

Harvey, A.L. SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART in The InTowner,
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Paul Emmanuel's deeply moving and beautifully executed exhibition, titled "*Transitions*," its first stop in this country, accompanied by the critically acclaimed and directly related film titled *3SAI: A Rite of Passage*. "*Transitions*" offers a series of generational progressions through life in post-apartheid Africa; it uses the sensitive, artistic lens of a young white man who is addressing questions of identity and place in a land still reeling from the effects of past racial segregation, police and military oppression, and the continuing phenomenon of racial inequality in wealth and economic opportunity.

"*Transitions*" is specifically a set of five individual series of what at first appear to be luminous, handsome photographic narratives, each with five, large images read from left to right. As one begins absorbing these compellingly engaging works, one begins to immediately realize that what first appeared as photographs are in fact extraordinary drawings — photo-realist images on photographic paper. One then learns that the artist uses a fine steel blade — something like an Exacto knife — to scratch these drawings out of the black exposed emulsion that coats photographic paper in a labor-intensive, almost obsessive process.

These five individual series, each of which is a masterwork in its own right, represent a deeply felt and emotionally revealing artistic expression in what could be characterized as an "Ages of Man" work. Aesthetically of young Afrikaner/Armenians, scenes from an elderly man's daily domestic life, and the movements of modern life — in this case through a transportation terminal's impersonal turnstiles. A bravura performance in a unique production!

Emmanuel's prize-winning 14-minute film documents the head shaving of South African army recruits at the 3rd Infantry Battalion army base in Kimberley. Like the experience of viewing "*Transitions*," one is riveted to the dynamics of interaction between the shaved and the shaver — all within the interactions and subtle ironies of race, class, and color in post-apartheid South Africa. The 200 waving-in-the-wind, tea-stained white T shirts have a Christo and Jeanne-Claude-like cameo role in this transfixing film, which will be running in continuous showings together with the exhibition through August 22nd.