As a South African of native African and German-English descent, Berni Searle was accustomed to “negotiating” racial apartheid and other racist regimes, it also recalls ritual practices in a number of cultures (including South Africa’s Zulu and Xhosa) where the body is whitened as a marker of transition or initiation.18 As Searle presses and folds the dough, her hands form a pattern of wings on the ground resembling snow angels made by children. The slapping sounds of Searle’s hands against the floor simultaneously have a presence and density that is both poetic and cultural.18

In Resting (2003), the camera is positioned downward under a transparent box suspended eight meters in the air. A stationary camera, tight cropping of the frame, and minimal editing, create a sense that the camera simply records the event. But the resulting projection is altered in two ways. First, the proportions of the projection are changed from the standard 4:3 ratios to an elongated 16:9 ratio. Second, the projector is rotated ninety degrees so that the image appears sideways. The effect is that the artist appears to be walking up and her sliding or gliding back down the gallery wall. The first glimpse of the artist is but feet, seen as the bottom of the wall. She stands, holds,DS, pouring olive oil into the box and the frame, slightly blurred. Each pour of the oil creates a different shape around her. She stands still, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk, cautiously yet with determination, across (or up) the frame. After she stands, upright, waiting. Olive oil in poured into the box and she begins to walk,
Berni Searle was born in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1964. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Art from the University of Cape Town in 1987 and a Master of Arts in Fine Art in 1995. Searle lives and works in Cape Town.

Selected Group Exhibitions

2002: "The Space Planet" (solo), Fora Art Projects, Cape Town, South Africa
2000: "Afrika Porträt," House of World Cultures, Berlin, Germany
1992: "Soul of a Nation," Staatliche Kunsthalle, Stuttgart, Germany

Selected Catalogues, Books, and Periodicals

Berni Searle/MATRIX 202-4, MATRIX Curator Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson
"Art is Everything: A History and Geography," William Morris Museum, Cape Town; Gertrude Posel Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
"DAK'ART 2000," National Museum, Dakar, Senegal
"FNB Vita 2000," Sandton Civic Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
"Kwere Kwere: Journeys into Strangeness," The Castle, Cape Town; Gertrude Posel Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
"Afrika Porträt," House of World Cultures, Berlin, Germany
"KWERE KWERE," The Castle, Cape Town; Gertrude Posel Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
"Lines of Sight: Perspectives on South African Photography," South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

Bone White (2003), 2002; photography, dimensions variable

Genevieve White (2004), 2002; photography, dimensions variable


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