

Repeated image and transformation in modern art

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



Transformation is described as a metamorphosis and change either in form or appearance. However transformation in the art making process has taken place over time, allowing artists to make use of technology to create works that combine photography and expression in unity.

In Modisakeng's work transformation is evident across a multitude of images, adapting the form slightly across each image to display a full metamorphosis of the subject matter. In my own work transformation is apparent through the repeated imagery of the human figure, which is adapted through drawing, copying and cutting the form, to create an arrangement that differs from the previous figure.

Ditaola by Modisakeng directly translated to divination bones. Links to the artists' history in South Africa as the name has Setswana / Sesotho roots, the act of throwing bones directly links to indigenous traditions. The bones form a connection to the dream world, visions and mystery. Working in a multidisciplinary manner of photography, performance and sculpture, a time lapse across the images creates transformation as the powdered dove visually depicts change and development. The artist makes use of his own body to confront violence, using his body as a vessel to display fragmentation, distortion and degradation which is directly influenced by South Africa's political history. The black body becomes a symbol and explores the connection between post-colonial history, it depicts the transformation of South Africa's past to present. The artists stance is ready for battle in a traditional sense but also a contemporary sense as violence is used as symbolism to convey South Africa's past. Violence is a large concern for the artist and his comments around it questions the influence it has on

the country, both in a colonial and post-colonial sense. Using his personal history as inspiration for his works, the artist explores the connected histories of those that lived in post-colonial South Africa. The dove becomes a focal point for the figure in the composition, although the figure appears to stare past the dove into the emptiness of the background. Transformation is directly depicted through this composition as it references South Africa sitting on the die of its freedom, however it questions the violence people used to get there, whilst many people were helpless throughout the process and took no participation to arrive at this freedom.

My work *The Body, a Pot*, similarly references histories, identities and stories. Comprising of four parts, human body is used as tools to represent the mystical and a transformed world, covering the human body to become a landscape and losing personal identity, the work becomes escapism from the current state of the world. The work depicts four people covered in monkeys and Chinese symbolism, including dragons, fish and so on. Linking to an old world, free of corruption and embodying culture. Inspired by Manuela Gray's photographic series *The Number*, I incorporated elements of rope that have been thread through the museum board, removing one of the figures senses, be it sight, sound, taste or touch, just as she threads Japanese metallic thread into *Paradise Lost Triptych*, which importantly also examines markings on the body. Each of the figures do not display a clear face, they are no longer themselves but rather just a body transforming them from people into a landscape that allows for activity to take place. Much like the artist Gabriel Moreno who uses different imagery in his work *Donkey*, to hide the individuals identity through transformation and metamorphosis, similarly

his drawing Hare edition, uses these same methods to remodel and reshape the way one views the human form, inspiring my own artwork. Across the images I display, the body is repeated as symbolism for a personal story and opinion but the personal aspect becomes omitted and the story becomes a shared vision for the figures. The figures are slowly transformed each losing one of their senses, be it sight or hearing, each escaping from the world by omitting these abilities and rather emerging themselves in a new way of being.

Untitled (Frame XI – XIII), depicts the artist with a mask and objects that allude to violence such as whips and machetes. Allowing Modisakeng to use his body as subject matter as he believes that in doing this he is accountable for his image. The artist draws inspiration from racism and inequality in South Africa for this work and he uses his own opinions and experiences to shape his work. One of Modisakeng's beliefs is that "the personal is political" which he uses to incorporate his own history and allows the form to take place based on this. As violence is a large influence and concerning factor for Modisakeng he looks at violence in South African history and the effects that it has had as well as the outcome of this violence by using the black body to explore societies consciousness towards this issue. The multitude of images that are used in this collection allow the work to unfold before the viewer's eyes, a story is told through the adapted images and the artists concerns as well as violence in South Africa's history is revealed. As each image appears in sequence a transformation takes place both between body positioning and subject matter in the composition. Identity and ritual are prevalent themes in this series, and the themes as well as traditions he depicts are used to

display experiences, particularly in a post-colonial and colonial South Africa, these themes supply context to the narrative that is depicted in the images as well as provide context for the whole work. The installation is presented and arranged side by side to create a story that places emphasis on the symbols used in his work which convey oppression and violence, these tools and objects reflect an attempt to gain control and power. Transformation is presented in a controlled sense and the work appears to be under complete control this juxtaposes the violent tools and objects that threaten this control and create a sense of the erratic and chaotic events of the past.

Monkey as Trickster depicts figures and landscapes that transform and flow into one another, metamorphosing into organic forms. Identity is again an inspiration for this work, I explore the boundaries between oneself and their environment, as well as who the individuals are and who they are connected to through relationships. Their identity forms not only themselves but also their surroundings. Transformation is employed through the copying of the drawings and repeating them to layer the work as well as layer their identities. Distortion and degradation are used by pouring thinners over the imagery in the center of the work. Distortion affirms the loss of personal identity and merges the environment and figures. A parallel is created between structure and chaos.

Untitled (Bust 2) depicts a bronze mannequin bust upon which scarves and horns can be seen. Modisakeng is again influenced by South Africa's history and stories that come with it. Narrative plays a role once again as a theme and violence is again an influence on this work. Culture, however, is also a

theme focusing on the everyday as a South African. Symbolism in the work such as the horns, headwear and scarves become symbols of violence and they are removed from their actual purpose as objects. This bust is one of Modisakeng's early sculptures influenced by Brett Murray. It similarly embodies a pop style, as it goes against the norms of violence in South Africa's past and rather confronts it. The modern piece represents issues of contemporary South Africa's history. The work incorporates elements of myth and tradition, as well as that of classical figures or busts. Modisakeng uses material in his work as a metaphor, through his use of bronze he compares people in post-colonial and colonial South Africa to that of bronze, as the bronze he uses is unpolished he alludes to that of the oppression of the people, how they have not been able to reach their potential through repression opposed to the gleaming polished bronze that alludes to expression and freedom. Modisakeng reiterates the sense that everything is the same despite the trajectory that has taken place since post-colonial South Africa instead of boldly marking these events. Transformation is marked in this way. Instead of highlighting the transformation in this work, he plays it down and rather repeats what was before. However repeated symbolism and imagery is used as he spreads this imagery across many of his works including all three in the above analysis, constantly repeating themes of violence, power and South African history.