

# Editorial: Blind spots: Trickery and the 'opaque stickiness'<sup>1</sup> of seeing

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In a flash the spot will disappear, and in its place ... and this is the interesting thing – there is nothing ... According to experimental psychology, the eye does not fill in the blind spot, but tricks us into thinking that it has been filled ... the blind spot is pure absence of vision, and cannot be experienced at all ... the blind spot ... is an invisible absence: an absence whose invisibility is itself invisible (Elkins 1996:170).

In *The object stares back: on the nature of seeing*, James Elkins (1996:167) argues that 'blindness is a constant companion of sight', and he compares medical conditions associated with the 'difficulties we have bringing the world into focus' to metaphors of blindness and ways of not seeing. He points out the difference between blindness – that "sees" – or recognises – its own blindness, and blindness that is blind to its inability to see. 'In medical blindness', he writes, 'the subject is not blind to the blindness itself – or to put it in philosophical terms, the blindness is visible, it is there to be seen' (Elkins 1996:168). Applying the concept of blindness to socio-psychological ways of seeing, the most hazardous condition is double blindness in which a person has no idea that she or he is partially blind.

The four papers in this volume that engage with the theme of *Blind spots and ways of not seeing* evolve, in part, from an earlier exploration of blind spots in a collection of performances that I curated for the National Arts Festival in 2014.<sup>2</sup> Titled *Blind Spot*, the project included the following performance art events: *What difference does it make who is speaking?* by Mbalil Khoza at the Eastern Star Press Museum (Figure 1); *Everse* performed by Joseph Coetzee, Ivy Kulundu-Gotz, Simone Heymans and Chio Nott at Victoria Primary; *Barongwa* conceptualised by Mohou Modisakeng and performed by Sikhumbuzo Makandula at Fingo Village in the vicinity of the old Egazini Memorial; and *Bimilish* by Igshaan Adams in the basement of the 1820 Settlers National Monument.

1. The term "opaque stickiness" is used in relation to uncertainty by Baki Makandula in *Perfusions: Intuity: The uncertainty of the Other* cited by Popoemaganda (1999:1).

2. The *Blind Spot* performance series derived funding from the National Arts Festival (NAF) and was co-curated by Ruth Simbao and was co-curated by the Department of Fine Art, Rhodes University. The four papers in this volume were first presented at the Rhodes University Fine Art Department and Visual and Performing Arts of Africa (VPAFA) Humanities Focus Area symposium *Blind Spots and Ways of Not Seeing*, in October 2015. This symposium, as well as the resolution in which Mbalil Khoza and Igshaan Adams participated, were generously supported by The National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDF).