerrie de Jong's peer.

<sup>455</sup> Van Zyl, who was very helpful and enthusiastic about my research, had previously scanned and emailed me a fair amount of *Taalmonument* material 'designed by de Jong'. As explained in Chapter One, this promising body of work was largely responsible for the inclusion of the *Taalmonument* case in the study.

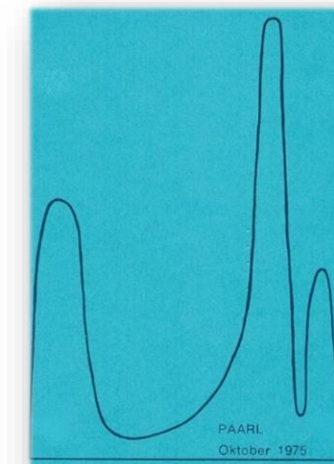
<sup>456</sup> Bridgeford judges that Jordaan was guilty of "standing on other people's shoulders".



**Figure 217** Designer and illustrator unknown, road map for visitors attending festivities at the inauguration of the *Taalmonument*, 1975 (collection of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum*). The proportions of the EDJS logo have been distorted to produce a sharper, more aggressive symbol. It is possible that Willem Jordaan provided the highly-skilled illustrations.



**Figure 215** Willem Jordaan (designer), programme for the festival concerts, *Taalmonument* inauguration, 1975. (see Fig. 216 or the invitation design for this event) (Collection of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum*).



**Figure 216** Designer and illustrator unknown, invitation to a series of festival concerts, *Taalmonument* inauguration, 1975 (collection of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum*).





**Figure 218** The *Taalmonument* precinct, Paarl (photographs by the author).



Cape and his recommendation of Jordaan’s “zeal” (Honikman 1966:13) and “level of excellence ... [which was] painstaking and exacting” (Honikman 2007:290) must have argued in Jordaan’s favour, despite what one assumes must have been van Wijk’s original recommendation of de Jong.

Besides being on the spot and highly regarded, Jordaan probably also exemplified the dignified, bucolic identity unique of the elite Afrikaner culture in the Western Cape, as opposed to de Jong’s more lightweight, American commercialism associated with the industrial north. This supposition suggests that a divide might have existed (and arguably continues to exist) between the design culture of the Cape and that of the (then) Transvaal. Rather tellingly, Clark (2016\_27 June 2016) claims to have no knowledge of the existence, let alone the iconic status, of Ernst De Jong Studios in South Africa in the early 1970s. The awe in which de Jong was held in the Transvaal clearly did not extend to the Mother City, despite the fact that de Jong had recently completed the design of a complete issue of South African stamps. Concomitantly, none of de Jong’s associates that I talked to mentioned Willem Jordaan — with the exception of Bridgeford, but only when asked about the *Taalmonument* project — as a significant role player in South African graphic design, despite Jordaan, in addition to work on books, annual reports, magazine design and brochures, also being “big” (Clark 2016\_27 June) with regard to corporate identity design. Therefore, what could be regarded as a trivial error of attribution opens up a potentially fruitful area of investigation with regard to historical *localities* of graphic design in Southern Africa. Although a large-scale study, that compares the regionalism of a number of creative practitioners over an extended period of time, is beyond the scope of the present study, it is relevant to an interrogation of EDJS to examine the studio’s identity for the *Taalmonument* within the context of Jordaan’s design for the inaugural invitations and programmes.

## 6.4 North vs South: two readings of the *Taal*

The first point of comparison is one of overlap. Conceivably, neither de Jong nor Jordaan executed the relevant designs *in person*. In the case of EDJS, Bridgeford was most likely responsible for the logo and Clark (2016\_27 June) recalls that he “indeed ... worked on this project just before leaving Willem [Jordaan] in 1975”. However, in both cases, these designers were responding to the exacting standards of their charismatic mentors. Thus Clark (2016\_27 June) reminisces:

He [Jordaan] was an uncompromising but patient mentor for which I am eternally grateful. He allowed me time to make mistakes and gave me the time to fix them. My role was assistant. More accurately his third arm. It was an incredible three years. I am blessed to have had such a rich point of reference to sustain me in what lay ahead ...

Clark’s prosthetic analogy is apt. As ‘third arms’, both Bridgeford and Clark were invisible extensions of their employers’ physical bodies, as well as their ambitions and obsessions. However, while supposedly only ‘assisting’, the apprentice — along with his or her arm — may also have provided the inspired insight of a youthful ‘third eye’, for which the master usually took the credit.<sup>457</sup> Although both Clark and Bridgeford would extricate themselves from this compelling but uneven relationship (Bridgeford in 1974, Clark in 1975), neither designer appears to have replicated in full measure the heady experience with their first, idolised mentors.<sup>458</sup>

As far as the identity of the *Taalmonument* is concerned, EDJS provided an apt signifier of the clean, pure lines of the physical structure (Fig. 218), as well as van Wijk’s (2014:6) “golden thread’ ... the holy grail that would make the creation of the monument possible”. This guiding vision was suggested by Sarah Goldblatt — erstwhile secretary to the legendary Afrikaans author CJ Langenhoven (1873-1932) — whom van Wijk interviewed in December 1964. Goldblatt produced a text from

<sup>457</sup> Cf. Mannstein and Aicher in Chapter Five of this study. In the case of EDJS, the attribution was at least group-related; Jordaan operated as a free-lance designer, thus any attribution implied that the work was executed by Jordaan alone.

<sup>458</sup> Both Bridgeford and Clark were employed by de Jong and Jordaan, respectively, immediately after leaving art school. Unlike de Jong, who taught Bridgeford, Jordaan did not lecture, but, according to Clark (2016\_01May), was an external moderator at Michaelis.

Langenhoven's *Collected Works* in which the author likened the growth of the Afrikaans language to a *snelstygende boog* (roughly, a rapidly-rising bow, or arch), the end point which would be *daar buite in die bloue lug* (far outside, in the bluest sky). Van Wijk's (2014:28) response to Langenhoven's metaphor is intensely poetic, almost ecstatic, a quality somewhat lost in translation, but worth quoting:

Eureka! Here is the image for which I am searching. A rapidly-rising bow, ascending in a swiftly accelerating ratio — the pure truth of geometry, a hyperbolic cone section, a wondrous, sculptural curve; a delight for the spirit of a designer of a symbol for Afrikaans, that began and grew, and has grown ever further, far into the distance. What a discovery! The idea of a road to an acropolis high in the blue sky wells up in my soul and the vision that I saw at the Voortrekker Monument in 1949 grows clear ...<sup>459</sup>

So striking was the phrase and the image that it evoked that, forty years later, de Jong was able to spontaneously recall van Wijk's obsession with his *snelstygende boog* ('rapidly-rising bow'). Furthermore, van Wijk's notion of an 'acropolis', while possibly countering the Germanification of the nation with yet another foreign identity, is not entirely out of place: unlike Baker's argument for Pretoria, Paarl does, in fact, share the Mediterranean climate of Greece, and the site itself, on a hot summer's day, is evocative of a sacred grove on an Aegean island (Fig. 218). The stylised rendering of the monument in the logo resembles de Jong's own crisp, hard-edge silkscreen prints and captures both the intellectual reasoning and the emotion, the sweeping sense of a soaring trajectory with 'Afrikaans' at its racing tip. The reference to an ancient Greek *logos* is evoked in both the use of colour and choice of letterforms, namely Hermann Zapf's "revolutionary font" (Brownlee 2015), *Optima*,



**Figure 219** The rallying cry of *Dit is ons erns* cast in metal in the *Taalmonument* walkway (photograph by the author).

that was released in 1958 by the Stempel AG type foundry. *Optima* was based on the Golden Section and developed after sketches done by Zapf in Italy in 1950 (Zapf 2016). Its debt to timeless letterforms of the Aegean prompted the typographer Matthew Carter, following drawings by Zapf, to produce a version of the font, *Optima Greek* in 1973 (Re 2005:15). Thus the rhetoric of the Voortrekker Monument (as a symbol of the imagined community of Afrikaners) is swept aside by a brilliant Mediterranean phallus that, were one to extend the analogy, flings the delicate white seed of Afrikaans into the hot African sky. However, lest the gesture be regarded as too frivolous, the solemn words, *Dit is ons erns* (roughly, "This we take seriously"), set in a warm brown, anchor the image to the earth.

This foundational motto has an ironic history, since the original usage, in 1905, was in the form of a question voiced by the politician JH Hofmeyr, where his concern was to preserve Dutch, and *not* Afrikaans (Monumentgeskiedenis 2017). In a progression of intertextual references, the statement of serious intent eventually emerged as an answer to the original question, but in order to *overturn* Hofmeyr's call, not support it (although this twist appears to have been overlooked by some commentators). The words eventually cast in metal in the *Taalmonument* concrete walkway (Fig. 219), and repeated in the EDJS logo, are an updated version of DF Malan's still-Dutch-influenced cry in 1908, *Het is ons ernst!* (Geldenhuys 1985:42). Malan, who was later to lead the *Herenigde National Party* to victory in the 1948 election, used the phrase as the title of a speech (Malan 1908) delivered to the *Afrikaanse Taalvereniging*<sup>460</sup> in the university town of Stellenbosch. Less than a year later, in 1909, the *Suid-Afrikaans Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns*<sup>461</sup> came into being, one of its primary goals being the advancement of Afrikaans (Geldenhuys 1985:42).

*Dit is ons erns* therefore inserts, into the futuristic monument and its two-dimensional signifier, a typographic link to history, a backward glance at those *manne* who seventy years earlier had championed the cause of Afrikaans. Unfortunately, within the context of van Wijk's vision, the inferred reference to Malan is not a happy

<sup>459</sup> Eureka! Hier is die beeld waarna ek gesoek het. 'n Snelstygende boog, opgaande na 'n vinnige vermeerderende rede — 'n meetkundige waarheid, 'n hiperboliese kegelsnede, 'n wonderlike beeldhoudende kromme; 'n lekkerte vir die gees van 'n ontwerper van 'n beeld vir Afrikaans, wat begin het en gegroei het, en verder die verskiet ingroei. Wat 'n ontdekking! Die idee van 'n trekpad na 'n akropolis bo in die bloue lug doem in my gees op en die beeld wat ek gesien het by die Voortrekkermonument in 1949 kry gestalte ...

<sup>460</sup> Afrikaans Language Society.

<sup>461</sup> South African Academy of Science and Art.

one. Notorious as the man who “set up the policy of apartheid ... [and] contribute[d] to a legacy that continues to scar [the] country” (In 1948 ... 2014), Malan’s dour spectre by 1975 had already alienated many Afrikaners, including, most likely, van Wijk himself: it was, after all, Malan who had inaugurated the — in van Wijk’s opinion— inglorious Voortrekker Monument. It is no surprise then that *Dit is ons erns* has vanished from the current *Taalmonument* logo; the monument and its museum now sport the byline, *Kultuur, natuur, plesier* — Culture, nature, pleasure — a more fitting motto, perhaps, for an unashamedly priapic concept.

Van Wijk (2014:58) mentions the insertion of *Dit is ons erns* in passing, only to explain that its function is to “create a frame of mind that would allow the deeper meaning of the monument to speak to the visitor”.<sup>462</sup> Interestingly, one aspect of this ‘deeper’ signification is Van Wijk’s (2014:30, 42) attribution of femininity to the design. The soaring mathematical curves are, in van Wijk’s eyes, synonymous not with a phallus, but with feminine beauty. Critics have remarked upon the plump ‘breasts’ in the courtyard (Fig. 218), and the structure at the far right, standing independently of the main silo, is undeniably yonic in its design (Fig. 220). Whichever way one chooses to interpret it, the precinct exudes an atavistic sensuality, which may be the reason that an architecture student, many years after the opening, confessed to van Wijk that his father had forbidden him to visit the site as a child, declaring, “that thing is evil” (van Wijk 2014:66).

In fact, the gaping yoni, according to van Wijk’s (2014:78) official explanation, represents the Republic of South Africa, notably “free of Afrikaans, but yet in the circumference of Africa”, an intriguing association of ideas too complex to unravel here. The three domes represent the cultures of the “Khoi-Khoi, San and other black Africans” (van Wijk 2014:76). Notably, while Malan’s utterance is mentioned only once, the signification of the domes is explained three times in *Taalmonument* (2014). This emphasis on Africa is not, as one might expect, an expedient addition in 2014; it emerges in the early stages of planning as a response to the second inspirational text (after that of Langenhoven) on which van Wijk drew, namely an excerpt from *Vernuwing in die prosa* (1963), by the ‘great spirit’ of Afrikaans, NP van Wyk Louw. The latter suggested the chapter, ‘Laat ons nie roem nie’ (roughly, ‘Let us not exult’), to van Wijk as a workable definition — conceptualised in 1959 — of Afrikaans and, by extension, the Afrikaner. In *Taalmonument* (2014) van Wijk quotes extensively from van Wyk Louw’s text, the most salient section of which is reproduced, above that of Langenhoven, at the monument itself:

Afrikaans is the language that binds Western Europe and Africa; it sucks its strength from these two sources; it forms a bridge between the vast, clear West and magical Africa — this sometimes still so *unclear* Africa; they are both great powers, and the greatness that can sprout from their union — that is perhaps what lies ahead for Afrikaans to discover ... (van Wyk Louw, in van Wijk 2014:34, emphasis in original).<sup>463</sup>

Van Wijk’s (2014:77) verbal (and visual) rhetoric in his original concept proposal similarly interweaves metaphors of Africa, sky gods and insemination:

The main silo turns to the right, to Africa, to the morning of day, in an enclosed, rising, sucking space .... The tip of the silo is rounded like a root, symbolising continuous virility ... below which the fountain bubbles and foams ... [it is] Afrikaans ... that stands in the living water of Africa”.<sup>464</sup>



**Figure 220** *Taalmonument*, secondary silo (photograph by the author)

<sup>462</sup> Although van Wijk (2014:78) suggested textual insertions by Langenhoven at another part of the monument, he did not indicate the use of Malan’s phrase on the walkway, or anywhere else, in the concept submitted to the competition judges. It is likely that the phrase was added by request of or insistence by some other influential role player.

<sup>463</sup> *Afrikaans is die taal wat vir Wes-Europa en Afrika verbind; dit suig sy krag uit dié twee bronne; dit vorm 'n brug tussen die groot helder Weste en die magiese Afrika — die soms nog so ónhelder Afrika; hulle is albei groot magte, en wat daar groots aan hulle verening kan ontspruit — dit is miskien wat vir Afrikaans voorlê om te ontdek.* The adjective *magiese*, although appropriately translated as ‘magical’, in Afrikaans also evokes that which is mysterious and uncanny.

<sup>464</sup> Compare van Wijk’s sensual description of the RAU complex.



**Figure 221** De Jong, poised god-like above the swimming pool at the De Jong Diving Centre, Pretoria, 1970s.



It is easy to dismiss, or censure, this narrative as the othering of an exotic, dark Africa that is penetrated, Danaë-like, by the blinding light of the West. However, in this coupling the power relations are difficult to disentangle: Afrikaans is both phallus and womb, Africa both nurturing earth and morning sky. Certainly, van Wyk Louw accords equal agency to the members of this pregnant ‘union’, the safekeeping of which he nonetheless cautions is an *ontsetting van moeilikheid* (roughly, a ‘release of trouble’), but, “could we ever”, asks van Wyk Louw (in van Wijk 2014:37), “have expected ease?”. In the truncated language of modernist logo design, the EDJS symbol cannot communicate this complexity of intent, and, for better or worse, van Wyk Louw’s ‘magical Africa’ remains off-stage. The energetic design is pure de Jong, and reflects a carefree, *holiday-in-Mykonos* mood. Although Bridgeford or another EDJS designer would have provided the finished artwork, the design captures de Jong’s delight in *brightness* — sun, water and the streamlined, shimmering arc of the diver’s taut frame. While not ‘magical’ in the sense of the shrouded mystery to which van Wyk Louw alludes,<sup>465</sup> the EDJS design nevertheless evokes enchantment of a different kind, namely a landscape that invites the naked body to offer itself up to the worship of a hot, cloudless sky (Fig. 221). Inherent in this trope is, of course, the cult of the white, middle-class swimming pool and, in 1975, the still-segregated beaches of the Republic’s shoreline. As Sitinga Kachipande (2013) points out, there has been a history of exclusion based on economics and colour that prevented most Africans from accessing hospitable bodies of water. For the de Jongs, on the other hand, swimming — and its attendant practice of sunbathing — would have been an indispensable part of their South Africanness, a quality that was unthinkingly transferred to the signifier for a language with which neither of them, nor Bridgeford for that matter, identified, yet with which their experiences in a post-colonial Pretoria was suffused.

Albert Grundlingh (2006:110) points out that publicity material of SATOUR<sup>466</sup> prior to 1990 typically depicted South Africa as an inviting outdoor paradise of sun and sea (Fig. 222). In this construction of a South African — and by extension, Afrikaner — identity, the subtext of the bikini-clad girl hovers always already in the palimpsest of nation and thus the feminine nature of the monument is, by association, intensified. However, despite the delicacy of the letterforms and their correspondence to van Wijk’s (2014:42) notion of the monument as a “pretty girl”,<sup>467</sup> Brian Sooy (2015) comments that of all Zapf’s fonts

Optima especially establishes a relationship with history ... A timeless typeface of classic proportions, it communicates quietly and thoughtfully. Optima communicates so thoughtfully that it opens a relationship with memory.

For this reason, Sooy (2015) argues, Optima’s capital letters were chosen for the names inscribed on the Maya Lin-designed Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, USA (unveiled in November 1982). Much like van Wyk Louw’s concept of Afrikaans as a union of two apparently opposing forces, Optima “melded ... a traditional typeface within a sans serif design” (Weber 2016). It was undeniably modern, but whispered of ancient myths and rituals. It celebrated the agency of the calligrapher’s subjective hand, a valuable characteristic when constructing an identity for a human language.



**Figure 222** Designer unknown, advertisement for SATOUR, early 1970s. It is of interest that here, too, Optima has been chosen to express South African identity (Sophisticated [sa]).

<sup>465</sup> Ironically, Moerdijk’s crepuscular Voortrekker Monument, which incorporates exotic, quasi-religious iconography from Africa and Egypt (Fischer 1998:222), perhaps more aptly captures van Wijk Louw’s vision.

<sup>466</sup> The South African Tourist Corporation. See also Chapter Four.

<sup>467</sup> Optima is, amongst others, the official font of the cosmetic house Estée Lauder.



Jordaan, on the other hand, when called upon to design the inauguration collateral, rejects, in his overall visual programme, both the joyful optimism of an azure sky and the humanism of Optima. Jordaan shifted the overall colour spectrum to a duller, earthier palette (Figs. 211, 224 & 225), one he had, for example, employed in his own 1974 stamp designs commemorating the restoration of the town of Tulbagh (Fig. 223). Indeed, the cover of the programme for the opening of the *Taalmuseum* (Fig. 227)<sup>468</sup> — where Jordaan is released from the iconography of the monument itself — retreats into a crepuscular black and grey, rendering the arched doorway to the museum not as triumphant, but rather as the ghoulish entrance to a charnel house. The black, opaque window glares sightlessly at the viewer, preventing all light and human kindness from entering or escaping the menacing interior.

The effect is sophisticated, but it is sombre — in conjunction with the forbidding, almost apocalyptic, photograph of the monument in the official programme (Fig. 211), it is Malan's *Het is ons erns!* exemplified. Optima was replaced with Helvetica and the controlling rhetoric of the grid made overt (Fig. 226), signalling a (re)alignment with contemporary, Northern-European visual culture and the 'aesthetic decree' of the International Style. EDJS's evocation of Afrikaners as carefree, open and *bright* is dismissed like a precocious child who is ushered off to bed when the adults settle down to mutter, ominously, amongst themselves. Exquisitely restrained, Jordaan's identity for Afrikaans, Afrikaners and, by implication, the Republic, was an argument for a cerebral, but also unforgiving entry into the international arena of post-nationalist nation states.

**Figure 223** Willem Jordaan (designer), invitation to the opening of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum* (*Huis Gideon Malherbe*), Paarl, 1975 (collection of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum*).



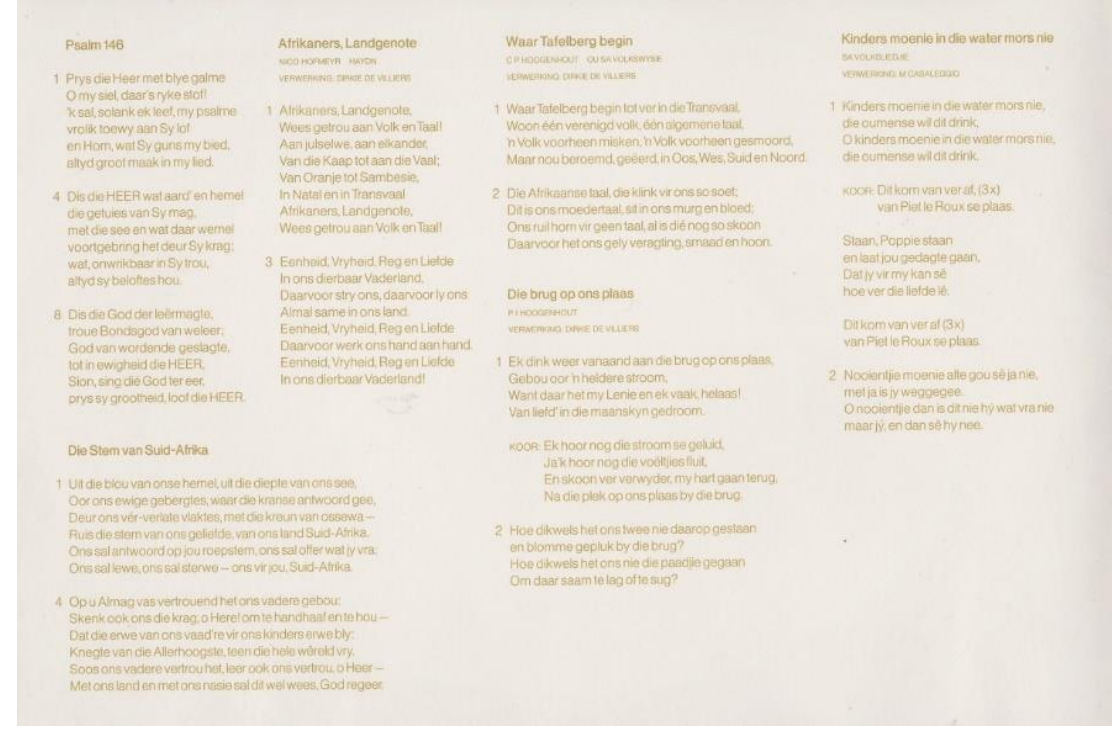
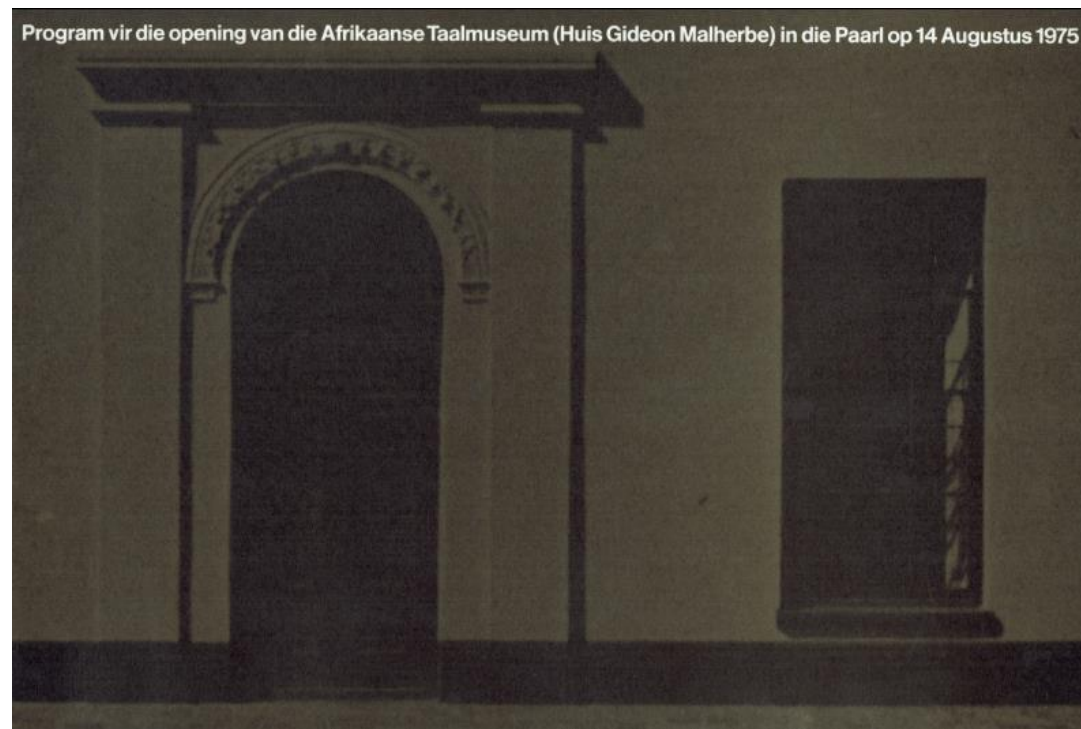
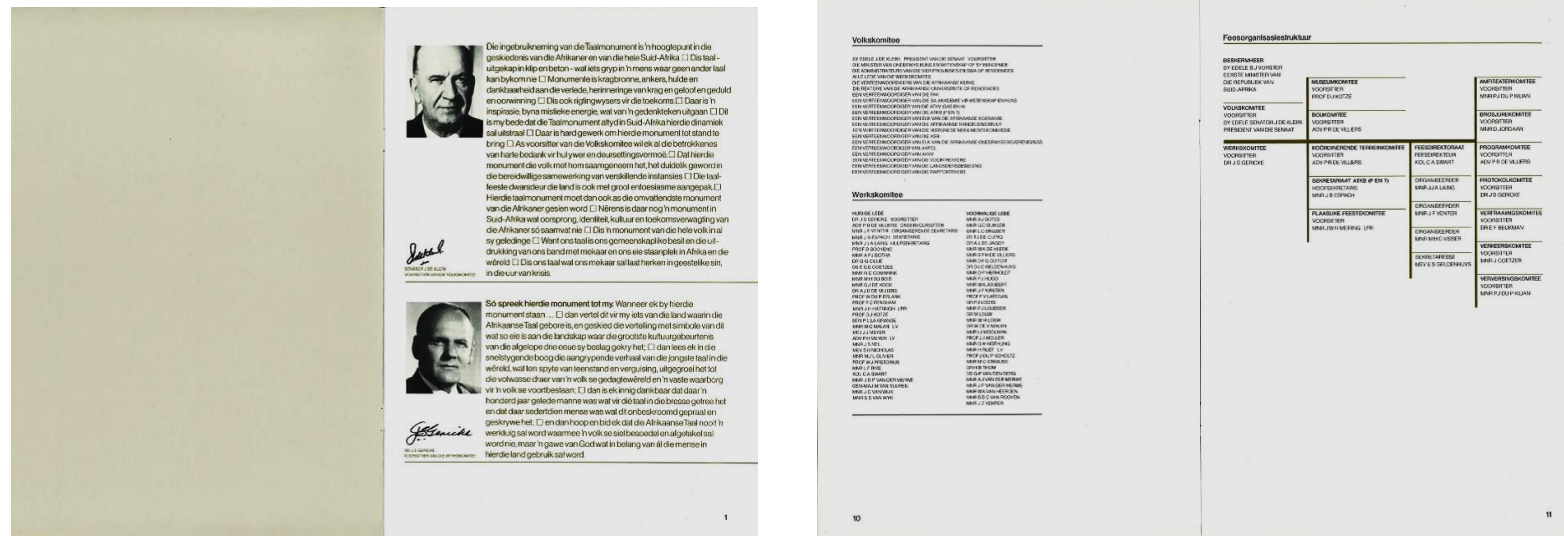
**Figure 225** Willem Jordaan (designer), invitations to the inaugural banquet and buffet lunches on the day of the monument inauguration. Guests invited to the sit-down function received the ochre invitation; less important guests received the blue version, Jordaan's only concession to the EDJS *ethos* (collection of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum*).



**Figure 224** Willem Jordaan (designer), set of two stamps commemorating the restoration of the town of Tulbagh, 1974 (South Africa Commemorative Stamps: 1970s 2015). Jordaan seems to have deliberately linked, by means of colour and style, the Tulbagh project to that of the *Taalmonument* in the nearby Paarl.

<sup>468</sup> The Afrikaans Language Museum is a separate institution, linked to the *Taalmonument* and housed in a historical building in Paarl. It was opened, as part of the *Taalmonument* festivities, on 14 August 1975 to commemorate the founding of the GRA on the same day in 1875.

**Figure 226** Willem Jordaan (designer), pages from the official programme for the inauguration of the *Afrikaanse Taalmonument*, 1975 (collection of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum*).



**Figure 227** Willem Jordaan (designer), cover and page from programme for the opening of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum (Huis Gideon Malherbe)*, Paarl, 1975 (collection of the *Afrikaanse Taalmuseum*). The sepulchral gloom of the cover design is not an error of reproduction; the image, in the original, is so dark that it is difficult to discern the visual elements.

## 6.5 The time of the role players runs out

In the metaphorical handing over of the baton from de Jong to Jordaan in the *Taalmonument* project one can thus discern a broader shift in the fabric of both de Jong's life and the political construct of the country. By the following year, the imagined nation had erupted into violence as the Soweto riots shook the country and signalled the beginning of the end of white post-colonial rule. After 16 June 1976, no designer could create a logo for a bank, or design an advertisement for orange juice, without acknowledging, consciously or unconsciously, the fragility of the structures with which he or she was engaging. A vigorous, on the ground, design project, the South African Poster Movement,<sup>469</sup> emerged to challenge Nationalist Party rule and advance the aims of the Freedom Charter. Notably, when the outcomes of this movement were subsequently showcased in the book *Images of defiance: South African resistance posters of the 1980s* (The Posterbook Collective 1991), the names of both designers and editors were deliberately withheld, signalling the collective's socialist agenda, its "grassroots vision" (Images of defiance ... 2016) and disavowal of an "artistic elite".<sup>470</sup> Here then, was the ostensible antithesis of a white, 'mythopoetic personality cult'; the crude silkscreened imagery of many of the posters in this campaign signalled, for many, that an authentic, South African design language had at last arrived.<sup>471</sup> From this point onwards, the work of mainstream South African graphic designers — past, present or future — would become a less compelling arena of creative production when compared to the visual rhetoric of dissent.<sup>472</sup>

By the time the *Taalmonument* was opened, Bridgeford (2015\_03\_April\_002\_34:52) had already, in his words, "bailed out" and the studio imperceptibly, but irrevocably, started to lose the pioneering reputation of its now no-longer-so-new American star. Bridgeford (2015\_03\_April\_2\_40:44) remains loyal to de Jong, yet the perceived betrayal that sparked his second resignation cuts deep. According to Bridgeford (who raised the matter during our very first telephone conversation), one of his designs that had been chosen to appear in the prestigious New York Art Directors Club Annual was hi-jacked by de Jong, who replaced Bridgeford's name with his own on the accompanying credits list. The design was a trademark for *The Gift Horse* (Fig. 228), a shop in Pretoria, and it appeared in the illustrious company of seminal work by design legends such as Saul Bass, George Lois (1931- ), Herb Lubalin (1918-1981), Seymour Chwast (1931- ), Paul Davis (1938 - ), Richard Avedon (1923-2004), George Tscherny (1924 - ), Lou Dorfsman (1918-2008), Reynold Ruffins (1930- ), Bea Feitler (1938-1982), Andre Francois (1915-2005), Willy Fleckhaus (1925-1983), Dugald Stermer (1936-2011), Henry Wolf (1925-2005), George Giusti (1908-1990) and Heinz Edelman (1934-2009), the latter being recognised for his iconic illustrations for The Beatles's *The yellow submarine* (1968). It was glittering company, at a particularly exciting time in the history of graphic design, from which Bridgeford found himself excluded.<sup>473</sup>

The level of personal upset that Bridgeford's resignation caused de Jong can only be surmised. The erstwhile master speaks with respect, but dispassionately, about his former employee; however, it is likely that the loss of his right hand man was a blow. Bridgeford's departure came at a time when de Jong's other emotional

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<sup>469</sup> As defined by Judy Seidman (2007:11).

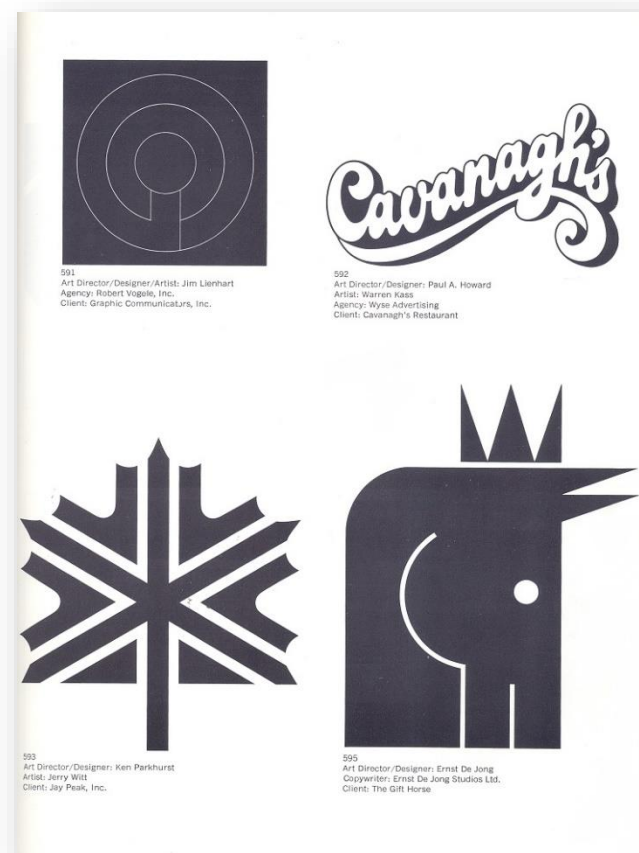
<sup>470</sup> Seidman (2007:8) reiterates that the Collective was not "interested in how it was to be an artist; we were interested ... in how it was to be alive". There were also practical reasons for remaining anonymous. Although South Africa was, in 1991, well on its way to democracy, poster makers may have preferred to conceal their subversive status during the preceding decades (Seidman 2007:17). The Posterbook Collective group itself comprised Seidman, Emilia Potenza, Marlene Powell, Charlotte Schaer and Maurice Smithers, a European profile of leadership that may not have been deemed strategic in resistance rhetoric. However, sixteen years later Seidman (2007:18) rescinds the Collective's allegiance to anonymity in her book, *Red on black: the story of the South African Poster Movement*, in which she "attempt[s] to trace the people, ideas, and visuals" that informed the movement. Ironically, one reason for Seidman's (2007:18) subsequent valorising of participants, such as the artist Thami Mnyele (1948-1985), may have been the bitterness that some poster makers felt at not being recognised for their contribution to the struggle.

<sup>471</sup> Not all the posters in the South African Poster Movement were silkscreened and not all the silkscreened images were crude. Poster makers, apparently, had access to international graphic design publications, since there were occasional attempts to copy the work of celebrated European and American graphic designers. The hand-cut, roughly stencilled images typically associated with the Poster Movement, such as the example featured on the South African History Archive website (Red on black ... 2010), take as their reference the posters printed during the May 1968 Paris uprisings. As such, the style cannot be regarded as unique to South Africa, although the context often seems to make it so.

<sup>472</sup> The two practices collided in postmodern irony in 2002 when the agency HarrisonHuman appropriated the iconography of the South African Poster Movement in their promotion of The Eagle Print Awards, at the time South Africa's most prestigious platform for rewarding mainstream print advertising.

<sup>473</sup> What is curious about this story is that the logo appeared in the 1969 edition of the Annual, but Bridgeford only resigned five years later — a long time to nurture a grudge.





**Figure 228** The page in the *Art Directors of New York Annual of Advertising* that caused the trouble (Adler 1969:356).

bulwark, Gwen de Jong, had also distanced herself from her husband, pursuing — as a consequence of their daughter Gigi’s success in the field — an independent career administrating South African gymnastics. In the opinion of an erstwhile employee at EDJS, June Wegerle (1954- )(2015\_13 June\_35:45), Gwen de Jong withdrew from the marriage as a consequence of the incompatible, in Wegerle’s opinion, personalities of the parties involved,<sup>474</sup> but also, and most pertinently, de Jong’s exasperating womanising (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_35:40).

Thus, the temptations and thrills of the Cadillac Motel had resurfaced in de Jong’s ongoing construction of himself as an American playboy. Gwen de Jong (2016\_04 December), for her part, reflects that she and her husband made an excellent team, and confirms — with exasperated rancour — that the sole reason for the disintegration of the marriage was her husband’s addiction to beautiful women. De Jong (in Groenewald 2015\_22 January) himself, in a rare moment of introspection, quietly conceded that his marriage had probably started failing soon after his return from the USA. There were also, according to Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_29:36), considerable amounts of alcohol being consumed in the de Jong household as the golden couple, twenty years after their auspicious arrival in Pretoria, spiralled into reciprocal infidelity.<sup>475</sup>

During this period of realigning loyalties, de Jong, according to Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_26:37), was preoccupied with other endeavours and consequently, in Bridgeford’s absence, there was no-one to oversee EDJS. In addition to teaching at the University of Pretoria, where he had directed the introduction of Information Design as a specialist area in the Fine Arts Degree in 1972 (van Eeden 2008:179), de Jong (2014:8) had taken up fencing and in 1977 was elected president of the South African Fencing Association. He busied himself executing murals for, amongst others, the Rustenburg Civic Centre, Grinaker and the CSIR, an area of artistic production that de Jong intimated was of fiscal rather than personal relevance. Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_26:40), while taking care to point out that de Jong may not agree with her assessment of the situation, nevertheless expresses the belief that

His business was not in a good situation ... He couldn’t care less about his clients, so it [EDJS] slipped. He spent the time at the varsity so the client base was minimal. It was, it *was* a very bad period.

There is a likelihood that this lack of client service contributed to the loss of the *Taalmonument* project. And yet, in 1987, ten years after the putative crisis, Ernst de Jong would win the prestigious Dashing SDSA Award for Outstanding Design Achievement in South Africa, outstripping the architectural firm Burg Doherty Bryant & Partners who only received a merit award for its design of the South African Reserve Bank. Within the context of graphic design’s perennial deference to other design fields, especially that of architecture, the decision to single out de Jong for this honour is evidence of the high regard in which he was held by his peers. On the surface, therefore, things appear never to have collapsed. On the contrary, EDJS clearly went from strength to strength after 1977 until the late 1980s when the studio played a pivotal role in the design of the iconic South African CS Stals banknote series. What is not that clear to history — but would have been apparent to colleagues and business associates at the time — was that de Jong was not the sole director of EDJS in this prosperous period. The person responsible for the rescue and subsequent rehabilitation of the studio was, indeed, June Wegerle herself.

<sup>474</sup> De Jong, seemingly in agreement with Wegerle, has repeatedly stated that the reason that he and his wife drifted apart was Gwen de Jong’s bookishness.

<sup>475</sup> Gwen de Jong had also entered into an extra-marital affair that would last, on and off, until the man whom she would eventually care for as a widower died in 2015.



## 6.6 June Viljoen at EDJS 1978-1989

**B**orn June Rolfe, Wegerle was employed by de Jong as an administrative assistant — in her words, a *secretary* — in February 1978 when she was 22 years old (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_31:22). At the time that she met de Jong, Wegerle was married with two small children and used her husband's surname, Viljoen. Wegerle had no background in art or design; her previous work experience had been in an administrative capacity at the CSIR's Information Research Services (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_37:57) and she replaced her sister-in-law at EDJS when the latter fell pregnant. De Jong was frank about his choice of staff based on physical appearance and the young Ms Viljoen was no exception: in those days, chuckles Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_38:43), "I was quite the babe". However, good looks were not all that Wegerle brought to the studio. Spunky and energetic, Wegerle also had excellent organisational skills. Bored with typing letters, she took over the EDJS accounting tasks and then moved to the studio itself (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_01:04) where she quickly acquired the necessary skills to take design concepts to print.

Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_16:00) emphasises that she "never really *did* the art". Instead, she took over the running of the studio, saw clients when de Jong was not able to and briefed the designers. She devised an alphabetised filing system in which each client's historical data, including all the relevant artwork, was stored for easy reference.<sup>476</sup> Wegerle was not overly concerned with design aesthetics; her focus was excellent client service. As a consequence, Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_27:38) concludes, the business "took off".

But it was not only EDJS that was rehabilitated. Wegerle and de Jong found, in one another, the means to reinvent their personal lives. If the de Jongs were "going through quite a bit of marital problems" (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_28:50), so was Wegerle, whose husband was physically abusive. Thus, although Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_27:30) concedes that she is "a pretty strong person", and that when she became involved in the running of EDJS she "got Ern going", she is equally generous in her gratitude to de Jong for giving her the confidence and financial support to get divorced. Although EDJS was faltering when Wegerle joined the studio, she readily admits that her impression of de Jong himself was favourable, and even tinged with awe: "He was good-looking — *very* good-looking ... and he had the world at his feet as far as his art was concerned" (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_36:00). He gave her, declares Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_24:30), "my education".

It was a heady mix. Wegerle took on the role, recently vacated by Gwen de Jong, of surrogate mother to de Jong, managing his studio and, in the wake of a spell of dissolute behaviour, keeping him "on the straight and narrow" (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_29:27). At the same time, Wegerle, young, beautiful but untutored, also stepped up — Pygmalion-fashion — to be mentored and moulded by the older man.<sup>477</sup> Within a year of Ms Viljoen arriving at EDJS, she and her still-married employer were, as Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_29:09) delicately puts it, "going out".

It was a relationship that would last for another twelve years. Wegerle's (2015\_13 June\_24:15) influence was, by her own reckoning, "huge". In 1979, she and de Jong planned and opened the Ernst de Jong Studio Gallery, which Wegerle subsequently ran. In the same year, de Jong was awarded the commission to paint the fire curtain of the new State Theatre in Pretoria. This installation, which is still in use and has consequently been viewed by thousands of theatre-goers over the past thirty-five years, probably secured de Jong more public acclaim than any other achievement, artistic or otherwise. Wegerle, with the help of the EDJS studio artists, executed the design in acrylic paint, sponsored by Windsor & Newton, on individual panels that would later be glued to the fire curtain itself (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_01:25-03:04). De Jong, according to Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_03:04) — who recollects this joint venture with a measure of motherly pride — would then do the finishing touches "so that it became *his* painting".<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> All the files with EDJS letterheads, logos and other corporate branding that have survived in the de Jong collection probably owe their existence to Wegerle.

<sup>477</sup> Wegerle, who is only five years older than Gigi de Jong, also shares the latter's birth date. The correspondence between the personae of these two women is notable.

<sup>478</sup> It is the first anecdote that Wegerle, unprompted, chooses to tell about her relationship with de Jong. At the time of writing, Wegerle, who had had no art training before joining EDJS, paints in her spare time and is planning an exhibition in Idaho, in the USA. Her style owes much to de Jong's meticulously executed and moody paintings of the late 1970s (e.g., *Planet of mangoes*).

In terms of graphic design output, EDJS followed its earlier success with regard to the RAU visual programme with an extended identity for The Medical University of Southern Africa (MEDUNSA),<sup>479</sup> which was rolled out in 1980. Other high-profile clients were CP de Leeuw Quantity surveyors and Lonrho, a world-wide conglomerate with roots in the Southern African mining sector.<sup>480</sup> EDJS had also acquired the design portfolio of Grinaker Holdings, a large construction and engineering company. Wegerle, who was made co-director with de Jong of EDJS — and appeared as such on the company’s letterhead — was closely involved in managing this lucrative account. Grinaker’s sailing sponsorships, for which EDJS designed branding collateral, prompted the adventurous Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_29:50) to draw her co-director into this sport as part of her crusade to curb the irrepressible de Jong’s tendency to an imprudent lifestyle, an aim that she apparently achieved. For the next decade, Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_30:14) claims, her partner “never *strayed*”.

Once again, de Jong appears to have experienced a period of stability and a measure of inner self-assurance, notably in a relationship with a woman who was approximately the same age as his first wife during the early years of their marriage. In 1982, when Wegerle was 28 and de Jong 48 years old, the couple travelled First Class to the USA courtesy of the South African Airways (SAA) in lieu of payment for a painting, commissioned by SAA, executed by de Jong and reproduced in the airline’s Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Calendar. In a curious reversal of the earlier voyage of discovery, Wegerle’s account of her introduction to the USA — where the itinerary included a visit to OU — parallels Gwen de Jong’s wonder at the boat trip out to Africa in 1957. Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_29:50), who had never set foot on an aeroplane prior to this event, reminisces that the entire experience “was unbelievable ... it was quite amazing”.

One of the consequences of the American trip was a series of exhibitions by American artists at the de Jong gallery.<sup>481</sup> In 1984, Wegerle and de Jong undertook the extension of de Jong’s residence to accommodate the graphic design studio that subsequently moved from Burnett to Hill Street in Pretoria (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_44:50), from which premises EDJS would operate until its closure in 1994.<sup>482</sup> With the advent of the fax machine, EDJS took on the first of its international clients, an American oil and gas company (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_11:04).<sup>483</sup> This busy period culminated in the receipt, by de Jong, of the Dashing Award in 1987. EDJS was thus performing well, but the studio never regained its status as a unique phenomenon in the South African design landscape.

Bridgeford’s departure in 1974 was not the only reason for the gradual subsidence into the mundane, albeit, under the co-direction of Wegerle, highly competent and financially rewarding design service. The 1970s saw the emergence of several competitors in the field of graphic design, for example, *Grapplegroup* founded in 1971 by Roy Clucas and Kenny Saint (Roy Clucas 2017). Heralded, in turn, as the ‘legendary’ and ‘avant-garde’ face of graphic design in South Africa, Clucas and Saint responded to the cultural memes of the hippie era — a foreshadowing of postmodern conceptual play and complex narrative imagery.<sup>484</sup> The latter was a context that, if not entirely alien, was not intrinsic to EDJS’s by now somewhat dated late-modernist approach. By the mid-1980s, the newly founded *Pentagraph*, a multi-disciplinary corporate branding and design consultancy in Johannesburg, was being aggressively marketed by its managing director Joe Kieser, so much so that by the 1990s it would be one of the largest design consultancies in the world (Raymond van Niekerk 2017). In comparison to these powerful new voices, underpinned by the dizzying ideologies of Reaganomics and Thatcherism, the studio in Hill Street — and its quixotic director — increasingly took on the appearance of an anachronism.

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<sup>479</sup> Founded in 1976 (Haynes & Lee 1995:[sp]).

<sup>480</sup> Lonrho began operating in Africa in 1909 as the London and Rhodesian Mining Company; it reached its peak in 1989 (Lonrho History 2017).

<sup>481</sup> *Inter alia*, Gayil Nalls (1953- ) and Corey Postiglione (date of birth unknown).

<sup>482</sup> It is not quite clear whether, during this period, Wegerle lived permanently with de Jong at the Hill Street house or not. Although Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_29:25) states, early in the interview, that she “lived in her own place”, subsequent remarks (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_35:00; 36:55) suggest that she regarded 366 Hill Street as her home. The de Jongs were finally divorced in 1984; arguably, Wegerle may have taken up permanent residence with de Jong after this event.

<sup>483</sup> There were also attempts, spearheaded by Gwen and Marc de Jong, to establish EDJS offices in Cape Town and San Francisco, USA. The details of these endeavours, that were both short-lived, are beyond the scope of the present study.

<sup>484</sup> A detailed history of Grapplegroup, and Roy Clucas’s design career in particular, is sorely needed.

Nevertheless, de Jong still commanded considerable respect. In 1988, he was appointed by the South African Reserve Bank to oversee the design of the CS Stals banknote series.<sup>485</sup> This year also saw the formation of the *Blue sky* movement, an attempt by mainstream — and, it perhaps goes without saying, white and male — graphic designers “to promote the development of a uniquely South African design style” (de Jong 2014:11). The first meeting of the group took place at the Hill Street studio, and de Jong would be its champion, on stage, at the first graphic design conference in South Africa, in Stellenbosch, in 1988.

However, 1988, as gratifying a year as it must have been — and perhaps for that very reason — was also a turning point after which de Jong’s life would, again, change. After ten years of fidelity and sober living, de Jong, now in his mid-fifties, eventually gave in to the amatory impulses that would hold him in their grip until the end of his life. As a consequence, Wegerle, just like Gwen de Jong before her, withdrew from the relationship, although Wegerle remained co-director of EDJS (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_30:16). The couple may have continued indefinitely in a business partnership, but a troublesome complication was brought into play, namely the incorporation of Marc de Jong into the structure and running of the design studio.

De Jong’s relationship with his son Marc was, and remains, a complex and difficult matter. It is beyond the scope of the present study to explore the emotional vicissitudes that characterised the oedipal tug-of-war between father and son. Suffice to say that, in 1988, de Jong made a decision to bring his son into the studio, one possible reason being the latter’s valuable knowledge of the new field of computer-aided design (CAD). There was probably also, as Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_23:30) implies, the fervent hope that, after several disappointments, this time the collaboration would *work*. Wegerle (2015\_13 June\_23:50) states that she objected, expressing her concern over the men’s clashing personalities — they were both “too alike *and* too different” — but de Jong overrode her opposition. In response, Wegerle resigned as director of EDJS, offering to work off-site for a salary (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_23:10). The arrangement lasted a mere few months. In January 1989, Wegerle, fed up with the situation, walked away from de Jong, his studio and his life.

She did not, however, walk alone: Grinaker, CP de Leeuw and Lonrho, amongst other clients, went with her. It had become clear, over the years, that it was June Viljoen (as Wegerle was then) and not Ernst de Jong who “did the work” (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_14:38) at EDJS. Wegerle’s carefully-nurtured client relations thus gained her an instant clientele when she started her own business, June Viljoen Print Consultancy, which, at the time of writing, she still runs.

## 6.7 Closing up shop

To some considerable degree, this act of perceived treason — de Jong did not speak to Wegerle for five years — adumbrated the end of EDJS. Deprived of its most important commercial clients, the banknote commission kept the EDJS staff occupied until the project drew to a close after 1991. In this endeavour, Marc de Jong played a pivotal role, as correspondence in the de Jong collection attests. In particular, his computer skills were brought to bear on the intricate security features of the notes, arguably the first application of CAD to a large-scale design undertaking in Southern Africa. Gwen de Jong was also drawn into the task, researching aspects of the visual imagery required for the designs.<sup>486</sup> There seems to have been a tentative but hopeful realignment of family concerns, and the prospect of Marc de Jong going forward with the design business in the absence of Wegerle might have seemed, for a while, a very real possibility.

This was not, however, to be the case. In April 1991, de Jong married Lynette Bartels and, while Wegerle and Gwen de Jong by all accounts “got on like a house on fire” (Wegerle 2015\_13 June\_35:33), Bartels’s arrival in the de Jong household seems to have been less cordial. After the banknote project, de Jong’s interest in graphic

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<sup>485</sup> According to de Jong, in an unrecorded conversation, the commission was initially, as suggested by his curriculum vitae, offered to EDJS alone, but in response to objections raised by other design consultancies, the project was then undertaken as a collaborative effort.

<sup>486</sup> A full account of this project, which is a remarkable example of the designer’s responsibility and agency in the construction of national identity, is beyond the scope of this study. For a reflection upon the visual rhetoric of the series, see Groenewald (2006b).

design dwindled and, presumably in response to his new wife's close ties to the ANC, he embarked, in 1993, upon a series of uncharacteristically ideological paintings, titled *Spear of the nation*,<sup>487</sup> that portrayed "the demise of the apartheid government and the ascension of the new democratic government of South Africa" (de Jong 2014:11).

While it is not the aim of this study to reflect upon de Jong's painterly output, the *Spear* series is of interest in that it signals a deliberate attempt, by de Jong, to gain acceptance as a serious painter in the latter part of his life in order to set aside, once and for all, associations with the shallow world of advertising.<sup>488</sup> His wife's political affiliations aside, de Jong had also watched erstwhile colleague Robert Hodgins elevated, late in life, from obscurity to international fame as the result of



**Figure 229** De Jong with one of the works from the *Spear of the nation* series, 1993.

inserting a political narrative into his art. In de Jong's case, however, it was not a good fit. Following close on the heels of the banknote commission that had been awarded by the very government that he now sought to discredit, the *Spear* series strikes a rather superficial note. Unlike Hodgins's easily assimilated caricatures of be-medalled dictators, de Jong settled upon the visual language of an obscure, abstract symbolism (Fig. 229). He abandoned the smooth, carefully crafted realism that Wegerle so admired for a crude, impasto style, possibly influenced by exhibitions of German art that he had encountered in Munich in 1990, but which had limited appeal within the context in which it was used by de Jong. Moreover, the *Spear* series was exhibited at the Pretoria Art Museum, hardly a platform for liberation art.

In the following year, in a gesture that quietly underscored the questionable intentions of the *Spear* series, de Jong launched a massive retrospective exhibition, presumably to consolidate, by artificial means if necessary, the appellation of 'legendary painter'. The exhibition, according to de Jong's (2014:12) curriculum vitae, comprised 236 artworks all executed, to considerable acclaim by the ruling order, prior to 1994. Images of the show attest to its impressive scale: it was, indeed, in the words of Princeton Lyman, the Ambassador of the USA who gave the opening speech, a "marvellous exhibition" (Lyman, in de Jong 2014:22) and a testimony to a hugely vigorous and abundant creative life. In a symbolic gesture, de Jong officially disbanded EDJS, in order to "devote his creative energies to painting and teaching" (de Jong 2014:5). He relocated to Norway, where Bartels served as First Secretary at the South African Embassy in Oslo and where the couple's daughter, Tamara, was born in August 1994. Why

his son did not continue with the studio is unclear, but any possibility of a cordial relationship, business or otherwise, between Marc de Jong and his father was, for reasons too complex to unravel here, irrevocably set aside during de Jong's four-year sojourn in Norway.

The narrative of Ernst de Jong Studios thus comes to an end in 1994. The story of de Jong himself continues for another twenty-two years, but that is a tale that cannot be told here.

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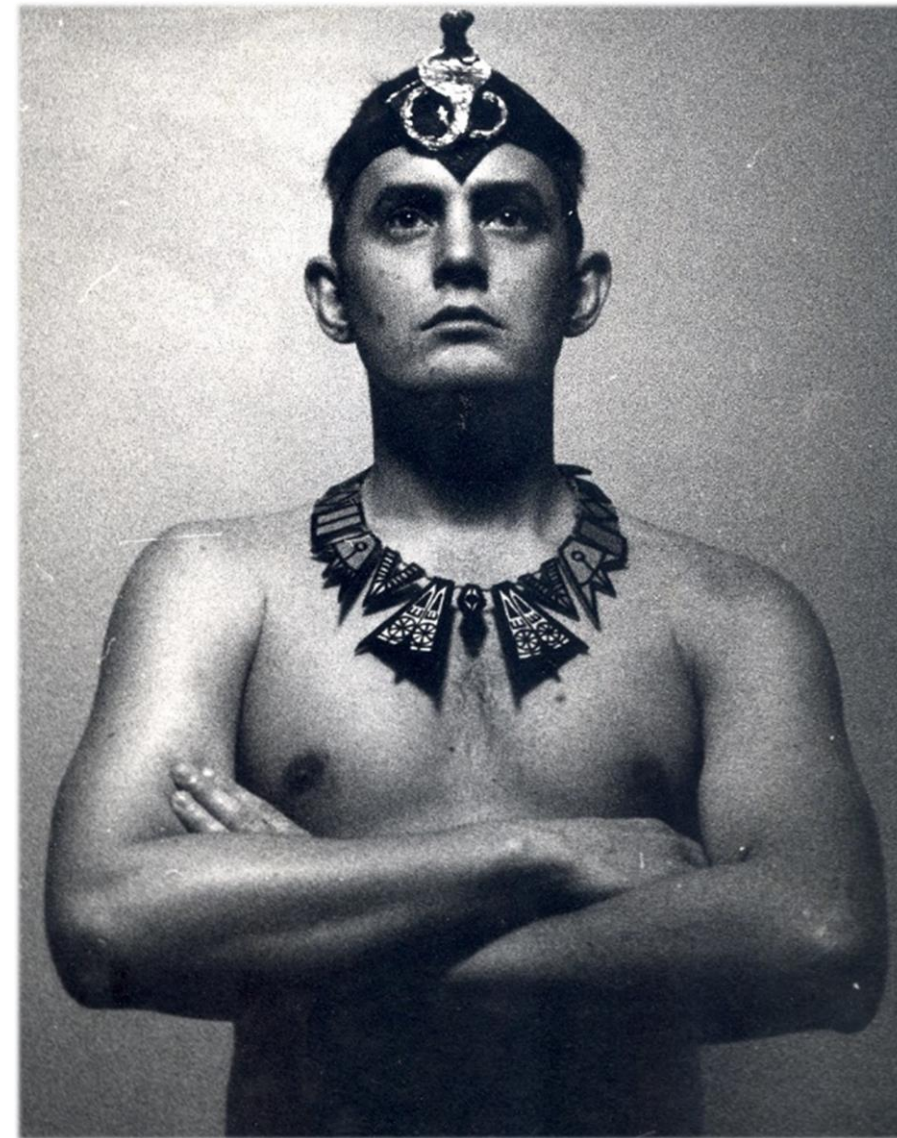
<sup>487</sup> Not to be confused with artist Brett Murray's 2012 portrait of the South African president.

<sup>488</sup> In one of our conversations, de Jong (2014\_16 December\_003\_24: 26) expressed his frustration about the dismissal of his designerly approach to painting: "I've been criticised for it for 50 years ... oh yes, but he's just a *designer*... and I'm saying, *ja*, but that's why I'm a good *painter*!".



## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

*We do scant justice to the king if we see in him only the adherent of an Aton religion which had already existed before him. He added the something new ... the quality of exclusiveness*  
Sigmund Freud, 1939, on Amenhotep IV





## 7.1 Leg[en]ds of desire

Every year, for the past decade or so, I have required my graphic design students to compile a presentation on the visual systems for the ongoing spectacle of the Olympic Games. The task forms part of a practice-led research project in which students investigate visual identity and wayfinding systems within the context of their own solutions to similar communication challenges. The theme of the Games is useful, in that it allows for an investigation of historical design styles, but also continually offers new examples of how communities utilise graphic design to imagine national identity. Thus, in the weeks that I was finalising this study, I settled back to listen to the presentations, amongst others, of an account of the Summer Olympics held in Munich, West Germany, in 1972. After an appropriate socio/political context for the event, the sunburst spiral of the black and white logo for the Munich Olympics flashed up on the screen, accompanied by the bold caption: ‘Designer: Otl Aicher’.

I did not correct the presenters. For thirty years I had broadcast the same ‘fact’ to learners. It was only owing to the need, prompted by the life story of a local designer, to ‘part the lips’ of the symbiotic relationship between masters and apprentices, designers and their legends, and the appropriation of legends of design by yet other designers, as well as the communities that employ designers, that I pursued the origins of this specific logo. As I clapped to reward the students’ diligence, I also wondered what purpose it would serve to demolish the legend. No matter how many edifices are given an impertinent shove by researchers bent on uncovering a truth, human beings prefer not to be surprised. Rather, the legend of the Legend provides the hope that I, too, can live the myth, be immortalised in design textbooks, have a biographer whisper my name (after all, why else pursue a Doctoral qualification?). Although Fallan, and others, may assert that this is all *wrong*, a role model in which all good things are assimilated — where ‘good’ does not necessarily equate to ‘moral’, or even ‘kind’ — appears to be indispensable in human affairs. This is perhaps especially so in the case of creative practitioners where ideas of genius are sutured to notions of the divine. Acknowledging this ‘itch’ for mysticism, Burke (1955:333) calls for the acceptance of a hierarchy of beings and, more to the point, its motives:

[S]ince, for better or worse, the mystery of the hierarchic is forever with us, let us as students of rhetoric, scrutinize its range of entrancements ... let us observe ... the motive that attains its ultimate identification in the thought ... of the universal order ... whereby all classes of beings are hierarchically arranged in a ... pyramid of mounting worth ... towards ... God ... the end of all desire.

Gwen de Jong, reflecting upon de Jong’s identification with Egyptian art and, more particularly, the symbol of the sun, concluded that her husband had, indeed, regarded himself as a god. Whatever the judgment of his peers or historians may be of this brand of narcissism, his bravado made de Jong stand out. He took the lead, he made things happen and in the exhilarating rush, he took others with him, perhaps even an entire community.

Did de Jong construct the profile of a modern South Africa? In one sense, this study — especially within the context of a limited sample for analysis — suggests that, as an individual, he did not. In another sense, it can be argued that as an impresario, as a *legend*, he did. Although my research suggests that without the contributions of partners and employees EDJS would probably have failed, I had set out to write about de Jong because I already knew about *him*, and I did so because de Jong had made it his business *to be known*.

Describing his involvement in the design of the festivities celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Republic in 1966, de Jong (2014 – 27 Aug\_ 125542\_01:02) comments that, “It was a new country [*sic*]... and they wanted an image that was very *bright*”. This is not an idea offered in hindsight; in an early promotional flyer for EDJS (Fig. 95), during Hoekstra’s tenure, the unique benefit offered by the studio is a “brighter, fresher” (De Jong Studios ... [*sa*]) identity; arguably, what the ruling order ‘wanted’ was what de Jong decided it should be given. De Jong, therefore, became and remains important because he exemplified this *brightness*. His American-styled confidence, good looks and prowess as a sportsman presented a seductive avatar for the ‘new’, white Afrikaner. He not only anticipated, but also physically *embodied*, a Republic that was on the forefront of international trends. The fact that this shimmering being was also an artist, heightened the mystique. To be part of the de Jong

phenomenon, was to be part of a brave, but also very sophisticated, new world; the actual *design* of this world was perhaps a secondary function of the ‘ultimate identification’ with the legend, and could be left to underlings and acolytes to perform.

The persona of a sun-god served de Jong, but also the South African design community, well — even a post-colonial, post-apartheid community that has, for better or worse, built upon the vision of an ambitious young man who sought to overturn the cramped visual language of a conservative, settler culture. Although de Jong is not correct in his claim, his boast that 366 Hill Street was the first *white* house in Pretoria is evidence of his compulsion to sweep away the sombre edifices that surrounded him. However, in the very act of constructing brightness, de Jong had to face his own culpability in the dark project of apartheid South Africa. By 1966, when he was conceptualising floats and horse-mounted parades for the anniversary festivities, white supremacy had been forcefully entrenched in the legal system of the nation state that he was celebrating, and the armed struggle to counter these injustices was already underway.<sup>489</sup> Well aware that my question about his role in the festivities contained hidden snares, yet unable to disguise his enthusiasm for the scheme, de Jong (2014 – 27 Aug\_ 125542\_02:07-02:09), all in a Freudian muddle, inadvertently — but tellingly — likens the event to the splendour of Hitler’s parades. In an attempt to extricate himself from the slip, by asserting that “fortunately, we weren’t going in *that* direction”, he then exacerbates the blunder by resorting to one of the most troubling tropes of Nazi Germany by adding, “Well ... we didn’t know, at the time”.

Burke (1955:31) warns that “a science takes on the moral qualities of the political or social movements with which it becomes identified”. In 1966, even I, as a nine-year old, was aware that I lived in an unjust society. However, I was, perhaps, fortunate in my parents, and a mother who, when Verwoerd was assassinated welcomed his demise an act of God. De Jong, on the other hand, had been raised in an environment where the dictates of the National Party were not only normalised but materially executed by a father whose son perceived this servant of the state as being civilised, gentle, and good. That de Jong, notwithstanding his momentary twinge on the bus in Cape Town, did not question (at any rate, not very searchingly) the *status quo* in 1966, seems obvious, but neither did he regard or fashion himself as an instrument of political persuasion. De Jong was only interested in what Burke (1955:269) refers to as “pure persuasion”, a preoccupation that

involves the saying of something, not for an extraverbal advantage to be got by saying it, but because of a satisfaction intrinsic to the saying. It summons because it likes the feel of summons. It would be nonplussed if the summons were answered.

Few explanations of the imperative to design could better summarise de Jong: he *spoke* because he was enlivened by the *feel* of the summons. De Jong did not care who won the next parliamentary election. He was not inflamed by issues of adult education. He was indifferent to the tastes and predilections of philatelists, and the battles of beer brewers in South Africa, and he certainly did not identify with the struggle to immortalise the *taal*. These commotions and conceits only served as opportunities to conceptualise and execute, perhaps as an individual, more often as a team, a *total* design, a creative performance that always strained to exceed its brief because the sheer pleasure of performing prompted the performers to prolong the show.

The argument for the thrill of the creative summons independent of the moral qualities with which it becomes identified is, of course, not unique to de Jong. A notorious case in point is German film-maker Leni Riefenstahl’s (1902-2003) (in Maclean 2014:234) declaration that she was an artist, answering a higher calling, and so unable to think politically. Riefenstahl (in Maclean 2014:234), not unreasonably, claimed that this was “true of practically every artist in the past who produced great works ... None of these people had any time or feeling for politics”. It would be scurrilous to equate de Jong’s cheerful, rotating flags trundling down Church Street to Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the will* (1935),<sup>490</sup> yet, after the fact, de Jong, like Riefenstahl, claimed immunity to the political ideas that so demonstrably accompanied his

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<sup>489</sup> Nelson Mandela had proposed the adoption of armed struggle in 1961; consequently, in 1962, the Sabotage Act was passed (Oakes 1994:368-369). In February 1966, in one of the most arrogant undertakings of the National Party government, the multi-racial Cape Town suburb of District Six was therefore, declared ‘white’. Forced removals of people from this location would begin in 1968. The anniversary of the Republic was in May; when de Jong designed the anniversary festivities early in 1966, Verwoerd was still Prime Minister.

<sup>490</sup> On the other hand, Riefenstahl’s *Olympia* (1938), a documentary film of the 1936 Summer Olympics, held in Berlin, Germany, may, perhaps, have resonated quite strongly with de Jong, not for its Nazi propaganda, at which, McCoy (206) argues, it completely fails, but because of the film’s sequences devoted to the high-diving competition, in which the visuals become less concerned with factual record, than abstract composition.



success. Chris McCoy (2016), who researched Riefenstahl's life and work, reflects that the impression he gained was of an individual "whose primary motivation was making beautiful images, and who was willing to let the ideological chips fall where they may". Much the same can be said of de Jong, but, adds McCoy (2016) — in reference to Riefenstahl — "that doesn't excuse *Triumph of the will*".

It is not the purpose of this study to construct a shrill exposé of de Jong's complicity with the high priests of apartheid; the fact that he was privileged and white, and accepted briefs from clients who were privileged and white, and who were, therefore, almost without exception furthering the interests of other, privileged white people, always already condemns de Jong as it does any individual, including myself, who sought advantage under National Party rule. Rather, it has been my concern to write about this person and his life world *despite* the acceptance of complicity, lest the rank smell of collusion cuts short all storytelling of the white histories of design in Southern Africa, beyond tales of smug indignation or guilt-induced outrage.

## 7.2 Death, the *longue durée* and other challenges

**E**rnst de Jong died on 13 February 2016. It took those of us that knew him by complete surprise; he had been full of plans, not all of them prudent or possible, but nevertheless testimony to a busy, energetic life. He took ill on a Friday, was hospitalised and passed away on the Monday, with his daughter, Tamara at his side. The news that the main subject of my research — now more friend than 'participant' — had permanently stepped off the stage while I was still in the midst of my own performance was, momentarily, shattering.

Naturally, this event presented a challenge. The questions I had not asked, and the ones that continue to emerge, will remain unanswered. Although de Jong's advanced age had been acknowledged in my research design, the study had been envisaged as an undertaking lasting, as far as de Jong's participation was concerned, a mere six months; although not impossible, it had seemed unlikely that he would pass away before I had completed the interviews. However, my best-laid plans for brevity went astray and thus a second difficulty of the project has been its duration. Scholarly texts that were still fresh when I cited them in 2013, took on a slightly jaded look in 2017. New research appeared that threatened to challenge some of the assumptions underpinning my arguments. The more I prodded the wound, the more I had to adjust, even reconceptualise, earlier findings, which was, on the one hand, expedient, but it also drew me into an ever outward spiraling quest for the factuality that Daniel James warns is the malaise of the Western historian. Moreover, committed to one topic for five years, I found it increasingly difficult to construct links between my research and conference themes, as well as other publishing opportunities. I had to repeatedly motivate for extensions from university authorities and line managers at my own institution began grumbling about lack of research outputs. I, too, grew older.

However, both de Jong's death and the duration of the project, despite their difficulties, also offered opportunities. Had I concluded a neat set of five interviews in 2013, I would have received an expedient view of my subject's life, but I would never have gained the trust of the man about whom I was writing. My tale would have slithered smoothly, but superficially, over the outer layers of a conventional 'truth'. And, while de Jong's death was both a personal loss and a practical impediment, the packing up of 366 Hill Street brought new material to light while I was still writing up the study. Some discoveries enriched existing observations; others, such as the photographs of the exhibition of *Musicians in the sun*, came too late. The emptying of the house also facilitated an exhibition of selected EDJS designs at the FADA Gallery at the University of Johannesburg, in August 2017, providing a public introduction to this work. That all of the material cannot be incorporated here is regrettable, but at least, in finalising my text, I can write with the assurance that, although I expect to encounter traces of de Jong in many other places in the future, nothing new can pounce at me from the rooms and boxes at the Hill Street house.

## 7.3 What it all adds up to

*Ragged bits and pieces of memory, a jumble of tender thoughts and troubled dreams, haunt every stage of our backward look. ... Granted, when the humble scholar emerges from either the library or the archive ... stuff has been found out, facts have been discovered, histories have been 'uncovered', connections have been made. Yet in what ways might we defend what it all adds up to ...?*

Michael Ann Holly, 2013

**B**ecause I am aware of the large amount of material that I have had to exclude from this study, it is difficult, from a subjective point of view, not to feel that the outcome is, in some ways, deficient: readers who are familiar with de Jong's work may agree that other, or more, cases may have better served both de Jong and my 'backward look'. However, viewed within the framework of my research design, the study has met its aim, and the limited sample, in fact, enables it to do so. I provide a singular account of, and considered reflection upon, the origins and rhetoric of both de Jong and EDJS, and respond, in depth, to the stated purpose of interrogating how a particular person, albeit often in a supervisory role, domesticated the modern in terms of graphic design experiences in South Africa in the years 1957 to 1975. The case studies selected — *Lantern*, RAU and the *Afrikaanse Taalmonument* — offer up, first and foremost, a record of visual material (much of it hitherto unpublished) pertaining to South African graphic design history, and prompt, through considered analysis, an engagement with the processes and meanings embedded in these experiences. I address the political, social and institutional contexts of a range of graphic design applications during this period, and also allow for glimpses of the sometimes less-than-perfect agents of this practice. The latter aspect may have emerged as an unforeseen consequence of the research process, but in the final result serves to anchor the study in the *lived* experience of design praxis, as well as the documentation, archiving and analysis of design artefacts.

It is also, then, to the purpose of prying open rather than merely documenting a statement or artefact that the biographical material has, somewhat precociously, exceeded its tender. Although readers eager to engage with a critique of the output of EDJS may grow impatient with more than 50 pages of the de Jongs' life story, the biographical element is, in fact, critical to Calvera's (2005:376) injunction that the local historian is called upon "to explain ... what has been different, specific or original about a local process". In a study that sets out to investigate *domestication*, what is different, specific and original can, perhaps, only emerge from the context of the process of which the physical and emotional circumstances of the designer is an integral part. Moreover, what may interest 'foreign colleagues' is how *undifferent* design practitioners are in their influences, drives and foibles, irrespective of the distances that separate them in terms of geography and time. Sandino (2007:193) states quite forcefully that, as a design historian, she

wants to show how strategies of the creative process can be seen as specifically 'narrative' strategies of the self ... where the self is 'developed collaboratively' in conjunction with ... an 'entire social environment' such as family, community or institutions.

The study is broad, personal and the issues it addresses diverse; its presentation is sometimes eccentric. A pared-down, obedient argument might have taken less time to construct and certainly less time to read, but would perhaps also have been less useful within the context of design history writing in Southern Africa that, arguably, demands complication rather than simplification of themes. No comparable study exists, a condition that both underscores the contribution of the research, but also highlights, for me, the challenges faced by historians of South African design. The study provides, for the student of graphic design history, a historical, rhetorical as well as an ethical map that can be taken up (or rejected) in future research undertakings. As such, it is a deliberate response to Alun Munslow's (2010:220) call for "expressionist historical forms", and offers the possibility of an approach to design history writing that is "authorially adventurous ... overtly figurative in exemplification, expansive in taste, affective, emotive, personal, gestural, perspectival, auto(bio)graphical, empathic, [and] performative" (Munslow 2010:217). This

is not to state that “artwork history”, as Munlow (2010:217, 219) terms it, is by definition unscholarly: expressionist historians always have a choice. In the case of the present study, despite a certain ‘expansiveness of taste’, I have scrupulously referenced the sources of the data that I use to construct and support my narrative and adhered to methodological practices advocated by respected scholars.

The usefulness of the text, to future researchers, was always a priority and, in its attention to detail and diversity of themes, the study suggests many opportunities for further research. First amongst these is a scrutiny of EDJS outputs not examined here (of which several are enumerated in Section 1.4), as well as a more general history of corporate design practice in South Africa — for example, Hortors, Unimark, Grapplegroup and Pentagraph — that emerged in conjunction with, in the wake of, and in competition to EDJS in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Designers such as Wynand Smit, Kobus Esterhuysen, Georges Duby, Mike Barnett and Willem Jordaan deserve attention, as do some of the architects mentioned in this study. While Colin Bridgeford and Johan Hoekstra are recognised in my study for their contribution to EJDS, Bridgeford’s subsequent work for, amongst others, Chris van Rensburg Publishers and Hoekstra’s successful career, post-EDJS, in mainstream advertising in Johannesburg, promise to throw light on these practices in South Africa in the years 1965 to 1990. The Pretoria College for Advanced Technical Education, as it moulded South African creative practitioners in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, also offers rich opportunities for further research. Marc, Gigi, Lynn and Tamara de Jong have their own stories to tell.

Specific case studies, while exhaustively unpacked in Chapters Four, Five and Six, continue to leak possibilities, such as the rhetoric of scientific, engineering and mining institutions in their attempts to promote scientific practice (and themselves) in Southern Africa; university branding in both a historical and contemporary context; student publications such as *Die Heraut*, and the design and promotion of monuments as a historical project in a divided society. While many of these themes are being interrogated, there is perhaps a need for more subversive readings than is presently the case. Finally, although the study, despite itself, touches on de Jong’s painterly output, a comprehensive interrogation of the latter can throw light on the nature of artistic practice in South Africa, and de Jong’s eventual exclusion from this arena.

In conclusion, a note on the use of tenses in the study. By the time that de Jong died, I had already written up a large part of his biography, as well as sections of the case studies. My interaction with de Jong was an ongoing experience, and I used the present tense when citing him. At the moment of his death, this changed; suddenly, an opinion expressed was no longer a living, malleable thought, but a past, fixed one. It may be that I should have moved the entire story into the past tense, but, in the end I did not. Some things *are* now materially different and in these cases, I have acknowledged that what I construct here is a record of human endeavours, places and things that have slipped, forever, away.

However, I have kept de Jong himself present, and alive.

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