

A dark, abstract painting featuring a red horse, a white horse, and a black horse in a landscape with a vase of flowers.

THIS
REMEMBERING
LAND

Carolyn Parton

THIS REMEMBERING LAND



Solo exhibition by Carolyn Parton

Abridged exhibition
Cape Town Art Fair

26 February - 1 March 2015

*Each poem, each piece remembers us perfectly
The way the earth remembers our bodies ...*

Anne Michaels, *The Winter Vault* (1996)

Unabridged exhibition
London

24 March - 18 April 2015

SULGER-BUEL LOVELL
LONDON | CAPE TOWN



*The works have such a strong energy.
Parton is making the work of the future, turning waste into beauty.*

Marlene Dumas, 2015



CREDITS

My grateful thanks to the many people who have contributed spent paint to the project,
yet are not mentioned in this catalogue.

With exception, I mention Marlene Dumas with her permission, as my 2015 exhibition
at Sulger-Buel Lovell in London takes place virtually in the shadow of her retrospective at Tate
Modern. I am indebted to her on many levels. Her interest and support has helped deepen the
project and extend its reach considerably.

I have also mentioned Michael Hall due to the unusual nature of his gift, and its interesting history.

For further paint backstories, please follow me on Instagram at *carolynparton*.

THIS REMEMBERING LAND

I work with paint that has a backstory. South Africa has the oldest paint backstory on record.

Buried deep in a cave on our coast a 100 000 year old* paint making toolkit was recently discovered. It played a crucial role in telling us a pivotal evolutionary story of our human mind, and led archaeologists to reposition the birthplace of modern human behaviour from Europe to Africa.

Intrigued that a mixture of land and liquid in a perlemoen shell can speak of who we were as a species at a vital stage in our evolution, I explore what contemporary paint and painting may tell to those in the future about us in what could possibly be a pivotal stage in ours.

In my process, I collect spent paint in all forms from all who use it - be they renowned international artists or unknown local housepainters. I work to understand its nature, experimenting with properties such as its three-dimensionality, weight, memory, flexibility, strength and impact on our immediate natural world, including our health. Attempts to change its destiny from landfill to artwork, from the discarded to the collected, have led me to develop processes for producing reclaimed paint from spent remnants and other forms of discarded painting material. Melikhaya Mdungwana and Tom Vidal assist me to process this paint for use in my art making.

As I work, the paint evokes stories of how land speaks of our interaction with it.

Carolyn Parton, 2015

* Approximate age

ARTIST BIO

Carolyn Parton holds a BA Fine Art *cum laude* (2008) from the University of South Africa. Her research article *Extended Traces: Tracking the impact of painter upon environment* was published in 2010.

Since 2006 she has been researching paint as matter, focusing on properties such as its three-dimensionality, memory, flexibility, strength, significant weight and impact on our natural world. In her art making process she collects spent paint - particularly that which has a backstory - from acclaimed international artists such as Marlène Dumas to local township housepainters. She develops methods to reclaim this paint, incorporating it as remnant of environment in her art.

Her work is included in collections such as The Constitutional Court of South Africa, University of South Africa and University of Cape Town Permanent Art Collections. She has held three solo exhibitions including Cape Town Art Fair (2015), and has an upcoming solo at Sulger-Buel Lovell London. Selected group exhibitions including *Spier Contemporary* finalist exhibition at the Cape Town City Hall (2010), *Threshold* at Michaelis Gallery (2011), *Transcode* at UNISA Gallery (2011), *Terra Pericolosa* at Fried Contemporary (2012), *What's going on?* at Lovell Gallery (2014), Turbine Art Fair Joburg (2014), *Imago Mundi* Benetton Foundation canvases at Ca' dei Carraresi, Treviso, Italy (2014), Museo Carlo Bilotti Rome (2014 - 2015) and upcoming at the Querini Stampalia Foundation, Venice Biennale (2015).

She was born in Cape Town where she lives and works as an artist and design creative director.

ART, DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE AND FREEDOM

Sometimes, attending to insignificant detail opens up huge questions for the imagination. The Constitutional Court logo - to be formally inaugurated by President Nelson Mandela on the day the judges took their oath of office - was one such detail. We sought a radical rupture and an image that conveyed the idea of a Constitution that protected the rights of all our people. This is how I met Carolyn Parton. We worked with her to create a logo symbolising the equal dignity of all participants in conversation, respect for different voices and a core of humane principles underlying the proceedings. And that is how the image of people gathered under a sheltering tree rooted in our own soil came about. But more than that, the logo directly influenced the character of the design that was to win the international competition for the new Court building. It turned out that the philosophy encapsulated in the small brass logo of the Court was to animate the resplendent building that is now the Constitutional Court of South Africa.

When I went to meet with Carolyn, I immediately felt that her studio was a place of special energy. At first I couldn't understand exactly what it was about her that gave me that strong sense of her respect for human dignity. It eventually came to me. She carries that same spirit of creativity and freedom of her great-grandmother, a writer who was in the Dutch resistance. It is this energy and spirit that I believe comes through the generations and emerges in her art.

The Dutch connection continues. It was at the Court building that Carolyn first briefly met Marlène Dumas, who had come to speak at the opening about her tapestries donated to the Court art collection by the Netherlands Government. I put them in touch again when Carolyn was visiting the Netherlands and asked to collect paint from Marlène for her art. The relationship continued and it is significant that Carolyn's work is soon to be exhibited in an intimate gallery a few blocks from Marlène's retrospective at Tate Modern.

Albie Sachs



The reader (2015)
Spent paint tubes,
opened and scraped in
the paint dust making
process, brass rings
(Credit: Tom Vidal)
146 x 112cm

Prologue (2015)
Palette remnants of artists' oils and acrylics.
Scraped from dried palettes as well as torn
from paint sheets in paint dust making
process, PVA, cotton offcuts, carbon fibre rod
89 x 56 x 2cm





**Once upon a hundred thousand
winters (2015)**

Fragments from reclaimed paint sheet left exposed through a full Cape Winter, spent paint removed from discarded paint lids, death mask cast of flowers growing on coast of South Africa 2014, reclaimed paint fragments, PVA, cotton offcuts, carbon fibre rod (Credit: Tom Vidal)
118 x 89 x 3.5cm

Anthology (2015)
Slabs consisting entirely of wall paint that accumulated over 20 years on the infinity curve of a photographic studio in Commercial Street, Cape Town.
The paint is a gift to the artist from photographer Michael Hall.
(Credit: Tom Vidal)
146 x 95 x 82cm



**Chronicler (2015)**

Paint dust hand made from spent artists' acrylics and oils, death mask paint cast of Spring flowers growing on coast of South Africa in 2014, strips of reject canvas, strips of reconstituted reclaimed paint, artists' acrylics and oils, canvas
36 x 20cm

**Manuscript (2015)**

The only material that is not paint in this work is the perlemoen shell.
Suspended paint pour:
PVA and reclaimed commercial paint
Base:

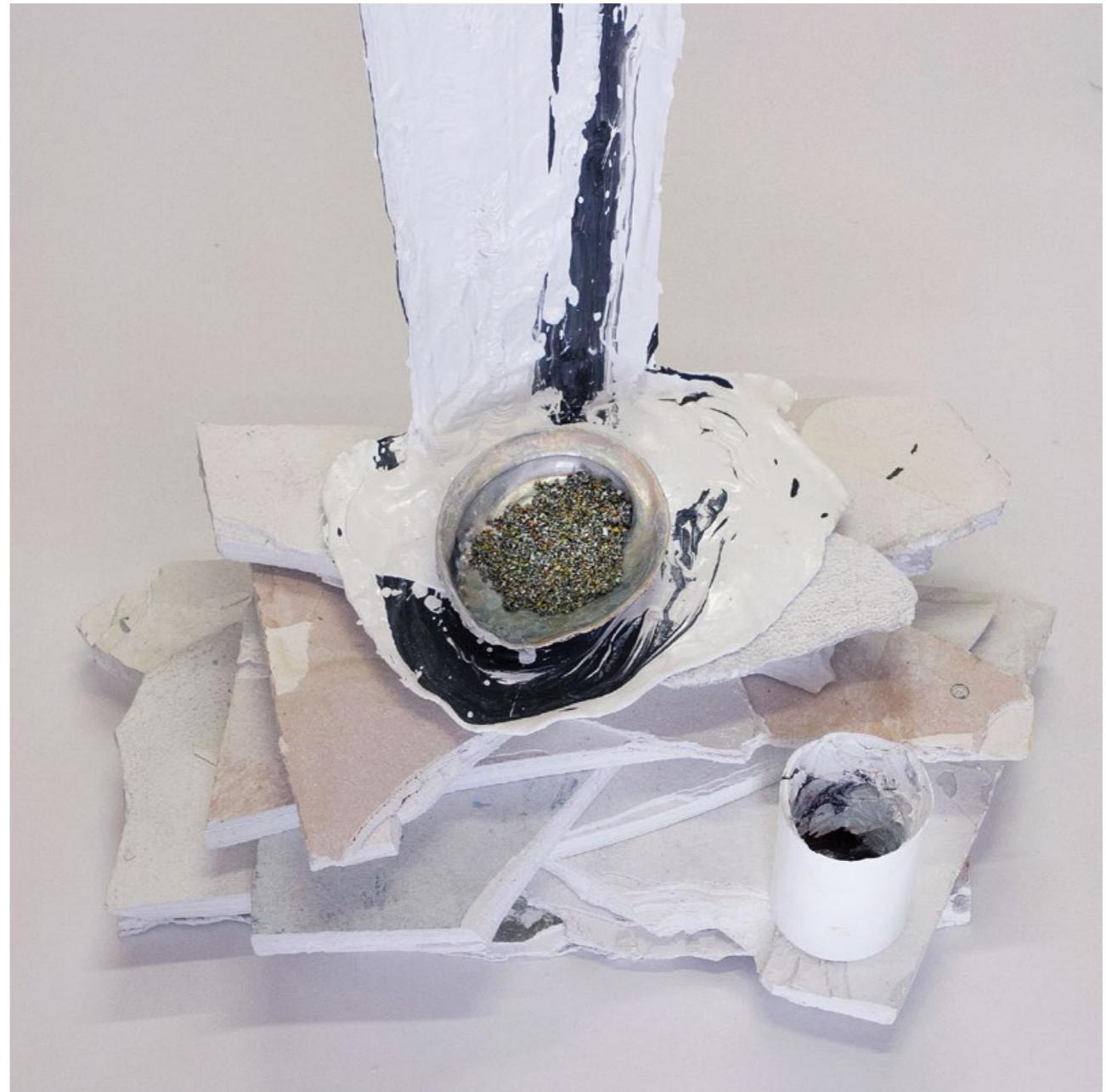
20 years of accumulated paint from infinity wall in photographic studio (gift from Michael Hall)

Container:

Dried paint removed from mixing container
(gift from Marlene Dumas)

Contents of perlemoen shell:

Paint dust hand made from spent artists' acrylics and oils
Installation size: 260 x 70 x 60cm



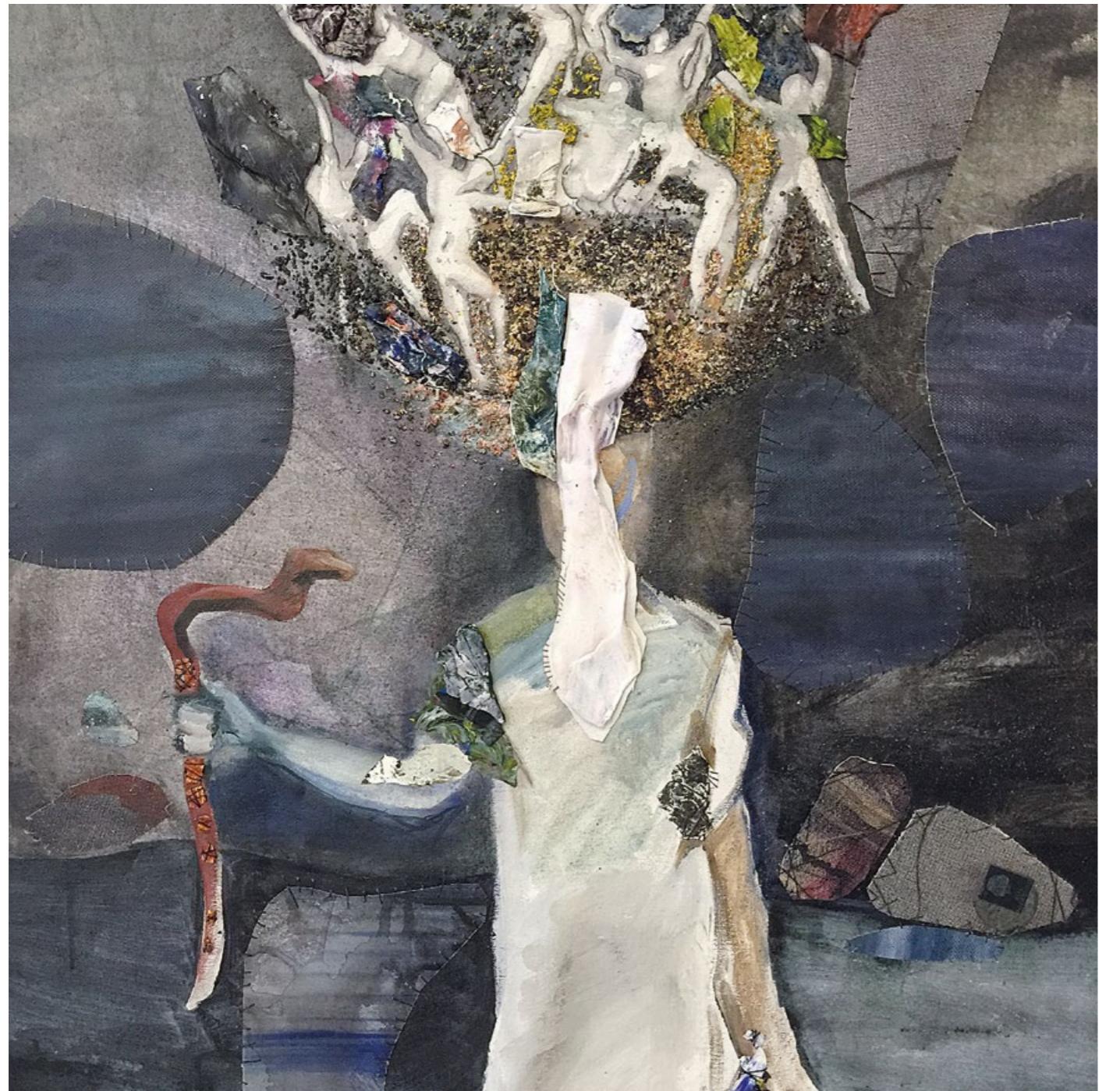
The chapters (2015)

Reconstituted paint fragments,
paint dust hand made from spent
artists' oils and acrylics,
spent paint tubes,
reject canvas fragments,
fabric offcuts, cotton thread,
cotton/linen, canvas,
artists' oils, acrylics and watercolours
230 x 60cm per panel
Installation size: 230 x 400cm

(Detail images on following pages)









To be continued (2015)

Paint dust, artists' oils and acrylics, reconstituted paint fragments and strips, cotton offcuts, aluminium, reclaimed canvas
Installation size: 95 x 130cm



P.S (2015)

Paint dust hand made from spent artists' oils and acrylics, exhibition printed matter/invitations collected over 17 years
47.5 x 28.5cm



Fictions from facts (2015)

Reconstituted paint strips and fragments from reclaimed paint, spent paint tubes used by Marlene Dumas as a student and in early years in Amsterdam, nail paint used by Helena Dumas as a teenager, silicone, aluminium
40 x 30cm each including frame



Allegory (2015)

Spent paint tube lids, nylon
70 x 117 x 7cm



Writer's block 1-3

(2015)

PVA, artists' acrylics, slab of
20 years of accumulated
paint from infinity wall in a
photographic studio
Dimensions variable



Between the lines (20 years of photography) (2015)

20 years of accumulated paint from infinity wall in
photographic studio, paint hand made from spent artists' oils
and acrylics, cotton, canvas, frame
40 x 30cm including frame

**Abandoned sentences** (2015)

Glass palette remnant from artist's studio, oil and acrylic artists' paints, fabric offcuts, canvas, paint hand made from: spent artists' oils and acrylics, discarded transparencies of oil paintings and art auction catalogue
30 x 40cm unframed

**Dedication** (2015)

Reconstituted paint handmade from: spent artists' oils and acrylics, fabric offcuts, art auction catalogue; sheets of reclaimed housepaint, oil and acrylic artists' paints, palette remnant from artist's studio, canvas, reclaimed canvas offcuts
40 x 30cm including frame

**Out of print** (2015)

Reconstituted paint handmade from: spent artists' oils and acrylics, fabric offcuts, art auction catalogue; sheets of reclaimed housepaint, oil and acrylic artists' paints, canvas, reclaimed canvas offcuts
40 x 30cm including frame



Author's notes 1 and 2 (2015)

Reconstituted spent paint fragments, PVA, cotton offcuts, carbon fibre rods
40 x 30cm including frame



Bibliography 1 and 2 (2015)

Paint dust hand made from spent artists' oils and acrylics, nail varnish container remnants from Helena Dumas, PVA, cotton offcuts, carbon fibre rods
40 x 30cm including frame



**Epilogue (2015)**

Spent paint tubes, opened
and scraped in the paint
dust making process, brass
rings (Credit: Tom Vidal)

115 x 84 x 3cm

**Aftermath (abridged) (2015)**

Artists' oils, paint dust hand made from
spent artists' oils and acrylics, reclaimed
paint tubes, cotton, canvas
30 x 40cm including frame

SELECTED WRITING



(top and above)

Installation view and detail of **Time will Tell** (2011)
Acrylic, enamel and reconstituted reclaimed paint
Dimensions variable



(above)

19.200kg landscape (2011)
Reclaimed, reconstituted paint in frame
100 x 70cm excluding frame

EXCERPT BY GWEN MILLER FROM **TRANSCODE** CATALOGUE AND THESIS (in print 2015)

In Parton's work, both ethereal collages and heavy deposits of stacked paint evoke the geographically layered space of the earth. This is a space of deposits and poisonous alchemy. In her installation *Time will Tell* (2011) detritus collapses to mediamatically address a culture of excess and waste. Parton's ecological criticality starts at a more personal space: that of the artist's working space. In her early works Parton initially explored the intermedial relationship between paint and the layering of Photoshop to express her concerns with the flotsam washed up ashore where she stays. Her processes now involve networking with artists asking them to donate their old paint and paint tubes. In Parton's (2012) words, working "... with paint that is spent or has been discarded, I explore through a creative process the possibilities of transforming the unwanted/ the discarded/ the outcast, into that which could be desirable, cared for and valued."

Her landscapes seem to speak about a subterranean awareness, resulting from deposits presented in systems of assemblages of throw-away paint and residue. Conceptually and technically, the reciprocity in her thinking led to works where medium progressively became the image, being the represented. Elkins (2000:45) refers to paint as "a hard scab clinging to the canvas", but Parton has moved into an entirely different level with stacked or hanging sheets of paint, as freestanding matter staking its claim in lived space. She writes about her processes where "paint is weighed and documented" and often titled according to its weight, such as *19.200kg landscape* (2011). As viewer one senses this physical weight in the tactile work, adding to psychological and existential drama of damage and destruction. The spatial compression of filling frames with stacked skins of discarded paint is at once asphyxiating and sublime in its multiplicity. Whilst the work evokes a Romantic sublime of awe, it simultaneously calls up the tension of sublime horror in its condemnation of earth as abused space: intact, irreversibly mounting in its lament of loss.

Gwenneth Miller

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EXCERPTS BY PROF. ELFRIEDE DREYER FROM

Let sleeping dogs lie: visual expressions of burial as loss of teleology

eBook of 1st Global conference: ***Apocalypse: imagining the end*** (2012)

Oxford University, UK.

(Excerpt 1)

A post-apocalyptic work such as Parton's dense yet ordered *25.150kg landscape*, 2011, from the Threshold exhibition at the University of Cape Town, presents a revisionist and self-reflexive discourse on the aftermath of the apocalypse-like event, which can be interpreted as a response to both environment pollution and, in my view, post-apartheid burial and catharsis. Parton's artistic process entails a project of collective gathering of artists' discarded paint residues partly induced by a viewpoint of "art pollution" expressed by the painter Jan Andriesse, Marlene Dumas's companion, that there is overproduction of paint in the world, depleting the natural metal and mineral resources of the earth (paint contains metals such as titanium and cadmium.)

At the same time *25.150kg landscape* depicts a landscape that is not viewed from above or down, nor presents the conventional viewpoint of gazing at the landscape, but offers a confrontation with utopianism on eye level. Surfaces simulating incisions, inroads and trajectories can be viewed as representing post-apocalyptic remnants and consequences of utopian ideologies in Africa and South Africa in particular. Signifying secrecy, Parton's layered strata of paint embody a burial of history and through the compositional ordering of the paint strata – almost as a kind of analytic archiving – express a quest for meaningful Ending or teleology through the ongoing search for Truth. Almost as a fragment taken from a much larger constellation of arranged and re-arranged planes, the directionless 'packing' of the strata calls for an interpretation of loss of teleology where both the beginning and the end have been misplaced. As such the sheets of used paint - applied as physical matter - become a burial of ecological and social strata concealing the (un)fulfilment of destinies and blundered cosmological and utopian teleologies.

***25.150kg landscape* (2011)**

Reconstituted, reclaimed paint in frame
72 x 125 x 3cm



(Excerpt 2)

In Parton's work the rhetoric of place has vanished in that the teleological linearity, vocabulary and modes of thought that form the cosmology (Augé 2008, 63) have been lost, and therefore both utopia and apocalypse are untenable. The work becomes a depiction of a dystopian non-place, since as Marc Augé (2008, 63) argues, "a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place." Parton's works function as post-apocalyptic thresholds in the sense of being on the verge of disintegrating, or alternatively viewed as metaphorically collecting and reassembling the pieces.

(Excerpt 3)

... in Parton's work, the transgression of the boundary never reaches a final, ultimate destination but remains on the verge as a continual disruption, a desire and a point of reassembling.

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