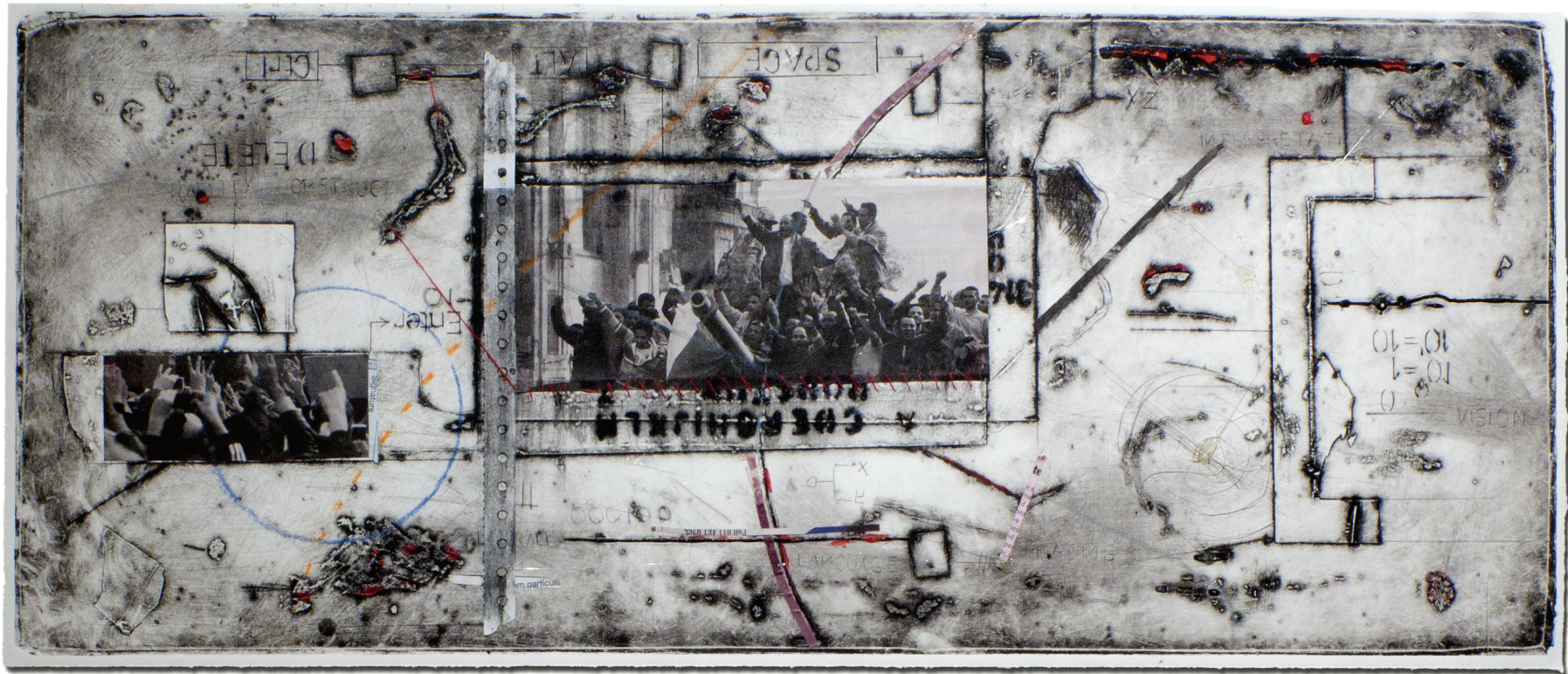


Seretse Moletsane



Open Dialogue: interview with Seretse Moletsane.

Questions compiled by Miranthe Garbett.

Seretse describes himself as a scatterbrained, sentimental and still-evolving artist. For him art is important on both a personal and social level. Deriving a sense of happiness and contentment through his work, he has also found that his art training and practice have opened his mind to social issues, given him a longing for a just and loving society, and instilled in him a belief that art and dialogue might have a role to play in working toward this. The following interview sheds light on the artist's style, influences, education, concerns, aims and process.

MG: How would you describe your style?

SM: My mixed media work is expressive, experimental and process-driven.

MG: What has influenced you?

SM: Everyday things: people, nature, architecture, fashion, music etc.

MG: Speaking of everyday things, what are your thoughts being an artist in contemporary hyper-reality?

SM: I feel like a sentimental fool in a game of who's fooling who.

MG: Would you consider yourself an idealist or a realist?

SM: I am caught between the two.

MG: What are your thoughts on the role of art in society?

SM: Art has an important role to play as socio-cultural watchdog, questioning social principles and practice. It has the ability to address real issues and to educate people.

MG: What are your thoughts on being a black male artist in post-apartheid South Africa?

SM: It is exciting and challenging. We have a chance to rewrite history and pave the way to the future. I am part of a generation that has been given the fishing rod but not taught how to fish. South Africa is still a divided nation.

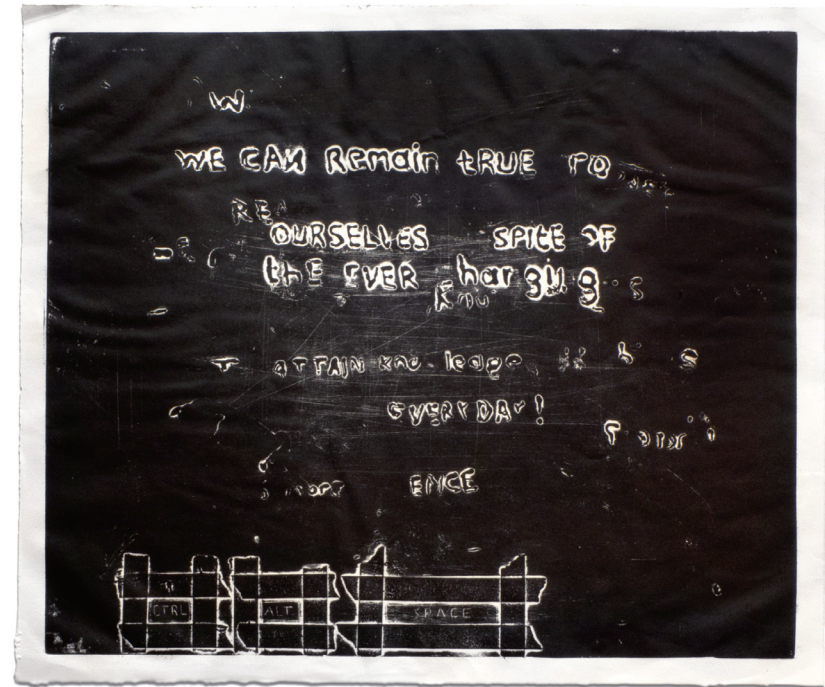
MG: What is your relationship to township culture?

SM: I have a strong bond with township culture even though I don't belong there anymore. People who have grown up in the townships and not moved out of them don't know any better because they are not exposed to much of what the world and life have to offer. And education fails them.

Their world is limited, but I can still relate to them. I know better by virtue of the good education I received in multi-racial/'Model C' schools, which I could not have had in the township. The best thing about township culture is the community spirit. Despite having little and being exposed to few opportunities, people in the township have each other and are generally very welcoming people.

MG: What social issues are closest to your heart?

SM: South African issues surrounding language and the need for education and equality in society. My focus is mainly on language politics. Language is the vehicle for knowledge transfer; it is the most important tool in education. In a South African context English and Afrikaans are languages of colonial rule and are second if not third languages to most of the population. This is problematic. Post-apartheid township schools still do not have the same level of education as 'Model C' schools. In most instances educators in rural areas and township schools do not have a full grasp of the medium of instruction, which makes it difficult for the learners to have a full understanding of the instructions. It is essential to be educated at an early age in one's mother tongue, as this has been proven to be more effective in the education process than learning in a second or third



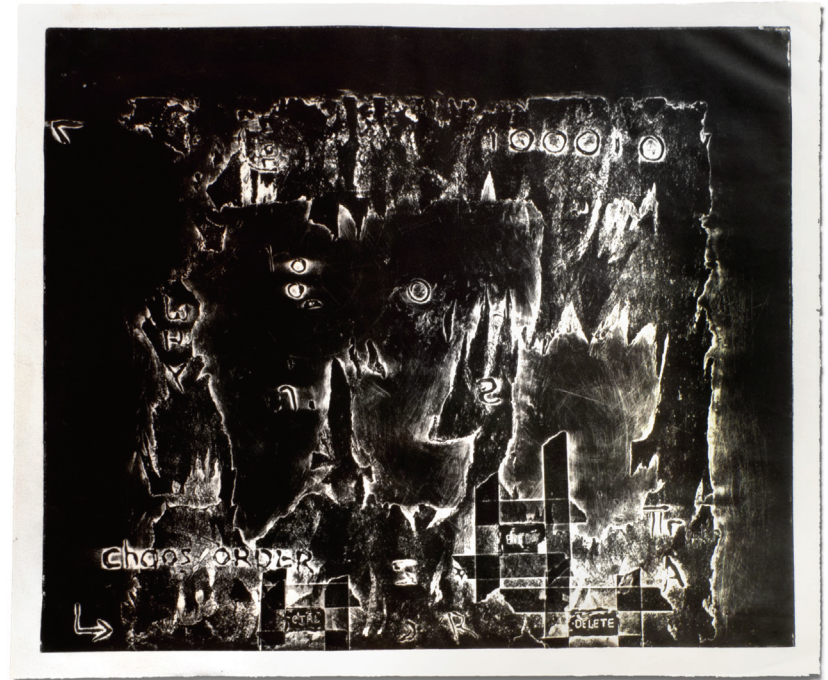
language. This also ensures the advancement of African languages and helps learners keep up with the rapid development of science and technology. Global culture is forever evolving and African languages and literature need to keep up.

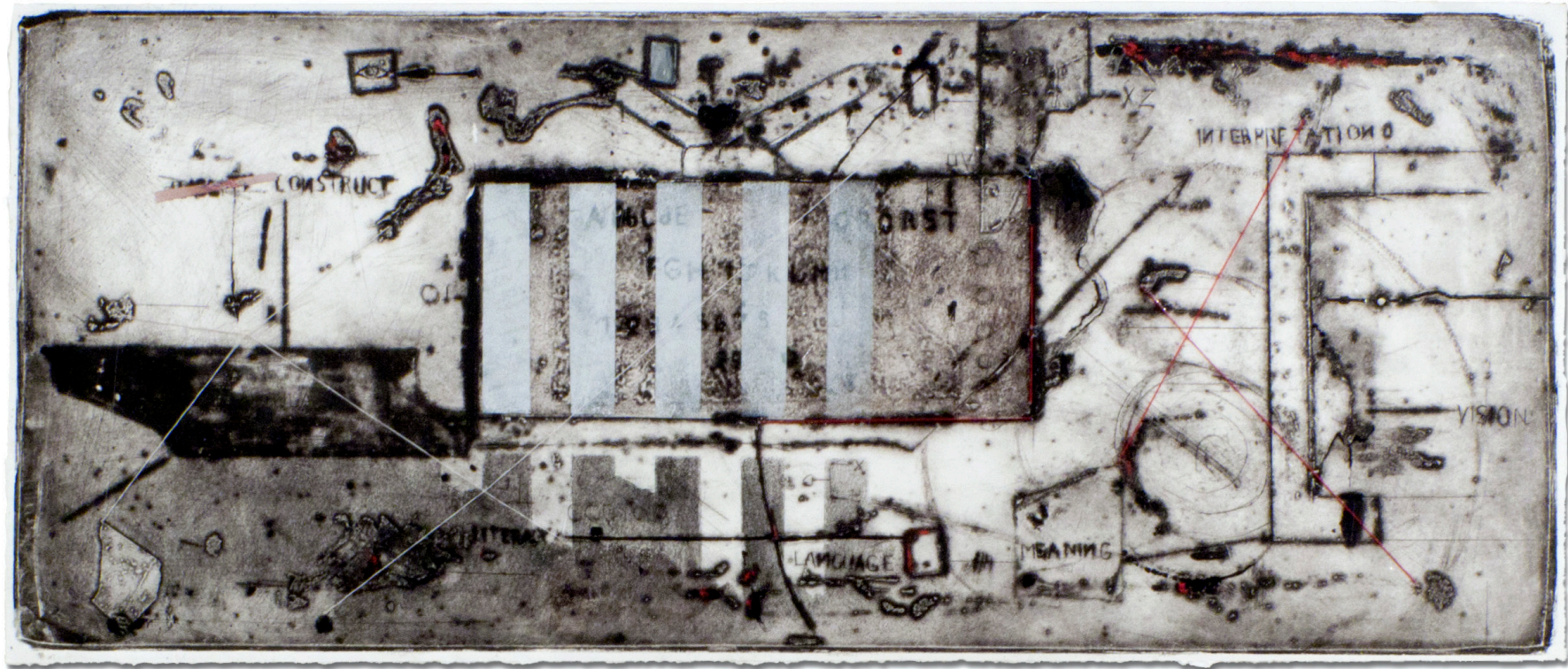
MG: How would you say studying art changed your life and perception of the world?

SM: Art has taught me a different approach to life, a different way of thinking. It opened me up to a world of information about the world, history and other cultures. The world is a crazy place, nothing is obvious. You need to question everything, especially what you see in the media. I am more liberal than ever, and inquisitive. I have a constant thirst for knowledge and research, which is often transferred into my practice.

MG: Do any people stand out as influences in your career and development as an artist?

SM: Three former art lecturers, who all happen to be white Afrikaans males: Andreas Schönfeldt, Abrie Fourie and Johan Thom.





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INTERPRETATION

VISION

LANGUAGE

MEANING

MG: Would you encourage a young person to study art? Why?

SM: Yes. Art serves without fear or favour. It is liberating and a real test of character. The money is not always there, but you gain a greater appreciation of life.

MG: How does an artist like you make a living?

SM: I am inspired by everything around me and that translates into different forms of expression. The t-shirt has become my basic income earner. I love designing and I do a lot of freelancing.

MG: What for you is the difference between design and art?

SM: Design has a formula that works, and art is risky.

MG: Who are your favourite artists and why?

SM: Banksy, Willem Boshoff and Willliam Kentridge. I admire their artistic passion, level of intelligence and approach to their heritage.

MG: Who/what is your 'flavour' of the moment?

SM: Robin Rhode and the city of Johannesburg.

MG: What does 'old school' mean to you in relation to art?

SM: Traditional and exclusive

MG: What does 'new school' mean to you in relation to art?

SM: It is wild and hi-tech. Same script different cast.

MG: Where would you place yourself on this sliding scale?

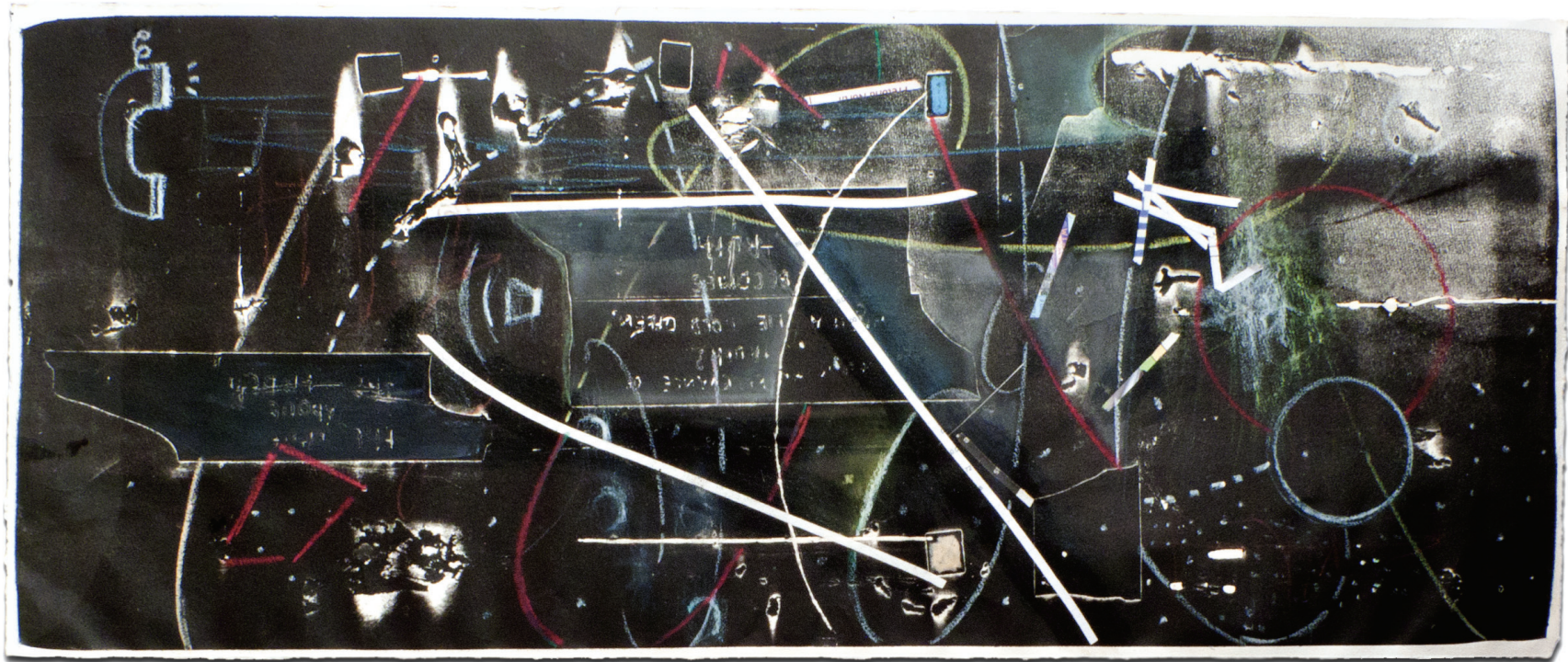
SM: I'm negotiating my path between the two.

MG: What is your take on the snobbery and elitism associated with fine artists?

SM: It is the ugly side of art and capitalism. Art is not easily accessible if you're not in the 'right' circles, and getting into the art world is quite tough. Exclusivity is bankable/valuable, which is how I think people end up developing big egos.

MG: Do you think your art is accessible to the 'ordinary' person? Do you feel there is a need to make art more accessible?

SM: Yes, I present my art to the ordinary person in ways that they can relate to. It is important to take art to the general public as it creates art awareness, and develops a new audience. This increases art's potential for growth and sustainability.





MG: How would you respond to someone who doesn't like or understand your work?

SM: If someone doesn't like it and confronts me about it, it's ok, it opens dialogue, which is not a bad thing. We are all entitled to our own opinions and everything should be questioned. My work is like a puzzle with missing pieces. If someone doesn't understand and needs an explanation, I explain the process of making the work and not the artwork itself.

MG: How many people would need to like your work for you to feel what you do is worthwhile?

SM: It takes one person to love and understand my work. The interpretation is part of the work. That is what they take home at the end of the day.

MG: You say you like to work with symbols and signs because they are universal and freely open to different interpretations. What is your favourite symbol?

SM: +/-

MG: There is a graffiti sensibility in your work. What is your relationship to this art form?

SM: I love good graffiti. Graffiti is the trace of human interaction with the environment. It is especially part

of youth culture, it is their voice.

MG: What about texture appeals to you so much?

SM: Texture appeals to various senses. It's not just visual pleasure. One is tempted to touch. I enjoy wall textures, the marks made on them by man and nature.

MG: What music do you listen to when you are working?

SM: Abstract music with no lyrics. It leaves a lot to the imagination.

MG: If your art had to be accompanied by a soundtrack, what would it be?

SM: Music from the movie August Rush.

MG: What is more important to you? The process or the product?

SM: Process comes first, but I believe in one hundred percent process and one hundred percent product.

MG: What about the printmaking process appeals most to you?

SM: Building up the image through trial and error.

MG: What is the feeling you get from the process of making art?

SM: Contentment and excitement

MG: What is the reward you get from making art?

SM: Connecting with people.

Image: WHEN THE GOING GETS TUFF THE TUFF GET GOING , 2011
(Installation view Map - South Africa at the University of Johannesburg Art Gallery 11 May 2011 through 15 June 2011)

Medium: wall painting & installation

Dimensions: variable



Image: (page 2 & 3) UNTITLED, 2010

Medium: Mixed media (charcoal, ink and transparency)

Dimensions: 69.5cm X 28.5cm

Image: (page 7) I CANT EAT FREEDOM, I NEED A JOB Part I, 2010

Medium: Mixed media (charcoal, ink, pastel, transparency)

Dimensions: 56cm X 46.5cm

Image: (page 9) I CANT EAT FREEDOM, I NEED A JOB Part II, 2010

Medium: Mixed media (charcoal, ink and transparency)

Dimensions: 69.5cm X 28.5cm

Image: (page 10 & 11) UNTITLED, 2010

Medium: Mixed media (charcoal, ink and transparency)

Dimensions: 69.5cm X 28.5cm

Image: (page 14 & 15) UNTITLED, 2010

Medium: Mixed media (charcoal, ink and transparency)

Dimensions: 69.5cm X 28.5cm

Image: (page 16 & 17) UNTITLED, 2010

Medium: Mixed media (charcoal, ink and transparency)

Dimensions: 69.5cm X 28.5cm

First published in 2011 by Map - South Africa in association with Fouthwall Books.

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ISBN 978-0-9870183-2-8

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