



In retrospect:  
Oudtshoorn - between distance and detail

## **Introduction:**

Oudtshoorn Trace is a collaborative land art and performance project by Marcus Neustetter and Bronwyn Lace. It was commissioned by ABSA KKNK in April 2009 as part of the larger KKNK festival. In their collaboration, Neustetter and Lace combined their interests in projects that address exploring space, public interaction, performance, installation and land art as well as experimentation with materials.

The project took its inspiration from the interesting geographical and social dynamics within the town of Oudtshoorn. The social changes in Oudtshoorn partially assisted by ABSA KKNK celebration and recognition of Afrikaans and broader South African culture over the last years made for a relevant backdrop to this project.

## **Planned approach:**

Based on initial geological and natural history research, the artists aimed to creatively respond to the experience of the landscape through large scale drawings. Using techniques for cordoning off sites of excavations, the artists planned to translate a Google Earth Trace image into a landscape intervention during the time of the festival with local volunteers from the neighbouring military camp. Evoking excavation site grids and geological dig demarcations, the work would be visible for passing visitors who witnessed the artists using wooden poles and white material in raising the "drawing" off the ground in the Klein Karoo landscape.

The designated location for the drawings was the side of a hill just outside of town visible from the main road in Oudtshoorn as well as the Prinsiepe School, which is the allocated visual art exhibition space for the festival.

In order to redraw the Oudtshoorn Google Earth image trace onto the landscape, the artists created a grid on the trace and in the landscape. The intention was that this grid on the landscape was then filled section by section by copying the drawing of a map. The grid and drawing were realized using blue and white ribbon, attached to wooden dowels hammered into the ground.

The recreation on the landscape drawing would take place in collaboration with the military volunteers over a period of 2 weeks.

## **When plans become a reality:**

The artists had assumed that the volunteers would be trained men and woman from the military, on meeting the volunteers they realised the volunteers were in fact 30 youth, children of military personnel. The reason this youth group had been recently formulated was due to serious disciplinary issues within the base camp.

For this reason hard physical labour was not really an option. The reality of climbing a 100 x 100 m hillside in the Oudtshoorn heat for a period of 14 days was something these youth would not cope with. Secondly Lace and Neustetter realised very quickly that a different type of collaboration might be of benefit to the youth considering the issues. The project had to radically shift. The new approach was to engage the youth in a participatory, performative way.

## **Outcomes:**

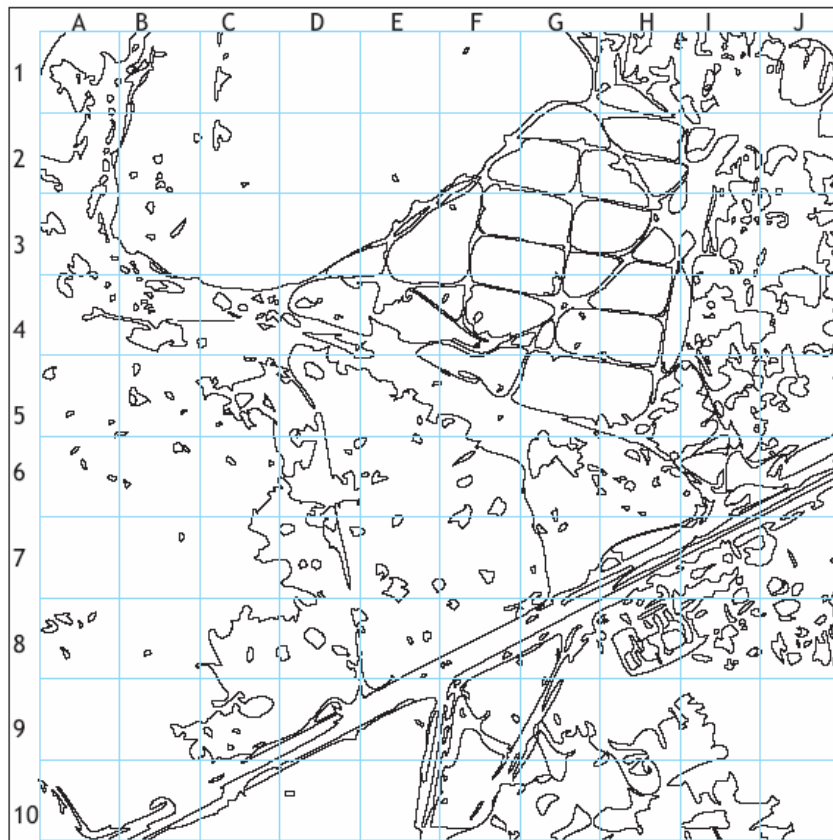
After mapping the grid onto the hillside parts of the Google Earth image was recreated, followed by a series of playful and experimental layers to the drawing.

For a number of mornings at 10am for the main exhibition walkabouts, the youth choreographed a performance with the materials on the hilltop hundreds of meters away that was visible through a video camera and binocular from the window of the exhibition space in town. The youth performing would sing and an audio link was created via mobile phone loudspeakers.

A final evening event was planned with projection, laser, LED-light and glow-stick performances. These animated the landscape and the drawing on the hillside. The performances were participatory and responsive to the activities, discussions and inspiration of the landscape interventions.



Google Earth image of site

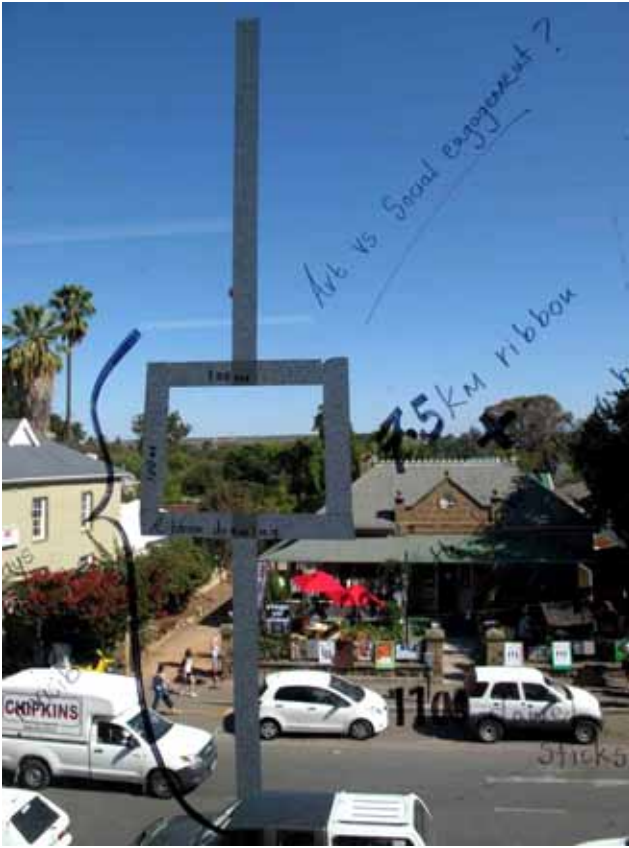


Mapping the Google Earth trace image



The ribbon drawing: white traces on the blue gird





View of drawing site from exhibition venue in Oudtshoorn



Performances on site



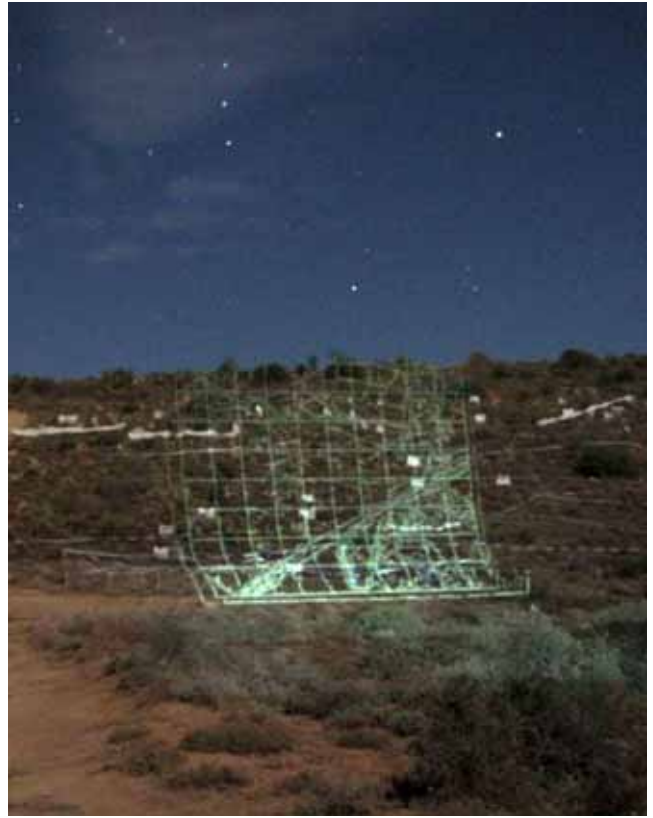
View of performance from exhibition venue via camera and binoculars



Performances on site







Evening event



Creating glow-stick images







LED-light performances







Stick-fighting with glow-sticks in a laser ring



Landscape projections





## resensies

# Leerders is deel van kunswerk

## Landskap as skilderdoek ingespan

Johan Myburg

*Oudtshoorn Trace*, die landskapkuns-werk wat Sondag net buite die dorp vorm begin aanneem het en Saterdag ten einde loop, is 'n projek wat 'n nuwe rigting op die program vir visuele kunste op die Absa KKNK inslaan.

Bronwyn Lace en Marcus Neustetter, twee Johannesburgse kunstenaars, werk saam met 20 tieners van Oudtshoorn aan *Oudtshoorn Trace*.

Hulle gebruik nie alleen die landskap as "doek" nie, maar maak ook gebruik van die tieners as medekunstenaars – jong mense wat voorheen geen of bitter min kontak met kuns gehad het.

Namitte die projek begin vorder het, het Bronwyn en Marcus besef dat hulle sekere aanpassings sou moes maak om die jong mense te akkommodeer.

"Dit maak nie saak hoe prestes jy 'n projek beplan nie, die menslike element bepaal altyd die loop van die werk," sê Bronwyn drie dae nadat die projek begin het. "Die werk het daarom 'n groter *performance*-element begin aanneem. Dis belangrik dat die tieners deel moet wees van die projek."

Die tieners het hul woonhuise in die weermagbasis in Oudtshoorn op Google Earth opgespoor en gee dit nou weer teen die hung waar die

Leerders van die weermagbasis in Oudtshoorn herskep hulle by Badkop as deel van die landskapkunswerk *Oudtshoorn Trace*.



kunswerk vorm aanneem. Dit is sigbaar vanuit Prins Vincent, waar die visuele kunste op vanjaar se fees vertoon word, en dit kan ook eerste-hands gesien word by Badkop net buite die dorp.

Marcus en vier van die tieners het gister tydens die rondleiding in Prins Vincent oor die projek gepraat en dit was duidelik dat die projek nie net hulle siening van die visuele kunste verander het nie, maar hulle

ook betrek het. Die opgewondenheid waarmee hulle oor die projek praat, dui daarop dat groter gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid 'n onontbeerlike aspek van die fees is en moet wees.

- Móre en Vrydagaand is daar van 18:00 tot 20:00 'n laservertoning en LED-igte word ook ingespan. Die twee vertonings is gratis.
- Johan is kurator vir visuele kunste by die KKNK.