Editorial

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The first issue of *Image & Text* for 2016 is an open issue and contains five articles that deal with current work by researchers from a number of South African tertiary institutions. Four articles deal with fine art from various critical stances, including public art, performance art, monuments and counter-monuments, and an investigation of 'the curatorial'. The last article deals with gender identity in a contemporary video game. In addition to the research articles, there is a book review of Victor Margolin's massive two-volume *World history of design*. This is followed by two conference reports from international conferences held in Amsterdam and Dublin. As always, there are common areas between the articles, and in this issue five of the authors are upcoming researchers; this aligns with *Image & Text's* vision of encouraging and nurturing younger voices.

The first article is by Karen Mentz and Jenni Lauwrens and is entitled 'When boys turn into women: a critical reading of postfeminist masculinity in *The last of us*'. In this article, the authors investigate the notion of gendered identity as inscribed in the video game *The last of us*, released in 2013. It is generally agreed that popular visual culture such as this contributes to gender identity, and feminine identity has previously been examined in this context. The current authors, however, tackle gendered identity from the vantage point of postfeminism to delve into the construction of masculinity. They demonstrate that although 'video games are still firmly rooted in a distinctively patriarchal version of hegemonic masculinity and its attendant association with competition, domination, and aggression', 'the emergence of a different representation of a male protagonist as morally complex, intuitive, and emotional' is found in this video game. The authors argue that 'the complex ways in which video games work to construct and maintain hegemonic discursive frameworks of gender, and renegotiate them, must continually be interrogated, particularly as women are increasingly entering into the video game sphere.'

The next article, by Storm Jade Brown, is entitled 'Lessons in retrospect: a McLuhan reading of the controversy surrounding Michael Elion's *Perceiving freedom* (2014)'.

Brown investigates the role of public art in urban environments, with particular reference to Cape Town, and traces the debate around the contested public art installation by Michael Elion, *Perceiving freedom* (2014). This artwork elicited heated reactions in the media and in social media in particular, which was exacerbated by subsequent defacement by The Tokolos Stencil Collective. The author employs the media-orientated viewpoint of Marshall McLuhan's seminal work *Understanding media* (1964) in order to investigate and theorise the impact of this artwork. By means of this theoretical point of entry, Brown reflects on the debate that 'South African public art object [has] a moral responsibility to go beyond aesthetics' and to consider the public context and engage with it in a responsible fashion.

The next article, 'Steven Cohen's *Golgotha* as a cultural critique of capitalism' by Larita Engelbrecht, also uses critical theory to probe this short film (2007-2009) by the South African performance artist. Cohen's performance works have shocked many audiences, and in this short film, he delivers, according to Engelbrecht, scathing critique of materialistic excess and capitalist culture. Cohen's 'visceral performance with real human skulls in the capitalist setting of New York's Wall Street and Times Square combines references to death with references to materialistic excess', which the author theorises by referring to Georges Bataille's notion of expenditure, as developed in the first volume of *The accursed share* (1949). Engelbrecht maintains that Cohen's 'aesthetically transgressive representation' that combines images of death with capitalist consumption nonetheless manages to 'represent excess and death in a cathartic, almost liberating way.'

Beschara Karam writes on 'William Kentridge's *Monument* (1990) as counter-monument and the embodiment of negative aesthetics' in the next article. This article analyses the film *Monument* (1990) by the famed South African artist and centres on an analysis of James E Young's ideas regarding the counter-monument and negative aesthetics: 'The former is defined as an anti-monument or a memorial that is open-ended, provocative, and subversive. The latter, Young's negative aesthetics, is defined as anti-redemptive art or counter-art, that is, a critical aesthetic.' Karam argues that Kentridge's film is provocative and offers the audience an opportunity to experience '(counter)artistic responses to historical traumas or catastrophes, such as apartheid.' This article makes a compelling South African contribution to the international debates concerning counter-monuments, countermemory, and negative aesthetics.

In the last article, 'Coming to terms with "the curatorial" in *PLAY_an* exhibition, Maaike Bakker and Jayne Crawshay-Hall take as point of departure the eponymous curated exhibition installed at the Nirox Sculpture Park in 2014. They start their article

with an investigation of the history of curatorship, which has greatly shifted in meaning during the last decade or so. 'The curatorial' has been expanded and is now 'conceived as a practice that operates supplementary to curating as "exhibition-making"'. In this article, the authors and two others, 'curated' the works of about forty artists in an informal outdoors setting in order to encourage interaction between the viewers and the artworks. They describe the processes involved in deciding how to display, install and curate the submitted artworks, and dwell on how the space was negotiated in order to align with the curatorial vision as well as the 'integrity to the artists' original intentions.' The unique circumstances of the outdoor space, the change of seasons that took place during the three months' running of the show, and the unpredictable nature of audience (and animal) engagement with the artworks meant that the curators realised that the 'exhibition would remain in constant flux,' but this also opened up the possibility for exciting interactions.

As previously noted, this issue ends with a book review and two conference reports. Jacques Lange reviews *World history of design* by the highly-regarded scholar Victor Margolin. The first two volumes of this huge undertaking were published in 2015, and the third volume is currently under development. Lange highlights the unique contributions this work makes and gives a succinct overview of the content that is dealt with. Thereafter, Fatima Cassim reports on the *Design & The City* conference held in Amsterdam in April 2016 and Kyle Rath writes on the *Face Forward: International Typographic Conference* held in Dublin in December 2015.

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