

Origination - a project by Katy and Rebecca Beinart

The project traces family history, both real and imagined, and attempt to understand the construction of identity and its connection to place. In December 2009, sisters and artists Katy and Rebecca Beinart embarked on a journey by ship, retracing the route of their ancestors from Eastern Europe to South Africa. They then spent two months in Cape Town and environs researching the sites and stories of their ancestors. The works shown here weave together factual research and mythologised ritual to explore themes of migration, identity and cultural adaptation.

Further information and images:

http://www.a-n.co.uk/artists_talking/projects/single/520058

www.katybeinart.co.uk



Don't Look Back
Installation, 2010
Digital prints, salt, projection

Don't Look Back invites the viewer to enter a salt pan, which is also a portal. Burgerspan is a naturally occurring salt pan in the Darling area of the Western Cape, one of several which the artists great-grandfather Woolf Beinart would harvest salt from, in the early 1900s.

The installation explores attempts to remember, capture or search out our past, our ancestors, and a discovery that it is through the indirect, chance occurrences that we find ways of understanding our past, and therefore our present. The title Don't Look Back refers to the migrant's dilemma, and particularly that of the Jewish diaspora – whether to attempt to preserve the customs and traditions of the old home, or to leave them behind, and start anew, adapting to the new environments they find themselves in.



Sal Sapit Omnia
Sculpture, 2010
Found wood, bicycle wheels, glass jars, salt pan plant samples
Photograms & salt samples from cargo ship and salt pans

The salt wagon is a tool for playfully investigating the salt pans. The wagon is designed to conduct experiments in harvesting and preservation. Salt is a powerful preservative, both physically and metaphorically – 'its ability to protect against decay, as well as to sustain life, has given salt a broad metaphorical importance – we associate it with longevity and permanence'. (Salt, Mark Kurlansky, 2002)

The form of the salt wagon is also a reference to the Smous wagons of early Jewish migrants to South Africa, who were travelling pedlars, traversing remote rural areas to sell goods to farmers.



Transfere
Installation, 2010
Found objects, photographs, documents, cigarette cards

Translation, which derives from the Latin Transfere, meaning 'to bring across', can be seen as a metaphor for migration. An object transferred takes on a new set of significances – or may be evoked using new objects which 'stand for' the original.

Detail shown: Case 2: Assimilation
These works represent a searching for home, the transient home of the family of migrants, and the traces that remain. The making of a home is a process, a writing and rewriting of our personal narrative or biography.

Family documents and photographs trace the connection to and establishment of belonging, while the Cigarette Cards series are an invented heirloom, playing on great-great-grandmother Anne Filaratoff's now lost collection of cigarette cards.