

Andrew Munnik

Collateral Damage: Lessons for the 21st Century

A suite of 18 pencil drawings by Andrew Munnik

The theme is an extension of a one-person exhibition held in Rosebank, Johannesburg, in 2005 entitled 'Bang the drum slowly', and is an attempt to highlight collateral damage and its consequences. I wanted to extend the theme of that exhibition, but restrict the working method and process. The formal approach would be a single medium, and a single motif. Any variation on these would have to be as a result of the tonal range of the medium (pencil) or of the physical state I experienced at any point during the process.

Random place-names have been 'embedded' in the legs, to convey the random way in which violent conflict can, and is, occurring. These names soon get 'swallowed up' by the number of casualties: for example, each drawing contains about 6 000 legs. The series thus totals about 108 000 legs. This is still 40 000 legs short of the destruction caused by one bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. In some of the drawings, the shapes of countries, chosen at random, have been described by using colour. Formally, an attempt to highlight the 'individual' perimeter created by humans to define 'ours' and 'yours' was aimed at, yet

without the element of colour, reverts to being a small part of a bigger 'whole'.

The suite of drawings is meant to highlight the difference, in time, between verbalising and visualising a number. Philosophically, for me, it was a way of 'acknowledging' each limb lost, as well as 'resurrecting' that loss by way of drawing each one as anatomically correctly, but as speedily, as possible. They had to be drawn and not, for example, photocopied.

Not writing, not enunciating, but recording.

Aspects such as micro- and macrocosmic would occur through the spectator's physical distance from the drawing. Formally, close up, each leg has a particular character, detail, correctness. From a distance, the image reads as a variety of grey tones and shapes, suggesting topography. Subjectively, each leg once belonged to an individual. The resultant loss of the limb is life-changing, but looked at from a distance of, say, 30 000 feet (from a fighter jet, perhaps) it becomes impersonal, abstract – merely collateral damage.

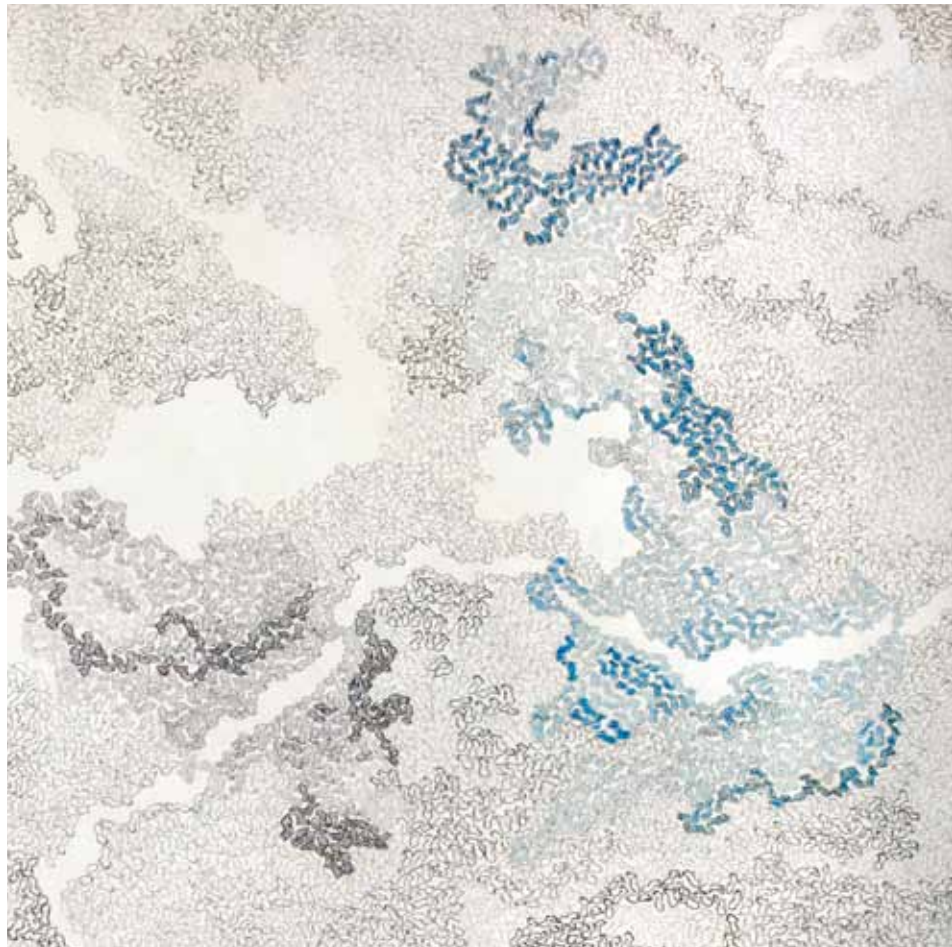
I had in mind the visually complex and time-consuming

Buddhist mandalas made painstakingly from sand by monks, carefully blown into designs over a period of days – only to be walked across, swept into a bucket and tossed into a river. For me this suggests 'the whole within the part – the part within the whole'.

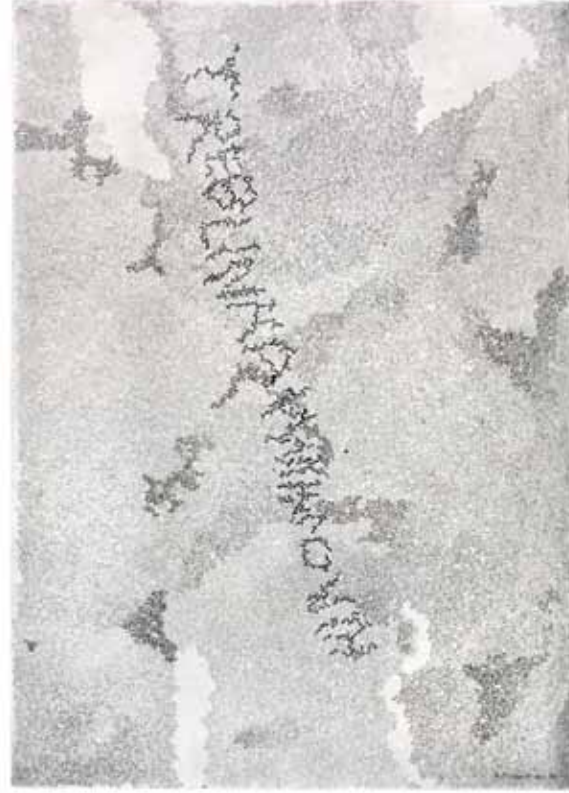
Since the completion of this work, much conflict has occurred in the world. The response by artists to these events would seem to cut across time, borders and nationalities. The April 2008 special issue of *Modern Painters* devoted to 'Art and War – Five Years and Counting' reviews the work of a number of artists commenting on the Iraqi war. One such artist is Collier Schorr, based in New York, who has made a series of works entitled 'An Arm and a Leg'. It is reassuring to know that although one artist might be working on the periphery of the contemporary art world, and another in the centre, the issues and concerns can be explored simultaneously.

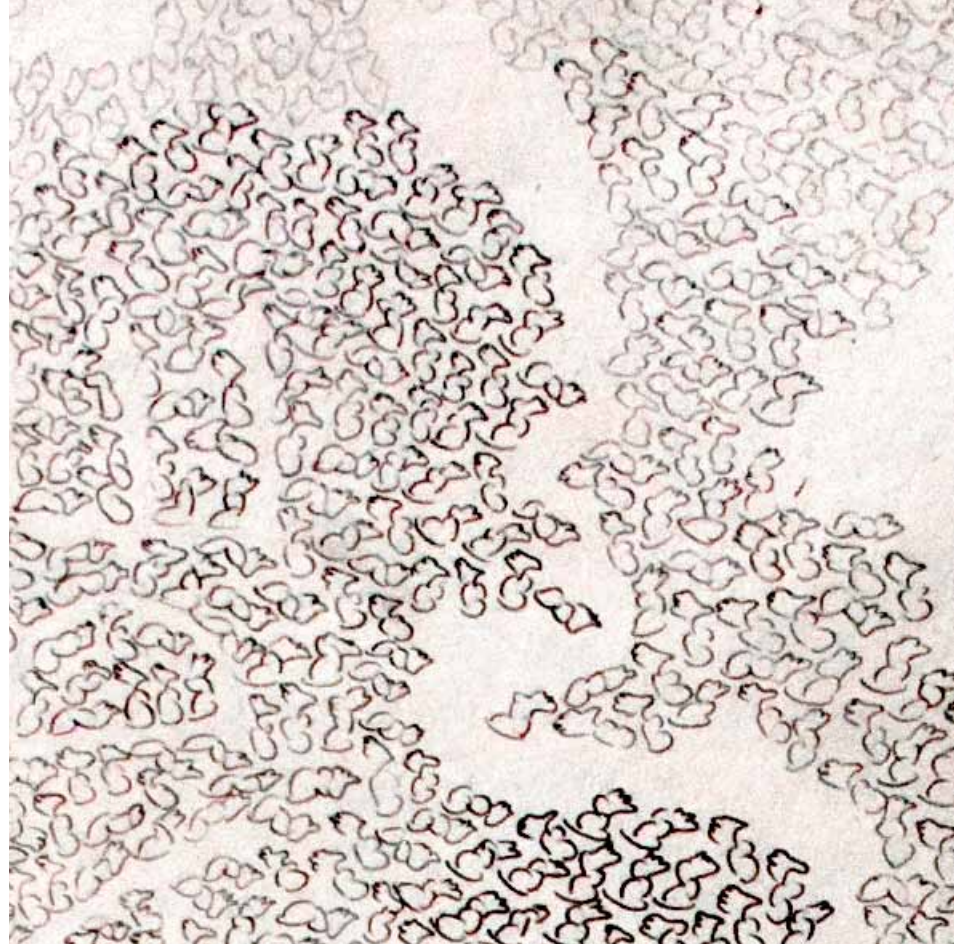




















Embedded names in order of appearance

1. NEW YORK - BAGDAD (detail)
2. BUDAPEST - BEIRUT
3. KABUL - SARAJEVO
4. ENGLAND - YUGOSLAVIA - CUBA (detail)
5. PHNOM PENH - AIN ABID
6. GUERNICA - KAMPALA
7. BANGLADESH - TURKEY - THE UNITED STATES
8. KINSHASA - STALINGRAD (detail)
9. TREBLINKA - HIROSHIMA
10. TUNIS - MANDALAY
11. BELGRADE - SIOUX FALLS (detail)
12. FALKLAND ISLANDS - LIBYA - MEXICO
13. TEL AVIV - PYONG YANG
14. SONG MY - DRESDEN
15. IRAQ - SOMALIA - CONGO (detail)
16. ANGOLA - AFGHANISTAN - FALKLAND ISLANDS
17. AMRITSAR - SHARPEVILLE
18. MAGERSFONTEIN - DUBLIN (detail)

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⊕ - Graskop

⊕ - Dullstroom

⊕ - Pretoria - Tshwane

⊕ - Irene - Tshwane

⊕ - Richmond

⊕ - Cape Town