

O'Sullivan, M. SMITHSONIAN AFRICAN ART MUSEUM'S 'TRANSITIONS' EXHIBIT  
INCLUDES FILM ON INFANTRY in The Washington Post, The Washington Post Company,  
Washington DC, USA, May

Paul Emmanuel is a stickler for detail.

The drawings in "*Transitions*" are meticulous, in concept and execution, but so is the imagery in the artist's first film, "*3SAI: A Rite of Passage*." The 14-minute movie -- which takes its name from an abbreviation for the Third South African Infantry -- will be shown in continuous loop in a small theatre off the main gallery.

Made for 430,000 rand (about \$57,000), it's a poetic companion piece to the show's works on paper, intercutting documentary-style footage of fresh army recruits getting their hair shorn with more lyrical shots of a temporary art installation that Emmanuel mounted, shot and dismantled over the course of three bitterly cold days one July. (That's the middle of winter in South Africa.) Called "*The Lightweights*," the work was composed of 1,000 plain white T-shirts hanging on clotheslines in the middle of a field."

Meant to evoke dead soldiers, the brand-new shirts were distressed by dyeing them in tea. The technique is as practical as it is poetic: The tea softens what might have been a sea of blindingly white cotton as well as suggesting the presence of the sweaty bodies that might have worn them.