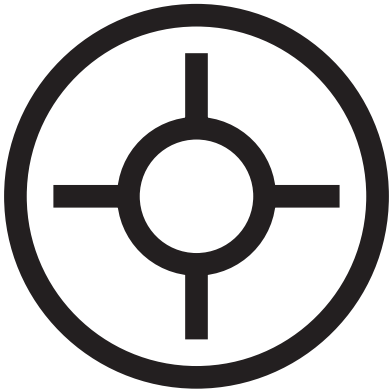
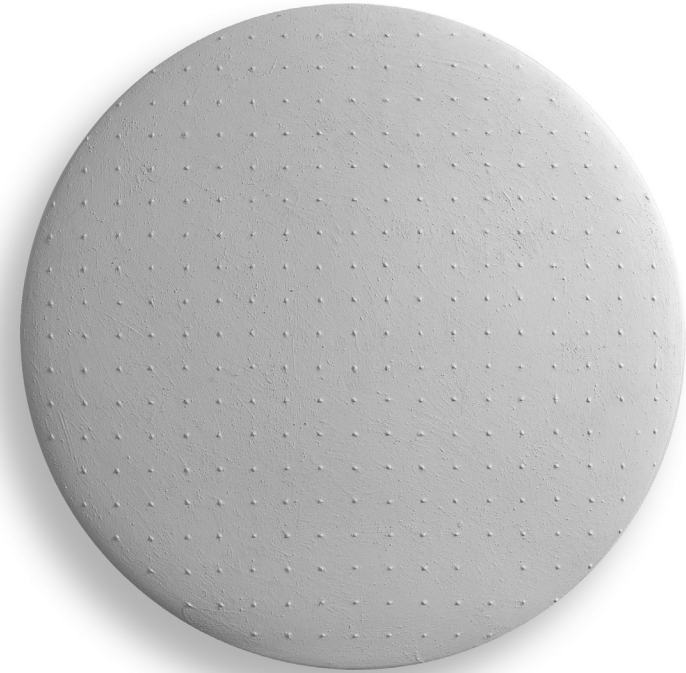


Jeremy Wafer



A field of stones

South Africa shares with other colonised countries complex histories of land ownership and occupation, of possession and dispossession. The *Stone* series shown here derives from a project in 2000 in the remote area of Nieu Bethesda in the Karoo. I was interested in exploring the ways in which these relationships have in the past history and present politics of South Africa been played out on a variety of levels:- economic, political, cultural, spatial, symbolic and poetic.

Two opposing positions were taken as points of reference. In the first a sense of place and ownership is defined through an open relationship of use, a series of movements across time and space modulated by and in dynamic relationship with food, water, topography, weather patterns, social relationships etc. Responsive to change, organic and communal in form, this relationship is taken as characteristic of pre-colonial and non-capitalistic modes of life. In the second, characteristic of colonial and later capitalist systems, fixed relations of control and ownership are expressed through physical and documentary demarcation of land and its use. These relations, defined through concepts of transgression and permission, inclusion and exclusion, separation and integration, grid and flow, individuality and communality, model the divisions of the landscape in which *boundary* and *fence* are central symbols and the breaching or relocation of these function as metaphors of change.

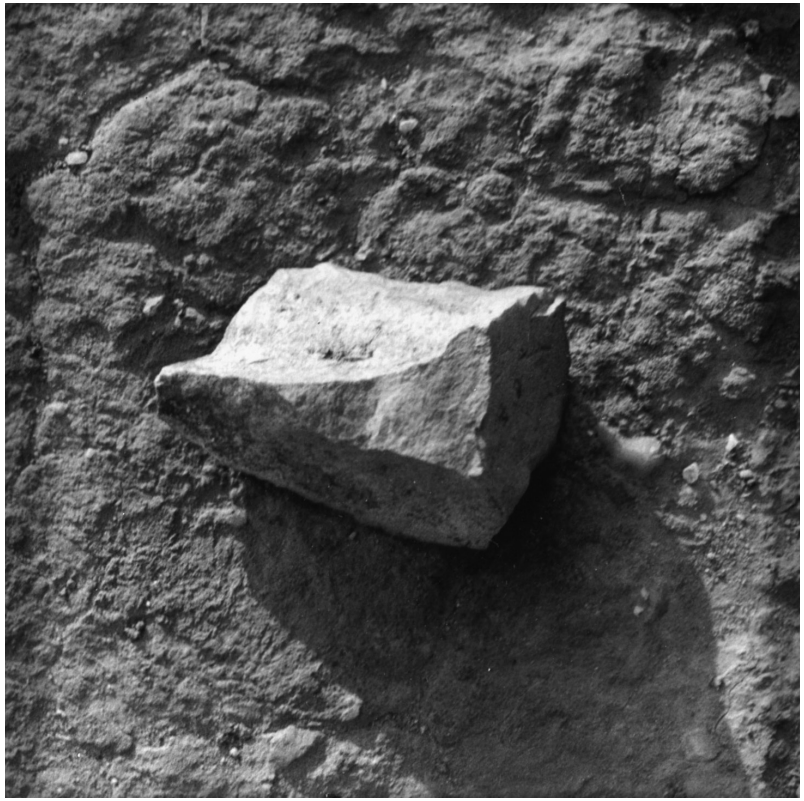
I selected a section of fence on the boundary between town and farmland, visited the site and took close-up photographs of stones on the ground at approximately ten meter intervals along a one kilometer length of fence. The photographs were then mounted back to back between two sheets of glass 10 x 10 cm, sealed, and attached to the fence wire at the same ten meter intervals. The work was then left to fend for itself. The stones function, I think, as metaphors of place, the way in which we mark a boundary by placing stones, but also as a metaphor of barrenness and deprivation in keeping with the Biblical imagery of sowing seed on stony ground or giving a man a stone instead of bread.

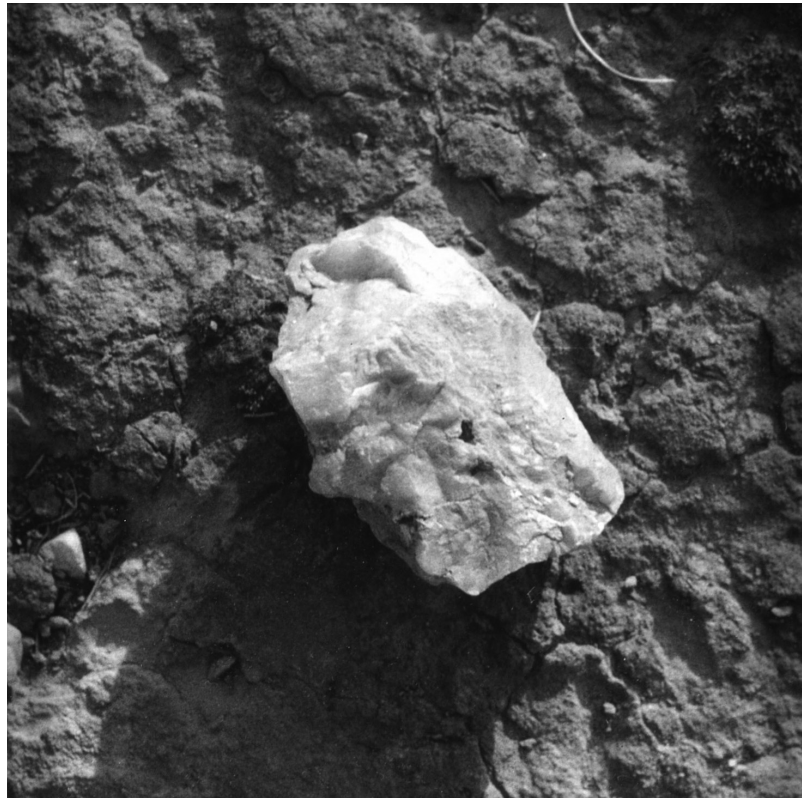
The *Black* and *White discs* derive from a somewhat different place in my work, one which started around 1994 with the changes in South Africa. I was interested, in a somewhat Utopian spirit, in locating some common ground between aspects of local indigenous traditions of sculpture and

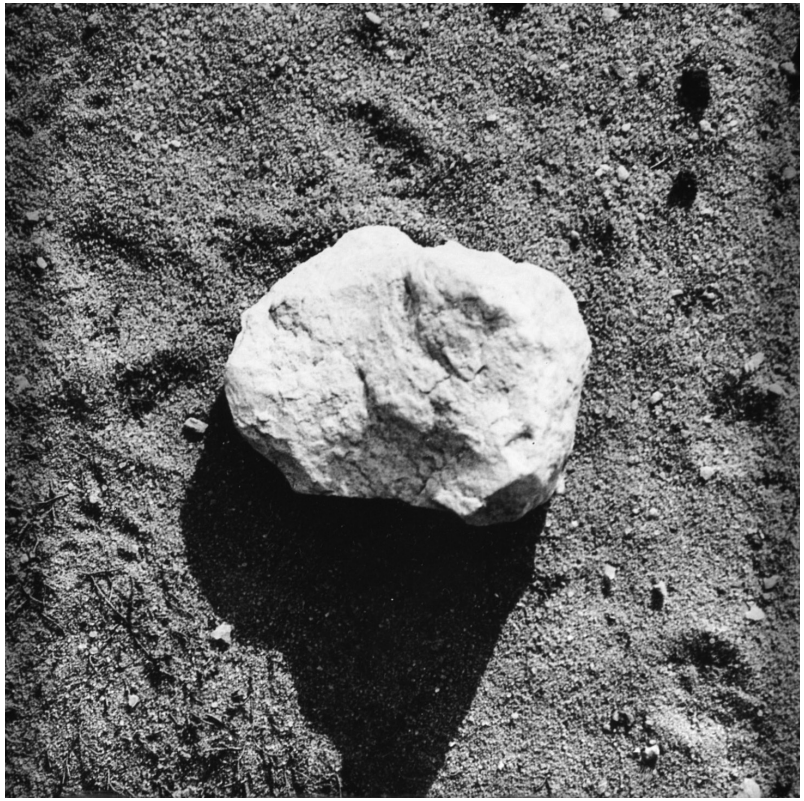
a more international post minimalist sculptural style. This work, inspired by the beauty and simplicity of traditional Zulu pottery in particular, is characterised by rhythmic patterns of surface intensification and by the use of natural materials deriving from indigenous healing practices. Seen in this context however, with the *Stones* and the *Hive* video piece, these two discs do open to a somewhat different reading, one which sees these as burnt fields or scorched places, places of separation and depletion rather than reconciliation.

The *Hive* video adds a third element to this set of interlinked works. The video, taken from a static camera viewpoint, shows the continuous cycle of bees leaving and entering a hive in the street outside my home in Johannesburg. My interest here was to work with the interrelation of the inside and the outside, with the ways in which we are constantly negotiating boundaries: between the personal and the political, between inner and outer experience, between that which we experience directly and that which we imagine ourselves into or hope for.

Jeremy Wafer, Johannesburg: March 2010







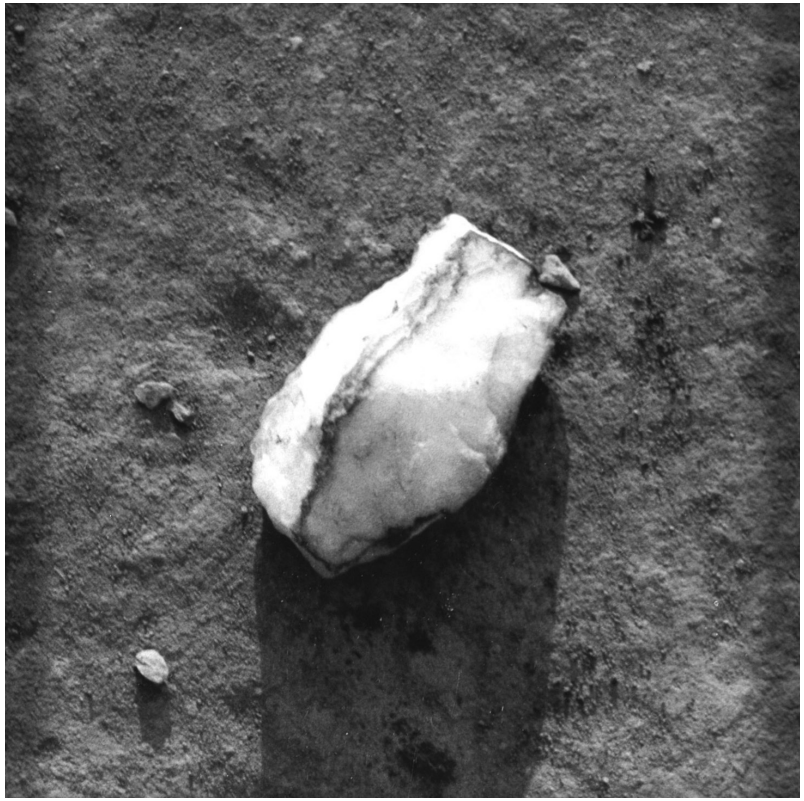


Image: HIVE, 2006
Medium: Video on DVD
Duration: 10 min. loop
Edition: 5

Image: (page 2) CHARCOAL DISC, 2005
Medium: Resin, black oxide, acrylic binder
Size: 100cm diameter x 5cm

Image: (page 3) WHITE CLAY DISC, 2005
Medium: resin, white clay, acrylic binder
Size: 100cm diameter x 5cm

Images: (page 9 - 18, detail) 100 STONE SERIES, 2000
Medium: Black and white photographs
Size: 20cm x 20cm each
Edition: 5

First published 2010
© Map - South Africa

PO Box 39
Groenkloof
0027

info@map-southafrica.org
www.map-southafrica.org

– Graskop

– Dullstroom

– Pretoria – Tshwane

– Irene – Tshwane

– Richmond

– Cape Town