

**Stuttgart meets Durban/Durban meets Stuttgart
Baden-Württemberg meets KwaZulu Natal**
Art between „Verortung“¹ and Network

...beach promenade and palms, emerald sea, dark blue sky - in the background the architecture icons of a modern metropolis...

This exotic picture of a subtropical paradise consisting of exotic fragments of nature and seemingly successful urbanisation is brought to the European Internet surfer via the Homepage of the city of Durban. However, at the end of the twentieth century, this virtual picture of the South African metropolis broadcast by the Internet no longer corresponds with the African myth of modernism; it certainly covers the hidden needs of many Europeans who vacillate between longing for exotic idyllic nature and the advantages and comforts of a modern hightec culture. The scarcity of unspoiled nature, authenticity, originality and pure emotion which the Europeans since the end of the nineteenth century have tried to compensate with travel to faraway places and exploration of last enclaves has also become the subject and movement of „artmaking“ in European art of the twentieth century. Accordingly, the American psychologist Anton Ehrenzweig characterised the function of modern art with the words: "to recall that which is absent".² Whether this concerns reactivation of history and myth during postmodernism, of the subconscious and accidental in surrealism, or of certain formal aesthetic criteria, as for example the return of art to its primary structures and primary materials, depends on what is formulated at the time as longing and need, or lack and loss, in the historical and social situation. With the historical background of European modernism, how can an artistic dialogue take place between South Africa and central Europe - in this case southern Germany - when the

romanticising primitivism and the perception of the „good savage“ are no longer valid? And can a superficial comparison of cultures, where the individual artistic positions are presented as in a colourful supermarket, contribute to clarification and understanding? After the romantization and colonization of African culture with European thought, after oppression, segregation and discrimination, an new beginning should now be found. The philosopher Jürgen Habermas perceives an opportunity in an „intercultural dialogue“, which „among strangers makes known what is shared and in common, but leaves the other his otherness“.³ Intercultural dialogue virtually and in fact already presents via global Internet, must still be achieved in the area of human interaction. It remains to be seen what contribution the project „Stuttgart meets Durban - Durban meets Stuttgart“ can make; it will become evident only after a more extended period of communicative exchange.

The exhibition „Stuttgart meets Durban“

In a first phase the dialogue between Stuttgart and Durban takes place on a material level: via juxtaposition of artifacts from both cultures not only politically and socially entirely different would make contact, but also artistic experience foreign to each other. In the second phase personal interaction is to take place in Durban, and cultural knowledge will be directly exchanged and shared. The fact that during the first phase a portion of the selected works is limited to the classical artistic genre lends the impression that thereby a first common level of communication between the two cultures and artists will be created: graphics and works on paper by 33 South African artists will be shown together with sculptures and objects of five sculptors from the Stuttgart area. It is not a particular „scene“, as shown in the gallery „Kultur unterm Turm“, but rather it is the position of individual artists who initially with examples of their work demonstrate their working method, their questions, and their cultural belonging.

The Artists

The sculptures and objects of Ingrid Hartlieb and Susanna Messerschmidt stand out among the shown pieces because of their search for elementary, primary forms and a sensuality achieved by the use of material, the working of the material and scale. In her wood sculptures Ingrid Hartlieb uses the method of simplification and enlargement in order to transform tools or toys and other everyday objects into archaic, monumental sculptures. Most