

'THE MEDIATORS'

By Nicky Broekhuysen

Everything in life and nature gives off some form of data in a complex world of information and meaning. By using binary numbers 1 and 0 as building blocks of form, this simple system of information storage acts as a condensed language of today's Digital Age. It becomes a metaphor that speaks of who we are, the connectedness of things and for the potentials of change with in a moment of chaos.

Depending on how we arrange the 1 and 0 in binary code we have the ability to store information and meaning. However, by subtly shifting and rearranging the numbers, we can change the meaning. This becomes a core concept in my work, the idea that nothing in life can remain static or fixed. The binary numbers continually re-arranged and re-ordered, move with a natural momentum towards evolution and change. Hence the notion that all ideas, information, beliefs and structures that we commit to cannot remain static but rather should exist in more dynamic states open to shift and change. Potential, another fundamental concept in all my work becomes evident. With in the binary system lies the potential for everything, the 'all' with in the simplicity of the binary 1 and the binary 0. The forms and structures depicted in the works are always momentary, a split second manifestation that can change at any moment. No form or structure is definite they are always in continual flux with the potential for the unknown forever present in the works.

What becomes evident is that the binary code, which imbues the work, begins to undermine meaning even though it is filled with it and designed to communicate it. The works take a logical system and make it illogical, the binary code becomes a system trying to find meaning in a world, which, is essentially chaos. The works themselves then become the search for something beyond the logic of the mind towards a state where there is only openness and ambiguity.

These are some of the metaphors and ideas with in the binary numbers and which form the starting point of every series of works. Thus it is not my intention to program the binary numbers with actual code rather it is the juxtaposition of the ideas and metaphors that they represent alongside a certain structural or environmental context which creates the substance and dialogue of each series.

The series, The Mediators, can be traced back to my childhood experience of growing up in South Africa, exploring the Cederberg Mountains and it's caves and overhangs covered in San Bushman Rock Paintings. This mysterious world captivated me and has influenced my experience ever since. Connected to some of the first historical examples of image making the San Bushman of Southern Africa believed that everything in life, the rocks, the plants, the animals hold energy. The San Bushman word for this being 'ghi' and translated as 'potency'. When painting the images of animals onto the rocks, they were in fact capturing the energy or potency of what they were painting and storing it in the rock surface. Therefore, the rock itself and the image became 'Reservoirs of Potency' or storehouses of energy. This energy was then used by the San Bushman Shamans to increase their own 'potency' during trance and healings - a time of movement between the physical and spiritual worlds. This concept of 'energy amplification' was paramount. Therefore when painting for example an animal, they would use the blood of that animal

to bind the iron-oxide pigments which depicted it as this in turn increased the image's potency.

The San Bushman approach to the surface of the rock on which they painted was also very different to our contemporary approach to 'surface'. Unlike today, they did not view the surface as an 'end point', rather it became a 'doorway' or access point in which to move between these physical and spiritual worlds. This juxtaposition of the physical and spiritual becomes very fascinating. Binary code is the bringing together of opposites in order to create a cohesive meaning. This perhaps is much the state of existence. Meaning and purpose created through the experience of and juxtaposition of the physical world and the spiritual world – side by side. The San Bushman like many Indigenous cultures, literally and intuitively understood this vital juxtaposition of opposites. Their culture acknowledged the importance of both states.

It is through these core ideas of energy and the image as a 'doorway' that I view this series of works 'The Mediators' as contemporary manifestations of San Bushman intentions placed with in a current and present day context and relevance.

Using colours that reflect and evoke the rocks and pigments of the South African rock paintings themselves, the works become 'mediators' between the physical and spiritual. They are the mid-point between these two binary states. Like the San Bushman Rock Paintings, the works become 'store-houses of energy'. However the purpose behind the works is not only about increasing the potency of energy, rather it is more about becoming aware of the energy itself. Much like Rothko's large 'Energy Field Paintings', they resonate and vibrate, pulling the viewer into their energetic space. As the San Bushman saw the rock surfaces and rock paintings as 'doorways', these works too become open spaces through which to enter.

'The Mediators' also speak of the connectedness of time. With in the works and the binary numbers themselves, the past present and future co-exist simultaneously – there is only the 'now' yet the now is a manifestation of all time. The 'potency' of the works themselves lies in the connection of a contemporary digital language like binary code and the Digital Age which it represents, juxtaposed with an ancient language of image making, which when brought together forms a powerful assemblage of memory and meaning. The work also looks back towards our indigenous roots, remembering a deeper state of connectivity and symbiosis with the natural world around us. The Ancient Rock Paintings of many Indigenous cultures achieved this by forming a powerful link between the natural world, the spirit world, the animals and the people themselves. 'The Mediators' show that nothing exists in isolation. Just as '1' has no meaning without '0', we too can never exist in isolation and the present can never exist in isolation from the past.