

## **'BLOOD DIAMONDS' or 'TERMINAL'**

(text exhibited in the room people waited in before beginning the journey –  
Grahamstown Festival, 2009)

Somehow, in the popular consciousness of white South Africa, the 1820 Settlers – imported from Britain to provide a colonizing buffer between the amaXhosa and the Cape Colony – have managed to retain a butter-wouldn't-melt-in-the-mouth innocence.

As if they were any less rapacious, opportunistic, violent and bigoted than the other 'civilizers' that have used blades, bibles and brute arrogance to shatter the despised societies and cultures of indigenes, to annex their land, and to enrich themselves off the fragments.

As if they had little to do with the history that has fowled up our country.

So much broken, so much lost. So many consequences to deal with...

In 'Settler City' – Grahams-town – the faces of black poverty and white wealth, African illiteracy and Western Enlightenment, gaze forbiddingly at each other from opposing banks of a stinking stream as they have done for close on 200 years. And barely the twain shall meet.

Forever "Frontier Country".

Forever crouching on the great bloody fault line that divides Colony and Africa, Savage and Civilised.

(And then the festival's Village Green is ripped out of the heart of the city and located in the leafy suburbs...)

The city starkly illustrates an elemental fracture in the South African soul.

The Grahamstown Railway Terminal was built in 1878 on this boundary line between Us and Them. It sits directly below the Settler cemetery – an inter-zone between Here and There. The last train pulled out of the station in February 2009, and the empty platforms of this dead end, like the vandalized graves nearby, are haunted by memories trapped in airless limbo.

The title 'Blood Diamonds' originated before a location had been chosen, before there was a clear vision for the work. The intention was to 'insert dark glittering gems of performance art into shadowy corners of Grahamstown'. Later, when the Station was selected, 'Terminal' – with its many connotations – seemed a more appropriate title, but the publicity material, alas, had already gone to print.