'LOOKING GOOD, CLEAN AND FRESH': VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE

SELF IN THE VAN KALKER STUDIO, CAPE TOWN 1939- 1978

Geraldine Leanne Frieslaar

Student no: 2658273

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Masters of Arts in

Public and Visual History

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Western Cape

2011

Supervisor: Prof. Patricia Hayes

Table of Contents

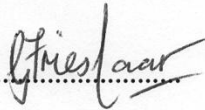# DECLARATION

I hereby declare that "'Looking good, clean and fresh': Visual representations of the self in the Van Kalker Studio, Cape Town 1939- 1978" is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other institution of higher learning, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Name: Geraldine Frieslaar

Signed: ....

Date: 10 November 2011

I

Abstract

'Looking good, clean and fresh': Visual representations of the self in the Van Kalker Studio, Cape Town 1939- 1978

This mini-thesis attempts to analyse the way in which Van Kalker photographs enabled representations of the self and allowed sitters a means through which to assert themselves visually especially when considered against a backdrop fraught with the socio-economic and political tensions of apartheid. The Van Kalker Studio, started by the late J. G. Van Kalker in 1937 at 47 Victoria Street, Woodstock became one of the most popular photo studios in Cape Town. Despite the effects of apartheid legislation such as the Group Areas Act (1950), the studio retained its prominence as an institution in which to mark memorable occasions. I have selected these photographs because it has become pivotal to consider how these intimate, beautiful and complex photographs speak to questions of the personal and the familial within an unfolding history of the city of Cape Town.

By considering the Van Kalker photographs not only as mere images but as material objects with historical traces that are enmeshed in highly emotive processes of production, usage, exchange, storage, and collection, it creates the possibility that meaning can be found in the way in which photographs are presented, and how they are appropriated and disseminated. Although the significance of photographs as material objects has been largely overlooked or fleetingly explored, I intend to address that loss of material understanding in the thesis by regarding the Van Kalker photographs both as images and material objects that co-exist together. In pushing the argument of the thesis further, I will argue that through the display of Van Kalker

photographs as material objects in prominent positions in the domestic interior, it serves as poignant reminders of personal and familial relations. Through an exploration of the Van Kalker photographs and the way in which they were appropriated, this thesis aims to weave an ephemeral visual seam across time and space, one that especially connects those that had their photographs taken at the Van Kalker studio despite their geographical dis/location.

Keywords: photography, studio, portraits, visual history, material object, self, family, domestic interior, Woodstock, apartheid

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

List of photographs

Chapter Two

Picturing Dreams: Photographs of the Van Kalker Studio

Chapter three

Historiographer of the domestic interior

VI

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Introduction

Close encounters with photography

"Photographs here are not so much kindling memories as creating an allegorical space and allowing us to people it with our imaginings."[1]

My earliest and most vivid encounter with photography was on a visit to my grandparents during a school holiday when I came across a framed black and white photograph of my late grandfather as a young man. This photograph was on a wall amongst other photographs but yet seemed to enjoy some kind of importance as it was placed slightly higher than the others. In the photograph he was wearing a uniform, smiling proudly with his hand resting on the wing of a light aircraft against the rugged backdrop of the Roggeveld mountains in Sutherland, a small Karoo town in the Northern Cape. Inquisitively, I asked him about the photograph. More importantly I questioned him about the whereabouts of the light aircraft. He just chuckled. Perhaps sensing that my disappointment would be great, he instead asked me what I saw in the photograph and thereby allowed me to narrate a story of my own that had him as a pilot serving in the air force going on various dangerous missions.

Many years later when I saw that photograph again it was still of a smiling young man with his hand resting on the wing of a light aircraft. Only this time it was next to a wreckage of a light aircraft that my grandfather had helped to retrieve in order to take to the scrap metal yard where he worked most of his life. Embarking on this visual exploration of history has both challenged and altered my own notions of memory, identity, family, race and gender as I came to realise that in many ways the photograph of my grandfather not only spoke to his desires, fantasies and

[1] R. Samuel, *Theatres of memory* (London: Verso, 1994), 357.

aspirations but also mirrored my own. And through my own personal experiences with photographs, I am acutely aware that photographs especially those of a personal nature become "the focus of intense emotional [and sensorial] engagement"[2] in which histories can be articulated through the use of different senses as stories are performed through spoken or sung voice, through touch and gestures, and through sight.

Elizabeth Edwards argues this point quite convincingly as she briefly exemplifies the relation between the photograph and the senses, specifically sight, sound and touch.[3] She argues, "The experience of the photographs, their meaning and impact cannot be reduced merely to a visual response but must be understood as a corpothetic engagement with photographs as a bearer of stories in which [the] visual, sound and touch merge."[4] As stories are woven around them, photographs become performative objects in which they sustain and reinforce memory. According to Edwards, photographs are enmeshed in the oral whether it is personal, family or community histories.[5] Through this story-telling photographs also demand an intimate physical engagement with the body as these treasured often fetishised objects are touched, caressed and handled. And as photographs are articulated through sound and imprinted by touch, they 'literally unlock memories and emerge in multiple soundscapes, allowing the sounds to be heard and thus enabling knowledge to be passed down, validated, absorbed and refigured in the present."[6] However, there are also silences around photographs brought about by loss or forgetting which are just as significant as the ones that are able to speak. These silences are

---

[2] E. Edwards, 'Photographs, Orality and History' in E. Edwards & K. Bhaumik (eds), *Visual Sense* (New York: Berg, 2008), 241.
[3] Edwards, 'Photographs', 244.
[4] Edwards, 'Photographs', 246.
[5] Edwards, 'Photographs', 242.
[6] Edwards, 'Photographs', 244.

particularly pertinent in this thesis, as the individuals depicted here are often not known. It is my hope however that through my historical analysis, these photographs will be re-invested with some measure of power and authority. And in a way break the silence surrounding them.

It is precisely in this sense that the thesis will attempt to analyse the way in which photographs from the Van Kalker studio in Woodstock, Cape Town, enabled representations of the self and allowed people a means through which to assert themselves visually. Of particular interest to me and central to this research is how the Van Kalker Studio was used as a space in which dreams and aspirations could be visually articulated especially when considered against a backdrop fraught with the socio-economic and political tensions of apartheid. The photographs that were selected for the thesis is part of a vast collection comprising of over 200 000 negatives that have been donated to the District Six Museum by Irvine Clements, the present owner of the Van Kalker studio.[7] The photographs that I have selected are dated from 1939 to 1978 and range from individual to family photographs depicting momentous, celebratory and often deeply personal moments in the lives of these people who visited the Van Kalker studio. Echoing Max Kozloff on the selection of photographs in his contribution to the discourse around photography, I too would argue that the Van Kalker photographs "comprise a memory book of consciousness, lit or harrowed by face values that no longer exist. Yet they are contained in pictures that I think are a

---

[7] Based on the size of the collection (some of which have been stored for years in boxes subject to varying climate conditions), it is thought that the photographer most likely kept the negatives in the event that clients wanted reprints of their photographs or for use in his own window displays as interviewees have informed me. As my interview with Irvine Clements revealed, the Van Kalker studio is currently still in operation as he took over the business and subsequently moved it to Wynberg, a suburb of Cape Town. When he took over the Van Kalker studio, he discovered negatives spanning a period of almost fifty years of which some have already started to deteriorate as a result of inadequate storage and a less than friendly conservation environment. It was in this regard that he thus approached the District Six Museum to take over the care of these photographs, which he donated at the end of 2004 to the Museum.

wonder to share."[8] While the Van Kalker collection can be deemed as having historical importance as it "includes a full spectrum of the Cape peoples during a time of incredible racial and cultural divide"[9], I want to suggest that we should be careful of romanticising the past. We tend to look back on this era with the clarity of hindsight and our own past experiences that have for the most part been informed by apartheid and its demise.

I have selected these photographs partly because of the need that exists for histories about these people of Cape Town that have been previously overlooked, or only briefly been touched upon. Another reason is because in a sense, the photographs that I have selected spoke to me. They drew me in as it were. The knowledge that there exists a need for a part of this history to be written, did not make the process any less easy or unproblematic. Instead it unleashed an avalanche of questions as I studied the photographs, interviewed people, and read literature around photography and visuality which for the most part is framed within a western paradigm and thus encourages a certain kind of reading (of which I may be guilty as well). But if I am guilty, then so is the limited research that has been done so far around the Van Kalker photographs. In her brief article on the Van Kalker photographs, Nkiruka Nwafor argues that "Van Kalker was able to present Blacks and 'Coloureds' not as impoverished, suppressed....but as people with dignity and exquisite sense of self."[10] She goes on to argue that studio photography allowed especially those that were marginalised by apartheid to be depicted as

---

[8] M. Kozloff, *The Theatre of the Face: Portrait Photography since 1900* (New York and London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2007), 11.

[9] 'Van Kalker Photographers: A Palace of memories at Trafalgar Buildings- Victoria Road' in G. Arthiros and L. Arthiros (eds), *Woodstock: A Selection of Articles from the Woodstock Whisperer 2003-2007* (Tokai: Historical Media CC, 2007), 128.

[10] N. Nwafor 'Re-presenting Self: Reading some Van Kalker Studio photographs' in *OGIRISI, A New Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 7 (2010), 169.

"responsible and enlightened people."[11] Though I agree with some of the points she makes in her article, the article also left me feeling unsettled- first by the almost passive role she has ascribed to the sitter/s through her over-emphasis on the role of the photographer and most importantly the way in which she definitionally and conceptually framed her article with seeming ease despite it being loaded with problematic connotations. Nonetheless, reflecting on this article and attempting to write a fragment of this history allowed me to confront my own subjectivities and made me aware of how crucial it is to interrogate the terms, definitions and concepts that were central to colonialist thinking and practices and which we still accept with seeming ease. Perhaps it is time to stop fixing boundaries and categories, and allow for a reconfiguration of historiography in South Africa - one that embraces fluidity and deconstruction as opposed to feeling unsettled by it.
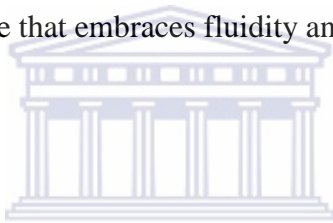
Before I elucidate on this further, it is perhaps worth mentioning that I have selected photographs primarily of coloured and black people. Though I am terribly uneasy about using these labels, I am only using them in the sense as the apartheid imposed 'racialised' categories which are how I believe they should be treated. According to Vivian Bickford-Smith et al the first recorded use of the term 'coloured' occurred in the 1865 population census of the Cape colony which included all black people from very diverse backgrounds. These included the Khoisan, Xhosas, imported slaves from the Dutch colonies and free black slaves who escaped the North American slave trade amongst others.[12] During segregation, the term 'coloured' meant relative exemption from harsh restrictive legislation and discrimination that targeted and exploited especially black people. One example of this is the Native Urban Areas Act (1923) which restricted the

---

[11] Nwafor, 'Re-presenting Self', 162.
[12] V. Bickford- Smith, N. Worden and E. van Heyningen (eds), *Cape Town the making of a City: An Illustrated Social History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998), 179.

movement of specifically black people, while the movement of coloured people remained fairly unrestricted. The term 'coloured' has often been problematic and ambiguous in the sense of being able to permeate the imagined constructed racial boundaries between coloured people and other groups. In an effort to clamp down on this permeability as well as to address other issues which drove the policy of apartheid, the Population Registration Act was introduced in 1950 which effectively allowed the state to divide people into categories based on colour, race and ethnicity. For those classified as coloured by the state, it implied that they were neither regarded as black or white. This double negative objectification of the term 'coloured' placed people classified as such in a very compromising and ambiguous position as they had to negotiate a difficult terrain of complicity and privilege with apartheid.

This point is succinctly argued by Zimitri Erasmus in which she comments, "Coloured identities were shaped not only by the need to survive and resist on terms dictated by slave-owners and colonisers, but also by the compromises and opportunities that arose in the context of settlers' encounters with indigenous Africans."[13] In the present day this in turn has left an indelible scar on bodies, personhood and geographical space as people that were classified as coloured or asserted a coloured identity now have to confront their collusion with apartheid. However constructed these racial categories are I am also very aware how they still mediate the everyday experiences of all people in South Africa. And as a way of interrogating my own disquiet

---

[13] Z. Erasmus, 'Re-imagining coloured identities in post-Apartheid South Africa' in Z. Erasmus (ed), *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001), 23. For a further discussion on the complexity of the coloured identity consult Erasmus's collection of essays in Z. Erasmus, 'Re-imagining coloured identities in post-Apartheid South Africa' in Z. Erasmus (ed), *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001) especially 13- 28 and 64- 79; See also V. Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995), 10- 38, 186- 209 and J. Western, *Outcast: Cape Town* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 3-58.

regarding the problematics surrounding racial and ethnic identities in Cape Town, I have intentionally chosen photographs of predominantly coloured and black people.

As alluded to earlier, significantly the period during which the bulk of the Van Kalker photographs were taken also intersects with an important period in the history of South Africa. This era marked the institutionalisation of apartheid in 1948 and this context may allow for a richer, more nuanced reading of these photographs if regarded against this background. Once again though, I want to emphasise the danger of overly painting these photographs with the broad strokes of apartheid's brush as this would allow for a very narrow reading. Instead I would argue that they should be regarded in the light of what they represent, which is the everyday sometimes mundane realities in the cycle of daily lives as people celebrated achievements, got engaged, got married and gave birth to children. All of which happened to occur against the background of apartheid. Before I touch on the Van Kalker studio itself, it is perhaps pertinent just to sketch a brief outline of the processes that led up to this particular period in South African history.

Historically speaking, South Africa is perhaps best known for its policy of apartheid which destroyed, traumatised and displaced individuals, families and communities. However, for an organism like apartheid to prevail it would have needed fertile grounds in which to flourish, which had been cultivated long before the implementation of apartheid in the twentieth century in various ways for different purposes as a means to serve the interests of the prevailing ruling authority. It is argued by some historians that practices of exclusion, segregation, oppression and displacement were introduced by European settlers as conflict over resources often characterised

the contact between settlers and 'indigenous' groups.[14] But in an attempt to problematise this history, attention should also be paid to the dynamics that played themselves out between (and possibly within) the early trade and military missions and different groups that were 'indigenous' to the African continent before the arrival of European settlers.[15] Hereby I am suggesting that trade missions and the establishment of trade routes most likely entailed the application of militaristic power which would have led to incursions and wars between different groups as they fought for control over resources and goods. It is in this sense that one should to take into account the complicity of the 'indigenous' people in reinforcing and sustaining these practices when the colonial administration eventually brought about a more formal system of oppression and segregation.[16]

---

[14]While John Western traces the roots of segregation almost back to the time of the first arrival of European settlers in southern Africa in the 1600s, Bickford-Smith argues that segregation has its roots in the nineteenth century with de facto segregation already in existence in institutions like government schools, churches and socio-economic activities. This was followed by de jure segregation after 1902 which will be discussed later in the chapter. See J. Western, *Outcast Cape Town* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 3; V. Bickford-Smith, 'A "special tradition of multi-racialism"? Segregation in Cape Town in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' in W. James & M. Simons (eds), *Class, Caste and a Social and Economic History of the South African Western Cape* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1992), 47- 62. Also see P. Maylam, *South Africa's Racial Past: The history and historiography of racism, segregation and apartheid* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2001), 13-28.
 Here I have put the term 'indigenous' in quotation marks as this is another term that is often applied in academic studies and everyday conversations without rigorously interrogating its complexity. The term 'indigenous' is seemingly accepted as natural as opposed to it being constructed while there is mounting historical and archaeological evidence that suggest how problematic the term 'indigenous' really is, especially with the fluidity and migratory patterns of different groups traversing the African continent. In his study of ancient cultural and trade links in Africa, Felix A. Chami effectively exemplifies the complexity of this term in which he argues that contrary to the position that holds that the Khoisan were the first people in Southern Africa, there is little evidence to support that claim as their roots can be traced back to North Africa. While this is certainly a very interesting and complex history, one needs to remember that knowledge systems continually shift in terms of what we know and the way in which we come to know it. Though it falls beyond the scope of this thesis to further explore this, it is my hope that in this brief discussion I was able to underline the complexity of the term 'indigenous.' See F. A. Chami, *The Unity of African Ancient History 3000 BC to AD 500* (Dar es Salaam: E & D Limited, 2006), 201.
[15] See Chami for a longer discussion on trade links and alliances between different groups of people on the African continent. In his study Chami traces the migratory patterns of groups of people across the continent in order to set up trade corridors and colonies which often led to wars and incursions. Chami, *Unity*, 196- 210.
[16] See Kofi Buenor Hadjor's insightful essay for a discussion on the way in which the colonial system was designed. According to Kofi Buenor Hadjor the colonial system rested on a policy of divide and rule whereby some groups were drawn into the colonial economy either as administration officers, migrant workers or soldiers while other groups were marginalised, first by the colonial system and secondly by the recruited group that were policing them. K. B. Hadjor, *On Transforming Africa: Discourse with Africa's Leaders* (New Jersey and London: African World Press and Third World Communications, 1987), 60- 62.

Slightly different from other cities and towns in South Africa in terms of the seemingly leisurely

way in which segregation was implemented, Cape Town was not exempt from the stranglehold

of apartheid or its earlier history of racial segregation and socio-economic and political

discrimination. Contrary to the belief espoused by some Capetonians which holds that Cape

Town "had a special tradition of multi-racialism"[17], Vivian Bickford-Smith and John Western

have both convincingly argued that this is a popular myth and something that was not unique to

Cape Town as other cities also experienced residential integration. In their gripping accounts of

segregation in Cape Town, both Bickford-Smith and Western have argued that *de facto*

segregation came to Cape Town long before apartheid was formalised as a state controlled

system which pervaded most of Cape Town's social milieu in terms of residential patterns, social

and economic mobility.[18] This set the tone for what was to follow next. Practices of segregation

and discrimination only gained momentum and intensified significantly with the formation of the

Union in 1910 and the implementation of *de jure* segregation.

---
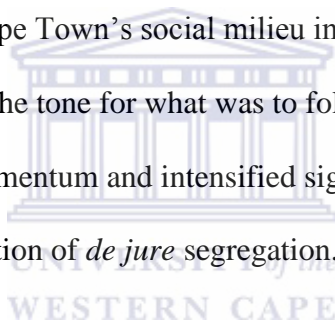
[17] V. Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995), 2.

[18] Exclusionary and exploitative practices against the Khoi herders were already in place from 1652 with the establishment of a settler community in Cape Town. Land became a contentious issue between the Khoi herders and the Dutch settlers as the former group were continually being pushed out by the latter. This resulted in loss of land for the herders and a smallpox epidemic which almost annihilated them. In the end, the Khoi herders could offer little resistance and subsequently moved inland in order to get away from Dutch control. In the ensuing years, the exclusion of the Khoi unfortunately set the tone for what was to happen with other groups of people. From the 1650s to the 1830s slaves were imported in order to sustain the economy of the Cape. Though the economy depended on them, they were not treated much better than the Khoi as it only deepened prejudices and stereotypes. This period saw the proclamation of various laws which actively segregated and discriminated against people who were deemed to be inferior based on skin tone and cultural practices. Even when slavery was abolished in 1834, patterns of informal and formal exclusion and segregation continued unhindered as it finally culminated in Cape Town's first forced removal in 1901 when the Cape government removed black workers to Ndabeni under the guise that they posed a health risk to the city. With the outbreak of the bubonic plague black dockworkers were among the first victims of the disease carried by fleas on rats in the hay that was imported from Argentina. For a more detailed and richer discussion see V. Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995), V. Bickford-Smith, 'Mapping Cape Town: From Slavery to Apartheid' in S. Field (ed), *Lost Communities, Living Memories: Remembering Forced Removals in Cape Town* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2001), 15-26 and J. Western, *Outcast: Cape Town* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 3-58.

From 1910 onwards, more restrictive legislation such as the Land Act (1913) and the Native Urban Areas Act (1923) was passed in order to disenfranchise specifically black people, to control movement and migration through influx control as well as to enforce segregation among people based on colour, race and ethnicity. When World War II broke out in 1939, there was a greater demand for labour which subsequently drew a large number of rural black people because of overcrowding and poverty in the reserve areas. However, this also accelerated the process of segregation significantly as farmers had to confront a reduced labour supply while in urban areas spokesmen for the Afrikaner working class started to voice concern about the growth of the black working class. These and other underlying factors fuelled racial fears which finally culminated in the Nationalist Party's rise to power in 1948 and the institutionalisation of apartheid. The apartheid period ushered in even more restrictive and severe legislation such as the Group Areas Act (1950), the Population Registration Act (1950) and the Immorality Act (1950) amongst others. Though this presents a somewhat simplified sense of the discriminatory and segregationist history that unfolded from the 1600s until the formalisation of apartheid, I am by no means suggesting that it was anything but simple. As apartheid swept through South Africa it took on different forms in different places, ranging from extreme severity to seemingly tolerant integration partly because of economic activity and other interrelated factors. Cast within this light, I want to argue that it is indeed this complexity of earlier segregation and apartheid which may in part allow for a richer analysis of the photographs that will be examined later in the thesis.

During the decade leading up to the institutionalisation of apartheid, J.G. Van Kalker established the Van Kalker Studio in 1937 at 47 Victoria Road, Woodstock. The latter is situated in the inner

city of Cape Town, which was first known as Papendorp in 1788 taking its name after a Hollander, named Pieter van Papendorp. As one of Cape Town's oldest inner city areas, Papendorp was renamed Woodstock in April 1882 and as with all historical accounts, there are conflicting explanations of the way in which this name change occurred. One account would have us believe that a decision was taken by local residents and patrons to name this area after the Woodstock Hotel which was run by Mr. P. Carey. Another account claims that the name change was as a result of Papendorp falling into disrepute because of "marauding bands of local layabouts and labourers from the docks [who] carried on an almost continual tribal war."[19] Whatever the reason, Papendorp came to be known as Woodstock, was given municipal status and continued to grow from the 1800s onwards as an urban, industrial area providing "opportunities for transient and otherwise disadvantaged people."[20]

In her study of open areas in Cape Town, Jayne Garside argues that Woodstock has been the "permanent home to coloured and white working class families" and has functioned as an "entry point for absorption of different 'immigrant' communities."[21] More importantly, her study focuses on how Woodstock as a multi-racial area managed to remain 'open' especially during the implementation of the Group Areas Act which she attributes to the "strength of character,

---

[19] This statement is in itself quite interesting as it alludes to the prevailing perceptions of that time which to some extent serves as armament in busting the myth around Cape Town as having a unique tradition of multi-racialism. The *Cape Argus* of 2 September 1922 carried an account by Major Michael Kenny in which he described life in Papendorp as wild and dangerous with criminal elements roaming the streets. He goes on to blame "local layabouts and labourers from the docks" which in effect implied that he attributed the dangerous conditions in the village to black workers, as historically they were the dock labourers that he was talking about. In his highly subjective account he dismisses the impact of alcohol consumption and its subsequent abuse, made very accessible to workers especially in the Papendorp area with its high concentration of hotels. Quoted in G. Arthiros and L. Arthiros (eds), *Woodstock: A Selection of Articles from the Woodstock Whisperer 2003-2007* (Tokai: Historical Media CC, 2007), 33.

[20] J. Garside, *Open Areas in Cape Town: The Struggle for their Identity* (Cape Town: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1987), 3.

[21] J. Garside, 'Residential Change in Woodstock, Cape Town prior to the Repeal of the Group Areas Act', Masters Thesis (Johannesburg: University of the Witswatersrand, 1994), 71; Also see J. Garside, *Open Areas in Cape Town: The Struggle for their Identity* (Cape Town: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1987), 3-5.

fortitude and compassion" that the people of Woodstock have shown.[22] Though she concedes

that at the turn of the twentieth century it was already divided along class lines into two areas,

upper Woodstock for the affluent white and lower Woodstock for the multi-racial working class,

she gives an almost harmonious account of racial tolerance in Woodstock in her study. It is in

this sense that she essentially overlooks the impact of *de facto* segregation that already existed

from as early as the 1800s "in many amenities, social activities and institutions."[23] Nonetheless,

Woodstock became a thriving urban space where social and economic exchanges between locals,

immigrants, artisans, fishermen, labourers, manufacturers and traders set the scene for bustling

activity on Woodstock's streets and beach.

Although Woodstock along with certain parts of the city had adopted a seemingly more liberal

approach to segregation, this was subject to frequent change with the perceived threat of black

people or the *swart gevaar* (Black peril) as they were sometimes also labelled. According to

Western when the census was taken in 1865 there were over 400 black people living in

Papendorp which renewed racial fears immediately. This prompted talks within the Cape

government in order to establish a location for black people.[24] This public demand was fulfilled

in part in 1890 when a segregated barracks was built for the labourers employed on Cape Town

docks. Though Woodstock to a certain extent became increasingly residentially and socially

integrated, racial fears stubbornly lingered until these exploded with the outbreak of the bubonic

plague in 1901. Using the bubonic plague as an excuse, black workers were forcibly removed to

Ndabeni, a 'reserve' on the fringes of Cape Town because they posed a health risk to other

---

[22] J. Garside, *Open Areas in Cape Town: The Struggle for their Identity* (Cape Town: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1987), 5.

[23] V. Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995), 5.

[24] J. Western, *Outcast: Cape Town* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 45.

Capetonians. In spite of this and other legislation that was passed which sought to especially restrict the movement of black people and promote segregation along colour and class divisions, the growth of the black population continued especially during World War II. This was of course until 1948 with the National Party's ascension to power. As mentioned previously, divisions had already existed in Woodstock before the implementation of apartheid in 1948 but with the formalisation of segregation it divided Woodstock into "East for whites and West for coloureds.''[25] However, the dynamics of specifically lower Woodstock as a working class community made it possible to permeate these state-induced boundaries often to the chagrin of the government and some members of the white public alike. In her study of the first phase of the Group Areas Act during the 1950s in Cape Town, Uma Shashikant Mesthrie points to such an instance in which the principal of the Wolraad Woltemade School in Woodstock, Mr. L. Pienaar, wrote a letter to Dr. Donges complaining about the concentration of coloureds in Woodstock and Salt River.[26] Interestingly enough, this happened just before the implementation of the Group Areas Act in 1950.

Against the backdrop of increasing segregation which later culminated in apartheid, Van Kalker provided a space in which aspirations and fantasies could be communicated through clothing, accessories, props and poses but even more importantly a space where for a brief moment, sitters could be free from the harsh realities of their circumstances. Nestled between a café adjacent to The Gem bioscope and a men's clothing shop, the Van Kalker studio occupied a tiny space in the

---

[25] J. Garside, *Open Areas in Cape Town: The Struggle for their Identity* (Cape Town: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1987), 5.

[26] According to Shashikant Mesthrie, Mr. L. Pienaar was very concerned about clearly defined demarcated spaces and even went as far as suggesting ways in which segregation could be attained. U. Shashikant Mesthrie, "'No place in the world to go"- Control by Permit: The First Phase of the Group Areas Act in Cape Town in the 1950s ' in E. van Heyningen (ed), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7 (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1994), 186, Also see Donges Papers (Western Cape Archives and Record Service, Cape Town), A 1646, Vol. 138, L. Pienaar to Donges, 26 May 1950 .

Trafalgar Buildings on the busy main street teeming with shops, people and traffic.[27] Trained as

a photographer in Europe, Van Kalker immigrated to South Africa from the Netherlands just

before the start of World War II. Primarily a commercial photographer, Van Kalker appealed to

the burgeoning working class community of District Six, Salt River, Woodstock and other

surrounding areas partly because of his ability to take a good photograph and because the studio

was located on a main transport route. Though Van Kalker followed the European conventions

of studio photography devoid of the theatre that has become synonymous with Indian and West

African studio photography (which will be touched upon later in the thesis), his photographs are

still compelling and beautiful in the sense that they affirm his sitters' status within the

community and speak to their desires regarding the way they see themselves.

Operating alongside other studios such as the Bridge studio, Electric studio and Art Photo studio,

the Van Kalker studio soon became one of Cape Town's leading photographic studios especially

among the communities of Woodstock, Salt River and District Six. An excerpt from the

Woodstock Whisperer exemplifies this: "Over the years the studio found itself in demand for all

special occasions- from various religious celebrations to graduations, birthdays and sporting

events. Children were scrubbed-up, shoes were polished and they were dispatched to Mr. Van

Kalker for the annual photograph."[28] For many individuals and families, having their photograph

taken at the Van Kalker studio meant saving up money, going to a dressmaker or buying new

---

[27] Biddie Rassool remembers, "And if he knew you, and he would be standing outside and you would be getting off at the bus stop and you are walking along and you would be going to the butchery and the bank. The butcher, the clothing shop, the men's clothing shop. Next to Philips was Van Kalker, next to Van Kalker was the café and then the bioscope. And then the chemist on the corner and they'd be standing outside and they would say hello, how are you today? So polite and gentlemanly. You know." Interview with Biddie Rassool and Joan Jardine, 1 February 2008; Also see 'Van Kalker Photographers: A palace of memories at Trafalgar Buildings- Victoria Road' in G. Arthiros and L. Arthiros (eds), *Woodstock: A Selection of Articles from the Woodstock Whisperer 2003-2007* (Tokai: Historical Media, 2007), 128.

[28] 'Van Kalker' in G. Arthiros and L. Arthiros (eds), 128.

clothes for the occasion. The Van Kalker studio became part of many individuals and families'

traditions as it served as some kind of a stage on which they could present themselves as

dignified and respectable, leaving a tangible imprint of personal and family narratives within the

unfolding history of Cape Town.

Despite the effects of the Group Areas Act, the studio retained its prominence as an institution in

which to mark memorable occasions such as birthdays, graduations, engagements and weddings.

In part, this may be attributed to Van Kalker's reputation as a good photographer but also

because even after the implementation of the Group Areas Act in 1950, Woodstock for the most

part retained its 'multi-racial' character due to a myriad of reasons which included the

permeability of the colour divisions between different groups. It is in this sense that the Van

Kalker photographs presented the possibility to engage in a space that was used to stage idealised

versions of oneself[29] in which the 'Other' became the 'Self'. Whereas South African

photography was previously mostly focused on portraying a certain part of the population

through the gaze of ethnographic or documentary photography, the democratisation of the studio

photograph effectively problematised the objectifying and classifying tendencies left behind by

colonialism and reinforced under apartheid.

As a way of examining studio photography and more importantly the Van Kalker photographs,

the thesis is composed of three chapters of which this chapter serves as the introduction. More

than just arguing that there is a sensorial engagement between the photograph and the senses,

specifically sight, sound and touch, this introduction is an attempt to locate the Van Kalker

---

[29] See C. Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social life of Indian Photographers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 178.

photographs within a broader context of an unfolding history of Cape Town. This was

exemplified by briefly touching on the broader history of early segregation and apartheid and the

deep-rooted remnants it left behind in our everyday lives in South Africa. In exploring this

history, it underlined the importance of interrogating some of the terms upon which systems of

segregation and discrimination were built and which are continually employed and appropriated

with apparent ease by scholars, politicians and the media amongst others. While this chapter

offers no solutions as a way out of the colonial and neo-colonial epistemological morass, the

purpose of this introduction in part was to create discomfort and highlight the need to think about

history in South Africa in alternative ways.

The first chapter focuses on a number of theoretical and conceptual debates regarding

photography in relation to representation, subjectivities and multiple interpretations. In taking up

the discussion started in the introduction regarding the relationship between the photograph and

the senses, this chapter will further expand on the debate around the growing centrality of

visuality in our everyday lives. In attempting to answer the questions posed by this thesis, it is

essential to "read it [the Van Kalker photographs] as the site of a series of simultaneous

complexities and ambiguities, in which is situated not so much a mirror of the world as our way

with that world..."[30] It is in this sense that this chapter will elaborate on the paradoxical nature of

the photograph in terms of the mediation and ambiguities surrounding it, both as an image and as

a material object. Though far from being a neutral representation of the world, ever since its

inception during the nineteenth century photography has been closely associated with realism,

objectivity and authenticity. Thus, in order to interrogate this paradox of photography, it is

necessary to critically engage with the work of a number of writers and scholars such as Susan

---

[30] G. Clarke, *The Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 28.

Sontag, Roland Barthes and John Tagg in their significant contributions to photography as a discourse. In pushing the argument of the thesis I will attempt to show that the Van Kalker photographs should be viewed in Barthesian terms, that which he described as the 'transparent envelope' hinting at the ambiguity of the photograph as material object and as a means of representation.[31] Within a similar vein as Elizabeth Edwards, I will argue in this chapter that by thinking about photographs both as images and material objects it may allow for a richer reading of the Van Kalker photographs in the subsequent chapters. The chapter concludes by briefly looking at the development of photography in South Africa and the way in which it was *honorifically* employed through photographic portraiture but also deployed as a tool of discrimination, repression, cataloguing and surveillance.[32]

Chapter Two starts off by discussing the social functions of photography as a means of creating family cohesion and solemnising rites of passages deemed important within the family circle. This in turn, serves as the foundation for a later discussion on family photographs elsewhere in the chapter. Through an analysis of historical and contemporary debates regarding photographic portraiture, I will argue that the Van Kalker studio provided a space of staged reality in which the dreams and aspirations of sitter/s could be visually represented through photography that is especially poignant if read against the background of apartheid's unfolding history. Furthermore, by engaging in studio photography it offered sitters a possibility to articulate their own subjectivities and sensibilities in terms of representation, cultural linkages, personal and familial relations and notions of personhood.

---

[31] R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 1981), 5.
[32] A. Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive' in R. Bolton (ed), *The contest of meaning: critical histories of photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 345.

In an attempt to give the thesis more depth, Chapter Three will focus on the materiality of the photograph as a ritualised and fetishised object circulating within the domestic interior of the home. By drawing on the critical insights offered by Gillian Rose, Annette Kuhn, Elizabeth Edwards and Corinne Kratz on the relationship between memory, family, materiality and display, I will argue that the photograph in its material form becomes a complex, emotive site of both integration and loss.[33] Through an exploration of several Van Kalker photographs of women featured on their own or with their families and by juxtaposing them with photographs of the intimate archives of the domestic interior, I will attempt to highlight the role of the family historiographer in the selection and display of personal and family photographs. In unravelling the complexities of the Van Kalker photographs, I will argue that their collection and display is crucial in constructing and maintaining familial relations.

Throughout the chapters of this thesis, I will attempt to exemplify the way in which the Van Kalker photo studio was used by its sitters as a space in which dreams could be woven and notions of personhood could be visualised which was extended into the domestic interior of family homes. In pushing the argument of the thesis further, I will argue that through the display of Van Kalker photographs in prominent positions (alongside other material objects) in the domestic interior, it perform[s]/ed various functions. This includes the affirmation and inscription of notions of personhood, serving as objects of remembrance and the construction of personal and familial relations. Even more significantly, it is my hope that through an

---

[33] G. Rose, 'Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (March 2003); A. Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 2002); E. Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998) and C. Kratz, 'Ceremonies, Sitting Rooms and Albums: How Okiek displayed photographs in the 1990s' in R. Vokes (ed), *Photography in Africa: Ethnographic Perspectives* (James Currey, forthcoming).

exploration of the Van Kalker photographs and the way in which they are/were appropriated, this thesis is able to weave an ephemeral visual seam across time and space, one that especially connects those that had their photographs taken at the Van Kalker studio.

Chapter One

On the nature of the photograph

"It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled." [34]

Today we live in a world saturated with visual imagery and in an attempt to create meaning and make sense of the world we engage in various social practices such as looking, touching and hearing as a way of navigating space which for the most part is organised around the sense of sight.[35] Though other senses also play an important role, many writers have argued that the human experience has become increasingly mediated through seeing and visuality. In his now classic work on the ways of seeing images, John Berger argues quite convincingly how sight is possibly our most important sense (and perhaps even for those who are blind or have limited vision).[36] He goes on to trace the importance of sight to earlier forms of vision such as drawings, paintings and sculptures though he cautions against confining this historical development within a particular period. A visit to the Louvre or even just flipping through the pages of an art history book is revealing in the sense that it exemplifies that images of the world have been around for

---

[34] J. Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), cover page.

[35] M. Sturken & L. Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9.

[36] Berger even goes as far as to say that "the faculty of touch is like a static, limited form of sight." This argument is taken further by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright in which they argue that "seeing and visuality are no less important than they are to those of us who are sighted, because the everyday world is so strongly organised around visual and spatial cues that take seeing for granted." J. Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 1; M. Sturken & L. Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9. See James Elkins' insightful approach on seeing in his book entitled, *How to use your Eyes* where he argues in fairly accessible scientific language that the eye is predisposed to seeing as it can find the slightest or dimmest sensation of light. He goes on to argue that because the eye cannot stand to see nothing it would invent the world from nothing, so in a sense real blindness does not exist perhaps only in death. J. Elkins, *How to use your Eyes* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 239-242. For a further discussion on the debate around the centrality of the visual see G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 6-7.

some time long before the arrival of the photograph. It was this fascination with providing a trace of the *real* (as elusive as it may seem now) which drove the invention of the camera in the nineteenth century by Niépce, Daguerre and Talbot. From its inception in the early nineteenth century, photographic portraiture was encoded within painterly traditions and styles as early daguerreotypists drew heavily on the poses and settings from the painterly tradition in an attempt to continue with this practice.[37] However, with the emergence of new models of vision in the early nineteenth century it brought about more than "a shift in the appearance of images and art works, or in systems of representational conventions. Instead, it was inseparable from a massive reorganisation of knowledge and social practices that modified in myriad ways the productive, cognitive, and desiring capacities of the human subject."[38] Regarded as a scientific apparatus, photography was endowed with objectivity and accuracy able to render "an inherent, objective visual relationship between the image and the living model."[39] As a result, photography was employed in the identification, classification and surveillance of "criminal, insane, diseased, orphaned and otherwise 'deviant' individuals"[40] which effectively subverted the privileges inherent in portraiture.

What started with the camera obscura evolved into the 'democratisation' of the daguerreotype as it provided people with a more affordable means to have a portrait made and then finally evolved into a visual culture firmly entrenched in the practices of spectatorship, observation and

---

[37] F. Ertem, 'The Pose in early Portrait Photography: Questioning attempts to appropriate the Past' in *Image and Narrative*, Issue 14 (July 2006), 1; G. Clarke, (ed) *The Portrait in Photography* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1992), 1-5.

[38] J. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On vision and modernity in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 3.

[39] J. Woodall (ed), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 6.

[40] Woodall, *Portraiture*, 7.

surveillance.[41] Photography has come to visualise existence in such a significant way that even everyday and mundane activities are documented. Because of the permeability of visual imagery in our everyday lives, it is easy to fall under the seductive lure or often anaesthetic effect of the visual without questioning the meanings and intentions with which it was constituted. Whether of grim images of natural disasters and wars strewn across newspaper pages or of provocative advertising billboards, images are created for various purposes and can offer diverse meanings. Furthermore, they are invested with significant power partly because of their ability to evoke and channel different emotions and responses from people.

Photographs have "the power to conjure an absent person, the power to calm or incite to action, the power to persuade or mystify, the power to remember."[42] Put another way, photographs are simultaneously intertwined with memory and loss, and it is in this sense that they are invested with deep emotive content which effectively place them within an ambiguous and often problematic relationship with power. But there is also another way in which photographs can become "a metaphor of power"[43] as they have "the ability to appropriate and decontextualise time and space and those who exist within it."[44] In as much as photographs are placed within genres or categories such as portraiture, landscape, art or documentary photography (which

---

[41] For a longer discussion on the history of photography see W. Benjamin, *Little History of Photography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 507-530; Also see G. Clarke, *The Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 11-25.

[42] M. Sturken & L. Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9.

[43] E. Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 7.

[44] Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography,* 7.

"further codify their terms of reference and status"[45]) photographs can acquire new meanings when they are circulated within changing contexts.[46]

In returning to the discussion on the centrality of visuality it is perhaps noteworthy to add that while there has been a definitive shift towards privileging visuality within popular culture and everyday life there has often been a failure to explore the mediated nature of the photograph and the ambiguities surrounding it because of the uncertainty that permeates photographs. This failure to explore the nuances of the photograph also finds resonance within the academic disciplines and the archive where historians and archivists have often dismissed and neglected photographs as historical documents by endowing them with a timeless quality that "needed no further context, social background or ideological framework to be understood and creatively deployed."[47] Writing on visual culture Nicholas Mirzoeff reiterates, "Western culture has consistently privileged the spoken word as the highest form of intellectual practice and seen visual representations as second-rate illustrations of ideas."[48] As a result of History's conventional leanings toward textuality, positivism and empiricism, visuality is subordinated to

---

[45] G. Clarke, *The Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19.

[46] Echoing Allan Sekula, Sturken and Cartwright argue that while the photographic portrait may have been rooted in bourgeois ideals, it also came to be employed as a means to classify and catalogue social deviance and pathology. This ability of photography to function both honorifically and repressively will be discussed at greater length at a later stage in this chapter. According to them, images have proliferated to such an extent that we are often unaware that our daily lives are observed and surveilled by cameras. They argue that we only become aware of them when unexpectedly they acquire new meanings because of the change in their social contexts as in the case in which former football star, O.J. Simpson was arrested for murder. Whereas before his image was circulated within the advertising and celebrity realm, his image took on a different meaning when it was disseminated in the form of a police mug shot. M. Sturken & L. Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24-26. Also see A. Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive' in R. Bolton (ed), *The contest of meaning: critical histories of photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 343- 388.

[47] See P. Hayes, J. Silvester and W. Hartmann, 'Photography, history and memory' in W. Hartmann, J. Silvester and P. Hayes (eds), *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town, Windhoek and Athens: University of Cape Town Press, Out of Africa and Ohio University Press, 1999), 7.

[48] N. Mizoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 6.

23

textuality, and then tends to be used illustratively.[49] Yet, the very nature of photographs is such that they are not mere "illustrations". Instead they narrate a visual history of the intersected lives of the photographer and those photographed, of subjectivity and knowledge in which multiple interpretations are continually created by different audiences. They are rich in context and meaning which alludes to the subjectivities of those both photographed and the photographer, and their reference systems. These in turn are affected by the technical processes of the print, and the dissemination (or not) of the image amongst different publics.

However, it is also herein that the difficulty lies, "for like opaque facts, images cannot be trapped readily within a simple explanation or interpretation"[50] as they are informed by the cultural experiences and beliefs of the photographer, the subjects being photographed and their audiences. It is in this sense that this chapter will critically explore the mediated nature of the photograph and the ambiguities surrounding it, not only as "sites of multiple, contested and contesting histories"[51] that inscribe, construct and allude to multiple pasts, but also as material objects that evoke memory which will frame a later discussion of studio photography within the South African context.

 On a rudimentary level, photography quite literally means 'the writing of light.' It is subject to a combination of optical processes such as the camera angle, the moment of exposure as well as the range of lens and chemical processes that fix an image on to a surface such as paper which

---

[49] See Hayes, Silvester and Hartmann for a discussion on the 'visual turn' and scopophobia (quite literally fear of the view) juxtaposed with history's fixation on the word in P. Hayes, J. Silvester and W. Hartmann, 'Photography, history and memory' in W. Hartmann, J. Silvester and P. Hayes (eds), *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town, Windhoek and Athens: University of Cape Town Press, Out of Africa and Ohio University Press, 1999), 2-9.
[50] A. Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (Canada: Harper Collins, 1989), xv.
[51] E. Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 22.

has been covered with an emulsion of light-sensitive metallic salts. This in turn forms the boundaries that circumscribe the physical nature of a photograph in terms of its flatness and the trimmed edges that confine the image.[52] However, despite its two-dimensional flatness and seeming passivity, there is an alluring, spell-bounding potency to a photograph. It is arresting in the sense that it draws the viewer into its mystical depths thereby allowing the viewer to linger and imagine infinite possibilities and construct new meanings. It is this fascination with the mysterious depth of the photograph which has compelled many influential writers such as Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, Elizabeth Edwards and John Tagg to grapple with the complexities enmeshed in and around the photograph. As a way of examining studio photography and more importantly the Van Kalker photographs which are central to this thesis, it is necessary to engage in a number of theoretical debates regarding photography generated by these thinkers, amongst others.
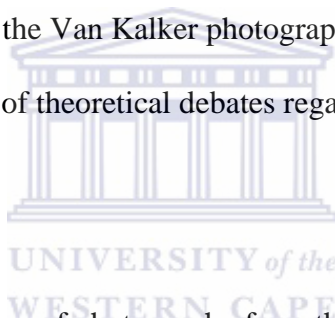
If one follows the historical trajectory of photography from the mid nineteenth century, it becomes clear that from its inception, photography has been closely associated with the emergence of discourses on realism. Thus to begin to interrogate the complex, ambiguous and paradoxical nature of photographs, the starting point should be by questioning the realist authority in which photographs are grounded. The French theorist Roland Barthes describes "every photograph [as] a certificate of presence", authenticating a reality that once existed although it is "a reality one can no longer touch."[53] It was something that was irrefutably once there. It is experience captured. But now the moment is gone. And all it offers in its wake is a neat slice of space and time, interrupted. Central to the paradoxical nature of the photograph, is

---

[52] S. Shore, *The Nature of Photographs* (London and New York: Phaidon Press Limited, 2007), 15.
[53] R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 1981), 87.

the temporality of the photograph in what Barthes describes as "the 'there-then' becomes the 'here-now'."[54] He explains that photographs are of the past yet they are also of the present, whereby a fragment of the past is brought from the past to the present in its apparent entirety.[55] It is within this vein that photographs, those visual slivers that cut through time and space become moments wrenched from the temporal flow of life which allows the viewer to pause and linger over the moment seemingly frozen in time.[56]

Critically exploring photographic realism in the late 1970s, Susan Sontag put forward the argument that photography is a fragmented way of seeing the world and because of its material nature as an object that can be printed, viewed, framed, projected or carried around we are compelled to collect and store it. She argues, "A photograph is not just the result of an encounter between an event and a photographer; picture-taking is an event in itself…After the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality (and importance) it would never otherwise have enjoyed."[57]

This is an important feature of photography that became very pronounced throughout the interviews which were conducted with people who used the Van Kalker Studio as a space in which to record and memorialise special events such as weddings, birthdays, graduations and christenings. Serving both as a lived record and as a sentimental reminder of the past, photography became "the family's primary instrument of self-knowledge and representation- the means by which family memory would be continued and perpetuated, by which the family's

---

[54] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 44.
[55] E. Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 8.
[56] Edwards, *Raw Histories*, 3.
[57] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 11.

story would henceforth be told."[58] In a sense, it became "part of many families' traditions"[59] as it not only memorialised the past but allowed people to take possession of their own past and visually assert themselves. As John Tagg succinctly comments, "The portrait is therefore a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity."[60] This is a crucial point to which I shall return in the next chapter when discussing these photographs in more detail.

In further expounding on the nature of the photograph, it is useful to again turn the discussion to Sontag and Barthes. For Sontag the nature of a photograph is best articulated through its multiple meanings which arise from social interaction and the use of photographs within different contexts and because of its relation to visible reality. Thus, for Sontag photographic realism is grounded in the referential nature of the photograph in terms of its iconic and indexical features. Taking this a step further, Barthes argued that the photograph cannot be separated from its referent because in a sense they are glued together. To Barthes, photographs are glued to the real because of their first engagement with viewers in which they transcend their status as an image. He poignantly reiterates, "The Photograph belongs to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both…"[61] Concurring with Sontag, Barthes also regarded photographs as material emanations of a past reality. He insists that the "'photographic referent' [is] not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be

---

[58] M. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, narrative and postmemory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 6-7.
[59] Interview with Joe Schaffers, October 2006.
[60] J. Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 37.
[61] R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 1981), 6.

no photograph…"[62] However, in opposition to Sontag he stresses that the photograph has no meaning outside of its status as an image, in other words it has no culture. Instead, his argument holds that the photograph is always contingent upon its referent for meaning. Despite his irritation with the sociological approach amongst others in exploring the nature of photography and his avoidance in discussing the way in which photographs are embedded in meaning and operate as purveyors of meaning, Barthes has ambivalently hinted that photographs are more than just the images they portray.

Writing on photography, Siegfried Kracauer asserts that photographs are "bound to record nature in the raw…they will therefore be surrounded by a fringe of indistinct multiple meanings."[63] This strongly hints at the ultimate resistance and unknowability embedded in photographs and their refusal to be contained and defined as any one thing. In a similar vein to Kracauer, Elizabeth Edwards also alludes to the raw and unsettled nature of photographs because of the near-infinite meanings and ambiguity contained within photographs.[64] In other words, there is never one interpretation of photographs because they are always subject to mediation and the construction of diverse meanings. In pushing this discussion further, it is imperative to ask if the Van Kalker photographs are also shrouded in ambiguity and subject to mediation especially within the controlled and highly staged environment of the studio with the photographer seemingly directing and choreographing the subjects. For instance, central to studio photography and significant for the Van Kalker photographs is that they almost have a fictional quality about them as they were created in a space in which the sitter/s could stage idealised versions of

---

[62] Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 81.
[63] Kracauer quoted in A. Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (Canada: Harper Collins, 1989), xvi.
[64] E. Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 5.

themselves.[65] By drawing on Edwards' analogy of the studio as a theatre in which the sitter/s

perform on stage for the camera inspired by their desires and aspirations in how they wish to be

defined which are in turn directed by the techniques and desires of the photographer, the

performative nature of photography becomes very apparent. Okwui Enwezor who has written

extensively on African art and portraiture notes, "The sitters are the creators of their own

personal image repertoire: who they are; who they want to become; what sort of mask to inhabit;

and what prosthetic devices they need to achieve that look."[66] In as much as performance is

central to photography, I want to put forward the argument that the Van Kalker photographs

offer an opportunity to reveal hidden meanings and contain a certain truth pertaining to how

people wished to see themselves although they function within the limitations of the constructed

reality of the studio. This is a point on which I shall elucidate further when the Van Kalker studio

and its photographs will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.
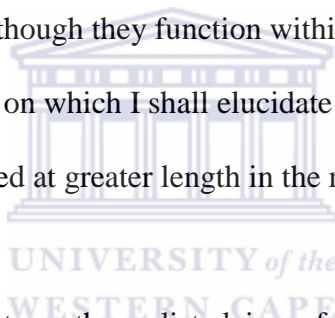
In returning to the contentious debate on the realist claims of photography, Edwards suggestively

notes, "Photography brings the expectancy of the real, the truthful"[67] because of the juxtaposition

between the here/now and the there/then which rests on a myth of photographic truth.[68] And it is

because of this perceived veracity and objectivity that has been conferred on photography that

we expect photographs to tell us the *truth* but find them stubbornly fragmented and resistant.

Thus far from just being faithful mechanical records offering stilled fractions of the world or

regrettably only serving as evidentiary material, photographs are contested interpretations of the

---

[65] C. Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social life of Indian Photographers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 178.

[66] Okwui Enwezor quoted in M. Lamuniere, *You look beautiful like that: The Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibe* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Art Museums, 2001), 28.

[67] E. Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 9.

[68] M. Sturken & L. Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 17.

world. Though photography posits that it captures reality and to a certain extent it does, the very nature of a photograph is such that it is always mediated and appropriated, whether it is through the preference and style of the photographer, the optical and chemical processes it undergoes or the desires of the sitter being photographed.

While the immediacy and realism of the photograph punctuates a specific moment in time and space, ultimately one will never fully understand it as it offers itself up to a myriad of meanings and possible truths. In a sense the photograph reveals as much as it conceals. As much as the photograph "confirms the presence and observation of the photographer and 'truth' of his account"[69], echoing Edwards I would argue that intrinsic to the medium of photography is the ambivalent and tenuous relationship between the truth of the real and the meanings derived from social encounters in the use and appropriation of photographs within different contexts. Although "the photograph possesses an evidential force"[70], it is "far from being a literal or mirror image of the world", instead it "is an endlessly deceptive form of representation."[71] It is amidst this paradox that the photograph exists.

In trying to understand the paradoxical nature of the photograph, it should be realised that photographs are both images and material objects that co-exist together in which they have "volume, opacity, tactility and a physical presence in the world."[72] Edwards reiterates, "Photographs have inextricably linked meanings as images and meanings as objects; an indissoluble, yet ambiguous, melding of image and form, both of which are direct products of

---

[69] E. Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 7.

[70] R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 1981), 88-89.

[71] G. Clarke, *The Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 25.

[72] Batchen quoted in E. Edwards and J. Hart (eds), *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

intention."[73] More than just a two dimensional image, photographs are printed in different shapes and sizes to be viewed in frames and albums, carried in wallets and lockets or to be exchanged as gifts in which visual information and related social actions are structured. Therefore, one way of understanding and interrogating photographs is to think about them not only as images but also to think about them in material terms.

Although the significance of photographs as material objects has been largely overlooked or fleetingly explored, recent years have seen a proliferation of scholars writing on the photograph as material object. Writers such as Sontag and Edwards have argued that the materiality of the photograph should be given the same analytical weight as the content of the photograph as it will offer a potentially very productive and distinctive way in which photographs can be articulated and understood. By considering photographs not only as mere images but as objects with historical traces that are enmeshed in processes of production, usage, exchange, storage, and collection, it creates the possibility that meaning can be found in the way in which photographs are presented, and how they are applied and disseminated.

Thus in order to make meaning from a photograph, the image cannot be dissociated from its material form because they are "two ontological layers in one subject."[74] Extensively exploring the relationship between the image and its material form, and stretching Barthes' argument in which he argues that the image and its referent are laminated together, Edwards applies this to her argument in which she asserts that the photograph and its materiality also cannot be separated. She argues that meaning is constructed from the dialogue between the content of the

---

[73] E. Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998), 223.
[74] Edwards, 'Photographs', 236.

31

photograph and its materiality and thus 'the image and object [is] brought into a single coherent form.'[75] However before this can happen, "in order to see what the photograph is *of* we must first suppress our consciousness of what the photograph *is* in material terms."[76] This loss of material understanding is something I intend to address in the Van Kalker photographs.

In unravelling the meaning of a photograph, it should be realised that the material form of the photograph in terms of what it is made of and how it is materially presented is related to the social, economic and political discourse within which it is framed. This is particularly significant when considering the Van Kalker photographs in light of the socio-economic and political instability intrinsic to apartheid which provided the context in which they were made. For many families, having one's photograph taken at the Van Kalker Studio meant saving up money, going to a dressmaker or buying new clothes because it signified a very special event in the cycle of family life as a way of chronicling and memorialising the present, and then the past. Part of the allure of the Van Kalker photographs was because they were treated in a special way as they found their way into a collection of textured frames that went onto mantelpieces, sideboards and walls. "Such spaces, as shrines, become public statements of group achievement and assurance; private statements of devotion, past and present,"[77] in which the family constructs and maintains an imaginary cohesion.

Also significant in exploring the complex and mediated nature of the photograph, is to understand that "the photograph infuses almost all levels of memory… its tentacles spread out,

---

[75] Edwards, 'Photographs', 222.
[76] Batchen quoted in Edwards, 'Photographs', 223.
[77] Berman quoted in Edwards, 'Photographs', 234.

32

blurring and constructing memory in its own insistent image."[78] Central to this is that the photograph both as an image and material object in their pursuit to construct meaning becomes the site of memory, contemplation and reverence in which it is treasured, displayed in gilded frames and embossed albums or exchanged as gifts. As *memento mori* photographs especially those of a personal nature such as portraits or family snapshots 'are incitements to reverie,'[79] as they speak to our nostalgic and sentimental yearnings to lay claim to a vanished past. It is in this sense that photographs, especially those of the intimate, personal kind become treasured because they "link objects to traces of the past, the dead, a fetishised focus of devotion" where it evokes both memory and loss.[80] Particularly because of its privileged status as a treasured artefact and because memory is refracted through the portrait, it requires a physical engagement by which the photograph is touched, caressed and framed. This in turn gives shape to deeply personal and complex narratives in the way the photograph mediates memory and structures forgetting.
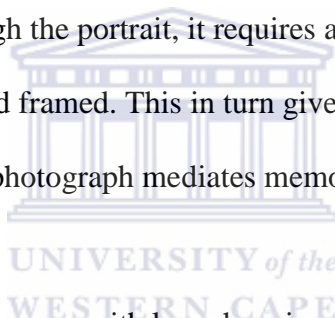
Because familial relations are interwoven with love, happiness, loss and disappointment photographs will continue to draw in, mirror, pierce, and even wound us through a sensory experience of involuntary self-discovery, a point to which I alluded to earlier in my own reflections on the photograph of my grandfather. Edwards attributes this to the notion that, "Photographs are very literally raw histories in both senses of the word – the unprocessed and the painful. Their unprocessed quality, their randomness, their minute indexicality, are inherent to

---

[78] Edwards, 'Photographs', 221.

[79] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 16.

[80] E. Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998), 226; See also M. Sturken, 'The Image as Memorial: Personal Photographs in Cultural Memory' in M. Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999), 178.

the medium itself."[81] Indeed photographs can sometimes be excruciatingly painful and unsettling, as they bear witness to time with the irrevocable certainty that everything will be defeated by time and ultimately death. This rawness and painfulness became very pronounced for Barthes so much so that he could not bear to reproduce an image of his deceased mother in his book, *Camera Lucida*.

As the "material traces of an irrecoverable past" [82], photographs became the means by which family memory would be continued and told through displaying family cohesion. However in reading personal photographs, especially those pertinent to the thesis, cognizance should be taken because "the photograph gives the illusion of being a simple transcription of the real, a trace touched directly by the event it records, it therefore has the effect of naturalising cultural practices and of disguising their stereotyped and coded characteristics."[83] By reading the Van Kalker photographs against the backdrop of memory, shifting family dynamics and socio-economic and political conditions, the photographs may offer an opportunity to engage in a process of peeling back the multiple layers of the past.

In elucidating further on the mediated and ambiguous nature of the photograph, it is imperative to pore over photography within the South African context which will provide a framework for a later discussion on the photographs of the Van Kalker studio in the next chapter. Photography ostensibly reached the shores of South Africa in 1842 and because of economic reasons it became a practice in which mainly white people, at least for some time, almost exclusively

---

[81] E. Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 5.
[82] M. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, narrative and postmemory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 5.
[83] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 7.

engaged. With professional, itinerant and amateur photographers setting up commercial studios or as in the case of the latter, improvised outdoor studio settings, photography rapidly became the more affordable means of representation. Following the same photographic processes and conventions that were employed in Europe, similarly portraiture also developed in South Africa as the dominant genre in early photography. As photography gained popularity and the daguerreotype or subsequently carte-de-visite fever swept through the country with more and more people flocking to professional or amateur photographers to have their photograph taken, on a parallel level photography was also employed in other ways such as indexing, classification, surveillance and criminalisation.[84] In his seminal essay 'The Body and the Archive,' Allan Sekula examines the advent of photography in nineteenth century France within the context of technologies of surveillance that were developing in tandem with the emerging physiognomical and phrenological 'sciences'. Whereas photographic portraiture was first considered as privileged, it "came to establish and delimit the terrain of the other, to define both the generalised look- the typology- and the contingent instance of deviance and social pathology."[85] It is in this sense that Sekula argues that photographic portraiture in particular rests on a "double system of representation capable of functioning both honorifically and repressively."[86]

Whilst on the one hand photography was deployed *honorifically* it was also used in a repressive and very insidious way that saw the indigenous people of South Africa subjected to the pseudo-scientific whims of physical anthropologists and ethnographers. In compiling photographs for

---

[84] K. Schoeman, *The Face of the Country: A South African Family Album 1860-1910* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1996), 17; A. Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive' in R. Bolton (ed), *The contest of meaning: critical histories of photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 343-389.
[85] A. Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive' in R. Bolton (ed), *The contest of meaning: critical histories of photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 345.
[86] Sekula, 'The Body', 345.

The Face of the Country Karel Schoeman notes, "Images of members of other races living in the country were recorded clinically for ethnological purposes or when they seemed otherwise interesting or picturesque to the photographer…"[87] Mofokeng reiterates this by saying, "Officially black people were frequently depicted in the same visual language as the flora and fauna – represented as if in their natural habitat – for the collector of natural history or invariably relegated to the lower orders of the species as belonging to the 'great family of man'."[88] It was only from the 1870s onwards that marginalised groups became increasingly engaged in portraiture but this was still overshadowed by the dehumanising effects of the repressive functions of photography in the way it identified, criminalised and typologised individuals into various groups based on skin tone. In remarking upon the effects of the camera in Africa, Vera notes, "The camera has often been a dire instrument. In Africa, as in most sections of the dispossessed world, the camera arrives as part of colonial paraphernalia, together with the gun and the bible, diarising events, the exotic and the profound…cataloguing the converted and the hanged."[89] In following the early trajectory of photography and its connectedness to colonialism in Africa and other parts of the world, it becomes apparent that photography is enmeshed in power relationships as even the language that photography drew on shares a similar vocabulary contained within the language of hunting and gunnery.[90] The question of the power implicit in photography will be further explored in the next chapter.

---

[87] K. Schoeman, *The Face of the Country: A South African Family Album 1860-1910* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1996), 11.

[88] S. Mofokeng, 'The Black Photo Album' in Revue Noire, *Anthology of African & Indian Ocean Photography* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1999), 70.

[89] Y. Vera, *Thatha Camera – The Pursuit for Reality* (National Gallery of Bulawayo, 1999), 3.

[90] P. Landau, 'Hunting with gun and camera: a commentary' in W. Hartmann, J. Silvester and P. Hayes (eds), *The Colonising Camera* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1998), 151-152.

Marred by a long history of oppression and racism incurred by the practices of colonialism and later apartheid in which the camera often played a repressive part through representing marginalised groups as 'primitive' and 'uncivilised', the latter often used photography in negotiating personhood. South African photography for the most part has gained prominence through its documentary or rather 'struggle' photography that developed almost in tandem with the political organisation and mobilisation of the anti-apartheid movement. By documenting the political violence and acute poverty within townships, struggle photography blossomed "in making people within South Africa and in the rest of the world aware of the political struggle and social conditions in the country."[91] Images depicting the daily struggles of those oppressed by the apartheid regime found their way into journals, books, films and exhibitions because it served as a record of the 'real' history of the country. This sentiment of the 'real' points to the underlying tension and contradictions inherent in documentary photography especially in South Africa as photographers documented what they regarded as reality from an admitted subjective viewpoint within the limits of government censorship and interference.[92] Although the

---

[91] F. Badsha, 'Aspects of South African documentary photography in the 1980s', (UWC History Department Unpublished Visual History Project), 1.

[92] Coined by film critic, John Grierson in 1926 documentary photography became a genre of photography preoccupied with the investigation of social conditions. See John Tagg's discussion on the historical trajectory of the term 'documentary' as it moved away from neutral observation to becoming a form of communication that would shape public opinion through emotional dramaturgy. In J. Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 51- 94. In the case of South Africa, people who were negatively affected by apartheid were presented through the perceived distancing gaze between the documentary photographer and those photographed. The distanced gaze constructed by the photographer between him/her and those photographed is perceived because of the paradoxical and ambiguous framework that documentary photographers operate in. According to Solomon-Godeau, while there is the desire to build pathos or sympathy into the image which involves some measure of trust between the subject and the photographer, the latter also have to grapple with the responsibility of social investigation. This implies that the documentary photographer must traverse an endless, ambiguous labyrinth of negotiations between objectivity and subjectivity, power relationships and social responsibility. Particularly, in South Africa documentary photographers had to become involved in the liberation struggle, in other words they had to pick a side. For a further discussion on documentary photography in South Africa see F. Badsha,'Aspects of South African documentary photography in the 1980s', Unpublished Visual History Project, 1-10; Also see D. Price, 'Surveyors and surveyed: Photography out and about' in L. Wells (ed), *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 74 and A. Solomon-Godeau, 'Who is speaking thus? Some questions about documentary photography' in *Photography at the*

ambivalent positions held by these photographers demand further interrogation it falls beyond the scope of this thesis to explore that.

Though photographs are placed within genres that further codify them in terms of their reference systems and meanings, for the purpose of the thesis it may prove invigorating to consider the Van Kalker photographs as not limited or framed within the confines of studio portraiture or any genre of photography for that matter. Are these photographs really that different from documentary ones? Do they not too reflect a fraction of history? And was it not Van Kalker's overarching goal (consciously or not) to bring the attention of an audience to his sitter/s? In her significant contribution to photographic history and practices, Abigail Solomon-Godeau grapples with what a documentary photograph is, strongly hinting that all photographs are subsumed within it. Answering her own question regarding documentary photography, she argues that "one might respond by saying 'just about everything' or alternatively 'just about nothing'."[93] She concludes that all photographic images are indexical traces of that which appeared before the lens at the moment of exposure which supports the notion that all photographs are documentary in nature.[94] Cognizant that the belief of photography as a reflection and an unmediated transcription of the real has long since been discarded, one can ask if the Van Kalker photographs reveal any *truth* since they nearly have a fictional quality about them as they speak to desires, fantasy and aspirations. I would argue that they document and reflect no single truth as such, instead they reveal various realities of the sitter/s, the photographer and the audience. In

---

dock. Essays on photographic history, institutions and practices (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 169-183.

[93] A. Solomon-Godeau, 'Who is speaking thus? Some questions about documentary photography' in *Photography at the dock. Essays on photographic history, institutions and practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 169.

[94] Solomon-Godeau, 'Who is speaking thus?', 169.

this sense they reveal much of the problematics of the subjectivities and identities which exist within a series of cultural codes and notions of personhood especially within the South African context.[95] By examining the Van Kalker photographs within this context, it will allow for a different reading of the past and deepen our understanding of people's experiences during that time.

In this chapter I have attempted to introduce key debates regarding the nature of the photograph by focusing on a number of theoretical and critical discussions of the photograph in relation to representation, subjectivity and multiple interpretations. Taking contemporary debates of photography into account (which I will return to throughout the thesis), it has become even more pivotal to analyse the Van Kalker photographs against the mediated, ambiguous nature of the photograph and its materiality which are all fundamental to its multiple meanings. Framed within Tagg's assertion that portraiture was rooted in a "democratising process"[96], the key features of photography will be further interrogated in the next chapter by examining how studio photography was appropriated as a means of representation and how the studio functioned as a kind of theatre in which the aspirations and dreams of sitters could be visually articulated. By chiefly drawing on Christopher Pinney's work on Indian photographic studios and Hudita Mustafa's research on how Dakarois women fashioned themselves through photographic studio practices in the next chapter it will become evident that rather than render the sitter/s merely as passive objects of photography, those practices rendered them instrumental in how they wished to see themselves.

---

[95] C. Kratz, *The Ones that Are Wanted: Communication and the Politics of Representation in a Photographic Exhibition* (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 2002), 119.
[96] J. Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 37.

It is toward this end then that I will argue that despite being framed within the confines and traditions of European photographic studio practices, sitters could visually assert themselves in an act of symbolic ascent or status inscription. Furthermore, the act of engaging in studio photography not only conferred a degree of status and power upon its sitters which other genres of photography could not necessarily achieve but beyond that, structured social interaction and visual knowledge through the material forms that these photographs assumed in the past and still do to a certain extent in the present. These photographs are not "dead in the stereotypical cultural graveyard of the [District Six] museum and archive"[97]; they are material objects that are still very much socially active through the context in which they are viewed and through the memories they produce. Photographs are created with a biographical intention of remembering as "they are inextricably linked to the past, [yet] they are also about the future- a moment, fixed and active in the present, specifically to communicate the past in the future."[98]

---
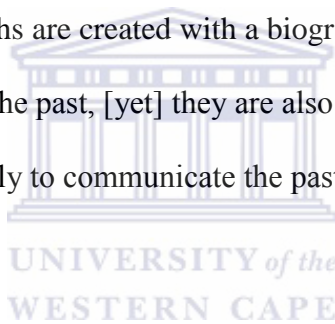
[97] E. Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 14.
[98] Edwards, *Raw Histories*, 14.

Chapter Two

Picturing Dreams: Photographs of the Van Kalker Studio

> Portraits stock the picture galleries of my memory with the vivid images of people, once known or previously unknown, now registered, preserved, and accessible through works of art that have become momentarily transparent.[99]

Never intended as works of art, the Van Kalker photographs were made to fulfil a specific social function in which individuals and families could express their subjectivities, aspirations and views and subsequently inscribe their social prestige within the private domain of personal and family life. Moreover, engaging in photography at the Van Kalker studio became a ritual by which personal and family experiences were solemnised and 'immortalised.' In his seminal study of the sociological approach to photography in the 1960s, Pierre Bourdieu gives much weight to the social uses of photography by asserting that photographic practice primarily exists for the most part by virtue of its solemnising and immortalising functions within the domestic circle.[100] For Bourdieu, the "photograph itself is usually nothing but the group's image of its own integration."[101] In essence, the camera becomes an instrument of family cohesion focused on moments that are sacred within the ritualised cult of domesticity such as weddings, christenings, anniversaries and so forth.[102] While he hints that the materiality of a photograph may be instrumental in understanding part of the meaning, he relegates this possibility in favour of the social functions of photography which for him articulate the meaning embedded in photographs. In going beyond Bourdieu's argument, I would argue that the Van Kalker photographs were not only made to fulfil social functions. Equally important is that the materiality of the Van Kalker

---

[99] R. Brillliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 7.
[100] P. Bourdieu, *Photography: A middle-brow art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 19.
[101] Bourdieu, *Photography*, 26.
[102] R. Krauss, 'A Note on Photography and the Simulacral' in *October*, Vol. 31 (Winter, 1984), 56.

photographs "exist in dialogue with the image itself to make meaning and to create the focus for memory and evocation."[103] It is in this sense that they form the "intimate archives"[104] of the domestic circle, shaping the way in which personal and family narratives were and would be told in future.

In his book entitled *Portraiture*, the art historian Richard Brilliant attributes the allure of portraiture especially those of a more personal kind to "the magical power that portraits have to bring the viewer- wherever present- into a personal, even intimate connection with another being, however remote from him in time [or space] that subject might be."[105] Put simply, there is something magical and fascinating about the Van Kalker photographs. They are mesmerising in their almost painterly beauty. They draw me in, speak to my senses and transfix me. Yet, I do not know the faces staring back at me, gazing at something beyond the frames that confine them. Still they draw me in because there is something familiar about them, something that appeals to my own aspirations, sensibilities and personhood and compelling me to go on a cathartic journey of self-discovery.

When Santu Mofokeng compiled images for the 'Black Photo Album' he talked about how the beauty of the photos made him wonder if they are not some kind of trick or illusion[106], and I am almost tempted to do the same with the Van Kalker photographs. However, within the same vein as Mofokeng I would argue that their significance transcends the boundaries of the framed

---

[103] E. Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998), 222.

[104] E. Maurice, 'Lives of Colour: Images from Cape Photo-Albums' in K. Grundlingh (ed), *Lines of Sight: Perspectives on South African Photography.* South African National Gallery, Cape Town, 17 July – 31 October 1999 (2001), 67.

[105] R. Brillliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 82.

[106] S. Mofokeng, 'The Black Photo Album' in *Revue Noire*, *Anthology of African & Indian Ocean Photography* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1999), 70.

image[107] as it can be argued that the Van Kalker photographs entail a "'relationship of power' [and] 'of mutuality and interconnection'"[108] especially if read against systems of oppression and marginalisation. It is in this sense that the Van Kalker photographs offer the possibility to disentangle some of the complicated, fractured threads and nuances of personal and family narratives brought about by the socio-economic and political consequences of such systems. Cast within this light it has become pivotal to consider how these intimate, beautiful and complex photographs speak to questions of the personal and the familial within an unfolding history of the city of Cape Town.

The primary purpose of the thesis is to provide an analysis of the way in which the Van Kalker studio created the possibility for people to shape their own representations to a certain extent through engaging in studio portraiture as opposed to how they were being represented by others, predominantly through documentary or official photography in a period that was fraught with subjugation, oppression and racism. Before I attempt to answer this question, and as a way of engaging with the Van Kalker photographs, it is essential to remember that photographs (whether portrait, documentary or ethnographic photography) do not reflect the world in a simple way. The Van Kalker photographs are certainly not an exception to the rule. Cast within this light it is necessary to critically interrogate the key features of studio photography.

Though the Van Kalker photographs will not be regarded as portraits as such in the thesis, it is useful to briefly explore the historical development of photographic portraiture. With the emergence of photography in the early nineteenth century, portraiture quickly developed as the

---

[107] Mofokeng, 'Black Photo Album', 70.
[108] M. Hirsch, *Family Frames* (Cambridge: Massachusetts and London, 1997), 9.

dominant genre as it provided people with a means and recognisable repertoire of visual representation. Whereas the painted portrait and even early daguerreotypes was the "privileged domain of its early progenitors", photography was the "ultimate democratic art form, at once sanctioning everything and everyone with potential significance."[109] Fulfilling Daguerre's promise that anyone and everything will become photographed, photography has undergone a major industrialisation process as it invariably sought "to democratise all experiences by translating them into images."[110] Firmly rooted in a "democratising process"[111], photographic portraiture allowed people especially the rising middle classes in nineteenth century Europe a means of representation in which to assert their social, economic and political importance. As Tagg asserts, "To have one's portrait done was one of the symbolic acts by which individuals from the rising social classes made their ascent visible to themselves and others and classed themselves among those who enjoyed social status."[112] Framed within bourgeois connotations, and bearing some resemblance to the tradition of painting, photographic portraiture became an assertion of privilege and power, as a particular moment in time and space is rendered significant.

This is especially relevant in terms of the Van Kalker photographs because as photography became more democratised, it enabled people to appropriate it to their own contexts which allowed them to stage idealised versions of themselves. This is especially poignant when set against the tumultuous background of discrimination, marginalisation and economic hardship. In as much as photography certifies experience, it also has a way of refusing it by assuaging fear

---

[109] G. Clarke, *The Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 18.

[110] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 6.

[111] J. Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 37.

[112] Tagg, *Burden of Representation*, 37.

and disorientation.[113] So even with apartheid in full swing people continued to stream into the Van Kalker studio to document various memorable occasions which attests to the need that existed among people from the working and middle classes to assert themselves in a changing environment fraught with socio-economic and political tensions. It is herein, that studio photography creates the space for an intricate engagement in which power manifests itself in various ways as the photograph becomes "the site of a complex series of interactions – aesthetic, cultural, ideological, sociological, and physiological."[114]

It is in this sense that the question of power becomes inextricably linked to photography as it reflects the aesthetic, political or ideological point of view of the photographer and is encoded with meaning underwritten by deceptive simplicity as it reveals as much as it conceals. The mere act of privileging a particular moment in time is to endow it with a degree of power and importance. "Each still photograph is a privileged moment, turned into a slim object that one keep[s] and look[s] at again."[115] However, paradoxically the photograph is also suspended between its capabilities of functioning both 'repressively' and 'honorifically.'[116] Inasmuch as the photographic medium was employed to reflect the interior being of a sitter as a way of inscribing their individuality and social standing within society, photography also subverted the privileges inherent in portraiture as it came to be appropriated as implements of science and public surveillance.[117] In an official context, the photograph came to be used (even more frequently now) as a way of identifying, classifying and observing criminality, pathology and deviance.

---

[113] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 9.
[114] G. Clarke, *The Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 102.
[115] Sontag, *On Photography*, 18.
[116] A. Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive' in R. Bolton (ed), *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1989), 345.
[117] See Sekula, 'The Body', 345; M. Sturken & L. Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24.

This repressive function of photography finds particular resonance in South Africa as photography accompanied by colonial expansion subjected people to ethnographic and anthropometric photography based on 'racial' theories of superiority that sought to classify and subordinate bodies.[118] Later, with the advent of apartheid the photograph came to be used as a tool of identification which the state employed as a means to classify and segregate its people. Interestingly, within the Van Kalker archive there are a substantial number of passport or identification photographs which is indicative of the need that existed for identification photographs in order to comply with state requirements. However, this also opens up a discursive space in which to argue that the Van Kalker studio offered its sitters, despite being framed for state regulated purposes, a way of 'looking good' even if the context within which it was framed, opposed it. It is in this sense that the photograph is endowed with power as it "achieves meaning through the context in which it is seen."[119]
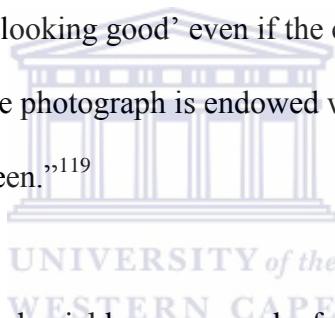
Another way in which the photograph wields power can be found by looking at the power dynamics at play between the sitter and the photographer. Fraught with ambiguity, photographic

---

[118] With colonial expansion, the indigenous people of the interior of southern Africa became of particular interest to anthropologists and ethnologists. This 'scientific' fascination subsequently resulted in a substantial number of anthropometric photographs which can be found today in the holdings of the National Library of South Africa, the old South African Museum (SAM) –which now forms part of the Iziko Museums of Cape Town as well as the Bleek/Lloyd collections located at the National Library of South Africa, Iziko South Africa Museum, University of South Africa (UNISA) and the University of Cape Town (UCT). During the late nineteenth century Wilhelm Bleek started documenting the oral traditions of /Xam prisoners. Later he was joined by his sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd who was also a linguist similar to Bleek. Unlike James Drury who photographed indigenous people in order to cast them in dioramas for display in SAM, Bleek and Lloyd's work was focused more on a kind of interactive sharing of knowledge as indicated by the drawings and recordings of folklore. While the Bleek/Lloyd archive is remarkable, it can also be regarded as "an objectification of a people" as Bleek "complied with an official request from the British Secretary of State for the Colonies to provide Sir Thomas Huxley with a series of anthropometric photographs of /Xam prisoners..." in P. Skotnes, 'The Politics of Bushman representations' in P. Landau & D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 257; P. Davison, 'Typecast: Representations of the Bushmen at the South African Museum', *Public Arhaeology*, Vol. 1 (2001), 11; K. Schoeman, *The Face of the Country: A South African Family Album 1860-1910* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1996), 11, 17.
[119] G. Clarke (ed), *The Portrait in Photography* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1992), 1.

46

portraiture immobilises yet animates its sitters in a solicitous negotiation where the sitters "behave as characters in a portrait genre, supervised by the photographer who builds on the circumstances at hand and according to the decorum of the occasion."[120] Barthes succinctly describes the role of the sitter, "In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use to exhibit his art."[121] While Barthes alludes to the active engagement of the sitter in the process of creating a photograph, he maintains that this complex and strange relationship between the sitter and the photographer will inevitably lead to the passivity of the sitter or to be more dramatic, turn the sitter into a passive victim. It is in this sense that Barthes contends that photography inexorably renders the "subject an object"[122], because "there is something predatory in the act of taking a picture."[123] In a similar vein as Barthes and offering quite a staunch view on where the power is actually centred within photography, Sontag argues that "To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed."[124]

Writing on the work of African photographers, Okwui Enwezor and Octavia Zaya in opposition to Sontag and Barthes emphasise the active roles of both the sitter and the photographer in creating a portrait in which the sitter can negotiate how they wish to be defined while the photographer assumes the role of the director. They argue that central to "portrait photography is the record of the model's self-inquiry, an inquiry framed and directed by the photographer's

[120] M. Kozloff, *The Theatre of the Face: Portrait Photography since 1900* (New York and London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2007), 168.
[121] R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 1981), 13.
[122] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 15.
[123] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 14.
[124] Sontag, *On Photography,* 14.

attempt to discover what he sees. Models imitate the image they believe photographers see

through the camera lens. Photographers develop the image as they touch the shutter; models

perform what they believe that image looks like."[125] Their view holds that portraits reveal as

much as they obscure through a complex, sophisticated process of representation which "creates

the illusion of fixed, immutable presences in images rendered as real bodies."[126] In as much as

portraits are representations of their sitters, they are also interpretations of their photographers. It

is along these lines then that the Van Kalker photographs will be explored in the following

section in terms of how studio photography was appropriated as a means of representation and

how the studio functioned as a kind of theatre in which the aspirations and dreams of sitters

could be staged, which ultimately conferred a degree of status and power upon its sitters.
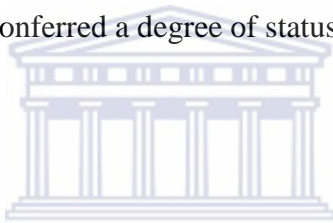
Inside the Chamber of Dreams

> "Our faith in the truth of a photograph rests on our belief that the lens is impartial, and
> will draw the subject as it is, neither nobler nor meaner. This faith may be naïve and
> illusory (for though the lens draws the subject, the photographer defines it), but it
> persists. The photographer's vision convinces us to the degree that the photographer
> hides his hand."[127]

In as much as photography captures a fragment of reality, it also seeks to beautify and it is in this

tenuous struggle between beautification and the real which is particularly pertinent within studio

photography, that it is necessary to interrogate various photographs from the Van Kalker studio.

Central to the thesis are photographs dating from 1939 to 1978, consisting mainly of family and

individual photographs. I have selected this period partly because of its historical significance

---

[125] Phelan quoted in O. Enwezor and O. Zaya, O. 'Colonial, Imaginary Tropes of Disruption: History, Culture, Representation in the Works of African photographers' in R. Solomon (ed), *In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1996), 33.
[126] Enwezor and Zaya, 'Colonial Imaginary', 33.
[127] J. Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 12.

and secondly because of the urgency to write such a history before those stories are lost in obscurity or relegated to the fringes of history.[128] The Van Kalker photographs are a vault of private moments in which special events such as weddings, birthdays, graduations and christenings were immortalised and memorialised as it "[brought] home to us images of mortality, especially poignant when they show us the fullness of life."[129] They offer an intimate yet incomplete account of a country or on a microcosmic level, the city of Cape Town, "gripped by, yet emerging, from the political, economic, social, and cultural structures imposed by colonialism"[130] and firmly entrenched in the iron grip of apartheid. Cast within this background of political and socio-economic uncertainty, the question that crops up is how did the Van Kalker photographs enable representations of the self and allow sitters a means through which to assert themselves visually?
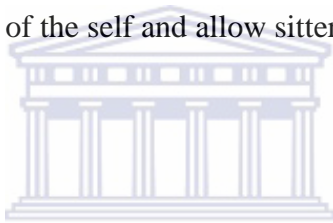
In a setting which Christopher Pinney describes as a "chamber of dreams"[131], though much more subdued compared to Indian and West African photographic studio practices, the Van Kalker studio transported its sitters away from gritty realism by beautifying them through various techniques. In contrast to the montage techniques and dramatic backgrounds that were very popular in Indian and West African photographic practices, the Van Kalker studio enhanced its sitters by employing lighting and touching up techniques. Writing in *Afterimage*, Arjun Appadurai has argued that backdrops are more than just a metaphor for some type of location as

---

[128] See Introduction, 6-9.

[129] M. Kozloff, *The Theatre of the Face: Portrait Photography since 1900* (New York & London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2007), 11.

[130] O. Enwezor and O. Zaya, 'Colonial, Imaginary Tropes of Disruption: History, Culture, Representation in the Works of African photographers' in R. Solomon (ed), *In/Sight: African Photographer, 1940 to the Present* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1996), 28.

[131] See Pinney's chapter 'Chamber of Dreams' in which he describes the photographic studio as a 'chamber of dreams' that becomes a space for individual exploration in which sitters can engage in representations of how they wish to see themselves through various props, backgrounds and poses in C. Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social life of Indian Photographers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 108-209.

it is indexical of the realities of the sitters. Specifically referring to the extensive use of props and fantastical backdrops in postcolonial photographic practices in India, Appadurai has argued that the "it [subaltern backdrop] resists, subverts or parodies the realist claims of photography in various ways."[132] Vastly different from Indian and West African photographic studios; and through visual and oral research it revealed that the Van Kalker studio was a fairly unimposing, neutral space which offered its sitters a more 'realistic' backdrop. As official photography gave way to studio photography in places like India there was a "gradual effort to 'singularise' the photographic subject by neutralising the backdrop."[133] However in the case of the Van Kalker studio I would argue that the neutralised backdrop can rather be attributed to Van Kalker's own sensibilities and subjectivities. Appadurai cautions though that the studio photograph is still subject to mediation as it involves photographic techniques such as lighting, vantage points, posing, facial expressions, dress and props, even in the absence of a visible backdrop or neutralised one. In a similar vein to Appadurai, I would argue that the neutralisation of the backdrop does not imply that studio photographs were not mediated or stylised just because they were framed within European photographic practices. Backdrops are not passive, even if they are seemingly neutral. They offer the potential for an interrogation of different realisms. It is in this sense that we have not even begun to understand the significance of backdrops in photographs as they "can be interpreted as sites of epistemological uncertainty about exactly what photographs seek to represent."[134] This is a pertinent point on which I shall elucidate later in the chapter.

Offering a slightly different view from Bourdieu, Pinney emphasises that in Indian portraiture "the photographic studio becomes a place not for solemnisation of the social but for the

---

[132] A. Appadurai, 'The Colonial Backdrop' in *Afterimage*, March-April 1997, 3.
[133] Appadurai, 'Colonial Backdrop', 2.
[134] Appadurai, 'Colonial Backdrop', 1.

individual exploration of that which does not yet exist in the social world."[135] This is evident

from the inventive posing and imaginative, ornate backdrops which typify most of the images

that were made within the photo studios in Nagda, India. Whereas Indian portraiture placed an

emphasis on the link between artistry and photography in the way it embellished portraits

through poses, costumes, backdrops and enhancement through painting as in the case of some

early Indian portraits, the Van Kalker photographs seem to operate within a slightly different

sphere. In contrast to Nagda studios in India where "personal explorations of an infinite range of

alter egos are possible"[136], the Van Kalker studio offered its sitters the opportunity to be

photographed in their already established social roles of wife, husband, soldier, boxer and nurse

albeit it in the staged reality of the studio. According to Pinney there are instances in which

sitters are depicted in their roles as consanguines and affines especially in wedding photographs

taken in Nagda studios but as pointed out earlier, studios functioned more as a space of personal

exploration. These chambers of dreams allowed sitters to become more of themselves through

inventive posing and elaborate backdrops as a way to effect the "transcendence and parody of

social roles."[137] In comparison with sitters of the Van Kalker studio, sitters in Nagda studios

were less concerned about effecting or mirroring reality evident from montage techniques

amongst others employed. If anything they desired to escape the bounded temporal and spatial

frames of their physical locality.[138]

---

[135] C. Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social life of Indian Photographers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 178.
[136] C. Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social life of Indian Photographers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 175.
[137] Pinney, *Camera Indica*, 178.
[138] C. Pinney, 'Notes from the Surface of the Image- Photography, Postcolonialism and Vernacular Modernism' in C. Pinney and N. Peterson (eds), *Photography's Other Histories* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 213.

Though quite different from the photographs of the Nagda studios in terms of being grounded in a more realist setting, there is one important parallel that can be drawn between the photographs of the Van Kalker studio and those of Nagda studios. In simple terms, sitters engaged in these studios because they wanted to look good and studio photography offered them that opportunity of 'coming out better.'[139] Moreover, on the surface level the Van Kalker photographs reveal a process of mediation in which the appearance of sitters was enhanced and beautified through 'touching up' as pencil marks and rubbings still remain visible on some of the negatives which served to erase wrinkles and facial flaws.[140] In my interviews with Irvine Clements and Patricia Twigg (both former sitters of the Van Kalker studio) respectively, both of them were of the opinion that it was this ability in particular that made Van Kalker a household name. Irvine Clements, photographer and current owner of the Van Kalker studio had this to say,

> I think that was part of the signature as well. Today we have the Photoshop which allows you to enhance the subject. Back then Photoshop was by a lead pencil, the nature of the photo being black and white. If indeed the surface of the negative, the grainy surface that was where, just to take the face, the dark lines under the eyes comes out white on the negative and if coloured in by a lead pencil, gave it a tone. So in fact it wasn't dark anymore, it was a lighter colour. On a negative a black line will come out white in a print. Now a grey tone and if used for your pimple marks and eyes and things like that.[141]

---

[139] Pinney employs this term of 'coming out better' when he talks about how Indian studio photography offers sitters the possibility of enhancing themselves by adopting gestures and using costume and props. 'Coming out better' is also prevalent in West African photographic studio practices exemplified by the research undertaken by Kobena Mercer. Mercer describes the approach of Mali photographer, Seydou Keïta as adding to the self that the sitter already is through the use of props, accessories and backdrops. For a more detailed discussion see C. Pinney, 'Notes from the Surface of the Image- Photography, Postcolonialism and Vernacular Modernism' in C. Pinney and N. Peterson (eds), *Photography's Other Histories* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 214.

[140] My research of the Van Kalker photographs revealed that a significant amount of the negatives were manipulated or 'touched up' evident from the pencil marks and rubbings found on them. As my interviews with Patricia & Desmond Twigg (14 March 2009), and Biddie Rassool & Joan Jardine (1 February 2008) reveal, most of Van Kalker's sitters were aware of this mediation indicating their complicity in this process, in fact some interviewees hinted that this probably contributed even more to his popularity as he was able to produce images of coloured and black people looking middle-class, respectable and more importantly lighter toned. The latter forms part of a contentious debate as there are those that would argue that this played into the colonial sensibilities that sitters aspired to while others would argue that it was driven by aesthetic choices. Also see N. Becker, 'Inside and Outside the Family Album: Making, Exhibiting and Archiving the Photograph in the South African National Gallery and the National Library of South Africa', Unpublised Masters Mini-Thesis (Bellville: UWC, 2002), 51.

[141] Interview with Irvine Clements, 5 June 2009.

Patricia Twigg also recollects, "maybe you have a scar on your face, you would hardly see the scar on that photo. …you would see it is a different photo…he would make you pretty."[142] Her recollection along with Clements' understanding of the processes involved in the photographic techniques employed by Van Kalker, underlines Van Kalker's skills of beautifying his sitters which in essence became part of his signature. Even more significantly it points to the participation of his sitters in shaping their own visual self-representations. Notwithstanding this mediation in which they were complicit, these photographs presented their sitters with the opportunity to visually represent themselves in bourgeois terms. But more than that, what is suggested here is that the sitters used these very same terms as a foundation for their inclusion in a society that sought to classify, marginalise, oppress and divide them along racial and class lines.
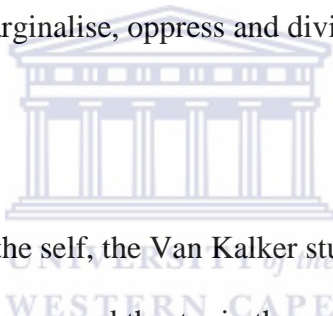
In constructing a representation of the self, the Van Kalker studio essentially became a stage as it drew on the conventions of performance and theatre in the way it employed poses, facial expressions, props, backgrounds, framing and lighting. Edwards, in particular affords special attention to the relationship between performance and photography as she notes that theatricality can be tied to photography in two ways, which are the intensity of presentational form and the heightening of sign worlds stemming from this intensity.[143] She takes this further by arguing "Performances, like photographs, embody meaning through signifying properties, and are deliberate, conscious efforts to represent, to say something about something."[144] Though the Van Kalker photographs are framed within European conventions of studio photography which visually translates into a fairly simple background with minimal props, the photographs are

---

[142] Interview with Patricia Twigg, 14 March 2009.
[143] E. Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 17.
[144] Edwards, *Raw Histories*, 17.

infused with a performative quality. This is because of the heightened intensity ascribed to a single fragmented moment in which both the sitter and photographer perform. Indeed the very nature of photography is such that it "carries an intensity that is constituted by the nexus of the historical moment and the concentration of the photograph as an inscription."[145] Throughout this analysis of the Van Kalker photographs, their performative and theatrical nature will become more apparent which is realised in the self-conscious poses adopted by sitters, and framed by various props, spatial depth, lighting and the backdrop.

In order to excavate part of the meaning embedded in the Van Kalker photographs it is imperative to understand that they were created in the highly charged political and socio-economic volatile environment brought on by the aftermath of colonial segregation and emerging apartheid. More than just immortalising the past, Sontag argues that photography allows people to "take possession of [a] space in which they are insecure."[146] This is crucial in understanding how sitters used the studio not only as a theatre in which they could act out their dreams and aspirations but also on an esoteric level, appropriated the studio to symbolically claim a "presence in representation"[147] in a space which otherwise sought to exoticise, romanticise, naturalise, dehumanise, marginalise and/or erase them.

Exploring photography as a mode of representation rooted within the emergence of the modern state, John Tagg argues that because of its perceived objectivity and veracity as a scientific medium, photography became an extension of state control as it created new kinds of knowledge

---

[145] Edwards, *Raw Histories*, 18.
[146] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 9.
[147] J. Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 37.

and means of control.[148] Functioning as an instrument of power, photography played (and continues to do so) an integral role in the development of various disciplinary institutions such as hospitals, asylums, police, prisons amongst others as spaces were created in which to contain, observe, survey and identify bodies.[149] In a more recent contribution to this debate, Tagg takes up these issues once again but goes slightly beyond the argument he made in *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. According to Tagg, photography should be regarded within the discourse that surrounds it and the institutions that disseminate it because in the end photographs cannot be contained indefinitely or defined conclusively.[150] It is in this sense that it can be argued that photographic representation could also have been employed as a means to make sense of the social experience, which was epitomised by control and tyranny in South Africa.[151] If considered in these terms the Van Kalker photographs can be seen as a "social rite, a defence against anxiety and a tool of power,"[152] conferring both privilege and power to those adversely affected by the socio-political context of apartheid South Africa.

To exemplify this point it is important to examine the following photograph (Fig. 1) which was taken in 1939. Strikingly beautiful in its simplicity, it depicts a smartly dressed couple meeting the gaze of the camera squarely. Both the man and the woman are wearing simple and conservative clothing evocative of the fashion of that time. The woman's dress is accentuated by the belt around her waist, the hat embellished with a jewellery pin while she is clutching a purse in her hand. To complete her outfit she is wearing open-toed shoes which match her outfit. The

---

[148] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 60- 103.

[149] M. Sturken and L. Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24.

[150] J. Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), xxxi, xxxvi, 1- 49.

[151] J. Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 8.

[152] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 8.

man is wearing a striped suit, shirt, vest and tie accented by polished shoes. His left hand is tucked in his pocket while he is pulling his jacket aside to reveal the knitted vest he is wearing. With his other hand holding onto a hat, he exudes sophistication and poise.

Fig.1, 1939

The couple is turned toward each other and their close physical proximity to each other is suggestive of an intimate relationship. The woman is smiling very elegantly and her delicate feminine pose is even more pronounced with her crossed ankles while the man is very serious, towering protectively over her with a silent confidence. Except for the chair used as a prop in the background, the studio background is almost bare. The couple is framed against a very simplistic

almost puritan backdrop with vertical lines in the centre reminiscent of a Grecian pillar. They are literally bathed in light, which gives the photograph an almost luminescent quality which is further enhanced by the simple interior of the studio. The neutralised backdrop foregrounds the viewer's attention on the couple while the absence of an ornate and detailed backdrop creates a kind of realism in this photograph.

When Mofokeng worked on the 'Black Photo Album' (1890-1950), he said that "these images run the risk of being dismissed or ignored as merely bourgeois." But what people do not realise is that these images challenge the dominant narrative of racial discrimination as they questioned racist policies by "taking their model from colonial officials and settlers, especially the English, [they] lived a life in a manner and dress very similar to those of European immigrants."[153] While the photograph above seems to reflect the "canonical specifications of representation which governs all image-making"[154], it presents a distinct fracture in the dominant racist and romantic narratives which sought to exoticise and dehumanise certain groups of people by depicting them as 'primitive' and 'tribal'. On the surface level, this photograph is imbued with bourgeois connotations as it is representative of a sophisticated, contemporary couple. By engaging in photographic portraiture at the Van Kalker studio it provided a means of representation in which the couple could "reconstitute the body of labour, reproduction, and patriarchy into that of beauty, elegance, and wealth."[155] Just like Barthes, the couple knows that they are posing by lending themselves to the social game of studio photography. But in departing from Barthes'

---

[153] S. Mofokeng, 'The Black Photo Album' in *Revue Noire*, *Anthology of African & Indian Ocean Photography* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1999), 70.

[154] O. Oguibe, 'Photography and the substance of the Image' in R. Solomon (ed), *In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1996), 247.

[155] H. Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity: Fashioning selves in Dakarois popular photography' in P. Landau and D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 188.

fears of being objectified by the lens of the camera, this studio photograph presents an opportunity in which "such moments of (self-)objectification [can be regarded] neither as loss nor as figments of generic ideals or cloaks of true selves, but as self-transformations."[156]

To further elucidate on this, it is pertinent to consider some of the Van Kalker photographs in terms of Hudita Mustafa's study on how photography has been appropriated by especially women in Dakar, Senegal as a strategy to reclaim "bodies and selves, once subjugated within a colonial imaginary."[157] According to Mustafa the practice of photographic documentation developed in tandem with colonialism where photographs were employed as a way to illustrate the 'primitiveness' of the dark continent juxtaposed with the 'progress' that colonialism brought forth. In challenging colonial indexing and representation, Africans engaged in studio photography under the notion of *civilisé* which sought to represent them as being in the centre of modernisation in Africa. This was done through exemplifying the wealth and sophisticated culture brought about by the processes of colonisation and modernisation. Mustafa contends, "photographic images are indeed complicit with local ideologies of civilisation, and patriarchal ideologies of the feminine as the site and sight of family honour."[158] Thus, as Senegal entered an era of decolonisation and with the proliferation of photographic studios in urban areas, it retained some colonial vestiges of representation of the self in studio photography where the notion of *civilisé* was used as a common thread in the making of photographs. Sharing the experience of colonialism, and in unison with Mustafa I would argue that this notion of *civilisé* could also be applied within photographic studios in South Africa especially evident from the great deal of

---

[156] H. Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity: Fashioning selves in Dakarois popular photography' in P. Landau and D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 188.
[157] Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity', 173.
[158] Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity', 175.

work that characterised visits to the Van Kalker studio. Sitters would take special care in their adornment, dress and pose in order to effect representations of themselves as elegant and dignified which could be stored or displayed as archives of memory. Both in its representational and material positioning, the "photograph[s] renew[s] the beauty and charisma of the person portrayed and document[s] the solidarity of communities that produce events and persons."[159] This is an important point that finds resonance throughout the thesis especially in the next chapter where the photograph as material object within the domestic enclosure of the home in terms of memory and gender will be more fully explored.

In returning to the issue at hand, it is useful to briefly turn to Sontag again. In taking Sontag's point further in which she argues that photography allows people to take ownership of a space in which they are insecure, Mustafa argues that in the context of socio-economic crisis,[160] women's strategies rely on collecting and displaying photographs of themselves dressed as respectably and elegantly as possible in a practice called *sañse* as a way of communicating their wealth and status in the midst of socio-economic uncertainty. In a similar vein to Mustafa, I would argue that women from the working and middle classes of District Six, Woodstock and surrounding areas had their photographs taken at the Van Kalker studio as it allowed them a space in which they could be elegant, beautiful, dignified and respectable beings rather than subjects being scrutinised and organised along racial and class distinctions left behind by colonialism and reinforced by apartheid. In exemplifying this, it is useful to consider the following photograph (Fig.2) taken in 1951.

---

[159] Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity', 184.
[160] See Mustafa for discussion on how the socio-economic crisis leaves women in competition for status and respectability in Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity', 175.

In this full length photograph the woman is dressed rather formally in a very chic dress which she has complemented with a handbag, a pair of hand gloves and strategic pieces of jewellery. She completes her outfit with a transparent shawl draped loosely around her face and what appears to be fox skin that is wrapped around her shoulders. While I cannot be sure if this particular fur skin belonged to her or not, during my pictorial research I came across several negatives of different women within the same period that all seemingly had the same fur skin draped around their shoulders. In my interview with Marian Abrahams she offered a possible explanation as she pointed out that women often borrowed accessories from each other on the occasion of getting a Van Kalker photograph done because they could already visualise how they would look.[161] This is an interesting point as it suggests that sitters were not just passive objects but actively participated in how they wanted to look.
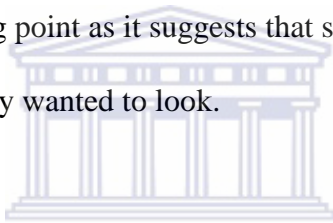
Standing slightly at an angle on a carpet in a relaxed yet elegant pose, she assuredly gazes at the camera and gives the impression of respectability and wealth which she projects through her attire, expression and stance. She is framed against a neutral backdrop which draws her out even further within the image thus emphasising her elegance and distinction. Although every aspect of this photograph embodies colonial imaginings of the self signified by the fashion and studio environment, I want to argue that this photograph did allow the sitter a measure of self-representation evident from her dress, pose and facial expression. By representing herself in this way, and if one were to read this image within the context of the apartheid laws that were being implemented around this period, it can be argued that the sitter found a way of mediating the prevailing socio-economic and political uncertainty of that time however subliminal and unintentional her engagement was. Another reason why studio photography was appropriated

---

[161] Interview with Marian Abrahams, 14 March 2009.

could be that it allowed especially women to either inscribe their already established social status or negotiate themselves into ascending social hierarchies. Mustafa points out, "Photos enable women to inhabit themselves as elegant, dignified beings, outside of the grueling routine of housework, social relations, and financial hardship."[162] And this is certainly true of the photograph below. Just like their counterparts in Dakar who had their photographs taken as a way to reconstitute the feminine body in order to destabilise the colonial male gaze, it is my contention that women in Cape Town started engaging in studio photography to improve or affirm their standing in the social hierarchy endemic to all societies.

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

---

[162] H. Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity: Fashioning selves in Dakarois popular photography' in P. Landau and D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 188.

Fig. 2, 1951

In her beautifully nuanced essay, entitled *In our Glory: Photography and Black Life* bell hooks

argues that the camera became a political instrument by which marginalised people could partake

fully in the production of images.[163] While she concedes that it might have been rarely

articulated as such, it offered "a way to resist misrepresentation as well as a means by which

alternative images could be produced."[164] Just like bell hooks, I would like to argue that these

photographs served in addressing the challenges brought about by the socio-economic and

---

[163] See b. hooks, 'In our Glory: Photography and Black Life' in D. Willis (ed), *Picturing Us: African American Identity and Photography* (New York: The New Press, 1994), 43-53.
[164] hooks, 'In our Glory' 49.

political instability of apartheid. However, as revealed by the sitters of the Van Kalker studio that were interviewed there is little evidence that would suggest such a deliberate and conscious impetus as most of them had their photographs taken to memorialise and document a specific event rather than as a passive and silent means of resistance.

The next photograph (Fig.3, 1955) serves as a particularly interesting example of how women actively positioned themselves through studio photography by appropriating visual techniques that once subjugated them. In her research Mustafa found that strategies of representation and assertion depended on being complicit with colonial techniques of cataloguing bodies and selves. That being said it is important to note is that the photographs of Dakarois women are also framed within signs of African culture and subjectivities. Although the photographic practices of the Van Kalker studio were rooted in European conventions and traditions of studio photography evident from the techniques employed by Van Kalker by virtue of the poses, tonality and studio setting, the following photograph is coded with signs that reveal rich cultural linkages to Africa.

In contrast to the previous photograph which exemplified the degree to which colonial imaginings of the self have been appropriated, this photograph is very powerful as the sitter has maintained her own cultural associations albeit framed within techniques of European studio photography. It depicts a woman clothed in African attire which consists of a head dress, skirt, shawl, T-shirt and something that is similar to an apron attached to the shirt.[165] She has

---

[165] Research has suggested that this could very well be a Xhosa costume, mainly identified by the vertical lines and buttons used in the dress. Through the informal interviews I conducted, it was suggested that she might have been a traditional healer as signified by the beads and the bare feet. However at the risk of misrepresenting this photograph, I will refrain from labelling it as such as this photograph is read within the limitations of my own and other respondents subjectivities juxtaposed with the anonymity of the sitter. For an example of a Xhosa costume see P. Faber and A. Van der Merwe (eds), *Group Portrait, South Africa: Nine Family Histories* (Cape Town and Amsterdam: Kwela Books and KIT Publishers, 2003), 184.

accessorised her outfit with two strings of beaded necklaces, and strings of beads around her arms and feet. Significantly, she is standing bare feet on a carpet in the centre between two curtains that have been drawn away. Her gaze is powerful as she faces the camera directly in a full frontal pose which conveys a sense of pride, dignity, honour and strength emanating from the stance she has assumed. Though Van Kalker primarily decided which pose was going to be assumed by the sitter as revealed by the interviews I conducted, I want to put it forward that by using frontality it allowed her to offer an image of herself in which she had a certain amount of control and autonomy.

It is in this sense that this photograph serves as a point of fracture as it breaks with the formal conventions of European photographic practices which associated frontality with a "code of social inferiority." [166] My argument here is that her frontal posture reconstituted her elegance, strength, and dignified stateliness as opposed to how African bodies were represented through colonial and post-colonial apparatuses of ethnographic and documentary photography. This photograph is exemplary of the self-representation that occurred within the Van Kalker studio which effectively allowed this sitter to appropriate photography through a process in which she could assert her own cultural linkages and values as to serve her own needs of social affirmation and definition.

---

[166] See Tagg for discussion on how the head-on view became characteristic of modes of supervision, control and surveillance used in scientific, legal and medical documentation in J. Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 37.

Fig. 3, 1955

While Bourdieu emphasises that individuals are photographed not in their capacity as individuals

but in their social roles, and to a certain extent this is true for most of the photographs that will

be discussed here, in going beyond his argument I want to suggest that the Van Kalker studio did

not limit its sitters in terms of only being photographed in a particular social role. Though it

shares the same social uses that Bourdieu linked to the practice of photography, the Van Kalker

photographs are slightly different in that they were produced in a time where coloured and black

communities had to "renegotiate their social relationships within the broader social and political

environment."[167] It is in this sense that studio photography could also offer its sitters the possibility to be photographed both in terms of the social role which they occupied and as a way of dealing with the prevailing socio-economic crisis which left sitters, more specifically women, to contend with crises within class identity, patriarchy and marriage. This is particularly palpable in the photograph (Fig. 2, 1951) above. More than just a symbolic inscription of their social status or emblematic of a desired objective in which they wanted to be seen, these photographs function/ed as material objects that evoke tacit and often piercing memories.

In trying to read the next photograph (Fig. 4, 1978), I am tempted to appropriate hooks's argument that the camera became a political instrument in which alternative images could be constructed in opposition to the stereotypical ones framed within racialised imaginings. This might have been a pertinent claim especially against the backdrop of a turbulent decade of political upheaval and violent conflicts in the history of South Africa which culminated in the Soweto uprising of 1976. However, that would be my deeper reading of the image which is informed by historical context and may not necessarily reflect the sensibilities and subjectivities that motivated these sitters to pose for this photograph. In the photograph both men are dressed very smartly with the one man dressed in a full suit and the other one looking slightly more casual but just as smart in his leather jacket. Interestingly, the man in the suit is holding a pair of binoculars in his hand which may suggest that he was either using it as a prop or as a reference to a hobby or past time such as horse racing that he may have liked to engage in.

---

[167] K. Blair, '"A Featherweight Portable Museum"- The Portrait Photography of the Van Kalker Studio, Woodstock, 1949-1979', Unpublished Honours Paper (UCT, 1999), 14.

Fig. 4, 1978

Slightly different from the other Van Kalker photographs already discussed, this image does not allow for a simple reading as it is not really apparent for what purpose or during which occasion the photograph was taken. While we can hypothesise as to the purposes behind the taking of this photograph, we will not fully understand the motivations that contextualised this event because of the anonymity in which these images are shrouded. What this photograph does allude to is the possibility that sitters engaged in the Van Kalker studio for reasons other than just memorialising significant events. More importantly the sitters in this photograph were presented with a means of inscribing their own sensibilities through the practice of studio photography. Perhaps, one

could even argue that these men had their photograph taken on a subliminal level as a way to visually assert themselves in a space in which they may have felt insecure.

As argued earlier, the photograph is both an image of a performance and an object with its own historical trajectory.[168] Because photographs are "mementos of cloth and events, they fuel nostalgia, desire, rivalry, and commodification"[169], they become more than just a solemnising ritual by which personal and family stories are visually narrated. Photographs involve the interweaving of selves, bodies, narratives, commodities, performances and memory through a complex process in which images are collected, displayed and exchanged. According to Mustafa, photography invigorated the representation of Africans as they regarded it as a way in which they could display and exchange their images as objects of social prestige and modernity. In taking Mustafa's argument further, it can be argued that the Van Kalker photographs also became a form of cultural commodity where sitters especially women collected and displayed photographs of themselves and their families in their finest and most elegant clothes.

This underlying sense of how the photograph as object might have been employed finds particular resonance in the next photograph of a young couple taken in 1942. In this photograph (Fig. 5, 1942) the couple is sitting closely together on a bench with curved metal legs with the man embracing the woman gently, leaning his head lightly against hers intimating a very close love relationship between them. The man is looking very distinguished in a fashionable double-breasted suit and tie while the young woman looks elegant in a dress which she accessorised with

---

[168] See H. Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity: Fashioning selves in Dakarois popular photography' in P. Landau and D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 179 and E. Edwards 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998), 236.
[169] Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity', 179.

little pieces of jewellery such as earrings, a ring on the ring finger of her right hand and a wristwatch on her left hand. In his very suggestive article entitled "Negotiating romance in front of the lens", Ori Schwarz argues that photography is often employed in expressing romantic interest during courtship, framing the relationship or negotiating its status.[170] He further adds, "Photography also helps lovers in 'doing romance', serving as a tool for the production of romantic moments, eroticism and playfulness, thus reshaping emotions and moods in present time rather than [only] in future consumption of photos qua artefact."[171] More than just acting out romance and intimacy in front of the camera, which in turn produce romantic emotions in the present and for future consumption, the photograph can be interpreted as a "declaration of commitment."[172]

Sontag takes this further by arguing, "A photograph is both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence,"[173] and if this image is read within that context it seems possible that the photograph was taken to affirm their status as a couple but even more importantly to employ the image as a material keepsake symbolising their love. This in turn fuels feelings of nostalgia and desire especially in the absence of the loved one either through distance or loss. This was revealed in my interview with the Twiggs, who upon their engagement visited the Van Kalker studio (though in their individual capacities on different days because of unavoidable personal commitments) in order to celebrate and immortalise this significant event of their imminent betrothal.[174] This is significant as it suggests that in addition to affirming their status as an

---

[170] O. Schwarz, 'Negotiating Romance in Front of the Lens' in *Visual Communication* 2010 9 (2), 151.
[171] Schwarz, 'Negotiating Romance', 151.
[172] Schwarz, 'Negotiating Romance', 154.
[173] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 16.
[174] Interview with Patricia and Desmond Twigg, 14 March 2009.

engaged couple, the photographs depicting the two of them individually might also have been used as material objects that were displayed or exchanged between Patricia and Desmond Twigg.

Fig. 5, 1942

In returning to the photograph above, another interesting feature about this image is that it illustrates the way in which the negative was mediated by Van Kalker through a process of retouching and enhancing evident from the barely noticeable thumb sized smudge across the couple's faces. Although this couple undoubtedly had their photograph taken as an expression and material reminder of their love for each other which they could cherish and exchange, I want to take this argument considerably further by proposing that the mediation that this photograph

70

was subjected to alludes to the complicity and subjectivities of both the sitters and the photographer. According to the photographer and current owner of the Van Kalker studio Irvine Clements, Van Kalker employed various techniques such as using a lead pencil and smudging on the negative, sometimes with the knowledge of his sitters in order to create the best possible representation of his sitters. In the case of the image below, it stands to reason that the smudging on the negative might have occurred to give the photograph a softer and by extension a more romantic finish. Cast within soft romantic overtones, this photograph is a symbol of the couple's love and intimacy which they wanted to celebrate and memorialise both in a representational and material format for themselves and perhaps also for their wider community.

The next photograph (Fig. 6, 1955) in contrast to the intimate, romantic pose of the couple above in Fig. 5, 1942 shows a man and woman sitting closely on two chairs that have been placed next to each other. They are quite possibly a married couple (as indicated by the ring on her finger), dressed very smartly whilst sitting squarely facing the camera with their legs crossed. In contrast to the photograph (Fig. 5, 1942) discussed earlier, this photograph does not embody romantic imaginings of their status as a couple. Instead it speaks more to a kind of solemnity in which moral and conservative ideals could have been given a high value especially if read against religious references as indicated in the photograph. Though signs of the love that they may have shared for each other might not be overt in the photograph, this is not to say that it was absent either. Given the religious references and conservatism in which this photograph is framed, it can be argued that it might not have been acceptable for this couple (contextualised by personal and societal ideals of morality) to display their emotions and feelings for each other in the public setting of the studio. While the woman is dressed in a matching outfit consisting of a striped

71

blouse and long skirt, her headscarf is very suggestive in the sense that it might be an indication of how she has maintained her own sensibilities of cultural personhood and sensibilities.

Fig. 6, 1955

The man is dressed in what looks similar to that what a religious leader would wear. Further adding to this religious reference are the Bibles both of them seem to be holding in their hands as well as the pin on his lapel which might indicate that he is Zionist. Their faces have a dignified, proud expression as they directly confront the camera. Further adding to this dignified stateliness is the viewpoint of the camera which is level with them creating the position in which one is almost paying homage to them which enhances and implies their social status within society.[175]

---

[175] S. Sprague, 'How the Yoruba see themselves' in C. Pinney and N. Peterson(eds), *Photography's Other Histories* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), 244.

In his study on the visual representation of the Yoruba through photographic practices Stephen Sprague makes a compelling argument of how the camera viewpoint, poses and garments contributes to a sense of status and upward mobility.[176] Similar to certain conventions and techniques employed in West African photographic studio practices especially those that are found in Yoruba photography, this photograph evokes a sense of status, respectability and solemnity. More than symbolising the couple's respect and status, it can be argued that it validated their importance not only to themselves but also to their wider community. Both as a representational and material object, as an aide memoire this photograph also served a specific function as it was more than likely prominently displayed either in their living room or in a place where the couple could make their social status visible to their relatives and friends.

More than just bearing witness to one's presence, the Van Kalker photographs allowed people to shape their own narratives by actively engaging in the making of their photographs. Going to the Van Kalker studio and getting one's photograph taken became part of the domestic rituals of many, especially families in which special events such as weddings, birthdays, achievements and christenings were celebrated and memorialised. During my interview with Irvine Clements, he reiterates this by commenting,

> You start with the wedding photograph and then its babies' photographs, then as the family progressed, the one would maybe come by to have his first I. D. photograph, that special bachelor's photo for the loved one, that special one for the engagement and then the wedding photograph and then the cycle starts again for photographs. Then the next generation comes by. That is the family route ...[177]

---

[176] See S. Sprague, 'How the Yoruba see themselves' in C. Pinney and N. Peterson(eds), *Photography's Other Histories* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), 244.
[177] Interview with Irvine Clements, 5 June 2009.

It is in this sense that photography became a rite of family life especially when framed within the socio-economic and political tensions that put the family as an institution under severe strain. Speaking of the close relationship between photography and family life, Sontag says, "Through photographs, each family constructs a portrait-chronicle of itself-a portable kit of images that bears witness to its connectedness."[178] Taking Sontag's argument further Hirsch asserts, the family photograph has become the medium of familial self-representation in which it perpetuates the myth of an ideal family by maintaining an imaginary cohesion.[179] This in turn places significant strain on the family as the lived reality of family life is often far removed from the romantic and idealised notions of the family. Whether photographs are framed or tacked in albums, they "erase the ruptures of emigration and exile, of death and loss, of divorce, conflict and dislocation."[180] These realities are submerged within these images and may never offer themselves up to be uncovered. Yet, the fascination of family photographs can be located exactly within that which is both revealed and masked as this can potentially open the photograph up to an invigorating process in which notions of the conventional family are questioned and reframed. It is within this framework that the next two photographs will be discussed, which were respectively taken in 1942 and 1955.

This intriguing group photograph (Fig. 7) was taken in 1942 and exemplifies the way in which studio photography was appropriated by the family in which they could document the high points of family life as well as express the cohesion (albeit imaginary) of their family. In this photograph the members of the family are dressed very formally suggesting that they are

---

[178] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 8.
[179] M. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, narrative and postmemory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 7.
[180] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 192.

memorialising a very important event in the cycle of their family's life. Except for the young man who is dressed in a military uniform, the rest of the family is wearing formal clothes with the older and younger women dressed in modest dresses and the older man and young boy dressed in suits. Significantly, the young man's military uniform provides a historical reference to the photograph as it places it within the context of World War II. It is likely that the young man formed part of the Cape Corps, a 'coloured' military unit in Cape Town which was first formed in 1781 under the auspices of the Dutch colonial administration and then later re-formed in 1915 as part of South Africa's efforts in both World War I and II.[181] The older woman seated in the centre provides further evidence of the young man's military involvement as she is holding his hat on her lap.

---

[181] Ancestry24, *Recruitment of the Cape Corps*

Fig. 7, 1942

The way in which the family is positioned in terms of their formal poses with the older woman (presumably the matriarch) flanked by the younger family members and an older man (seemingly the patriarch in the family), is evocative of the solemnity of the occasion. They are grouped very closely together with the family converging around the matriarchal figure thus emphasising their emotional closeness and cohesion as a family whilst at the same time indicating the hierarchical order of the family. There is nothing in the image that overtly points to the family as being wealthy, in fact the haunting almost tired look on the older woman's face as she directly gazes at the camera is reminiscent of someone who has had a very difficult life.

Yet, there is something dignified, respectable and humble in the way in which this family represent themselves in this photograph. Whether it is the expression of pride on the face of the older man or the quiet solemnity emanating from this photograph, there is something that gives this photograph an aura of achievement and glory which is subsequently shared by the family as a whole.

Still exploring family photographs, the next photograph (Fig. 8, 1955) is also revealing in terms of how families appropriated studio photography as a way to chronicle their family life and visualise the interconnectedness of the family. Going a step further, as argued elsewhere I would also like to reiterate that despite the Van Kalker photographs embodying European photographic studio traditions and values, the photographs are encoded with signs that reveal deeply embedded cultural linkages. To illustrate this, I shall refer to the photograph of a smaller group consisting of a man, a woman and two small children who seem to epitomise the ideal of the nuclear family. While the family is dressed in clothes evocative of that time, the fez worn by the man and the headscarf draped loosely around the woman's face gives evidence of their religious affiliation as Muslims and by extension also makes reference to their cultural ties. Moreover, what is interesting in this photograph is the positioning of the male figure in relation to the woman and the children. He seems to be quite tall already in relation to his wife (indicated by the wedding band on her finger) and the fact that he is sitting on a slightly higher chair further contributes to his elevation as he towers protectively over his family.
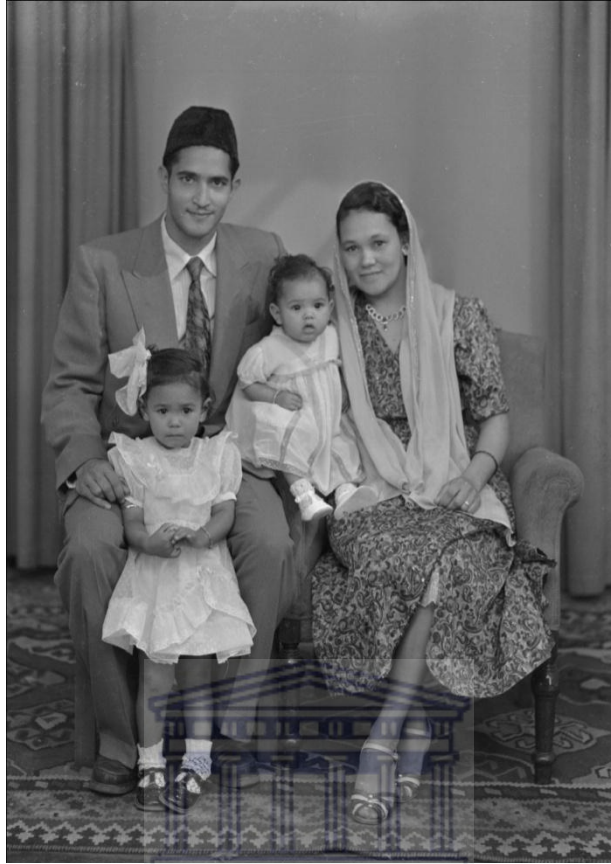
Fig. 8, 1955

Despite this notion of patriarchy being enforced in the photograph, there is a hint of the

subjectivities of the woman attempting to break through the confines enforced by her religion

which is suggested by her contemporary clothes and slight display of legs. Important to note is

that the conventions surrounding studio photography regarding Muslim women in South Africa

were a bit more relaxed in the sense that the photographs were used as a cultural commodity and

freely displayed both in their homes and in the Van Kalker Studio itself compared to other

countries such as coastal Kenya where Islamic conventions did not allow for Muslim women to

be photographed except for the benefit of their spouses.[182] Equally important to note is that

---

[182] See Behrend for discussion on the role of Islam on photographic practices pertaining especially to women. "With the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in recent years, the influence of Islamic laws on everyday life has increased even more and triggered various debates about, for instance, gender and modern media, including photography." Because Islamic women did not allow themselves to be photographed as their images were reserved for their husbands it implied that men who wanted to be photographed with women had to find a substitute in the form of montaging

78

Muslim women in South Africa had greater flexibility in terms of their dress, they could either choose to represent themselves as covered from head-to-toe in a garment framed within Islamic references or in western-style clothes though still retaining some religious references. When measured against this, it becomes evident that this photograph might have provided a means of religious confirmation or memorialising their status as a closely-knit family.

Up until this point, photographs of various individuals and families either assuming the role of wife, husband, son, daughter, relative, lover or soldier have been explored. It is with this in mind that the last two photographs will be examined as these are quite exemplary in terms of how sitters represented themselves by assuming various social roles translated through the images. This photograph (Fig. 9, 1955) depicts a man and a woman dressed in medical uniforms as indicated by her nurse's uniform and the badge of a medical cross on the sleeve of his uniform's jacket. They are facing the camera squarely in a frontal position with both of them smiling slightly, while the man is turned asymmetrically towards the woman. It is quite possible that they are married as suggested by the ring on his left hand which adds an intriguing dimension in unravelling the meanings of this photograph. The act of engaging in this photograph allowed this man and woman a way in which to articulate a sense of respectability and importance partly linked to the integral positions they occupy within society. While this photograph underlines the social roles which the man and woman occupied within society both in their medical professions and possibly as a married couple, I want to take the argument further by suggesting that this photograph gives evidence of the profound yet very ordinary way in which people represented

popular Indian actresses onto their portraits. As the situation was different in South Africa in terms of the more relaxed conventions around portraiture around Muslim women, this development never took place. H. Behrend, 'Love a la Hollywood and Bombay in Kenyan Studio Photography' in *Paideuma,* 44, 1998, 151.

themselves. More than anything, and as informed by the interviews I conducted, people just

wanted a keepsake or a memory as it were of themselves at their best and in their best.

Fig. 9, 1955

The last photograph (Fig. 10, 1955) that will be discussed in this chapter shows a boxer in a

frontal pose decked out in his provincial boxing gear as indicated by the acronym WP (which

presumably stands for 'Western Province') on the shirt he is wearing. Further adding to this

moment of accomplishment and honour is the presence of his achievements in the form of

various trophies and certificates that have been placed on a low table in front of him as to signify

the status he enjoys because of his success as a boxer. This photograph is highly staged and quite

theatrical in the sense of the sitter's stance, costume and props that were used. Though the costume and props significantly contribute to this sense of theatricality, I want to argue that it is the 'action shot' pose assumed by the sitter under the theatrical direction of the photographer which achieves the theatricality entrenched in this photograph.[183]

This photograph serves as an interesting example where the sitter clearly engaged in studio photography as a way to make his achievements as a boxer visible to others, whether family and friends or his community as a whole. Through the act of taking this photograph it validated his importance to himself and to others which in turn inscribed the social prestige of the sitter as a triumphant boxer. In addition to accentuating the social role he occupied in society thereby suggesting a way in which he could symbolically assert himself, the theatrical nature of this photograph alludes to another means in which this assertion of the self could be attained. In this visual sliver of time and space, if only for a brief moment both the sitter and the photographer "freed themselves from Western hegemonies and invented their own repertoire of representations."[184] More than just inscribing the sitter's importance, this moment left an evidential trace of the negotiation between sitter and photographer in order for the sitter to construct a suitable representation of himself.[185]

---

[183] See C. Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social life of Indian Photographers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 179, In his research one of his interviewees, Vijay Vyas, a manager of a studio in Nagda made the following comment to explain the phrase 'action shooting': "Action shooting or an action photo means you've got your hand in a certain way – holding it up to show your watch, one leg is higher than another, these are action photos." Through these techniques mutually agreed upon by the sitter and the photographer, it allows a particular pose to emerge.

[184] H. Behrend, 'Love a la Hollywood and Bombay in Kenyan Studio Photography' in *Paideuma,* 44, 1998, 148.

[185] Within the Van Kalker archive there are numerous examples of photographs that are quite theatrical and highly staged in nature. For example, there is a photograph of a boy balancing a bicycle, a male swimmer imitating breast stroke, a boxer assuming a fighting position, a man sitting cross legged on the carpet, another posing with his dog, a man with an unlit cigarette in his mouth and so the list goes on. Each photograph is very interesting in its own right but what is particularly telling about them is that they exemplify the way in which sitters appropriated the Van Kalker studio to serve their own needs, dreams and desires.
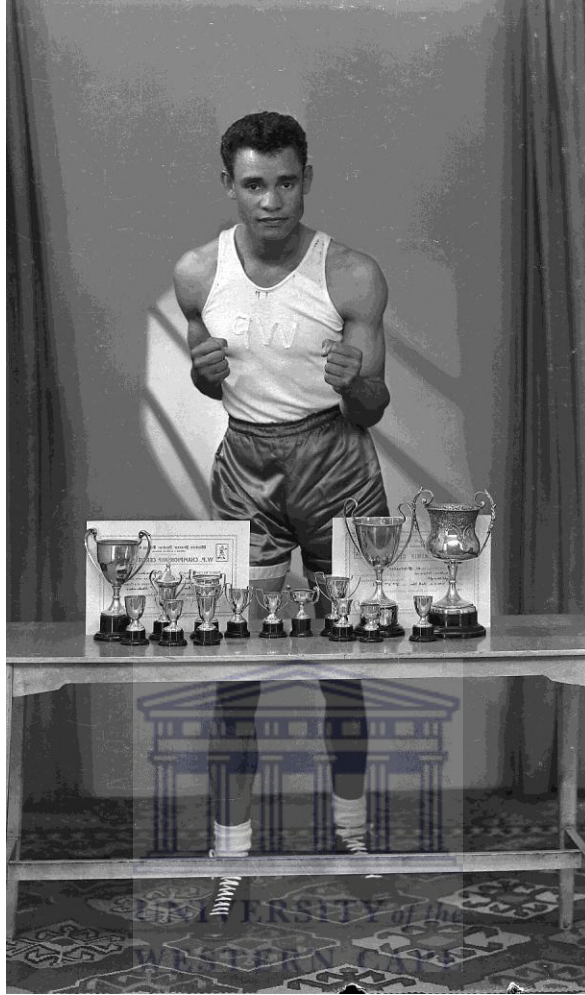
Fig. 10, 1955

Through an exploration of various photographs contextualised by notable literature and enriched

by oral interviews, I have attempted to reveal the complex, ambiguous and mediated nature of

the photographic medium. The Van Kalker photographs exist in the midst of a complex struggle

between the real and beautification, as they are framed by the mediation of the photographer

through use of backdrop, lighting and props. Further adding to the complexity, are the

subjectivities of the sitters in which they were able to articulate an idealised sense of self yet

keep their visual representation grounded in a kind of realism. Cast within the wake left behind

by colonialism and emerging apartheid of South Africa, studio photography allowed people to

take possession of a space in which they were insecure where they could construct alternative

images in opposition to the stereotypical ones framed within racialised imaginings that sought to exoticise, dehumanise and marginalise them.

Furthermore as exemplified in this chapter, individuals and families engaged in studio photography as a means in which they could assert themselves by being instrumental in the shaping of their own self-representations that reflected their subjectivities, dreams and aspirations. More than just a solemnising and immortalising ritual in which they could establish or reinforce their already existing social roles it offered sitters of the Van Kalker studio the opportunity to document their personal and family stories. Moreover, as touched upon photographs were used as both images and material objects (the latter will be developed further in the next chapter) that were pivotal in the construction of personal memory. By analysing these photographs it has become apparent that they are framed within the bourgeois connotations and traditions associated with European photographic studios. Notwithstanding, sitters could appropriate it to their own contexts as illustrated by the photograph of the woman dressed in an African dress (Fig. 3, 1955) and the photograph of the family (Fig. 8, 1955) which is exemplary of the way in which sitters maintained their cultural or religious ties and articulated it within the confines of what was essentially an European imagining of the self. The action photograph of the boxer (Fig. 10, 1955) serves as another example of this appropriation that took place within the studio as a means in which to represent successes, aspirations and sometimes dreams. By drawing heavily on these photographs (and while it might not have been articulated as such by the sitters), I have attempted to show an alternative way in which coloured and black communities could visually represent or construct themselves that challenged racist and stereotypical notions.

More than just challenging a dominant ideology, people engaged in photography at the Van Kalker studio because it was seen as a symbolic inscription of their social status and identity often crucial in the making of an urban self. Just as significantly if not more so especially if measured against the fragility of time, the materiality of the photograph serves as a poignant token and conduit of memory in which it speaks to the collection, display and exchange of bodies, selves and performances through a complex process of narrativising these beautiful photographs. As a vehicle to further highlight the complexity and ambiguity of the photograph as well as to lend the thesis more critical depth it is essential to look at how the Van Kalker photographs were employed as material objects of production, collection and most importantly display within the domestic interior.
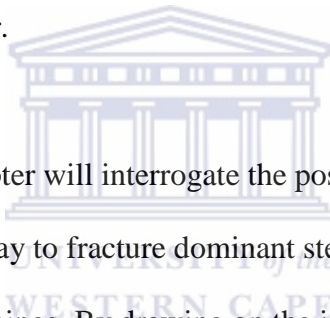
It is in this sense that the next chapter will interrogate the possibilities for a gendered reading of the Van Kalker photographs as a way to fracture dominant stereotypical narratives and produce alternative interpretations and meanings. By drawing on the insights offered by prolific scholars such as Annette Kuhn, Elizabeth Edwards and Corinne Kratz on the relationship between memory, family, materiality and display, it will serve as an interesting point of departure in which to examine photographs in the next chapter. Through an exploration of various photographs of primarily women, featured either with their families or in their individual capacity celebrating momentous occasions, and by juxtaposing them with photographs of the intimate archives of the domestic interior, the chapter will highlight the role of women in shaping the exhibition of personal and family photographs in the domestic interior. To deepen the reading of the photographs, they will depend greatly on the oral testimony and imagery of the intimate

archives of sitters of the Van Kalker studio as these may offer the possibility of unravelling more hidden meanings and complexities.

Chapter Three

Historiographer of the domestic interior

> "Sarah Oldham, my mother's mother, was a keeper of walls. Throughout our childhood, visits to her house were like trips to a gallery or museum – experiences we did not have because of racial segregation. We would stand before the walls of images and learn the importance of the arrangement, why a certain photo was placed here and not there. The walls were fundamentally different from photo albums. Rather than shutting images away, where they could be seen only by request, the walls were a public announcement of the primacy of the image, the joy of image making."[186]

By reading these words I cannot help but feel myself transported to a distant past in which I remember the walls of my grandparents' house – the way in which the family photographs lined the walls and decorated the lace-adorned sideboard thereby transforming the domestic interior into a curatorial space in which photographs were created and displayed. I too, would stand there mesmerised, imagining and narrating the lives of these faces staring back at me, some known and others unknown but all very much central to my idea of family and to the "creation of altars"[187] within the domestic space. Throughout this mini-thesis, a number of diverse photographs have been explored and analysed which chronicled and memorialised significant moments in the lives of individuals and families. They affirm that the family photograph has become a ritual of the domestic circle as it documents and immortalises the climatic moments of family life such as graduations, engagements, weddings, births, christenings, birthdays and holidays. By exploring these photographs and grounding them in oral interviews it became apparent that the photographs provided a way for many people to enter history as a means of

---

[186] b. hooks, 'In our Glory: Photography and Black Life' in D. Willis (ed), *Picturing Us: African American Identity and Photography* (New York: The New Press, 1994), 50.

[187] This phrase is borrowed from bell hooks when she describes how photographs in many black homes were central to the creation of altars as a way to commemorate and pay homage to absent loved ones. In hooks, 'In our Glory', 51.

articulating and remembering the past in a space where the home became the "site of a fully developed interiority", transforming the "domestic enclosure into a gallery of cultural knowledge and possibility."[188]

This serves as an interesting point of departure in which to look more closely at these domestic curatorial interiors in terms of how history is being expressed by the position of the 'family archivist,'[189] which according to Edwards is essentially occupied by the female. As Edwards argues quite convincingly, "The exhibitions of framed collections, on top of televisions, sideboards, pianos or mantelpieces, similarly have shrine-like qualities. They are spatially differentiated in their positioning and in their formats. The selection and care of these living-room shrines are gendered. The 'family archivist', controlling the overlap of history and fantasy, and the domestic spaces dedicated to the articulation of this function, is usually female."[190] It is in this sense that this chapter will attempt to accentuate the role of the family archivist in selecting and shaping the exhibition of personal and family photographs. We shall approach this by looking more closely at various photographs primarily of women featured either with their families or in their individual capacity, and juxtaposing them with photographs of the intimate archives of the domestic interior as it may offer the possibility of unravelling more hidden meanings and complexities.

In her poignant and thought-provoking look at the relationship between her own private history, memory, public history and social theory through visual texts in *Family Secrets*, Annette Kuhn

---

[188] E. Abel, 'Domestic Borders, Cultural Boundaries: Black Feminists re-view the Family' in M. Hirsch (ed), *The Familial Gaze* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999), 131.
[189] E. Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998), 233-234.
[190] Edwards, 'Photographs', 233.

argues that by telling stories about the past, it offers a pivotal moment in the making of our selves. She furthermore argues that people engage in photography to display the imaginary cohesion of the family in a moment where they could constitute themselves as a family and sustain that identity by sharing stories about the past. [191] The Van Kalker photographs appear to be no different. Even a quick cursory glance through the Van Kalker archive would be quite revealing in the sense that it reflects the group cohesion and integration while at the same time perpetuating familial myths and guarding secrets.

I quote Kuhn at length:

> Most of us imagine the family as a place of safety, closeness, intimacy; a place where we can comfortably belong and be accepted just as we are. If we think of family ties as a given, not chosen, they have this much at least in common with our other attachments: nation, race, class, gender. And yet we know in real life matters are rarely quite so simple…Disputing the givenness of social categories like class, race, gender identity and sexual preference confers no exemption from the necessity of negotiating their social meanings in daily life. For example, while fully aware that femininity is a fabrication, as far as the world is concerned- and indeed as far as I, too, am concerned- I am still a woman, and live with the very real consequences of a gender label. So it is with the identity conferred by family. [192]

It is with this in mind that the following photographs of women and their families will be analysed as a way to possibly provide more critical insight into the complexities and ambiguities surrounding them both on the surface level and in its material form. The photograph as a material object of meaning, display and exchange becomes the site of memory and loss, contradiction and affirmation, all taking place within the complex emotionally-negotiated realm of the domestic interior.

---

[191] A. Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 2002), 2, 22; Also see M. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, narrative and postmemory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 7 and P. Bourdieu, *Photography: A middle-brow art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 19.
[192] A. Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 2002), 1.

The first of these photographs that will be explored is one that was taken in 1942 (Fig. 11), depicting a woman and a little girl who is dressed very elegantly. The little girl is wearing a dress, socks and shoes which are completed by a small handbag which she is clutching in her hand. She is sitting on top of a table with her legs crossed as she is staring beyond the frame of the camera. The woman (presumably her mother) is standing at a slight angle toward the camera, whilst supporting the girl slightly as her arm is resting behind the seated girl. The woman looks immaculate in a fine dress, stockings, formal heeled shoes, a handbag and a scarf tied around the front of her hair. She radiates confidence as she half-smilingly if not with an almost amused air looks at something beyond the camera. The simplistic, unimposing backdrop and use of lighting draws the sitters out even more which adds to the stylistic and elegant quality of the photograph.

Fig. 11, 1942

In trying to read this photograph, a number of questions come to mind such as to the motivation and the purpose behind the taking of the photograph. What does it reveal or construct about the subjectivities of the sitter, the collector and the photographer? Was it to represent herself as a proud mother in which she displays her perceived close affinity to her daughter, thereby constructing them as a family in the process? Or was it taken as a means to inscribe their social prestige in which they are represented as dignified and respectable where she could put this photograph on display within her wider community of networks or on a more personal level, as a precious keepsake and gift to send to the father/ husband absent from the image? The possibilities are almost infinite, so in trying to find potential answers to these questions it is crucial to consider a few more photographs.
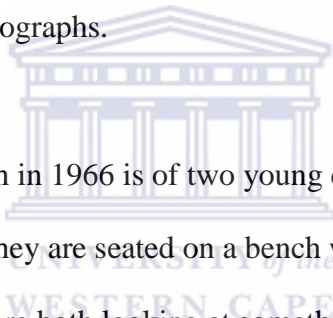
The next photograph (Fig. 12) taken in 1966 is of two young children, a boy and a girl both smartly dressed for the occasion. They are seated on a bench with what appears to be a birthday cake perched between them. They are both looking at something beyond the frame of the camera, seemingly intent on keeping the pose that they were placed in most likely by the photographer and the complicity of the parent/s who may be absent from the photograph but still very much integral in the setting up of this scene.[193] It is in this sense that both Bourdieu and Edwards argue that the mother becomes the family historiographer, as she vigorously produces, collects and displays photographs of the child's development with an almost urgent need to try and suspend those fleeting moments against the ravages of time.[194] During one of my interviews this notion was reiterated by Marian Abrahams, an ex-resident of Walmer Estate who is quite

---

[193] Interviews revealed that toys were often used in the process of taking photographs of children, or the parent usually the mother would draw the child/rens attention in order to have a good photograph of her children.

[194] P. Bourdieu, *Photography: A middle-brow art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 30 and E. Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998), 233.

well-known for her volunteer activities within the District Six Museum. She is also the wife of Stan Abrahams, a former board member of the District Six Museum until his death in 2008. In my interview with her, she strongly emphasised the role of the woman in the production and display of photographs within the domestic space. She says,

> That mother, if she wants to have a family picture taken, do you know that she would save the whole year. Because at the end of the year when Christmas comes, that family picture is going to be taken with her and her children. And Mr. van Kalker was only cash. That was the plan. They, not the father. He's never interested in a photograph. The mother, she wants the picture. That's why you will see lots of mothers with their children. Do you find mother and father? Now and then you would come across one. But most of them, it's the mother with her children.[195]

This can be attributed to the family function conferred on the camera by the family group both as a means of showing parental interest in the child and expressing their togetherness as a family. Bourdieu adds, "The mother who has her children photographed can only meet with approval,"[196] because this will indicate her level of interest in the children. Through the act of photographing her children she foresees her future loss as the children will grow up and move on. It is in this sense then that she addresses that future loss by making sure that she and they have material souvenirs from their childhood.

---

[195] Interview with Marian Abrahams, 14 March 2009.
[196] P. Bourdieu, *Photography: A middle-brow art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 21.

Fig. 12, 1966

Was this perhaps one of the motivations behind the making of this photograph? Keeping within a similar vein, the next photograph (Fig. 13) taken in 1955 also offers a decidedly striking example of the primacy of the woman in the cyclical representations of the high points of family life. This photograph is very significant as it strongly evokes the notion of matriarchy with the two women sitting very dignified and respectable next to each other while one is holding a baby on her lap and a little girl is positioned between the two women. Both the women and little girl are dressed very formally and it is especially the women who project an air of silent strength and respectability articulated by the poses that they assumed. I can only speculate about their relation to each other. Could they have been sisters posing with their children? And even more significantly, how does one account for the absence of the male presence in the photograph?

As discussed elsewhere in the chapter, women essentially took it upon themselves to visually record and document the development of their families, which sometimes implied the exclusion or absence of the male figure within the photograph.[197]

While this points to a much more nuanced and varied relationship between photography and femininity in the sense that "photographs are [such] important ways of ordering domesticity and integration"[198], I want to argue that the exclusion or absence of the male figure within the image brings greater complexity and significance to the family photograph below. This complexity is deepened especially if read against historical referents such as the implementation of apartheid by the Afrikaner Nationalist government in 1948 which was accompanied by the displacement, forced removal, influx control and economic disempowerment of people classified as non-white in South Africa. These apartheid laws left indelible scars that still reverberate even today as it implied emotional and deep-seated economic, social and cultural implications for those affected by apartheid. Often these implications had far-reaching effects in terms of shifting the role of the woman as the nurturer of the family to the *de facto* head of the household in terms of making decisions whether financial or other family choices.

For insight into families such as these it might be useful to briefly explore Elaine Salo's research focusing on the role of women in Manenberg as they come to terms with the difficulties of their socio-economic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and the proliferation of gangs which put marital and familial relations under pressure. In the making of their personhood as 'mothers', Salo argues that women constantly have to negotiate the virtues of respectability which is

---

[197] Interview with Marian Abrahams, 14 March 2009.
[198] G. Rose, 'Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (March 2003), 8.

integrally tied to the construction of the 'mother' identity.[199] She furthermore argues that the apartheid economy, racial legislation and urban planning provided the economic and cultural capital in the local sphere which unintentionally placed adult women in powerful positions as they enjoyed greater access to welfare, housing and labour.[200]

It should be noted that although Salo's dissertation offers key insights into households in which the female is the head, it is also limiting in the sense that it is primarily focused on the present day experiences of coloured women in Manenberg which were shaped as a partial consequence of apartheid. Even though there may be similarities between coloured and black women's experiences of apartheid, it is also marked by stark contrasts through different traumatic experiences enacted by the Population Registration (1950), Mixed Marriages (1950) and Group Areas Acts (1950), amongst others. The period preceding the year during which this photograph was taken was marked by increasing black urbanisation and racial integration, partly because of the booming war economy between 1939 and 1945. This occurred despite the restrictive racial legislation that was already in place as early as 1913 with the Land Act which was followed by the 1923 Natives Urban Areas Act. To stem this influx and migration of black people, legislation was even more tightened up during the 1950s and extended to black women in the form of carrying pass books. This was one of the periods that saw the stringent bureaucratic structures of the state clamp down on black urbanisation and constrain social and economic opportunities by banishing people to impoverished reserve areas.

---

[199] See E. Salo, 'Respectable Mothers, Tough Men, Good Daughters: Making persons in Manenberg township, South Africa', Phd. Dissertation, (Emory University: Atlanta, 2004).
[200] Salo, 'Respectable Mothers', 152.

This often meant that families were scattered because of the spatial dislocation and fragmentation brought about by these socio-economic conditions as women became *de facto* household heads in the absence of the male figure who had possibly been subjected to a system of influx control. It against this background of political and economic uncertainty that this photograph (Fig. 13, 1955) was taken. Flowing from the argument made earlier by Salo and contextualised by the detrimental socio-economic effects wrought by apartheid, I would argue that the notion of respectability intrinsically tied to the making of persons is particularly significant as it also resonates throughout the Van Kalker photographs that have been selected in the thesis. With the male presence missing, the photograph is even more captivating as it does not conform to the conventions of the typical nuclear family which might be attributed to the social and political effects of apartheid that often left women as the head of the household.

While the photograph is imbued with feminine and class specificity as noted from the poses and the simplicity of their attire, the photograph in itself is powerful as it epitomises and celebrates the women as the pillar of the domestic circle, as the matriarchs of the family as it were. With the focus on the strength and pride of the women, the photograph is endowed with a notion of matriarchy as it challenges traditional notions of family. On a deeper level, this photograph offers a silent resistance and testimony to the resilience of women especially if measured against the emotional and financial hardship that they sometimes had to endure.

Fig. 13, 1955

The above photographs strongly allude to the primacy of women in the production of photographs especially when measured against the large amount of Van Kalker negatives of children, either on their own or posed with their maternal figures pertinently speaking to various ritualised moments within the cycle of family life. In addition to these negatives featuring women as caring and nurturing homemakers or matriarchs, women also acted out other roles at different times in their life such as the glamour starlet bedecked in jewellery and fur, the siren-like beauty in a two-piece bathing suit, the bride on her wedding day or the woman espousing cultural or religious beliefs through use of dress. It is against this background that the following photographs depicting women in roles other than being the maternal figure will be interrogated as a means to understand the way in which women potentially contribute to the making of aesthetics within the domestic interior.

The photograph (Fig. 14, 1955) below is very intriguing both on the surface level in terms of its contents and how it was employed and potentially circulated as a material object both within the curatorial space of the domestic parameters and the wider network of familial relations as an affirmation of beauty, elegance, dignity, prestige, respectability and power. In this photograph, the woman chose to represent a certain aspect of herself which speaks to her own subjectivities and the cultural associations she attaches to her sense of self. This is evident from the African dress she is wearing which is further enhanced by various strings of beads around her neck and left arm and a scarf around her head. She is standing against a fairly neutral background, centred between two drawn curtains with backlighting illuminating her face. Interestingly enough, and as mentioned elsewhere in the thesis the way in which Van Kalker used backlighting is quite remarkable as his play of light created the illusion of natural light filtering in through a window with diagonal lines that would cast its light and shadow over the sitter and the background just as early morning or late afternoon sunlight would stream into a private space such as a lounge or a bedroom.
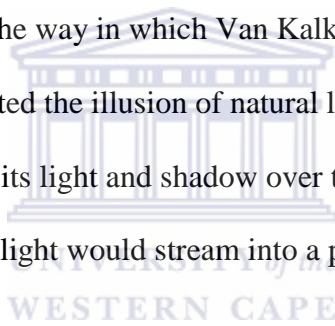
Fig.14, 1955

Throughout the thesis it has become apparent that Van Kalker's use of props was minimal so it is

not surprising that in this photograph he only used a table on which a vase with dried flowers

was placed. However inconsequential these props may seem in this particular photograph it

skilfully draws attention to the embroidered cloth with beadwork that is draped over the table.

The representation of this embroidered cloth in the photograph alongside its possible creator is

equally significant in terms of how people chose to represent themselves or at least a part of

themselves which in this case is a sitter who has established her own cultural associations

through dress and prop. The use of this beautiful cloth is paramount in the photograph as it not

only possibly locates the sitter within a specific culture but also speaks to her sense of pride and ownership in creating this object as she squarely confronts the camera with a half- yet recognisably proud smile. More than this, this photograph probably circulated within the intimate environment of the familial as an object of display or exchange in which meaning is continuously created, positioning the woman as the epitome of beauty and elegance thereby locating the viewer "within the owners' personal history of courtship, ceremony, and sartorial practice."[201]

Though very much framed within European aesthetics of the photographic studio, this photograph is very powerful as it speaks to questions of representations, subjectivities, cultural identities leaving ethereal traces of itself behind as it voyages through the personal and the public at various points. It is my contention that this photograph is very suggestive of the culture of display inscribed into all images and objects and thus was made for the purpose of display where the sitter in this photograph could articulate her social status and express her cultural identity. Having no information about this sitter, the question of whether she was in charge of the curatorial decisions in her domestic interior remains unanswered. Slightly different from the photograph above, the next photograph (Fig. 15, 1956) that will be discussed is a close-up view of a woman in profile. This is a very interesting photograph as it evokes notions of femininity, beauty and joy.

---

[201] H. Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity: Fashioning selves in Dakarois popular photography' in P. Landau and Deborah Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 184.

Fig.15, 1956

In this photograph (Fig. 15, 1956) the woman is styled in a fashionable, short-sleeved floral dress which is accentuated with an elegant necklace. Delicately smiling, she does not squarely confront the camera. Instead she is turned asymmetrically to one side looking out of the frame reminiscent of nineteenth- and twentieth century British studio photography which makes her seem aloof yet alluring at the same time. With the incandescent lighting surrounding her face, subtle smile and her elegant attire it gives the impression of sophistication, beauty, femininity, wealth and glamour reminiscent of Hollywood movie star glamour.[202] Again, the motivations behind taking this photograph could be manifold but by engaging in the production and subsequent display of this photograph the sitter made her social status visible by portraying herself as an elegant, charming and fashionable woman. Mustafa suggests, "Like fashion,

---

[202] For a discussion on how lighting and more specifically backlighting was used in close-ups to create a gendered stylistic code which made women appear glamorous by softening the images through the use of various techniques such as light diffusion, lens diffusion and direction of light look at P. Keating,'From the Portrait to the Close-up: Gender and Technology in Still Photography and Hollywood Cinematography' in *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Spring, 2006), 90-108.

photography has been amenable to women's strategies of self-representation, diversification of wealth forms, and status advancement."[203]

In the photograph the woman is enveloped in a soft, luminous light that creates a halo of light around her head which almost gives her an ethereal quality. Put another way, the breath-like halo that surrounds the sitter imbues the photograph with something magical- something which Walter Benjamin have defined as the aura of an image (though he was referring to painted portraits and early photographic portraits).[204] However, in discussions around aura and photography, the latter is commonly implicated in the destruction of aura. In his essay on 'The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility', Benjamin charges photography with the decline of the aura. He asserts, "That which withers in the age of the technological reproducibility is the aura of the work of art."[205] While Benjamin laments the loss of the aura through the mechanical reproducibility of photography, there are also those that challenge his conception of the aura. In her study on Benjamin's writings on photography, Carolin Duttlinger makes an insightful contribution to this debate as she complicates the notion of the aura by arguing that aura and photography are in fact engaged in a complex process of interaction. Through a careful analysis of Benjamin's writings on photography, Duttlinger reveals

---

[203] H. Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity: Fashioning selves in Dakarois popular photography' in P. Landau and D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 178.

[204] He regrets the loss of the aura so much that he says, "The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face." In W. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in H. Arendt (ed), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 5. Also see Benjamin's earlier essay, 'Little History of Photography' in which he discusses how the aura was at first associated with early photography partly because of the technology and techniques employed. With technological advances, this all changed as the aura that were now absent from the photographic image had to be simulated through retouching and lighting. In W. Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography' in M. Jennings, H. Eiland, and G. Smith (eds), *Selected Writings* Volume 2, 1927-1934, Translated by Rodney Livingstone and others, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 507-530.

[205] W. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in H. Arendt (ed), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 3.

Benjamin's ambivalence towards the concept of the aura through his continuous emotional engagement with the childhood portrait of Franz Kafka throughout his writings. More than this, Duttlinger's analysis of Benjamin's writings allows for an alternative concept of aura founded on "a process of reception and imaginary encounter which arises less as a result of than as a reaction against the reifying photographic technique."[206] Perhaps the photograph has lost some of its aura because of technological advances in the photographic field, but at the same time "photography's extraordinary power of mimicry imbues all things photographed with the aura of the original."[207] Echoing Duttlinger in her reading of Benjamin's writings on photography, I would argue that there is an aura emanating from the photograph above as it engages me on a deeply, profound and emotional level from which "neither viewer nor image emerge unchanged."[208]

As photography is considered a form of praise, people especially women had their photographs taken as a means to signify propriety, elegance, beauty, femininity, wealth and civility within society. In terms of the Van Kalker photographs there is another dimension though, which speaks to the dreams and aspirations of the sitters of how they wished to be seen by themselves and among their larger community. While the historical trajectory of this photograph as material object might be elusive, and irrespective of the purpose/s for which it was made, there is one thing that is certain. To put it quite simply, "All pictures, before being portraits or depictions, are and must be perceived to be displays in this sense. For, as pictures, they are visible, meant to be

---

[206] C. Duttlinger, 'Imaginary Encounters: Walter Benjamin and the Aura of Photography' in *Poetics Today*, 29: 1 (Spring 2008), 96.
[207] M. Frizot, 'States of Things: Image and Aura' in M. Frizot (ed), *A New History of Photography* (Köln: Könemann, 1998), 385.
[208] Duttlinger, 'Imaginary Encounters', 99.

visible, meant for us to see that they are so meant."[209] So as these elegant and adorned bodies found their way into frames on the walls of family homes and into the pages of albums the display of these photographs allude to their circulation and consumption in the cycle of everyday life. In pushing this argument further, it seems fitting to interrogate the production, collection and display of the wedding photograph. It is in this sense that this wedding photograph (Fig. 16) which was taken in 1978 will be examined.

Fig.16, 1978

In the cycle of ritualised moments, the wedding serves as one of the pinnacles in social relations thus it is only fair to assume that few photographs are as climatic and carry such social importance as the photograph documenting and memorialising the *fairytale* wedding complete with elaborate wedding gowns, bridesmaids, groomsmen and other wedding regalia. It is in this

---

[209] P. Maynard, 'Portraits as Displays' in *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 135, No. 1, Proceedings of the Thirty-seventh Oberlin Colloquium in Philosophy: Aesthetics (August 2007), 115.

sense that Mustafa argues, "In the sartorial ecumene, a woman is allowed a day of unchallenged elegance and fame at her wedding…"[210] While the wedding photograph serves as an intimate yet very public reminder of the union of two individuals, it also functions as "an image of a performance and an object with its own trajectory"[211] as it makes its way through structures of collection, display and exchange. The photograph embodies a certain kind of solemnity conveyed by the quite serious and poised facial expressions and formal poses of the wedding party as it speaks to the sanctity of the wedding ritual. Moreover, people knew that they were lending themselves to the social game of posing in which they used 'frontality as a means of effecting their own objectification'[212] and as revealed through the interviews that were conducted people wanted to have a good photograph commemorating a specific event so they did not mind assuming a rigid pose and facial expression.[213] In contrast to the other photographs that have been discussed so far, this photograph (Fig. 16, 1978) features quite a big group consisting of a bride, a bridegroom, bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girls and a page boy converging around the bridal couple. They are positioned against a neutral backdrop of basic curtains and flooring which focuses the attention on the wedding party even more.

Drawing once again on the research of Mustafa in which she examines how Dakarois women visually represented their social selves through photography, in a similar vein I would argue that "marriage remains a formative institution in gender and familial relations and is relevant to

---

[210] H. Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity: Fashioning selves in Dakarois popular photography' in P. Landau and D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 180.
[211] Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity', 179.
[212] P. Bourdieu, *Photography: A middle-brow art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 83.
[213] Biddie Rassool explains, "And they had this old-fashioned chair and he would place you and cross your legs for you. He would put your feet in a certain position and your head had to be in a certain position. And even the children were placed. Hold, keep still, don't move. And then that was the portrait type of thing." Interview with Biddie Rassool and Joan Jardine, 1 February 2008.

issues of display…"[214] It is along these lines then that I would argue that the wedding photograph in particular offered a heightened means in which women could articulate notions of elegance, beauty, grace, wealth and respectability. More than just documenting one of the most important days in the cyclic representation of family life, this wedding photograph in particular serves as a powerful narrative (especially if contextualised by the widespread political instability of the 1970s) by exemplifying the way in which people constructed and affirmed themselves by engaging in everyday activities such as celebrating weddings. However, within the culture of display, "men are peripheral to women's circuits of collection, gift-giving and socialising, which now incorporate photos"[215], a common thread that was revealed during my interviews with some female respondents when asked about who is in charge of the preservation or display of the wedding photographs. During my interviews with some female respondents it was revealed that they were essentially in charge of the production and display of their wedding photographs. Though it is possible that men also produce, collect and display photographs, I want to suggest that the display of the wedding photograph is essentially inculcated into the sphere of women both serving as a lived reminder of happy times and exemplifying their beauty, elegance and power which is extended through the photograph.

Apart from being engaged in the production and collection of the family archive as suggested by my archival research and oral interviews, there is still the question as to who is the keeper of the walls. Within the private sphere of the domestic interior which was conventionally occupied by the female, who was curating the exhibition of family photographs? And is this even the most important question here? Instead of asking "Who are the keepers of the walls?", perhaps the key

---

[214] H. Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity: Fashioning selves in Dakarois popular photography' in P. Landau and D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 179.
[215] Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity', 179.

concern should be around the effects of the photographs within the domestic interior in relation to their sensorial engagement with people. As objects of a material culture, photographs have power and agency as they intersect the private and the public leaving behind a biographical trajectory of their existence. They wield power as they structure both memory and loss, they reflect presence/absence, integration/disintegration, they wound and sometimes add to silences through revealing as much as they conceal. Cast within this light, and in trying to understand the ways in which Van Kalker photographs are/were used within the domestic interior, it has led me on a journey into the intimate surrounds of the family home in which "it [the home] becomes a rich source for stories about the past and a site for discovery and self-reflection – a 'dream space' where memories and fragments of information sometimes long forgotten, slip back into mind."[216]

The Domestic Interior

> "One particularly fruitful feature of domestic interiors is the demarcation of space: the walls that separate inside from outside, one space from another."[217]

Entirely separated from the outside world, ideologically the home offers a brief sanctuary and in a sense an escape from the evils of the external landscape in which its occupants have the chance for reflection, rest and spiritual regeneration. Conventionally regarded as the domain of women in which the domestic interior became an extension of the feminine psyche, Catherine Karusseit offers a different view in her brief study of Victorian domestic interiors as she argues that initially the furnishing and decoration of the home would have been shared between the man and

---

[216] E. Maurice, 'Lives of Colour: Images from Cape Photo-Albums' in K. Grundlingh (ed) *Lines of Sight: Perspectives on South African Photography,* South African National Gallery, Cape Town, 17 July – 31 October 1999 (2001), 67.
[217] J. Watkins, *Imaging Transcendence: Domestic Interiors and the Sacred*, 1.

106

the woman.[218] It was only thereafter that the woman will maintain the aesthetic ideal of the domestic interior by filling it with furniture, and embellishing it with decoration and ornaments. Inextricably linked to the aesthetic ideal within domesticity is the notion of respectability through which a family expressed their "outward appearances of gentility"[219] in the deployment of material objects. Taking this argument further and departing from Karusseit's view, feminist geographer Gillian Rose has argued that the domestic space is essentially produced by the processes of capitalism and patriarchy through which women are expected to work, cook and clean without wages or privacy.[220]

According to Rose there has been a tendency among feminist geographers to regard the domestic space as limiting and oppressive in terms of confining women. However in her research around the relationship between family photographs and domestic space she argues that as material objects, photographs are crucial in the making and the extension of a domestic space into other public spheres of political, economic and cultural relations.[221] In turn, this will construct and maintain familial relations. She suggests in as much as photographs reflect the togetherness of a family by erasing tension and conflict, they also articulate absence, emptiness and loss either through spatial or temporal distance.[222] It is this absence and feeling of loss that often impel the display of photographs within the domestic interior in which the photograph acts as a substitute in the absence of a loved one.

---

[218] Paraphrasing Tosh, Karusseit argues quite convincingly, "despite the unmistakable feminine quality of the rituals of home, the labeling of home as 'the woman's sphere' obscured the true relationship between home and gender… [yet] domesticity was in all respects as much the creation of men as of women." See Karusseit for futher discussion in C. Karusseit, "Victorian domestic interiors as subliminal space" in *SAJAH*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2007), 171.

[219] C. Karusseit, "Victorian domestic interiors as subliminal space" in *SAJAH*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2007), 171.

[220] G. Rose, 'Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (March 2003), 5

[221] G. Rose, 'Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (March 2003), 5.

[222] Rose, 'Family Photographs', 7.

In complicating her argument further, and perhaps resonating with certain aspects of my own research, Rose furthermore argues that the domestic space should be considered as the result of relations that extend beyond the physical boundaries of the home because of the spatial dispersion of families either through distance or loss. This closeness/distance, presence/absence nexus is reiterated by the physical gaps between different framed photographs and the ease with which photographs can be regrouped, subtracted or added to especially in a free-standing arrangement.[223] According to Rose, it is in this sense that the domestic is stretched beyond the home as photographs bring those that are far away closer together. This is a poignant point to which I shall return when discussing the function of photographs as part of a display simultaneously entangled with presence and absence.

Briefly departing from Rose, and as a way to gain further insight into the culture of display within the domestic interior it will be useful to examine the research of Corinne Kratz in which she explores the way in which Okiek in Kenya displays their photographs. In her research Kratz argues that despite its setting (whether urban or rural) the sitting room is used for display as this is the space in which visitors are welcomed, and the space which is set aside for special occasions.[224] Along similar lines as Rose, Kratz goes on to argue that "the connection between photographs, sitting rooms, identity and status is widespread…"[225] even in homes with a diminutive collection of photographs on the wall. Echoing Cieraad and Parkin, Kratz argues that "when contexts of use and display include domestic space, as they often do, the very locations

---

[223] Rose, 'Family Photographs', 12.
[224] C. Kratz, 'Ceremonies, Sitting Rooms and Albums: How Okiek displayed photographs in the 1990s' in R. Vokes (ed), *Photography in Africa: Ethnographic Perspectives* (James Currey, forthcoming), 13.
[225] Kratz, 'Ceremonies', 12.

may also become meaningful through narration and emotionalisation, contributing to photographic associations and significance."[226]

Visiting the enclosed, intimate spaces of individuals and families where photographs are quite often used as a way to construct a story in the present foregrounds the issue that the selection and arrangement of the photograph are as important as the photograph. On a deeper level the display of photographs also alludes to the visual seam (despite geographical dis/location) that connects people, especially those that had their photographs taken at the Van Kalker studio. It was in this sense that I found myself seated opposite Marian Abrahams in the hope that she could provide more insight regarding some rather challenging questions. Upon entering the domestic interior of Marian Abrahams, it made me realise that I was entering a space in which the visual is highly significant and privileged as photographs are laboriously displayed and meticulously preserved in frames.

---
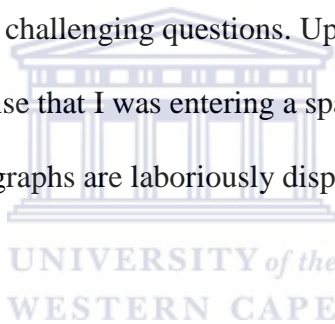
[226] Cieraad and Parkin, quoted by Kratz, 'Ceremonies', 3.

Fig.17, Entrance hall of Marian Abrahams, 2011

Immediately after entering, one encounters a wall in the entrance hall lined with framed black

and white photographs juxtaposed with more recent colour photographs of family members in

pairs or small groups. These were placed mostly in a linear, chronological order both paying

homage to absent loved ones and depicting the rituals of family life such as her wedding day and

various other celebratory moments. The photographs of her wedding day were taken at the Van

Kalker studio as shown in the close-up (Fig. 18) below and from their position and relation to the

other photographs on the wall, they seem to be enjoying a substantial amount of privilege and

status which might be as the result of the symbolic importance attached to a wedding day. This

wall made me think of a pictorial gallery, which traversed a visual genealogy of the family

crucial in constructing their sense of self and identity as a family in which "the reading of old

marriage photographs often takes the form of a course in genealogical science, in which the

mother, a specialist in the subject, teaches the child about the connections which bind him or her to each of the people shown."[227]

In addition to narrating a family story that spans generations, recognising, reading and feeling what these photographs say without words, this wall evokes memory, nostalgia and remembrance because each photograph has been 'touched with pathos just by virtue of being photographed'.[228] This became very pronounced during my interview with Marian Abrahams as she remembered with nostalgic fondness how her late husband was in charge of the production, selection and display of photographs and paintings in their house. Though she concedes that in the District[229] it was mostly women who were in control of the visual representation of the family, she emphasises that a compromise was necessary in her house because of her husband's passion for photography and the visual arts in which he both produced and curated his work and other selected works in their shared domestic interior. She remembers with amusement, that if she allowed him to take over all the walls he would have done exactly that and there would be no open space left visible on the walls.

---

[227] P. Bourdieu, *Photography: A middle-brow art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 23; Also see b. hooks, 'In our Glory: Photography and Black Life' in D. Willis, (ed), *Picturing Us: African American Identity and Photography* (New York: The New Press, 1994), 52.

[228] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 15.

[229] Here she is referring to the sixth municipal district of Cape Town (formally named District Six in 1867) a vibrant area which was originally established as a diverse and contemporary community of freed slaves, tradesmen, domestic servants, immigrants, labourers and prostitutes. The community thrived despite the impoverished conditions that some people were subjected to but that all changed with the first forced removals in 1901, with black people being the first to be resettled. For a more in-depth discussion regarding the history of District Six it is useful to look at F. Swanson. & J. Harries, '"Ja! So was District Six! But it was a beautiful place': *Oral Histories, Memory and Identity"* in S. Field (ed), *Lost Communities, Living Memories: Remembering Forced removals in Cape Town* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2001), 62-80; Also see V. Bickford-Smith, 'The Origins and Early History of District Six to 1910' in S. Jeppie & C. Soudien (eds), *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present* (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990), 35-43.

Fig. 18, Close-up of Van Kalker photographs on wall in the entrance hall, 2011

After listening to her story, I started to sense his curatorial hand almost everywhere because immediately after exiting the entrance hall I stepped into the lounge (Fig. 19) which offered a similar kind of visual pleasure in line with the entrance hall in the way that photographs of all sizes are interspersed with paintings on the walls. The lounge boasts a wide selection of studio photographs, snapshots, painted portraits and paintings that have either been hung on walls or placed on side tables as demonstrated below. In a metaphorical sense, the material objects on the walls and side tables of the lounge have become part of a collage composed of very diverse objects that have been grouped together. Marian Abrahams beautifully articulates,

> It's always nice to have an interesting wall filled with pictures of generations and generations. And then the wall becomes a family story. It will make it into a beautiful collage and as children are born into the family, their photographs go up and then you make a story of their age and how they grow up. It could be so

112

beautiful but people are not using their walls. They refuse to put up a picture, a painting, a photograph. It is all hidden and it has all gone yellow into a book instead of showing it off …[230]

Now if one looks at the origin of the word *collage,* it literally means to glue.[231] A closer reading of the word would reveal that in conventional terms a collage is composed of diverse materials such as cut-outs from text, paintings and other photographic images which have been pasted together in order to form a new image. And in a study of the photo collages by two Ugandan photographers, Heike Behrend provides exactly that - a detailed visual explanation of the production of photo collages. She argues that "the process of producing a collage includes fragmentation, cutting into pieces, an aggressive, destructive act that by its very nature protests against an apparently harmonious and continuous world."[232] However, in going beyond Behrend's argument in which a collage becomes an act of fragmentation, I would argue that within this particular domestic interior (and the domestic interior of Freda Hendricks which will be explored later) it also offers the possibility of social cohesion.

---

[230] Interview with Marian Abrahams, 4 February 2011.
[231] According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary the definition of **collage** is,
1.a) an artistic composition made of various materials (as paper, cloth, or wood) glued on a surface
   b) a creative work that resembles such a composition in incorporating various materials or elements
2. the art of making collages
3. hodgepodge <a *collage* of ideas>
4. a work (as a film) having disparate scenes in rapid succession without transitions
[232] H. Behrend, 'Fragmented visions: Photo collages by two Ugandan photographers', *Visual Anthropology*, 14: 3, 302.

Fig.19, Lounge of Marian Abrahams, 2011

According to Marian Abrahams a photograph is like a conversation piece that should not be hidden away as it weaves a story of family, life and the pain of inevitable loss.[233] And if one extends her argument, it can be argued that the way in which the photographs are arranged in relation to each other allows for an engagement with the body as invisible threads tie objects and bodies together in a delicate web. Even more important is that the arrangement allows for a "narrative expressive of the social relationships underwritten by the family"[234], as ethereal and transient as that glue may seem.

In returning to the discussion on the arrangement of photographs in the lounge, on the little round table there is a collection of smaller framed photographs, two black and white photographs from the Van Kalker studio depicting Marian Abrahams and her husband individually. This is

---

[233] Interview with Marian Abrahams, 4 February 201.1
[234] E. Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998), 234.

114

augmented by other snapshots of them in later years in colour as well as the portrait of an unknown artist's impression of her late mother. Interestingly enough are the inclusion of two small albums in this visual history of the family alongside these framed images. What kind of responses would these portable archives elicit in relation to tactile bodily experiences given that materiality is tied to social ways of viewing? Offering a brief explanation Edwards argues that if the photo-object engages with the body, it also retemporalises and respatialises the photograph.[235] This means that in the physical act of engaging with the album, the viewer is in control of establishing a relationship with those images that speak to their own sensibilities and skipping over those that causes unease as the object is invested with "narrative and memory, interwoven with private fantasy, fragmented readings and public history."[236]

Shifting from the albums, my attention then focused on the photograph hanging above the table which was taken by a photographer named Anne Fischer who also seemed to be quite popular among the photographic studio consumers of Cape Town. Though most of my interviewees preferred Van Kalker, many of them described Anne Fischer as an exceptionally good photographer in terms of the way she employed light and contrasts to enhance her sitters. One of the interviewees even hinted that her photographs were artistic at best. Interestingly, this photograph of Marian Abrahams as a young married woman was only put up recently after spending years almost hidden in a corner in the lounge. The addition of this photograph to the exhibition of family photographs within her home is very significant as it alludes to her greater involvement in the display of material objects in the absence of her late husband.

---

[235] E. Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998), 230.
[236] Holland and Spence paraphrased in Edwards, 'Photographs', 230.

In interrogating the possible gendered display of material objects in the secluded realm of the home further, it is imperative to focus on another example of a domestic interior. This particular domestic setting is just as interesting as the former in the way it "involves the interweaving of images, commodities, bodies, stories, and performances in practices around photographs."[237]

Fig.20, Dining room of Freda Hendricks, 2011

Forming part of a wider exhibition of material objects encapsulated in and on the sideboard, the two framed Van Kalker photographs take on an almost shrine-like quality in the way in which it is enjoying centre stage amidst the other artefacts, souvenirs and knick knacks all seemingly arranged in a complex cacophony of colour, size and texture. As Edwards puts it, "Such spaces, as shrines, become public statements of group achievement and assurance; private statements of

---

[237] H. Mustafa, 'Portraits of modernity: Fashioning selves in Dakarois popular photography' in P. Landau and D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 179.

devotion, past and present…"[238] In relation to the other material objects in and on the sideboard, it seems that the photographs are the most valued and cherished - a point which was reiterated during my interview with Freda Hendricks. This can partly be explained by the mnemonic capability of photographs as they offer "narratives of remembrance, evocative imitations, and identifications bridging time and place."[239] However, in understanding the power and agency of photographs as material objects that are part of a display within the domestic interior, we need to understand the "different modes through which relations between people and things are shaped and transmitted in particular settings."[240]

In her interesting study of Christian imagery in Ghana, Birgit Meyer argues that material objects are situated in specific regimes which organise practices of looking and it is in this sense that photographs assume a sensuous presence for the gaze of their beholders.[241] Meyer argues that religions "authorise particular traditions of looking, upon which the sensorial engagement between people and pictures is grounded, and through which pictures may assume a particular sensuous presence and mediate what remains invisible to the eye."[242] Though far removed from being embedded in a religious regime of looking, Meyer's analysis of Christian imagery is very suggestive in terms of the effects of the photographs discussed above especially those that are part of a free-standing arrangement within domestic interiors. Just like the imagery discussed by Meyer, the Van Kalker photographs featured in the image above are also subjected to a particular regime of looking, a particular way of looking which Marianne Hirsch in her study of the

---

[238] Edwards paraphrasing Berman in E. Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998), 234.
[239] C. Kratz, *The Ones that Are Wanted: Communication and the Politics of Representation in a Photographic Exhibition* (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 2002), 154.
[240] B. Meyer, "'There is a Spirit in that Image": Mass Produced Jesus Pictures and Protestant Pentacostal Animation in Ghana' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2010, 52 (1), 104.
[241] Meyer, 'Spirit in that Image', 106.
[242] Meyer, 'Spirit in that Image', 106.

relation between photography and family memory has termed the 'familial look'.[243] According to

Hirsch is the familial look "a mutual look of a subject looking at an object who is a subject

looking (back) at an object."[244] And it is in this moment of employing the familial look that they

become treasured, valued and revered as they have the capacity of inducing mnemonic

experiences set against an intricate web of complex emotions. Following from the arguments

made by Meyer, Edwards and Rose, I would argue these photographs form an integral part in the

domestic spaces that become shrines in a way where it articulates both the presence and absence

of family members. Before I elaborate on this point further, it is noteworthy to sketch a brief

trajectory of these Van Kalker photographs featured in the image (Fig. 20) above in terms of

their circulation within the culture of display and to a certain extent as an object of exchange.

Unintentional as I attempted to be in my selection of domestic interiors, after my interview with

Freda Hendricks about her role as family archivist and curator it suddenly dawned on me that

these two women share a few remarkable similarities as both of have them have had to deal with

the unavoidable reality of death and the subsequent pain and lingering feeling of loss

accompanying this experience. Haunted by absence, distance and loss, the display of

photographs in these domestic spaces (whether grouped together on a wall or clustered into a

free-standing arrangement) became evocative of the fragility and disintegration of family life. In

returning to my earlier point regarding the trajectory of the Van Kalker photographs on top of the

sideboard, Freda Hendricks offers a fascinating story especially around the photograph depicting

her individually.

---

[243] M. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 9.
[244] Hirsch, *Family Frames,* 9.

When asked about the Van Kalker photographs in her home, Freda Hendricks immediately started with the one of her as a young, unmarried woman. In her recollection to me, she seems to remember this photograph as if it was taken yesterday which can be attributed to the intense emotional experiences locked up in this photograph. She remembers that the photograph was taken when her future husband went to study at Fort Hare between 1958 and 1960 and he wanted a photograph of her. While alluding to her primacy in the production of the photograph in the care she took to create this special, intimate moment of object exchange between them as a young couple separated by distance, she also alludes to her husband's taste and imperatives in terms of the display of photographs and exerting influence within the domestic interior.[245]

Lost in reverie, the photograph takes on even more poignancy as Freda Hendricks remembers small details about the photograph such as the pearl broach she is wearing in the photograph which was given to her by her late husband. Slightly different from the domestic interior of Marian Abrahams where the display was largely determined by Stan Abrahams, her late husband, within the enclosures of the Hendricks household the display of photographs according to Freda Hendricks was a dual decision with the exception of the photograph that she took at the Van Kalker studio to send to her husband while he was away at Fort Hare. What makes this photograph even more interesting is what happened to it after the death of Freda Hendricks' husband, Abel Hendricks, as it found its way off the wall in their bedroom and onto the sideboard in the dining room. She explains with an almost painful acceptance that she had it made for him and since he was no longer here, it seemed strange to keep it on the wall where he

---

[245] "When my husband studied at Fort Hare, in the ministry that was 1958 to 1960 and then he wanted a photograph of me, so I had that one taken and I framed it and made him a nice, warm waistcoat made of mohair and so I put the photograph in it, framed already and sent it off fragile to Fort Hare and he was very glad when it got there. So after, when we got married of course he brought it back and he always, he displayed it, decided to display it on his side of the bedroom." Interview with Freda Hendricks, 11 November 2009.

had hung it all those years ago. Undoubtedly treasured and revered, in a Barthesian[246] moment this photograph pierces her as it reminds her of the time when they were on the brink of starting their lives together as a young couple in love, still full of the unfulfilled promises of life.

Still in the dining room, she directs my attention to the impressive wooden table (Fig. 21 and 22) that almost fills the entire space. Similar to how photographs are used in relation to other objects in the interior of Marian Abrahams, the dining table of Freda Hendricks is suggestive of a collage of visual histories as it threads and forges ties that are stretched because of absence and loss. The photographs displayed on the table are representative of fragmented slivers of time celebrating the joyous moments of life such as birthdays, baptisms, weddings and holidays yet also commemorating the sadder moments as any narration of photographs will inevitably include absences brought about by death, loss or conflict. In talking about the selection of photographs which are displayed underneath the glass, this point is reiterated by Freda Hendricks. She says this about the display on her dining room table:

> I think all those photos are of significance to us. Well Heloise, our daughter she is now 49, she was three years old I think when we had that one taken and having been the first child we thought we would like to display that. And then there are other photographs…then there is Cynthia, my husband's niece and her granddaughter. And she also gave us a photo of her granddaughter. She got drowned in a pool so you know there is that sort of the bad things and the good things in life too… So it just to think of certain occasions and then you like to display that sort of thing, I think that is what we have done.[247]

---

[246] For Barthes his piercing moment was when he recognised his mother as a little girl in the Winter Garden photograph, a wound that was so palpable that he could not bear to reproduce the photograph of her in *Camera Lucida* as that prick of recognition or the *punctum* of the photograph was unique to him. However one cannot discuss the *punctum* without the *studium*. According to Rose, all photographs participate in the *studium* however, it is the *punctum* that ruptures the *studium* in that moment that "it shoots out like an arrow, and pierces me" in R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 1981), 26; Also see G. Rose, 'Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (March 2003), 15.

[247] Interview with Freda Hendricks, 11 November 2011.

Fig.21, Dining room table of Freda Hendricks, 2011

In the poignant and insightful recollections of these two very different yet remarkable women, both having encountered the fragility of life in the form of death, one becomes aware of the acute sense of loss and emptiness articulated by the absence encapsulated in the photograph. Yet the photograph is also seen as "a trace of a person's presence" in which it is "displayed and circulated in awareness of the pervasiveness of absence and distance."[248] In an attempt to supplement the spatial or temporal absence of family members, photographs are grouped together in a display or album as to show the integration and cohesion of the family while at the same time being inherently apart because of distance separating them. It is in this sense that photographs become significant material objects within the domestic space as they are looked at and spoken about. And while they are subjected to various acts such as being looked at (which is

---

[248] G. Rose, 'Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (March 2003), 12.

a kind of doing), pasted into an album, stored in box or framed on a wall, photographs are far from being inert as exemplified by the narratives of Marian Abrahams and Freda Hendricks.

Fig.22, Close-up of Heloise, daughter of Freda Hendricks taken at the Van Kalker studio, in 1964 when she was three years old

Photographs evoke memories, sometimes painful ones which are punctuated by the presence/absence of the loved ones within the photograph. However, they also offer the possibility of recalling happy times in which tensions are masked underneath the veneer of the idealised family. Infused with remembrance and emotive narrations, these photographs (especially when part of a display) take on a certain kind of reverence in the way they are treated as treasured objects. As Edwards argues, "The act of making inscribes the memory, the photograph gives reality to the mourned, the object acts as cenotaph…through a dialectical and

signifying relationship of image and material form."[249] Drawing on Rose's argument made

earlier, I would argue that creating these altars of remembrance whereby photographs integrate

family members by grouping them together, the act of looking at them extends the domestic

space beyond the home. This in turn pulls people together by showing their group cohesion but

in a more significant and local context, it alludes to the ephemeral seam that connects these two

women who have never met, but whose journeys are almost parallel through mutual experiences

of fragmentation and loss despite their geographical dis/location.

In this chapter, I have attempted to gain more insight into the complexities and ambiguities

surrounding Van Kalker photographs by examining the way in which they are collected and

displayed within the intimate sanctum of the domestic interior. In complicating things further and

in pushing the argument of the thesis, I have attempted to show that the viewing of photographs

within the domestic interior is as important as the creation of them as it is inscribed with memory

and narrative through which the family story can be told. Talking about the pictorial genealogies

that her grandmother Sarah Oldham constructed on her walls, bell hooks comments that they

were "essential to our sense of self and identity as a family" in the way "they provided a

necessary narrative, a way for us to enter history without words." [250]

The sphere of domesticity is interwoven in a complex set of practices and representations

entangled in deep-seated emotions, religion, economic and cultural systems which become even

more complex as the domestic space is extended beyond the home as a way of maintaining

---

[249] E. Edwards, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (London: Berg, 1998), 232.

[250] b. hooks, 'In our Glory: Photography and Black Life' in D. Willis (ed), *Picturing Us: African American Identity and Photography* (New York: The New Press, 1994), 52.

familial relations. It is in this sense that the role of the family historiographer is pivotal in terms of the production, collection and display of photographs, a role which according to scholars such as Edwards and Hirsch is essentially occupied by the female. In as much as the ambivalent relationship between photography and femininity deserves more attention, that argument has to be made in full somewhere else. While the gendering of the photographic display within the domestic interior is important, I would argue that it is of secondary concern when measured against the affective capacity of photographs in relation to the sensorial engagement of people especially framed within the intimate space of the home. By visiting these intimate spaces and spending time with Marian Abrahams and Freda Hendricks, I finally realised that more than just performing the rituals of the domestic cycle through picturing weddings, christenings, birthdays and graduations these photographs are very much representative of the everyday. They are traces of life, visual fragments of love and loss all waiting to be "seen, recognised, and read."[251]

---
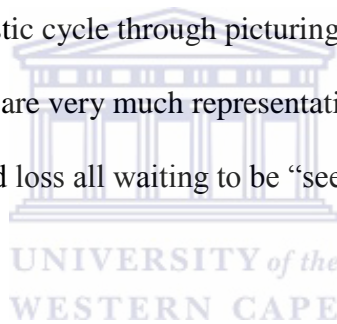
[251] b. hooks, 'In our Glory: Photography and Black Life' in D. Willis (ed), *Picturing Us: African American Identity and Photography* (New York: The New Press, 1994), 53.

Conclusion

Weaving the visual seam

"There is always, to us, a strange fascination in portraits", Walt Whitman said. "We love to dwell long upon them- to infer many things, from the text they preach-to pursue the current of thoughts running riot about them."[252] They offer "inexhaustible invitations to deductions, speculation and fantasy"[253] because they evoke in us varying emotions and meanings. Inasmuch as the need exists to write histories about and for people of Cape Town that have been moved to the fringes of history, in a sense it was also a voyeuristic fascination with the Van Kalker photographs that kindled the writing of this thesis.
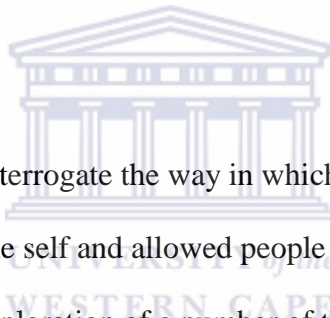
The aim of the thesis has been to interrogate the way in which photographs from the Van Kalker studio enabled representations of the self and allowed people a means through which to assert themselves visually. Through an exploration of a number of theoretical and historical debates around photography, and by locating the Van Kalker studio within the broader context of an unfolding history of Cape Town, I have attempted to sketch the way in which the Van Kalker Studio was used as a space of staged reality in which dreams and aspirations could be visually articulated. This takes on even more significance especially when considered against a backdrop fraught with the socio-economic and political tensions of apartheid where the camera was often used repressively. Throughout the thesis I have argued that people often engaged in various social practices such as photography in order to make sense of their social experience which in this case was characterised by discrimination and oppression. While the camera might not have

---

[252] W. Whitman, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* Vol. 5, No. 160 (2 July 1846), front page.
[253] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 23.

been necessarily employed as a political instrument, I have argued that the Van Kalker studio offered its sitters the opportunity to shape their own self-representations which mirrored their subjectivities, cultural sensibilities and notions of personhood. On a deeper, more significant level it also alludes to the symbolic albeit largely illusory control that the act of taking a studio photograph afforded sitters as a way of taking possession and making sense of a space in which they often felt insecure.

In order to lend the thesis more depth and nuance, I have argued it may prove very productive and invigorating to consider the Van Kalker photographs both as images and material objects which are embedded in processes of usage, storage, collection and display within different contexts. Along similar lines as Edwards in which she argued that the experience of photographs must be understood as a corpothetic engagement, I wanted to understand the affective capacity of photographs to incite emotions and evoke memory. It is within this vein that I attempted to address this by looking at the way in which the Van Kalker photographs are/were used as material objects within the domestic interior especially in terms of display. Exploring the private space of the domestic interiors of former sitters of the Van Kalker studio in which Van Kalker photographs have been displayed alongside other material objects, has illuminated the fact that the production of these photographs are just as important as the collection, circulation and especially the display of photographs in shaping memory and narratives, representing sensibilities and constructing personal and familial relations. It is in this sense that I have argued that the display of Van Kalker photographs which find themselves mostly on walls, mantelpieces and sideboards within the private curatorial realm of the domestic interior, offer fragments of personal and family narratives necessary for remembrance and maintenance of personal and

familial relations. More than this, as material objects especially when viewed within the intimacy of the domestic interior, these photographs show not so much that people were once there, as how these people once were.[254]

In a sense, it can be argued that the engagement with studio photography did not end within the confines of the Van Kalker studio with the symbolic inscription of social statuses, roles or relations as it was often extended into the intimacy of the domestic interior through the act of display, collection and exchange of the Van Kalker photograph as material object. The Van Kalker photographs tell stories of love, happiness and achievements inasmuch as they speak to pain, absence and loss which can even take on more poignancy when confronted by death. Though I have attempted to address some of the issues pertaining both to representation within the image and the photographic display of the Van Kalker photograph as material object in the thesis, there are still silences - silences from these unknowing yet respectable, dignified faces staring back at me. Silences that may never be addressed and questions that may never be answered because "a photograph is a secret about a secret, the more it tells you the less you know."[255] Despite these silences, the Van Kalker photographs tremble with possibility as we have not even begun to understand the effect that the "materiality of pictures" may have on issues of representation, memory, narratives, social relations and history.[256]

---

[254] A. Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 2002), 395.
[255] Diane Arbus quoted in S. Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 111.
[256] C. Kratz, 'Ceremonies, Sitting Rooms and Albums: How Okiek displayed photographs in the 1990s' in R. Vokes (ed), *Photography in Africa: Ethnographic Perspectives* (James Currey, forthcoming), 2.

Bibliography

Oral history interviews by author

Interview with Marian Abrahams, 14 March 2009

Interview with Marian Abrahams interview, 4 February 2011

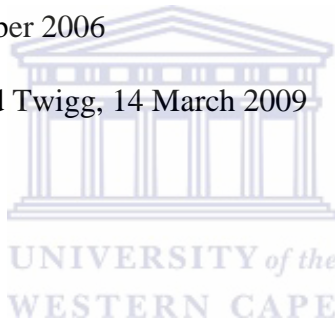Interview with Irvine Clements, 5 June 2009

Interview with Freda Hendricks, 11 November 2009

Interview with Freda Hendricks, 5 February 2011

Interview with Biddie Rassool & Joan Jardine, 1 February 2008

Interview with Joe Schaffers, October 2006

Interview with Patricia & Desmond Twigg, 14 March 2009

Books and articles

Abel E, 'Domestic Borders, Cultural Boundaries: Black Feminists re-view the Family' in M. Hirsch (ed), *The Familial Gaze,* University Press of New England: Hanover and London, 1999.

Arthiros G and Arthiros L (eds), 'Van Kalker Photographers: A Palace of memories at Trafalgar Buildings- Victoria Road' in *Woodstock: A Selection of Articles from the Woodstock Whisperer 2003-2007,* Historical Media CC: Tokai, 2007.

Barthes R, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* Vintage: London, 1981.

Behrend H, 'Fragmented visions: Photo collages by two Ugandan photographers', *Visual Anthropology*, 14: 3.

Behrend H, 'Love a la Hollywood and Bombay in Kenyan Studio Photography' in *Paideuma* 44, 1998.

Berger J, *Ways of Seeing,* Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, 1972.

Bickford-Smith V, 'A "special tradition of multi-racialism"? Segregation in Cape Town in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' in W. James & M. Simons (eds), *Class, Caste and a Social and Economic History of the South African Western Cape,* UCT Press: Cape Town, 1992.

Bickford- Smith V, Worden, N and van Heyningen, E (eds), *Cape Town the making of a City: An Illustrated Social History,* David Philip: Cape Town, 1998.

Bickford-Smith V, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town,* Witwatersrand University Press: Johannesburg, 1995.

Bickford-Smith V, 'Mapping Cape Town: From Slavery to Apartheid' in S. Field (ed), *Lost Communities, Living Memories: Remembering Forced Removals in Cape Town,* David Philip: Cape Town, 2001.

Bickford-Smith V, 'The Origins and Early History of District Six to 1910' in S. Jeppie and C. Soudien (eds), *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present,* Buchu Books: Cape Town, 1990.

Bourdieu P, *Photography: A middle-brow art,* Polity Press: Cambridge, 1996.

Brillliant R, *Portraiture,* Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1991.

Chami F A, *The Unity of African Ancient History 3000 BC to AD 500,* E & D Limited: Dar es Salaam, 2006.

Clarke G, *The Photograph,* Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997.

Clarke G (ed), *The Portrait in Photography,* Reaktion Books Ltd.: London, 1992.

Crary J, *Techniques of the Observer: On vision and modernity in the nineteenth century,* MIT Press: Cambridge, 1990.

Davison P, 'Typecast: Representations of the Bushmen at the South African Museum', *Public Arhaeology*, Vol. 1, 2001.

Edwards E, *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920,* Yale University Press: New Haven, 1992.

Edwards E, 'Photographs as Objects of Memory' in M. Kwint, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories,* Berg: London, 1998.

Edwards E and Hart J (eds), *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images,* Routledge: London and New York, 2004.

Edwards E, 'Photographs, Orality and History' in E. Edwards & K. Bhaumik (eds), *Visual Sense,* Berg: New York, 2008.

Edwards E, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums,* Berg: Oxford, 2001.

Elkins J, *How to use your Eyes,* Routledge: New York, 2009.

Enwezor O and Zaya O, 'Colonial, Imaginary Tropes of Disruption: History, Culture, Representation in the Works of African photographers' in R. Solomon (ed), *In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present,* Guggenheim Museum: New York, 1996.

Erasmus Z, 'Re-imagining coloured identities in post-Apartheid South Africa', in Z. Erasmus (ed), *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town,* Kwela Books: Cape Town, 2001.

Faber P and Van der Merwe A (eds), *Group Portrait, South Africa: Nine Family Histories,* Kwela Books and KIT Publishers: Cape Town and Amsterdam, 2003.

131

Frizot M, 'States of Things: Image and Aura' in M. Frizot (ed), *A New History of Photography,* Könemann: Köln, 1998.

Garside J, *Open Areas in Cape Town: The Struggle for their Identity*, South African Institute of Race Relations: Cape Town, 1987.

Hadjor K B, *On Transforming Africa: Discourse with Africa's Leaders,* African World Press and Third World Communications: New Jersey and London, 1987.

Hayes P, Silvester J and Hartmann W, 'Photography, history and memory' in W. Hartmann, J. Silvester and P. Hayes (eds), *The Colonising Camera. Photographs in the Making of Namibian History,* University of Cape Town Press, Out of Africa and Ohio University Press: Cape Town, Windhoek and Athens, 1999.
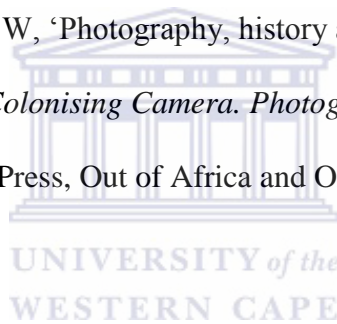
Hirsch M, *Family Frames: Photography, narrative and postmemory,* Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997.

hooks b, 'In our Glory: Photography and Black Life' in D. Willis (ed), *Picturing Us: African American Identity and Photography,* The New Press: New York, 1994.

Karusseit C, 'Victorian domestic interiors as subliminal space' in *SAJAH*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2007.

Kozloff M, *The Theatre of the Face: Portrait Photography since 1900,* New York and Phaidon Press Ltd.: London, 2007.

Kratz C, *The Ones that Are Wanted: Communication and the Politics of Representation in a Photographic Exhibition,* UCLA Press: Berkeley, 2002.

Kuhn A, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination,* Verso: London, 2002.

Lamuniere M, *You look beautiful like that: The Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibe,* Harvard University Art Museums: Massachusetts, 2001.

Landau P, 'Hunting with gun and camera: a commentary' in W. Hartmann, J. Silvester and P. Hayes (eds), *The Colonising Camera,* UCT Press: Cape Town, 1998.

Maurice E, 'Lives of Colour: Images from Cape Photo-Albums' in K. Grundlingh (ed), *Lines of Sight: Perspectives on South African Photograph,* South African National Gallery: Cape Town, 2001.

Maylam P, *South Africa's Racial Past: The history and historiography of racism, segregation and apartheid*, Ashgate: Aldershot, England, 2001.

Meyer B, "'There is a Spirit in that Image": Mass Produced Jesus Pictures and Protestant Pentacostal Animation in Ghana' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2010, 52:1.

133

Mirzoeff N, *An Introduction to Visual Culture,* Routledge: London and New York, 1991.

Mofokeng S, 'The Black Photo Album' in Revue Noire, *Anthology of African & Indian Ocean Photograph*y, Revue Noire: Paris, 1999.

Mustafa H, 'Portraits of modernity: Fashioning selves in Dakarois popular photography' in P. Landau and D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires,* University of California Press: Berkeley, 2002.

Oguibe O, 'Photography and the substance of the Image' in R. Solomon (ed), *In/Sight: African Photographers - 1940 to the Present,* Guggenheim Museum: New York, 1996.

Pinney C, *Camera Indica: The Social life of Indian Photographers,* University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1997.

Pinney C, 'Notes from the Surface of the Image- Photography, Postcolonialism and Vernacular Modernism' in C. Pinney C and N. Peterson (eds), *Photography's Other Histories*, Duke University Press: London, 2003.

Price D, 'Surveyors and surveyed: Photography out and about' in L. Wells (ed), *Photography: A Critical Introduction,* Routledge: London & New York, 2000.

Rose G, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials,* Sage Publications: London, 2001.

Samuel R, *Theatres of memory,* Verso: London, 1994.

Schoeman K, *The Face of the Country: A South African Family Album 1860-1910,* Human and Rousseau: Cape Town, 1996.

Sekula A, 'The Body and the Archive' in R. Bolton (ed), *The contest of meaning: critical histories of photography*, MIT Press: Cambridge, 1992.

Shashikant Mesthrie U, "'No place in the world to go"- Control by Permit: The First Phase of the Group Areas Act in Cape Town in the 1950s ' in van E. Heyningen (ed), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, UCT Press: Cape Town, 1994.

Shore S, *The Nature of Photographs,* Phaidon Press Limited: London and New York, 2007.

Skotnes P, 'The Politics of Bushman representations' in P. Landau & D. Kaspin (eds), *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 2002.

Solomon-Godeau A, 'Who is speaking thus? Some questions about documentary photography' in *Photography at the dock. Essays on photographic history, institutions and practices,* University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1991.

Sontag S, *On Photography,* Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York, 1977.

Sprague S, 'How the Yoruba see themselves' in C. Pinney and N. Peterson (eds), *Photography's Other Histories,* Chicago University Press: Chicago, 2003.

Sturken M & Cartwright L (eds), *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture,* Oxford University Press: New York, 2009.

Sturken M, 'The Image as Memorial: Personal Photographs in Cultural Memory' in M. Hirsch (ed), The *Familial Gaze,* University Press of New England: Hanover and London, 1999.

Swanson F & Harries J, "'Ja! So was District Six! But it was a beautiful place": Oral Histories, Memory and Identity' in S. Field (ed), *Lost Communities, Living Memories: Remembering Forced removals in Cape Town*, David Philip: Cape Town, 2001.

Szarkowski J, *The Photographer's Eye,* The Museum of Modern Art: New York, 1966.

Tagg J, *The Burden of Representation,* University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1988.

Tagg J, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2009.

Trachtenberg A, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans,* Harper Collins: Canada, 1989.

Vera Y, *Thatha Camera – The Pursuit for Reality,* National Gallery of Bulawayo, 1999.

Wells L (ed), The Photography Reader, Routledge: New York, 2003.

Western J, *Outcast: Cape Town,* University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1996.

Woodall J, (ed), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject,* Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1997.

Unpublished theses and papers

Badsha F, 'Aspects of South African documentary photography in the 1980s', Unpublished paper submitted for the Visual History course project, History Department, University of the Western Cape: Bellville, 1999.

Becker N, 'Inside and Outside the Family Album: Making, Exhibiting and Archiving the Photograph in the South African National Gallery and the National Library of South Africa', Unpublised Masters Mini-Thesis, University of the Western Cape: Bellville, 2002.

Blair K, '"A Featherweight Portable Museum"- The Portrait Photography of the Van Kalker Studio, Woodstock, 1949-1979', Unpublished Honours Paper, University of Cape Town: Cape Town, 1999.

Garside J, 'Residential Change in Woodstock, Cape Town prior to the Repeal of the Group Areas Act', Masters Thesis, University of the Witswatersrand: Johannesburg, 1994.

Kratz C, 'Ceremonies, Sitting Rooms and Albums: How Okiek displayed photographs in the 1990s' in R. Vokes (ed), *Photography in Africa: Ethnographic Perspectives*, James Currey, forthcoming.

Salo E, 'Respectable Mothers, Tough Men, Good Daughters: Making persons in Manenberg township, South Africa', Phd. Dissertation, Emory University: Atlanta, 2004.

Internet sources

Ancestry24, *Recruitment of the Cape Corps,*

Available at http://ancestry24.com/recruitment-of-the-cape-corps/, Accessed on 23 July 2010.

Appadurai, A. 'The Colonial Backdrop' in *Afterimage*, March-April 1997,

Available at www.thefreelibrary.com/The+colonial+backdrop.-a019291516 Accessed on 11

August 2010.

Benjamin W, 'Little History of Photography' in M. Jennings, H. Eiland and G. Smith (eds),

Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927-1934, Translated by Rodney Livingstone and others,

Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, Available at

http://totuusradiofi/wordpress/wp-contact/uploads/2010/09/benjamin-little history-of

photography.pdf, Accessed on 29 July 2011.

Benjamin W, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in Arendt, H. (ed)

Illuminations: Essays and Reflections, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968, Available

at http://www.colorado.edu/envd/courses/envd4114-001/Spring%2006/Theory/Benjamin.pdf,

Accessed on 20 June 2011.

Duttlinger C, 'Imaginary Encounters: Walter Benjamin and the Aura of Photography' in *Poetics

Today* 29: 1, Spring 2008,

Available at http://poeticstoday.dukejournals.org/content/29/1/79.short, Accessed on 20 June

2011.

Ertem, F. 'The Pose in early Portrait Photography: Questioning attempts to appropriate the Past'

in *Image and Narrative*, Issue 14: July 2006,

Available at http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/painting/fulya.htm, Accessed on 4 August 2011

Keating P, 'From the Portrait to the Close-up: Gender and Technology in Still Photography and Hollywood Cinematography' in *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 45: 3, Spring 2006, Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/3877750, Accessed on 20 August 2010.

Krauss R, 'A Note on Photography and the Simulacral' in *October*, Vol. 31, Winter 1984, Available at http://www. Jstor.org/stable/778356, Accessed on 6 May 2010.

Maynard P, 'Portraits as Displays' in *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 135, No. 1, Proceedings of the Thirty-seventh Oberlin Colloquium in Philosophy: Aesthetics, August 2007, Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/40208799, Accessed on 1 March 2011.

Merriam Webster Dictionary

Available at http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/collage, Accessed on 23 August 2011.

Nwafor N, 'Re-presenting Self: Reading some Van Kalker Studio photographs' in *OGIRISI, A New Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 7: 2010, Available at http://ajol.info/index.php/og/article/view/57931, Accessed on 10 November 2010.

Rose G, 'Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol. 28, No. 1, March 2003, Available at http://www.jstor.org.stable/3804564, Accessed on 9 March 2011.

Schwarz O, 'Negotiating Romance in Front of the Lens' in *Visual Communication* 2010, 9: 2, Available at http://vcj.sagepub.com/content/9/2/151 , Accessed on 1 September 2011.

Watkins J, *Imaging Transcendence: Domestic Interiors and the Sacred,* Available at http://itiablog.wordpress.com/2010/11/29/imaging-transendence-domestic, Accessed on 1 March 2011.

Whitman W, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* Vol. 5, No. 160 (2 July 1846) Available at http://eagle.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/Default/Skins/BEagle/Client.asp?Skin=BEagle&AW=131 4189240328&AppName=2&GZ=T, Accessed on 23 August 2011.