

THE TRIANGLE ARTS NETWORK – Contemporary Art and Transnational Production

by

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for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy*

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Abstract

This dissertation presents a historical overview and contemporary analysis of the Triangle Arts Network, an international network of artists and arts organizations that promotes the exchange of ideas and innovation within the contemporary arts. It was established in 1982 through a workshop held in Pine Plains, New York and quickly grew into an international network of artist led workshops around the world. More than twenty years later the network continues to grow and includes a roster of ongoing workshops as well as artist led organizations and centres.

This dissertation situates Triangle as a major global phenomenon, yet one that operates outside the mainstream artscapes. My research follows the network's historical links from Saskatchewan, Canada, to New York and onto South Africa. This web-like evolution demonstrates the complexity of global art networks and the fluidity of boundaries needed for contemporary art discourse. This research explores how the movement of ideas, artists and infrastructures complicate our understanding of clearly defined boundaries within contemporary

art and globalization. Using Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as a metaphor for the Triangle Network, I attempt to unpack the complexities of an art system without objects, a process without product and the entangled relationships between artists, workshops and grassroots models of production.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures – p. 6

List of Appendices – p. 8

Introduction – p. 9

Chapter 1 - The First Triangle Workshop: Modernity in Crisis – p. 24

Chapter 2 – Emma Lake - Triangle's Humble Beginnings – p. 69

Chapter 3 – The Thupelo Workshops: A Case Study – p. 109

Chapter 4 - The Triangle Network: A Means to an End or an End in Itself? - p. 177

Conclusion – p. 212

Bibliography – p. 215

Appendices – p. 235

List of Figures

All figures omitted for copyright reasons

- Figure 1. *Cover page of Emma Lake Summer School Brochure*, with naturalistic landscape painting on the front, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 1936.
- Figure 2. Artist Unknown, *Map of Emma Lake*, University of Saskatchewan Summer Art School Yearbook, drawing, 1936.
- Figure 3. Edyth Clarke, Eva Mildred Hart, Olga Pitchko, Selections of sketches from the early Emma Lake Yearbooks, charcoal on paper, 1936-1940
- Figure 4. Eli Bornstein, *Saskatoon*, 1954.
- Figure 5. The Regina Five posing in front of a classic Lincoln Continental behind the former Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1964 (source: <http://www.mackenzieartgallery.ca/engage/exhibitions/the-regina-five-50-years-later>)
- Figure 6. Graham Peacock, *Mediterranean Blue Oval*, 1985
- Figure 7. Anthony Caro, *Emma Dipper*, Painted Steel, 1977
- Figure 8. Graham Peacock, *Sentry Red*, 1987
- Figure 9. Flyer for Great Walk and More Festival featuring the Open Day at Greatmore Studios in 2010 (Left-Front / Right-Back)
- Figure 10. Woodstock Starlights at annual Kaapse Klopse parade (Source: <http://blog.savenues.com/provinces/western-cape/great-walk-more-exhibition/>)
- Figure 11. Veryan Edwards, *Community Gratitude*, Rough Sketches and Final Installation for house #54, Paint, Woodstock, Cape Town, 2010.
- Figure 12. Chris Ofili: *The Holy Virgin Mary*, 1996, paper collage, oil paint, glitter, polyester resin, map pins and elephant dung on linen.
- Figure 13. Yinka Shonibare, *Girl Ballerina*, Mannequin, Dutch wax printed cotton, 2007.
- Figure 14. Maya Radanovic, Zipper installation, 2010
- Figure 15. Igshaan Adams, *Through Brian's Eyes*, Weaving, 2010

- Figure 16. Jenny Parsons, *Skyline*, Painted mural, 2010
- Figure 17. Patrick Tagoe-Turkson, *Too Late*, Mixed Media installation, 2010
- Figure 18. Jill Trappler and Anne Sasson, *Take a Photo*, Photographs and mixed media, 2010
- Figure 19. Pamphlet for *Networked Dialogue & Exchange in the Global Art Ecology*, November 26 & 26, 2011

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Current active network partners (2016)

Appendix 2 – List of artists and critics invited to lead the Emma Lake Workshops

Introduction

This dissertation began with an interest in the contemporary arts of South Africa. It was John Peffer's book *Art at the End of Apartheid* (2009) that first introduced me to the Triangle Arts Network through its in depth discussion of the workshops known as Thupelo.¹ The Thupelo Workshops became not only an intriguing entry point into South African art production but a gateway for my research into the much larger Triangle Arts Network. As an isolated case study Thupelo uncovered the complex social and political environment that artists, particularly black artists, faced under apartheid. Peffer's book focused largely on the South African workshops that occurred at the end of apartheid. In a brief footnote he mentioned that the workshops were ongoing, an area of study he had not pursued. His writing also alluded to a much larger international web of artists, policy and ideologies that were intertwined into what presented itself as a local event but undoubtedly had greater international connections. It was these larger openings that lead me into this project.

From this locally focused South African perspective, my dissertation evolved into a comprehensive introduction to the Triangle Arts Network, which I address in the chapters that follow. Today, the Triangle Arts Network is an international network of artists and arts organizations that promote the exchange of ideas and innovation within the contemporary arts. It was established in 1982 with an initial workshop held in Pine Plains, New York and from there grew into the international network it is today. The network continues to grow and includes a roster of ongoing workshops as well as artist led organizations and centres.

In the first chapter I address the humble beginnings of the first Triangle workshop as a

¹ John Peffer, *Art at the End of Apartheid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

moment born from a crisis in the New York Modern art scene.² Chapter two traces the conceptual beginnings of this workshop movement at the 1960's Emma Lake workshops in Saskatchewan. This chapter not only draws upon a Canadian connection but also highlights larger issues of provincialism and the global relationships between the centre and periphery. In chapter three I return to the starting point of my research, presenting a detailed case study of the ongoing Thupelo Workshops in South Africa. As one of the longest running workshops in the Triangle Network, Thupelo enables me to explore the complexity of the network's transnational production from a grassroots perspective. I use this case study to argue that contemporary art history benefits from the inclusion of more counter-spaces for global art production. In looking at global spaces outside of major art spectacles and centres, one can create alternative reference points to diversify the narrative of contemporary art. In my final chapter, I turn to Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as an approach that is not traditionally used in art history but helps one understand the linkages between seemingly disparate yet intricately connected sites.

² The "Modernism" practiced at the early New York workshops were closely aligned with Clement Greenberg's ideas about high Modernism. This narrow version of modernism was based upon a linear narrative emergent out of older European traditions and belief in the primacy of formal purity. This was central to the core group of initial participants. Ideas surrounding Greenbergian Modernism were furthered in subsequent critical writing by Michael Fried (who attended the early New York workshops as visiting critic), and aligned to many of the early critics and artists throughout Triangle's early history (i.e. Tony Fenton, Karen Wilkin, Willard Boepple). Today, the Triangle Network represents a multitude of Modernisms that coexists around the world, and the global workshops are often spaces where these alternate versions of Modernism interact with one another. The diversity of modernisms at the contemporary workshops are a strong foil to the rigid, exclusionary and debunked narrative of a singular "Greenbergian Modernism" initially practiced at the early New York site. Through the workshops one sees the multiple ways Modernism is defined around the world, and the diverse historical narratives that converge alongside one another to create unique local narratives within a global framework.

For further reading on Greenbergian Modernism see; Clement Greenberg, edited by John O'Brian, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, 4 Volumes, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986 and 1993; Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood : Essays and Reviews*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

The trajectory of my research followed the organic nature of the network itself. It began in South Africa at the Thupelo Workshops (Chapter 3), where I learned that Thupelo had formed after the artists David Koloane and Bill Ainslie returned from an exchange at the New York workshops. They returned to South Africa with the idea of creating a similar event within their own art scene. Naturally, this took on its own local flavor, which at the time was inextricably linked to the political situation. The link between New York and South Africa was the first cross continental connection within the workshop model.

After analyzing Triangle New York in the 1980s I was led into the modern art history of the Canadian prairies at the Emma Lake workshops, in Saskatchewan. This history came to light through Anthony Caro's recurring mention that his impetus to create the New York workshop came from these earlier workshops that he had attended in Saskatchewan at Emma Lake.³ Scholars have never investigated this link and as such, the Canadian connection to Triangle has never fruitfully been explored. Yet, the Canadian element of the Triangle narrative is where the early tensions of centre and periphery began to play out. This dichotomy is still central to the workshops and the larger network, as it fuels the pushing and pulling between the more established nodes and those that operate in lower profile.

As I traced the evolution of Triangle from Thupelo in South Africa, back to its New York beginnings and even earlier to its Canadian foundation, the Western European linear modernist narrative began to unravel. It was clear that the network operated on multiple levels, for different purposes in different places. It also moved back and forth through time and space and it became

³ Anthony Caro, "Anthony Caro and Robert Loder in Conversation with Sonya Boyce," Opening remarks at *Networked: Dialogue and Exchange in the Global Art Ecology*, London, England, November 26, 2011.

increasingly difficult to write about as a unified whole. Each workshop in every new location was an entirely new event, yet each was linked by a common (universal) ethos that prevailed throughout its thirty-year evolution.

I explore how the initial Triangle workshop had no strict mandate but rather a loose ethos that focused on artists led experimentation, process-based production, dialogue, exchange of ideas and innovation. This ethos continues to dominate the network, which now exists as the Triangle Arts Trust (a loose umbrella organization functioning as a facilitator rather than a hierarchical governing body), as well as its many independent global workshops.

In the study of contemporary art and global art production “universal” is contentious term for it homogenizes, blankets and washes over what are often very diverse experiences. It assumes a hegemonic position and neutralizes power. Hence, we are taught to problematize the universal. Yet in the Triangle Network narrative the idea of the “universal” still holds currency and this fascinated me. There seemed to be a universal ethos that prevailed through capitalist New York, apartheid South Africa, rural Saskatchewan and continues to permeate hundreds of sites around the world. The shared belief in *process over product* remains the strongest and often the only link between the various workshops within the network. The network exists through an idea that links various sites that often have very little in common.

In my final chapter, I address how the idea of process over product is complicated to write about. How does one discuss an art movement with few tangible objects⁴? In Western

⁴ Artists within the Triangle Network occasionally produce finished works. However, most of the work produced is never seen or preserved. There is no goal to create a finished object or even an object destined for viewership within the workshops. The workshops are very much about the process of art making. As discussed in the following chapters, certain workshops do deviate from this model entirely. Nonetheless, the network ethos devalues the art object.

discourses we frequently refer to the “dematerialization of the art object,” yet, Triangle complicates these debates for its participants are still keenly interested in materiality, access to materials and processes for exploration that they could not access otherwise. In cases where there is an object, its aesthetic does not fit within Western recognized categories for art or value. What are the politics of bringing this “other” aesthetic into the discussion of contemporary art? How does one translate these objects into other existing discourses? Finally, how does an organization like the Triangle Network expose the very limitations of the discourse itself? Even though many of these questions are on going debates within the discourse, from a global perspective they often emerge from extremely differing socio-political, economic and cultural milieus. I explore how to find a model that maintains enough flexibility to serve diverse interests and local circumstances while simultaneously acknowledging larger global debates.

These are some of the difficult questions I grappled with while researching and writing this narrative. Here, ANT became an effective metaphor through which I could “flatten” the entire network and begin to discuss it as a unified whole.⁵ I chose ANT as an entry point into the network. It offered the ability to map out and visualize the vast network through its multiple heterogeneous components. ANT operates much like a toolbox, enabling one to get through the nuts and bolts of an extremely complicated web of connections. It functions like a catalogue. Given the scope of this project, I felt the need to map out the network’s activities before deconstructing it with further network theory. Thus, my final chapter uses ANT to lay out the

⁵ It is often argued that Actor-Network “Theory” is hardly a theory but rather a way of describing how networks are made. It is one field within the larger body of Social Network Analysis, an interdisciplinary range of theories that help explain, analyze and predict networks. SNA is a multi-disciplinary approach but remains closely tied to mathematics and science. It provides an abundance of ‘network analysis techniques’ that help us uncover how and why networks function. I touch upon SNA throughout my work, but it remains a large body of research still needing to be pursued for the Triangle Network. Currently, there is no comprehensive look at the Triangle Network through SNA and this is a large omission in the body of work that exists for Triangle.

network so one can then ask the larger questions. For example, is “the network [is] a means to an end or an end in itself?” What is the purpose of this network and, if it is so diffuse, how and why do some artists continue to associate themselves with it while others drift from the model entirely?⁶

My research presents itself as three seemingly disparate narratives (Triangle New York, Thupelo in South Africa and the Emma Lake Workshops in Saskatchewan) that become linked through network theory.⁷ Thus, my work is tied together by an approach that is not traditionally used in art history. Yet, the Triangle Network is different from many of the contemporary art endeavors, particularly the ongoing bienialization of global art. It operates in the margins of the art world, with no outward aspirations to circulate in the global mainstream. Therefore, it makes no effort to promote any of the artistic aspirations or objects that Western institutions value when

⁶ A broader network analysis is undoubtedly still required, yet I used ANT as the entry point into this field. I felt that the network still needed to be “mapped” and visualized in its entirety before layering on further network theory. The theoretical “weakness” of ANT, and its approach as a descriptive metaphor rather than a tool for scientific analysis makes it an ideal way to set up the narrative and begin understanding Triangle’s scope. There is also great strength in ANT’s requirement for specificity. Given the Triangle Network’s vastness, organizing it into a sum of its specific parts is necessary before working it through with larger theory. Once the network is visualized through ANT then one can deconstruct it through additional theories such as the New Materialists, Manuel Castells or older figures such as Niklas Luhmann. These larger network theories, particularly those that address systems of power (i.e. Manuel Castells) can be more aptly applied to case studies on KHOJ, the contemporary New York sites or other sites that function more in line with neoliberal exhibition and production structures. Theories of power and networks can begin to explain why dominant narratives and approaches take over at certain workshops (i.e. Neoliberal economies) while remaining at arms lengths from others. This is an area that clearly warrants further study.

⁷ For the purpose of my research I determined that the workshops were nodes and the artists were some of the main links between the nodes. If one was to break apart the network even further, then the artists were also nodes in and of themselves with multiple links to other artists as well. Hence, the network embodied a deep entanglement that made it so interesting. Depending on ones perspective the artists were both links between workshop nodes, and nodes in and of themselves (comprised of other objects, things, and relationships). The ‘artwork’ is absent from this narrative because it plays a secondary role to the larger systemic and infrastructural shifts that Triangle creates. The art becomes a symbol/extension of the actual artists who play a much more crucial role in the travelling and transference of this network.

Research by Elizabeth Harney, Anthony Gardner, Terry Smith et al. offer alternate examples of research around art systems or infrastructures versus the specificities of actual works of art.

studying art history. Triangle deliberately emphasizes an ethos that devalues the product in exchange for uninhibited artistic exploration. It purposefully, and politically, positions itself “under the radar,” using a workshop model to foster its approach. In studying the Triangle network I looked to find an alternative framework with which I could navigate the model in all its complexity and contradictory ways.⁸

As biennials, art fairs and mega events continue to mushroom through the global art world, the Triangle Network simultaneously grows but falls under the radar. Its growth is prolific. When I began this dissertation in 2010 the Triangle Network had 29 partner organizations, comprised of a growing list of independently operated workshops, artist’s centres and studio spaces (Appendix 1). Today, in 2016, it has over 40 active partners and is still growing, a clear testament to how effectively this network model continues to evolve.

The term “Triangle” has essentially become a name that workshops affiliate with when they subscribe to the broad mandate currently listed as:⁹

1. Facilitating experimentation and innovation in contemporary arts practice by stimulating dialogue between artists and across cultures.
2. Enabling artists to exchange ideas, share knowledge and develop new skills.

⁸ There are a multitude of contradictions within the Triangle model between its idealistic vision and actual practice. This is an area that warrants further study. Throughout the dissertation this is addressed briefly but requires further investigation. While Triangle operates outside the boundaries of the mainstream art world elements of its practice do circulate in the global arena, market and discourse. Likewise, many of its artists continue to use Triangle as a gateway into larger global art circles.

⁹ Taken from the website www.trianglearts.com. In 2015 the website was amalgamated onto the Gasworks website <https://www.gasworks.org.uk/triangle-network/>. The mission statement no longer exists in the above quoted form, however similar wording is still located in various grant applications and abstracts dealing with the Triangle Network.

3. Stimulating debate on international visual art.
4. Encouraging an inclusive approach to the themes and methodologies in contemporary arts, often through direct interaction with artists.
5. Ensuring the networks' long-term sustainability through greater visibility, stronger partner collaborations and mutual support.
6. Addressing the need for Triangle's partners to professionalize and diversify their activities.
7. Generating more dynamic and responsive activities, further collaborations between Triangle's partners and greater local and international reach.

The network is overseen by the Triangle Arts Trust, a loose umbrella organization currently chaired by David Elliott. The day-to-day activities are run by its director Alessio Antonioli, a vibrant curator, arts administrator and organizer with a strong drive to ensure equality, diversity and international exchange. Both the board and staff running the Trust remain committed that “Triangle will never be a brand” or institution.¹⁰ Rather, the network's activities are focused on creating permutations not hierarchies, facilitating communication and contact rather than brick and mortar buildings. It does not operate as a funding body, nor involve itself in the day-to-day operations of its partner organizations. Rather, The Triangle Network functions as the common denominator for multiple sites that are extremely diverse. Although the Triangle Trust is a registered UK charity, it does not funnel money into any of its partner organization.

¹⁰ The Triangle Network held its first major conference in London on the November 26th and 27th, 2011. At the conference one of the major discussions was the role of the “institution” in the evolution of the Triangle Network. Its ambivalent place within the trajectory of the network was explored. While the Triangle Network aims to avoid becoming an institution, the institutionalization of some of its sites has become an inevitable and welcomed effect of the workshops. For example, Gasworks in London or the Bag Factory in Johannesburg are two permanent studio spaces that play a central role in their respective art scenes and grew out of a succession of successful workshops that felt they needed a more permanent institutionalized space.

Instead it facilitates independent local fundraising organizations and helps with infrastructure building. Guided by need, The Triangle Trust mobilizes its resources only when approached, enabling it to remain committed to a bottom-up rather than top-down approach.

Thus, Triangle first and foremost distinguishes itself by maintaining it is *not* a funding body but a facilitator. This political position has been integral to its substance throughout the past 30 years, and allows it to maintain its seemingly “neutral” position as an umbrella organization. Despite clear connections to larger (more top-down, often neo-colonial) funding bodies (i.e. British Council, HIVOS, Prince Clause, Arts Collaboratory) Triangle maintains its difference as a bottom up model. The role of these larger organizations in Triangle’s narrative is clandestine and paradoxical. The umbrella network works with these organizations to facilitate funding, but operates differently from them in that they themselves make no direct financial contributions to the workshops. As noted by Robert Loder, “Triangle offers *a channel through which* the Ford Foundation, The Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, Arts Council England, HIVOS and others....can give practical help to artists while also developing audiences for their work.”¹¹

Yet, as the artworld becomes more and more intertwined with larger neoliberal structures and flows of capital, Triangle is likewise not immune. Most of the Network and the workshops have a complicated relationship with these funding organizations. If the workshops lose their connection to the larger funding then they often cease to exist. Yet, if they become too close to the funding they often detach from the Triangle model. Triangle’s delicate relationship to public

¹¹ Robert Loder, “Experiences Live in the Mind,” in *Triangle: Variety of Experience Around Artists’ Workshops and Residencies*, edited by Mich Albert, Alessio Antonioli, Lorna Fray and Robert Loder (London: Triangle Arts Trust, 2006) 21.

and private finances places it somewhere in the gray zone between a social organization and an NGO. Despite maintaining an arms length approach, recent history demonstrates that these larger funding bodies are wielding an increasing and complicated influence on the network's activities. While I believe that Triangle is an "end in itself," for it holds tremendous influence in terms of its creation of an alternative framework for contemporary art, there are many workshops that have used Triangle as a "means to an end." For example, a site like KHOJ was created around the Triangle model but recently distanced itself as it became more established in larger neoliberal frameworks and more closely aligned with larger funding bodies. My thesis maintains a closer focus on the "alternative" workshops sites, the ones that attempts to operate outside these neoliberal frameworks (effectively or not). The counterparts to these workshops are those more overtly aligned with global capital. While beyond the scope of this project, they are unquestionably another valuable area for pursuit.¹²

In the digital age, the term "network" has become a buzzword.¹³ Yet, my research uncovers a global network that existed decades before "globalism" emerged as a field of research. It demonstrates that the art world has long been "global."¹⁴ Transnational production,

¹² My thesis lays a comprehensive groundwork to the history, narratives and foundations of the Triangle network. It outlines the new infrastructures it created and the way it shaped contemporary flows of global art. Further research needs to address more specifically how these funding bodies are pulling the Triangle Network in new directions, and how they have historically shaped the trajectory of the network.

¹³ There is a body of research that would argue "network" is an ineffective term for describing connections and links between nodes. Some argue a more appropriate term would be 'meshwork,' 'web,' 'entanglement,' indicating that the nodes and the links are actually more closely intertwined than "network" implies. However, for the purpose of the Triangle Network, I argue that "network" is the most appropriate term because the central movement happens within the actual nodes rather than in the linkages between them.

¹⁴ The term artworld was first used by Arthur Danto in his 1964 essay "The Artworld." Using Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* as his case he explained that it is not possible to understand or interpret art without

international influence and cross-pollination always existed, but perhaps we have lacked the discourse and language to tackle it from a global perspective.¹⁵ I hope my work begins to demonstrate the value of looking at ‘art history,’ not only through images and objects but also through ideas and systems. In studying the Triangle network as an alternative framework, I hope to highlight alternative ways of viewing art systems that have traditionally remained outside the dominant narrative. I hope to find hidden connections that demonstrate how intertwined the art world is and to expose the forces that shape the direction and evolution of these models.

As archaeologist Ian Hodder notes, the humanities and social sciences has faced a “return to things.”¹⁶ “We can no longer separate subject from object or mind from matter,” humans and things are always intertwined and affect one another.¹⁷ It is within Hodder’s line of theory that I situate my work. I attempt to uncover the “things” that art history has traditionally overlooked and the objects and forces that are often invisible, yet, integral to power dynamics. For example,

the community of theorists, institutions, critics etc. at work surrounding the art object. The “art world” is essentially the cultural context surrounding the works of art.

¹⁵ There is a limited language that does exist, and various artists and movements have dealt with the concept of a network. For example the Fluxus “Eternal Network” led by Robert Filliou, who proclaimed that art was born 1,000,000 years ago on ‘arts birthday.’ This birthday is celebrated through an autonomous network of artists in the past, present and future that circulate art as part of the “eternal art network.” Earlier narratives from the 1990’s of “internationalism” or “new internationalism,” also work through the concept of network. Yet, while helpful, these discourse are not completely applicable to Triangle. Triangle presents a new set of challenges in that its work, practice and existence does not fit neatly into any existing rubric. The organic and fluid nature of the workshops and the transience of many of its art objects left me looking for new methodologies or a combination of approaches that could adequately speak to its reality. There is no central “movement” that unified the discussion of Triangle network, nor is there a self selected group of artists that work within the rubric. Its diffuse organic nature makes it unique in terms of how to discuss it.

¹⁶ Ian Hodder, “The Entanglements of Human and Things: A Long Term View,” *New Literary History*, Vol 45. No. 1 (Winter 2014) 19.

¹⁷ Ibid.

I look at access to materials, politics of paint and supplies, living conditions etc. all of which shape the actual workshops, and consequently the art that is created within them.

While I discuss select artworks throughout the thesis, their place in this narrative is limited. The central focus of this thesis is infrastructure building. Therefore, the artworks I have incorporated are selected for how they contribute to the larger systems that Triangle shapes globally. Many of the works produced at the workshops are transient, undocumented or lost. Although Robert Loder has amassed a large collection of the artwork from the African workshops, they remain primarily in storage, and with the exception of select exhibitions are undisplayed.¹⁸ Therefore, as Anthony Gardner noted, this research is along the lines of Terry Smith's "Infrastructural activism."¹⁹ It looks at new ways contemporary art is being produced, consumed and displayed, and how this then destabilizes and problematizes the traditional art historical infrastructures (the museum, the gallery, curator, etc.)

One of the largest infrastructures that Triangle redefines is the archive. The network operates on the premise that it will not turn into an institution. Thus, its operation has deliberately remained organic and uncodified. On a practical level this first and foremost posed challenges in locating any existing material. There was difficult access to transcripts (mainly that most were kept private), limited published materials and a great reliance on oral history and memories. Naturally, this came with its own set of biases, issues of translation and a minefield of personal politics. Nonetheless, these personal anecdotes were crucial for deconstructing and

¹⁸ In conversation with Robert Loder on January 11, 2011 in London, he discusses that his reason for purchasing many of these works was simply to provide funding for the workshops to continue operating. The implications of this are outside the scope of this project but would be interesting to pursue further in another project.

¹⁹ Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curation* (New York: Independent Curators International (ICI): 2012); 252.

humanizing a vast network that remains virtually invisible from the contemporary narratives.

Rather than exclusively focusing on the details or specifics of the narratives, I looked for larger general trends, sentiments and ideas across space and time.

Until this thesis, the most comprehensive publication relating to the network was the self published book *Triangle: Variety of Experience Around Artists' Workshops and Residencies*. (2006) This was the only published resource that documented the “global” scope of the network’s activities. Yet, it was published by the Triangle organization and served as an archive with little critical insight on the politics of its operations or the links between each site. It was essentially a collection of personal narratives and experiences. My research builds upon this publication by incorporating new case studies, contemporary theory and critical approaches. In discussion with artists, administrators and through site visits I was able to see the Triangle “ethos” in operation, and understand the complex relationships (both personal and geographic) traditionally left out of Triangle’s official history.

My own work contributes to the existing literature but shifts the dialogue towards larger theoretical debates on globalism and contemporary art. I strategically emphasize certain sites and moments (the Triangle publication does not) to demonstrate the importance of counter-directional flows of information, the blurring of center vs. periphery and the intersection of the regional and global.

In adding to this limited history, there is a politics of institutionalization that must be addressed when documenting and translating the network’s activities. By producing this thesis I was aware of the inherent risks to writing a history that tries to avoid being written. Triangle has always maintained its refusal to be categorized, and in writing its history I was essentially

categorizing it. Yet, my goal was to create a framework for dialogue, one that set out the groundwork of this network in a way that opened up new questions and perspectives on global contemporary production. I hope this work becomes a strong reference point for further research on the network, without pigeon holing Triangle into a singular definition. Given the vast expansion of the network and its ongoing growth, I attempted to create an art history that could remain current despite the network's ongoing evolution.

This research demonstrates that each workshop holds different meaning for different sites and different times. There is no clear definition of "Triangle" for it adapts to its local needs. I make no attempt to classify what Triangle is, but rather, I hope to present a detailed art history on the foundations and infrastructure it creates. I chose to work closely with case studies in South Africa, New York, and Emma Lake because I felt they all epitomized different, yet, foundational tenets of the initial Triangle model. By weaving these regional histories into larger global narratives I also attempted to create an art history that was inclusive but not homogenizing. Through my analysis and assessment of Triangle's critical moments, I contribute to the existing literature by demonstrating how multiple identities, styles, and socio-political histories are shaped within disjunctures of different global flows. I argue that this is where new art historical narratives are born, and canonical exclusionary narratives are broken apart. There is a great need for more global art historical narratives that emphasize the counter-directional flows of information, and in doing so decentralizes existing hierarchies.

Chapter 1

The First Triangle Workshop: Modernity in Crisis

The Triangle Artists' Workshop was first launched in 1982 in Pine Plains, New York, and was spearheaded by the sculptor Anthony Caro and arts patron Robert Loder. The decision to create a workshop began as a practical initiative, with no initial mandate to replicate itself outside of its first iteration. It started with a very limited objective: to bring together artists from the geographical Triangle of the UK, Canada and the US Eastern seaboard. It was initially a purely practical endeavor. As noted by Loder, "We thought we were making a useful contribution to young artists, four or five years out of art school, who didn't know anymore what they were doing art for."²⁰ Now more than thirty years later, Triangle occupies a very different position in the global art world. What began as an informal gathering of "Tony's friends,"²¹ has since evolved into one of the longest standing and broadest reaching systems of global art production. Yet, despite its international scope the organization's alternative approach to art production enables it to operate under the radar of the "global" art scene.

Although the organization has a mandate, one that goes back to the time when the workshops began in 1982, it held no set program or goal. "The way [the workshop] was put together was deliberately haphazard, because we wanted something flexible and very open... We

²⁰ Robert Loder, Interview by Miriam Aronowicz, London, England, January 11, 2011

²¹ Robert Loder, Interview by Miriam Aronowicz, London, England, January 11, 2011.

didn't want to set too many rules because, as I still think, stimulus through communication and exchange of ideas with other artists is the central contribution we make to the development of artists' practice," notes Loder.²² The workshops were formed for practical reasons, to give artists space to work and communicate.

The location was founded by chance. Caro needed a place to store his sculpture, and Loder knew of some disused barns at the Mashomak Fish and Game Reservation in upstate New York that could serve the purpose. Upon spending the night at the site they realized it would be the ideal space to hold an art retreat of sorts. Caro came to the idea to create the art retreat based on his previous experiences at the 1977 Emma Lake Workshops in Saskatchewan, and he described the workshop as:²³

... A very loose idea. We initially thought it was going to be for one year only. We thought: "Let's ask some people from Canada, the US and the UK, because they speak the same language. We'll stick them all together and see what happens". It was as loose as that! There wasn't much of a structure. During those two weeks people worked their asses off during the day and in the evening they swam in the pond, talked about art, whatever. There was an incredible sharing of

²² "History," *The Triangle Network website*, accessed November 5, 2013.
<https://www.gasworks.org.uk/triangle-network/about/>

²³ Although Caro based the Triangle workshops on his experiences at Emma Lake, there is a long art historical legacy of artists workshops and colonies being set up in secluded locations with a self selected aligned group of peers.

ideas, knowledge and techniques. People were saying: “Have you tried this?”; “No, never seen it”; “Well, have a shot at it!”²⁴

With the enthusiasm following the initial event it became evident that there was a need and a will to recreate the experience the following year. Both Loder and Caro recall that from the start, there was a demand for the workshop matched with a sense of sharing and commitment. Something about the model seemed to resonate with the group of artists. The two weeks of uninterrupted studio production matched with a collective environment clearly fueled inspiration.²⁵ This was not a novel approach. It followed a long modernist legacy of cultivating artists’ workshops, collectives and community environments for art production.²⁶

As the workshops progressed new international artists from outside of Caro’s inner circle were invited. The first international artists to join the Triangle group were Bill Ainslie and David Koloane from South Africa. Upon returning home they began their own local South African workshop based on the Triangle model and called it the Thupelo Art Projects, a project which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 3. Although there was no official program to disseminate the model globally, as it evolved it was clear that the workshop’s principles translated across

²⁴ “About,” *The Triangle Network website*, accessed November 5, 2013. <https://www.gasworks.org.uk/triangle-network/about/>

²⁵ Anthony Caro, “Anthony Caro and Robert Loder in Conversation with Sonya Boyce,” Opening Words at *Networked: Dialogue and Exchange in the Global Art Ecology*, London, England, November 26, 2011. As noted by Caro, “I learned more in the two weeks than I did in six weeks in my studio.”

²⁶ Historically there have always been groups of artists that aligned themselves together and worked in like-minded ways. In Western art history the Barbizon Painters and the Impressionists are two examples of cohesive “groups” of artists that worked together outside (or sometimes within) the main urban centres as a collective community.

borders. Thus, many of the international artists went home and adapted the model in their native countries, fueling the network's growth.²⁷

Despite major differences in the social, political and cultural situations of participating artists, the adaptable and organic model continues to serve the needs of artists in multiple global sites. Today, it continues to grow and evolve as a non-hegemonic entity. With few concrete links between the different international sites, it is the over arching and original ethos that continues to unify the network.²⁸ While some of these global workshops are simply single events or moments in time, others are repeat engagements, ultimately leading to infrastructure building, in the form of permanent studio structures, institutions or established artist groups. Many of them link up to one another through various degrees of separation and some emerge as stronger nodes than others.²⁹ The scope of the entire network remains difficult to map, and the lack of an accurate sociogram remains one of the greatest omissions in Triangle research. Its ephemeral nature and splintering influences are difficult to track because they follow no fixed pattern. Each node's

²⁷ The idea of returning home and continuing the model in a situated space elsewhere is an important distinction versus the traditional approach of sending more and more artists from the periphery to the centre. This demonstrates the commitment of an artist led approach within the Triangle network. Rather than following flows of funding, institutional frameworks or geographical boundaries the spread of the network was always artist led and completely organic. It also demonstrates that the type of artists this network has typically attracted (or for whom it has been most effective) are those that do not feel the pressure to enter "global artscapes" but are truly committed to the process of art making regardless of the conventions or trends at the time.

²⁸ It is important to note that the Triangle Network holds no direct financial links to any workshops. Rather it helps in facilitating the workshops to approach and gather funding from external sources.

²⁹ In Chapter 4, Actor Network Theory explains what makes certain nodes "stronger" than others. Usually it is the amount of connections that a certain actor has. I.e. ANT argues that certain nodes such as KHOJ might have more links and therefore become stronger/more stable. The effectiveness of this approach is debatable as it does not account for the complex histories, power dynamics and level of influence each link might independently have. In discussions with Anthony Gardner he notes that the unequal histories and dynamics of power are potentially "white washed" by flattening the network this way. Carl Knappett notes that it is the field of Social Network Analysis that might better highlight these power dynamics.

identification with the larger network or Trust is varied. Often the workshop administrators are aware of the connection but the artists themselves are not.

On the other end of the spectrum are self-proclaimed “Triangle junkies.” For example, Brooklyn based artist Bivas Chaudhuri, who attended Thupelo in 2010, attends as many Triangle workshops as possible because the workshops were such a positive force for him. For a workshop to remain affiliated to Triangle it must loosely identify with the umbrella organization in some way. This affiliation can be through a sharing of intellectual resources (knowledge, expertise), tools that facilitate independent fundraising or a self-identification with the larger Triangle mandate. Yet within each node the actual self-awareness of the organization is varied. Thus, its underlying ethos is present in some way but often intangibly.

While part of my research touches on the diversity of each workshop, I initially look at how this seemingly impromptu initial 1982 gathering evolved into an immense global network of art production in the contemporary era. In 1982 the workshop was designed for a select group of artists, working in a circumscribed time and space. The participants were Western art college-trained, professional, mid career artists trying to find their footing within the rapidly changing but hegemonic art world and market.³⁰ Today the workshops thrive in the alternative spaces that characterize Appadurai’s ethnoscaples, financescaples and technoscaples of our inter-connected global world.³¹ The Triangle model emerges as an optimal opportunity for artists working in

³⁰ It is also crucial to note that I do not believe the parameters of the art world have shifted greatly, but rather that workshop has held a stronger currency with artists and sites in the margins of the artworld. While the discourse of contemporaneity and globalism has shifted, and global biennials, contemporary art markets and international shows have increasingly included the “other” into their discussions the discourse is still shaped by an essentially Eurocentric framework.

³¹ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 33–7.

liminal spaces between the major flows of global capital, markets, and technology and affords them inspiration, collaboration and access. In a complete reversal of the initial workshop, the artists that attend the international workshops are of no specified preselected demographic, but rather a diverse mix of mid career artists who are mostly working from the margins of the contemporary art world. It attracts the artists that do not show up at the international art markets or biennials, and if they do, then they usually no longer associate with Triangle directly. My work explores why the model has held such currency for non-western artists, mainly artists working in the global south, and how the model continues to thrive from the margins of the established art world.

Despite its broad “non-canonical” or “fringe” appeal, the foundations of the Triangle model were undoubtedly located in an established Western Modernist moment, one that catered to an elite group of Western artists working primarily with paint and sculpture. Yet, despite their canonical foundation, the workshops began at a time of fundamental socio-political, cultural and artistic crisis for the artists involved. A crisis where the artists involved were feeling increasingly irrelevant. Today, this notion of crisis continues to permeate the workshops. It is an unspoken but common link uniting the network and its global umbrella. Whether it is a political crisis, financial crisis or a crisis of accessibility, the network is continuously propelled in sites that face external challenges. In many ways it operates as a refuge from current market conditions. Its utopian belief in collaboration, process and uninterrupted creative time offsets the anxieties and turmoil operating outside of it. In isolating the social and aesthetic crisis that instigated the initial Triangle workshop, and considering how the inclusion of international visitors complicated their

dilemmas, I use “crisis” as the theme that unifies that range of workshops through space and time.

Despite a unique mandate and a changing approach, the Triangle model was founded as a Foucauldian heterotopia, which manifests itself in various forms but is ultimately a universal idea. This universal principle is the underlying foundation, and that which enables Triangle to translate globally.³² The workshop model created a co-existence in an artificially constructed space that combined a large number of fragmented experiences, people and worlds. It operated as a refuge outside of space and time, and existed in somewhat of a vacuum from external forces. The first group of artists were primarily painters working in an outdated high modernist style. For this group of artists that worked anachronistically, the ability to remove themselves from the space and time of contemporary art was liberating and fruitful.

The initial workshops operated more specifically as what Foucault called “crisis heterotopias,” essentially sacred, religious or special spaces for people who in relation to their society were in state of crisis.³³ In approaching the Triangle workshop model as a crisis heterotopia, it contextualizes the workshops as an act of place making. Foucault highlights how human beings have always felt the need to create artificially constructed sites to address, and in a sense legitimize or situate unique societal or community needs. Thus, first and foremost the Triangle workshop concept is based upon the idea of taking oneself out of a normal societal structure and creating a safe space to operate within.

³² Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), 23.

³³ For example, one can describe the segregated areas and spaces for sick, elderly, or menstruating women as crisis heterotopias. In more modern times Foucault explains that crisis heterotopias have given way to heterotopia's of deviation, sites for those who stray from societal norms. He uses the example of prisons, boarding schools and hospitals.

This is connected to a long history of modernist artists working in utopian settings, often removed from conventional societal structures.³⁴ Although these working locations often seemed remote, as Michael Jacobs points out, they were far from it, often located close to railway networks and in locations that were generally not considered picturesque for the average tourist. The “crisis heterotopia” that characterized the early workshops fits neatly into this long historical narrative of working outside urban centres (but in locations that were less remote than they appeared.)

For example, the Barbizon painters left their winter studios in Paris every summer to immerse themselves in the idyllic French countryside. Paul Gauguin, removed himself from urban Europe to find “inspiration” in more idyllic isolated settings in the South Pacific and, in more recent history, many of the early modern expressionists addressed the dystopias of urban conventional life. Today sites such as the Emma Lake Workshops, discussed in the following chapter continue to operate in this legacy alongside a community of artist colonies and groupings that choose to produce outside of urban centres.³⁵

³⁴ Abigail Solomon Godeau, “Going Native: Paul Gauguin and the Invention of Primitivist Modernism,” *Art in America* 77 (July 1989) 118-129. Godeau presents a good comprehensive discussion of Paul Gauguin’s retreat from French society into Brittany and Tahitian society in search of a more authentic primitivism. This removal and retreat from European society was often practiced as a means of accessing a higher, purer, truth in in painting.

³⁵ The first Triangle workshop was designed around the format of the 1960’s Emma Lake workshops at that Caro attended. At these workshops it was widely known that the appeal for many of the American and British making the annual trip to northern Saskatchewan was in part to find inspiration from “the great white north,” a topic I discuss further in the subsequent chapter. The isolated setting figured prominently as a utopian space within the creative imagination of the artists involved. In discussions about the early Triangle workshops, artists often note the dire working conditions, the leaking barns and the cold temperatures, which in the western art historical narrative created the ideal romantic setting for intense artistic exploration.

There is an undisputable historical link between modern art and the struggle to find utopias for creative inspiration, whether individually or collectively in the form of artist retreats or artists' colonies.³⁶ Therefore, even though the first workshop occurred in 1982, decades after the height of mainstream modernism, ideologically the workshops were very much aligned with a long-standing modernist approach. In addition to their high modernist working style, these artists also came through the traditional western art trajectory of the "absolute artist."³⁷ Creating this "crisis heterotopia" with the idea of producing art in self-imposed exile (albeit temporarily) was a self-fulfilling attempt to validate themselves amongst the modern greats.³⁸ Although this was not effective in influencing the larger art historical discourse it proved to be greatly invigorating to those involved.

The 1982 event also operated as a "heterotopia of deviation." Although the retreat was voluntary, unlike Foucault's definition of heterotopian sites, it was extremely effective because the participating artists were previously marginalized from the contemporary art circles due to their outmoded style of working and anachronistic stylistic choice.³⁹ The majority of the artists

³⁶ There are also a multitude of contemporary artist colonies that continue to operate with similar objectives. However, being associated to Triangle differs from an association to an artist colony in that the Triangle label is only a temporary moment. The links and connections that Triangle forges are transient, and although they may shape an artists carrier they rarely define that artists overall identity.

³⁷ Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). I borrow the term "absolute artist" from Soussloff who presents a "genealogy of the artist" as a social construct dating back to the foundations of the discipline and the emphasis on artist's biographies. She deconstructs the historiography to identify the construction of the heroicized artists as an unconditioned genius. I argue that the artist's at the early Triangle workshops were trying to emulate this same trope of the artist as an unaffected and inherent genius.

³⁸ Jim Walsh, interviewed by Miriam Aronowicz, interview by phone, New York, January 15, 2011.

³⁹ I speak of the artists as "anachronistic" in terms of the traditional western modernist art historical narrative. Within this hegemonic narrative there is the notion that artistic styles and trends evolve in a linear progression, that what has already been mastered need not be repeated. There are a multitude of

involved were loosely categorized as working in “post-painterly abstract(ion),”⁴⁰ and as noted by Jim Walsh, there “was a clear sense of a New York school connection.”⁴¹ Of the 29 artists that attended the first workshop, 19 were painters and 10 were sculptors. There were only two landscape painters and one oil painter; the majority produced abstracts in acrylic. Two of these painters went as far as self identifying as “New New Painters,” a group that furthered the legacies of Abstract Expressionism and Color Field Painting by pushing the boundaries of acrylic gel paint.⁴²

Hence given the cultural climate of the 1980s the first Triangle artists were very much-detached formalists working in a rear-guard style outside the parameters of the current art world. Formal exploration was a central tenet of the early event. While this was all going on inside the workshops, the contemporary art world outside the Triangle model was in a different place. It was primarily moving away from painting towards post-modern styles (installation, performance, site specificity etc.)⁴³ Abstract Expressionism was still discussed and debated but not as an active practice. By the early 80’s it was actively historicized through revisionary

problems in writing the discipline through a temporal framework, something I touch upon but is largely still debated.

⁴⁰ “abstraction” is a term coined by art critic Clement Greenberg for the title of an exhibition he curated in 1964. It encompasses a broad group of American and Canadian painters who reacted to Abstract Expressionism through the pursuit of hardedge abstraction or through color washes.

⁴¹ Jim Walsh, interviewed by Miriam Aronowicz, interview by phone, New York, January 15, 2011

⁴² One of the self identified New New Painters, Kenworth W. Moffett, has a large body of writing on his personal website, much of which details the New New Painters and their philosophy. See www.kenworthmoffett.net

⁴³ During the 1980s there was a return to Neo-Abstract art particularly in New York City. However, this return to abstraction was a deliberate rejection of the intellectually detached abstraction of the 1960’s and 1970s, and was far more subjective. It embraced story telling, commentary and a greater relationship to the larger spectrum of art history. This is very different from the pure abstract expressionism that many of the artists at Triangle were still working on. Rather than re-inventing the older style they were trying to revive it.

scholarship and new academic approaches. Hence, it was only one year after the workshops began that Serge Guilbault's radically revisionist reading of abstract expressionism as a highly politicized Cold War tool spearheaded a huge re-assessment of the painterly and post-painterly styles.⁴⁴

By the 1980's, with the call to a Return to Representation, Neo Expressionism, New Figuration, it was increasingly problematic to use abstraction as a purely formal pursuit⁴⁵. The artists at the workshop were still very much following the Greenbergian approach of abstraction as a distinctly European/American invention with little regard to its global influences. The gathering gave them a venue for debate and open dialogue and the needed confidence to continue working in this vein. Although this was not the direct intent of the workshops, nor was it truly in line with Caro or Loder's approach, the early workshops legitimized and assuaged the artistic crisis felt by the early participants.

On a micro level their painting (and formalist sculpture) style was in crisis, but on a macro level these artists faced an even larger crisis--one that went beyond their working styles to their identity politics. The 1980s brought on a growing focus on the politics of representation. Art theory was increasingly shifting to incorporate semiotics, cultural theory and pan-humanities critical theory. Thus, race, class, gender theory and feminism became little by little mainstream

⁴⁴ Serge Guilbault, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983

⁴⁵ There was a huge flurry of literature around this time re-addressing abstraction and its political implications. Abstraction as a purely formal pursuit "had already been done" and the larger implications and global connections of abstraction were becoming increasingly debated and important to acknowledge. Guilbault's seminal text played a major role in shifting the discussions surrounding abstraction as an "apolitical" endeavor, and posits the movement as being deeply intertwined with cold war politics.

topics, challenging the metanarratives that had dominated the art world for decades. What was historically a secure artistic identity was gradually challenged by newer discourses that were finally changing the actual status of the white male heteronormative identity. If one was part of a western, college educated art elite then at the very least one needed to be aware of one's privileged identity and create work that reflected this tension.⁴⁶

The decade's major exhibitions and critical discourses embody these changes. Success was reframed in a pluralist framework. By the end of the 1980s and the closing of the Cold War, art history contended with what Rasheed Araeen called new "critical discourse of the globalization of modernism"⁴⁷. Capitalizing on this moment, Araeen founded *The Third Text* journal, a watershed moment in the discourse of non-western centric arts. Likewise, new critical exhibitions were taking place in spaces that were historically reserved for western histories. Most notably, MoMA's controversial "Primitivism: in 20th Century Art," –a flawed attempt to reassess the influence of 'tribal,' non-western art on modern art—took place only two years after the first Triangle workshop, in 1984. These moments signaled the beginning of discussions around the interconnections of globalism, multiculturalism and modernity. The early workshops operated outside this framework and were very much a reaction to larger changing tides. Although Caro and Loder had less political ambitions, for many of the artists involved, their participation can be understood as a protectionist response.

While these shifts in thinking were happening in both Europe and the United States, locally in New York City where these artists were based, collectivism was becoming more

⁴⁶ Pamela Lee, *Forgetting the Art World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 18. Quotation taken from Arthur Danto's "Art World" *Journal of Philosophy*, (1964).

⁴⁷ Rasheed Araeen, "Why *Third Text*?" *Third Text*, 1, Autumn 1987, 3–5 .

popular as well. Even before the 1980's there were a growing number of community based activist initiatives and an increase in the amount of works that required collective audience participation.⁴⁸ Most of the artists at the initial workshop struggled to fit within this changing rubric. They mainly worked independently, in isolated studios and their work had dwindling contemporary relevance, as they championed pure formalism over socio-political meaning. According to Willard Boepple, a practicing sculptor and one of Caro's technical sculpting assistants, Caro was well aware of the isolation his friends were feeling during these times. Therefore, the heterotopian space of the workshop normalized their deviance from this changing system and aimed to promote new inspiration.

Nikos Papastergiadis notes that identity at the cusp of transformation tends to retreat into, or fabricate a narrative that reinforces boundaries and closes it off from 'the other.'⁴⁹ Likewise, the workshop was a space for a modernism under threat. It was a space designed for retreat, for those to remove themselves from art world changes and strengthen their position. Despite its collective setting, Triangle was born out of attempts to perpetuate the cult of the autonomous artist.⁵⁰ At the initial 1982 workshop Caro and Loder hoped that the space could cultivate some "new masters," of a similar caliber to the great abstract artists of the 1960s. In conversations with Jim Walsh he recalled Robert Loder asking at the end of the workshop, in a not entirely joking

⁴⁸ Alan W. Moore, "Artists' Collectives: Focus on New York 1975-2000" in *Collectivism After Modernism*, Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette Eds, 192-221 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) 200.

⁴⁹ Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Migration*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000) 116.

⁵⁰ Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

manner, ‘who the new Pollock would be?’⁵¹ This quest for new masters was championed openly albeit in a conservative reactionist way. For example in the 1986 Triangle yearbook, the visiting critic, Michael Fried proclaimed that, “in an art world increasingly given over to meretriciousness and schlock (I write these words a day after having seen Schnabel’s latest productions), Triangle’s mission continues, in its quiet way, to be nothing less than revolutionary.”⁵²

Yet as the art historical narrative unfolded, Triangle never became revolutionary from any aesthetic or stylistic standpoint.⁵³ With few exceptions, today it continues to operate in a similar space where the process has far greater potential than the actual works of art coming out of the workshops. Hence, New York produced no “new masters,” and the success of the Ab-Ex and post-painterly abstract movement continued to dwindle despite its earnest efforts.

Modernism, from its inception, was always stressed by the artworld’s moving tides. However, at Triangle there was a deliberate conservative politics at play, which attempted to push back at these new movements. The heterotopias that they set up for themselves functioned

⁵¹ Jim Walsh, interviewed by Miriam Aronowicz, interview by phone, New York, January 15, 2011.

In a later interview with Robert Loder, in *Triangle*, p 78 he states that the workshops were never about finding new masterpieces. This contradicts Walsh’s recollection of the early workshops. Most likely, in the initial workshop the actual mandate for what Triangle was and/or would become was less defined. They were very much figuring out Triangle as it went along.

⁵² The early workshops featured prominent visiting critics who often contributed to the yearbook and general art writing surrounding the event. The role of the critic continues to be heavily debated in the Triangle context. While certain nodes (i.e. New York) thrive on the critical presence, with hopeful artists looking to be “picked up,” other nodes (i.e. South Africa) have gracefully moved away from a central critic’s presence because of the feeling that it made artists uncomfortable. The idea of a truly artist led processed based exercise becomes challenged and far less natural with a critical eye overseeing and commenting on the process.

⁵³ Michael Fried, quoted in the *1986 Triangle Yearbook*, New York, 1986.

as protectionist enclaves for an increasingly outmoded aesthetic. They were deliberately set up as safe spaces, closed to visitors or outside critics. This continues to be one of the premises of the Triangle model today, albeit an idea that is difficult to uphold and often overlooked. This isolation offers freedom from external viewership, which allows artists to explore without the pressures of the art world and market's expectations.⁵⁴

The initial workshops were “about making things and painting and or welding steel sculpture...[not] about all the rest of the things that the art world was doing...that was important to us.”⁵⁵ From the onset, despite the workshop's conventional stylistic focus, structurally it was set up as an alternative model. The ongoing language of crisis for these artists also marks a refusal to fall into the “provincialism problem.”⁵⁶ Terry Smith defines this as “an attitude of subservience to an externally imposed hierarchy of cultural values.” Thus, they were outsiders in the art world, but not provincial, and the workshop was a way to remove themselves from the new art world standards to which they did not conform.⁵⁷ He noted that this issue of remaining locally relevant while globally innovative plagues artists from the periphery. Thus, their work

⁵⁴ In theory, this is the idea of having closed workshops. It is debated how effective this approach is and if it truly works as certain locations hold an innate pressure to produce a certain type of work. For example, the amount of applications that the New York Triangle workshop receives creates an inevitable self-selection process where the savviest and most current artists make the cut. They are very aware of the “art scene” and to close the workshop does not necessarily remove this inherent bias. Furthermore, the open day model where the public can attend the workshop cannot be underestimated. Despite the encouragement to experiment, the knowledge that the work will be open to the public undoubtedly shapes its trajectory.

⁵⁵ Jim Walsh, Interviewed by Miriam Aronowicz, interviewed by phone New York-Toronto, January 15, 2011.

⁵⁶ Terry Smith, “The Provincialism Problem,” *Artforum*, vol. XIII, no. 1 (September 1974) 54-59.

⁵⁷ There was the idea that that the artists felt isolated and needed to come together to strengthen their position rather than adapt to the new trends. As noted in the opening pages of the *1986 Triangle Yearbook* “good artwork does not flourish in isolation,” yet the paradox remains that they retreated into isolation to fight that very sentiment.

often ends up being provincial in attempts to function within the larger global art worlds. While Smith notes that it is most likely to deal with the provincialism problem when working in the periphery, even in art centres such as New York City, artists can still be provincial in their subservience to the larger system. Thus, although the Triangle artist's came from sites that were geographically "central" their refusal to conform to any of the popular styles at the time, placed them in the "periphery." Yet, this periphery was not a radical place, but rather, a place behind the times, holding on to a modern ideal which since evolved.

Although the crisis these artists were facing in 1982 seems obvious in hindsight, it was not until the mid to late 80's that the workshops became self-reflexive and identified the trend. Most notably, in the 1985 yearbook the first discussions were noted about the changing artscape, and particularly, the stress this was placing on these artists' modern style. In the 1985 yearbook artist Russell Bingham notes:

There was a lot of discussion at this year's Triangle Workshop, especially during the first few days, about the current state of art, Modernist art in particular and also the role of Triangle as it relates to this. It led to some fairly heated exchanges.... There's was concern among some of the people who care about this kind of art that it may be in danger of slipping into a kind of formalist mannerism... we are living during the "high" period of Modernist art, and history will bear this out – its time of greatest accomplishment...to get back to the main point this is all about keeping standards high...there's no question in my mind that this mucking around – this getting into the medium on its own terms- is one of the main issues of the day as far as painting is concerned... the level of art at Triangle is high, and it's important to say that.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ 1985 *Triangle Yearbook*, New York, 1985. 33.

The enthusiasm at the first workshops, where “all the artists who come to Triangle share a common belief in the continuing validity of modernism,” was gradually replaced with a more critical self-reflection.⁵⁹ By 1984 artists began noting that their working method was possibly becoming stagnant. They sensed the risk that Triangle was no longer innovative but rather turning into an academy that fostered a narrow outmoded paradigm of art.

Alongside this existential crisis were major shifts in the internal workshop administration and participation, as these gatherings opened to international visitors. The first international visitor to the workshops was David Koloane in 1983, followed in 1984 by three German sculptors, Ulrich Bauss, Harry Klahr and Peter Tiefensee, and Carlos Leon from Spain. By 1985 Bill Ainslie and Garth Erasmus were invited from South Africa alongside two Australian artists Barbara McKay and Kevin Norton. As the workshops progressed they became increasingly diverse. Despite their initial protectionist attitude the composition of the newer workshops began to mirror larger global trends of multiculturalism and internationalism, slowly degrading the initial participants’ sense of a “safe” heterotopian environment.

The international artists that attended the workshops, and the early international workshops sites continued to operate primarily in painting and sculpture but brought on entirely new discourses in the context of the workshops. They brought in new cultural opportunities and different aesthetic histories. Since painting was not passé in many of the regions that these artists came from they challenged the anachronism of Triangle culture by complicating understandings of modernism. These early workshops raise a flurry of new questions regarding multiple modern temporalities. It is here that the potential of Triangle was unlocked. The international artists

⁵⁹ 1983 *Triangle Yearbook*, New York, 1985. 6.

brought in what Rey Chow deemed a “displaced modernism [into the workshops that were operating in western modern traditional]...the sign of an alien imprint on indigenous traditions.”⁶⁰ With that came an entirely new set of histories and stories to be told. They worked in the same mediums and shared similar historical references but refracted through local avant-gardes.⁶¹ These experiences broke down the supremacy of the western modern experience. It demonstrated that modernity came in different times, places and spaces, all with unique webs of cross-pollination.⁶² Whether modernism is inherently global and avant-garde or if it is a differently measured moment in time, is still debated and a topic I leave open for discussion. Nonetheless, the inclusion of multiple modernities shook the heterotopia of the early workshops forcing it to slowly break apart.

⁶⁰ Rey Chow, ‘Postmodern Automatons’, in *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 55

⁶¹ David Koloane and Bill Ainslie represent a good example of this. Working in an abstract medium, their stylistic legacies were influenced through various expatriate South African artists working abroad. Notably, Douglas Portway, a European based South African artist working as part of the British Abstract movement. Although he lived in exile he continue to exhibit in South Africa and his move towards abstraction influenced Bill Ainslie (amongst other artists as well). David Koloane, a student and friend of Ainslie’s was likewise influenced by Ainslie and the move towards abstraction. John Peffer in *Art at the End of Apartheid* discusses this influence briefly (p. 136). Portway’s larger influence on South African local abstraction is also seen in Michael Stevenson and Annabel Rosholt’s exhibit, *Moving in Time and Space: Shifts between Abstraction and Representation in Post-War South African Art* (Johannesburg: Dimension Data, 2003), J.P Hodin, *Douglas Portway: A Painter’s Life* (Great Britain: Springwood Books, 1983), and most comprehensively in Vanessa Anderson, “The Use of Abstraction by Bill Ainslie and David Koloane,” MA Thesis, Department of Fine Art, Technikon Natal, South Africa. February 1999.

⁶² Modernism was historically influenced by a multitude of global influences as early as the 1800s and notably the 1900s. The post-painterly abstract works that were being practiced at the early workshops cannot be separated from their connections to native art, non-western spiritualism, *japonaise* etc., and there is an abundance of scholarship that addresses these connections. The transnational flow of artists and ideas that mushroomed in the 1980s was undoubtedly influential in this paradigm shift, and the inclusion of international artists at the early workshops forced many of the New York artists to come face to face with their perceived “purity” of modernism.

When one views modernism as a transnational movement, the chronological narrative perpetuated by western art history destabilizes. In studying Triangle and its modernisms one sees how the canonical and linear narrative falls apart. While modernisms in certain parts of the world dwindled, new modernisms simultaneously emerged in others areas of the globe. Although many of the non-western modernisms emerged after western modernisms they were hardly derivative, and Triangle is an example of a space where these parallel moments converge. As Bauman argues, modernism was never an upward value scale.⁶³ Rather than viewing it as a straight trajectory with a predictable evolution, the Triangle workshops demonstrated how modernism splintered, dwindled and flourished simultaneously in different parts of the world at different periods of time.

As the workshops evolved so did Loder and Caro's larger vision for the organization's ethos. They saw the potential in pursuing Triangle's international linkages rather than holding on to its limited western aesthetic. They saw the value of multiple modernisms that emerged at the New York workshops. By 1989 Caro resigned and stated, "I knew that Triangle must change, adapt and develop. If it were to become set, institutionalized, it would have very little to offer as a pressure cooker for new art. This was one of the reasons why I stepped down – because it was time new voices were heard and new ideas were tried out."⁶⁴ Unlike some of the early Triangle alumni, Caro was aware of Triangle's risks of turning into an academy. While realizing the potential of Triangle, he also saw the inherent risks of keeping it stagnant. This struggle between maintaining a model yet not evolving into an institution is something Triangle continues to

⁶³ Zygmunt Bauman, "An Overview: In the End is the Beginning," in *Postmodern Ethics*, 223-251 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1993) 238.

⁶⁴ Anthony Caro, "Anthony Caro and Robert Loder in Conversation with Sonya Boyce," Opening Words at *Networked: Dialogue and Exchange in the Global Art Ecology*, London, England, November 26, 2011.

grapple with today.

By the end of the decade, after Caro resigned, Loder also distanced himself from the New York workshops and began focusing on cultivating international offshoots. Spearheaded by Loder's commitment to multiculturalism, diversity and international exchange, by 1988 the workshop model spread to South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Barcelona.⁶⁵ The changes in British cultural policy during the 1980s undoubtedly also filtered through Triangle's upper administration further fueling its growth.

In 1986 Britain passed the Arts and Ethnic Minorities Action Plan, this outlined that a minimum of 4% of the Art Council's expenditure was to be committed to funding AfroCaribbean and Asian Arts. Monitoring groups were set up that included black professional artists, academics and critics. After two years of review a report was released recommending that black artists be promoted to central and local government departments, and that state supported institutions share revenue with black arts organization.⁶⁶ It was this report that eventually leads

⁶⁵ Due to Robert Loder's previous employment at the Anglo-American mining company (something briefly mentioned in Chapter 3) he had strong existing ties to Southern Africa, which led him to the region with the workshop.

⁶⁶ Even today with a well-established discourse on visual culture the place for these types of alternative frameworks falls in a grey zone between the disciplines of visual culture or art history. Yet, undoubtedly, in the 1980s this type of practice had a very limited language and discourse surrounding it, making it difficult to document, discuss or study. It also limited its place within academia and critical writing, which is a central reason why it has taken over thirty years for the first scholarship to emerge surrounding the network. Despite its ubiquitous scale Triangle has remained relatively unknown in art historical literature. Whether or not we have the tools and to discuss the network today is still a contentious debate, and it is something I will further explore in the final chapter. How does one discuss a movement with no permanent footprint, no art objects and limited institutional structures?

to the formation of InIVA and ultimately the funding for the Triangle Arts Trust, the offshoot Trust that Loder and Caro started based on the workshop model.⁶⁷

Thus, Caro and Loder's commitment to cosmopolitanism was very much in line with larger governmental policy shifts towards the arts in Britain. They were very much in tune with the socio-political climate of the time. Thus, while many of the participants remained committed to formalism, Caro and Loder turned their focus towards a more progressive cosmopolitan approach. Defined by Kwame Anthony Appiah as being simultaneously part of the place you are from and at once part of a larger local community, cosmopolitanism is "the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kin, or even formal ties of a shared citizenship... that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance."⁶⁸ This larger commitment to humanity, compassion and tolerance was always integral to the Triangle model for Loder and Caro. Hence, when they felt the New York workshop was no longer aligned with their immediate outlook they spearheaded offshoot initiatives that furthered the dialogue they were looking for.

⁶⁷ Britain had a longer historical connection to "international" arts that could be further explored. Dating to the 1950's the first "international art" galleries were opened in London. One of the most famous was the New Visions Art Centre, which was located at 4 Seymour Place and was directed by Frank Avery Wilson, Halima Nalecz and Denis Bowen. The art at this gallery was primarily abstract, and further complicates the rhetoric of purity surrounding abstract art. The NVC held similar properties to the early workshops in that it was artists led, collaborative and promoted exchange of ideas. In the NVC paperwork the mission is stated as "Artists from Europe, America and other parts of the world have been shown in the gallery. This has enabled the exchange of ideas and the promotion of activities to become possible and many of our artists are now engaged in such a way to make exhibitions of their own work possible in many different countries. The NVC archives are located at the Tate Archives.

⁶⁸ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism* (New York: WW Norton Company, 2006) XV.

In the mid 1980's Triangle began to witness what Appiah called "cosmopolitan contamination." By including international artists who were working in similar mediums but from different legacies signaled a type of healthy hybridization. The workshops were pushed from a space of purity and cultural protectionism to a place of mixture and cross-pollination. Unquestionably, this created rifts for the local artist trying to cultivate their own style and the international artists who brought in new ways of working. Multiculturalism often seems liberating but masks exclusion.⁶⁹ This was the case at Triangle. While some artists included the international artists, few were actually interested in learning from them as equals or understanding their different process. For example, the recollections of Koloane at the 1983 workshop differed greatly from those of other participants. Some of the artists viewed him as an outsider, showed little interest in his professional place as an artist and more interest in how an African artist could navigate the foreign territory. Nonetheless, there were artists such as Peter Bradley who made it a priority to attend the workshop after hearing a black South African would attend, and spent time with Koloane inviting him to his home in New York. Artists such as Robert C Morgan who wrote in the 1991 yearbook "I remember fondly the 2 Korean artists, Mr. Lee and Mr. Kim. It was so completely refreshing to see work that challenged the customary categories of westernized expression and aesthetic formalism."⁷⁰ Triangle had a mix of responses to the multicultural inclusion, but overall its core-working group remained disinterested in the larger trends.

⁶⁹ Anne Ring Peterson, "Identity Politics, Institutional Multiculturalism, and the Global Artworld, *Third Text* 26.2 (March 2012): 195-204

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Although Koloane, his friend Bill Ainslie and many of the other international visitors later went home to spearhead some of the most successful international workshops to date, the core group of initial Triangle artists paid little attention to the international offshoots and the cross pollination that was occurring, most never travelled to the workshops abroad and lost contact with the artists who participated. Most remained focused on their own work with little interest in outside influences. Many of the alumni from the early Triangle days to this moment believe that the workshop model “sold out to postmodernism,” leaving formalism behind.⁷¹ The early workshops reinforced the split between the multiple modernities that played out and represented a site where painting was simultaneous rear-guarde and avant-guarde.

As noted by Willard Boepple, ‘the cross fertilization that has happened has been much stronger South-South.’ Although the workshop began in New York the node-to-node connections between workshops outside of New York have a much stronger cross influence.⁷² This is partially attributed to Loder, who after leaving the New York workshops in the late 1980s turned his focus to facilitating funding for non-western locations to host the Triangle model.⁷³ Yet, what it also signals is that for many of the New York based artists there was little need or willingness to go outside of their comfort zone. While they refused to conform to major stylistic art trends, their place from within the geographical center created a blind spot of the periphery.

⁷¹ This term was used by Karen Wilkin at a panel discussion held at the Triangle New York Workshop 2010, held at the Triangle Studios in Dumbo, Brooklyn. See; Karen Wilkin, Panel Discussion led by Malado Baldwin and Christina Kee, Triangle Studios, Brooklyn, New York. September 22, 2010.

⁷² Willard Boepple, Interview with Miriam Aronowicz, New York City, New York, September 2010.

⁷³ One of the central tenets of Triangle is that it does not find the funding and provide it to international workshops, but rather facilitates the local administrators to seek out funding opportunities. Through Loder’s international connections and connections to Southern Africa (from his time working there as an executive), he was able to help artists and administrators make the connections they needed to get the workshops off the ground.

Today the Triangle workshop still operates annually out of New York City, unofficially known as “the mothership of the network.” Nonetheless, it continues to operate in somewhat of a vacuum. Despite its now international mandate to include roughly fifty percent of participants from outside the United States it tends to function within a narrowly defined acceptable global aesthetic, which as James Elkins argues is simply a new form of conceptual imperialism.⁷⁴

Fittingly, the contemporary workshops have become increasingly conceptual and less high modern formalist. While the upper administration and board members such as Karen Wilkin still seem to champion “the painters,” the younger artists are very current with artistic trends and operate within this new contemporary wave of production. The modes of working are primarily conceptual (even if paint is used it is no longer in a purely formal pursuit). The pool of artists who now attend the New York workshops are generally all university educated, savvy and well versed in critical discourse. Their work is on the forefront of a “global aesthetic,” and their practice is decentralized as they travel the global art network. Today, Triangle New York draws from an exclusive elite artistic cognitariat.⁷⁵

From 1998-2001 Triangle New York operated out of a vacant floor in the World Trade Centre. Today, Two Trees Management in DUMBO Brooklyn, a management company committed to the “transformative power of art,” offered Triangle generous studio spaces in their buildings. This financial security and the links Triangle New York holds to certain benefactors as a result of its geography translates into access to certain artscapes, and likewise attracts certain

⁷⁴ James Elkins, Introduction to *Is Art History Global?* (New York: Routledge, 2007) 41.

⁷⁵ The term *cognitariat* is used in Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). *Cognitariats* are described as the new breed of freelance intellectual laborers, the immaterial laborers whose knowledge is the source of their power.

audiences, artists and collectors.⁷⁶ By virtue of location, the New York workshops are still viewed as stepping-stones into the global world for many of the artists that attend. Hence, the current New York ‘open days’ feature artist statements, CVs and room of young talent eager for gallery representation.

Although Triangle New York still functions under the same umbrella organization of the Triangle Arts Trust it remains a unique node within the network. It seems to epitomize Chow’s lament that postmodernism – and by implication post colonialism – is merely modernism in a different register rather than a succession.⁷⁷ While the aesthetic is now much more contemporary the foundations of the New York workshop remain the same. It maintains the same structural foundation and the insistence of New York as a central place for contemporary art. It continues to feed into the “Provincialism Problem” in that it reinforces the need for artists from the periphery to acclimatize, adapt and take on the New York art world as an entry point into global circuits. Although the artists are of a new generation, the board is still filled with many of the original participants.

Today, Triangle New York is an anomaly within the larger network. To return to my earlier argument, the organization’s greatest innovations continue to thrive when negotiating

⁷⁶ In attending the New York Workshops as an observer it became apparent that more so than other sites the participating artists were very aware and active within “the market.” Although the goal of the workshop was process based, many of the artists were open about wanting to sell their works, gain gallery representation, or critical acclaim. Many of them had the ultimate goal of getting to the workshop as an access point to a select critical viewership. This use of the workshop as a stepping-stone was less prominent in other workshops within the network.

⁷⁷ Rey Chow, ‘Postmodern Automaton’, in *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1993) p 55.

crisis. The New York site is successful in that it is financially stable and recurring. It serves more of a practical purpose to help working artists gain time and space to further their careers. It attracts a range of artists that are not under the same pressures of the early participants. They are a vetted group of an emerging, but stable, roster of talent. Therefore, Triangle New York was the springboard for the network and calls itself the “mothership” but is so stable now that it is no longer one of the sites pushing the network’s evolution.

Crisis is integral to propelling the network. A crisis in the globalizing art world and modernism sparked the 1982 workshop. Crisis propagated the rifts amongst the early alumni that then led to the workshop’s international offshoots. Social, political or cultural crisis made certain geographic locations susceptible to or suited to the Triangle model. For example, the lack of black art education under the strictures of South African apartheid and the ongoing debates about the role of black arts in that country left a vacuum in art production that the Triangle model could fill. Likewise, in sites like Palestine the ongoing political crisis has enabled Triangle’s success because its malleable organic model is successfully adaptable to a region with minimal resources or art infrastructure. The possibilities Triangle offers as an alternative framework are immense under these circumstances. Thus, it is on the foundation of crisis that the model became a network upon which most of the contemporary workshops continue to operate.⁷⁸ The most interesting workshop developments are those that function within this zone of instability. One can categorize these developments into two major categories: **foundations** and **art practice**.

For the purpose of this chapter I define *foundations* as the principles on which the art historical discipline is built, the fundamental building blocks to artistic production. It includes

⁷⁸ New York continues to function as an anomaly within this model. While it emerged from crisis it has become a very stable and predictable annual event.

the tangible components of any art historical narrative, for example, the object, the site, the artist itself, the process etc.). Whereas *art practice* speaks to the technical modes of art production, the specific modes and styles of working that form when the foundations are all put together.

The first foundational shift that the Triangle movement prescribed was the change in emphasis final product to process. From the very first workshop there was this notion that artists should use the two week opportunity to create without the pressure of getting representation, selling their work or putting on a show. Although there were always visiting critics at the workshops their role remained contentious and continuously debated within the framework. In the past 15 years the idea of the “Open Day” evolved, which was the inclusion of a final workshop day where the public was invited to come and see the work. Unlike a structured and curated exhibition artists are encouraged to showcase their work, experiments, and progress in whichever form it took through the workshop. In theory, the open day is designed to connect with the community and open up the studios without the pressure of markets, representation or judgment. Whether or not this is an idealistic goal is still debated. Undoubtedly, societal pressures continue to exist. Although the workshops may operate in a space far removed from the commercialized art world, once the public is invited in the hegemonic structures that govern the art world trickle in and may fundamentally shift (or undermine) this model of process over product. Thus, many of the artists do work to create “finished” pieces and present their work in ways not unlike a traditional exhibition. In defining art as process-based one needs a shift in the systems and structures of interpretation for it to be effective. Nonetheless, what remains important is that in principle the Triangle model emphasizes process and not the final product. Whether or not the art world structures can accommodate this shifting model is an issue that will be further explored in the final chapter.

The idea of valuing the process over the final product is one example of how far from modern formalism the workshops evolved. The modernism practiced at the initial workshop was very much committed to the centrality of the art object. Undoubtedly, there was a keen emphasis on the act of painting, the chemical properties of paint and experimenting with new acrylic mediums (and sculpture). So much so, that Sam Golden of Golden Paints sponsored the workshops by donating unlimited amounts of supplies, a relationship the Triangle workshops still maintain with Golden today. The relationship was mutually beneficial. Golden gained valuable market research and insight on product development and the artists were able to experiment with limitless materials.

Experimenting with the acrylic medium became the central focus for certain artists such as Graham Peacock and Kenworth Moffett of the New New Painters. This group saw themselves as working in a style that was the logical extension of abstract expressionism, the New York school and color field painting. By pushing the limits of acrylic paint as a medium they felt they were able to take abstraction to a new spiritual level, creating works in colors, vibrancy and texture that had never been created before. The New New Painters' focused on the science of acrylic painting in further pursuit of the medium of painting rather than the process of actually making the painting.⁷⁹

Although the workshops were originally intended as a safe place to create (modernist) art, the emphasis on materials and process inevitably dismantled the focus on the very art object that it was intended to protect. The stress of a disintegrating modernism led to the need to protect

⁷⁹ The New New Painters are still self promoting and have continued to operate as a unique group, putting on exhibitions at the Armory and more recently opening the Museum of New, located in Toronto, Canada <http://www.museumofnew.com/museumofnew.com/Museum.aspx>

it, to distill it back to its most formal elements and rebuild it as something stronger and new again. This crisis had unintended but welcomed consequences. The emphasis on materiality, production and medium created a site where “Process” became more valuable than the final product, for example the New New Painters whose final works were far less interesting than the exploration and experimentation that went on at the workshops.

From a workshop that closely guarded the modernist primacy of the art object grew a network that disintegrated the very movement it originally attempted to protect. Slowly this emphasis on the materials became the central focus of the workshop. Critics argue that no new masterpieces were really ever created at these workshops, rather it was the experiments and the act of producing work in a collective setting that was the most fruitful in terms of confidence building for the artists.⁸⁰ This was especially true for many of the non-western artists. For example David Koloane speaks about his experience at Triangle as being fruitful for his ability to access an unprecedented amount of materials and space that he could not at home, advancing his practice in new ways. His works from the workshop were more important in terms of his overall artistic progression than in final products in and of themselves.⁸¹

⁸⁰ There are very few “masterpieces” to emerge from these events. There are select pieces that were collected and stored by Loder at Gasworks to document and catalogue the exhibits, but in terms of critical or market success these works did not generally circulate. Nonetheless, many artists speak of the experience as being fruitful to their artistic evolution and the confidence building, exploration and experimentation is what often draws these artists to their interest in the workshop model.

⁸¹ David Koloane notes that the unprecedented access to materials and scale of work greatly shifted his style of working. For the first time he could access unlimited amounts of paint, large canvases and paint, allowing his style to evolve greatly.

David Koloane, Interviewed by Miriam Aronowicz at the Bag Factory, Johannesburg, South Africa, June 18, 2010.

According to Thierry De Duve, it was Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* that changed the rhetoric from "here is art to this is art."⁸² Okwui Enwezor furthers this discussion by noting that although conceptualism may have opened up this debate it never entirely restructured the modernist dialectic of the object and the gaze. Conceptualism never shifted or redefined the structures of hegemonic power that governed the art world, notably the museum and western gallery system. Conceptualism failed to acknowledge that "it was not just the primacy of the art object that demanded new consideration, but the primacy of the social exclusions that purportedly were built into the way in which institutions of art mediate the history of those objects."⁸³ Here, the Triangle workshop made a fundamental shift in the art historical foundations. The artists at the workshop intended to maintain the primacy of the art object, yet in creating, displaying and placing their works within this heterotopian setting they attempted to remove themselves from the Western frameworks and institutions that mediated them. Without the societal structures that judge and vet works of art (critics, galleries, markets, art histories), suddenly the status of the object as a work of art was less interesting than the process of actually making it. This theoretical change in frame of reference was central to undermining the traditional art historical system that one was used to working within.

In emphasizing process over product the artists at the first Triangle workshop were unknowingly contributing to the growing history of collectivism as well. According to Enwezor, modernist collectives historically evolved in times of crises, thus it is unsurprising that the

⁸² Thierry De Duve, as quoted in Okwui Enwezor, "The Artist as Producer," in *Empire, Ruins and Networks: The Transcultural Agenda*, Scott McQuire and Nikos Papastergiadis eds. (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2006). 24.

⁸³ Enwezor, "The Artist as Producer," 24.

collective nature of the Triangle workshops was established early on.⁸⁴ He argues that in collective work we immediately complicated modernism's idealization of the artwork as a unique object of individual creativity. It shattered the myth of originality that was required for high modernism to function. Thus, by nature of bringing a group of artists to collectively learn from each other, one was by nature going against the traditional modernist rubric. The artist studio has played a central role in the history of art making, and yes, often these studios were collective spaces, but it was the abolishment of any hierarchy within the studio setting that was fundamentally different at Triangle. Rather than setting up a studio with the master painter and his artisans, workers, or assistants the two weeks were set up as a collective art camp. Production during the two weeks was very much community based, with artists collectively contributing and working on each other's pieces.⁸⁵ The fact that these artists felt so isolated that they needed to come out of their studio into this group setting already signaled a crumbling modernist framework. The results of this collective production had long lasting implications for the network.

Although I argue that the Triangle collectivism emerged as an unintended byproduct of a failing modernism one must still acknowledge the complexity of collectivism within the modernist movement. Blake Stimson successfully draws this distinction between modernist

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ This type of collective engagement was unique given that the artists were simultaneously attempting to work in high modernist styles. In Stimson and Sholette's *Collectivism After Modernism* they note, "Put schematically, we might say that modernist art after the war no longer found the solution to its founding solipsism problem in collectivism but instead in a brute form of materialism." In Stimson and Sholette's edited volume they highlight the various collective "interventions" into the Modernist narrative. The collaboration and work produced at Triangle can be similarly situated as an intervention into the high modern discourse.

collectives and collectivism after modernism.⁸⁶ He notes that collectivism has always existed in Modernism but in the desire to speak as a collective voice for some larger transnational, supernatural or greater idea. Like modernist collectivism, collectivism after modernism also held great intention but rather to cultivate the heterogeneity of the world, to use collective art to highlight difference, diversity, interventions and to blur the lines between object and subject. I add to Stimson by noting that a critical difference between the modernist collective and collectivism after modernism is in the production of work. Collectivism during modernism may have had a common voice or goal but, with the exception of select movements, for example the collective mural movement, most works of art were still independently created, in studio settings. Hence, the myth of originality remained integral to modernism, and even if there was a collective common voice or goal each work of art maintained an aura of individuality and uniqueness. Thus, the 1982 Triangle alumni may have very well come together as a modernist collective, with the common goal of maintaining their formalism and protecting what they saw as a dying art. Yet, the collective working environment, the group *process*, and communal approach began blurring the lines on the type of collectivism they were working within. Slowly the workshops slid into a post-modern collectivism where the art object dematerialized and the socio-political goals became more and more central. Hence, as more and more international visitors joined throughout the 1980s the socio political effects of the workshops, particularly on local art movements, were far more significant than any particular work of art produced.

⁸⁶ Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, "Introduction: Periodizing Collectivism" in *Collectivism After Modernism*, Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette Eds, 3-16 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) 10.

The crisis of modernism at the first workshops began to shape the foundations of the now global Triangle Network. Fairly quickly the workshops became less about the objects they produced but about the process of production. Yet, although conceptualism reduced the value of the “masterpiece,” to one of cognitive value, one where the “idea is the art,”⁸⁷ it did little to change the power structures of object/subject and the hegemonic gaze that dominated the art world. Most conceptual artists continued to work within the gallery or museum space or within some framework towards it. In principle the workshop model tried to redefine the fundamentals of art history by creating an artscape where the final object was of so little importance it needed no viewer.⁸⁸ The workshops became purely about artistic development, raising questions about how to speak about art without a final product.

However, it is unquestionably that the crisis at the heart of the New York workshop was fundamentally privileged and esoteric in comparison to the issues many of the global artists faced. Sites like South Africa, Pakistan, Palestine etc. deal with a far greater scope of socio-political issues affecting their work. However, it was through deconstructing the final art object back to its foundations of art making that enabled it to translate internationally. It was the slippage from the dematerialized art objects that gave many of these international sites the translatable building blocks to recreate an art scene that served their own unique circumstances.

⁸⁷ Sol Le Witt defines conceptual art as “Idea becomes the machines the make art,” as quoted in Alexander Alberro, “Art as Idea,” in *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, 26-55 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004) 35.

⁸⁸ I find this claim needs to be taken with caution, as it remains very theoretical. Within the network the model of having “open days” contradicts the notion of needing no viewer or object. There is this ongoing push and pull of theory vs. reality.

Miwon Kwon's reframing of the term "site specificity," is particularly interesting for the Triangle model as well, because it defines the framework on which the workshop premise began. Kwan defines "site specificity" as the cultural mediation of broader social, economic and political processes that organize urban life and urban space.⁸⁹ She sees it as a "problem idea" in a space where art and spatial politics meet. By this definition the Triangle workshop was a site-specific practice from its earliest conception. It was a space where artists could come together and work through the social, political and aesthetic issues they were dealing with, and it was a site where the physical location often dictated the types of works being made. For example, the limited materials at the South African workshops created a certain aesthetic, one that was shaped greatly by the locations limitations. Similarly, the abundance of open space at the early New York workshops led to experimentations of larger scale works. While the choice for the site of the early workshop seemed random, chosen as a matter of logistic and geographic convenience, the decision to isolate oneself in a given site set its foundation as a "spatial cultural discourse."

In assessing the network today a great number of the current workshops are defined as site-specific exercises. I use the Greatmore Studios Thupelo Workshop of 2010 as a prime case study of a site-specific event. Site specificity is central to the Triangle model if it intends to continue to operate as an "alternative framework." Thus, even sites that do not use site specificity as their official theme still produce site-specific works because the locality of each workshop is always central to production.⁹⁰ Site specificity is often anti-capitalist by nature. It

⁸⁹ Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002) 3.

⁹⁰ Nick Kaye, *Site Specific Art: Performance Place and Documentation*, (London: Routledge, 2000) In Kaye's introduction he discusses how in reading of an image, object or event, its positioning in relation to political, aesthetic, geographical, institution, or other discourses, all inform what "it" can be said to be. Site specificity, then, can be understood in terms of this process, while a "site-specific work" might

works against the market because it is harder to commodify. Thus, considering the workshops early roots in modernist formalism, it is extraordinary how far outside the discourse they now operate. Yet, if one redefines the early workshop as a site-specific practice, the stability, purity and myth of originality that sustains modern formalism is automatically undermined. Thus, there was an inherent contradiction within the model that enabled it to evolve into its alternative global paradigm.

Finally, Triangle shifted the traditional relationship of art to the market. Triangle's ongoing relationship to the market is also in perpetual crisis. Since most of the work that emerges from the workshops is unmarketable it attempts to maintain a freedom from neoliberal forces. Triangle promotes that artists should 'create without pressure.' While this is liberating in theory, it comes with a double bind. For the workshops to continue they need financial security and some sort of market to operate within (and presumably artists need to sell for their livelihood). The push and pull towards and away from market forces continues to be another ongoing crisis that the workshops balance.

The first half of this chapter demonstrates how the slippage from western modern formalism into a more global approach was related to shifts in the foundations of art making. This emphasis on process, site specificity, and collectivism shaped the working paradigms, but also shaped the style of work to emerge from the workshops. While most of the works created by the western artists never really circulated in major exhibitions or shows, some of the work from

articulate and define itself through properties, qualities or meanings produced in specific relationships between an object or event and a position it occupies.

the non-western workshops made it into global exhibitions.⁹¹ The original Triangle alumni began the workshops in order to engage with a struggling modernism, their artistic success was arguably limited (the structural and administrative foundations of the workshop were successful.) Yet, the international visitors seemed to have been more successful in furthering the network's goals. The international offshoots from the original Triangle workshop, and the fact that the workshops seem to have been far more successful on a South-South axis is illuminating for the discussions of multiple modernisms.⁹²

As noted by Edward Said, "modernism needs to be re-evaluated as a transnational movement that is inextricably linked to its history of colonialism, imperialism, and war, and the outcomes of travel, commerce, media, immigration and imagination."⁹³ For non-western artists the workshop framework played a central role in many of the modern movements throughout the global south. Many new art schools and art institutions in Africa, Asia and Latin America evolved from the early Triangle workshops. Although the workshops themselves attempted to resist institutionalization they often gave way to offshoots of more permanent structures that began setting an arts foundation in countries where formalized art education was often non-existent. For example, Greatmore Studios in Johannesburg grew from the early Thupelo workshops, Gasworks in London became a permanent institution within the UK's network and

⁹¹ A few of Koloane's work's from the Thupelo workshops were featured in the Seven Stories exhibit. For further reading see; David Koloane, "Moments in Art," in *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*, ed. Clementine Deliss (Paris and London: Flammarion and Whitechapel Gallery, 1995)

⁹² Willard Boepple, Interview with Miriam Aronowicz, New York City, New York, September 2010.

⁹³ Edward Said quoted in Ming Tiampo, "Originality, Universality, and other Modernist Myths: A Response to the 2007 Stone Summer Theory Institute Seminars," In *Globalization and Art*, James Elkins, Alice S. Kim and Zhivka Valiavicharska eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.)

many of the first art schools in Southern Africa evolved from artists who attended these early events.

Accounting for these non-western modernisms has shifted the literature to include artists and histories of practice from other parts of the world. Iftikar Dadi, working with the history of modernism in South Asia, provides an interesting definition with which to approach the Triangle network. He defines modernism as “cultural production that is experimental and reflexive, inhabits new patronage arrangements, seeks an audience and venues and is generally concerned with exploring the predicament of the subject in modernity by drawing on a ruined tradition.”⁹⁴ Using this broad definition it becomes clear why the workshops held such currency for non-western artists in the global South. The “modernism” that the first Triangle NY alumni attempted to further had little significance. It was no longer experimental but rather anachronistic, showed no new patronage arrangements, deliberately dismissed the audience at the expense of creating an isolated and safe working site, and did not draw on any ruined tradition, rather it emulated a working style that was already replete. For the international artists it gave them new tools to merge with their own traditions. They could take what they needed from the New York workshop, blend the experiences with their own locality and create an entire new type of parallel modernisms.

Modernism as a concept with a capital M was challenged at these workshops. As noted by Ming Tiampo, the narrative of modernism assumes two things, “That modernism was a closed system located in the West and relentlessly disseminated to its territories with no

⁹⁴ Iftikar Dadi, “Globalization and Transnational Modernism,” In *Globalization and Art*, James Elkins, Alice S. Kim and Zhivka Valiavicharska eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.) 186.

reciprocal exchange; and that once transplanted, ‘modernism was replicated around the world, resulting in no contributions that were necessary to modernism.’⁹⁵ The reciprocal exchange that Tiampo discusses is crucial for Triangle. The western modernism that was practiced at the early workshops was discussed and disseminated amongst the international visitors. The ideas about formalism and abstraction did cross pollinate but not in the form of blind mimicry, rather it spawned a discrepant abstraction,⁹⁶ a unique style that may have had visual affinities to the western paintings but signified and achieved very different outcomes. I borrow the term from Kobena Mercer’s anthology *Discrepant Abstraction* to refer to abstract art movements that complicate the myth of pure abstraction and speak to its diversity of style. As Mercer noted, “liberating the free play of pure line, pure colour and pure form to expose the very foundations of art as a mark making practice, one might say in such figurative terms that abstraction has not ceased to de-centre the conventions of visual representation... an elusive phenomenon whose very openness resists the narrative impulse toward closure.”⁹⁷ Triangle signifies this openness as the abstract workshop held such currency for many of the international artists, inspiring them to bring the same framework home while allowing it to evolve into a locally relevant project. Essentially, new forms of international abstraction were explored from within the liminal spaces of established American modernisms.

As noted by Willard Boepple, “The life experience of African artists came to abstraction through very different routes. This created interesting conversations.” Although there were striking visual similarities in style to the works of their western cohorts, the international artists

⁹⁵ Ming Tiampo, 167.

⁹⁶ The term is taken from Kobena Mercer, *Discrepant Abstraction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

⁹⁷ Kobena Mercer, Introduction to *Discrepant Abstraction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006) 10.

came to their styles from very different historical legacies. Not to suggest that abstraction came to the non-western sites via Triangle, rather, abstraction did have long legacies in other parts of the world. Yet, its circulation was often limited to local exposure or overlooked in western writing. It was only with the discursive shifts of the 1980s and use of multicultural discourse did the local move come to the forefront. For a long time the contribution non-western abstraction had one western abstraction was ignored.

Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus is also extremely useful in understanding how abstraction became so universally relevant.⁹⁸ Artists such as Koloane and Ainslie arrived at the workshop with their own system of knowledge and life experience that drove them towards abstraction. Their own habitus shaped what Bourdieu calls the "field," the battleground where different actors compete for different interests. The early workshops were the fields where these different identities came together. Similar to ANT, *Habitus* and *Field* are ways to understand the multiple components that create agency within structures.⁹⁹ The internalized forces, that are often subconscious, within each actor, push and pull the larger structure of the network in ways that can not be underestimated.

Iftikar Dadi has expressed that in places without powerful but outdated institutional codes to rebel against, the avant-garde as we know it simply cannot exist.¹⁰⁰ If one reads this statement

⁹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁹⁹ Jürgen Habermas's concept of "Lifeworlds" is similar to Bourdieu's Habitus/Field in that it describes the internal perspective of how actor's perceive the outside world. Jürgen Habermas. *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Vol. 2, *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1987).

¹⁰⁰ Iftikar Dadi, 186.

through Bourdieu's notion of habitus, understanding the "powerful but outdated" institutions as creating a schematic that is subconsciously acquired through socialization and enculturation then naturally each local form of abstraction must be unique. Nonetheless, abstraction seems to translate effectively as a "system of shared meaning," or a "shared conceptual map."¹⁰¹ The non-figurate nature of abstraction allows for a seemingly universal interpretation, albeit obviously a very surface one. The Triangle model forced these "seemingly" parallel modernisms to confront each other in a somewhat artificial and pressurized environment.¹⁰²

Rather than implying completely separated courses of abstract development, this reading allows us to acknowledge the longstanding connections and global hybridization that was internalized and localized into unique modernisms. They can neither be read as exclusively separate or as independent from one another. In contextualizing the Triangle workshops one understands how locality became a central precept for the model, despite the very "New York style" approach of the early workshops. The workshops, from their conception, were always a site of what James Clifford calls "translocal cultures."¹⁰³ In this formulation, the local does not necessarily mean a geographical location, but a characteristic social-cultural place from which the artist can design his or her own strategies of production and maintain an active dialogue with the global.¹⁰⁴ Thus, although international artists arrived at Triangle working in an abstract style

¹⁰¹ Stuart Hall, Introduction to *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997) 10.

¹⁰² Bourdieu's *Habitus* works well with ANT (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4) in that it flattens the landscape and addresses the multitude of factors that create a person's work/outlook/experiences etc. It accounts for the multitude of actors that shape one's experiences.

¹⁰³ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late 20th Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997)

¹⁰⁴ Local does not mean primordial as local is always premixed with a plethora of experiences.

that shared visual affinities to the western artists' work, these similarities were already a mediation or refraction of non-western or 'primitive' forms.

For artists like David Koloane it was the freedom from expectation, the freedom to escape the meaning and politicization that people drew from the figurative, especially in the South African context. As a black South African the ability to paint abstractly was liberating coming from a history where black artists had been relegated to printmaking, political works of art, tourist art or the commodity market.¹⁰⁵ For artists like Bill Ainslie, a close friend and mentor to Koloane, it was a way of drawing on a legacy of artists that had influenced him such as Douglas Portway, who had left South Africa for Great Britain. Koloane recalls that for Ainslie, "Because a lot of great art came out of a lot of repressed countries, countries with a political repression, and I think he saw art as something beyond politics, rather than something that influences one's art. He saw it in a mystical way, as being a spiritual way, and ascendance, and an expression of spiritualism."¹⁰⁶ Like Koloane, the role of political oppression led the artists to seek out new modes of representation. This was very different from the system of meaning that the Western artists came from, who rather than working from a political place where working from a systematic place to further the formal modernism, to build upon a legacy that they felt needed to be honed. Hence, each artist had very different reasons for coming to abstraction than their western cohort working at early Triangle.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ This history is explored further in the third chapter addressing the South African component of the Triangle network.

¹⁰⁶ David Koloane, Interview by Polly Savage, Johannesburg, South Africa, May 24, 2010 (unpublished)

¹⁰⁷ The original Triangle cohort came to abstraction for various reasons, however, there was also a very real politics around abstraction in cold war US as many have written about now. There was a nationalist

Of course the birth of the Triangle movement in South Africa brought with it numerous assumptions about the role of black artists and the appropriateness of abstract art, and also the “derivative” nature of the abstraction practiced. I deal with this issue at great length in the chapter on the Thupelo workshops (Chapter 3) Yet, what this controversy highlights once again is the universalizing tendency art history has in assessing movements based on visual affinities, which dates back to the foundations of the discipline’s history.¹⁰⁸ The discourse continues to read works through a western hegemonic lens, something that models of global art history continuously caution against.

The role of abstraction at the early workshops highlights the crisis of modernism unfolding. As one group got together to preserve a narrowly defined aesthetic, new international visitors joined who seemed to work in a similar aesthetic, but whose style reaffirmed an existence and ongoing cultivation of translocal modernisms with completely different goals and missions.

By the 1990s the rift between the early New York participants and the British upper administration took the network in different directions. New York continued to operate entrenched in its ways while the internationally focused Triangle Trust was established from the UK. Loder and Caro established the Trust to encourage excellence in the visual arts while promoting an exchange of practice and ideas. The activists of the Trust were created to lie outside the institutional framework of colleges, museums and galleries and focused on fueling

bent, or on a more individual level, a spiritual impetus that moved artists away from the cacophonous, worldly connections of post-war economy to the increasingly unattainable realm of autonomous art.

¹⁰⁸ The foundations of art history date to the founding writings of Aby Warburg, Heinrich Wölfflin, Ernst Gombrich etc.. Where looking, formalism and style were intrinsic to what art history is.

the creative process through experimentation and exchange. This process was realized through workshops, studio residencies and exhibitions all encouraging communications through practice. The Trust was essentially started to propel the Triangle model while preventing it from becoming institutionalized. The main principle behind the Trust was to act as a facilitator, a role it still carries on today. It hands no money down to workshops directly but rather facilitates funding by helping the leading artists locate resources from local and international donors. Unlike the early workshops there was no stylistic guide to the trust, it has no allegiance to modernism, abstraction or any of the principles of the early workshop but focuses solely on artist led initiatives and a commitment to experimentation and process. The result of this is a network so diverse, many of the participating members have very little in common with each other. Each workshop is entirely locally driven, conceived, created and implemented.¹⁰⁹

The growth of the international network and the workshop movement embodies the cyclical evolution that grew from the first Triangle New York workshop. Initially the foundations of production were altered, the emphasis shifted towards process, experimentation and breaking down the institutional structures that guided the art world, this inevitably then began to shape the actual practice of the workshop as objects became more dematerialized, collectivism emerged and site specificity became central. Once these new practices formed, the possibility of creating new foundations around these new principles once again emerged. While the initial workshop grew from a crisis in modernism, the conundrum that continuously

¹⁰⁹ Whereas many of the other organizations distribute funding and aid from a top down approach, the Triangle Trust only shares “resources,” being knowledge, information, tools etc. There is no funding given from the trust to the local outposts. Furthermore, rather than the Trust selecting certain locations and aiding them most of the workshops or Triangle initiatives begin locally and independently and only then reach out to the over arching trust for additional assistance.

reemerges within the model is the constant threat of institutionalization and subsequent incorporation into the status quo.¹¹⁰

The Triangle Arts Trust remains the umbrella organization that exists over various independently run artists centre. This complicated relationship poses one of the greatest challenges of the Triangle workshop model. The workshops may be fleeting, with diffuse artists and no centralized structure, yet nonetheless there is an umbrella organization that is stable and constant. Given these discrepancies how does the Triangle model prevent institutionalization? How does it remain simultaneously permanent and impermanent? And how does it continue to evolve without stagnating or becoming submerged into the mainstream art circuits? To return to the beginning of this chapter and the common theme throughout, the answer to the above questions is “crisis.” Just as crisis created the first workshop, it is the constant threat of crisis that enables the workshops to progress. Without crisis the workshops would become status quo. It is crisis that maintains the network’s flux. Crisis emerges in zones where there once was stability that has since been lost or removed. The push and pull of stability/instability is where crisis flourishes, and likewise it is where the network seems to blossom.

To return to the definition of site as proposed by Miwon Kwon, for Triangle, site is a cultural mediator, it is the “field of knowledge, intellectual exchange or cultural debate.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Most notably, the BAG Factory in Johannesburg, which was created in 1991, after six years of the Thupelo Workshops, Greatmore Studios in Cape Town, established 1998, KHOJ studios in New Delhi, established in 1997 from its first workshop and Gasworks in London, established in 1994. These sites operate as permanent nodes within the Triangle network. Founded around the needs for artists to eventually secure permanent working spaces, these sites emerge after a series of successful workshops and are often the more permanent off-shoots of the transient workshop model. They are the infrastructure building that emerges out of Triangle. How they fit into the model remains an interesting debate as they ultimately do function as art institutions within a network that aims to remain non-institutional.

¹¹¹ Miwon Kwon, 44.

Within the network, site has replaced the role of the curator or the institution. It is site that becomes the main interlocutor. Meaning is now a process that takes place rather than something that is excavated by experts,¹¹² and the space of each workshop is what defines its place within the contemporary network. The more unstable the space, the more effective the workshops seem to be at establishing an alternative framework. As Stephen Wright asks, “the fundamental question facing contemporary art is whether such experimental approach and activities are capable of establishing a parallel economy or whether they remain embedded in an existing order?”¹¹³ This question is one that Triangle continues to grapple with, but the workshops that continue to operate under crisis do maintain an alternative framework, while those that become too stable become embedded and further the existing order.

At the Triangle network conference in November 2011, one of the biggest questions raised was whether or not the Network was a means to an end or an end in itself? I address this extensively in my final chapter. There is the Trust, the independent workshops, the independent artist centres and studios and then there is the actual network. For Triangle, the network is defined as the connections between the nodes and also between each site and the umbrella trust/organization. The general consensus was that the Network remains an end in itself for certain locations, generally sites that operate in the periphery. In other words, sites that have to deal with the crisis of remaining outside the art world, outside certain political systems or outside certain social structures. For sites like Khoj, its director Pooja Sood argued the network is no

¹¹² Irit Rogoff, “Smuggling-An Embodied Criticality” (2006) 1. Accessed on the website of the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/rogoff1/en>

¹¹³ Stephen Wright, “The Delicate Essence of Collaboration,” *Third Text* 18:6 (2004) 543-545.

longer relevant to the successful operation and continuation of their workshop model.¹¹⁴ Yet, in other sites such as Iran for example, the network remains incredibly relevant because it is the lifeline to the greater global art world. Without the network and the flow of artists that travel through its channels certain locations would receive very little visibility even in their own local settings.

What becomes problematic within the network's structure is that the workshops that continue promoting non-institutional approach to art making often do so by virtue of necessity. They simply have no other option. James Elkins is correct when he notes the "Misconception that there is a dichotomy between biennials and other international events – "on the one hand...[and]...there are artists interested in resisting globalization, commodification, or the machinery of the art market. That dichotomy is a trope in the lit on contemporary art."¹¹⁵ It is a utopian and idealistic approach to assume that there is no ultimate goal of accessing the major art circuits. As noted by James Walsh, an early Triangle New York participant, there was an absolute desire for a show. This signals a disconnect between Triangle's theory and actual practice. Thus, the notion that one can continue to work outside of the system and find success is often over-idealized. There is the reality that artists need to make money, need to sustain their lifestyles and need to operate within the systems that represent them.

¹¹⁴ Pooja Sood made this statement after a round table discussion at the Triangle Network Conference on November 27, 2011.

¹¹⁵ James Elkins, Introduction to *Globalization and Art*, James Elkins, Alice S. Kim and Zhivka Valiavicharska eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.) 2.

Triangle remains compromised by this utopian dream that it can evade the art structures, yet somehow cannot resist institutionalization. On one hand it explains why the Network has proven to be such a “universally” successful model in an artscape that shuns the terms universalism. There will always be crisis and the model seems to fit within states of crisis exceptionally well. Yet, it is a double-edged sword for most artists working in zones of crisis would rather not be relegated to that position.

Where does the Triangle Network fit within the larger discourse on contemporary art and neoliberalism? It continues to occupy a space in between the center and the periphery, an ambiguous zone between the margins of the discourse. While it began as a trophy to formal modernism it has evolved into a contemporary conglomerate of art styles, approaches and perspectives. Its diversity makes it difficult to discuss. This chapter establishes that the Triangle network is one that operates best in crisis and that the network becomes less and less relevant as situations stabilize and sites institutionalize. This push and pull continues to make the network so interesting but also so contradictory. The final chapter will address how neoliberalism and the contemporary global art flows effect the Network, and why those that resist globalization, the art market and commodification end up trapped in a discourse and system that has no structures to assess them critically.

Chapter 2

Emma Lake: Triangle's Humble Beginnings

When studying Triangle's evolution the narrative often begins with the first workshop in New York State. Hence, my first chapter addresses these founding moments and outlines the foundation on which the now global model is based. Yet, during my research it became clear that a major blind spot in the historiography of the Triangle narrative were its connections to lesser internationally known workshops in Saskatchewan, Canada.¹¹⁶ Although the workshop model took critical form in New York, the impetus for the project is traceable to Anthony Caro's formative experiences at the 1977 Emma Lake Artists' Workshop in Saskatchewan, Canada (something often mentioned in the literature but never studied.) From this isolated location in the middle of the Canadian prairies grew a network that now connects six continents and more than thirty countries.

The Emma Lake Workshops are most commonly approached from their place within Canadian art history. They hold a major place in Canada's history of modern art, and particularly outline a complicated, long standing relationship between Canadian artists and their American neighbors. My work resituates the Emma Lake workshops as not only an important Canadian moment, but an often overlooked but integral part of the global Triangle narrative, and consequently, a far reaching network of artists and institutions that have evolved as a result. They are an example of a framework that began in Canada's disparate art spaces, interacted with

¹¹⁶ Anthony Caro mentioned the Saskatoon connection at the Triangle Network Conference on November 26, 2011. However, he mentioned it as an aside rather than as an integral part of the story.

New York's modernist circles and then refracted throughout the globe as a contemporary model. Although the formal developments and modernist school of thought undoubtedly influenced the generation of central Canadian artists, it was the structural and systematic shifts in artistic production cultivated at Emma Lake that forever changed the contemporary artscape.

As discussed in the opening chapters, Robert Loder and Anthony Caro founded the first "official" Triangle Workshop at the Mashomack Fish and Game Preserve in Pine Plains, New York in 1982. This gathering intended as a one-time art boot camp, became an annual gathering and the stepping-stone to Triangle's vast expansion. By 1985 Triangle spread to South Africa, and over the next twenty years over 800 artists participated in Triangle sponsored workshops in 14 different African countries.¹¹⁷ The growth of the network paralleled larger western sentiments about internationalism and multiculturalism that were prevalent at end of the 1980s and early 1990s.¹¹⁸ While this provided an ideal environment for the network's growth, its underlying

¹¹⁷ Kirumira, Namubiru Rose, "The Formation of Contemporary Artsits Africa: Revisiting Residency Programmes," PhD thesis, Makere University. Quoted in Sidney Kasfir and Till Forster, "African Art and Agency in the Workshop," (Indiana UP:2013): 134.

¹¹⁸ In 1976 the Arts Council of Britain published a report called "The Arts the Britain Ignores," this was the first paper opening up the debate of supporting arts from marginalized or minority communities, at a time when the general rhetoric was quite hostile to outsiders. In the 1980s the Black British movement became prominent and a series of exhibitions and publications addressing black Britain were put forward. In 1986 the Arts Council passed the "Arts and Ethnic Minorities Action Plan," which stated that a minimum of 4% of the Council's expenditure should be committed to funding Afro Caribbean and Asian Arts. This legislation slowly paved the way for organizations such as the Institute for International Visual Arts, a major player in multi-cultural arts of Britain. For more information regarding Britain's policies of multiculturalism and diversity see; Alessio Antonioli, "Cultural Diversity and Internationalism – "Contemporary British Arts: The Cases of the Institute of International Visual Arts and Triangle Arts Trust" (MA Diss. Birkbeck University of London, 1999).

Simultaneously in Canada under Pierre Trudeau multiculturalism became the official government policy, with the *Multiculturalism Act* passing in 1988 [I can't check this where I am, but why do I think it was 1971 originally?] this needs correcting!! legislating the recognition and respect of Canada's diversity of languages, religions, ethnicities and cultures. This led to quotes in art councils and public policy that influenced the incorporation of diversity in the arts.

ethos developed long before at the Emma Lake Summer School and Workshops in Saskatchewan from 1935 – 1988. The 1977 Emma Lake workshop was the most significant for the network's trajectory, because it was the workshop that inspired Caro to recreate the model. It was also an important time for the Emma Lake Workshops because it marked a major shift in the approach to artistic practice and a breaking down of the isolation Canadian artists felt.

Figure 1: Cover page of *Emma Lake Summer School Brochure*, with naturalistic landscape painting on the front, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 1936.

The Emma Lake School and Workshop program began in 1935 when the University of Saskatchewan secured a segment of land north of Emma Lake, Saskatchewan for the purpose of establishing a summer art school.¹¹⁹ The early school was known as the Murray Point Summer School of Art and was “more like a summer colony than a regular school.” (see image of map from 1954 workshop)¹²⁰ Trained at the Academie Julian in Paris, an immigrant from Blackpool, England, Augustus Kenderdine spearheaded the program. He was appointed as a lecturer for the University in 1928 had become familiar with the area from spending his summers at the lake painting *en-plein air*.

Located 200 km north of Saskatoon, the choice for setting up a summer school at Emma Lake was significant. According to Anne K. Morrison, the northern woods of Emma Lake

In the United States, while multiculturalism was never adopted as policy at the federal level it became integrated into the school system curriculum throughout the 1980s.

¹¹⁹ In the 1936 Pamphlet it describes the location as, “The point is about five acres in extent and is well timbered with spruce, balsam, birch, poplar and shrubbery of various kinds; and with water frontage on three sides, east, north and west, it affords ample and varied material for either land or water sketching.” The school purchased 20 acres surrounding Emma Lake, 5 acres of which were known as Murray Point.

¹²⁰ John O’Brian, “Introduction” in *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, ed. John O’Brian (Mendel Art Gallery: Saskatoon, 1989) 14.

differed from the landscapes most often associated with the barren prairies. It was a location where Kenderdine could promote his Romantic approach to painting the European picturesque, a notion that resonated with 19th century movements such as the Barbizon painters, Impressionists and British academic landscape painting. Thus, Kenderdine's choice to paint there furthered "a kind of hierarchy of "suitable" and "unsuitable" landscape for art," a tradition dating back to his classical training in the European academy.¹²¹

Figure 2. Artist Unknown, *Map of Emma Lake*, University of Saskatchewan Summer Art School Yearbook, drawing, 1936.

Kenderdine's program consisted of theory and appreciation classes in the morning, followed by three hours of actual outdoor sketching.¹²² The students enrolled were mainly art school teachers who attended the program for supplementary instruction. While his method was arguably outdated it was still significant for it contributed to a disparate system of art education in central Canada. Yet, unfortunately it did so in a way that furthered the imperialistic environment already dominating Canadian sentiment and culture. It perpetuated the ideas of acceptable landscapes as guided by conventions of the European picturesque. This strengthened the colonial approach where Canadian artists were conditioned to find success through emulating European traditions. It also codified central Canadian artists in peripheral position due to the topographical unsuitability of their region for fine art.¹²³ The works created at the Summer

¹²¹ Ann K. Morrison, "Beginnings: The Murray Point Summer School of Art 1936 - 1955?" in *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, ed. John O'Brian (Mendel Art Gallery: Saskatoon, 1989) 22.

¹²² 1936 Summer Art School Pamphlet, *Emma Lake Files*, University of Saskatchewan Archives, Saskatoon, Canada.

¹²³ The term picturesque was first established by Uvedale Price's *An Essay on The Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1794). The principle of the picturesque implies organizing the composition in accord with a pleasing irregularity. The use of a range of colors, lustrous foliage,

School were thus mainly traditional landscape sketches that were generally unimpressive and considered to be aesthetically “rear-garde.”

Figure 3. Edyth Clarke, Eva Mildred Hart, Olga Pitchko, Selections of sketches from the early Emma Lake Yearbooks, charcoal on paper, 1936-1940

The picturesque served an important role in the formation of the Emma Lake workshops. As discussed by W.J.T Mitchell, the picturesque persisted in the colonies where land was being claimed as British, while being progressively seen as outmoded at home.¹²⁴ He links the pre-eminence of landscape in Britain to the rise of imperialism and colonization stating that “the semiotic features of landscape and the historical narratives they generate, are tailor-made for the discourse of imperialism, which conceives itself... as an expansion of landscape understood as an inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of culture and civilization into a natural space in a progress that is itself narrative as ‘natural.’” Thus, the picturesque served a politicizing force underlying much of the Emma Lake’s early movement.

reflective surfaces and atmospheric perspective are often characteristics of picturesque compositions. There is a long-standing colonial tradition of locating the European picturesque in non-European landscapes. As discussed by Leslie Dawn, “The Brutishness of Canadian Art,” in *Beyond Wilderness*, ed. John O’Brian and Peter White (Montreal/Kingston: McGill Queens University Press, 2002), by the 1880s landscape paintings had become absorbed by the aesthetic pictorial formulae known as the picturesque. They were codified and popularized through the writings of the Reverend William Gilpin, and they provided the means through which landscape was judged suitable to be made into a picture. For example, in J.M Coetzee, in *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 36, the explorer William Burchell documents the difficulties of locating the European picturesque on the African continent, given its flat lighting, monotonous geography and different color palate.

¹²⁴ W.J.T Mitchell in “Imperial Landscapes,” in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002)

Undoubtedly, it was clear that Kenderdine set up the art school at Emma Lake as a place defined by its geographical location.¹²⁵ Much like later Triangle workshops, the Emma Lake workshop always operated with the utopian aspirations of creating a place outside the social, political and geographical realities of the time. The counter-site that emerged at Emma Lake became “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all other sites that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted.”¹²⁶ It became the space where artists could negotiate their provincial place, where they could work without the pressures of creating for an audience, exhibition or external validation. Place making became central to Emma Lake’s art school narrative. This guiding ideology, founded by Kenderdine, continued to operate as a principle for the growth of the contemporary Triangle network.

Although this ethos was established early on in the development of the school and workshops, the changing leadership had great effects on Emma Lake as well.¹²⁷ By 1945 Gordon Snelgrove, who had joined the faculty shortly after the summer school began, took over as the head of the department after Kenderdine passed away. He was a recent graduate of the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, England, and offered a gentle foil to Kenderdine’s teaching by including courses more broadly addressing the history of art and new developments in Europe

¹²⁵ In various sources located at the University of Saskatchewan archives it was also clear that there was a cult like following around Kenderdine. He was very much the centralized leader of the workshops, and the artists looked to him with great admiration. This centralized artist as leader has dissipated and is very different from what the current workshops promotes.

¹²⁶ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), 24.

¹²⁷ The importance of leadership within the Triangle Network requires further investigation. Although each workshop is independent many are associated with a certain figure or personality who is administratively responsible for the workshop or its unofficial leader. In preventing the workshops from becoming institutions the counter effect is that they remain closely tied to the personalities that are involved. Thus, when the personalities move on or are no longer involved often the workshops take on new directions.

and North America.¹²⁸ Upon becoming the head of the department he shifted the curriculum to focus more heavily on international modern trends. The combination of Kenderdine's original locational framework matched with Snelgrove's cosmopolitanism created a unique environment that set the stage for what was to come.

Under Snelgrove, the department of art at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon began diversifying by bringing on a new roster of artists to the faculty. New instructors such as Nikola Bjelajac who created dark figure studies, and Eli Bornstein who worked with fractured cityscapes, moved away from the naturalistic landscapes that previously dominated the curriculum. That same year, the art department at the University of Regina hired two future members of the Regina Five, Kenneth Lochhead and Arthur McKay. Lochhead had recently completed his studies in the United States and traveled through Europe. McKay, who had studied in Calgary, had also just returned from time spent in Paris. Together Lochhead and McKay reinvigorated the department, bringing a range of new experience and diverse approaches to the school. With Bjelajac and Bornstein in Saskatoon and Lochhead and McKay in Regina, the art departments within the University of Saskatchewan began to compete for cultural developments. This forged a new energy for the central Canadian art scene and, according to Terry Fenton, signaled the end of a "long period of British cultural dominance."¹²⁹

Figure 4. Eli Bornstein, *Saskatoon*, 1954.

¹²⁸ Kevin Atkinson, "From the Lake to the Swamp," in *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, ed. by John O'Brian (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 1989) 25

¹²⁹ Terry Fenton, "Abstraction West: Emma Lake and After" An Annotated checklist for the exhibition circulated by the National Gallery of Canada, 1976.

The new internationally educated university faculty naturally led to a questioning of the Murray Point Art School and its approach. Despite its growing enrollment the program remained methodologically behind, tailored to formal art teachers rather than professional artists.¹³⁰ As noted by Fenton, “because art schools tend to provide a nucleus of professional artists in provincial situations, and because Saskatchewan lacked such schools it was left open to the influence of a new generation of artists.”¹³¹ Thus, the art scene in Saskatchewan did not grow organically, but rather burst out through a mass hiring of international professional artists who revitalized the institutions and in turn shaped the cultural environment. It was a very manufactured and deliberate attempt to improve the art scene on the prairies.

By the 1950’s the Saskatoon and Regina art departments began competing for the direction of the Emma Lake summer school. Initially the departments agreed to alternate their administration of the summer school annually, but by the mid 50’s the Regina faculty secured jurisdiction over the summer programming. In 1959 Lochhead and McKay implemented a program along side the existing art school that shifted focus towards helping Saskatchewan’s professional artists in addition to teaching faculty. In acknowledging the need for a range of arts education they instituted a two-week workshop after the six-week teacher training summer program, and so the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshop began.

The socio-politics in Saskatchewan at the time fueled the fertile ground for artistic development. The growing university, the newly elected Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the founding of the Saskatchewan Arts Board (SAB), fostered an

¹³⁰ Kevin Atkinson, 25.

¹³¹ Terry Fenton, “Abstraction West”

environment that was heavily invested in arts and cultural and offered a multitude of new funding opportunities. The SAB, closely modeled after the British Arts Council (BAC), was the first public arts agency in North America operating and granting funds “at arms length,” from government.¹³² Complicating Fenton’s earlier sentiment that British dominance had ended, the creation of the SAB signals that it likely evolved into a more subtle form of cultural hegemony.¹³³

However, the introduction of the SAB still placed Saskatchewan at a great cultural advantage to the rest of Canada. One of the major differences between the BAC and the SAB was that SAB had a local responsibility, “summed up briefly as concern for the quality of rural living.”¹³⁴ It was focused on the idea that art has value in breaking down isolationism and providing a sense of belonging to a greater society. The underlying ideology guiding the SAB was groundbreaking, and its rhetoric of art for development was well ahead of its time. When the Emma Lake Workshops began they were funded with the hopes of creating a local artist community that could enrich the lives of the province’s inhabitants. As noted by Norah McCullough the director of the SAB at the time, “art can add to the lives of people, in enjoyment as much as anything. And with rural people, experience of art has value in breaking down

¹³² Jeremy Morgan, “Saskatchewan Arts Board,” in the *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* [online], (Western Economic Diversification Canada, The Government of Canada, The Government of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina). Accessed September 19, 2011, http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/saskatchewan_arts_board.html

¹³³ The concept of cultural hegemony was developed in Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1992.) 233–238.

¹³⁴ Norah McCullough, “Bringing Arts to the People,” in *Canadian Art*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, (Spring 1956) 299.

isolationism, in providing a sense of belonging to a greater world and a share in the amenities of living.”¹³⁵

When the concept of the Emma Lake Workshops folded into the Triangle workshop in New York it shifted its focus from rural and social development to artistic development. Rather than combating the isolation of the area’s local inhabitants it focused exclusively on countering the isolation of the modern artist. Nonetheless, as the model began to grow, expanding from North America onto the African continent, it quickly translated back to its roots of social development.¹³⁶ Thus, while the workshops have maintained a common ground of combating isolationism their focus shifted back and forth throughout its early years.

With the establishment of the SAB came a range of new developments. By 1955 it acquired 19 pieces for its permanent collection enough to create a circulating display,¹³⁷ and in 1956 The Saskatchewan Society of Artists formed complimenting the SAB with an independent professional artist organization. Simultaneously, the first two professional galleries were being set up in Saskatchewan; the Mendel Gallery in Saskatoon and Norman Mackenzie Gallery in Regina.¹³⁸ These galleries produced some of the first opportunities to view international art in

¹³⁵ Ibid, 298.

¹³⁶ Alessio Antonioli, interviewed by Miriam Aronowicz, Gasworks Studios, London, England, January 2011. According to Antonioli, the network’s current director, the Triangle Arts Trust continues to promote culture for development, something that has become difficult to convince funding agencies of as money is increasingly put towards infrastructure building. This shift in global policies away from arts and culture towards brick and mortar development initiatives has taken a toll on many of the network’s international nodes. The network grew rapidly in its early years because the socio-political environment fostered arts and culture for development.

¹³⁷ “Art from Coast to Coast,” in *Canadian Art*, Vol. XII, No. 1 (Autumn 1954)

¹³⁸ The Mendel Gallery was started by the European immigrant and Saskatoon industrialist Frederick Mendel. His collection included a Pissaro, a couple Dufy paintings and Chagall. He was also a huge

the province and became major supporters of local artists. Together, the new galleries formed the early foundation for arts in Saskatchewan and fueled the vibrant culture growing on the prairies.¹³⁹ Matched with the new faculty of professional artists at the universities, Saskatchewan was slowly building an infrastructure that could provide the platform for broader artists' dialogues. Although the environment was "provincial" in location, physically detached from other Canadian and international centres, these new development fostered a community that was highly sensitive to its peripheral place and the need to, therefore, *actively* foster professional arts.

According to Terry Smith, "it is inescapably obvious that most artists live in art communities that are formed by relentless provincialism. Their worlds are replete with tensions between two anti-thetical terms; a defiant urge to localism (a claim for the possibility and validity of 'making good and original art right here') and a reluctant recognition that the generative innovations in art, the criteria for standards of "quality," "originality," "interest," "forcefulness" etc. are determined externally."¹⁴⁰ As noted by Greenberg in his writing about

supporter of local artists and in 1964 built the public art gallery as a way to celebrate his success and thank the community of Saskatoon for their support.

Norman Mackenzie was a Regina lawyer who had been collecting since 1900 and amassed an impressive collection of drawings and international art objects. His collection included works by Michelangelo, Veronese and Pontormo. Upon his death in 1936 the collection was left to College in Regina where it rested until 1951 when the funds from his estate were used to build the gallery. The Mendel and Mackenzie Galleries were the first professional art galleries in the province, to this day they remain a center of the art scene within Saskatchewan. For further reading regarding the history of the galleries see; R.H. Hubbard, "The Arts in Saskatchewan Today," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XII, No. 4 (July 1955) 150-155; The Mendel Art Gallery Website: www.mendel.ca; The MacKenzie Art Gallery website: <http://www.mackenzieartgallery.ca/>

¹³⁹ R.H Hubbard, "The Arts in Saskatchewan," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XII, No. 4, (Summer 1955)

¹⁴⁰ Terry Smith, "The Provincialism Problem," 55

Western Canada, while Saskatchewan was undoubtedly very provincial, the artists knew this and used this awareness as the impetus to challenge their practice.¹⁴¹ Thus, the Emma Lake Workshops presented themselves as a new opportunity for international art relationships. Its concentrated working environment consisting of two weeks at the end of each summer created long lasting friendships, flows of ideas and cross cultural communication.

Despite its importance for Canadian and international art history, there is little literature that deals with the diversity and larger scope of the Emma Lake project. The *Flat Side of the Landscape*, an exhibition curated by John O'Brian for the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon, is one of the most comprehensive publications to date.¹⁴² This publication was an exhibition catalogue but also created an unprecedented archive for the Emma Lake Workshops that included timelines, photographs, plate lists and a comprehensive dossier. Although the catalogue addresses the workshop until 1989, its date of publication, it primarily focuses on the workshops

¹⁴¹ Clement Greenberg, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," in *Canadian Art* (March/April 1963) 90. "Montreal and Toronto as leading centres of art, with Ottawa as a headquarters if not centre, and Vancouver in the role of San Francisco, took it for granted that prairie art was nothing but provincial – and were all the readier to do so because they themselves felt in a provincial relation, art-wise, to Paris and New York. For this reason I saw Prairie art in Canada as being wrapped in double obscurity," "Unlike Podunk or San Francisco, the place does not waste its mental energy in conjuring up illusions of itself as a rival to New York or London; it frankly acknowledges that it is in a provincial situation. If it is true that the truth shall make you free, it is also true that looking an obstacle straight in the eye is the first step in over coming it. This may explain why I found both Regina and Saskatoon far less provincial in atmosphere than I had expected."

¹⁴² Prior to O'Brian, *The Flat Side of the Landscape* there was only one comprehensive study to date an undergraduate these by John D. H King, "*A Documented Study of the Artists' Workshop at Emma Lake, Saskatchewan, at the School of Art, University of Saskatchewan, Regina from 1955 to 1970* (BFA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1972.) Since O'Brian's publication there has been a chapter dedicated to Emma Lake in Roald Nasgaard, *Abstract Painting in Canada*, (Vancouver and Halifax: Douglas and McIntyre and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2007), one film by Mark Wihak, *Between the North Pole and New York City* (Regina: Cooper Rock Pictures, 2004) and select articles in Canadian publications. The role of Emma Lake is

throughout the 1960s and the relationships to the American artists leading the workshops during those years. (Appendix 2)

Although the workshops are ongoing, there has been limited critical work on the Emma Lake Workshops post 1965. Furthermore, according to Terry Fenton most of the literature that exists over-emphasizes the role Clement Greenberg played in Saskatchewan while overshadowing many of the other simultaneous developments.¹⁴³ Thus, the archive surrounding Emma Lake remains in a contentious place in Canada's art history. The workshops are either associated with the emergence of the Regina Five and other abstract movements from central Canada, or they are frequently interpreted as fostering a neo-colonial relationship between Canada and United States.¹⁴⁴

While there is undoubtedly an over-emphasis on American participation at Emma Lake, criticizing the workshops as imperialistic furthers a "cosmopolitan primitivism," promoting the idea of artists as passive recipients rather than active agents with choice.¹⁴⁵ This perspective perpetuates a neo-colonial approach that continues to propagate histories which are overwhelmingly one-sided. The over-emphasis on the role Americans played at Emma Lake underemphasizes the independent careers of the multitude of Canadian artist involved. This

¹⁴³ Terry Fenton, email correspondence with Miriam Aronowicz, September 20, 2011.

¹⁴⁴ O'Brian, "Introduction," to *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, 14. "For some while, detractors have dismissed Emma Lake as either a long-playing event of rather limited regional interest, or as a shoddy chapter in American cultural adventurism... Emma Lake has become a stereotype, conventionalized along the lines of Edward Said's "Orient," though of course on a microcosmic scale."

¹⁴⁵ Partha Mitter, "Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery," *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (December 2008): 531 – 548.

chapter addresses the void in the research by including the diversity of experiences that Emma Lake came to represent particularly through its place in a global context.

While, the workshops were a uniquely Canadian moment they were also based on the premise for a transnational ethos. They were an example of counter-directional flows from the periphery to the centre, more specifically, an example of a British system reinterpreted for a Canadian provincial space and then reworked into an international organization. The workshops represent the art historical constellations that destabilize established geo-cultural hierarchies. They do not belong to the western ‘avant-garde,’ but rather, they decentralize art’s genealogies, and open up alternative paths for moving forward.¹⁴⁶

As Foucault famously stated, “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, the act of bringing great American artists to Saskatchewan was a way for Canadian artists to acquire knowledge of the art world’s centre. This knowledge was then a prerequisite for the empowerment they felt was needed to succeed as artists. To return to Greenberg’s observation, there was a self-awareness about isolation and provincialism that led to the hosting of American artists. I argue that it was not to promote mimicry, but rather to heighten the local artist’s own subjectivity. It undermines the artist’s agency to assume the reception of the American colleagues was received unanimously. Naturally there was a diversity of responses amongst participating artists. For example Robert Murray moved to New York City soon after the workshops, while other artists such as Dorothy Knowles

¹⁴⁶ Anthony Gardner, “Which Histories Matter,” *Third Text*, 23:5, 607

¹⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, (Paris and New York: Editions Gallimard and Pantheon, 1977 and 1978) 27.

chose to continue working in regional styles.¹⁴⁸ It is also crucial to acknowledge that most of the Emma Lake participants were working abstractly long before the American artists came to visit. Lochhead and McKay, for example, were already working with quite advanced forms of abstraction when they extended their first international invitation.

One of the arguments as to why the workshop leaders chose to host American artists was because they were excluded from their own Canadian art scenes.¹⁴⁹ The sentiment was that artists working in the east were generally indifferent to the central and western Canadian practices, with the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Ontario paying virtually no attention to the western provinces. Furthermore, the canon of Canadian art history was virtually based on this exclusion as well. For example, the Group of Seven, often described as Canada's "national school of painting," created their works mainly on the central and eastern provinces. While there were select works from the Canadian Rockies and Manitoba, none were from Saskatchewan proper.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the narrative that surrounded the Group of Seven, perpetuated the

¹⁴⁸ According to Robert Enright, "Greenberg would not have all representational art sacrificed at the altar of modernism – it was he who told Dorothy Knowles back in the 60s that she was a good landscape painter and should stick with it." Robert Enright, "Saskatoon: An isolated bastion of modernism or a community in which art and artists thrive?" *Canadian Art* (Winter 1984) 51-57. In Clement Greenberg "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," he also speaks highly of Reta Cowley stating, "She demonstrates that one can learn from Cezanne and Klee how to make nature more, not less, vivid in pictorial art."

I use the term "regional" as a locally inspired art that does not resonate beyond its immediate geographical location.

¹⁴⁹ Terry Fenton, email correspondence with Miriam Aronowicz, September 27, 2011 "The AGO and National Gallery have paid virtually no attention to the West for decades, and that rankles. But in Saskatchewan, especially, due in large part to Emma Lake, the New York-London connection came to matter more than the central Canada one. In a sense many of the serious artists became indifferent to Central Canada. It was just as easy to go to NY than to Toronto, and Montreal succumbed to some extent to separatism, so its attractiveness diminished."

¹⁵⁰ The Group of Seven's paintings west of Ontario-Manitoba are rarely seen. However, they were showcased in, "The Group of Seven in Western Canada," at the National Gallery of Canada, October 10-

general sentiment that certain landscapes were more representative of national identity than others, and Saskatchewan's prairies were not one of them. This exclusionary nationalism was not only painted into history but also perpetuated through the National Gallery of Canada "promoting the Group's narrowly defined, exclusive Canadian nationalism... a nationalism based on the notion that there is an essential Canadian identity."¹⁵¹

Perpetuating the narrative of Saskatchewan as an individual player the province always remained somewhat disconnected from the rest of Canada's art history. For the artists at Emma Lake, "it was just as easy to go to NY than to Toronto, and Montreal succumbed to some extent to separatism, so its attractiveness diminished."¹⁵² This sentiment is underplayed, but telling, for it demonstrated that despite peaceful and stable geographical borders, as an "imagined community" Canada remained somewhat disjointed.¹⁵³ While Saskatchewan was not trying to emulate American art production it was also situated in a vacuum of nationalism.

Although Saskatchewan remained a blind spot in Canadian national identity, with the CCF, the only elected Socialist government on the continent, the province became a source of

January 4, 2004. The show addresses their works from Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories, but there are no images from Saskatchewan. As Terry Fenton notes in "Abstraction West," during A.Y Jackson's western Canada travels he skipped over Saskatchewan entirely.

¹⁵¹ Anne Whitelaw, "Whiffs of Balsam, Pine, and Spruce," *Art Museums and the Production of a Canadian Aesthetic*, in *Beyond Wilderness*, edited by John O'Brian and Peter White, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queens University Press, 2007) 175.

¹⁵² Terry Fenton, email correspondence with Miriam Aronowicz, September 27, 2011. Fenton notes that while Bloor was from Toronto and McKay was from Ottawa they were exceptions to the general sentiment that the Easterners ignored the west. In *The Flat Side*, O'Brian mentions that there was a general "anti-eastern" sentiment. This seems to be over emphasized, rather than an antagonistic sentiment towards the east, the western artists instead felt ignored.

¹⁵³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 1983). Within Canada, the sense of nationalism varies depending on the province or region, but what seems to unequivocally unite Canadian nationalism is that it is not American.

fascination for the American public. Thus, the American focus in the literature may be overplayed but not unfounded, because unlike Eastern and Western Canadians who saw the prairies as distant, for the Americans it became imaginatively close.¹⁵⁴ To return to Anderson's notion of nationalism as an "imagined community," the psychological links between the United States and Saskatchewan grew stronger during the post-war decades. This put Saskatchewan in a unique place, turning it into a virtual cosmopolis, a space of the imagination that engendered elective affinities between those in the center and periphery on the level of intellect and creativity.¹⁵⁵

Saskatchewan became a great escape for the American intellectuals working within the Cold War politics. The province's Northern topography, remoteness, and open wilderness made it seem exotic. At least in the imaginations of American artists, it provided the ideal utopian setting that echoed modernism's utopian aspirations. Similar to Kenderdine's sentiment, Emma Lake seemed to continuously take on the role as the quintessential non-place.¹⁵⁶ For varying individuals and at different times the Emma Lake location became the ideal blank canvas for art production. As defined by Augé, it was always a 'super modern' site for it seemed to operate outside time and space. Thus, under Kenderdine it became ideal for the traditional European picturesque, whereas under Lochhead and McKay it served as the ideal backdrop for modernism.

¹⁵⁴ John O'Brian, "Where the Hell is Saskatchewan, and Who is Emma Lake?" In *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 1989) 30.

¹⁵⁵ Partha Mitter, "Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery," *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (December 2008): ??

¹⁵⁶ Marc Augé, *Non-Place: Introduction to an Anthology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995). Marc Augé's non place is a place that is defined as devoid of history and identity. It has specific entry and exit points and is often guided by the network relationships within it rather than its physical qualities. Emma Lake was a working site where artists from all over the world could meet in an isolated environment. Operating as a non-place, it formed through the relationships that it enabled.

As discussed in the first chapter, the choice to host at the first Triangle workshop at the Mashomak Fish and Game reserve clearly echoed similar sentiments that had played out in Saskatchewan decade's prior.

Much of the literature around Emma Lake is rather critical of American involvement. Yet, when the American artists were invited to Emma Lake, they did not come with any colonial intentions. There was no desire to hijack the "terra nulla" that was Emma Lake for their own agendas.¹⁵⁷ Rather, they often attended the workshops simply because it was all expenses paid vacation where they could continue working on their art.

The Emma Lake workshops became a site where the aura of international modern art scenes was temporarily recreated in the isolated space of the Canadian prairies. Even after high modernism gave way to postmodern movements in major art world centres, not unlike the more recent Triangle workshops, the Emma Lake workshops also continued to cultivate, in the later years, an arguably outdated form of painterly abstraction alongside more contemporary practices. Thus, while it has traditionally been written about in terms of its relevance for Canadian modern art history it became criticized because its aesthetic was anachronistic, leading one to interpret the workshop as a delayed derivative modernism. This controversial argument is greatly debated in Canadian postcolonial literature. While this debate is undoubtedly relevant, if

¹⁵⁷ Arguments have been made that Greenberg did attend Emma Lake to further his own aesthetic and access a new location where he could have further influence. O'Brian's *The Flat Side of the Landscape* also addresses how the Saskatchewan landscape mirrored the desire for flat shapes that Greenberg felt was central to modern art. Greenberg's role is extensively explored in O'Brian's chapter. However, as a generalization most artists attended the workshop because it was an opportunity to paint in a new and exciting place and all expenses were paid. The idea to bring outside artists into Saskatchewan was based on an existing program that the SAB had established of funding theater and music workshops directed by outside leaders. On this basis, Kenneth Lochhead applies to the board for financial assistance to bring in an outside guest.

one looks beyond the formalism of Emma Lake, one can argue that it was the structural effects on production that were more profound in terms of how the workshops began operating within larger world systems. Here again one sees the benefit of looking at art history through not only the art object, but often the social structures that surround it. This methodology uncovers a different history surrounding Emma Lake and offers an entry point into larger global discussions where art objects, styles and movements become more difficult to classify based on discrepant modes of “taste,” “judgment” and “value.”

The first Emma Lake workshop syllabus indicated the underlying importance placed on situating the Canadian artists’ place within the broad spectrum of contemporary arts. The syllabus, which was devised by the workshop’s first visiting artist Jack Shadbolt from Vancouver in 1955, posed the following talking points:

The forces that have shaped contemporary art

The forms evolved by contemporary art

Canadian artists in relation to the contemporary tradition

The artist’s integration into contemporary society

The nature and function of criticism

The Arts in Saskatchewan, realities and possibilities

New aspect of form in present sculpture.

Practical workshop methods.¹⁵⁸

Although Shadbolt's art was less influential for the artists than the later visitors, his syllabus "stirred thinking," opening the artist's minds to their own subjectivity and place in relation to larger global trends. Thus, the workshop was a unique departure from previous art education in Saskatchewan because of its cosmopolitan scope. While the workshop focused on issues of contemporary art outside central Canada without losing site of its own locality. Shadbolt's made the artist realize that although they were provincially situated they could "bring the mountain to Mohammed."¹⁵⁹ Simply because they could not access urban centres, did not mean that the ideas, trends and, ultimately, the major players within art centres could not come to them. In acknowledging their own "provincialism problem," they could take steps to change it.¹⁶⁰

After the success of the initial Emma Lake workshop, Joel Plaskett was invited in 1956, and in 1957 Will Barnet of the Art Students League in New York led the group. Barnet was the first of an impressive list of American artists who began attending Emma Lake from New York. Yet, the major catalyst for change was Barnett Newman who attended the workshop in 1959. He famous quote, "Where the hell is Saskatchewan and who is Emma Lake?," was a clear jab at the isolation of the province, yet one that was also greatly exaggerated. As John O'Brian notes, in

¹⁵⁸ Syllabus prepared by Jack Shadbolt for the first Emma Lake Artists' Workshop, August 1955 as printed in O'Brian, *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, 126.

¹⁵⁹ Roald Nasgaard, *Abstract Painting in Canada*, 144.

¹⁶⁰ Heather Barker and Charles Green, "The Provincialism Problem: Terry Smith and Centre-Periphery Art History," *Journal of Historiography*, No. 3 (December 2010). Barker and Green use a similar argument to explain Smith's reasoning for publishing "The Provincialism Problem." They argue that his article was an attempt to negotiate and simultaneously alleviate his own entrapment of being an Australian living in New York.

Newman's New York circle left-leaning artists were well aware of Saskatchewan through the international media coverage it received after the CCF was elected.¹⁶¹ With the intrigue and allure surrounding the province circulating in international media, it is no wonder Newman and his circle of friends began accepting their invitations to visit the province.¹⁶²

How Newman was picked remains somewhat contested. Some accounts claim his name was picked from a hat, while others say that artists literally flipped through an art magazine and opened the page to his work.¹⁶³ Yet, inspired by Newman, the artists at Emma Lake were invigorated with a renewed confidence that their works were relevant.¹⁶⁴ Fenton recalls, that upon returning from the Newman workshop, Ronald Bloor who was already working in advanced forms of abstraction felt his work was confirmed, "but McKay came back and he was just charged up...it made the biggest difference to him."¹⁶⁵ Considering Newman did not show any of his own works at the workshop, nor did he paint, his effects were largely psychological. His formal practice did not really change the trajectory of the artists' style, but rather, his enthusiasm did.

Two years after the workshop Ronald Bloor, Ted Godwin, Douglas Morton, Kenneth Lochhead and Arthur McKay exhibited their newly inspired works in the Mackenzie Galleries' 1961 "May Show." The show was strategically planned to coincide with the Canadian Museums

¹⁶¹ O'Brian, *Flat Side of the Landscape*, 30 discusses the US media accounts of the CCF. He also notes that the honorariums the visiting artists received were not inconsequential.

¹⁶² O'Brian, *Flat Side of the Landscape*,

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Terry Fenton, interviewed by Miriam Aronowicz, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, June 28, 2011.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Association meeting held in the area that year. After Richard Simmons, the National Gallery decision maker saw the show he decided to include a more compact version of the exhibit in the national show “Five Painters from Regina,” soon giving the artists the name “Regina Five.”

Figure 5: The Regina Five posing in front of a classic Lincoln Continental behind the former Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1964 (source: <http://www.mackenzieartgallery.ca/engage/exhibitions/the-regina-five-50-years-later>)

Following Newman, there were workshops hosted by John Ferren, Herman Cherry, Clement Greenberg, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, composer Stefan Wolf, Frank Stella and Donald Judd. Yet, Greenberg was perhaps the most confusing symbol, for as noted by Robert Enright, “on the one hand he stood for the best in contemporary art; on the other, he was a salesman, a kind of painterly advance man for the most aggressive and stifling kind of American dominance. Nevertheless, the sales pitch worked; more than 20 years later the workshop continues to strongly be identified with modernist theory.”¹⁶⁶

Clement Greenberg also famously favored Lochhead and McKay, selected them to be included in his “Post-Painterly Abstraction” show at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Yet, critics condemned the show claiming it was Greenberg’s failed attempt at creating a personal style. Even more significantly, his favoritism drove a rift between the Regina Five.¹⁶⁷ Although the group was never a cohesive movement, first and foremost they were a group of

¹⁶⁶ Enright, 55.

¹⁶⁷ Greenberg’s favoritism is transparent in Greenberg, “Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today. It was also discussed by Terry Fenton, when interviewed by Miriam Aronowicz, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, June 28, 2011.

friends who had gone through similar artistic experiences and development.¹⁶⁸ Many say that Greenberg's selection of McKay and Lochhead slowly brought the Regina Five to an end.¹⁶⁹

Despite the controversies that surrounded his visit, Greenberg was one of Emma Lake's greatest supporters. His famous article on the state of art in Prairie Canada held a strong bias for the Emma Lake painters and an equal distaste for the remainder of Western and Central Canada. Hence, the honest conclusion to his Canadian Art article, "I am aware that it may seem distorted by favoritism towards Saskatchewan. I honestly don't feel that is distorted in this respect, but I hope that those who disagree and those better acquainted, in part of whole, with the ground I have tried to cover will not hesitate to make themselves heard from."¹⁷⁰ His call for commentary was taken literally, and a slew of responses reined in decrying Greenberg as "provincial" and "narrow-minded."

Arthur McKay's famous response to Greenberg in *Canadian Art* stood up for the workshops. His response piece in *Canadian Art* stated, "there has been a great deal of controversy over these recent workshops and that artistic temperature of the area has been raised on occasion to fever...curiously enough we accept political coercion, economic domination, Coca-Cola and predigested mass communication, while we resists exposure to the more humane

¹⁶⁸ Mark Reynold, "The Emma Lake Encounters" *The Beaver*, December 2001/January 2002. Reynold discusses that Canadian art history has a trend of numerology, where painters who are affiliated with one another are codified into groups with numeric names, for example Painters Eleven, Regina Five, Group of Seven. Often these groups are overdrawn and categorized for the purpose of historical writing, exhibitions etc.

¹⁶⁹ Terry Fenton Interview

¹⁷⁰ Clement Greenberg, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today." 107.

and civilized arts from the U.S.A.”¹⁷¹ While Greenberg’s bias and perceived intrusion into Canadian affairs were rightfully challenged, why it received such widespread criticism as opposed to British or Eastern Canadian influence requires further investigation.¹⁷² Nonetheless, his article, no matter how controversial, was a successful sales pitch, despite its criticism, it drew an unprecedented amount of attention to the arts of Saskatchewan.

Yet, despite the varying opinions on the role of American workshop leaders at Emma Lake, according to the participating artists it led them, “to view themselves and their art in a broader human context.”¹⁷³ In Ernest Lindner’s words it offered a “window” to the larger contemporary art world, and according to Bloore it “helped evoke an intellectual atmosphere for an essentially indigenous creative movement.”¹⁷⁴ The role of the New York artist in Saskatchewan was less to influence the formal properties of the artist’s works but to give them assurance they were working at equal levels to those in major centres. To provide the artists the confidence that despite their isolation, they could still create good art, and to offer them venues for dialogue and debate (which were often vocally very controversial.) In turn, this zone of contact allowed artists to create a strong local movement, setting the network’s precedent of taking global flows and appropriating them in regional settings.

¹⁷¹ Arthur McKay, “Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops: An Appreciation,” *Canadian Art* (Sept/October 1964) 280.

¹⁷² O’Brian, *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, 33, rightfully points out the significance of the Massey Commission in creating the anti-American nationalism that should be cultivated by Canadian Arts and Culture.

¹⁷³ Ibid

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

The Emma Lake Workshops were never intended to “solve” the provincialism problem, but rather to alleviate the feelings of inertia inherent to it. As Smith notes, “the cultural transmission is one way...the most to which the provincial artists can aspire is to be considered second rate.”¹⁷⁵ This prediction is accurate in viewing the artists and its object in terms of traditional hierarchies and individual practice, but systematically peripheral or provincial movements such as Emma Lake can make great strides. Collectively they can shift flows of information, and in exploring how Emma Lake transpired first Triangle New York and then globally, one sees a prime example of a movement that has done exactly this.

Therefore, viewing the workshops within their social framework is imperative. There seems to be a rift between the scholarship and critics of the workshop and the actual feelings of the participating artists themselves. In writing a post-colonial history or re-assessing an ongoing narrative one always runs the risk of silencing the very voices one tries to write about. Similar rifts exist in discussions of the Triangle network. There often seems to be a disconnect between the critics and scholars and the practicing artists. For example, to jump to contemporary times, when discussing the role of African artists at the Triangle workshops many of the New York artists paid little attention to them because formally their work did not fit into the same movements or trajectory. Artists such as David Koloane spoke of his early workshop experiences very differently, indicating that the things western artists take for granted (accessibility of paint, working space etc.) are what forever changed his oeuvre. Again, I argue that part of this disconnect falls back on the over reliance of the art object at the expense of larger shifts in thinking.

¹⁷⁵ Terry Smith, “Provincialism Problem,” 5.

There is a clear predicament for the provincial artists, in which they are often ‘damned if they do and damned if they don’t.’ In order to circulate globally and break free of their “provincialism problem,” they need to adapt to the hegemonic global trends. For lack of a better word, they need to “sell out”. They need to produce what markets want and what satisfies expectations. They either do not fit in or they fit in but through mimicry. In his discussion of provincialism, Terry Smith highlights this dilemma extremely well. Yet, while he highlights the inevitable predicament of the provincial artists he does not explore the structural parameters that create these power dynamics, for example the markets role in creating the centre and periphery. Without an active patronage structure it is increasingly difficult to work as a professional artist, and with a population that hovered around the million mark, and only two professional galleries, the province of Saskatchewan clearly had a limited market. Many of the global workshops within the Triangle network continue to suffer from the lack of local or international markets to directly (or indirectly) fuel their success and longevity. Echoing a similar narrative to Saskatchewan without tapping into larger art scenes (and the larger amounts of money that accompany them), the market-less workshops remain rather slow moving and more silent.

To return to Emma Lake, although the artists engaged in cosmopolitan artistic dialogues, their work simply could not circulate on the same level as artists working elsewhere. The early 1960s were an exception for select artists from the province who did receive unprecedented exposure, but their success was limited. Still it is presumptuous that all the artists intended to make it in global markets. Many participating artists generally spoke very highly of their experiences, primarily for the immediate opportunities it provided them to expand their practice whether or not it translated internationally. This is demonstrated in the Canada Council Annual Report from 1966-1967, where it outlined;

There is really nothing like having someone come from abroad to tell you how good you are, and in the period under review our artists have from time to time been stimulated by visits of eminent artists and critics who were able to take back to their countries some knowledge of Canadian art. The most important single influence has been the Emma Lake Workshop in Saskatchewan, which was conceived by the Regina artists and run by the University of Saskatchewan, which some modest assistance from the Canada Council. For the past eight years outstanding artists have attended Emma Lake as guest each summer: They include Barnett Newman, Jules Olitski, John Cage, Clement Greenberg from the United States and more recently Harold Cohen from England.¹⁷⁶

The validation that the artists received through the acknowledgement of international artists was enough of an impetus to continue working. This premise of self-validation remains integral to the Triangle model. The notion of creating an artist community, no matter how temporary, is often what fuels many of these workshop artists to continue practicing. Triangle was set up to 'combat the loneliness of the studio experience,' and the American-Canadian connections at Emma Lake can be viewed in precisely the same way. Again, I would argue that the greatest impact of both Triangle and its indirect predecessor Emma Lake was not in the artworks produced, or the careers that it shaped but in the more general shifts in value that they created when writing, producing or critiquing works of art. They changed art history not through their art objects but through their practice.

¹⁷⁶ Canada Council, *Annual Report*, 1966-1967 as reproduced in O'Brian *The Flat Side of the Landscape*.

According to Robert Enright, while the Emma Lake workshops were invigorating they left behind an alter to high modernism, and encouraged a mode of working that many artists never evolved from.. By the end of the 1960s Emma Lake fell off the international radar and consequently became less of a focus for art historical research.¹⁷⁷ Yet the artists' ethos never faded and while international attention and art history lost interest in the late 1960s and early 1970s Emma Lake developments, one can argue that this was actually when the workshops became most interesting for it was the durability and versatility of the model was tested as a sustainable approach to art production. This predates the similar predicament the Triangle workshops grapple with. When there is international viewership targeted at a workshop, the aesthetic tends to become more predictable and inline with global expectations essentially being conceptual imperialism.¹⁷⁸ Yet, when there is no global focus we lack the language and framework with which to access these workshops. We lack the language to discuss works of art that do not read as art by European standards, and we therefore lack the literature that codifies these moments into our western cannon. Nonetheless, although we do not document these moments they often become essential spaces for alternative modes of production.

¹⁷⁷ The workshops did continue throughout the late 70s but were generally fraught with tension and were unsuccessful. For example, Frank Stella's 1967 visit was a complete flop. In "Between the North Pole and New York City," Stella claims he remembered very little about the workshop noting, "they didn't go anywhere, outside of getting stoned or something, they just sat there...they were very inert...Lumps of clay, it was hard to fashion them into anything...Mostly they wanted to argue about why it was ok to be Canadian and be better than the US." Furthermore, as noted by O'Brian in the Introduction to *Flat Side*, there were only five workshops in the history of Emma Lake that were cancelled for various reasons; 1958, 1974, 1975, 1978. The fact that three workshops in the 1970s were cancelled demonstrates the struggles the workshops encountered after the rush of important international visitors.

¹⁷⁸ James Elkins, "On David Summers's Real Spaces," *Is Art History Global?* (New York: Routledge, 2007) p 41.

Hence, as Emma Lake faded from the international scene it went through a second revival after Terry Fenton recommended that the sculptor Michael Steiner attend a workshop in 1973 at the Edmonton Art Gallery. At the time Fenton was organizing a show that included his work at the Norman Mackenzie Gallery. He had gotten to know the artists and felt he would be a good fit. According to John O'Brian, Steiner's workshop was important for two main reasons, firstly it, "kept open the New York-Emma Lake access at a time when it seemed most likely to collapse, and it helped "mold a new generation of artists in Saskatchewan."¹⁷⁹ According to Fenton, these new artists included Clifford Enright and Donovan Chester from Regina, and Robert Christie from Saskatoon. These artists all began moving away from stain painting towards a more painterly abstraction inspired by the recent work of Jules Olitski and Larry Poons.¹⁸⁰ Graham Peacock, an Edmonton artist, was perhaps one of the artists most influenced when he met Olitski and Poons in the wake of the 1973 workshop. After exploring the artists' tactility and cascading use of paint he went on to devote the rest of his career to exploring the process of working with the materiality of acrylics.

Unquestionably, the 1973 workshop was extremely influential for the Canadian artists, yet it was even more influential in the larger history of the Triangle network. It marked the second generation of Emma Lake Workshops. If the first generation began cultivating the psychological shifts necessary for artists to strive in peripheral situations, the second generation began creating a system where the traditional value hierarchies of art history were turned on their head. It was during that second phase that the larger shifts in ideas about artistic process began

¹⁷⁹ Roald Nasgaard, *Abstract Painting in Canada*, (Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2007). 294

¹⁸⁰ Terry Fenton, "*Abstraction West: Emma Lake and After*," National Gallery of Canada, March 1976. Accessed through <http://www.grahampeacock.com/litjourn13.html>

evolving at Emma Lake. As Terry Fenton concluded in his 1976 catalogue entry, considering the success of the second generation workshops, “if any mystery surrounds the Emma Lake and Edmonton Art Gallery Workshops it is that they were not copied in other places in Canada. The principles behind them were simple.”¹⁸¹ Unbeknownst to the artist involved less than ten years after the 1973 workshop the idea was reborn at the first Triangle Artist’s Workshop in Pine Plains, New York.

It was at this stage that I argue the tenets of high modernism, as epitomized by “Greenberg’s crusade,” were simply sublimated into a new wave of artistic production that went beyond a reductive purification of the medium of painting to the exploration of the medium of painting, namely the new acrylic paints and gels. For example, it was at these workshops that the ideas behind the “New New Painters” began to emerge. The New New Painters was a movement that emerged as a homage to the New York School. Yet, instead of the bravura of the older generation they worked with acrylic gels creating works somewhere between abstract expressionism and color field painting. Their works were often thickly lathered with fluorescent, thick, texturized paints, creating a unique look and feel.¹⁸² Figure 6. Is an example of Graham Peacock’s typical works (one of the most vocal proponents for the New New movement), which feature an abundance of paint in abstract form.

Figure 6: Graham Peacock, *Mediterranean Blue Oval*, 1985

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² For a discussion of the New New Painters see; Kenworth W. Moffett, “Moffett’s Artletter 2.0” <http://kenworthmoffett.new>

The group of New New Painters remained closely aligned to Emma Lake through their participation and leadership at the workshops as well as the first international exchanges between Triangle nodes. For example, both Graham Peacock and Kenworth Moffett were two of the first visiting Triangle artists at the Thupelo workshop, and the controversies surrounding their practices were directly related to ideas about materiality. This demonstrates how central the concept of process became to the early workshops, so much so that in different socio-political situations it became the route of controversy.

The 1973 the workshop began leaning towards this emphasis of a process-based practice, but its definitive moment was the 1977 workshop that Anthony Caro attended. The 1977 workshop re-energized the dwindling model, for the productivity that Caro demonstrated was unprecedented at any of the workshops. At previous workshops many of the visiting artists did not create any works, instead choosing to operate as the overseeing eye. Yet, Caro created fifteen sculptures in ten days, with masterpieces such as *Emma Dipper* now part of the Tate's permanent collection.¹⁸³

Figure 7. Anthony Caro, *Emma Dipper*, Painted Steel, 1977

Caro worked prolifically and with a strikingly collective approach. He placed himself as an equal amongst the participating artists and made a point of demonstrating that every artist's

¹⁸³ The *Emma Dipper* is a unique piece for Caro because it was created entirely out of scrap metal. Due to the limitations of accessing steel and transporting material to the remote Emma Lake Caro worked largely with found scraps. There has been one exhibition of Caro's Emma Lake series at the Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park in Michigan. The show included, *Emma Sail*, *Emma Gate*, *Emma Scribble*, *Emma This*, *Ceiling Piece A*, *Ceiling Piece D*, *Table Piece* (four), a genre which Caro invented to have the sculpture relate to the table's edge as much as to its surface. See: *Anthony Caro: The Emma Lake Sculptures*, Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 2003

opinion mattered and anyone's ideas welcomed. Fenton recalls his working method as being incredibly communal, with artists giving recommendations and Caro immediately implementing their ideas only to then collectively discuss whether the change worked or not.¹⁸⁴ Caro attended the workshop with the intention of leaving his isolated studio and maximizing the potential of artistic interaction. Rather than scripting out his process, he allowed the space to guide his production, a necessity given then inability to source most of his common working material while at Emma Lake. All of these ideas remain central to the foundation of the Triangle Network.

At Emma Lake, Caro broke down the hierarchy inherent to the provincialism problem. He was the first to democratize the workshop space by turning it into a place with no hierarchy. In some of the early workshops there was a role of the visiting critic, however, the model has since moved away from this mainly because of criticism about the hierarchy it created. This equal practice continues to guide the workshops to the present day. The idea being that by bringing international and local artists together in the workshop space one creates a sort of heterotopia where artists can work on an equal footing.¹⁸⁵ It was under Caro's influence that this new sense of democratic space evolved. Caro's workshop was an exceptional experience, both of the participating artists and Caro himself. It was an entirely positive experience without the drama and controversy that surrounded some of the other workshops. Unlike many of the visiting artists throughout the late 60s and 70s, Caro was still mid-career. Whereas, the artist who visited at the height of their careers created a more contentious power dynamic and also less room for personal growth.

¹⁸⁴ Terry Fenton, Interviewed by Miriam Aronowicz, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, June 28, 2011.

¹⁸⁵ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."

The potential of this new framework and the energy of the 1977 workshop were immediately evident. Thus, in 1982 when Caro teamed up with Loder to create a similar type of workshop in Pine Plain's New York he based them on his experiences at Emma Lake. When the Triangle Workshop emerged it was based on the same ideological principles, a heterotopian setting, collective participation and artists teaching other artists. Terry Fenton, who had been instrumental in bringing Caro to the 1977 workshops was invited to New York as the first resident critic.¹⁸⁶ It was there that he also coined the name Triangle in reference to the geographical points of the invited artists.

By the 1970's, when Caro attended the workshop, the New York art scene was readily embracing the beginnings of conceptual art, performance work and new media projects. Yet, the artists at Emma Lake continued to work primarily in painting, sculpture and land art. The modernist style was no longer avant-garde and the working style of many of the Emma Lake artists was arguably outdated. Nonetheless an ethos developed, where the process became equally as important as the final product. What Caro's workshop reinforced was that the aesthetic became less important than the process it fostered.

The emphasis on process was epitomized through the New New Painters, who were gaining popularity at the time. Despite their prolific self-promotion, aesthetically they were never as revolutionary as they believed themselves to be. Nonetheless, their idea to explore painting through a study of its chemical components signaled a new approach to production that went beyond creating a painted final product, but turned the product into an exploration of its

¹⁸⁶ In a letter from Anthony Caro, London to Otto Rogers, Faculty Co-Coordinator, Emma Lake Artists' Workshops, Department of Art, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 25 February 1977 (University of Saskatchewan archives), he mentions Fenton by name stating, "It is good that Terry Fenton and Daryl Hughto will be there both...I am sure we will have a stimulating time there."

components. Merging art and science the New New Painters forged a strong working relationship with Golden Paints under the premise that they were exploring the medium's chemistry.

Caro invited many of the New New Painters to the first Triangle workshops in New York, such as Peter Bradley, Kenworth Moffett and Graham Peacock. Thus, it is no coincidence that Golden Paints became a major sponsor of the event. They also continue to play a role in many of the early workshops worldwide.¹⁸⁷ The fact that paint sponsorship became centre to the later Emma Lake workshops and early Triangle workshops points to an emphasis on process, and experimentation, principles that carry through the organization to present day.

As postmodernism took hold across the art world the Emma Lake contingency was not unaffected. Despite their modernist styles their working method shifted towards the “dematerialization of the art object.”¹⁸⁸ Although the product remained in a traditional modernist “object” form, the process became part of the product. Here Emma Lake epitomized Rey Chow's statement that, “Once we view the modernism-postmodernism problematic not in terms of a succession of ideas and concepts only, but as the staggering of legacies and symptoms at their different stages of articulation, then the ‘displacement’ of modernism by postmodernism becomes a complex matter and can vary according to the objectives for which that displacement

¹⁸⁷ Golden Paints was invested in the early New York Workshops as well as the early workshops in Southern Africa. Through USSALEP Golden Paints provided paint sponsorships to the early Thupelo Workshops. This allowed for new artistic experimentation due to an unprecedented amount of access to materials for many of the artists involved. However, as discussed in Peffer's, *Art at the End of Apartheid*, 2010 it was also the route of a great deal of controversy about American Imperialism in South Africa as well as larger CIA involvement and interest in creating an educated black middle class.

¹⁸⁸ Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

is argued.”¹⁸⁹ The 1977 Emma Lake Workshops stand as a prime example of the overdrawn modern/postmodern divide.

Furthermore “contemporaneity” is actually a conglomerate of modern, postmodern and current trends blended together in a new way. As demonstrated, the modernist medium experimentation at the 1973 and 1977 Emma Lake Workshops was never abandoned but rather continuously evolved in the Triangle Artists’ Workshops more broad focus of practice and process. Many of the contemporary workshops abandoning the requirement have gone as far as abandoning the requirement for a final object all together, focusing on process entirely. Tracing the history of Triangle through Emma Lake demonstrated how this contemporary approach may have grown from Greenberg’s holy grail of modernist ideas about paintings intrinsic qualities.¹⁹⁰

As noted by Frederic Jameson, although we now live in a world of ‘hyperspace’ and collapsing boundaries, western perceptual habits were formed in the old space of high

¹⁸⁹ Rey Chow, “Postmodern Automaton,” in *Writing the Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993), 56.

¹⁹⁰ Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” in *The Collected Essays and Criticisms: Modernism with a Vengeance 1957 – 1967*, ed. by John O’Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) 86. Greenberg’s famous quotation about the intrinsic qualities of the medium (flatness, properties of pigment etc.) of painting regarded as a positive factor for modern painters extended into the exploration of paint with the New New Painters. The continuous breaking down of the medium until the object was been completely obliterated echoes the progression from modern painting to postmodern and contemporary arts. Despite the heterogeneity of practice within the contemporary Triangle Network, the genealogy of Triangle’s unique relationship to the art object can be traced back to the ‘altar of modernism’ that was created at the early Emma Lake workshops.

Some would argue that the Emma Lake workshops suffered from the “Greenberg Effect.” His one time presence at the Emma Lake workshops and later through his influence on various artists tends to dominate art historical accounts, overshadowing the subtleties of the different interactions. In a personal interview with Terry Fenton on June 28, 2011 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan he noted this over-emphasis on Greenberg in publications such as *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, edited by John O’Brian, (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Mendel Art Gallery, 1989.)

modernism. The Emma Lake workshops represent an important moment when the spaces of high modernism began to shift with new ideologies, such as ideas based on process, collectivity and democratic interaction instead of a hierarchical object-based art history. Yet, as Jameson notes, Western perceptions are still tied to high modern values. Thus, while the network may have incorporated a post-modern or contemporary ideologies Western lingering modern perceptions continuously guides the framework in which we evaluate the workshops. The art systems that continue to govern the dealers, curators, markets and exhibition structures perpetuate the need for a final “art object,” to evaluate product vs. process and to champion certain “international artists” over “local” counterparts. This is a major reason why Triangle remains left out of the major art historical narratives or why receptions on Open Days are often seen as uninspired.¹⁹¹ The Triangle model as it evolved through Emma Lake, operated in a liminal space that defies the hegemonic tools of perception (perpetuated by the market place) we have been left with.

The process of evolution that the Triangle network went through and continues to go through is profound. Its role has shifted given the different times and need and each workshop is a unique reflection of the socio-political climate in which it is created. The first workshop that Caro crated in Pine Plains likewise was no different. It hosted a hand-selected guest list of mainly Caro’s circle of friends based in Canada, the UK and the New York area. The workshop participants were known as F.O.T “Friends of Tony” and were mainly abstract painters and sculptors working in acrylic or steel.¹⁹² Although the workshop had no official aesthetic

¹⁹¹ In conversation with Jill Trappier when visiting Greatmore Studios in June 2010 she mentioned the difficulty and complicated place critics have played at Open Days, particularly because the work created at the workshops does not translate to critical expectations. Due to a misunderstanding about the workshop’s intent, often the work comes off as uninteresting to critics and is overlooked.

¹⁹² Willard Boepple, Interview with Miriam Aronowicz, New York City, New York, September 2010.

program by virtue of its selection process it maintained a bias towards the generation of abstract painters and sculptures.¹⁹³ This forged a new type of “provincialism” that broadened the definition to include not only one’s geopolitical place, but also one’s working style. Thus, the 1984 workshop provided a forum for artists who were now provincial by virtue of their outdated aesthetic. As noted by Willard Boepple, it was an opportunity for artists to come together and not only combat the “isolation of the studio,” but also find solace in working together at a time when their style was becoming outmoded.¹⁹⁴ By 1984 many of the artists who were major players throughout the Emma Lake years now found themselves increasingly marginalized due to their style.

Thus, the Triangle Artists’ Workshop in many ways evolved as a continuous alleviation of the provincialism problem, beginning as a tool to challenge a geographically defined provincialism, it evolved into a method for dealing with an aesthetic provincialism as well. As the model continued to grow and mushroom into the contemporary workshop it took on shifting roles, while always remaining true to its initial purpose; giving isolated artists a sense of belonging. As the workshops shifted from Saskatchewan to New York it offered a venue for artists to find inspiration in the fact that their working method was still relevant. When the workshop model grew first through Southern Africa, then Europe, Asia and South America it proved to be extremely adaptable, always responding locally to the needs of the artist on the ground. Today it continues to be an alternative model of sorts filling the gaps in the international

¹⁹³ Despite their democratic values any workshop within the network has a natural leaning bias to whoever is on its selection committee. Each nodes as an independent board that inescapably holds certain biases.

¹⁹⁴ Willard Boepple Interview.

and local existing art world structures, and tending to those who are left out from the mainstream in some way or another.

Whether or not there was an aesthetic program to the initial expansion is still heavily debated. Undeniably the first workshops beginning with Emma Lake in Saskatchewan, Pine Plains in New York and then Thupelo in South Africa, Pachipamwe in Zimbabwe and Triangle in Barcelona all retained a focus on abstraction. Although there was no official mandate to work abstractly, the selection committee privileges the aesthetic and the fact that most of the international visitors were loosely aligned with some sort of abstract movement, whether it be New New Painters, Abstract Expressionism etc. furthered this bias. While abstraction seemed to be the common thread linking the early workshops, why it became the constant that translated so easily across borders will be further investigated in the following chapter.

While this translatability of abstraction allowed the Triangle model to expand, it simultaneously further complicated issues of provincialism for it reinforced the universalisms that the workshops, ideas of multiculturalism and internationalism tried so desperately to avoid.¹⁹⁵ The workshops demonstrated how abstraction became the new language for western internationalism, the aesthetic imperialism that went hand in hand with global arts.¹⁹⁶ With the

¹⁹⁵ The exhibition “Magiciens De La Terre,” curated by Jean Hubert Martin in 1989 at the Centres Georges Pompidou was the seminal show that tried to address the over-emphasis on Western arts and under-representation of the rest of the world. The show was a turning point for the study of non-western arts and was heavily criticized for its eclectic, tokenistic and primitivistic selection criteria as well as its western curatorial judgments of taste. Yet, the exhibit’s egalitarian aspirations attempted to demonstrate the broad “diversity” of global arts, the inability to universalize contemporary art production. One of the striking commonalities of the artists selected was the few were working in naturalistic paradigms, most works were abstracted, or semi-abstract, again, leading one to question why abstraction and internationalism remain so closely intertwined.

¹⁹⁶ The notion of an aesthetic imperialism is discussed by James Elkins in regards to the “conceptual imperialism” of the contemporary art world. James Elkins, “On David Summers’s Real Spaces,” *Is Art History Global?* (New York: Routledge, 2007) p 41.

hopes that the postmodern and contemporary would shift away from modernism's universal ideals came a new realization that many of the same typologies still existed under new names. While abstraction is still prevalent albeit in new contemporary forms, the market demonstrates a preference towards conceptualism or abstracted but still subjective works of art.¹⁹⁷ Pure formal abstraction is often seen as retrograde and outmoded. This matched with the requirement to access new media has emerged as a new paradigm.

Thus, despite the proliferation of global flows and supposed breaking down of art world centres (i.e. there are now biennials held anywhere from Havana to Istanbul) the "provincial" still exists. Regardless of physical place in the "center" or "periphery," artists are now seen as provincial if they fail to work in an acceptable aesthetic, certain medium or translate within a global forum. If an artist from outside the art world centres works in a style that translates globally, then their difference is often commodified and marketed as an object of desire. In this regard contemporary art provides the illusion of a breakdown from modernism's hierarchy of styles to a "total randomness." Yet, as noted by Julian Stallabrass, "total randomness is one form of total uniformity," leaving one problematizing whether the contemporary is simply a reworked new modernism.¹⁹⁸

As demonstrated through Emma Lake and then later the early Triangle workshop, one of the advantages of the network is its self-awareness. Without a formal mandate it is encouraged to continuously re-evaluate itself. Thus, after the first few years of operating Triangle New York's workshop directors felt that the continued propagation of abstract arts which was leading the

¹⁹⁷ Marilyn Martin, "At the Threshold of Seeing," *Art South Africa* 7.2 (Summer 2008) 69 – 79.

¹⁹⁸ Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

network's expansion and creating an inspiring community of abstract artists, was at the same time 'at risk of becoming an academy.'¹⁹⁹ According to Karen Wilkin, it was at this point that the director's prioritized workshop was open to artists working in diverse styles.

Today the Triangle mission statements remains close to its initial roots:

The international nature of workshop open days, residency, open studios and exhibitions enables a greater flow of information and ideas to artists and audiences based in countries that seem particularly isolated. These activities are integral to challenging established assumptions about art and to the introduction of new perspectives in areas where a narrow constituent generally represents international practice.²⁰⁰

Hence, the Triangle Network posits itself as an alternative to the "international practice generally represented by a narrow constituent." But ultimately this constituent is the "normative" art world and the way the network continues to interact with it requires further investigation.

Thus, where does one situate the Triangle network within this larger world-system? How does the network prevent itself from becoming an institution but at the time still rely on many of its structures? Although it continues to privilege no aesthetic, the workshops that propagate a more international style, namely conceptualism, seem to achieve greater stability and notoriety. For example, this demonstrates that the contemporary remains closely linked to modernism's ideals, for there is still a hierarchy of style and approach, albeit with a new name.

¹⁹⁹ Karen Wilkin, Interviewed by Miriam Aronowicz, New York City, New York, September 2010.

²⁰⁰ Triangle Arts Trust Website; www.trianglenetwork.org

As demonstrated, at the beginning of this chapter, the Emma Lake workshops required structural shifts on a governmental and institutional level to evolve into the significant events that they were. As the workshops evolved they made the conscious decision to avoid become an “institution.” Eventually Emma Lake dwindled leaving a strong foundation of modern art on the prairies but one that remained nothing more than a historical moment. Unlike the first Triangle model, which evolved into a permanent studio structure and ongoing workshop model, Emma Lake was a moment in time. Thus, despite the network’s desire to not become an institution, historically the workshops that have managed to institutionalize an element of themselves have prevailed.

Chapter 3

The Thupelo Workshops: A Case Study

There are now numerous workshops in the network that have a related brick and mortar location from which they can run annual activities. For example, some of the strongest network nodes are Greatmore in Cape Town, Khoj in Delhi or Triangle in New York. All these organizations have a stable set of directors, a payroll and permanent studio space. These elements cannot be underestimated as a reason for the corresponding workshops' success. The following chapter addresses the Thupelo workshops in South Africa, which can be seen as foils to the Emma Lake workshops. Both Emma Lake and Thupelo were very locally driven, and in many ways fell into the "provincialism" model. Both workshops were shrouded in controversy and both had a foundational place in the Triangle narrative, Emma Lake as a precursor and Thupelo as the first international site after Triangle. Yet, Thupelo emerged and is still going strong more than thirty years after its conception. It has weathered the varying trends in the art world, seismic shifts in the local political landscape, and has funneled through a roster of local and international artists with varying aesthetics.

The Thupelo workshops continue to hold an important place in the evolution of the Triangle network. They are one of the oldest nodes and, historically, one of the most consistent operations within Triangle's history. Within South Africa, Thupelo's long-standing success has made it an integral part of the country's art scene, where it remains one of the few opportunities for local and international artists to work together.²⁰¹ Although the workshops evolved within a

²⁰¹ Despite Thupelo's long-standing success from the end of apartheid to the present day it has received limited critical reception. Sue Williamson, a prominent South African artist and critic only recently acknowledged the power the workshops have had on the country's art scene. Her comprehensive survey

network of global flows, they serve as an example of a transnational model that successfully dovetails with local conditions, forging a local *artscape* that challenges the homogenizing trends of contemporary art production.²⁰² Using Smith's classification system of contemporaneity, there are three currents we can follow.

1. The Retro-sensationalist turn: The spectacular repetitions of avant-garde shock tactics, enabled by the neoliberal economies, globalizing capital and neoconservative politics.
2. The Postcolonial Turn: "Following decolonization within what were the second, third and fourth worlds, including its impacts on what was the first world, there has emerged a plethora of art shaped by local, national, anticolonial, independent, antiglobalization values (those of diversity, identity and critique). It circulates through the activities of travelers, expatriates, the creation of new

South African Resistance Art (Cape Town, South Africa: David Philip, 1989) left out the Thupelo workshops despite their strong political role during the period she surveys on the grounds that they produced non-figurative works. Her most recent publication, *South African Art Now* (New York, Collins Design, 2010) fails to mention Thupelo, or its sister studios the Bag Factory and Greatmore Studios in the timeline of significant art events within South Africa. In a blog posting on Williamson's website, following the most recent Thupelo workshop she acknowledged for the first time the importance of Thupelo in the South African art scene, perhaps signaling a changing attitude and welcomed acknowledgment of the workshops. Website accessed at - <http://suewilliamsondiary.blogspot.com/2010/07/thursday-july-8-2010.html>

²⁰² Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 33-37. Appadurai identifies five dimensions of global cultural flow: ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples, and ideoscaples, in "Traditionsängste im globalen Kunstkontext — Anxieties of Tradition in the Artscaples of Globalization". In: *Springerin V(1)*. Pp. 54-57 (1999.) he adds the use of his term *artscape*. His initial categorization of global flows of information did not distinguish between flows of popular culture and circuits of high art; artsaples differentiates within this terms.

markets. It predominates in biennales. Local and internationalist values are in constant dialogue in this current.”

3. Specific, Small-Scale and Modest Offerings: A mix of the first two currents, the third current raises questions as to the nature of temporality, place making vis-à-vis dislocation.

I argue that Thupelo functions somewhere in between the second and third currents, complicating existing categorizations of contemporary art production.²⁰³ This chapter begins with a historical overview of Thupelo from its inception in 1985, and builds a genealogy to Thupelo’s complex contemporary moment. Tracing its links to the early community art schools, I explore how the contemporary workshops continue to address the changing needs of South African society while simultaneously complicating larger global frameworks.²⁰⁴

Thupelo was the first workshop based on the Triangle prototype to take place outside of New York State, signaling the evolution of the Triangle workshop from an international and site-specific framework to one that was transnational and nomadic.²⁰⁵ After Thupelo was established in South Africa, the Triangle model mushroomed to neighboring countries creating one of the

²⁰³ Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 7.

²⁰⁴ John Peffer’s discussion of the early Thupelo workshops in *Art at the End of Apartheid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), addresses the relationship between the workshops and community building. My research is indebted to the archival work Peffer assembled, and the foundation of research he created about the initial workshops. My own work departs from Peffer’s by focusing on the contemporary moment, and more specifically the workshops post 1990.

²⁰⁵ In an interview with Robert Loder at Gasworks Studios, London, England, January 2011 he indicated that under Anthony Caro’s direction the original New York workshop had no aspirations to recreate itself outside of North America. It was Loder’s vision to encourage the network to spread to other countries, an issue I address in preceding chapters.

most comprehensive infrastructures of artists, studio systems and residencies on the continent.²⁰⁶

The beginnings of Thupelo in South Africa demonstrated the adaptability of the original Triangle model, which assembled Canadian, British and American artists in a specific location in upstate New York, to a travelling model that could emerge organically wherever there was need or interest.

Using the same precepts as the Triangle Artist workshop in New York, Thupelo was a two-week, expenses paid art retreat where artists were offered the “rare opportunity to work with fellow artists in an intense yet supportive environment [and] where the creative process was designed to led to personal artistic growth.”²⁰⁷ Following the original New York workshop format, Thupelo continued to promote the central mandate of process over product,²⁰⁸ and, likewise, the artists relied on donated paint, found objects and the inspiration of their environment. Yet, within South Africa the accessibility to materials on such a scale was unprecedented, thus, the opportunity allowed artists to experiment with new mediums and forms.

The impetus for fostering a South African Triangle connection was tied to the personal and political ties of the network founders, Robert Loder and Anthony Caro. Between 1957 and 1965 Loder lived and worked in Johannesburg for the Anglo-American mining company and was greatly involved in black cultural production under apartheid. He was the chair of the Union

²⁰⁶ Although Triangle initiatives do not foster sustainable patronage or formal institutional structures, they create an infrastructure through building a social safety net for artists, a collaborative community with informal ties.

²⁰⁷ “What is Thupelo” taken from the Thupelo Workshop Website Archives, 2008.

²⁰⁸ The emphasis on process instead of final product challenges the traditional object based methodologies that are used in art history, something I work through in preceding chapters.

Artists at Dorkay House during the production of the historical Jazz Opera *King Kong*,²⁰⁹ and was also heavily involved in the township Jazz scene.²¹⁰

Triangle's co-founder, Anthony Caro, developed a connection to South African black art education during his visit to South Africa, where he was invited by the Durban Arts '80 competition to judge and award the Grand Award for sculpture.²¹¹ It was during this South African visit that he met Thupelo's future founding artists.²¹² While touring local universities to talk to students about his work, he was approached by the prominent white artist Bill Ainslie who pointed out that he had only been travelling to white institutions. Ainslie then introduced Caro to FUBA, the Federated Union of Black Artists, a community art centre based near the

²⁰⁹ In an interview with Robert Loder at Gasworks Studios, London, England, January 2011, he discussed his involvement with *King Kong* as a turning point for his involvement with the South African art scene. Abbey Maine, "An African Theater in South Africa," *African Arts*, 3:4 (Summer 1970) offers a concise history about *King Kong*, an all African Jazz theatre that debuted in 1959 and was considered the "first hit in African Theatre," and the first "non- exploitive African theatre." It starred Miriam Makeba and over 10,000 South African's watched the performances.

The Union Artists were a group of black musicians who performed at the Dorkay House, a hub for black performance arts under apartheid.

²¹⁰ Robert Loder, interview with Miriam Aronowicz, Gasworks Studio, London, England, January 2011.

²¹¹ Peffer, *Art at the End of Apartheid*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) 140.

²¹² Although Caro's visit to South Africa in 1980 was significant for the development of the Triangle network, Caro had a long standing connection to South Africa through his South African students while teaching at St. Martin School of Art in London. His South African students included Isaac Witkin (1957-60); Malcolm Payne (1972-73); Karel Nel (1978-79); Andrew Todd and Johan Moolman (1975-76); Willem Strydom (1977-78); and Hilda Kohly (1977-79). List of students taken from Elizabeth Rankin. *Images of Metal and Post-War Sculptures and Assemblages in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994)

Market Theatre in Johannesburg, and one of the few sites that fostered visual and performing arts for black South Africans under apartheid.²¹³

Struck by the appalling working conditions of the black institutions in comparison to the white facilities Caro decided to assemble a collection that could serve as a fundraising tool and also as the nucleus of the FUBA gallery. The collection featured 122 artworks including pieces by Caro, Henry Moore and David Hockney. Most of the works were European but the collection also featured classical African pieces, and was intended to later include contemporary South African works.²¹⁴

In 1982 the collection was coordinated and sent by Robert Loder to South Africa where Sandy Summerfield, the collection's South African coordinator toured it around the country. Upon the tour's completion Summerfield felt that the money should go directly to FUBA's visual arts program while Sipho Sepamla, FUBA's director, felt the money should go into FUBA's general account.²¹⁵ After an ultimate disagreement in 1985, Summerfield placed the funds from the FUBA tour into a trust for a new school, the African Institute of Art under the

²¹³ The Market Theatre was founded in 1976 by Mannie Manim and Barney Simon, and went on to become known as South Africa's "Theatre of Struggle." It served as an alternative to state theatres and played a central role in the culture of resistance under apartheid. Rosemary Jolly, "Rehearsals of Liberation: Contemporary Postcolonial Discourse and the New South Africa," *PMLA* vol. 10, no. 1 (Jan 1995) p 18. discusses how the Nationalist government permitted select "resistance" venues to thrive as a neocolonial tactic of controlling and containing the acts of resistance. Often performances that were denied in the townships were granted permission to show at the Market Theatre, a grey area that the government channeled the resistance. Nonetheless, the cultural resistance that emerged from the Market Theatre, its productions numerous awards and international tours are a testament to its success.

²¹⁴ Peffer, *Art at the End of Apartheid*, 141. Although the Caro collection was shelved the FUBA gallery did show contemporary South African works until its disbanding, it had a functioning gallery and exhibition space for its students and local artists.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 155.

direction of Steven Stack. Over the next fourteen years , the collection was placed into basement storage at FUBA until Sotheby's removed it for concern of preservation.

In 1999 the collection was entirely liquidated to pay off long standing rental debt that FUBA acquired. Sam Bass, a South African businessman now living in Australia, and the former landlord of the FUBA building, purchased the majority of the collection at extremely low prices. Art critics and historians lamented over the loss of South African heritage by negating the FUBA collection's original mandate to stay within South Africa. While Louis Garb, Bass's lawyer, counter-argued that if the collection was valued in South Africa a gallery or local collector should have purchased the works at the discounted prices, stating "the only time this became what they called an 'art heritage' is when the sale took place."²¹⁶ The dispersal of the collection was an uncomfortable and unfortunate loss for the history of black arts under apartheid; yet, the effects of the initial tour and the relationships it fostered, paradoxically, became a corner stone for the Thupelo workshops.

Not only was Loder and Caro's friendship fostered through their work on the FUBA collection, but also so was Koloane's introduction to Caro. While FUBA was on its national tour Koloane was in London completing a museum studies degree. The plan was that upon his return he would become the curator of the new FUBA collection, a position that was never filled after the internal disputes. Nonetheless, Caro was so impressed by Koloane's work that he invited him to the second annual 1983 Triangle Arts Workshop in upstate New York. Upon returning from

²¹⁶ Ben Wilson, PM Radio Broadcast on *Australia's Radio National*, November 12, 1999. For transcript see: <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/stories/s66110.htm>. Various news sources reported that the auction of the collection was a great loss for South African heritage. In an ANC press release it stated that the entire collection was sold for R200,000, with Bass paying up to R70,000 for Henry Moore's bronze *Helmet Head*. Figures taken from, *ANC Daily News Brief*, October 21, 1999 accessed at - <http://www.e-tools.co.za/newsbrief/1999/news1022>

the New York workshop, Koloane approached Ainslie and together they coordinated how to bring the workshop model to South Africa.²¹⁷

In his recollection of the workshop's origins Koloane notes:

I was fascinated by the fact that there were artists from all over Europe, Canada, the States, and for me it was interesting to see people who had never met one another before come to meet for the first time and be together for two weeks working. I felt this idea would work very well in South Africa because there was no infrastructure and there were so many restrictions in terms of the Group Areas Act.²¹⁸

Thus, The Triangle model was brought to South Africa primarily for the potentials of its collective working environment. Yet, a fundamental difference between the New York and South African workshops was that in New York they were designed to take artists out of the isolated studio space, while in South Africa they enabled artist to enter a studio space, often for the first time.²¹⁹

Although the New York experience inspired Koloane, the workshop model had established local histories within South Africa, particularly as an effective counterapproach to

²¹⁷ In John Peffer's *Art at the End of Apartheid*, p. 142 he argues that the venture and friendship developed between Loder and Caro on the FUBA collection demonstrates that "the Triangle Artist's workshop has a South African origin." He cites an interview with Robert Loder to back up his claim.

²¹⁸ David Koloane interviewed by Vanessa Anderson, *The Use of Abstraction by Bill Ainslie and David Koloane*, Master's Thesis, Department of Fine Art, Technikon Natal, 1999) 48.

²¹⁹ Bongzi Dhlomo stated that in the townships she used her bed as a space to lay out paintings. Similarly Louis Maqhubela stated that his studio was the floor of his family's dining room after everyone had gone to sleep. Taken from interviews between John Peffer and the artists: Dhlomo was interviewed on 27 July 1995 and Louis Maqhubela was interviewed on 8 January 2007. Taken from Peffer, 305 (footnote 67).

the *Bantu Education Act* of 1953. The act instituted laws decreeing separate and segregated education for black students with a focus on cultivating a labour force for the white state. Thus, art education, exhibitions and entrance to cultural institutions fell outside educational requirements and were denied to blacks.²²⁰ The informal workshops and environments of collective learning that emerged in the community centres such as the Polly Street Art Centre, The Community Arts Project (CAP), The Rorke's Drift Arts and Craft Centre, FUBA, and the Johannesburg Art Foundation set an unquestionable precedent for Thupelo's trajectory. These spaces served as mechanisms for subverting the Act and fostered a culture of art for liberation. Many of the original Thupelo artists were involved with these different centres, and the working and teaching models that the workshops embodied were fostered within these community spaces.²²¹

Yet, one of the major challenges for these black art education structures was the inability of students to move freely throughout the country. Despite the proactive workshop formats the artists were limited to working with other artists within their geographical space. Thus, the South African modernisms that developed during this period relied on the renegotiation of a localism often seen as incompatible with western modernist narratives. The immobility of the majority of South African artists and their inability to de-territorialize, limited their access to the enlightenment ideas of the cosmopolitan, a system that Amanda Anderson argues remains linked

²²⁰ While the government's official position was that art education did not fit within the prescribed roles for black students, the denial of art education was also to prevent the use of art for subversion and dissent. The histories of resistance art demonstrate that despite the restriction of art education, visual culture played a central role in the liberation struggle. Many of the works of resistance art resulted in a slippage from the training at centres that were designed to teach the visual arts for pragmatic purposes.

²²¹ For example, Pat Mautloa studied at the Jubilee Centre and Mofolo Art Centre, as did Tony Nkotsi, Bongsi Dhlomo and Dumisani Mabaso and Lionel Davis was involved with CAP.

to ideals of critical detachment and distance.²²² The relationship of the body to cosmopolitanism, issues of access and mobility, in turn, created a unique South African modernism based in a sense of place and the everyday.

Koloane's decision to bring the workshop to South Africa was, thus, wholly pragmatic. It served as a way of subverting the barriers to mobility under apartheid, which in turn challenged the limits of the education systems. He states:

At that time it was 1983, during the height of the apartheid era. So it was difficult in the country to bring artists together, because you needed to have a permit to go to, let's say from Johannesburg to Durban or Cape Town. You needed to have somebody to stamp your passbooks to allow you to travel. So the basis of our thinking of initiating a workshop movement was to enable artists from different parts of the country to come to the workshop. That was one strategy we used.²²³

By creating an enterprise such as Thupelo, Ainslie and Koloane realized that they could issue travel permits for artists all around the country to come together for a two-week event. This offered artists the mobility, access and cross-pollination required for artistic development. It also

²²² Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Although Caro's FUBA collection toured nationally, and blacks working within South Africa still had moments of global access, they had little agency in determining which *artscapes* to negotiate with. The discursive space for black arts remained circumscribed by the white ruling class.

²²³ David Koloane, interview by Miriam Aronowicz, Bag Factory Studio, Johannesburg, South Africa, June 18 2010.

challenged V.Y. Mudimbe's definition of colonialism as a system of strict categorization and arrangement, for it blurred the boundaries, which circumscribed movement.²²⁴

Thupelo's Foundations: The Community Art Centres

The Polly Street Art Centre was set up in 1949 as a multi-use recreation facility and, despite its modest beginnings, played a seminal role in South African art history. It was also the educational foundation for many of the Thupelo artists, and as noted by Elza Miles:

The inter-racial partnership that took place at Polly Street Art Centre was unique. Professional artists and art connoisseurs, travelling from the white residential areas, imparted their skills and knowledge to budding artists for whom, because they were classified non-European, the doors of art education were closed elsewhere.²²⁵

Many of the first professional black South African artists emerged through Polly Street and many of the central figures in the early Thupelo workshops drew influence from the artists and teachers that came through the centre.

²²⁴ In V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)

Mudimbe's description of colonialism as a system of categorization and arranging subjects/objects is a foundational way of understanding colonialism. I would argue that it is one of the basic precepts to colonial domination (initially through geographical categorization and followed by socio/political and cultural classifications). Through separating and demarcating things one also gains control over them. In deconstructing these categories and systems of classification colonialisms tenets also fall apart.

²²⁵ Elza Miles, *Polly Street the Story of an Art Centre*, (New York: The Ampersand Foundation, 2004). 16

The Polly Street Art Centre rose to prominence when Cecil Skotnes, a University of Witwatersrand fine art graduate, was appointed as the Cultural and Recreation Officer and put in charge of the centre in 1952. Under his direction Gideon Uys was responsible for the art section and Fred Schimmel volunteered as an assistant. Skotnes' academic teaching style was complimented by Schimmel's belief in teaching art intuitively, with the philosophy that "you cannot teach art – you can only evoke attitudes."²²⁶ Together they forged a workshop style environment that encouraged multiple-media and a sense of openness. Yet, Skotnes believed in the professionalization of black artists, thus, one of his most important decisions was to separate the Polly Street students into two groups; a group of serious artists and a group of leisure-time artists.²²⁷ This was the first step in acquiring a facility where black students could work professionally, a legacy Thupelo would build upon.

Skotnes was undoubtedly remembered as a pioneer in his field, but nonetheless was often criticized for teaching African student's to paint in European styles, rather than encouraging their own approach to art.²²⁸ Yet, his own fear that he might be "destroying something" echoed a persistent primitivist belief in the primordial, authentic African. The double bind of furthering black empowerment but simultaneously fostering an 'invented native,'²²⁹ demonstrates how

²²⁶ Helen Smuts, "Looking for No. 1 Polly Street" pamphlet published inside Elza Miles, *The Polly Street The Story of an Art Centre*. The combination of the belief in an intuitive nature of art and informal teaching style was a common model in many parts of Africa. It was a neocolonial anti-intellectual approach the was evident throughout the continent in the 1950s and 1960s, for example Pierre Lods' Poto Poto workshops in Brazzaville (Congo) and Ulli Beier's Oshogbo workshops in Nigeria.

²²⁷ Miles, 42.

²²⁸ Elza Miles, *Polly Street*, 17

²²⁹ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001) p. 187 discussed the "invented native," as a trope of colonialism. Mbembe argues that colonizing structures invent the native, a creation that is seen as incapable of acting intentionally within a "unity of meaning."

colonialism continued to permeate even the most liberal institutions. Nonetheless, the slippage of European domination often gives way to new forms of resistance, and the residual colonial undertones of Polly Street evolved into tools for liberation.²³⁰ Many of South Africa's resistance artists, as well as the early Thupelo founders directly or indirectly trace their lineage to Polly Street.²³¹

After Ainslie's encounters abroad he returned to South Africa and established the Ainslie Studios. Defying the Group Areas Act, which forbade any black person to enter "white" areas, he set up a multiracial studio for artists that he felt could not access the resources they needed in the townships. While the Ainslie studios excelled, The Polly Street Art Centre gradually became less influential as the government clamped down on the facilities for black cultural recreation. By this time Skotnes had resigned to concentrate on his own work, and the artists Sidney Khumalo, Ezrom Legae and Ben Arnold became the centre's joint instructors.²³² In 1972 the

²³⁰ The term "slippage" is used in reference to Homi K. Bhabha's discussion of mimicry in *The Location of Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) p 122.

I use the term slippage to describe the phenomenon of something becoming "almost but not quite." Through mimicry the colonized begins to repeat the colonial way of teaching/thinking but cannot do this without slipping into something slightly different. This eventually evolves into something that appears similar but is actually different from the colonized, and this new "slipped" identity can often become the tool through which colonial rule is weakened.

²³¹ The lineage of Thupelo to Polly Street can be traced directly through Maqhubela who in the 1960's was sent by Skotnes to train under Douglas Portway, living in London. Ainslie, who was also working with Portway became friends with Maqhubela and together began to influence David Koloane. Shortly thereafter, when Ainslie returned to South Africa he established the Ainslie Studios, a central meeting point for many of the artists who began to use culture for liberation. For example, while working at the Ainslie Studios, the activist and poet Wally Serote introduced Thami Mnye to the work of Dumile Feni. Inspired by Dumile's grotesque and powerfully moving images of suffering, Thami Mnye went on to found the Medu Art Ensemble (a highly political collective with strong ties to the ANC based in Botswana). In 1982 he became the head of the Culture and Resistance Festival in Gaborone, Botswana, one of the largest moments for South African resistance art.

²³² Sidney Khumalo was considered one of South Africa's most famous sculptors, together with Cecil Skotnes, Eduardo Villa, Cecily Sash and Guisepe Cattaneo, Kumalo founded the artist group

centre was forced to move to a Black African urban area in Soweto known as Mofolo Park. The Polly Street Art Centre was renamed the Mofolo Centre, officially falling under local jurisdiction and marking the end of its seminal place in South African art history.

As the decade of Polly Street closed, Rorke's Drift Arts and Craft Centre, a missionary school focusing on craft development grew in prominence.²³³ Although it was originally intended as a religious institution for black artists to gain trade skills for the job market, the introduction of the lino-print and printing equipment was its most important feature. The environment at Rorke's Drift encouraged open expression, and taught black artists to use art as a tool for releasing thoughts and emotions. This emphasis led to some of the first and most vivid depictions of life under apartheid. By the time the fine art section of Rorke's Drift closed in 1982

“Amadlozi,” which was a diverse group that consciously brought together the influence of African sculptural traditions. Ezrom Legae was originally a student of Polly Street and later an instructor at the Jubilee Centre, his lithographs and sculptures provide some of the most vivid social commentary on life under apartheid. Ben Arnold, also a sculptor, was likewise very involved in the liberation movement.

²³³ Rorke's Drift began as an Evangelical missionary centre run by a Swedish church. The first teachers at the centre were Ulla and Peder Gowenius who were sent to do church philanthropy, with the mission of promoting and teaching mainly arts and crafts for women. The centre quickly grew into a fine arts institution, one that encouraged the use of art as expression. Gowenius believed that apartheid stifled people's ability to communicate, and that black artists could once again learn to express themselves through the use of art. The centre had a roster of mainly Swedish staff that encouraged the use of the printmaking to professionalize art practice. Most of the Thupelo artists came from Rorke's Drift including prominent artists Pat Mautloa, Bongsi Dhlomo, Sam Nhlengethwa, Lionel Davis. There is no comprehensive book on Rorke's Drift, although Steven Sack has a chapter devoted to the centre in his exhibition catalogue for *The Neglected Tradition*, the first large exhibition to feature the work of black South African artists; of the 93 artists included in his exhibition, 24 trained at Rorke's Drift. For further reading about Rorke's Drift, see the exhibition catalogue; Philippa Hobbs and Elizabeth Rankin, *Rorke's Drift: Empowering Prints* (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2003).

due to resource shortages, most of the artists that Thupelo assembled had already passed through its doors.²³⁴

As the turbulence of apartheid continued, new and increasingly overt political community art centres emerged.²³⁵ Ainslie, a major figure in the community programs coordinated a meeting of representatives of African Music and Drama Association (AMDA), the Market Theatre and the Ainslie Studios to set up FUBA, which eventually splintered into Funda, and Alexandra Art Centres.²³⁶ As the Mofolo Centre (formerly Polly Street) was now under local authority, spaces such as FUBA, primarily backed by liberal donors and volunteers, emerged as the new sites of resistance. Politically aligned with the liberation movement, the artists at these centres often worked collectively to prepare banners, logos and posters for the ongoing struggle.

Ironically, the funding that started FUBA initially came from the Urban Foundation, a government group that put money into building black communities, with a motive to regain foreign support for the government at the expense of the ANC. Using this money Sipamela was able to employ a full time staff and begin strengthening the black art scene.²³⁷ FUBA was born from the *founding objects* of Western domination, created with funding to enhance the colonial structure and weaken the colonized. Nonetheless, FUBA turned their space into an *objet trouvés*

²³⁴ Cyprian Shilakoe, was one of the most famous students to graduate from the centre, and his grotesque images of mutilated forms and distorted figures echoed the nightmare of apartheid and became some of the most representative images detailing the horrors of the time.

²³⁵ David Koloane, "The Community Art Centres," *Cross Currents Contemporary Art Practice from South Africa an Exhibition in Two Parts*, (Somerset: Atkinson Gallery, 2000) 18.

²³⁶ Anderson, *The Use of Abstraction by Bill Ainslie and David Koloane*, 23.

²³⁷ Sophia Ainslie, "Voice of a Nation" taken from Bill Ainslie's personal website. <http://www.billainslie.co.za/sophia%20essay.htm>.

of resistance, where the money was used to educate some of the most vehemently anti-apartheid artists to emerge from South Africa.²³⁸

As FUBA became established, Ainslie simultaneously continued to run his own studios while facilitating and supporting the various community centres around South Africa. By 1976 the original Ainslie studios grew into the Johannesburg Art Foundation (JAF), based out of his home in Saxonwald. By 1989 the school had more than five hundred students enrolled.²³⁹ Most of its teachers had drawn their training from the Rorke's Drift Arts and Crafts Centre, and by the 1980s Ainslie hired its first black art instructors—Dumisani Mabaso as the head of printmaking and Tony Nkosi to teach painting. As Ainslie's daughter Sophia recalls, "the Johannesburg Art Foundation (JAF) filled a vital gap in providing formal art education, particularly to black students of all ages, but it was equally important as a forum—a place of dialogue, discussion and debate that demonstrated that democratic process could exist despite racial differences."²⁴⁰

²³⁸ The terminology and theoretical approach are taken from Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," In *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 131.

²³⁹ Ainslie, "Voice of a Nation,"; Sophia Ainslie (Bill's daughter) explained that the school initially kept a low profile to fly below the radar. A close circle of accomplished supporters (lawyers, academics) guided the school and advised on how far it could go. She notes that the security police constantly spied on the house, and her family moved locations regularly to avoid getting caught. Yet, the informality of the school made it hard to incriminate anyone. She stated, "David Koloane recalls spending a night at our home when he was a student at Ainslie's Studios. A neighbor noticed him through a window and called the police, who arrived in the middle of the night and demanded entry to locate the black person illegally present in a white home. Bill calmly said that he had no idea what they were talking about, that the room they pointed toward was an art studio. Bill never lied."

²⁴⁰ Many of the artists and educators that were interviewed about Thupelo stressed that the workshops' success was because many of the board members and organizers were there 'from the beginning.' In September 2007, T.A.G, the Greatmore Studios Newsletter, published an introduction for their new board members Gary Frier, Kiatou Diallo and Janet Ranson in which they expressed the awareness of these concerns, "Project spaces are indeed very vulnerable entities and if mismanaged, can easily morph into destructive places that can destroy a culture of free art making. The question of effective handover to a new generation of artists and coordinators caused a slight stir in the beehive - how does any group of

In the Johannesburg Art Foundation newsletter Ainslie explained that:

In keeping with the modern movement, the teaching is not academic in the sense of stressing technical skill and reproducing conventional art models. Instead the Art Foundation promotes the workshop concept, emphasizing the importance of the example of the master, the immersion in the tradition, the significance of the individual vision, and the challenge of the new.”²⁴¹

Unlike a university structure the students at the JAF needed no academic background or credentials, only the will to work seriously and learn. As stated by Robyn Sassen, “one didn't graduate from the Foundation. Courses were about skills, but marks weren't given... It was here that the romantic notion "artist" - in layperson's terms, a layabout or scallywag - was taken seriously. Under the leafy shadows in northern Johannesburg, in this place of innocence, art was the equalizer, not money, qualification or political affiliation.”²⁴² No artist was denied and the doors were open to all. Commentators described Ainslie as fostering a “humanitarian art” above all.²⁴³ While precedents of workshops on the African continent often echoed primitivist notions

artists with twenty years of experience even begin to transfer the reigns of leadership to new very different hands who may not initially appreciate the toil and sweat that went into the development of these projects- there is a weight of responsibility that accompanies the history of such projects, can a pool of younger artists be trusted to carry this effectively- whilst encouraged to bring in new and fresh ideas, will the integrity of art making be maintained? The challenge of effective transfer of leadership is indeed a real and urgent one that has permeated all spheres of society from politics, economics and now the arts. From the deliberations that emerged during the conference, it was unanimously agreed, that given economic and social shifts in our democracies and constantly evolving tastes, greater accountability of project coordinator activities and a transfer of experience from one generation to the next are urgent priorities.”

²⁴¹ Bill Ainslie, Johannesburg Art Foundation Newsletter, 1986

²⁴² Robyn Sassen, “Art Foundation: Gone with a Bang or a Whimper?” *ArtThrob* 49:1 (2001). <http://www.artthrob.co.za/01sept/news/foundation.html>

²⁴³ Author unknown, “Ainslie – Artist, Teacher, Humanitarian” *Weekly Mail*, September 7, 1989, p 26.

and fostered neocolonial approaches to art education, the JAF needs to be assessed in light of the existing colonial arts infrastructure operating in South Africa at the time. In an environment where art merged with pragmatism, the loose workshop framework the Ainslie promoted allowed artists to find new strategies of empowerment by disassembling hierarchies. It also furthered the legacy set by Rorke's Drift, which was the first institution that allowed artists to use art as a tool for pure expression rather than for a professional purpose.

While the early years at JAF were funded by student tuition, even the students who could not pay attended studio sessions in exchange for bartering their funds through organizing the libraries or modeling for classes. JAF constituted "more than just an artistic force, it had a political voice."²⁴⁴ It was a meeting spot for many of the artists from the community centres such as former Polly Street instructor Ezrom Legae, FUBA curator David Koloane, and Rorke's Drift alumni Bongzi Dhlomo. One of the most famous students to pass through the foundation's doors was William Kentridge. A white, Jewish, middle class artist who is now considered one of the most successful South Africans in the international art world, Kentridge also taught in Ainslie's printmaking department and continues to support the Thupelo workshops to this day.²⁴⁵

It was the idealism at JAF and Ainslie's democratic ideology that set the foundations for the Thupelo workshops, a space that furthered the concept of informal learning and collaboration. Thupelo is still governed by many of the teachers and students that were initially involved with JAF, and the ethos and ideas at JAF were carried through into the open and anti-hierarchical approach that guides the ongoing workshops.

²⁴⁴ Ainslie, "Voice of a Nation."

²⁴⁵ On August 5, 2011 Kentridge spoke about his work at Greatmore to help raise money for the studios.

Unfortunately after Ainslie's tragic death in a 1998 car accident JAF began to slowly unravel. The council appointed Steven Sack as the director, but Ainslie left behind shoes far too big to fill. Officially closing its doors in 2001 Sack's recollection of the foundation's demise was pessimistic. "NGOs by their nature are generally founded by charismatics. When they die, the project must die too, because unless the council understands that the only way they can take it forward is to bring in a new visionary and be prepared to change the whole project, it's impossible."²⁴⁶ Sack's statement foreshadows a similar risk for the ongoing Thupelo workshops. The double bind of resisting institutionalization is that the projects rest on the original board members and artists' ethos. It is in times of change that the durability of the model will be truly tested. As the original Thupelo members move away from the workshop it will be interesting to see how the workshops continue to change.

Thupelo's History and Historiography

The first Thupelo workshop took place in 1985 as a joint venture between FUBA and the United States South Africa Leadership Exchange Program (USSALEP), a non-governmental organization with the mission to "enhance democratic values and the quality of life at all levels of South African society by drawing on American, South African and other resources."²⁴⁷ This workshop, originally known as the FUBA-USSALEP workshop was hosted in the remote area of Rustenburg, with sixteen participants and Peter Bradley as its American international visitor.

²⁴⁶ Steven Sack as quoted in Robyn Sassen, "Art Foundation: Gone with a Bang or a Whimper?"

²⁴⁷ Description of USSALEP taken from website accessed at: <http://home.intekom.com/bbn/bbn/ussalep/what.html>

After meeting Koloane at the 1983 New York workshop Bradley was intrigued by South Africa and in an exception to the ANC cultural boycott policy was the one international visitor permitted at the workshop.²⁴⁸ The premise of the workshop was to encourage artist to explore and experiment with new materials, new forms and new styles. Exchange and collaboration was encouraged and the process of learning from one another was “intended to discourage formulaic stereotypical expression which resulted in the “township-art” label in the marketplace.²⁴⁹ The result was a broadening of styles, with many artists choosing to experiment with abstract modes of expression.

Unfortunately, within South Africa much of the historical writing surrounding the first Thupelo workshops reduced its history to controversies surrounding its practice of black abstraction, a gross oversimplification of the varying aesthetics and social political role these workshop’s played within the country. Despite South Africa’s National Gallery director Marilyn Martin’s characterization of the workshop’s as a “loosening of styles,” a public feud surrounding the workshop’s aesthetic quickly erupted in Cape Town’s *Weekly Mail* between 1985 and 1987. The most strident attack against Thupelo came from artist and art historian Colin Richards, who

²⁴⁸ David Koloane, Interview by Miriam Aronowicz, Bag Factory Studios, Johannesburg, South Africa, June 18 2010

²⁴⁹ The township art label was defined in Gavin Younger’s *Art of the South African Townships* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988). The book was one of the first publications to deal with contemporary South African art, and reinforced the claim that “African art has a demonstrably figurative tradition.” p 70. Hence, the artists Younger focused on were mainly figurative painters, printers and sculptors working for the liberation struggle. Younger deliberately negates the Thupelo workshop as inauthentic “township” art because it took place “in the heart of a white farming district for two ‘all expenses paid’ weeks.” p 70. In Younger’s honorable, but problematic, attempts to create a category of “township art” he enforces a dichotomy between black art and others practices within South Africa at the time, which echoed the market for black expression in the apartheid era.

asked, “In short, is Thupelo really what Ainslie claims it to be – something more than residual Abstract Expressionism much removed but still hanging around?”²⁵⁰

Most of the local writing that addressed Thupelo was completed in the 1980s or early 1990s, and based around the public perceptions of the first few workshops. Shortly after Richards statements, Gavin Younge published *Township Art* (1988) and Sue Williamson published *Resistance Art* (1998) two seminal books that publicized the visual culture of resistance and liberation, yet Williamson’s account leaves Thupelo out entirely, and Younge discusses the event as illegitimate for it was “not emanating from the townships ... [but] from the heart of a white farming district for two ‘all expense paid’ weeks.”²⁵¹ Moreover, Younge notes that, “despite claims that African art is primarily geometric, African art has a demonstrateable figurative tradition.”²⁵² Thus, the early writing that addressed black art was oversimplified and continued to address the workshops’ aesthetic direction formally, negating Thupelo’s subtle political implications when read against the traditional alliance of figuration and resistance. It also perpetuated what Marilyn Martin termed a “cultural apartheid,” the expectations of black artists to work in a limited aesthetic.²⁵³

²⁵⁰ Colin Richards, “Alternative, Abstract Art? It’s All in His Mind,” *Weekly Mail*, 23 – 29 (October 1987) 21.

Colin Richards later revised his stance regarding Thupelo, as seen in Colin Richards, “Peripheral Visions: Speculations on Art Criticism in South Africa,” in *Art Criticism and Africa*. edited by Katy Deepwell (London: Saffron, 1996) 71. Here he publically shifted his position towards a more positive interpretation of Thupelo, noting that he may have misread their actions in earlier debates.

²⁵¹ Gavin Younge, *Art of the South African Townships* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988) 70.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Marilyn Martin, “Is There a Place for Black Abstract Painters in South Africa,” *De Arte* 44 (1991)

Martin was one of Thupelo's few early supporters, standing up to the South African art communities that venomously disagreed with her. In response to the scathing criticism about the workshop, Martin claimed, "but black artists, as the political situation gets fiercer, are expected to carry the banner for the liberation struggle in one hand while holding on to the goat-hide skin of their ancestral roots in the other."²⁵⁴

With Martin as one of the lone champions of the workshop movement, the general sentiment towards Thupelo was almost immediately damaging. It undermined the complexity of Thupelo and presented an image of the workshops as exercises in simplistic mimicry and appropriation of an outmoded American style of painting. As noted by Loder, the New York workshop actually had no intention of recreating itself outside of New York, and their gross misreading oversimplified the workshop's original goals.

As discussed in previous chapters the first Triangle Art Trust workshops was an opportunity for artists working in the abstract expressionist style to come together and combat the isolation of working in a form that was increasingly outmoded by the 1980's. From Koloane's accounts of the 1983 and 1984 workshops in New York it was not the abstract expressionistic style but the opportunities of space, materials and cross-pollination that intrigued him, and it was those experiences that guided his South African initiative. Within South Africa, Koloane and Ainslie undoubtedly worked within a lineage of abstraction in British circles with painters such as Douglas Portway and Louis Maqhubela, yet despite formal affinities to American abstraction their trajectory was an example of a uniquely South African abstraction, that developed long before Thupelo's American visitors arrived or funding began.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

Unlike the original New York workshop, where artists were encouraged to refine their existing style of practice, the artists at Thupelo were encouraged to find new modes and styles of working. Yet, the premise of the workshop was in essence similar to the New York model because both workshops served as alternative spaces to the normative art world trends. In New York the workshops provided a space for abstract expressionism at a time when the style of painting was increasingly outmoded. In South Africa the workshops provided black artists space to paint and breakout from a fixed expectation. At both workshops the Triangle model created a safe space for artists to work in mediums that defied the current expectations. As quoted by Bill Ainslie, “we reject the avant-gardist position that insists that certain things, like easel painting, are out of date. It is our belief that the originality is developed in the execution and that the artists’ own means will be answered in time if they are deserving and fortunate.”²⁵⁵

Unfortunately, the simplified misreading of the workshops by South African academics were fueled by visiting artists promoting Greenbergian ideas and attempting to play into Eurocentric and anachronistic understandings of modern American abstraction.²⁵⁶ Although their goals differed from Ainslie’s, they seem to resonate strongly in the existing critical writing. Hence, Thupelo’s 1986 guest Kenworth Moffett famous statement found on the Thupelo website until 2010:

²⁵⁵ Bill Ainslie, “An Artists Workshop- Flash in the Pan or Builders Rejected,” presented at *The State of the Art in South Africa Conference* July 1979. (Cape Town, SA: University of Cape Town, 1979) 81- 89

²⁵⁶ As noted in the chapter on Emma Lake, The early Thupelo workshops also suffered from what I call the “Greenberg Effect.” His one time presence at the Emma Lake workshops and later through his influence on various artists tends to dominate art historical accounts, overshadowing the subtleties of the different interactions. In a personal interview with Terry Fenton on June 28, 2011 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan he noted this over-emphasis on Greenberg in publications such as *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, edited by John O’Brian, (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Mendel Art Gallery, 1989.)

With abstract art, South African art... can for the first time become major. South Africa is being offered a place in the development of painting and sculpture. It only needs to continue in its present track and it will produce a real movement. It will become like one of those centres for abstraction like New York, Edmonton or Toronto... Given the overcrowding, desperate poverty and terror that exists in the townships it is incredible that a sophisticated, ambitious, abstract art should be coming from there. An art that is wholly life affirming and that doesn't indulge in self-pity.²⁵⁷

The inclusion of these statements in the Thupelo yearbooks is not only highly condescending but signals the ongoing tension of African artists looking to the West for validation.²⁵⁸ A symptom of how Africa has been created in the western imagination as in the words of Mbembe, as “thing that is, but only insofar as it is nothing.”²⁵⁹ The inclusion of Moffett's quote in Thupelo's literature points to the double consciousness that colonialism created, a persistent double vision in constant tension.²⁶⁰

Yet, as noted by Jill Trappler, the early visitors were, nonetheless, a “tremendous source of food” for the young artists working at Thupelo. Whether their reception was positive or negative, the debates they created formed critical spaces. Often these visitors highlighted the

²⁵⁷ The extract from Moffett's Art Letter by Kenworth Moffett was taken from the Thupelo/Greatmore Studios website archives given to Miriam Aronowicz by Kate-Tarratt Cross.

²⁵⁸ Veryan Edwards, Facebook correspondence March 22, 2011.

²⁵⁹ Mbembe, 187.

²⁶⁰ W.E.B. Dubois, “Double Consciousness,” in the *Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998) 124.

disjuncture between different regimes of value circulating at a time when South Africa was closed due to cultural boycotts and the curtain of apartheid. For example, Graham Peacock's visit was ill received because of his working method of pouring gallons of paint. For example, works such as *Sentry Red* were typical of his style at the time, something he did not deviate from despite the limited resources in South Africa. Clearly, this sort of painting required an abundance of material, lots of which was wasted through spillage and overage. Accounts from the workshop reminisce about Peacock's cultural insensitivity towards the South African conditions and the value of difficult to access materials. With a constant shortage of materials, artists working in South Africa developed a resourceful approach to their medium. The South African response to Peacock's methods demonstrated the disjuncture's within/amongst global flows. The workshops were not a space for paternalistic western teaching, but rather, an environment that furthered artistic development by raising awareness and dialogue around global approaches.²⁶¹

Figure 8: Graham Peacock, *Sentry Red*, 1987

As Alessio Antonioli, the current director of the Triangle Arts Trust notes, "it underpins a lot of the way Triangle moves around the world. It's that sort of process of learning...and if it is done organically, it does make mistakes but it just makes them in a way that advances the discussion."²⁶² The language of development that underpins the Triangle network evolved after the initial New York workshop, and remains an integral component of the model. In this regard, Thupelo remains an example of a "successful" Triangle workshop, for permanent studios and

²⁶¹ I suggest that one of the reasons Peacock was so unwelcome was because of his paternalistic approach, which the artists in attendance spoke of critically.

²⁶² Alessio Antonioli, interview by Miriam Aronowicz at Gasworks Studio, London, England, January 14, 2011.

residencies grew out of the initial two-week workshop and the dialogues they opened up for serious art production. The infrastructure Thupelo jumpstarted, particularly for black or underprivileged artists set a precedent on the African continent. Artists such as Veryan Edwards in Botswana, Atta Kwame in Ghana and El Hadji Sy in Senegal brought the model to their own countries, and many of these workshops have since developed into larger educational structures, a process that will be detailed in the following chapter. Thupelo's ability to gather funding on a regular basis without the British based Trust's involvement is a further testament to its sustainability. It remains one of the few workshops Antonioli has never attended stating that "...there is no need for me to go... it has its own movement, and its own rhythm."²⁶³

Thus, although the workshop's central framework and ideology was taken from the New York model, it was increasingly localized to reflect the unique South African socio-political condition. By the second workshop in 1986, the workshop, although still funded by USSALEP officially changed its name to Thupelo, the Sotho word for "to teach by example." As noted by Peffer, the workshop's new name "mirrored other slogans popular with the progressive movements at the time including the Congress of South African Student's motto 'Each one teach one' and the title of the literary magazine *Learn and Teach*."²⁶⁴ This workshop was held at Broederstroom in the Alpha Training Center, and hosted by the American artists Kenworth Moffett and Lucy Baker, but despite the American involvement in the event, the mandate was tailored to suit South African needs and its new name signaled an undeniable political component.

²⁶³ Alessio Antonioli, interview by Miriam Aronowicz at Gasworks Studio, London, England, January 14, 2011.

²⁶⁴ Peffer, 133.

In 1987 the workshop was held at Ainslie's JAF, and the Canadian painter Graham Peacock was the international visitor. Since USSALEP was still funding the workshop, and the international visitors were artists such as Peacock and Moffett, who championed Greenbergian ideologies, rampant accusations circulated that Thupelo was the new face of American cultural imperialism.²⁶⁵ The argument was fueled by the suspicion of American interests in South Africa during the Cold War, matched with new research at the time linking American painting to political pursuits.²⁶⁶ The exact parameters of USSALEP during the Reagan administration have yet to be studied completely. Steven McDonald who was integral to creating the Rockefeller Foundation Report, now accepted as the guiding principles of US foreign policy under Reagan, joined USSALEP shortly before their involvement with Thupelo.²⁶⁷

Reagan's policy of Constructive Engagement, which included a multimillion-dollar education program for blacks in South Africa, was created for economic and strategic benefits as well as attempts to control South Africa from falling into the hands of the Soviets. Often less concerned with ending apartheid, the policies were designed to create a buffer black middle class

²⁶⁵ Robert Loder, interview by Miriam Aronowicz, Gasworks Studio, London, England, January 2011

²⁶⁶ Peffer discusses that the general criticism were related to trends in art historical writing at the time that addressed Abstract Expressionism as a political tool for American domination. For further reading about the political manipulation of Abstract Expressionism see David Craven, "Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Postcolonial Approach to American Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 14:1 (1991), 44-66. Serge Guilbault, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), Joan Marter ed. *Abstract Expressionism: An International Context* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2007) and Stephen Polcari, "Abstract Expressionism: New and Improved," *Art Journal* 47:3 (Autumn 1988), 174-180.

²⁶⁷ Peffer quotes USSALEP documents at length indicating that there are no public records of USSALEP's direct involvement with the US Government, see Peffer, 164. However, despite the absence of official documentation of USSALEP's involvement with the government, I am unconvinced that they were politically neutral. Thus, the claim that they had no government involvement and opposed Reagan's official policies is questionable given the personal connections.

that would prevent the country from spiraling into violent anti-capitalist revolution. USSALEP was specifically noted in the Rockefeller Foundation Report as being a tool to promote peaceful change, through its concentration on “efforts promoting elite forms of education...as part of its general policy to promote the ‘emergence of a black merchant class.’”²⁶⁸

Robert Loder insists that the actual involvement of USSALEP was limited, stating that their primary role was to provide the international artist exchange and sponsorship of Golda Paints.²⁶⁹ Regardless of their true intentions, the aid helped Thupelo get off the ground, offering the artists resources to negotiate according to their own will. Nonetheless, the suspicion surrounding USSALEP’s involvement was enough to spur debates about America’s cold war interests and the anachronistic copying of American culture in South Africa, debates that were heavily damaging to the both the critical reception and credibility of the early workshops within the country.²⁷⁰

By 1988 the Thupelo Art Projects were no longer supported by USSALEP. The final workshops of 1988 and 1989 featured no international visitors and were held on a smaller scale at the Africana Museum in Johannesburg and again at the Alpha Training Centre in Broederstroom. Furthermore, accommodations and extra curricular programming were cancelled due to lack of funds. The end of the 1980’s was a turning point for Thupelo as it signaled the end of American involvement in the workshops, and also the loss of a significant amount of funding.

²⁶⁸ John Davies, “U.S. Foreign Policy and the Education of Black South Africans,” *Comparative Education Review* 29,2 (May 1985) 181.

²⁶⁹ Robert Loder, Interview by Miriam Aronowicz, Gasworks Studio, London, England, January 2011.

²⁷⁰ Peffer, “Art at the End of Apartheid,” 2009, discusses the criticisms of USSALEP, which were mainly published by Younge and Richards in a series of publications in the *Weekly Mail*, 1987.

Yet, throughout this time of transition many of the artists involved in South Africa's workshops were invited to the Triangle events in New York.²⁷¹ Approximately 5% of the New York visitors came from South Africa annually creating a strong creative current between the two nodes.

As the structures of apartheid began to disintegrate and funding models changed, the lack of a codified institution allowed the workshops to maintain a flexibility that evolved with the times. As noted by Koloane:

At its best the studio and workshop concept is flexible in shape – flexible to any form or situation. It can be triangular, hexagonal, trapezoid, yet surprisingly there is no room for squares...the concept can only thrive when inventively with innovative programmes emanating from its multifunctional space.²⁷²

The fluidity of the workshop model was its greatest strength, resting on an idea rather than an institution. In 1989 there were discussions about creating a Thupelo constitution. According to sources this was never completed, and the decision was made to maintain an evolving model that ran on an uncoded ethos handed down from one member to another.²⁷³ Hence, the inventive

²⁷¹ According to the Triangle Workshop yearbooks the South African visitors to the New York Triangle included; 1983 – David Koloane and Ian Redelinghüys, 1984 – David Koloane, 1985 – Bill Ainslie and Garth Erasmus, 1986 – Dumisane Mabaso, 1987 – Lionel Davis and Ian Redelinghüys, 1988 – Sholto Ainslie and Anthusa Sotiriades, 1989 – Kagiso Patrick Mautloa and Durant Sihlali, 1990 – Chabani Cyril Manganyi, 1991 – Sam Nhlengethwa. South Africa had one of the most consistent attendance records of all the international artists involved in Triangle New York.

²⁷² Fordsburg Artists' Studio exhibition pamphlet (Pretoria: UNISA Art Gallery, 2005)

²⁷³ The intentions for a constitution are briefly mentioned in the Thupelo Art Projects Newsletter 1989. In discussions with Jill Trappler, June 2010 it was verified that no constitution was ever created.

nature of the workshops and ability to respond to a specific time and place are a reason for its success.

During the early 1990's Thupelo went through major transitions. Many of the artists who had initially worked at the workshops were looking for professionalizing their practice and finding more permanent opportunities. The funding slowly dissipated and the FUBA gallery, which included many Thupelo donations, closed. As an extension of the impermanent workshop process the Fordsburg Artists Studios aka "The Bag Factory" in Johannesburg opened in 1991. Koloane came from the FUBA gallery to start the studios and direct the space, and Robert Loder purchased the warehouse as the first permanent establishment within his British based Triangle Arts. At the time it was the first non-racial artists' studio in South Africa and one of the first permanent residency buildings on the African continent, consisting of 18 studios, a gallery, computer facility, offices and conference room.²⁷⁴ The Bag Factory was strategically located in the inner city district of Newtown, linking to some of the first urban black art movements that emerged around the Market Theatre, and close to Soweto.

The Bag Factory alleviated the limitations of an impermanent workshop. At the end of the two weeks most artists returned home to squalid conditions with no space or place to continue working, challenging the continuation of their artistic development. The idea of creating a permanent studio space came to Koloane after his experiences in London where he worked in a collective in Stockwell. He recalled that it afforded, "the privilege of working in a collective studio situation without any form of discrimination on the basis of color or culture, enabling me to work and operate on a professional level, as opposed to the necessarily ad hoc

²⁷⁴ Fordsburg Artists' Studio exhibition pamphlet (Pretoria: UNISA Art Gallery, 2005) 2.

approach common among township artists.²⁷⁵ While the impermanence of the workshops was institutionalized based on the same ethos of collectivity, experimentation and collective production, the new studio space offered a permanent working site that focused on the long-term professionalization of artists.

As noted by Jill Trappler, this was an attempt to institutionalize Thupelo and ‘it did not work, for it did not want to be that.’²⁷⁶ While the Bag Factory was extremely successful as an institution, home to some of South Africa’s most successful artists, it signaled the end of the initial Thupelo workshop model. The goal of Thupelo was to promote arts in places without an infrastructure, to fill the voids left by colonialism and provide the artist with the confidence and experience to further his/her career. Thus, Thupelo subsided in Johannesburg only to reemerge where there was new need; in Cape Town under the direction of Lionel Davis and in Durban under Thami Kali.

After a few years of organizing the Cape Town Thupelo Workshops, the working group was approached by Dr. Isky Gordon a South African doctor living in London. Gordon felt more was needed for South African arts, particularly for those artists from difficult economic situations. “The well known galleries in Johannesburg were successfully selling art and promoting chosen artists. I wanted to establish a very different concept, inspired by the Bag Factory in Johannesburg,” said Gordon.²⁷⁷ Upon returning to London, Gordon approached Loder about creating a similar opportunity in Cape Town, a site where there was an active working

²⁷⁵ Fordsburg Artists’ Studio, 3

²⁷⁶ Jill Trappler, discussions with Miriam Aronowicz at Greatmore Studios, Cape Town, June 2010

²⁷⁷ Isky Gordon quoted in *10 Years at Greatmore Studios Pamphlet*, (Cape Town: Greatmore Studios, 2006), 1

group of artists but no permanent space or infrastructure. As one of the most “successfully” divided cities under apartheid,²⁷⁸ Cape Town suffered from a completely imbalanced working environment, but also a unique history with the Community Arts Project (CAP), a community school that served as a central site of resistance to the apartheid regime.²⁷⁹ Jill Trappler stated that by the end of the 1990’s CAP was defunct, leaving a void in the already limited Cape Town art scene.²⁸⁰ “So we needed some of CAP but in a more professional/mature working space and the Greatmore Studios could be an attempt to kind of equalize a very unbalanced artistic environment in Cape Town with reference to black artists.”²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ Apartheid legislation shaped Cape Town into a white enclave, turning its traditionally racially mixed areas into white areas by pushing the black and coloured communities largely north of the city centre. The natural geography of the city with Table Mountain in the centre furthered this division by physically demarcating the white and non-white spaces, which were pushed to the outskirts of the city.

²⁷⁹ The Community Arts Project was established in 1977, originally as a site to offer those excluded through the Bantu Education Act space and facilities to creative expression, much which surged alongside the politics of the time. By the 1980’s CAP became increasingly politicized when Gordon Metz, in his capacity as a member of the African National Congress asked that CAP act as a coordinator for the 1982 Culture and Resistance Festival in Gaborone, Botswana. CAP was singled out as a location where artists could return to and further their impact within the community. CAP also became the physical meeting place for grass-roots anti-apartheid organizations, intimately tying it to the culture of struggle. In 1985 CAP released a working paper that stated CAP “firmly commits itself to a cultural policy that is rooted in the struggle for a unified South Africa, democratically governed and free of all forms of oppression and exploitation.” With the onset of democracy CAP changed its mission to include a tighter educational focus with an attempt to help students transition into skilled jobs or further education. Detailed history of CAP taken from Jacqueline Nolte, “Ownership of the Community Arts Project (CAP) 1976-1997,” published in Africa South African Initiative, 18 February 2011, accessed at <http://www.asai.co.za/forum.php?id=1088>

²⁸⁰ Jill Trappler and Garth Erasmus in *Conversation in 10 Years at Greatmore Studios Pamphlet*, (Cape Town: Greatmore Studios, 2006) 3. For more information about CAP see Eben Lochner, “The Community Arts Project (CAP): The Role of the Arts in Building Community and Artistic Development,” presented at Art and Social Justice International Conference, Durban University of Technology, March 21-24 2010.

²⁸¹ Jill Trappler and Garth Erasmus in *Conversation in 10 Years at Greatmore Studios Pamphlet*, (Cape Town: Greatmore Studios, 2006) 3.

The workshop's shift from impermanence towards stable sites represents one of the greatest tensions within the model. Despite their ethos of non-institutionalization the workshops tend to be most successful once they claim a permanent space of their own. Within the network these tensions of permanence/impermanence are in constant flux, and although workshops emerge in artistically underdeveloped spaces, once they progress beyond a certain size or frequency they ultimately require a stable and centralized home base. While there are workshops within the network that remain homeless, they are generally in locations where there is an existing arts infrastructure, enabling the artist to find patronage and support to fuel their ongoing practice.²⁸² Thus, in locations without existing arts infrastructures the workshops are often more effective if they establish permanent affiliated spaces to set up sustainable enterprise. One of the challenges is then how to create these spaces (which have boards of directors, studios, galleries and exhibitions, budgets and schedules) without emulating the established discourse. As Foucault states in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*:

Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. Every education system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it"²⁸³

²⁸² Brazier's, the annual workshop outside of London, England has no central home base, yet functions regularly. However, the arts infrastructure within the UK is strong enough to maintain continuity and offer its administrators enough of an infrastructure that Brazier's does not need its own studio space.

²⁸³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1969) 226.

The Triangle model occupies an ambiguous place within the art historical discourse. It promotes a framework that offers an alternative to the established artscape but ultimately relies on existing art world structures to sustain its success. The workshops are an interesting negotiation between flows and structures, the stable social forms and organizations that help us contain and understand the objects in motion.²⁸⁴

While the effects of the flow of the Thupelo workshops and the permanence of institutions such as the Bag Factory or Greatmore Studios have been immense for narratives of South African art history, the historical writing surrounding the workshops, in particular, remains limited. The majority of published research emanates from Europe. In contrast, South African writing on Thupelo is meager. Hence, the threat of creating a field that further subordinates African art history through its attempts at historicizing needs to be taken into account.²⁸⁵ Particularly when the majority of writing is coming from Europe we must caution against creating what Gayatri Spivak calls “an ethnocentric extension of Western logos--a totalizing, essentialist "mythology" as Derrida might call it.”²⁸⁶

There are a handful of dissertations about the early Thupelo workshops, and researchers have attended some of the events,²⁸⁷ but this work remains largely unpublished. One of the only

²⁸⁴ Appadurai, “Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination,” *Public Culture* 12:1 (2000)

²⁸⁵ Elza Miles’ FUBA files are one of the most comprehensive archives on the early community arts centres in South Africa. Her research on the Polly Street Art Centre and FUBA are housed in the Johannesburg Art Gallery Archives, where she donated her papers.

²⁸⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271 - 316. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988.)

²⁸⁷ John Peffer attended some of the first Thupelo workshops and has published his research. His work remains the most comprehensive study to date on the early events.

comprehensive accounts of the early Thupelo workshops is John Peffer's *Art at the End of Apartheid* (2009), to which my own research is indebted, but befitting his historical focus, his work ends with the onset of democracy, leaving an entire new chapter of Thupelo untold.²⁸⁸

There have been three exhibitions within England that have addressed the Thupelo Projects, in one-way or another.²⁸⁹ The first major international exhibition to explore South African art was David Elliott's *Art from South Africa*, at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford in 1990, featuring comprehensive sections on the community art movements. Following Elliott's show, Clementine Deliss curated *Seven Stories: About Modern Art in Africa* which featured a subsection curated by David Koloane titled "Moments in Art: A Story from South Africa," including works by prominent black artists, segments on the community centres and small focus on the Thupelo Art Projects.²⁹⁰ Five years later, in 2000, Robert Loder exhibited his collection

²⁸⁸ John Peffer's archival and historical research is unrivaled in the field of South African art history. In an email exchange with Jill Trappler, Sept 2010 she verified that his historical groundwork is quite accurate. Yet, his work addresses Thupelo problematically as "a school," thereby portraying the workshops as much more programmatic than they actually were. His book has been criticized for being "too historical," the reason he claims that he was left out of Brenda Atkinson and Candice Breitz, eds. *Grey Areas: Representation, Identity and Politics in Contemporary South African Art* (Johannesburg: Chalkham Hill Press, 1999). However I would disagree with these criticisms, as the historical groundwork is necessary and often missing in South African art histories, which elude the past and rush into the contemporary.

²⁸⁹ Since 1994 there has been a surge of international shows documenting South African art. While many of these works reference various Thupelo participants the mainstream exhibitions tend to focus on aesthetics of photography, new media or conceptual works. The works produced at Thupelo are often overlooked at newer exhibitions.

²⁹⁰ David Koloane, "Moments in Art," in *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*, ed. Clementine Deliss (Paris and London: Flammarion and Whitechapel Gallery, 1995) 145 and David Koloane and Ivor Powell, "In Conversation," In *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*, ed. Clementine Deliss (Paris and London: Flammarion/Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1995) 264. "Seven Stories" was part of the africa95 festival put on in Britain to honor the arts of Africa and the collaborations between the UK and Africa. It was conceptualized in 1992 by Robert Loder and Clementine Deliss and featured over fifty African exhibitions. "Seven Stories" was hosted at the Whitechapel Gallery and attempted to show a more contemporary non-cliché version of African Arts. "Seven Stories" was not originally part of the africa95 plan but because the Royal Academy refused to include modern and contemporary art in its telling of

from South Africa at the Atkinson Gallery in Somerset, UK, creating a small but important catalogue *Cross Currents: Contemporary Art Practices in South Africa and Exhibition in Two Parts*. The catalogue included entries by a range of intellectuals including Bill Ainslie's friend and relative, David Trappler, artists and educator Penny Siopsis, as well as David Koloane and Bill Ainslie all who expressed the importance of the workshops and studio systems within the education structure.²⁹¹

Within South Africa proper, two exhibitions have addressed the Thupelo works; both organized by commercial galleries, "Moving in Time and Space," and another by the Stellenbosch Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery (SMAC) exhibition "Abstract Art from the Isolation Years."²⁹² Both of these shows include an abundance of work produced or inspired by the Thupelo workshops but neither catalogue offers in- depth critical writing about the community workshop experience.²⁹³ Although Thupelo had no express mandate to promote

African history, a separate show was conceived. It was less visually spectacular than the simultaneous blockbuster "Africa Art of a Continent" held at the Royal Academy of Arts. Viewed as a more important critical exhibition, it was curated by five African artist/scholars and was more concerned with African artists themselves. For further discussion and critiques of *Seven Stories* see; Kendell Geers and Doran H. Ross, "africa95: Many Stories about the Art of a Continent," *African Arts* 29:3 (Summer 1996) 1,6,8,11. Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, "Exhibiting Africa: Curatorial Attitudes and the Politics of Representation in 'Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa,'" *African Arts*, 30: 1 (Winter 1997) 10,12,83,84. Philip L Ravenhill, Review of Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa, *African Arts*, 29:3 (Summer 1996) 15,16,18.

²⁹¹ *Cross Currents: Contemporary Art Practice in South Africa an Exhibition in Two Parts*, (Somerset: Atkinson Gallery, 2000).

²⁹² Annabel Rosholt and Michael Stevenson, *Moving in Time and Space: Shifts from Abstraction and Representation in Post-War South African Art* (Cape Town: Michael Stevenson Gallery, 2004) and Muller Ballot ed, *Abstract Art from the Isolation Years: Volume I* (Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery, 2007)

²⁹³ In 2005 and 2008 SMAC and University of South Africa UNISA published an exhibition of the Bruce Campbell Smith collection, *Revisions+Expanding the Narrative of South African Art*. This show attempted to fill the void of a critical South African art history by featuring only the works of black artists. The show promoted a revisionist history of South African arts that included twenty-eight black

abstraction, the renewed interest in viewing Thupelo through this lens, answers earlier dismissals of the workshops that characterized them as poor copies of American abstraction. Instead, the newer exhibitions point to a comprehensive abstract movement under South Africa's apartheid regime. This revisionist reading illustrates that despite the closed system, local artists engaged in ongoing and complex negotiations of international flows, reworking them into a situated but cosmopolitan artscape.

In recent years there has been a general loss of international interest in the contemporary Thupelo workshops, attributed to the unfashionable practice of abstraction within contemporary global trends. The early writing about African modernisms fit within the zeitgeist of multiculturalism and diversity. The newer workshops occupy an ambiguous place within global flows, working within a transnational framework but creating work that does not necessarily

artists who were traditionally left out of contemporary narratives. In this respect it was very similar to Steven Sack's *The Neglected Tradition* (1998) the first major exhibition within South Africa to include black artists. Creating a show that was based on Sack's precedent almost twenty-years after the end of apartheid signals that dearth of scholarship and slow shifts in patronage that still exist. Undoubtedly, the representation of black artists in democratic South Africa is still unequal to white artists. Nonetheless, Campbell-Smith, a white South African collector, has been heavily criticized. Absent from his collection are all the major artists from the Thupelo workshops, or artists who work non-figuratively, demonstrating a problematic return to the trope of black artists as figurative painters. Hayden Proud, "The Collection as an Image of the Collector" in *Revisions+Expanding the Narrative of South African Art: The Campbell Smith Collection*. (Stellenbosch, SA: UNISA Press and Stellenbosch Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery, 2008) summarizes the criticism of the collection. He states, in reference to Chinua Achebe's analogy of a funeral, these initiatives are often discussed as being created by "stranger[s] who shed more tears than the bereaved." He also quotes Okwui Enwezor in "Reframing the Black Subject: Ideology and Fantasy in Contemporary South African Representation," stating, "the pragmatic value' of everything that defines the country still derives from an 'interregnum of white nationalism and black resistance', so that the 'birthright of utterances' that have defined the character of the nation have 'ultimately belonged to the white interlocutor.'" The dialogue that *Revisions* generated demonstrates that many of the same debates about representation, and who has the right to represent whom, are still at the forefront of contemporary South African culture.

translate widely.²⁹⁴ Since writing is always tied to a period eye it seems as though current conditions have turned Thupelo into a blind spot within the larger narratives.²⁹⁵

This leaves one posing the question:

One is right to wonder what is being taught to students under the rubric ‘South African Art’ if the many histories constituting this subject are yet to be written. What, after all, do we really know of the modernisms practiced in Bill Ainslie’s studio and allied workshops, at Thupelo, also in artists’ studios such as the Bag Factory and Greatmore?²⁹⁶

Unfortunately, some of the more contemporary approaches of historicizing the workshops were demonstrated at the two Johannesburg biennales, which packaged and promoted the workshops in a pejorative way.²⁹⁷ At the first biennial the Community Art Centres were exhibited in a separate curatorial project entitled “The Outreach and Development Project” held in the townships far outside any of the main exhibition spaces and curated by one of the only black curators on the biennale board, Bongi Dhlomo. This segment of the biennale, which featured local artists without formal training seemed ad hoc and improvised due to its placement

²⁹⁴ In discussions with Willard Boepple (September 2010) and John Picton (January 2011) the theme of translation emerged as an issue within transnational networks. Picton stressed the rarity of finding artists from Africa whose work translates both in Africa and abroad, making it more difficult to find artists who are able to circulate on an even global circuit.

²⁹⁵ The period eye is a term developed by Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) to describe the socially constructed ways of seeing objects, created and shaped by our immediate environment.

²⁹⁶ Thembinkosi Goniwe, “Blame it on the Art Historians,” *Art South Africa* 7:3 (2000) 25.

²⁹⁷ David Koloane has been an outspoken critic of the Johannesburg Biennales and the damage they created for community institutions, see; David Koloane, “Africus: The Johannesburg Biennale: A Perspective” *African Arts* 29, 1 (Winter 1996) 50-56.

and set up outside the main biennale structure. The separation of the community schools and workshops outside the main pavilions represented them as an underclass artscape, rather than an integral component of South Africa's democracy. Koloane called the biennial a "tokenistic Afro-Disney"²⁹⁸ in which the realities on the ground were overlooked in favor of promoting an unproblematic neatly packaged South African identity.

The second biennale catered to a more 'global aesthetic,' leaving out the localisms of South African production (i.e. workshops such as Thupelo,) in favor of a more international platform. While critically the second Johannesburg Biennial received better international reviews, it did little for many of the artists within the country it claimed to represent. Many criticized the de-facto 'foreign policy' of South African arts as being an opportunistic re-entry into the international art community with little regard to the realities and local modernisms within the country,²⁹⁹ entrenching the idea that South African community movements were incompatible with global flows. Considering it was the community projects that provided the only opportunities for black artists to enter the art systems and these events were intended to

²⁹⁸ Koloane quoted in Thomas McEvelley, "Towards a World Class City – first Africus Biennale in Johannesburg South Africa." *Art in America* (September 1995)

²⁹⁹ Gordon Metz, "Africus: The Johannesburg Biennale," *African Arts* 29 (Winter 1996): 57 - 59 offers a good critique of the first Biennale where he states that South Africa was not ready for an international showcase. The biennale was criticized as a further entry of white artists into the global world, while black artists were largely neglected and still left behind. Anitra Nettleton quoted in Thomas McEvelley, "Towards a World Class City," argued that the Biennale was "trying to create an unproblematic unity in the face of political realities in South Africa." The response to Trade Routes, the second Johannesburg biennial was very divided. International critics and globally successful South African artists felt it was very beneficial whereas many locals felt it was elitist and non-representative. Bongi Dhlomo in conversations with Michael Godby, *African Arts* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2004) states that although the Biennales were criticized, they did give South Africa exposure and one cannot underestimate the opportunities it gave many South African artists.

showcase the new democratic South African art world, ironically they negated the very structures that opened its doors.

Yet, one of the greatest problems of assessing Thupelo formally, an inherent focus of Biennales, is that “it threw up work that, considered as a final product was frankly awful.”³⁰⁰ The works were never intended for exhibition. They were formal experiments, developments in process and opportunities for many of the artist to work in new scale, with new materials. After access to the two-week facility many of the artists returned to the townships and continued working on tourist curios and marketable productions. Robert Loder helped the artists by purchasing some of the works from the workshops and occasionally exhibiting them.³⁰¹ Willard Boepple’s, a long time board member of Triangle, suggested that Loder’s support for the artist was never paternalistic, but purely out of a need to enable these artists to continue working and travelling within the network. Nonetheless, with the exception of Loder, the patronage for Thupelo products was virtually non-existent.

The value of Thupelo lay in the opportunities and facilities it offered rather than the artworks, creating an inherent problem for an art historical narrative traditionally based around objects. The workshops were a venue for discussion, critique and creative experimentation, free

³⁰⁰ David Koloane and Ivor Powell, “In Conversation,” In *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*, ed. Clementine Deliss (Paris and London: Flammarion/Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1995) 264.

³⁰¹ In personal interviews with Willard Boepple (Sept 2010), he indicated that Robert’s main intention in collecting works was to provide artists with the financial means to continue travelling. He stressed that there was nothing paternalistic in his support for the young artists. These works are now housed at Gasworks Studio, and have been exhibited in a series of exhibitions including “Image and Form: Prints, Drawings and Sculpture from Southern Africa and Nigeria,” at the Brunei Gallery in London, 1997, “Cross Currents: Contemporary Art Practice in South Africa an Exhibition in Two Parts,” at the Atkinson Gallery, 2000, “Action and Vision: Painting and Sculpture in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda from 1980,” at Rochdale Art Gallery, 2002 and “Transitions: Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe 1960-2004 at the Africa Centre in 2005.

from the demands of township art. They were an opportunity for artists to create art for themselves rather than for white tourists hoping to collect the “authentic” Africa. Using abstraction as a guiding style for the workshops was in the words of Marilyn Martin, a tool to “loosen styles” which had become clichéd and had pigeonholed many of the country’s black artists. Albie Sachs repeated this sentiment in 1990, in an ANC publication where he criticized using art solely as a tool for cultural struggle, on the grounds that it impoverished art and stripped the diversity of traditions.

Hence, it has been a perpetual misreading to locate the power of the workshops in their form as opposed to the structural changes that they instigated.³⁰² The traditional paradigms of art history have promoted a legacy of object-based readings, and this inability to look at work in a larger context is what has challenged Thupelo’s history. As noted by Michel de Certeau, “as in a workshop or lab the objects produced by an inquiry result from its (more or less original) contribution to the field that has made it possible. From this point of view, the “objects” of our research cannot be detached from the intellectual and social commerce that organizes their definition and their displacements.”³⁰³ Only once one approaches Thupelo from this broader theory of art, can we assess the workshops in their entirety. The tendency to view art as both an

³⁰² In conversations with Estelle Jacobs, the former director of AVA Gallery in Cape Town and a long time supporter of Thupelo, at the Thupelo “Interventions” Open Day (June 25, 2011), she insisted that many people do not understand Thupelo because they continuously expect to see finished work. She stressed that it is not a traditional exhibition and one cannot judge the works as final products, but must look at them in terms of their process and development. The workshop actors generally expressed conflicted feelings about the expectation to exhibit unfinished work. Furthermore, some felt that the site-specific configuration of “Interventions” was even more challenging because of the explicit end goal to produce an object.

³⁰³ Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984) 43.

autonomous art object and an archive is an effective tool against the vanishing present.³⁰⁴

Nonetheless one must deconstruct the existing archive the surrounds the workshops. Thus, this chapter begins with a Foucauldian archaeology, unraveling the two poles of formalist or political readings that Thupelo has historically been reduced to.³⁰⁵

Undoubtedly the limited historiography that exists around Thupelo relates to the post-apartheid approach of historicizing the community art centres, placing them in the histories of apartheid rather than the present. The existing writing is a symptom of what African philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah might call a "space clearing gesture," implying the carving out of a space in the present that is distinguished from the past.³⁰⁶ As demonstrated by the biennales, as well as many of the exhibits that focus on art from a democratic South Africa, much of the postcolonial writing engages less with the historical trajectories of art under apartheid and more with creating a "new" globally relevant South African artscape. In other words, many of the black modernisms the developed under apartheid have been cleared in exchange for cutting edge, conceptual contemporary pieces (i.e. new media, photography, etc.), essentially, those works that translate globally in an aesthetic still governed by European market trajectories.

This presents a huge challenge for South African contemporary art for it raises issues of power and access. Many black artists still cannot financially afford the post-secondary institutions, leaving the newer community art schools as the most viable option for many artists.

³⁰⁴ For a discussion of the object as art and archive in the South African context see Okwui Enwezor, "The Enigma of a Rainbow Nation," In *Personal Affects: Power and Poetics in Contemporary South African Art*, ed. Sophie Perryer (New York and Cape Town: Museum for African art, 2004) 27.

³⁰⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 226

³⁰⁶ Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post in Postmodernism the same as the Post in Postcolonial?" *Critical Inquiry* 17.2 (Winter 1991): 248.

The community centres also continue to be promoted in ANC government documents as part of the strategy to increase accessibility in the arts. They are, therefore, a vibrant part of a changing South African society and a facet of culture that needs to be addressed. Despite the lack of critical writing surrounding the current community art centres, they continue to play a vital role in South African art production. As Marilyn Martin states;

The sad thing is, FUBA, FUNDA, the Community Arts Project, we still have a need for that. There will always be artists black or white, or any other color, who don't want to go to university, who want to go to an art school...because it provides another kind of education. It saddens me enormously that with democracy there has been the demise of these NGO's that sustained the creative process, under the apartheid years...I think there are still too many artists who are left behind through our education system.³⁰⁷

Thupelo opens a space for the artists left out of the South African education system to work alongside those who have been academically trained. This equalizes the playing field, offering all artists access to an international space and aesthetic.

South African art has a substantial global art presence, arguably a larger visibility than any other country on the African continent, and it is the translatability of South African art that is a major reason for its recent success in the global markets. Undoubtedly, this ability to translate is closely tied to the histories of European art education within South Africa, something still not all students are able to access. Despite its rhetoric of transnationalism, the coordinates of

³⁰⁷ Marilyn Martin, interview by Miriam Aronowicz at the South African National Gallery library, Cape Town, South Africa, June 2010.

globalism are still blindly defined in European terms. Thus, the European codes fostered at South African art schools echo the trends of the global artscape, enabling artists who access these institutions smooth entry into global circuits. The most recent Thupelo workshop was an “intervention” not only into the local community but also into South Africa’s engagement with global contemporaneity.

Thupelo “Interventions”

Thupelo “Interventions” was the 30th Thupelo workshop hosted to date from its inception at Rustenburg in 1985. The contemporary workshops complicate mainstream global artsapes by demonstrating how local community-oriented practices can operate within transnational and global frameworks. Rather than situating the local on a global platform, Thupelo “Interventions” situates the global into the local. Providing a unique framework for international production within a community space, “Interventions” reverses directional flows of the contemporary art world.³⁰⁸

Figure 9: Leaflet for Great Walk and More Festival featuring the Open Day at Greatmore Studios in 2010 (Left-Front / Right-Back)

³⁰⁸ Chin Tao-Wu, “Biennials without Borders?” Tate Papers (Autumn 2009) Accessed - <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/09autumn/chin.shtm>. In Tao-Wu’s discussions of Biennial’s she brings forth statistical data that deconstructs the global flows of the art world, proving that despite the seeming “equalization” and “deterritorialization” of the global art world these artsapes are made from one-way flows from the periphery to the centre. “To reach the centres you need to imagine an uphill journey, starting from the peripheries and passing through the semi-peripheries and semi-centres before you reach the top – though in some cases it may be possible to jump straight from a periphery to one of the centres. Hierarchical because, like all power relations, the spiral has a central core, with clusters of satellites orbiting it.”

Thupelo “Interventions” was hosted from June 10th to 24th, 2010 at the Greatmore Studios in Cape Town. Unlike previous workshops, “Interventions” was the first Thupelo with a theme, and final goal to create site-specific artworks within the surrounding community of Woodstock. The premise of the workshop was to break down the barriers between the Woodstock community and Greatmore Studios, a site that had become increasingly isolated from its surroundings. The workshop’s goal was to improve the reputation of Greatmore Street as a safe community space and repudiate the neighborhood’s dangerous reputation.

Twenty-five artists from America, Cape Town, Congo, Ghana, Great Britain, Holland, India, Iran, Nigeria, Serbia and Uganda worked together for 14 days, housed in the neighborhood Learning Centre, a community school across the street from the studio. The makeshift accommodations were named the “refugee camp,” and featured communal rooms with portable plumbing, limited heating and sparse conditions. Upon arriving at the workshop each artist was asked to identify a site or space within Woodstock and create a site-specific intervention that could be displayed on the final Open Day. Unlike previous workshops, “Interventions” aligned its open day with the first Woodstock street festival, *The Great Walk and More Festival*, a community celebration of food, performance and culture.

Figure 10: Woodstock Starlights at annual Kaapse Klopse parade (Source: <http://blog.sa-venues.com/provinces/western-cape/great-walk-more-exhibition/>)

The festival commenced on the final night of the workshop, with a street parade and live music provided by the Woodstock Starlights.³⁰⁹ As the carnival band walked up Greatmore

³⁰⁹ The Woodstock Starlights are minstrel troupe based in Woodstock, Cape Town. The *Kaapse Klopse* (known as the Coon Carnival or Minstrel Carnival) is an annual New Years carnival in Cape Town where select members of the Cape Town coloured communities take the streets in brightly colored parades often sporting in black face or white face entering into carnival competitions. The carnival is organized into

Street community members were encouraged to come out of their houses and “light the way” for the parade, which led to a celebration in the Learning Centre car park. With over 1000 visitors, the audience, artists, invitees and neighborhood families activated the Woodstock community as a positive space, shifting the focus from safety and security to art and cultural history. The cultural festival represented contemporary art in a “third space,” neither purely activist nor academic. But rather, it occupied an ambivalent place in between art and life, a space that simultaneously unified the community while furthering artistic practice.³¹⁰

During the two-week working period artists were encouraged to approach the neighbors about their requirements and opinions for the public works. This resulted in works of art that were governed by community tastes and expectation, and designed to translate to a specific local audience. For example Veryan Edwards created a non-figurative mural with Islamic script that spoke to familial and domestic themes, a subject matter the residents of Greatmore Street encouraged as an appropriate topic.

Figure 11: Veryan Edwards, *Community Gratitude*, Rough Sketches and Final Installation for house #54, Paint, Woodstock, Cape Town, 2010.

Klopse (translated in English as troupes), which, like bands and camps in other Carnivals, serve as social networks for the participants. The festival dates to the tradition of slave bands putting on friendly competition on the annual January 2nd slave day. By the end of the 1800’s American and British minstrel shows starting coming to Cape Town and became syncretized with the slave holiday festivals. The term “coon” was reclaimed as the troupes began using the term with pride. The apartheid regime attempted to suppress these festivals without success, turning the annual event into a symbol of resistance, cultural perseverance and the hybridity, diversity and syncretism that continues to define Capetonian culture. For more reading about the carnival see Denis-Constant Martin, *Coon Carnival: New Year in Cape Town: Past and Present* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1999).

³¹⁰ The *Third Space* is defined by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* as a space that occurs in between the oppositions of self/other and colonizer/colonized. In his words, “the non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space – a third space – where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences.” 218.

While conversely, the artist Phillippe Kayumba was encouraged to censor his photographs of female nudes in respect for the Muslim neighborhood. Thus, the community played an integral role in the creation and implementation of the works. By representing the tensions of the artists' creative ambitions and the real constraints of the community Thupelo created spaces, which required a negotiation between art and life. Demonstrating that contemporary art production is often found in the shuttling between the extremes of autonomy and heterotony,³¹¹ Thupelo signaled a departure from the original utopian aspirations found at the earlier workshops.

By blurring traditional categories Thupelo "Interventions" begins to answer the question first posed by Terry Smith, "In the aftermath of modernity, and the passing of the postmodern, how are we to know and show what it is to live in the conditions of contemporaneity?"³¹² One of the challenges in addressing the global contemporary art world is the question of art's assumed universal mandate: to exchange, translate and circulate within a market. Here Thupelo intervenes by reclaiming these ideas and demonstrating their connections to ideals of cosmopolitanism. The workshops engage with the premise of universality, but in a way that promotes an art that does so without relying on a universal mandate but, rather, on a universal address.³¹³ This universalism does not imply that all people respond the same way to aesthetic experiences, but it

³¹¹ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, translated by Gabriel Rockhill, (New York and London: Continuum, 2000)

I use the terms autonomy and heterotony to describe the work of art as existing in and of itself as an autonomous object, but is heterotonomous because it relies on the outside rules/environment/community to shape it as well.

³¹² Terry Smith, Introduction to *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity and Contemporaneity*, edited by Terry Smith Okwui Enwezor and Nancy Condee (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2008) 1.

³¹³ Thierry Du Duve, "The Glocal and The Signuniversal," *Third Text* 21: 6 (2007), 681-688.

is merely the transcendental idea of such a faculty. Unlike many major global exhibits, Thupelo does not rely on a translatability, but rather, on multiple interpretations of the works and processes. The works created at the workshops all communicate in some way, but the diverging interpretations of what they say, how they say it and how they are interpreted, allow the workshops to thrive. This makes them truly cosmopolitan in that they embody a multitude of different identities, cultural approaches and interpretations. “Interventions” continues to promote the legacy Ainslie first encouraged when he created the initial workshop “between the pole of high art, which challenges all taste in its quest for the unconditioned act/work, and the pole of community – or grass roots – art, which recognizes that all people are capable of authentic and vital expression.”³¹⁴

Yet, the most fundamental challenge Thupelo “Interventions” poses to contemporaneity is the reversal of its paradigm that traditionally places the local into the global. The emphasis on locality in the workshops dates to the 1990’s and with the promotion of internationalism and the emphasis of displaying local identities in a global framework.³¹⁵ These trends led many artists to begin engaging with forms of strategic essentialism.³¹⁶ By emphasizing certain facets of their local identity, their work fueled desire on the global stage. For example, the African artists who used western European aesthetics but simultaneously played with images of “africanness” were

³¹⁴ Bill Ainslie as quoted in Martin, “Is there a Place for Black Abstract Painters,” 5.

³¹⁵ Nikos Papastergiadis, *Dialogues in the Diaspora: Essays and Conversations on Cultural Identity*, 131-132.

³¹⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271 - 316. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988.)

catapulted to stardom. Hence, star artists and Triangle alumni, Chris Ofili and Yinka Shonibare, both drew on cultural references to promote their “internationalism.” Chris Ofili’s strategically used elephant dung in his works and referenced his Nigerian heritage while marketing himself as being post-identity. Likewise Yinka Shonibare continues to draw upon African cultural references through his use of Dutch wax print cloth largely made in the UK, hybridizing the complex web of British and European cultural references and demonstrating the inseparability and complex power relations that entangle European and African histories. Nonetheless, their location within the British art world sets them up in a space that privileges primitivizing narratives, demonstrating how it is much easier for the local to translate globally if it emerges from established art world centres.

Figure 12: Chris Ofili: *The Holy Virgin Mary*, 1996, paper collage, oil paint, glitter, polyester resin, map pins and elephant dung on linen.

Figure 13: Yinka Shonibare, *Girl Ballerina, Mannequin*, Dutch wax printed cotton, 2007.

This expectation for essentialized and detached identities but simultaneous global translatability has created a burden or representation amongst Diaspora artists. Often accepted into global circuits on the basis of their ‘otherness’ they remain trapped in the expectation to draw on self-primitivizing or tokenistic identity tropes. Furthermore, Shonibare and Ofili are both diaspora artists, a position that affords them a critical detachment that makes their negotiation of identity appear more legitimate. What is seen as exotic sampling in a western context is often primitivist or provincial when created from within the “periphery.” A framework that positions artists in a local setting and for a local audience relieves the pressure of portraying identity for global consumption. The site-specificity of “Interventions” forced artists to negotiate a specific place and time through their own experiences, challenging the commodification of

identity that is often displayed on global platforms.³¹⁷ However, the paradox of Thupelo is that although its practice strives for transnational post-identitarian frameworks, the grounds for its funding and marketing remain tied to the national categories that continue to govern global coordinates. Promoting the event as “international” continues to give the workshops more credibility than a purely local event, regardless of how much the artists are actually engaging with national categories. Likewise, large funding bodies, which remain governed by neoliberal market flows, require formal reports and assessments of the artist and audience demographic, and the bureaucracy and formalities of the enabling organizations (National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund) require classifications that continue to privilege arbitrary or fixed categories of identification. Thus, the publications and descriptions around Thupelo “Interventions” always stressed the multiplicity of nationalities involved. Yet, the works attest that the artists were negotiating their immediate place within South Africa rather than their national identity. The workshop reinforced the argument that national identity is often strongest when under threat. Without the pressure of a global audience, and in an equalized space, national identity retreats to the background and engagement with present space become more important.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ The term commodification is used in the way Appadurai defines it in “Commodities and the Politics of Value.” In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 3 – 63. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.) Merging the Marxist reading of commodity as something with economic value and Simmel’s view of commodity as Use Value, Appadurai looks at a commodity as anything that gains its value through exchange. At Thupelo identity is not “commodified” because its fluidity and intangibility defies exchange.

³¹⁸ Nikos Papastergiadis. *The Turbulence of Migration*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 116. And Kobena Mercer, “Ethnicity and Internationality: New British Art and Diaspora Based Blackness,” in *Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff (New York: Routledge, 1998) 190; both authors discuss issues of identity under threat. Kobena Mercer discusses this through the example of the Young British Artists, he states, “the YBAs pathetic neo-nationalism must be understood as a paradoxical attempt to hook up with global flows of art world capital, not by joining in and moving outward to embrace new art (from around the world) but by standing apart and turning inward to promote its own cultural identity as an ‘extra added value.’” This is similarly noted by Papastergiadis in his discussions of

Thus, Thupelo “Interventions” complicates the artist as ethnographer paradigm, for rather than transporting a mobile practice or preconceived methodology from one site to another, it forces artists to come up with new methods and approaches in an unknown time and space.³¹⁹ At Thupelo “Interventions” artists were deliberately disrupted from their normal working, living, and artistic conditions, altering their habitus. They not only had no idea what materials they could access, but many of them had never seen the space or travelled to Cape Town.³²⁰ Arriving into the unknown forced artists to tailor their work to local conditions, encouraging the works/productions to take on a local relevance.

In the first chapter I address the effect of the environment and physical conditions of Thupelo through Kwon’s model of site-specificity. However, ANT adds another lens through which one can explore Triangle. This theoretical approach has rarely been used in art historical studies because it assigns equal weight to human and non-human actors, complicating the primacy of the art object or the artist as a unified whole.³²¹ The existing art historical framework,

how identity at the cusp of transformation often tends to retreat into, or fabricate, a hostile narrative that reinforces boundaries and closes it off from ‘the other.’

³¹⁹ Hal Foster, “The Artist as Ethnographer,” in *The Return of the Real*, 171 – 204 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996) 173.

³²⁰ Artists were discouraged from bringing their own materials and were given a stipend of R1200 to collect and purchase materials from in and around Cape Town. With the exception of Philippe Kayumba none of the artists brought their own working materials. Kayumba brought conceptual photographs that he had taken previously and wanted to incorporate them into his “intervention.” According to the artists’ discussions, this was discouraged as it did not use the workshop resources to full potential. Thupelo differs from other workshops in that it encourages one to abandon previous working methods, rather than improve ones existing practice. The further artists get from their original working style they more successful they are considered.

³²¹ For more information on Actor-Network see John Law, “Notes on the Theory of Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity,” Center for Science Studies (Lancaster: Lancaster University 1992) Accessed <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Law-Notes-on-ANT.pdf>; Law, “Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics, Centre for Science Studies,” (Lancaster: Lancaster University, 2007) accessed <http://www.heterogeneities.net/publications/Law2007ANTandMaterialSemiotics.pdf>,

one that privileges an object based reading, has created a persistent challenge for writing Thupelo's history, and ANT offers the potential for creating a broader art historical reading that eliminates the primacy of the object as we know it. While the participating artists at Thupelo still create objects, and some of those objects end up circulating in the object based art world, the value of the experience comes less from the objects that are created (if any) than from the actual process. Even the materials, which are "objects," it is more that access to new materials, the experimentation and evolution of different mediums that become the focus.

Unlike other network theories, ANT 'flattens' the field assigning equal agency to the human and non-human actors. Thus, a work of art is a network comprised from a clustering of materials, artists, ideas, and location. One can use the metaphor of ANT in different ways for the Triangle network. One can approach the artworks and artists as independent nodes that cluster together to form the workshops/the networks, or one can see the workshops as the node and their connection to other workshops as the larger network. Both these scenarios allow for a flattened perspective of the Triangle web. In either approach, the mythical value that we award certain objects over others breaks down as each component can be disassembled to the point of near nothingness, furthering what Walter Benjamin termed as the destruction of the aura.³²² This is an effective

and Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For the full annotated ANT bibliography see John Law's database - <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/centres/css/ant/antres.htm>. One of the main criticisms of ANT is that it is morally problematic because it equalizes human and non-human actors, comparing people to "things."

³²² Benjamin states "that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art." Reproduction detaches the object from the domains of history, authenticity, tradition and authority effectively destroying the aura of the original work. I argue that network theory achieves a similar effect vis-à-vis the aura by deconstructing the complete object. Walter Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," (1936) *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969) 217-242.

approach for studying the creations at Thupelo because on a theoretical level it de-emphasizes the object in exchange for the multiple entangled components that make up the system.

In using ANT as a metaphor to analyze the works created at Thupelo, it is evident how each event, creation, performance or installation was rooted locally but inspired by larger conditions. The artists in attendance arrived without plans for their work, without materials and without knowledge of the working environment and dynamic. Thus, the human and non-human actors that comprised the workshop as a node were locally inspired. However, the habitus each artist arrived with was formed through broader networks that could be traced to each artist's (often international) background.

Bourdieu's theories of art perception, the codes with which the viewer interprets these works, were also relevant to Thupelo's reception. There were limited educated viewers, those who truly understood the goals and politics of the workshop. By opening the studio up to the public there was a further goal of the viewership broadening their perception of art by exposing them to the cramped working environments, limited materials, and physical conditions of the studio space. Exposure to the workshop's setting enlightens the perception of the artwork.³²³

Likewise, the "refugee camp" style accommodations to the physical limitation of space within

³²³ Nick Prior, "Putting a Glitch in the Field: Bourdieu, Actor Network Theory and Contemporary Music," *Cultural Sociology* 2:3 (Nov 2008) 301-319 – presents an excellent example of how Bourdieu and Latour's theories work together. His writing demonstrates that the two theorists are actually not opposed to one another but compliment each others' work. Elizabeth Harney cautions against how ANT can subsume the work of African artists and the political gains of postcolonial or anti-colonial resistance, which is a risk inherent to using ANT. However, ANT cannot be used as a methodology or theory in the traditional sense, but rather as an approach to be used selectively when deconstructing certain conditions of power.

It is also important to recognize that the workshops grew out of a need for space and better working conditions. When addressing how the current environment shapes the work of art it is more in terms of the practicality and reality of working within any physical space (with its inherent boundaries, limitations or potentials)

Greatmore Studios, simultaneously shaped the artists' habitus and ultimately the works they created.

ANT theory claims that every actor is important to the network, and that order is created when the nodes link smoothly. When components are removed from the actor-network analogy the system breaks down. Thus, ANT is a theory about the mechanics of power. It does not analyze networks, as much as it describes examples of why some networks perpetuate and others fall apart. This is very different from other theories of power such as Foucault, Gramsci or Althusser who discuss that webs of power and influence are set up in self-perpetuating almost systematic ways. ANT on the other hands highlights how weak these 'systems' can actually be. Yet, although ANT exposes these power structures, it does not deconstruct the hegemonic dynamics, these remain unchanged. ANT offers a way of understanding why Thupelo is often misread, and offers new approaches to understand its importance. For example, by removing certain *actants*, such as the finished art project from an exhibition structure Thupelo falls out of the art world narratives because it breaks down the framework for effective translation. ANT highlights how different networks become hegemonic when they exhibit stable components. The art world's main roster of ingredients—the finished painting, the exhibition wall, the artist statement—have created a framework for an art world that is comprehensible to western audiences.³²⁴ . Thupelo destabilizes this structure by removing certain components from within this.

Furthermore, although Thupelo is one node in a larger international network, the objects created at the workshop are South African networks in and of themselves. Thupelo's connection

³²⁴ The artworld is not always predictable and artists are constantly trying to de-stabilize the existing framework, but there is a baseline framework that art operates within (or outside) that acts as a point of reference for what we consider "mainstream" or "alternative" etc.

to the community but simultaneous circulation within a global arena creates an engaged cosmospace.³²⁵ Reversing the critical detachment that characterizes major global flows, Thupelo promotes an engaged cosmopolitanism that blurs and complicates or loosens the dichotomy of localism and globalism. The detachment and universal objectivity that permeates many global flows, often create an aesthetic that is generalized and homogenized.³²⁶ To return to James Elkins famous phrase, we are now in a period of “conceptual imperialism.”³²⁷ The contemporary is simply modernism in a new framework and the same hegemonic structures that governed earlier modes of production continue to operate albeit in different ways. Thupelo “Interventions” is one example of a site that complicates the assumption of a ruling or accepted aesthetic by demonstrating the potential of localizing nomadic flows of contemporary culture and encouraging artists to engage with a geographically defined site.

³²⁵ For a discussion of the term *cosmoscape* see Gavin Kendall, Ian Woodward and Zlatko Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism: Globalization, Identity, Culture and Government*, (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 128. Cosmoscapes are “spaces, practices, objects and images which afford and construct

networks within which cosmopolitan engagements may be possible.” Thupelo is defined as a cosmospace because it sets up a local space where artists are able to interact within a cosmopolitan arena. Presumably they are working off of Appadurai?

³²⁶ James Elkins, “On David Summers’s Real Spaces,” *Is Art History Global?* (New York: Routledge, 2007) p 41. p 41, presents the term “Conceptual Imperialism,” to describe the new homogenizing trends of global art history. There are evident trends emerging in global shows, particularly the expectation to work in a prescribed aesthetic. The proliferation of new media, photography and conceptual work at these global shows points to a new “international style” that grew out of European/North American art historical trajectories. Those working in art centres are often unaware of the variety of works taking place in the so-called “peripheries.” At a panel discussion at Triangle New York City in September 2010 artists debated if global art has become homogenized, most the artist working in art centres (such as New York, London, Berlin etc.) felt that because of globalization everyone was working in a similar aesthetic, yet artists from places outside these established centres demonstrated the diversity of styles in varying locations, particularly a preponderance of painting and even social realist styles seen as retro/outmoded.

³²⁷ James Elkins, “On David Summers’s Real Spaces,” *Is Art History Global?* (New York: Routledge, 2007) p 41.

For example, the work created by Maja Radanovic, uses art as commentary on the presence of safety bars on all the windows and doors in South Africa, a striking visual paradox of providing security while simultaneously symbolizing danger. Her project included collecting multi-colored zippers with which she covered the bars of a Greatmore Street house. She left the interpretation and consumption of the piece open ended, but with the expectation that people would take the zippers off the bars as the day progressed.

Figure 14: Maya Radanovic, Zipper installation, 2010

Radanovic was commenting on socio-political environments that emerge as a result of imminent theft and vandalism. Her work raised awareness of a normalized but problematic reality for South African neighborhoods, and in doing so demonstrated how bringing global flows into local spaces can activate the everyday in progressive new ways. Clearly, Thupelo “Interventions” fosters an international environment that strengthens the local ties within the community. Yet studies of contemporaneity offer no framework with which to discuss the “complex inter-local connections that operate in a global framework.”³²⁸ The existing western art historical framework continues to privilege contemporary art that is globally relevant. Thus, it must translate internationally, rely on universal signifiers and codes and directly or indirectly speak to market demands.

At Thupelo, artists are selected on the basis of a portfolio or recommendation, but are encouraged to arrive at the workshop with no plan for creation. Many artists use the two weeks to try new working methods, materials and or approaches that they feel they do not have the time

³²⁸ Nikos Papastergiadis, “Spatial Aesthetics: Rethinking the Contemporary,” in *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity and Contemporaneity*, 363 - 381 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) 381.

or resources to experiment with in their professional lives. For example, a collaborative line drawing between Edwards, an artist from Botswana, and South African artist Jenny Parsons highlights the emphasis on process, experimentation and spontaneous production. The drawing represents a departure in style for both Edwards and Parson who primarily work with paint. The drawing was also a challenge at working collectively, something studio based artists rarely have the opportunity to do. As Edwards explained, by pushing oneself out of a comfort zone new seeds are planted that often only develop long after the workshop has ended.³²⁹ Thus, the emphases in art history and critical writing on a final product are challenged through Thupelo's mode, for many of the workshop's offspring emerge once artists return home and process their experiences.

Another Thupelo participant, Igshaan Adams attempted to use the workshop to reverse his formal training, a revelation he made while speaking to local residents about their own personal creative pursuits.

Figure 15: Igshaan Adams, *Through Brian's Eyes*, Weaving, 2010

His project was a woven mural on a street fence, but a recreation of a painting that he purchased from the Woodstock's senior's home. In his statements Adams mentioned that his experiences with the community made him wonder 'what he lost through formal training.' The self-awareness of a young artist like Adams exposed the very real pressures of working in established and accepted styles and media. It also demonstrated a level of art education as Adams was tapping into a classic vanguardist move, where artist renege their formal education to produce some sort of "uninhibited" expression. The ideology of Thupelo promotes a 'safe-space' for

³²⁹ Vervan Edwards, Facebook correspondence with Miriam Aronowicz, March 22, 2010

experimentation where artists feel they can remove themselves from their daily practice. Within the workshop scope of 'Daily practice' was also diverse as the workshop hosted a range of artists in various stages of their careers with various levels of art education.

Adams also demonstrates how the workshop blurs distinctions between art and craft, something the workshops have been committed to since their inception. Growing out of the histories of apartheid, the distinctions between art and craft were disingenuous separations since for the black communities the opportunities for art grew out from initial exposures to craft. Inherent in the discussion of art vs. craft is also a hierarchy of value, where high is much more coveted than craft.

If one returns to ANT as a method to flatten this comparison and break it into its fundamental components (people, materials, tools, etc.) it becomes equalized. It unravels the structures of power and finance that have shaped the western valuation of art vs. craft. Once we use ANT to equalize everything we expose the actors and elements that create value in certain cultures vs. others. For example art and craft often begin with the same foundational actors, yet as they travel through market places, institutions, exhibitions etc. they take on new meanings and value. Many of the structural actors that give art versus craft its meaning are western constructs, once they are removed we see how this dichotomy is a construct.

The artificial distinction between the categories is something Thupelo founding member Bongi Dhlomo identifies as problematic in the South African art history.³³⁰ Yet, there is currently no framework that accounts for these types of inter-local histories and how they manifest themselves first in the workshops and then within the larger global artscape as artists

³³⁰ Bongi Dhlomo in conversations with Michael Godby, *African Arts* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 94

move from site to site. ANT offers the potential to re-read this dichotomy from a more even footing.

Critically the current Thupelo workshops and works produced therein are largely overlooked, both within South African and abroad. As noted above, the early workshops have received some art historical attention but as South Africa opened to global flows the critical voice within the country shifted to works that translated internationally. Thupelo continues to obtain funding and draw in more applications than available spots, a success that is perpetuated mainly through word of mouth and network flows. Nonetheless, without a similar long-standing critical support that other major Triangle workshops receive (notable Triangle New York, with critics such as Willard Boepple and Karen Wilkin endorsing the programs) Thupelo will never receive the same scope of exposure.³³¹ The absence of a critical voice around the workshop is something that board members are continuously debating.

Thus, despite Thupelo's independence and cultivation of an alternative space, its directors are well aware of the normative art world structures that need to be accounted for. Striking a balance between its own operations and still working within the power structures of the larger discourse is in constant struggle/challenge. This is evident in the title of the workshop – “Interventions.” Historically the workshops have not had a theme or a name, to prevent the expectations of creating specific finished products. Kate Tarratt-Cross, Greatmore's former

³³¹ The reliance on a critic is an unresolved issue for Thupelo. In discussions with Jill Trappler at Greatmore Studios in June 2010 she stated that it was much easier for Thupelo when it had the backing of large international names behind it, particularly Robert Loder's direct interest. Now that the workshop is established and runs independently many of these international names are less interested in the experience. On one hand it is remarkable that Thupelo has become so sustainable, on the other hand, the loss of the international interest has prevented it from growing as large as some other nodes.

director, explained that the workshop theme came about organically and somewhat by accident. She states, “because the funding I got [for the Great Walk and More Festival] included the Thupelo workshop...I had to adjust that they thought about site specific artwork so that they could participate in the festival.”³³² The realities funding requirements demonstrate the real limitations many of these organizations face, and that Tarratt-Cross remains well aware of the need to become increasingly sustainable as cut backs continue to roll out.³³³

The majority of the workshop funding was received from the National Lottery Trust Fund, with the expectation that the workshop took on a community focus so that the funding could be relevant to a more people than only the Greatmore artists. This is symptomatic of a larger global trend of moving donations and funding away from arts and culture towards sustainable development initiatives. As mentioned earlier, with the establishment of South African democracy many of the organizations that were integral to funding the arts have since shifted there funds elsewhere.³³⁴ The changes within Thupelo often result from shifts in the

³³² Kate Tarratt-Cross, interview with Miriam Aronowicz at Greatmore Studios, June 30, 2010

³³³ The Greatmore Studios recently completed an initiative called the “Art Bus,” the project was created and designed by visiting artists, and is being used in three ways, firstly for outreach, secondly to bring visitors to Greatmore (particularly those who usually cannot access these spaces), and thirdly to generate profit through renting out the bus for special events. The bus is both decorated on the inside and outside functioning as a mobile exhibition space. Future projects include an “eco shelter” in the neighboring township Khayelitsha. This eco-shelter will function as a satellite of the Greatmore Street studio in the township and intends to be entirely sustainable, providing its own electricity, food, materials etc. It will offer a permanent place for artists to cultivate, create and work in the townships.

³³⁴ One of the greatest sources of funding under apartheid had come from Sweden. In the late 1960s Sweden, in direct opposition to the American policies towards South Africa, became the first Western country to directly support and fund the liberation movements. Until 1994 Swedish funds directly or through international NGO’s were funneled into South Africa to popular democratic organizations, including art centres, newspapers, women’s rights groups, religious centres and cultural associations. The Swedish government who was simultaneously funding many of the community art centres funded many of the early Thupelo workshops. Swedish Travelling Exhibitions STE, an organization, founded in 1965, dedicated to bringing exhibitions to people and regions that could not access art, also had direct contact with various art centres throughout the 1980s, due to a personal connection between STE’s Christina

flows of global capital, and despite Thupelo's expectation to subvert the market demands, it paradoxically remains inextricably intertwined.

Part of the funding was donated to the studios under the co-direction of Isa Suarez, a Spanish based curator who was holding a residency at Greatmore Studios. Suarez added an invaluable dimension to the two-week workshop by hosting the "Laboratory of Recycled Revolutions,"³³⁵ an additional exhibition that ran in tandem to the open day within the Greatmore studios. Yet, Suarez also insisted that artists include their names and artist statements alongside their works so that the audience could understand the projects. Both Tarratt-Cross and Trappler felt this went against the ethos of experimentation, compounding the tensions between process and final product. Likewise, the artists did not take to the decision, stating that they felt "cheated" of the Thupelo experience through the inclusion of final projects, synthesized in neatly compacted statements. The final "Open Day" did feature plaques with statements, although many artists left their explanations deliberately brief. Many of the most interesting works

Björk and Action Group, a theatre troop in Cape Town. For more information about STE see their website; <http://www.riksutstallningar.se/> for a detailed discussion of Sweden's South African funding see; Tor Sellström, Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa: Volume II Solidarity and Assistance 1970-1994, (Stockholm, Sweden: Elanders Goltab, 2002). With the onset of democracy Swedish funding subsided and Thupelo was forced to look elsewhere. Within South Africa, internal organizations emerged as sources for funds, but the amounts were far less.

³³⁵ The "Laboratory of Recycled Revolutions" began with a call for artists to submit proposals for the two week laboratory, which was launched on June 25 and 26th at the Great Walk and More Festival. The call was for works of art that used text as a form of expression; a poem, song, story or collaborative project. The works could be set up in any creative way (spoken, performed, crocheted, installed). The goal was to create a platform where people could come together and "recycle" what they have learned, re-mixing "past revolutions by proposing alternative solutions and thoughts." The Laboratory also featured a political scientist and food artists stationed on site to interact with participating artists and audience members, demonstrating the multiple possibilities for expression.. The result of the exhibition was a loose mix of multi-media, a gospel choir from the neighboring township Khayeletisha performed, The Institute for Figuring's Hyperbolic Coral Reef Crochet, and a diverse range of interactive works. The setting was experimental and blurred the boundaries of viewership

remained displayed inside the Greatmore Studios in the form of sketches, rough drafts, and experiments that had no names, statements or explanations alongside.

This tension of exhibiting offered interesting insight into the disjuncture and differences that open through global flows and different registers of value within the art world. Suarez's approach demonstrated an attempt to categorize and organize information, fulfilling the expectations of the panoptical exhibition structures that dominate global circuits. Suarez attempted to organize and classify the information so it could translate to an audience. Yet, this created tension for the artists because it furthered the paradox of exhibiting unfinished work and giving meaning to incomplete experiments.³³⁶

It also undermined the visual literacy of the audience, and their own subjectivity in reading the works. Many of the works were inspired and guided by community engagement. They spoke directly to the neighborhoods that inspired them. For example, Parsons' "Skyline" included cleaning up an urban dumping ground, whitewashing gang tagged walls, painting over the open space with a silhouette of the Cape Town Skyline and inviting the neighborhood children to paint underneath it.

Figure 16: Jenny Parsons, *Skyline*, Painted mural, 2010

Targeted directly to the neighborhood, the piece was intended to inspire residents to notice the everyday beauty that surrounds them, "lamp posts, church spires, TV aerials, churches and mosques." The history of the space remained unknown to the general non-local audience. Following a long trajectory of community mural art in South Africa, Parsons' work gave the

³³⁶ This is an ongoing paradox with in the workshop framework and an integral issue to creating process based project but then simultaneously featuring an open day/exhibition.

residents a sense of identity “symbolically regulating the urban environment by indicating who belongs there, who has the right to specific places and use them in specific ways.”³³⁷ Thus, Parson embodies the ethos of Thupelo by placing a community that was traditionally on the periphery of Cape Town’s cultural spectrum into its centre. Here Parsons furthered Thupelo’s historical premise of democratizing the cultural sphere. As Dhlomo explained the workshop’s original response to the need for black artists to move from the fringes of the white art world onto a more level playing field.³³⁸ More than thirty workshops later, this ethos of equalization continues to govern the workshops, albeit in new ways.

Nicholas Tsoutas’ description of contemporaneity as “a space that is not self contained but discursive, open and constantly fluid...a speculative space without boundaries: A cultural Laboratory,” is a fitting description for the Thupelo workshops.³³⁹ It is a site that opens a space for dialogue, negotiation and constant evolution. Nonetheless, Tsoutas goes on to critique the paradox of contemporaneity for its desire to create stable institutions (museums, galleries etc.) to house fluid practices. Thupelo offers a welcomed alternative to production and display, by hosting the workshop Open Day outdoors in the neighborhood. By placing the works into the everyday it complicates the classificatory systems that guide our reception of the works. The mistranslations that open through these displays highlight and call into question the normative structures codes of the globalized art world.

³³⁷ Sabine Marschall, Transforming Symbolic Identity: Wall Art and the South African City.” *African Arts* 41: 2 (Summer 2008): p. 12 – 24.

³³⁸ Bongi Dhlomo in conversations with Michael Godby, *African Arts* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 62 – 96

³³⁹ Nicholas Tsoutas, “Introduction: The Paradox of Space in Contemporary Art,” in *Empires, Ruins + Networks: The Transcultural Agenda in Art*, p.148 – 155, edited by Scott McQuire and Nikos Papastergiadis (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005). 150.

For example, Patrick Tagoe-Turkson's work "Too Late," emphasized the risks of removing a work from a controlled environment. His intervention featured a toilet set out on the street front with a sign reading "too late," a loose play on the word toilet, with a phone number to call. His was a social commentary on the lack of public toilets in Cape Town.

Figure 17: Patrick Tagoe-Turkson, *Too Late*, Mixed Media installation, 2010

As a black man in a city that is still very divided, the lack of access to restrooms and unofficial denial of entry draws awareness to the structural imbalances that still exist in post-apartheid South Africa.³⁴⁰ Tagoe-Turkson was disappointed that nobody called the number, claiming that had the work been created in his hometown in Ghana the public would have been much more inquisitive. The difference in codes of reception in Ghana and South Africa is an interesting issue, but what is more crucial is the centrality of the audience in decoding the works.³⁴¹

Hence, engagement with the artworks at "Interventions" was a crucial element of the workshop, for many of the works were only activated through audience interaction. In this sense, the workshop is not unlike discussions of relational aesthetics, the theory that artistic practice is a facilitator of human interaction that must be viewed within a larger social context. Within this theoretical framework the audience is given ultimate agency in determining the interactions and meanings of the social framework created. As demonstrated by Tagoe-Turkson, the workshop

³⁴⁰ Tagoe-Turkson's work was a poignant piece considering the on-going scandal between the ANC and the DA in respect to the installation of inhumane uncovered public toilets in the townships. This scandal is still on going, plagued by finger pointing between the opposing political parties. Both political parties are guilty of perpetuating these squalor conditions. For more information see: David Smith, "Why is South Africa Still Providing 'Apartheid Toilets,'" *The Guardian*, May 17, 2011. Accessed <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/17/south-africa-toilets-david-smith>

³⁴¹ There is a great deal of writing on the role of the audience in creating meaning particularly when dealing with the postmodern and contemporary. Relational Aesthetics is one of the theories that address this.

culminated by giving the agency of work back to the community that originally inspired it, the Greatmore neighborhood. From the perspective of ANT, the community is an integral node to the artworks as networks produced.

One of the major critiques of relational aesthetics is that the theory was based on situations in self-selected utopian spaces, i.e. works that were executed in gallery settings, or to targeted audiences. Thus, the works were superficially democratic for they still circulated in elite space with an assumed and informed audience. Here Thupelo furthers the discussions of relational aesthetics by deregulating the exhibition space. Thupelo relied on a cross section of viewers, many with no initial interest in the arts or awareness of the festival. Many of the visitors at the open day were simply pedestrians walking through an area, which historically had never seen an arts initiative of this scale. The engagement with Tago-Turkson's work, therefore, was truly democratic because it was activated through the everyday rather than through mediated artsapes. It points back towards more of a collectivist movements. Unlike conceptualism or relational aesthetics the work was created in a venue with external viewership but with not "pressure" to exhibit.

Jill Trappler and Anne Sasson's work "Take a Photo" was also an intervention activated only through interaction and individual consumption. Trappler and Sasson documented Greatmore Street and the Woodstock neighborhood by photographing its inhabitants.

Figure 18: Jill Trappler and Anne Sasson, *Take a Photo*, Photographs and mixed media, 2010

They then invited the subjects to come back to the studio on the Open Day and pick up their photographs. The goal of the work was to break down the barriers between the neighborhood and the artist studios, creating a work that depended on local participation. Yvonne George the

caretaker of the studios, who had been at the space since its inception was troubled by the work, claiming that it invited criminals off the street into the safe Greatmore Studio community. Woodstock's dangerous reputation and gang activity, historically kept outside of the studio buildings, was now invited inside--something that became a point of tension amongst the staff and artists.

Rather than demonstrating relational aesthetics, Trappler and Sasson's work created a relational antagonism. "Predicated not on social harmony, but on exposing that which is repressed in sustaining the semblance of this harmony," Claire Bishop argues it creates a more concrete platform for rethinking our relationship to the world and to one another.³⁴² Thus, more than twenty-five years after its creation Thupelo continues to challenge the status quo through new contemporary methods.

As demonstrated by Kamaldien, Trappler and Sasson, Thupelo "Interventions" fostered a model that encouraged artists to engage with the politics of the everyday, which according to de Certeau addresses the micro ways in which people subvert the dominant order.³⁴³ Hence, the works are all examples of what can be called "small gestures in specific places."³⁴⁴ Whether artists move horizontally from one site to another or remain in their local space, the effects of these gestures on the artist and community continue to evolve often in intangible ways. A democratic art history of contemporary practice needs to account for the multiple sites of art

³⁴² Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004), 51-79, 78.

³⁴³ Nikos Papastergiadis, "Small Gestures in Specific Places: On Collaboration and the Politics of Art" in *Empires, Ruins + Networks: The Transcultural Agenda in Art*, p. 287-303, edited by Scott McQuire and Nikos Papastergiadis (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005).

³⁴⁴ Nikos Papastergiadis, "Spatial Aesthetics," In *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity and Contemporaneity*, edited by Terry Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008)

practice and reception, particularly in spaces outside the dominant global artscapes. Through engaging with local histories, and through transnational narratives one can create a bottom up art history, where the effects on the ground are not lost to larger neoliberal flows.³⁴⁵

This globalization from below used a transnational framework but engaged a local community through effective space clearing gestures. Many of the works produced activated previously derelict spaces and put them back in service for the neighborhood use. Kitty Dörje's public intervention of placing a jumping castle in the centre of the neighborhood reclaims the "fear [that] lingers in South Africa about the use of public space."³⁴⁶ Dörje's work demonstrates the politics of aesthetics, showing how the community shaped the artworks that in turn influenced the society they served.³⁴⁷ The most recent workshop was not only an intervention into space, but also into the cycles of life that perpetuate social structures.

Safety and security unquestionably emerged as the unspoken theme at the workshops. Thus, many of the projects addressed de Certeau's concept of space as a practiced place. Using the physical movement of bodies within the neighborhood, Thupelo turned Greatmore Street into

³⁴⁵ James Elkins eds. *Is Art History Global*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) stages a dialogue between artists, critics and historians that discusses how to begin writing art histories that account for local narrative and global co-ordinates. Elkins brings together papers that question the methodologies used for research, tools for teaching and issues of translatability in a globalizing world. For a discussion of a bottom-up intellectual approach see Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980). In Foucault's writing he refers to an "ascending image of power," one that builds itself from the micro mechanisms of power, each with its own history and trajectory up to more generalized mechanisms of power and then to global domination.

³⁴⁶ Kitty Dörje, Artists Statement for the Great Walk and More Festival, Cape Town, South Africa, June 25 and June 26, 2010.

³⁴⁷ Rancière presents this cycle in *The Politics of Aesthetics*, demonstrating how the art that is created is a result of the community in which it is made in, and in turn this work then shapes the community it is displayed in, creating a cycle that makes art and life inseparable.

a collective art space. This move complicates the trends of globalism, which are increasingly characterized by Marc Augé's "non-place." The "non-place" can be found anywhere independent of localities. They are defined as transient spaces where relationships, history and identity are equalized and a collective identity is formed based on the immediate circumstance.³⁴⁸ Unlike De Certeau's "space" which requires a negotiation of past and present, Augé's "non-place" is separated from sites of memory and history, operating only in the present.³⁴⁹ If the biennial has become contemporaneity's "non-place," an exhibition space where artists are placed together to serve a larger system, Thupelo offers an international framework where history, identity and relationships remain integral to the contemporary art production.

This is because Thupelo reverses the directional flows of globalism, by working in international frameworks but within a local space. For artists who have no access to global coordinates these workshops offer invaluable experience and confidence that they are able to situation themselves in transnational artsapes. While some artists are fulfilled by the opportunity of working alongside international artists, others use the workshops as stepping stones to access larger markets. The trope of the isolated artistic genius is being increasingly replaced by the new cosmopolitan cognetariat, a new breed of intellectual labourers who move

³⁴⁸ Marc Augé, *Non-Place: Introduction to an Anthology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995). Augé describes the non-place as a site that results from the excess of time and space, he cites examples of the non-place as supermarkets, hospitals, hostels, bus stations, airports etc.

³⁴⁹ The criticism surrounding the Johannesburg Biennales is that they linked together disparate fragments of South Africa's arts and culture without a proper critical framework. The biennales can be described as an example of Augé's non-place because they were places that artist included and bunched together artists without proper contextualization, history or politics. The artists involved were unified only through their common identity as Biennial participants.

from site to site with knowledge as their power.³⁵⁰ Thus, in an environment of proliferating global flows there is an increasing stigma and fear of isolation, an anxiety about being left out of global trends or being unable to access them. Veryan Edwards eloquently stated this;

Botswana is pretty isolated; ...So we need contact; we need the feeling of knowing what is going on. There is always the question of whether one should orientate one's attention to the Western art world, or just focus on one's own puddle. However, when one goes to an international workshop, one knows one is going to meet interesting and good artists. And the realization comes again: it is about good art wherever you are and one returns with some extra confidence and aspiration to make it so.³⁵¹

For the local and international artists that attend the workshops, at the very least, they provide the opportunity for international interaction, an increasingly important prerequisite for engaging with the contemporary. Thupelo "Interventions" offered the opportunity to work within an international framework, and with the exception of Suarez's select curatorial choices, without becoming entangled in the politics of global exhibitions.

One cannot deny the importance Thupelo plays for the South African art scene. It unquestionably provides unprecedented opportunities for those who are still systemically left out of the education structures to access global flows. It offers artists the confidence and exposure to

³⁵⁰ The term *cognitariat* is used in Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). *Cognitariates* are described as the new breed of freelance intellectual laborers, the immaterial laborers whose knowledge is the source of their power with which they move from site to site.

³⁵¹ Veryan Edwards, Facebook correspondence, March 22, 2011

interact on an international level and it challenges homogenous readings of global art flows. Nonetheless, the workshops remain severely underrepresented in publications, classrooms and exhibitions both within South Africa and abroad. This brings one's attention to a major challenge for the workshops; they often fall victim to their own success. The beginning of this chapter cautioned against the narrow literature available for the early workshops, demonstrating the risks of an indiscriminate production of archives. Using Pierre Nora's terminology, both the present and past Thupelo workshops functioned as a *milieux de mémoire*, a unique space of true memory that takes its refuge in momentary gestures, social and unviolated spontaneity. In attempts to historically document these fleeting encounters, the literature turns its remaining artifacts, mainly its artworks (many unfinished or experimental) and codes them into "petrified remains of memorial consciousness, what Nora calls the *lieux de mémoire*."³⁵² The crisis in using these objects as evidence is that they were never intended to be seen or interpreted as autonomous pieces, yet, there is no framework with which to discuss their ambiguous place amongst the art world substructures.³⁵³

Thupelo has maintained success because it has defied categorization. Its ethos has remained fluid and difficult to dichotomize giving it the necessary leverage to adapt and evolve

³⁵² Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989).

³⁵³ This leads to a major contradiction in the Triangle Model, as Loder has catalogued and published many of these works. Certain workshops have also donated select items to the foundation or sponsors at the end of the workshop, these are currently stored at the Gasworks Studio in London. According to Kirumira (2008) this was done to defray the costs of the workshop. Throughout my research I had never heard this theory, and would dispute its accuracy. None of the works has been sold to directly offset the expenses and Triangle does openly maintain a financial distance from its international workshops. Nonetheless, this is a political move and does bring up a plethora of issues surrounding the politics of Triangle, something that I hope to address in future research. There is a clear tension between a program that is rooted in strong idealism but operates in a world governed by real market forces, conventions and institutions.

with changing times. Inherent to the nature of archiving is the destruction of the *milieux de mémoire*, a problem to consider when writing about the workshops. One must accept that it is a futile attempt to try and “map” Thupelo, in de Certeau’s sense of the term.³⁵⁴ The workshops will always be “itineraries”, spatially diverse, moving from past to present with a general direction but no set coordinates. An analysis of the workshops can only begin to summarize the multiple effects the workshops have on the community and the larger global coordinates.

³⁵⁴ de Certeau 116.

Chapter 4

The Triangle Network: A Means to an End or an End Itself?

In the fall of 2011 Triangle held what is arguably its largest get together to date: the “Networked” Conference. In honour of its 30th anniversary, the conference brought together participants, organizers and funding bodies to discuss the role of the network. It was less interested in defining the network than in “bringing together the latest research and debate on the role of cultural networks in the global art ecology.”³⁵⁵ One of the most telling questions during the two-day conference was whether or not “The Triangle Network is a “means to an end or an end itself.” Whereas the first chapters of this project present the historical evolution and history of the network, the following pages deal with the present. Where is the network now in the second decade of the millennium? How should we measure its success? What should we deem worthy of art historical literature and how should we continue to write the art historical canon?

Figure 19: Pamphlet for *Networked Dialogue & Exchange in the Global Art Ecology*, November 26 & 27, 2011

The Triangle Network offers a cross section of artists, workshops, schools and infrastructures that work within and outside the received narratives and standard discourses of art

³⁵⁵ The “Networked: Dialogue and Exchange in the Global Art Ecology” was held on November 26th and 27th, 2011 at the Bloomberg Headquarters in London. It was an international conference hosted by the Triangle Arts Network marking the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Network. It included panel discussions, presentations and invites were extended to all the active workshop participants.

history. Hence, there are certain sites such as New York, India, France or the now defunct Hong Kong iterations that excelled in the ebbs and flows of the contemporary market. The network's artists went on to become some of the "art stars" we read about today. Yet there are other sites with workshops that we rarely hear about, workshops with no lasting effects to write about, and no remaining works of art to discuss.

The workshops that are discussed, and the ones that develop a critical art history, are essentially those that fit into a more neoliberal framework and function within the contemporary paradigm of globalization. Yet, the workshops that are the most effective in terms of propelling artist's careers, confidence and access to production are usually the small grassroots ones. Many of the most influential sites are those that leave no direct codified legacy mainly because we have a limited discourse and language to critically frame them.³⁵⁶ It is here that Network Theory provides a unique entry point into a discourse that art historical methods cannot access.

Karen Wilkin, a founder of Triangle New York, once stated that it was a "Bedouin organization," a travelling model that plants itself in different locations and if it does not work simply packs up and moves on. Other founders have called it "amoeba like," organic and fluid. With the exception of a few larger nodes that over the years created more permanent institutional offshoots (Khoj, New York, South Africa etc.) most of the workshops are transient and fleeting. There are various workshops that only occurred once (or a handful of times), leaving us with little written documentation about the events. These "one time" workshops are the inactive (invisible) partners in the Triangle narrative making the web all the more complex. Examples of these workshops include sites such as the Madinina Workshop in Martinique, Xayamaca

³⁵⁶ The legacy is often imprinted socially into the artists who attend. They then go on to travel and further their practice on new places in the world, yet the direct influence of Triangle often remains subconscious.

Workshop in Jamaica, Soroa Workshop in Cuba, Festival de Performance in Columbia, Dingo Flats workshops in Australia etc. The list is ongoing, difficult to track and it is often unclear why the workshops do not continue, what issues they face and why they disperse. Some come together in different forms in new locations and others remain a limited moment in time. Clearly, a detailed network analysis of the system is still needed to truly comprehend the scope of Triangle's reach.

According to Rhodes and Jones, Network analysis usually takes one of two forms. Either one studies a "detailed data gathering on a small group of individuals," (in Triangle's case, workshops,) or "a broader and less detailed investigation of the links between a much larger selection of individuals," (the entire Triangle Network).³⁵⁷ The former three chapters took a detailed approach on selected workshops. I also used ANT to flatten these workshop/nodes into the various human and non-human actors that they were comprised of. Using ANT, Triangle can be visualized as a system of smaller networks within a larger network. Each workshop is both a node and an entire network within the larger Triangle network. Every actor/artist within the workshop is also its own network made up of different human and non-human traits that define them. Thus, in using ANT as a metaphor to understand Triangle one can continuously deconstruct the entire organization into smaller and smaller components.

In this final chapter I attempt to draw the broader links between different workshops. While it is extremely difficult to map out an entire organic network, as demonstrated by Rhodes and Jones, Network Theory can help infer these larger links based on data analysis of select samples. As one example, Rhodes and Jones use a breakdown of Greek terror cells to

³⁵⁷ CJ Rhodes and P Jones, "Inferring Missing Links in Partially Observed Social Networks," *Journal of the Operational Research Society* 60 (2009) 1374.

demonstrate how this approach to networks is effective. Through Rhodes and Jones example of the Greek terror network one sees that in clandestine networks it is easy to trace the visible links, but the missing links within the network are harder to uncover. As a clandestine network, Triangle operates logistically much like Rhodes and Jones Greek terror network. Within the Triangle Network the links are often deliberately hidden or obscured in order to continue operating. While I make no claim that Triangle is by any means a terror organization, its ability to remain fluid and organic relies heavily on the de-emphasis and erasure of many of its links, as well as the balance between active and inactive sites.³⁵⁸

A major premise for Triangle is that it maintains it is not a brand. A brand is a cohesive and complete network. For example, a weak brand is one with inconsistent links between the actors comprising its brand identity, and a strong brand is one with stable and consistent links between the multiple actors shaping it. In eschewing any branding, Triangle needs to keep the links between nodes abstract and intangible. According to Loder, “The reason we don’t have a brand is because as soon as there is a brand it insinuates some form of social control”.³⁵⁹ This resistance to social control, codification and categorization is implicit to its organic growth and perseverance. While Triangle evidently operates within the categories of the art world, it somehow continues to operate beneath its radar.

³⁵⁸ Constantinos Tsirogiannis and Christos Tsirogiannis, “Uncovering the Hidden Routes: Algorithms for Identifying Paths and Missing Links in Trade Networks,” in T. Brughmans, A. Collar, F. Coward, F. (eds.) *The Connected Past: Challenges to Network Studies in Archaeology and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 103–120, is another example of an effective approach to studying the hidden links within networks.

³⁵⁹ Robert Loder, Interview by Miriam Aronowicz, London, England, January 11, 2011.

Any sort of social critique of the organization or canonization of the model into art historical discourse destroys the very essence of the model. Likewise any codified and dependable links (whether financial, social, market ties etc.) further institutionalize the web. This challenge leaves art historians, academics and existing art structures in a very difficult position in relation to the network. It is also a primary reason I found the network so fascinating and it is likely one of the main reasons it has over the past 30 years remained outside of the canon and separate from the contemporary flows of the art world.³⁶⁰

Hence, trying to write about Triangle is difficult. It exists but in no concrete terms. It has brick and mortar structures but as discussed in the previous chapters, they insist on their independent operation and hold no financial ties to the Triangle umbrella organization. It is an organization riddled in paradox. For example, the organization is not for profit, yet its conference was hosted and sponsored by Bloomberg and held in the London Bloomberg offices. As noted by Martha Rosler, “For a long time now, art and commerce have not simply taken place side by side, but have actively set the terms of one another, creating and securing worlds and spaces in turn.”³⁶¹ Triangle is not immune to these neoliberal connections. It was pointed out numerous times how ironic it was that the conference was housed in the Bloomberg buildings (with Occupy Wall Street protesting outside), while the artists debated the importance of operating outside these financial spaces. It is these entanglements and contradictions that make the network so fascinating and also so difficult to deconstruct. Although Triangle tries to evade institutionalization it continues to exist through select objects in institutions.

³⁶⁰ In stating that it remains “separate from the contemporary flows of the artworld,” I refer to the mainstream art circuits, the biennials, mega-exhibitions, auction houses etc.

³⁶¹ Martha Rosler, “Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, part 1” e-flux, November 2010. <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/culture-class-art-creativity-urbanism-part-i/>

In the past five to ten years there has been a small flurry of documentation about Triangle. Khoj released a large glossy publication in 2010 documenting its evolution and endeavors.³⁶² Likewise, Robert Loder has been cataloguing artists' interviews from various Triangle workshops around Africa. Polly Savage's publication *Making Art in Africa* (2014) holds many documents pertaining to the Triangle workshops through artist interviews and catalogued works. There has been a big burst of interest in the African workshops, most likely because they are some of the most long-standing and consistent events. Many of the early Triangle artists are now well established and the trajectory of their careers allows them to reflect back on the role these workshops have played for them. Nonetheless, most of the writing is still locally focused, addressing specific works, artists and workshops. There is far less writing addressing the larger links between the nodes or the theoretical reasons why the network continuously grows.

There have been increasing discussions surrounding the "crisis in art history."³⁶³ Particularly, there are large debates on the loss of a sense of history, the interdisciplinary nature

³⁶² Pooja Sood ed., *The Khoj Book of Contemporary Indian Art 1997-2007* (Delhi: Harper Collins India, 2010.)

³⁶³ The crisis in how one defines the parameters of the discipline of art history is an ongoing debate. At the 2011 College Art Association of America New York City conference, the board of directors sponsored a series called "Critical Issues in Art History," where the crisis in art history was debated. These papers are published in Patricia Ruben ed., "Defining The Crisis in Art History," *Visual Resources* 27:4 (2011), 308-314. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01973762.2011.622211>

Yet, this debate dates back decades. As early as 1974 T.J Clark published a landmark essay, "The Conditions of Art History," *Time Literary Supplement* (May 1974), where he opens by stating "I would begin by saying that art history is in crisis, but that would have too strident a ring." Clark continued: "Out of breath, in a state of genteel dissolution—those might be more appropriate verdicts." He then asked, "why should art history's problems matter? Or on what grounds could I ask anyone else to take them seriously?" He answered by reminding the reader and reminding himself of "what art history once was," eventually coming to "the roll-call of names—Warburg, Wolfflin, Panofsky, Saxl, Schlosser"—art historians whose research in different ways led "back time and again towards the whole terrain of disagreement about the nature of artistic production." Clark's purpose was not to "sanctify" the names,

of contemporary production and what kind of language we need to tackle newer contemporary works. Books like David Summers' "Real Spaces" 2003 have attempted to create new methodologies, which move away from iconographic and formal readings of global art histories towards a more spatial connection. Yet, we still don't have great tools to discuss art without objects, or artistic spaces without clearly defined boundaries of discussion.

Social Network Analysis is one way into the webbed connections that comprise the Triangle Network. If one were to create a sociogram of the Triangle Network it would likely fit well within the Watt's and Strogatz's Small-world network model, indicating that all nodes are connected to one another by limited degrees of separation.³⁶⁴ The preceding chapters and the lines between South Africa, Saskatchewan and New York alone demonstrate a "small-world network" connection. If one were to expand the body of research surely this web would continue to unfold. In viewing the network as a small-world model, distinctions between us/them and otherness are complicated. It quickly becomes apparent that we are all closely related and intertwined, breaking down perceive hierarchies.

ANT is an interesting way to navigate the web of connections that comprise Triangle.

Rather than attempting to understand Triangle through the institutions or major "powerhouse"

but to "rediscover the kind of thinking that sustained art history at that time." He dismissed a "cheerful diversification of the subject," with his "specialty," the social history of art "taking its place alongside the other varieties—formalist, 'modernist', sub-Freudian, filmic, feminist, 'radical', all of them hot-foot in pursuit of the New." Against this "disintegration," he set a "concentration" on the "relation between the work of art and ideology." The point here is not to sanctify nor, absolutely not, to vilify T. J. Clark or his essay, but to put "crisis" and "art history" into a disciplinary context: to recall a moment when the "New" was mounting the barricades against a stale tradition or, worse, disciplinary constructions that obscured entire realms of artistic production and neglected the conditions of that production.

³⁶⁴ The small world network implies that even nodes that are not beside each other can be connected through limited degrees of separation. In popular culture this is like the "six degrees of separation" analogy. This model of graphing networks was first proposed by D.J Watts and S.H Strogatz, "Collective Dynamics of 'small world' Networks," *Nature* 393 (1984) 440-442.

structures, ANT creates an analogy that helps us deconstruct why certain structure are more powerful and led to the building or establishment of institutions while others do not. It deconstructs the very entry points from which we are used to looking at art historical models.

ANT's major limitation is that it is very much a descriptive approach. It is essentially a metaphor for connectivity. Rather than providing a clear theoretical framework it describes how relations assemble and how power structures come together. It is mainly associated with Michel Callon, Bruno Latour and John Law, the first to use the term "actor-network."³⁶⁵ The term remains abstract and is often criticized for being overly descriptive. Nonetheless, it has become an excellent tool in understanding why and how certain power webs evolve. "[ANT] is a disparate family of material-semiotic tools, sensibilities and methods of analysis that treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated effect of the webs of relations which they are located. It assumes that nothing has reality or form outside the enactment of those relations."³⁶⁶ It is a material semiotic approach that describes how relations produce and shift all kinds of actors, including but not limited to "objects, subjects, human beings, machines, animals, nature, ideas, organizations, inequalities, scale and sizes and geographical arrangements." The approach began in the sociology of science and technology and has since spread to a range of disciplines. It grew from the scientific belief that the micro and macro are deeply connected.³⁶⁷ Even the most micro experiment could have macro proportions,

³⁶⁵ For a comprehensive database of ANT sources and authors see; <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/centres/css/ant/ant-a.htm>

³⁶⁶ John Law, "Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics," in *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, edited by Brian S. Turner, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009) 141.

³⁶⁷ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 180.

and this is essentially what the Triangle Network is. It is a series of micro nodes with macro implications.

According to Law, “Theories usually try to explain why something happens, but ANT is descriptive rather than foundational in explanatory terms, which means that it is a disappointment for those seeking strong accounts. Instead it tells stories about ‘how’ relations assemble or don’t ... it is better understood as a toolkit for telling interesting stories about, and interfering in, those relations.”³⁶⁸ Hence, ANT, methodology or analysis (whichever term one sees fit) is essentially a lens through which one enters one’s subject of study. It provides a framework in which one can study linkages, nodes, and relationships that remain invisible to other methods. In flattening the network one can expose the various actors that push and pull certain artists in different directions.³⁶⁹ Hence, some artists choose to “use” Triangle as a way to enter the very neo-liberal market it attempts to eschew, while others find its place within the margins very liberating. ANT helps visualize these clusters of power and links between sites that shape those involved. It does not provide an interpretation of that material. It is only through super-imposing the post-colonial theories, social histories and theories of power over top this framework that it can become extremely useful. In a sense, ANT is the most effective way to catalogue all the dispersed information circulating.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ John Law, “Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” 141.

³⁶⁹ I refer to the term “flattening,” as mapping out the network into the sum of its parts or into a somewhat objectivized and itemized roster.

³⁷⁰ ANT is particularly useful in that it does not negate other theoretical frameworks. Triangle’s cyclical model as discussed in Chapter 1, where foundations influence art practice and so forth can be easily integrated with ANT, for it flattens the relationship without negating its symbiosis. It deconstructs each category further uncovering the multiple “actors” that create each category.

There are six main components to ANT:

1. Semiotic Relationality - it must be a network whose elements define and shape one another. For the Triangle Network this is most evident through the travelling artists who literally define and shape the different nodes based on their network experience. More abstractly the various approaches of all the difficult workshops create the ethos that defines the entire network.
2. Heterogeneity - there are different kinds of actors within the network , and these actors can be human or non-human. As discussed in previous chapters, materials, medium, space, politics etc. are all examples of non-human actors that blend with the human actors to create the workshop nodes. On a micro level the artists themselves are made up of human and non-human actors (clothing, education etc.) which turn them into heterogeneous nodes as well.
3. Materiality - the network encompasses many diverse elements reaching far beyond the social.
4. Process and precariousness - each element has a specific role, playing its part momentarily or else it all falls apart. The transience of certain nodes represents this most clearly.
5. Power – This will always be integral to the network. Power as an effect, “it is a function of a network configuration and in particular the creation of immutable mobiles.” Sites such as New York, London, Delhi remain the most powerful because their links (to the market, to institutions, artists, politics etc.) have become so stable. These select sites, although mobile, are immutable in their

place of power because a web of deeply entrenched connections anchors them to their surroundings. They are in a sense established self-contained entities within a larger network configuration.

6. Space and Scale – These offer the framework for how these networks distance themselves and translate themselves across different dimensions.³⁷¹ This point is crucial for Triangle because the nodes that are considered “central” are not necessarily the nodes that are geographically “central” but that remain in the “ideological” centres of discourse. The space and scale of the network is abstract, and this cannot be represented in the standard Sociogram of traditional social network analysis. The transcendence of space and time is closely linked to the idea that the network is never synoptic, something I discuss in the following pages.

Naturally, there are great criticisms of this methodology. Some argue it is too descriptive, others find that its most radical principle-- which; awards non-human actors equal weight to human actors-- is grossly implausible.³⁷² Nonetheless, all these ingredients seem to make it effective for understanding the Triangle model. ANT was never intended to give us a theoretical framework for analysis, but rather, provides an effective metaphor. Instead, if we use it together with theories of translation (or other theories) it becomes more effective. The Triangle Network is a system that like ANT remains loosely descriptive. It holds limited objects, codified histories or institutions and in many cases its history is retraced through personal anecdotes, interviews

³⁷¹ John Law, “Actor-network theory and material semiotics” In: *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory, 3rd Edition*. Edited by Bryan S. Turner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) pp. 141–158.

³⁷² Andrew Feenberg, Hans Radder, Langdon Winner et al. have presented excellent critiques of Actor Network Theory

and independent connections. Hence a great deal of its research takes place outside of libraries and archives, but rather through people's descriptions of their experiences or events.

Every object and history needs to be translated into art historical narratives before it is coded into the canon, and by virtue of translation anything we read is already manipulated.³⁷³ We cannot avoid issues of translation in recounting Triangle's history. "Translation involves creating convergences and homologies by relating things that were previously different."³⁷⁴ For ANT, translation was historically a concept that merged the gaps between varied aspects within a technology. For example a microscope allowed one to translate the microscopic elements into something visible to the naked eye. Applying this model to sociological or art historical environment is useful when studying the Triangle network, for a model is needed that makes sense of multiple flows that are seemingly disparate. For example, there are currently no published studies linking the early modernist workshops in Saskatoon to a contemporary Triangle workshop taking place in the Southern hemisphere today. Yet, there are links between these seemingly disparate sites, and these links can be human or non-human. For example, Anthony Caro is a link between Emma Lake and the later Triangle New York Workshops. The artists Willard Boepple can be seen as the link between New York and many of the African sites, and so on and so forth. In speaking with these artists, or reading their notes and experiences, they become "the translators" through which we can navigate the network. Naturally, these

³⁷³ For further reading on translation see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Translation." In *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti, 369 – 389 (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

³⁷⁴ Michel Callon, "Struggles and Negotiations to Define what is Problematic and what is not: The Sociologic of Translation." In K. Knorr, R. Krohn & R. Whitley (eds.) (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Co: 1981), 211.

translations always come with their own biases, their own habitus, that influences how the information is delivered.

One of ANT's most radical claims is the equal agency it assigns to human and non-human actors. This symmetry is crucial for the network to operate. Geography, borders and political situation often dictate the shape and trajectory of the different workshops. Access to physical studio space as well as materials are both very real factors in how the workshop evolves and also how the artists (as micro nodes) form their practice. For example Golden Paint's sponsorship at the early New York workshops allowed the experimentation with material that evolved into new post-modern movements (New New Painters etc.) This access to materials further influenced David Koloane from South Africa who returned home with a new set of experiences because he had accessed artistic materials on a new scale. Furthermore, items such as passports, visas and government documents hold critical agency in the network as well. Much of the movement within the network remains circumscribed by the ability of artists to travel across borders and boundaries. For example, David Koloane missed the first few days of the early New York workshop because of Visa issues, and still today, at the Networked conference various workshop participants and administrators, particularly those from the Middle East and Africa were unable to receive the necessary documents required to visit London. Their absence from the discussion was felt but also shaped the discourse surrounding the organization. ANT draws an awareness to this symmetry highlighting the cascade of factors that shape each node and consequently the larger network.

ANT also illuminates the "associations" between heterogeneous actors (human and non-human alike.) This distills why certain networks or nodes become larger or more powerful (in neoliberal terms) than others. The more associations, or the stronger the associations the more

dominant that network becomes. If one flattens the network and its various nodes into a web of associations between heterogeneous actors, then one can highlight through clusters why certain networks, artists or workshops emerge as dominant.

For example, the contemporary Triangle workshop in New York and its long-standing success is attributable to certain associations that enabled its actors to mobilize in ways that actors from other workshops could not. Triangle New York has traditionally had associations to physical studio space in the form of institutions, real estate or benefactors enabling more consistent reliability. This reliability in turn allowed the network, and the human actors in the network, to grow new associations to Golden Paints,³⁷⁵ government agencies responsible for issuing visas for artists, funding bodies that provided further resources and so on and so forth. Once the node creates a certain amount of stable associations it essentially reaches a critical mass that enables it to propagate itself. Once it hits this critical mass there is a significant turning point in the relationship to the traditional network. According to Willard Boepple the New York workshops have always endured because their “core group who are connected from the start.” It is the longevity and stability of certain associations that allows the node to remain stable.³⁷⁶ So is the network a means to an end or an end in itself? It seems that this critical mass is essentially ‘the end.’ Once the node becomes so stable in its association, the initial association to the broad “triangle model” ceases to remain significant.

³⁷⁵ Golden Paints has its own network that can be flattened through ANT. As a capitalist venture, in offering its product to artists Golden gets free product development and furthers its own economic goals of production and distribution.

³⁷⁶ Willard Boepple, Interview by Miriam Aronowicz.

In contrast, smaller less regular workshops need the Network until they forge sufficient relationships elsewhere that enable them to stop relying on it. For example, the Network seems to hold great currency in Southern Africa. Here the instability of associations led those workshops to strengthen their consistent association to the umbrella network. This one association to a larger idea, principle or unofficial mandate (the Triangle mandate) remains the bridge or the lifeline to broader artistic circles, as well as smaller art circles gaining cultural currency through association. Hence, the cross- pollination and connections between Africa and the UK Trust have traditionally been stronger than those between other geographic locations.

When one describes the network through ANT the ‘chance’ factor becomes more containable and consequently understandable. Bruno Latour’s discussion of dislocation is instructive here. He states that “an ‘actor’ in the hyphenated expression ANT is not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it.”³⁷⁷ Hence, the very notion of an actor becomes destabilized, not necessarily shaped by chance, but shaped by a flurry of activity that becomes hard to pin down. There are so many factors at play that shape each node it becomes nearly impossible to summarize the entire network. Each actor has a different “array of entities swarming it,” so diverse there really is no unifying factor to the network other than its umbrella ideology.

Alessio Antonioli summarizes this well when he states;

Triangle is “acknowledging the shifting ground, the shifting theories needs, and also following the need which is also really interesting. Rather than following a mission that comes from a UNESCO informed slogan. It’s more a need that comes from the ground,

³⁷⁷ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 44.

well artists need to get together because that is how they make work, and that is how it advances their practice. And because they don't work in isolation, the work in a community, they work in a bigger group, whatever they do has an influence on the ground. That seems to be pretty basic. And then working on that level, everything else gets built on top, but it's never fixed, and it is this sort of lack of fixity that makes Triangle very interesting.”

Antonioli mirrors the principle of destabilization that ANT outlines as integral to understanding a functioning network.

Furthermore, ANT states no interaction is isotopic. “What is acting at the same moment in any place is coming from many other places, many distant materials, and many faraway actors.”³⁷⁸ Latour uses the example of a lecture hall and all the places that are interacting in its space simultaneously. The forest out of which the desk is coming, the janitor that tends the place, the printer that printed the schedule and so on and so on. Each site becomes dislocated from time and space, transporting through various mediums different actors into one encapsulated whole.³⁷⁹ The Triangle Network crystallizes when one stops viewing it as isotopic.³⁸⁰ There is no centralized administrative structure for all the nodes, each site is set up as independent and local. Yet, their locality draws from a multitude of global actors all coalescing in a single site. Hence, the whole relationship between the local and global shifts when viewing the network through this lens, demonstrating it is much more intertwined than initially perceived.

³⁷⁸ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 200.

³⁷⁹ John Law's article “Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” sets up the example of the Portuguese ship as the ideal immutable mobile, circulating to and from space while holding onto their shape and form.

³⁸⁰ *Reassembling the Social*, 200.

According to Latour the concept of a network can also not be synchronic.³⁸¹ The random elements that come together to create a certain moment in space and time are actually from a range of different moments and places. Here Latour cites Michel Serres' notion that "time is always folded."³⁸² The actions of a network are also not synoptic. At any given times certain agents are highly visible while others are dormant, the visibility and invisibility of these different actors is also constantly in flux. Essentially, the network remains destabilized. This operates on both a macro and micro level. On a micro level the actual workshops have no central figure. For example at the early Triangle New York workshops and even the early workshops at Emma Lake it was the great art superstars, the Caro's, the Greenberg's who emerged as the central focus. However, there were participants that seemed more dormant in accounts of the workshops but later emerged as central in other places that fueled the network. For example, Willard Boepple, Caro's technical assistant played a secondary role in the early New York workshops. He was unable to attend certain workshops and missed the first Triangle gathering because he was teaching. However coinciding with Tony Caro winding down from the Network in 1991 Boepple became a board member. He was brought on board by Robert Loder and later became central to many of the workshops in Southern Africa, beginning with Pachipawme in Botswana, then on to workshops in Mozambique, Zambia and South Africa. Boepple is a micro example of an actor whose role was non-synoptic. He remains one of the sole participants who held both a prominent role in New York and also within Africa. He is an anomaly in that most of the

³⁸¹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 210.

³⁸² Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science Culture and Time*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1995) 59

stronger network connections emerged on a South-South access vs. the North-South access he represents.

Similarly, on a macro level the workshops also operate in a non-synoptic fashion. There are often delays in space and time between when certain ideas travel, emerge and fertilize from node to node. Workshops such as New York, Khoj, Marseille or Gasworks may present themselves as more central because of more visible connections, but there are multiple other nodes operating simultaneously with equally far reaching effects.

Finally ANT maintains that each actor is heterogeneous and isobaric.³⁸³ Latour borrows the term isobaric from “the lines of equal pressures that we read in weather maps when looking for depressions or anticyclones.”³⁸⁴ Some forces are pressing very strongly, others are being manipulated, contained or moved. Yet at any moment something could occur to a single actor and the entire system can shift. One way this becomes evident in the Triangle Network is through the funding bodies whose mandates shift with global politics and social situations. Nodes such as New York functioned alongside many early African workshops throughout the 1980s. The associations between the workshops were relatively predictable with artists returning home and bringing together their own community of participants to carry on the Triangle idea in a local setting. Yet in the late 1980s and early 1990’s the Swedish government determined that its Swedish International Development Corporation Agency (SIDA) would spend foreign aid on “small scale cultural project in third world countries.”³⁸⁵ Suddenly workshops around the

³⁸³ Latour, 201.

³⁸⁴ Latour, 202.

³⁸⁵ Willard Boepple, Interview by Miriam Aronowicz

African continent had stronger associations that allowed them to flourish. In the past few years SIDA has slowed their funding for cultural projects once again causing workshop associations to change again. The lack of Swedish funding was heavily discussed at the Greatmore Thupelo workshop. Administrators and artist's alike were all cognizant of the increasing difficulties in achieving funding without the Swedish help, and consequently the unpredictability of the workshop's continuity. In recent years, SIDA has shifted its focus to economic development.³⁸⁶ New organizations have come to the forefront in funding various Triangle nodes, mainly HIVOS, Arts Collaboratory and the Prince Claus Foundation.³⁸⁷ The newer funding mandates

³⁸⁶ 1. **Economic growth.** To help increase the production of goods and services; 2. **Economic and social equality.** To help reduce differences between rich and poor and ensure that everyone's basic needs are met. 3. **Economic and political independence.** To help to ensure that countries can make their own decisions on their economies and policies and create the conditions necessary for national self-determination. 4. **Democratic development.** To help to ensure that people are given greater opportunities to influence developments locally, regionally and nationally. 5. **Environmental protection.** To promote the sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment. 6. **Gender equality.** To promote equality between men and women.

SIDA's areas of work include

1. Economy
2. Infrastructure
3. Humanitarian assistance
4. Water
5. Urban development

Taken from SIDA: Swedish International Development Coordination Agency, "Overview," website, <http://web.mit.edu/urbanupgrading/upgrading/resources/organizations/Sida.html>

³⁸⁷ These are some of the many organizations that have helped various Triangle nodes. However, they all operate independently and are accessed from local sites.

tend to favour culture for development, adding another actor to the mix and further shaping the network's growth.

ANT is useful in that it highlights the complexities of the Triangle network. It operates as a lens through which we can understand how multifaceted each workshop node is and also how dynamic the entire network is. Although not a traditional methodology, it does begin to break apart the network's structure and hierarchies. It begins to help us understand who is defined as a "global" artist? How does a "local" workshop become "global" in relevance? And why do certain actors catapult into global circuits while others do not?

For various reasons certain works of art and certain artists at certain times seem to translate more effectively into the global circuit. This global circuit, is based on an understanding of 'contemporary' art that is evolved from European and western notions of modernity. To further deconstruct this, 'In the aftermath of modernity, and the passing of the postmodern, how are we to know and show what it is to live in the conditions of contemporaneity?'³⁸⁸ What are these conditions of contemporaneity and how do they affect the Triangle's evolution and current state of affairs. Perhaps a good starting point for discussions about the contemporary situation can be traced to shifts from temporal understandings of modernism to the spatial relationships initiated by postmodernism. Twenty years ago, Frederic Jameson argued that the crisis in historicity has created the present, which is heavily fragmented and randomly heterogeneous. This statement still holds true.³⁸⁹ The inherent contradiction to this new condition is the

³⁸⁸ Terry Smith, Introduction to *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity and Contemporaneity*, edited by Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor and Nancy Condee (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2008) 1.

³⁸⁹ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991)

universalizing coordinates of globalism that frame the disjointed world, creating a tension between the older paradigms of nationalism, that still govern a great deal of contemporary cultural production and the larger transnational networks in which they circulate. It is these tensions between local frameworks and global circuits that dominate contemporary art discussions. Yet, through an application of ANT we see that this is complicated in the Triangle Network. The division between local paradigms and global paradigms cannot be separated so easily.

A major problem with the term globalism is that it can be used as simply a rendition of Euro-American universalism. For the contemporary artist to be global, he/she must often work within an international aesthetic that is usually conceptually or installation based. At a recent panel discussion at the 2010 Triangle New York workshop, Karen Wilkin asked a painter what it feels like to be working in this contemporary international environment. The general consensus was that painting was seen as passé and unimportant.³⁹⁰ “Is this a type of aesthetic colonialism?” asked Wilkin. The response was overwhelmingly yes.³⁹¹ Another Triangle artist Nivi Alroy provided the example of feeling as though she was from the periphery, and the feeling of artists in the periphery was that in order to make it one needed to leave and enter global hubs, or in ANT terminology nodes with stronger associations. New York is a central node and it has become a site where artists go to almost erase their local identity. Alroy stressed for her it was

³⁹⁰ This consensus furthers the western hegemonic thinking operating with blindspots to other modes of working. In many parts of the world painting is still seen as the “absolute art.” The fact that this was not discussed during the panel only furthers the insularity of the artist demographic in attendance.

³⁹¹ Karen Wilkin, Panel Discussion led by Malado Baldwin and Christina Kee, Triangle Studios, Brooklyn, New York. September 22, 2010.

important to not be an “Israeli” artist but just an artist.³⁹² At the debates in Triangle New York the sentiment became evident, to succeed as an international art superstar one must become part of this global aesthetic. To borrow James Elkin’s terminology this is essentially a new form of “conceptual imperialism.”³⁹³ It is this conceptual imperialism that simultaneously prevents smaller grassroots workshops from emerging on an international scale. If the aesthetic doesn’t echo current art trends it tends to get overlooked.

Yet, the desire to submerge one’s identity is not as simple as creating globally translatable art. Most non-western artists working in this conceptual or “international” aesthetic often remain trapped in a double bind where viewers, critics and curators still expect them to represent national authenticity. This is what happened in the early South African workshops when artists like Koloane and Ainslie began working in abstraction. It was assumed or expected that artists working in a politically charge location needed to make politically active art, which was representational, to be valid. This dilemma was echoed more than thirty years later at the New York workshop when Mexican artists Gamaliel Rodriguez stated that distancing oneself from a local identity is a way to erase all political guilt and responsibility that comes with it. Clearly, the contemporary global continues to exert this double bind where internationalism is welcomed but is simultaneously limiting.

ANT helps unravel this double bind. Most studies of contemporary art struggle with how the local plays out within a global framework. As stated by Sidney Kasfir “power is defined in

³⁹² Nivi Alroy, discussions with Miriam Aronowicz, Triangle New York 2010 Workshop Open Day, New York, September 24, 2010.

³⁹³ James Elkins, Introduction to *Is Art History Global?* (New York: Routledge, 2007) 41.

terms of access to mobility and the dissemination of knowledge.”³⁹⁴ This echoes Latour’s thinking that no place can be said to be bigger than any other place, “but some can be said to benefit from far safer connections with many more places than others.”³⁹⁵ What ANT demonstrates is that in a descriptive model the local and global can never be separated, and if one flattens the network the safer connections, or the access to power begins to dissolve because every actor or node becomes an equalized “disheveled array of connections.” As a lived reality for artists there are other factors that add new influences to their experiences which go onto further shape things, but ANT allows us to isolate the foundation from the other theories that then shape it. In the words of Latour, “if you cut some underlying structure from its local application, nothing happens. It remains there in its mysterious empyrean; if you cut a structure-making site from its connections it simply stops being able to structure anything.”³⁹⁶ Hence, ANT localizes the global. It forces us to come out of our myopic understanding of power structures by showing us powerscapes from a different perspective. Hence, when discussing the local and the global we often fall back into this universalizing prism of global translatability.³⁹⁷ When we localize the global this prism begins to fall apart and we are forced to look at the network in new ways. This is potentially very beneficial when trying to navigate the Triangle Network without classifying it and not fall into the traps it tries to avoid.

³⁹⁴ Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration*, 89.

³⁹⁵ Latour, 176.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “The Politics of Translation.” In *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti, 369 – 389 (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

Latour argues for “flattening the landscape,” for localizing all structures in the network and studying them through their connectors. He calls this approach the Oligopticon approach. The oligopticon operates the opposite way Foucault’s Panopticon operates. The Panopticon is the centralized structure. The viewer remains in the position of power and can see everything, although nothing extremely well. The oligopticon sees very little but what it does see it sees well. He uses the analogy of an army post and a command centre connected through multiple connectors without one over arching vantage point. This is extremely effective and allows for a detailed command of the satellite site, its weakness is that the moment a connector breaks down the connection is lost. Unlike the Panopticon where central viewership is harder to break down.

If one uses the Oligopticon approach for the Triangle Network one moves away from viewing it as a hierarchical and centralized structure with smaller satellites (i.e. Cape Town, Bangladesh, Palestine all circulating around Gasworks). Rather, one views them both on an equal playing field, what becomes more central are the actors that pass through each connector transmitting information. This could be the artists, administrative frameworks, tools, supplies, funding or the artworks. It is a unique framework for art historical study because it isolates the actors from their metastructure. This is likely the best way to study a network whose mandate is to operate the same way.

There are lots of international artists initiatives. Perhaps most visible is the proliferation of global biennales in places that were traditionally off the art world map, places such as Sao Paulo, Havana, Dakar and Johannesburg is an attempt to restructure the unequal distribution of power within the art world. In attempts to decentralize the notion of globalism as westernism, these global shows have entered spaces that were previously sealed off from art circuits. Yet, if the reactions to the Johannesburg biennales of 1995 and 1997 serve as any indication, the simple

transfer of a global exhibition framework into a local space, does little to shift the dynamics of power with which it functions. Particularly, when the curators of these mega-shows remain western, the artists they select remain within a limited aesthetic, and regardless of if they are placed into nationalist pavilions or not the politics of inclusion/exclusion are at play.³⁹⁸ As Michael Hardt notes, “when saying that there is no more centre to power, we’re trying to argue that the forms of cultural and political practices that were assumed to be liberatory are not necessarily liberatory and sometimes coincide with forms of power. Global power is not centered...but is instead a distributed network of powers – that has no center. That proliferation of powers, or of nodes, isn’t necessarily itself liberatory, and can be a more frustrating form of domination.”³⁹⁹ While global biennales do less for local art than for global art superstars, regardless of their geographic location, the limited numbers of local artists that are included “reflect a marketing strategy whereby local artists are granted only the privilege of being shown within the context of accepted international art.”⁴⁰⁰

Most historical writing takes place through the context of objects that have been already vetted by institutions (biennials, museums, exhibits). The very nature of this is that we often rewrite a story already told with slightly different subjects. Despite location they are still based on western power structures. Triangle avoids this fate, and in successfully doing so, it is often

³⁹⁸ The similar responses to both the first and second Johannesburg biennales are symptomatic of this. *Africus*, Johannesburg’s first biennale was held with national pavilions and criticized as insufficiently representing South African cultural production, *Trade Routes*, the second Johannesburg biennale, was organized without national pavilions and was still criticized for exclusivity.

³⁹⁹ Michael Hardt and Stuart Hall, “Changing States: In the Shadows of Empire,” in *Changing States: Contemporary Art and Ideas in the Era of Globalization* (London: inIVA, 2004) 134.

⁴⁰⁰ Hans Belting, “Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age,” in *Contemporary Art and the Museum a Global Perspective*, edited by Peter Weibel and Andrae Buddensieg (Karlsruhe: Hatje Kantz, 2008), 31.

not written about. Its objects are often forgotten (that is if they are even created in the first place) and many of its artists remain unknown. ANT and the oligopticon approach are an effective way to crystallize this unique local/global dynamic and see things that would traditionally remain as blind spots in historical art writing. There is an implicit global regime of value that continues to dictate the local regime of value.⁴⁰¹

The Triangle Arts Network is a postcolonial constellation.⁴⁰² It decentralizes art production, critique and exhibitions through its annual cycle of workshops, open studios and community outreach. Each center and workshop is locally run, with partial international funding from the British based trust and partially through local fundraising. Selection committees for each workshop are led by local practicing artists, and the workshops are comprised of two-thirds local artist and one-third international visiting artists. At the end of each two-week workshop an open exhibition is held with forum for dialogue. While the framework for the Triangle Arts Network may very well have been rooted in neo-colonial pursuits, their slippage into an alternative and often empowering arts structure is evident with its unique place in global paradigms. Unlike Biennales, or global shows which place the local into global frameworks, the Triangle workshops place the global into the local, reversing the discourse and fundamentally altering the archive of contemporaneity that we are used to working with.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰¹ Arjun Appadurai, "Commodities and the Politics of Value," In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 3 – 63. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

⁴⁰² The Postcolonial Constellation is a term taken from Okwui Enwezor's "The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a Permanent State of Transition." *Research in African Literatures* 34: 4 (Winter 2003): 57–82.

⁴⁰³ The Triangle model maintains that it is fundamentally a bottom-up organization. It differentiates itself from the top-down approach that major global exhibitions take. Rather than being lead by an

The oligopticon allows us to see Triangle for what it really claims to be. It also allows us to describe and discuss the network without breaking its ethos. The Triangle Network is a facilitator more than anything. Like the Oligopticon it allows for conduits filled with actors and information to travel from node to node. Yet these conduits are easily severed, hence why certain workshops dwindle, emerge, break down or succeed with very little predictability. These connectors are sometimes unintentionally broken, for example in the case with workshops in politically unstable sites often the inability to secure travel visas and the lack of mobility across borders severs the connector and prevents the workshop from occurring. In other situations workshops themselves close off their conduit, seeing no further purpose to remain connected or associated to a satellite structure. This is okay too. For example, KHOJ in India although still affiliated with Triangle is continuously reevaluating where it sees its place within the network. At the 2011 conference in London KHOJ director Pooja Sood, who at one point was heavily involved in Network activities⁴⁰⁴ mentioned that KHOJ sees its affiliation to Triangle as increasingly less important. With the exception of the “name” Triangle, the notion of being artist led and the focus on workshops, KHOJ has less and less association with the actual Triangle umbrella organization as time goes on. The conduits to Triangle are gradually replaced by regional, non-Triangle affiliated, actors in the form of community and ecological workshops.

organization or funding body it is always initially artist led. The need and execution comes from the ground up.

⁴⁰⁴ At the Networked Conference in London Pooja Sood openly noted her ambivalence of relating KHOJ to Triangle’s larger network any longer, noting that when KHOJ was starting up it needed the support from the umbrella organization. Throughout the years it has grown in mandate, scope and operated increasingly independently. With the exception of its history and Sood’s own personal connection to the Network (she became intertwined in the network’s activities through connections to Loder and Koloane in South Africa there is very little ongoing connection of the network to KHOJ’s current activities. Pooja Sood is also personally responsible for building the success of KHOJ very much from the ground up. Loder described her as an extraordinary arts administrator, the type of person that Triangle needs to keep evolving.

She noted that their international associations are becoming much stronger along a south-south axis. Thus, once one flattens the landscape it becomes clear how the network functions from node to node. It is precisely Latour's ideas that a network is not isotopic, synchronic or synoptic, making clear how the model remains fluid and why the local/global and past/present cannot be separated so easily.

One of the critiques of network theory is that "network" is not an accurate term for the phenomenon. Anthropologist Tim Ingold states that "meshwork," is a more appropriate term. He notes that ANT holds each node as too isolated and does not look closely enough at the connections between the nodes.⁴⁰⁵ As Hodder notes, in Spanish the word "network" is translated as *red* and in French as *réseau*, both of which have the connotations of web, mesh or 'reticular'.⁴⁰⁶ Thus, some would suggest that there are better terms to use than "network" when demonstrating how interconnected the nodes and links are. One of the main critiques of ANT is that it views the nodes as too isolated and independent.

Yet, Sood's comment about KHOJ and the ability for different workshops and centres to emerge and recede fairly independently demonstrate that the Triangle Network may truly be a network rather than a meshwork. While the links are important, they function as travel routes between nodes that continue to operate independently. While there are unquestionably strong links between the nodes, they are often hidden, receded or erased to emphasize the independence of each node.

⁴⁰⁵ Tim Ingold. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2011). For further reading on the difference Ingold sees between ANT and his 'meshworks' is his chapter "When ANT meets SPIDER: Social Theory for Anthropods," in *Material Agency: Towards a Non-Athropocentric Approach*, edited by Carl Knappett and Lambros Malafouris (New York: Springer Science and Business Media, 2008) 209-215. Here he draws the comparison of ANT being like viewing the ground of a forest as a multitude of heterogeneous objects vs. an entangled web of connected beings.

⁴⁰⁶ Hodder, 25.

Bipartite networks are tricky because of the complex entanglement that exists between human and non-human actors. Hodder defines entanglement as the sum of four different relationships between humans and things.⁴⁰⁷ Humans depend on things (HT), things depend on other things (TT), things depend on humans (TH), humans depend on humans (HH). Thus entanglement = (HT) + (TT) + (TH) + (HH). Humans are left in a double bind. (For example, if one puts sugar in their coffee (Human + Sugar/Thing), this is dependent on the Sugar/Thing being harvested from the Sugar cane/Thing, in order to do this the Sugar cane/Thing depends on a Human to harvest it, and that Human depends on other Humans to teach harvesting, cultivation etc.) This entanglement becomes more and more complex as we evolve. Humans become deeper and deeper intertwined (and detached) from their complex relationship to “Things.”

“Entanglement” is an important element in unravelling the Triangle Network. Particularly the relationship of materials and art production, for example in the case of South Africa for example, access to paint became clearly intertwined with social access and the political system. Network analysis allows us to deconstruct the nodes to uncover these usually invisible dynamics. It also helps us predict and explain why certain nodes become more established than others.⁴⁰⁸ The nodes that are more and more entangled seem to emerge as more consistent and “established.” The further entangled these nodes become (between Humans and Things) the more naturalized their place becomes, and consequently the more established. For example, Triangle New York has such a dependable and long-standing relationship to Golden Paints (dating to the first workshop in the 80s) and given its geography, has great access to a large pool of artists, art institutions and travel etc. that all these entanglements are so intertwined

⁴⁰⁷ Hodder, 19.

⁴⁰⁸ As links and nodes are not always easily connected, an effective “theory” enables one to draw and highlight the invisible links.

they become harder to break apart. Consequently, the node becomes stronger and larger.⁴⁰⁹ More transient sites within the Triangle Network, for example, Organhaus in China, which only ran for two consecutive years, remained a weaker node because its dependence on humans and other things was not as established. The links between the artists, funding, institutions, access to materials etc. were weaker and newer connections. They were easier to break and harder to establish. Hence, the node receded.

Many years ago Lawrence Alloway described the art world as a network where:

“Not only has the group of artists expanded in number but art is distributed to a larger audience in new ways, by improved marketing techniques and by the mass media. What does the vague term “art world” cover? It includes original works of art and reproductions; critical, historical and informative writing; galleries, museums and private collections. It is a sum of persons, objects, resources, messages and ideas. It includes monuments and parties, esthetics and openings, *Avalanche* and *Art in America*. I want to describe it as a system and consider what effects it has on art or our understanding of art.”⁴¹⁰

Discussions of the art world today are often framed within an established hierarchy. As noted by Pamela Lee “The reading of an art world tangentially engages in a systematic theory of ‘high art and low art’.” Triangle is clearly an art world by Alloway’s definition, but it is one that remains

⁴⁰⁹ For the Triangle Network, these entanglements provide the illusion of opportunity as they offer increased access, but they are restrictive in the inherent bias that any entanglement has. They are always an uneven entanglement pulling the nodes in a certain direction.

⁴¹⁰ Lawrence Alloway quoted in Pamela Lee, *Forgetting the Art World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012) 20.

underground, resisting the pull of the quintessential global art world which has become typified by “the biennial [as] that cultural form par excellence in keeping with the nomadic misadventures of global capital ...it is at one and the same time a “white cube” associated with “neoliberal denial” and a nexus of cultural self determination and belated nation building.”⁴¹¹ Triangle is the anti-thesis of this model.

There is a flurry of research that attempts to circumvent the trap of buzzwords like globalization and to look at artworks and artists without a neo-imperial gaze. Pamela Lee argues instead of thinking about the “global art world” as a socioeconomic phenomenon (or in terms of the imagery it stages and sponsors,) “the work of art’s world” is a medium through which globalization takes place. She argues that the work of art is itself both object and agent of globalization.”⁴¹² This echoes Latour’s idea of localizing the global. We need to flip the discourse around and look at how these microstructures embody macro ideas. “To speak of the “the work of arts world” is to point to both the work of arts mattering and its materialization, to understand the activity performed by the object as utterly continuous with the world it at once inhabits and creates.”⁴¹³ With Triangle we do not always have the artwork in which we can see the art world, as the network’s focus remains processed based. Yet, we can surely see the art world through the working processes within the network.

For example, in the early South African Thupelo workshops there were multiple global actors that arrived through conduits into the local framework. The sponsorship of materials from

⁴¹¹ Pamela Lee, 12.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Pamela Lee, 23.

the United States brought not only paint to the workshops, but multiple other associations to American imperialism and debates about abstraction. These debates had further connections to political groups, institutional affiliations and so forth. The space in which the artists could work traced their finances and bricks and mortar to European money and the artists travelling to the sites came by trains, cars, and airplanes made of parts manufactured all over the world. Thus, if one applies the web of actor network to the image once can see how the global was intertwined into every aspect of what seemed to be a very regional workshop.

To return to the question of if the network is a means to an end or an end itself – ANT demonstrates that that the network can be an end in itself.⁴¹⁴ It only exists as long as the connectors bringing the global into local sites, or connectors from node to node continue to exist. Once these connections are severed the network ceases to exist. The node may continue operating but with new connections that are severed from their initial source of the Triangle umbrella. The beauty about this artist led Triangle initiative is that the connections are often made from the regional level and crafted by those working on the ground. The moment they feel those connections are not helping their cause there is no need to further pursue or strengthen them.

Through ANT we see that the global and the local remain intertwined on every level. Nonetheless certain workshops maintain stronger connections to other actors who operate in the “art world” while others have increasing associations with more regional actors. The Triangle formula has become so successful because it brings the global into the local with no pressure to

⁴¹⁴ This question is complicated and differs depending on the node and or theory with which one views the Triangle Network. For many workshops the network is a means to an end, for others it is an end in itself. Nonetheless, ANT as a methodology demonstrates the reality of the network as an entity in and of itself.

continue building any associations. Its organic growth is fueled by a need on the ground rather than some large institutional mandate or financial incentive. An area where Triangle has become extremely successful is in its relationship to development and infrastructure, despite not having an official mandate of arts for development (despite its connection to funding bodies for whom this is their mandate). Many art schools, institutions and cultural foundations have grown from initial Triangle workshops.

One of its very successful programs is the Knowledge and Skills Sharing Workshops (KSS), which happen on both a south-south axis as well as a north-south axis. Rather than bringing local artists into an international institution, which mirrors the top-down approach it attempts to circumvent, this Triangle program is a peer-to-peer exchange designed to share knowledge and learn from sites that have complementary strengths. The program, known as the KSS program, “provides an ad-hoc and hands-on training for coordinators of grass roots arts organization operating within the Triangle and Arts Collaborate Networks.” It started in 2009 with the following goals:⁴¹⁵

- Tailored training for grass-roots organizations, particularly those operating in areas where the art infrastructure is particularly limited
- Stronger activities as a result of greater international dialogue on artistic, curatorial and critical approaches to contemporary practice
- Greater understanding of partners’ roles within their cultural landscape and internationally

⁴¹⁵ The Triangle Arts Network website, “Knowledge and Skills Sharing”
<http://www.trianglenetwork.org/projects/knowledge-skills-sharing>

- Encouraging new developments, connections and partnership
- Greater visibility of organizational activities, leading to increases opportunities for fundraising from diverse range of funders.

Thus, the goals of KSS are clearly to create a node that is able to build a strong network of associations. As Foucault reminds us, “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations.”⁴¹⁶ Undoubtedly there are power relations inherent to a selection process and program that offers peer-to-peer exchange. Yet the goal of sharing knowledge in a democratic way has proven to be very effective for the network’s growth and strengthening of artistic communities in places with a struggling arts infrastructure.

Most of the exchanges with the KSS program do not surface in the biennials or crowned stages of the global world but they still make a huge impact on a regional level. Biennales, global exhibitions and global institutions have a set of vetting processes that one needs to go through to emerge on top. Most of the artists that circulate in the global art market are university educated and have therefore had access to a western style of teaching. They are vetted first through these institutions and then further selected by the larger gatekeepers of culture: curators, administrators, organizers, and so on. Once they are selected and propagated into the global arena they enter into the global flows of capital and are intertwined into the art market. The KSS does not set artists or administrators up on the trajectory for global stardom. Rather it provides them the tools through which they can make new connections, how they make those connections

⁴¹⁶ Foucault, *Power* 1977, 27.

or which associations they choose to promote are entirely up to them.⁴¹⁷ The Triangle model gives grass roots organizations the ability to set up an infrastructure on the ground. Through an ideology it creates a network link, whether or not a site wants this link to remain strong, weak or somewhere in the middle remains entirely isobaric.

Why certain nodes remain grounded locally and others seem to tap into larger international meta-structures remains linked to a larger paradox in contemporary art. On one hand “The concept of contemporary art provides an opportunity to revise the universality of art history as art’s history” yet somehow where we gather our contemporary art from is born from this very universalism. For example, Wu Hung, a distinguished scholar of Chinese art refers to contemporary Chinese art as experimental art because contemporary art seems to align itself too closely with western principles.⁴¹⁸ “Contemporary Art and its globalization have been narrated through institutional and structural perspectives, through traditional historical sources; literature-catalogues and sociological data, or economic analyses- and related archival material”⁴¹⁹ This is part of the problem, the narrative of contemporary art often leaves out the local contemporary works. ANT equalizes this playing field.

There are numerous artists who have made the jump into discussions of global contemporary art. Subodh Gupta, Simon Faithful, Jim Langy, Susan Welland and Tapfuma

⁴¹⁷ After the Thupelo Workshop in Cape Town in 2010 the director of Greatmore Kate Tarratt-Cross hosted the director and artists Kwaku Kiss (Castro) from SaNsA in Ghana for a month residency at the Cape Town studios. The goal of the workshop was for Castro to engage in the operations of Greatmore, including general operations, finance, programming and website management. This initiative was sponsored by Hivos.

⁴¹⁸ Charlotte Bydler, *The Global Art World, Inc.: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art*, Figura Nova Series, No. 32 (Uppsala University Press, 2004) 465.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

Mosez Gupta are all examples of artists who have become contemporary superstars.⁴²⁰ They are the easier ones to write about. They either had access to institutions that could pull them into larger international circuits or translatability to their work that made them legible to the western audiences. If we are ever to destabilize the power imbalance of the contemporary art world we need to look at those artists that remain active on a regional level. The artists whose work problematizes what we read as contemporary art, and artists whose work does not have a place in the western institution. Once western art history begins to include these artists in the narratives, and find the language and frameworks with which to deal with them, only at that point will the contemporary global truly become global and inclusive.

⁴²⁰ I use the term superstar to in terms of success in the global marketplace, biennial circuit, gallery and exhibitions representation.

Conclusion

This project serves as an introduction into the intricate web of the Triangle Network, its organizations and affiliated workshops. The scope of the network and its ongoing projects are constantly evolving and by the time this work is completed the network will have already grown. One of the greatest challenges in writing about this topic was finding the parameters of my research and framing it so it remained open ended enough to further study. I hope to offer enough of a foundation from which we can continue to build an archive for Triangle, while maintaining its fluidity and organic nature.

In this world of rapid globalization, expanding mega-exhibitions, biennials and international capital artists are increasingly pressured to move vertically from periphery locations into the centre. Triangle remains unique in promoting a horizontal movement between spaces and places. The value in Triangle is not about where one ends up, but in the connections that are made in the process. These connections are endless and I hope my research demonstrates a small glimpse into the web that Triangle has created.

As I wrap up my research on the network, the discourse surrounding us is rapidly expanding to include narratives of multiple modernisms and global exchange. This is a welcome progression and will likely lead to increasing Triangle narratives coming forward. For many years the discourse and language to distill what was happening at Triangle simply was not available, and consequently the writing surrounding the network was scarce. As we create new literature to help us distill these international links we also gain exposure to areas that were previously hidden from the art world. I hope my dissertation provides an opening into these new

ways of viewing non-traditional art histories and new approaches to talking about them within the larger framework.

With the growing use of social media platforms, blogs and web based initiatives Triangle is now more connected than ever. The linkages between the nodes are likewise becoming stronger and parallel the growth of online networks and cyber connections. As my own research progressed I was struck by how much more connected the network became with each passing year. The access to online archives, artists' emails, and experiential blogs have been a welcome addition to the limited Triangle archive and helped push my work immensely. Yet, the new online accessibility to many of these workshops and initiatives also highlighted new challenges.

Unlike the traditional archive structure online databases are often transient (especially those that are not institutionally affiliated). Thus, a lot of my work was gathered over many years and no longer exists on online platforms. Information appears, disappears and is constantly being edited and altered. As the network evolves and its mandate grows it is updated online and often older sources are discarded. This posed a challenge for researching and tracing the historiography of the ever-evolving network.

Moreover, my research brought to my attention new issues of accessibility and translation that I touch upon but still require further investigation. While the network thrives in zones of crisis, it requires zones of freedom to operate. Hence, it requires the freedom of travel, freedom of information and freedom of communication to be successful. This remains a major challenge for the network and needs to be acknowledged. At the 2011 conference many of the workshops were not represented because of security issues and inabilities to obtain travel visas.

Likewise, many of the workshop leaders addressed that restricted access to their workshops proved to be one of the largest challenges in moving the model forward.

Nonetheless, despite its challenges and the political realities of the world we live in Triangle has thrived through adversity and success. It has proven to be adaptable, long-standing and holds an ethos with near universal appeal. There is an unquestionable merit to a model that has held up and evolved for so many years, touched so many artists' lives and changed so many art systems. Despite these seismic shifts in the artworlds it encounters, Triangle has and continues to operate from the margins, demonstrating that change need not come from the top-down.

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Appendices

Appendix I

As of 2016 the current active network partners are:

- 32° East, Uganda
- Abro, Ethiopia
- Al Mahatta, Palestine
- Bag Factory, South Africa
- Batroun Projects, Lebanon
- Bergen Ateliergruppe, Norway
- Britto, Bangladesh
- Capacete, Brazil
- Coast, England
- Cona, India
- Gasworks, England
- Greatmore, South Africa
- Helena Producciones, Colombia
- Insaka, Zambia
- Khoj, India
- Kiosko, Bolivia
- Kuona Trust, Kenya
- Lugar a Dudas, Colombia
- Makan, Jordan
- No.1 Shanthi Road, India
- Organhaus, China
- Partage, Mauritius
- Popty, Wales
- Rybon, Iran
- Sansa, Ghana
- Shatana Workshop, Jordan
- Supernormal, UK
- Thapong, Botswana
- The Cornelius Foundation, France
- Theertha, Sri Lanka
- Thupelo Workshop, South Africa
- Triangle Arts Association, USA
- Triangle France, France
- Vasl, Pakistan
- Xerem, Portugal

Appendix 2– Artists and Critics Invited to Lead the Emma Lake Workshops, 1955-1969 (taken from *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, p140.)

	Accept	Decline
1955	Jack Shadbolt	
1956	Joseph Plaskett	Jack Shadbolt, David Alfaro Siquieros, Jose Gutierrez, Will Barnet
1957	Will Barnet	
1958	NO WORKSHOP	
1959	Barnett Newman (William Ronald)	Jock Macdonald, Harold Town, Franz Kline
1960	John Ferren	Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Pablo Picasso, Mark Tobey
1961	Herman Cherry	Philip Guston, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Clyfford Still, Adolph Gottlieb, Conrad Marca-Relli, James Brooks, Adja Yunkers, Ludwig Sander, John Raynal, Tommy Sills
1962	Clement Greenberg	Philip Guston, Barnett Newman
1963	Kenneth Noland	Barnett Newman
1964	Jules Olitski, Stefan Wolpe	Eli Bornstein, Tony Smith
1965	Lawrence Alloway, John Cage	
1966	Harold Cohen	Robert Motherwell
1967	Frank Stella	Anthony Caro
1968	Don Judd	
1969	Michael Steiner	Ronald B. Kitaj, Ron Davis, Jack Bush

