

REVIEW BY SUSAN SNODGRASS, ART IN AMERICA, JUNE/JULY ISSUE, 2009

In "Anatomy of an Archive - The Secret History of a Material Body" Chicago based, Mozambican born Jose Ferreira explored landscape as a metaphor for the body, while also invoking the 1879 Battle of Isandlwana, at which Zulu warriors defeated British forces, to examine issues of territorial conquest and postcolonial emancipation. Although the battle, referenced in didactic materials, was not represented in the art, Ferreira's work suggested a parallel between psychological and political desires for a place of one's own in the world. This multifaceted project, combining a sculpture, a drawing, a video and a computer-based archive, unfolded in the course of a two-month residency at the Hyde Park Art Center, during which viewers assisted the artist, formerly a resident of South Africa (as well as Holland and the UK), in constructing the installation in the second-floor project spaces.

Ferreira's 9-by-12 foot wall drawing in black ink depicted a lush stand of trees set against a mountainous horizon. This unidentified Edenic landscape, which adhered to conventions of 19th century Romanticism, served as a symbol for European land-lust and the Zulu's ultimate loss. Both are encoded in a digital archive of present day maps of South African provinces, gathered from that nation's Department of Land Affairs and downloaded onto CDs stacked on two wooden shelves nearby.

Commanding one gallery was a monumental sculpture (5 by 25 by 18 feet) constructed from wood, metal, and paper maché, the undulating white surface of which evokes waves or rolling hills. Puryear-esque in its reductive form and penchant for craft, the work enticed viewers at the same time that it partially obstructed both the interior space and the urban view outside the windows.

The neighborhood of Hyde Park (home to the University of Chicago, President Obama, and a large, multi-ethnic middle class, adjacent to a larger, more economically challenged community) offered a fraught background for most of Ferreira's project. One of Chicago's more austere areas is summoned up in *Dead Moon Day* (2009), a two-channel, dual-projection video. A moon rises from the bottom of the right screen, arcs slowly upward and disappears out of frame. On the left screen appear indoor shots of the terminal of the city's Meigs Field, a single-strip airport closed in 2003. Images of empty seats, hallways and stairwells engender feelings of solitude, entrapment and immobility that are echoed in the work's sound track, Samuel Beckett's prose-poem *Company*, narrated by Stephanie Brooks. This "fable of one in the dark," where "darkness equals silence and light gives voice," where the past haunts the present, becomes a parable for South Africa's history and for contemporary explorations of the self.