Decolonial Propositions

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On Art Institutions

On Artistic Practice

Introductory Comments: Initiatives and Strategies
Jyoti Mistry and Nkule Mabaso

The two events (ArtSearch, March 2017 and Third Space Symposium, August 2017) from which these contributions are drawn took place at an exceptionally volatile moment in South African higher education. The Fees Must Fall movement which started in October 2015 while, on the one hand challenging tuition and tuition increases, high-lighted on the other hand, the structural inaccessibility to higher education. Moreover, it brought into stark relief the legacies of racial privilege sedimented in institutional structures that had not been responsive to the growing urgency for transformation in art institutions and universities: its hiring practices, student recruitment, the curriculum, the recognition of art practices that acknowledge and accommodate different epistemologies and aesthetics.

This has been a protracted journey in arriving at this open-ended 'ending'—the consolidation of these contributions was forged from a period of resistance, protests, introspections and reflections, deliberation and conversations…

This publication marks rather a pause, a moment of bringing together the contributions that provided a reflective rest to recall all the efforts that were drawn from not just the spark of this movement but provides a recognition that in spite of the numerous challenges the space to support engaged dialogue was possible.

fig. 1: *An interview at the University of Cape Town* (1971) by John Muafangejo

1974

John Muafangejo's linocut, *An interview at the University of Cape Town* (1971), depicts the artist being interviewed for entrance to the Michaelis School of Fine Art. Eight pairs of eyes stare out of the frame while Muafangejo, a lone figure on one side of the table, has his gaze fixed across rather than directly at the phalanx of interviewers.

The crowded faces stare across a large table, three of them wielding dagger-style pen, paint brush and scalpel. The open book, perhaps it is Muafangejo's portfolio, sits in the hands of a conjoined/self-opposing member of the interviewer team, suggests a single authoritative narrative wielded by the pale faced custodians of the institution.

Muafangejo was rejected by Michaelis and took up a residency at Rorke's Drift Art and Craft School.

2003

The documentary film *The luggage is still labelled: Blackness in South African art,* was created by Vuyile Voyiya McGee and Julie McGee. It consists of interviews, primarily with black artists in Cape Town, who reflect on the racially segregated art world that still prevails in educational institutions, museums and galleries. Many of the artists speak from direct experience, making the connection between apartheid's institutional marginalisation of black artists and the contemporary persistence of white privilege. The interviews capture the 'post-apartheid' era in which gatekeepers of the art world reproduce imperial and colonial structures with scant attention to the stultifying effect on artists.

The artists express an urgent need to transform institutional structures so as to include epistemologies and aesthetic art practices from multiple sources and experiences and not just the canonised tropes of Western, European art.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9WMkaVl-_0

fig. 2: Chumani Maxwele throws excrement on Rhodes statue

2015

The Rhodes Must Fall movement starts at the University of Cape Town.

Same Mdluli: "... *student activist Chumani Maxwele threw a bucket of excrement at the Cecil John Rhodes statue. This performative act spiralled into a movement that saw a generation of young South Africans challenging monuments and structures that are a representation of the past. While the protests were primarily in response to the lack of transformation within institutional structures that continue to ignore and neglect the 'real' lived experiences of marginalised people—who in South Africa make up a majority of black African people—it is also important to point out that the 'RhodesMustFall' movement was also a response to a continued monumental and symbolic presence of reminders of a painful past that South Africa has in many ways not yet addressed,"* (2017).[1]

March 2017

Artsearch Symposium at the University of the Witwatersrand.
Using artistic research as a way to address decolonising practices, this three-day symposium brought together international scholars and practitioners from various disciplines. The presentations offered creative strategies to transform art institutions and recognise previously unacknowledged artistic practices and forms.

> *"[T]he understanding of this decolonization ... could help us not only to shift away from western-centric belief systems but also to debunk their recurrent predominance. Therefore, decolonising visualities is a call for a paradigm shift and recognition of previously marginalised modalities in order to make subtle and covert form[s] of colonial influence perceptible, inside and outside of academia. And this requires a breakaway from the western-centric education model into an African model of education,"*
>
> Mawande Ka Zenzile, 2017.[2]

August 2017

3rd Space Symposium held at Cape Town University's Institute of Creative Arts (ICA). Centred on creative practices ranging from performance, dance, theatre, film and visual arts, the second iteration of the *3rd Space Symposium* focused less on institutional transformation and more on multiple aesthetic practices and strategies that challenged canonised Western and European art modes. It drew from unresolved histories and experiences that had been rendered invisible under colonialism and apartheid, and through race and class privileges.

Decolonial propositions

September 2020

Much has changed and more has remained resistant, the conversation to decolonise knowledge has once again brought to the fore some of the unfinished historical grievances and injustices which continue to define the present. Our truncated timeline points out to some these moments and the practices directed at this 'yet to be concluded' project of decolonisation especially in relation to grievances and injustices in education that no progressive African can afford to ignore.

Some of the interviewee subjects in *The Luggage is Still labelled* occupy positions of power in the same institutions that received criticism in the documentary... the present and recurrent complaints speak to the coloniality of power, irrespective of whether one sits inside of the institution; or not – categorical non-conformity does not suffice to change the status quo. The demand for intervention is urgent and long overdue.

Overview of the Anthology

The material of this publication is drawn in part from the March and August 2017 symposiums. It is augmented by reflections and experiences that connect the past with the relative immediacy of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, which, having gained momentum, expanded to the national and later the international Fees Must Fall campaign. The content of the publication moves beyond these seminal moments to discuss the myriad strategies that educators and artists use to address inequality and to create a futurity that is "uttered" on its own terms.

> *"[T]hinking decolonially (that is, thinking within the frame of the decolonial option) means to start from 'enunciation' and not from 'representation'. When you start from the enunciation and think decolonially, you shall run away from representation, for representation presupposes that there is a world out there that*

> *someone is representing. There is not a world that is represented, but a world that is constantly invented in the enunciation,"*
> Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014. [3]

The marginality that John Muafangejo experienced as a black artist is still here; it is tangibly evident within South Africa's arts education institutions and in some institutions on the African continent and globally. In response, artistic practices have found multiple forms to express protest, resistance and defiance. These innovative forms demand a radical re-examination of knowledge and of prevailing assumptions about aesthetic form. Notably, the construction of theory – in the context of anticolonialism, postcoloniality and decoloniality – has made *utterance* central to the aesthetic practices explored in this collection.

The collection is organised in two sections. Section 1 reveals the myriad ways the contributors (often educators and practitioners in art schools) have through critical strategies offered by artistic research tackled institutional challenges in ways that move beyond simplistic notions of institutional critique. Section 2 examines decolonial aesthetic strategies in artistic productions. The artistic mediums used include photography, film, theatre (including contemporary drama and performance), visual art, music, video, and fine art. The essays reflect on the mutual enrichments that can occur between critical art practices and social movements. In these reflections the contributors elaborate upon the conditions for politicized critical practice, and examine the politics of institutional memory and the archival silences operating within the university.

Jyoti Mistry and **David Andrew** in the foremost paper in the **On Art Institutions** section, express the urgency of seeing arts schools and arts education within a contemporary political climate. In a jib-jab style (*Punch and Judy*), the work enquires into curriculum transformation as a possible pathway to "decolonise education". Drawing from the ethos of artistic research, Mistry and Andrews propose ways of acting out against the edifice of arts institutions, and of bypassing (*pavements*) sedimented orthodoxies and knowledge production that refuses to see behind and beyond itself. Such acting out and open confrontation is explored as a liberating way to address the challenge to the arts school – its practice and pedagogy is not reactionary but wholly determined through the political, social and cultural milieu from which that definition is forged. Their sparring style offers discursive observations and enquiries that expose the fault lines of thinking and its operations in the university (*ponzi schemes*). They propose the potentiality of artistic research in institutions to advance decolonial strategies.

In keeping with the potential of artistic research, **Zen Marie** attends to artistic practice as a formation of knowledge without need for further self-qualification. Marie's paper, *The Paradox of the Art School in a University,* explicates how such a position needs to be embraced, rather than artists being forced to conform to the technocratic and rabid rubrics of the neoliberal university system. Marie views the aesthetic as having the potential to enact the double movement of simultaneously refusing to conform and performatively asserting forms and content that are not merely oppositional or reactionary, but are substantively iterative of unprecedented and emergent epistemologies. He draws from practical examples where the paradox of the art school in the university comes to challenge convention and would seem to align itself to a broader project of radical politics. This potentiality embraces epistemological breaks that both the project of decolonisation and its aesthetic forms provoke, and which affect the very core and nature of academic work.

It is through the archival policies, collections and research foci of educational institutions that one set of artistic practices is validated over another. In *Relocating the Centre*, **Bongani Mkhonza** addresses some of the challenges that colonially conceptualised archives present. Drawing from the ongoing discourse on "decolonising the Westernized university" and its museums' management policies, Mkhonza proposes a set of prompts for thinking about and finding ways to move the collections, their practices and policies towards Afrocentricity. He proposes negotiated processes for exploring possibilities beyond the Eurocentric epistemic positions.

Also scrutinizing the factors that inhibit change within South African institutions, **Unathi Kondile** *scratches at the thick layer of colonial dandruff* to expose latent racism towards black people's bodies. He makes the point that in order for a black person to succeed they are forced to assimilate. Using the frustrations of language and self-translation as the barrier to access, he traces the direct and indirect hostilities in art schools, the university and cultural institutions. His focus is on using language in the service of transformation in order to create environments that are conducive to the self-definition of those previously marginalised.

The prevailing Eurocentrism in institutions is examined in **Bekele Mekonon's** article and in the interview that **Ruth Sacks** conducts with the Kinshasa-based artist **Henri Kalama Akulez**.

Mekonon recounts the history of the Alle School of Fine Arts in Addis Ababa and how in its 60-year existence it has (in fact, it hasn't) been *Reshaping* (*the wax*). Mekonon asserts that despite the changing national politics, the art school has not fundamentally questioned its curriculum or institutional structure. Mekonon's *glimmer* of hope resides in a more holistic approach to entrance criteria, in institutional changes which support curriculum shifts, and in acknowledging the realpolitik of the Ethiopian context.

Similarly, **Henri Kalama Akulez** points to the urgency of epistemic re-evaluation. He shares creative strategies that educators and students use to navigate a way forward within the entangled aspirations of decolonising the historical model of the Academie des Beaux-Arts and the practical exigencies of living in Kinshasa and pursuing a degree in art. He describes to **Ruth Sacks** the current and contemporary trends in painting and the challenges encountered in the pedagogical pursuits of the university.

The final interview in this section is with **Miguel Marrengula** from the Faculty of Cultural Studies at the Higher Institute of Arts and Culture in Mozambique. Marrengula offers a comprehensive vision of how the curriculum, the modes of teaching, and education in the arts has to contend with the challenging socio-economic conditions in the city of Maputo. **Nkule Mabaso's** questions expose the differences in political and social priorities that inform how "decolonising" is operationalized. Fundamental definitional discrepancies informed by historical specificities and contemporary political conditions are highlighted.

Section 2 focuses on the poetics of **artistic practices**, and is introduced by **jackï job** through the evocative potentialities of *Third Space in South African Academia*. In an adaptation of a performance-paper she delivered at the Third Space symposium job makes a case for liminality as a way to eschew reductive and binary ideas of culture and identity. The performance and its attendant analysis draw on butoh principles to experiment with form that is not only multivalent, but incorporates polyvocality – using Patwah and Afrikaans to further challenge the centrality of English in academia.

For job, it is the practice of exploring liminal spaces itself that functions as the transformative proposition to avoid fixity or singularity in expressing the connections between politics and its aesthetics.

In a complementary stance, **Sharlene Khan**'s *Unorthodox Autobiographies* captures the performative poetics of her politics. Through her art practice, her words and her body, Khan explores the intersectionalities of her identity in a series of repetitive gestures that aim to confront the institutional structures of the artworld and academia.

In an interview with director and theatre maker **Nwabisa Plaatjie**, the relevance and contemporaneity of adapting the 1989 play *The Native who Caused All the Trouble* is situated in the gendered politics of her directorial interpretation and a radical re-examination of land. **Lindokuhle Nkosi's** interview with Plaatjie offers a refreshingly complex proposition of what it means to be a black woman in South Africa – a futurity of *Land as Milk*. In keeping with the exploration of black womanhood, **Nomcebisi Moyikwa's** performance, *Qash-Qash,* is a provocation that picks and pulls at essentialist notions of "sisterhood". The performance traces the intimate interconnections between different people, places and spaces, placed both in the theatre and outside of it, which contributes to debates about relational geographies of responsibility and embodied agency.

Setting up a nuanced and complex "face off", **Nomusa Makhubu** explores the presentation of blackface minstrelsy and caricature in **Zanele Muholi's** photographs. While Muholi's own enactment of blackface is presented as a celebration of black identity, *Blackface Whiteface!* exposes the double bind and laboured conflict present in Muholi's work. Makhubu cautions against Muholi's striking evocation of the derogatory practices that emerged in nineteenth-century America, where black people were caricatured by white entertainers who darkened their skin and lightened or exaggerated their lips. Makhubu calls for frank and unapologetic engagement with the way specific dimensions of race in the arts are reproduced in recurring symbols of historical black humiliation, which at times re-surface as self-representation and activism. By way of contrast, Makhubu discusses Cele's *Black Off* performances in which Cele plays Bianca White, a middle-class, white South African woman to address the chasms between the consumption of race as image or the minstrelisation of racial politics and the labour of activism.

Through revitalised cinema aesthetics, practitioners **Nobunye Levin** and **Nduka Mntambo** pose research questions that set new politics of film practice in motion. Through *Walking,* Levin explores the limits of gendered *Willful*(ness) by working with the film fragment as a discursive form. There is an insistence on sensuality and emotion rather than narrative through which characters cohere. The strategy of working with fragments invites an open-ended attitude to the experience and brings into play cinema as citation. The essay is complemented by Levin's film work, which is orientated around a set of rhythmic acts: waiting, walking, wandering, willfulness. In exploring these movements and gestures discretely, Levin creates a scaffolded experience-argument for "falling in love" as the political potential to produce "de-colonial love".

Upturning conventional cinema practice even further, Mntambo takes us through his working process towards the manifestation of the three iterations of *Asymmetries* (2017-19) – an installation of moving image sequences. The work is not held together by any grand mimetic narrative, instead it is conceived of as a making-thinking-spectatorial project on the urban environment. It is premised on strategies inspired by

enquiries which capture the difficulties of theorising many quarters of African cities, where complex social interactions challenge normative modes of research. The installation project demands a different conception of the relationship between the screen, the image and the viewer.

Form is one of the cornerstones in **Jay Pather's** performance practice. In his meticulously detailed essay, Pather charts the development of three projects (*Body of Evidence*, *Qaphela Caesar!* and *rite*). The projects are interconnected through Pather's other fundamental concerns: the body, structural violence in South Africa both historically and in its contemporary manifestations, and the relations to space/place. The situatedness of the performances is central to how "memory and apartheid, truth and reconciliation" come to be embodied and expressed in *multiply-layered* and hybrid forms. Pather's paper not only attends to the process and conditions that lead to his insistence on excess and, on layering and counter-narrative strategies, but his recounting of the research-rehearsal process is fundamental to the relationship of aesthetics to the politics of *utterance* (as opposed to the aesthetics-politics of representation).

Pather's parting shot cues to the orthodox strictures of institutional research, which have failed to respond to a society where utterance (gesture) and its various aesthetic forms constitute the pulse of (lived) "decolonial politics". Alluding to the profound disconnect, he writes provocatively at the end, "one hopes that someone sees the point".

Decolonial practices exist as forms of protest and transgression and as aesthetic affirmation of experiences from the margins. Furthermore they secure and safe-guard spaces of resistance to dominant and "institutional" aesthetics. To decolonialise art institutions across the entire spectrum of arts education, including places of exhibition, (taking into account critical reception) entails making the relevant point visible!

2020

How might this John Muafangejo image be inverted to reveal a revised relationship of seeing and being seen. Of being heard and hearing. Of deep listening that does not assume the certainty of knowledge, but recognises all knowledges and experiences.

 The artist sits at the head of the table. He is bearer of a system of knowledge unknown to his audience. How might the members of that audience recognise their complicity in white power – and take responsibility for the privileged place of whiteness and address their own dearth of knowledge in utterances they do not recognise – in languages they do not speak.

Decolonialising is not a mythical endeavour, it is ultimately a politics of recognition. It demands that aesthetics and the politics of practice dismantle singularities and the monolithic – it seeks out the nuances, the co-existence of contradictions and invites us to look, see and listen and to not deny the legacies of privilege borne from structures of power.

Notes
1 Same Mdluli (2017, p79) *Chasing Colonial Ghosts: Decolonizing Art Institutions in "Post-Apartheid" South Africa in Decolonizing Art Institutions* Oncurating Issue 35 / December 2017 pp 79-81
2 Mawande Ka Zenzile (2017) *Decolonising Visualities: changing cultural paradigms and freeing ourselves from Western-centric epistemes.* (MAFA Thesis) Art History, University of Cape Town
3 Gaztambide-Fernández, *Decolonial options and artistic/aestheSic entanglements: An interview with Walter Mignolo Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández,* Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2014, pp. 196-212 2014 R.

Nkule Mabaso is contributing editor to the Oncurating Journal and is the director of Natal Collective an independent production company active internationally in the research and presentation of creative and cultural Africana contemporary art and politics. She graduated with a Fine Arts degree from the University of Cape Town in 2011 and received a Master's in Curating from the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) in 2014. She headed the Michaelis Galleries at the University of Cape Town between January 2015 and June 2021. Mabaso's practice is collaborative and research interests centre around theorizing and articulating nuanced aesthetic questions from the black female vantage point.

Jyoti Mistry is Professor in Film at Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg in Sweden. She works with film both as a research form and as a mode of artistic practice. Select works include: *Cause of death* (2020) *When I grow up I want to be a black man* (2017), *Impunity* (2014), *09: 21:25* (2011), *Le Boeuf Sur Le Toit* (2010), and *I mike what I like* (2006). Her work has featured at festivals and museums including the Berlinale International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, Rotterdam International Film Festival, Durban International Film Festival, Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume Paris, Kunsthalle Zürich, Kunsthalle Vienna, Museum der Moderne Salzburg and the Eye Film Museum, Amsterdam.

Select publications include: *Places to Play: practice, research, pedagogy* (2017) explores archive as exemplar of "decolonised" film practices. She has edited special issues of the *Journal of African Cinema:* "Film as Research Tool: Practice and Pedagogy" (2018) and the International Journal of Film and Media Arts: "Mapping Artistic Research in Film" (2020).

She has taught at University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa), New York University; University of Vienna; Nafti in Accra and Alle Arts School at University of Addis Ababa. Mistry was in the Whitney Museum Independent Artist programme and artist in residence at California College of Arts, and a DAAD Researcher at Babelsberg Konrad Wolf Film University. In 2020, she completed a residency at Västerbottens Museum in Sweden working with the indigenous Sami collection. In 2016-2017 she was Artist in Residence at Netherlands Film Academy. From 2017-2020 she was principal research investigator on a BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) cross cultural project that explores image-making practices. Currently she is editor in chief of PARSE (Platform of Artistic Research in Sweden) and on the editorial board of L'Internationale Online.

On Art Institutions

ArtSearch: Punch and Judy, Pavements and Ponzi Schemes
Jyoti Mistry and David Andrew

The following propositions emerge from an ongoing and disaffected/aberrant yet precise series of conversations between the authors as they have imagined what forms and ambitions artistic research might take on. In sparring with these propositions we allowed the form of the paper to imitate and extend the processes of arriving at the thinking and action that is artistic research.

In November 2016, we convened a symposium that brought together the disciplines in the Wits School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, to address the matter of a shared (or not) vision of what might constitute an arts school in contemporary South Africa. Furthermore we provided an opportunity to consider what the broader vision of an arts school might be in the global South, drawing from the region's own geo-political histories and cultures. At the core of this enquiry was the growing awareness that there was a pressing need to transform curricula and to recognise head-on the priority of decolonising education, given the broader issues of how arts schools were reconstituting themselves globally.

The ethos of artistic research itself is to challenge the hierarchical transfer of knowledge; it is an ethos that encourages open dialogue and exchange—and not "handing over" in a sense of deferring to contemporary positions that come from elsewhere. It is about enabling exchange, which acknowledges processes as central to knowledge production.

(From *Introduction:* ArtSearch Symposium, 9-11 March 2017, Jyoti Mistry and David Andrew).

The Primer, as we termed the November 2016 event, was to set the terrain for a more ambitious ArtSearch Symposium that took place in March 2017.

While the Primer focused on the specifics of the Wits School of Arts, the March 2017 symposium engaged directly with contemporary debates across disciplines as these debates relate to artistic research and its significance in informing arts schools and university research more broadly.

Moreover, there is the urgency to consider the potential relations between curriculum transformation as part of the enquiry to "decolonise education".
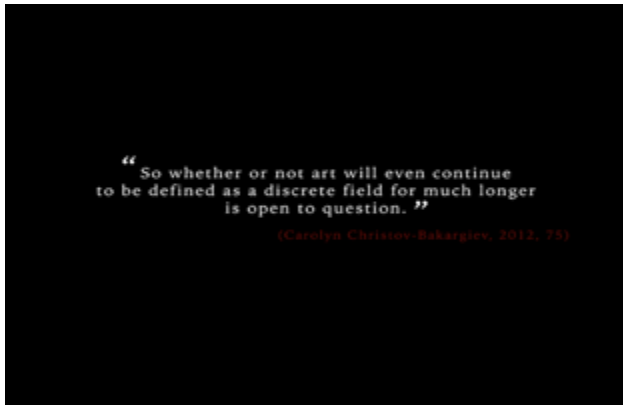   The idea was to use the debates and evolving discussions on artistic research as a way to interrogate the growing uncertainty regarding the role of arts schools and arts education. We also wanted to confront directly the *ethos of artistic research*. We viewed such a confrontation as a potentially liberating way to address the challenge to the arts school—its practice and pedagogy, which advances decolonised education, and which is not reactionary, but wholly determined through the political, social and cultural milieu from which that definition was forged. Stated another way: How can the agenda of decolonising education be defined from within the global South given the specificities of its own histories and could the ethos of artistic research inform this potentiality?

Work board of planning and programme

This paper is a series of thought processes, preparatory considerations and an invitation to enter into the practices and thinking that shaped the March 9-11, 2017 ArtSearch Symposium hosted at the Dance Factory in Newtown, Johannesburg.

We offer a reflection on some of the connections and misconnections between two symposium-convenors, who come from very different disciplinary backgrounds (Jyoti Mistry—Film and David Andrew—Fine Arts), and who have differing political and cultural proclivities. While we were successful in shaping an international and local "meeting of minds and practices", the ideas in this paper offer a more discursive set of observations and enquiries that expose the fault lines of thinking with regard to artistic research, institutions where art is produced, and schools or arts institutions. Increasingly there is an urgency to revitalise practices and pedagogies that make decolonisation, real, tangible, embodied and not simply a metaphor—an idea that we will return to with explicit and implied repetition.

"So whether or not art will even continue
to be defined as a discrete field for much longer
is open to question."

(Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, 2012, 75)

Schambelan and Christov-Bakargiev 2012: 75

Recognising the various playing fields that we occupied; disciplinary specificities and differences meant that we also wanted to create a platform from which we might speak and address one another with some shared reference points.

In preparation for the Primer and ArtSearch Symposium we created and further collated from colleagues a reading list that was made available as another entry point into a conversation regarding artistic research from various disciplinary positions.

"The artist-as-researcher distinguishes himself from other artists
by taking it upon himself to make statements about the production
of his work and about his thought processes. The artist-researcher
allows others to be participants in this process enters into a discussion
with them and opens himself up to critique."

(Jannika Wesseling 2011, 4)

Jannika Wesseling (2014: 4)

"Decolonization is not a metaphor."

E. Tuck & K. Wayne Yang (2012)

This was meant to provide common reference points from which meanings or definitions could be debated and agreed to, and a sense of common purpose (or not) could be achieved.

3 SCREEN SHOTS: From Primer and ArtSearch Symposium
video compilation

"Your bodies are inefficient for the collecting of true information.
All you can do is misunderstand. And so you may as well make an art of it."
"How can you make an art of misunderstanding?"
"By assuming that you can't understand anything, and that nothing
can be understood, because nothing is what it seems."
"But where is the art?"
"The art is to communicate through misunderstanding.
To make misunderstanding the very tool itself"
(Okri 2007, 312-313).

But First:

Why Punch and Judy?
This has become a descriptor for how we began the collaborative interest in artistic research and its place in the arts school. So this is a conversation, an on-going sparring, that has wrested this ill-matched duo into a space where they have become less meta-phors for what might happen in the collaboration and more of the "not a metaphor" that is insisted upon in the writing of Eve Tuck and Y. Wayne Yang (2013). Punch (Jyoti) and Judy (David) become the actants in a space that entertains at times—a ludic leaning to nonsense and an associated epistemic violence.

The Punch and Judy gambit is at once playful, and at the same time jarringly alarming. This is not a straight-forward humour—there is a violence present.

Within this Punch and Judy mantle we have become more and more interested in its propensity for the interpretative and indeterminate rigour (Doll 1993: 182), the (non)sense, the humour and the epistemic violence that characterises how we understand artistic research.

The contiguity of violence and pleasure in the revisiting and revising of Punch and Judy allows an eschewing of politeness without losing this pleasure. It also intro-duces the violence that goes with the "incommensurable" understanding of decolonisation (incommensurable as described by Tuck and Wayne Yang, 2013).

Gayatri Spivak, elaborates on the structural, sys-temic and codified episteme of violence in her seminal text *Can the subaltern Speak?*

"The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us an imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme."

(1994, 82)

What happens in this Punch and Judy space is the harnessing of an energy—a violence—and its opposite is not peace.

Historically the violence of the Punch and Judy roles is rooted in a deeply set prejudice and misogyny. In reversing, re-imagining and delimiting these roles in the research process, a space is created for the aberrant propositioning that allows for a violence (and humour and pleasure in the research process) that maintains an outrage—an acting out against and a bypassing of sedimented orthodoxies and knowledge production that refuses to see behind and beyond itself. These are the epistemic violences that continue to assert themselves in pedagogy, curricula and research.

Chus Martinez, the curator, writes of artistic research in the following way—and these perceptions are insightful for us:

"And this produces a paradox: the relevance of grasping the reverse of knowledge, and the role played (by) both humor and fiction as practitioners of (non)sense."

(2012, 46)

Nikita Dhawan and Maria do Mar Castro Varela question whether there can be a non-violent education. They call for an examination of the (im)possibility of non-violent education—an impossibility that means that our teaching and learning, and research, will be unsettling (2009: 329).

Our concern therefore as artists and educators, and educators involved with artists makes us all the more cognisant of our roles in structural compliance. It has drawn us into an immediate experience of disaffection, on account of the active resistance from within institutional frameworks. The neoliberal agenda that permeates the current Westernised university system (Grosfoguel 2013) is a testament to the various pulls on the academic and intellectual endeavours. It is an agenda that lies at the centre of the artistic research. The recognition of black anger—black rage, and what Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) have recognised as the position of settler innocence, is thus this sparring as an active engagement which directly addresses the historical within the contemporary.

To fully enact an ethic of incommensurability means relinquishing settler futurity, abandoning the hope that settlers may one day be commensurable to Native peoples. It means removing the asterisks, periods, commas, apostrophes, the whereas, buts, and conditional clauses that punctuate decolonization and underwrite settler innocence. The Native futures, the lives to be lived once the settler nation is gone—these are the unwritten possibilities made possible by an ethic of incommensurability.

(Tuck & Wayne Yang 2012, 35)

In short, it has become necessary to recognise epistemic violence produced through institutional fortifications and the fact that these fortifications have facilitated the canonisation of disciplines and institutions. This rigidity is challenged through the ethos proposed through artistic research.

But before we take on epistemologies and their implications for decolonisation it might be useful to address this matter of fortification, since it appears to be at the heart of how we think and where we think,

Garth Stevens "deploys both a psychosocial approach and a decolonial lens to understanding violence and suggests a shift in our gaze towards understanding and theorizing the "how" of violence in the service of the "why" of violence. This revitalization of our theory may be at least partially possible, by arguing against interventionism,

and explains to some degree why we chose not to host the ArtSearch Symposium at the university in which the Wits School of Arts has its premises. Instead the ArtSearch Symposium was hosted at the Dance Factory in Newtown, Johannesburg; a not-for-profit venue with a performance and rehearsal space.
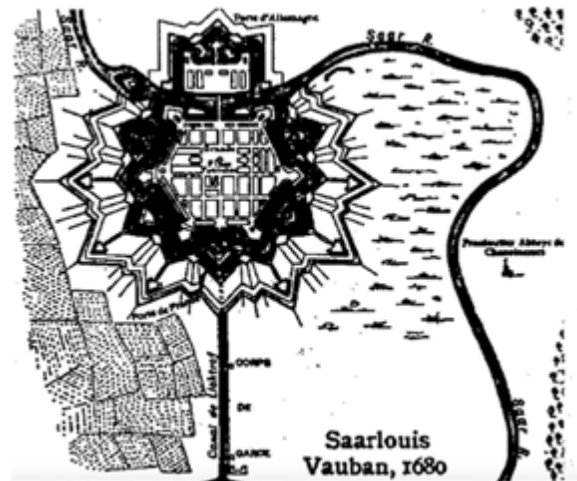
but simultaneously for the re-engagement with issues of morality, for an examination of embodied enactments, and for the exploration of affective practices within violent encounters."

(Inaugural Lecture, 2016, *Rethinking the Psychosociality of Violence: Economies of Morality, Embodied Enactments and Affective Practices*)

… And we also evoke the idea of pavement with its attendant implications of dust, earth, and grounded-ness, and the counter strategies that it poses to fortifications.
    The concept of fortification is something that David Andrew in particular finds useful and there is a quote from W.G. Sebald's book *Austerlitz* that he returns to frequently:

"The frequent result, said Austerlitz, of resorting to measures of fortification marked in general by a tendency towards paranoid elaboration was that you drew atten-tion to your weakest point, practically inviting the enemy to attack it, not to mention the fact that as architectural plans for fortifications became increasingly complex, the time it took to build them increased as well, and with the probability that as soon as they were finished, if not before, they would have been overtaken by further devel-opments, both in artillery and in strategic planning, which took account of the growing realization that every-thing was decided in movement, not in a state of rest" (2002, 19-20).

Saarlouis
Vauban, 1680

Jyoti: Explain why this idea of fortification has been so important for you in thinking about institutions and the idea's relation to artistic research.

David: I have returned to this section in Sebald's novel again and again. Why? I ask myself. Perhaps it is in the recognition of these fortifications having an affinity with contemporary institutional structures—the university as fortification that ultimately becomes the static form to be bypassed, to be moved on from—to be ignored. It is the bypassing that I am interested in—perhaps this is why the Sebald passage haunts me—the acknowledgement that the school, the university is the fortification— and that just as much as it is undergoing a more direct assault, it is also a space of "being ignored". The forms of knowledge production given primacy in the current moment are part of the surging movement beyond the university, spilling onto and along pavements, and further afield.
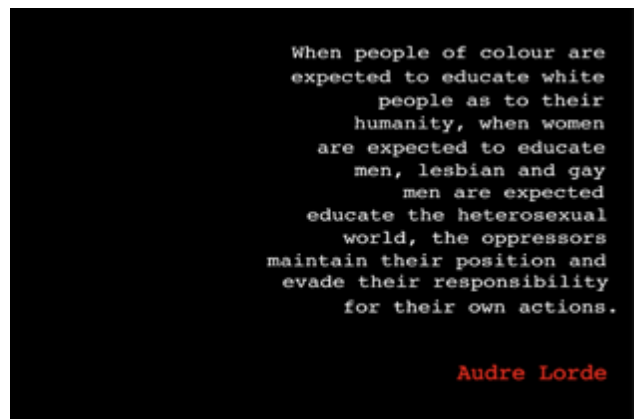
Jyoti: Fortification is connected to violence through "a series of moves to innocence" (Malwhinney, 1998), which problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity (Wayne & Tuck 2013: 3). Decolonisation is often

temporally located—but this is a misunderstanding in my opinion—its traces are through the ways in which the fortification has been challenged through art practices: erosion, cracks, crevices and fissures become evident in the fortification when artists, poets, musicians work to counter canonised paradigms through writing their experiences, politics and artistic prowess to create new languages in artistic expressions of experience and knowledge. Decolonisation also should not be conflated with this immediate historical present—the resistances that are part of a decolonising moment have operated at different moments in various historical art practices. For the black artist (for instance) this location of artistic expression is central to the resistance to imposed identities and in favour of an identity that is not defined through fortification.

The strained sounds of John Coltrane amplify the cracks in the fortified walls of music (as a form that produced knowledge). Coltrane's music created a form of artistic expression that was much later institutionalised and which claims an immediate experience that is at once embodied and speaks directly to the politics that it is resisting.

The measured words of Audre Lorde (1984: 114) cannot be read as only a call to political change and struggle— the words create lyrical truisms that are expressions of decolonial action.

When people of colour are expected to educate white people as to their humanity, when women are expected to educate men, lesbian and gay men are expected educate the heterosexual world, the oppressors maintain their position and evade their responsibility for their own actions.

Audre Lorde

Jyoti: The colonial project determined the narrative and shaped the identities of both the oppressed and the oppressor; natives and settlers. But lived experiences that do not conform to these grand narratives are subverted by stories and artistic expressions that are not immediately recognizable because they are not known. Audre Lorde's insistence on "poetry is not a luxury" as being core to the politics of resistance to white patriarchy is one such strategy challenging the fortification of art forms. And certainly, in his time Coltrane's interventions are political and aesthetic strategies to split, shatter if not smash fortified structures of knowledge and art drawn from immediate lived experiences otherwise not found in the grand narrative.

*...it doesn't matter if we believe in a grand narrative or indeed in its shadow; both are too clearly delineated to convey the shape of reality. Our lives do not have a center, a single focal point; what goes on inside our heads is too chaotic for us ever to achieve such focus. Life's like that too: Like Tristram, we spend our lives jumping from one subject to another, telling stories, following our fancies, and saying **If only** to ourselves, whatever happens to come into our heads. We are forever open to— disposed to—distraction, and our thoughts wander; we will stop a story midway to launch into a joke, and in so doing we reflect the surprise and coincidences of life in ways that a grand narrative never can.*
(Orhan Pamuk 1999, 2007, 132-133)

David: The quote from Orhan Pamuk's *Other Colours* (2007) reminds me of a mobile phone conversation we once had while I was crossing a carpark; an in between space anticipating - and in - motion – incessant departure and arrival. I recall you using Laurence Sterne's character Tristram Shandy in this conversation as an injunction to digress; to allow for the generative distraction; to be alive to moments that unsettle and make strange. It is these spaces and moments that I understand increasingly as being about those aesthetic strategies that exist outside and beyond the grand narrative and invite an artistic research of unlearning and unknowing. The space and moment of multiple by passes, of multiple passers' by.

The implication of Pamuk's insight is that the institutions that we inhabit are fortifications. If this is the case, how do we situate ourselves as the "bypassed"?
Can we leave the fortification and be in the space of what we are referring to as the pavement and join those that by pass?

This is not to elevate the pavement as a mythical site of unending promise. Rather, for those who venture there, it is a space where experience and knowledge production collide. The pavement and the spaces adjacent to it are a series of positions in a state of antagonism towards the fortification. What we argue for, is a space for these antagonisms to collide without being enamoured with one position being better than another.
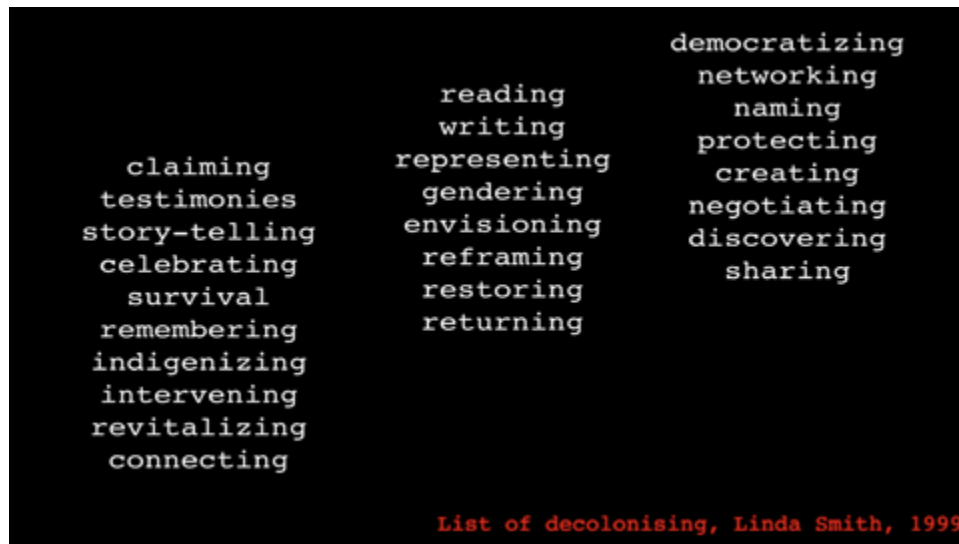
Pavements and bypassing (photo: Jyoti Mistry and David Andrew)

A frequent observation is that the divide between what takes place in the arts school, as opposed to within other varied spaces of cultural production, reveals a telling disjuncture that requires ongoing interrogation. As such, the reference to pavements is also an injunction to assert the significance of these other spaces as critical for the ongoing unsettling of the arts school. With more specific reference to the ArtSearch Symposium, the presence on the programme of both the Afrika Freedom Station (Johannesburg) and RAW Academy (Dakar) invited an interrogation that signalled the paucities and limitations of arts schools—their incommensurability with a decolonisation project. Pavements suggest spaces of traffic; spaces of transit; spaces of exchange; spaces of dialogue, stepping into, stepping off—and also spaces of unboundedness, of the substances that are emitted and discharged when space and object are unsettled.

  In the two spaces—Afrika Freedom Station and RAW Academy—the immediacy of these entities' ability to react to socio-political and cultural enquiries was more evident; they were spaces that could think about their formation (as opposed to fortification) in more malleable ways than arts schools of universities or institutions were able to do.

If incommensurability is to find itself in the arts school, the methodologies offered by Smith (1999) suggest a different arts school where artistic research is always at the forefront of unsettling imported models of familiarity and ease.

democratizing
networking
naming
reading   protecting
writing   creating
representing   negotiating
claiming   gendering   discovering
testimonies   envisioning   sharing
story-telling   reframing
celebrating   restoring
survival   returning
remembering
indigenizing
intervening
revitalizing
connecting

List of decolonising, Linda Smith, 1999

David: Through this understanding of artistic research we arrive at something we believe is worthy of our closer scrutiny—an insistence on critical proximity as opposed to only a critical distance, where imagination is at the core of everything we do. Maxine Greene brings together imagination as a pivot that informs practice and pedagogy.

"...we begin to reclaim our research: by first decolonizing the spaces that make research possible, our identities are also transformed."

(Miguel Zavala 2013, 68)

Jyoti: If *Austerlitz* has been a recurrent reference from which you take inspiration, I have returned to the ideas of what *Releasing the Imagination* (1995) implies and the provocation and challenge it offers in what it means to take histories and identities into account in developing pedagogic strategies. The provocation in critical pedagogy is crucial because it makes visible two vital challenges to the pedagogue and the institution. The first is: can the limits of the pedagogue be overcome so that they do not become the limitations for the students and, the second, implicit in this thinking, is the awareness that the pedagogue in the institution is also circumscribed by the specifics of their histories and political or cultural limits.

"Of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions."

(Maxine Greene 1995,3)

Critical pedagogy invites a reflection on the institutional positioning and parameters of one's own historical, political and referential imagination. It brings about an awareness and recognition of the triggers and markers that constitute the possibilities of new references, and hence makes the familiar estranged and strange. This estranging and making strange is what produces the disquiet or the anxiety that makes decolonial action appear threatening and produces an apprehension regarding the certainty of knowledge.
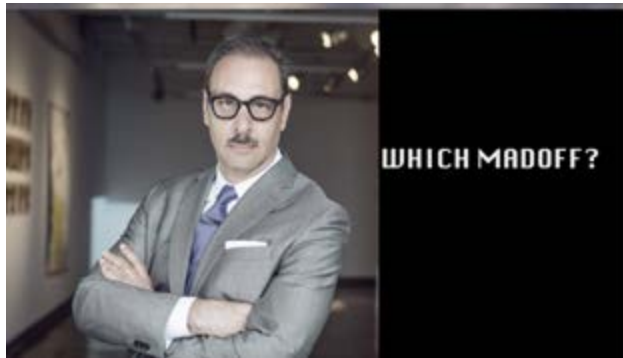
David: And where does the Ponzi Scheme reference emerge from in all of this? Again, a moment during the research towards the ArtSearch Symposium where the disconnect of names in a Google search promotes one Madoff (Bernie), above another Madoff (Steve) as a potential candidate for the symposium programme. And through this a consideration of what practices, seemingly divorced from artistic research, might reveal in illuminating ways emerges—the university, the institution as a structure that is now at a point where it promises a return that is increasingly empty.

"An evolved profile of contemporary artistic practice has pressed the art school as a pedagogical concept itself to address what an artist is now and what the critical criteria and physical requirements are for educating one – or should I say educating tens of thousands, as the complexities of capital markets worldwide have fostered an industry."

Steve Madoff

Steven Madoff, the curator and author of *Art School: (Propositions for the 21ˢᵗCentury)* (2007).

Jyoti: While Madoff describes a rather cynical perhaps even depressing account of the current state of the arts schools in a neoliberal environment—the corporatisation of universities and arts schools—Boris Groys offers a counterpoint that reminds us of the potential, the possibilities that emerged with the ArtSearch Symposium and which are present in the ideas of the Third Space Symposium.

Here it is instructive to consider Simon Sheikh's writing on artistic research from 1999. Sheikh invokes the Nietzschean understanding of knowledge production as "an ambiguous mixture of pain and pleasure" (p.4) rather than something altogether more harmonious. Sheikh's insistence that artistic research is less about knowledge production and more about "thinking" as "networks of indiscipline, lines of flight and utopian questionings" (p.6) points to the making strange, the unsettling that emerges as the space of decolonisation. And perhaps this is the nub of it—knowledge understood as "what you know, what you have learned, is also a limitation: something that holds you back, that inscribes you within tradition, within the certain parameters of the possible" (p.6).

"Art education is an education that functions more as an idea of education, as education per se, because art education is finally unspecific.[...] Paradoxically, the goal of this isolation is precisely to prepare students for life outside the school, for "real life." Yet this paradox nonetheless is perhaps the most practical thing about contemporary art education. It is an education without rules. [...] Ultimately, teaching art means teaching life."

(Boris Groys 2009, 27)

By using the imaginative space that an arts school is, this place of imaginative possibilities and solutions to change how we think, think about students, pedagogy and context. Artistic research, as imagined in this aberrant/disaffected and entirely pleasurable conversation, insists on the estrangement and unsettling that disallows knowledge.
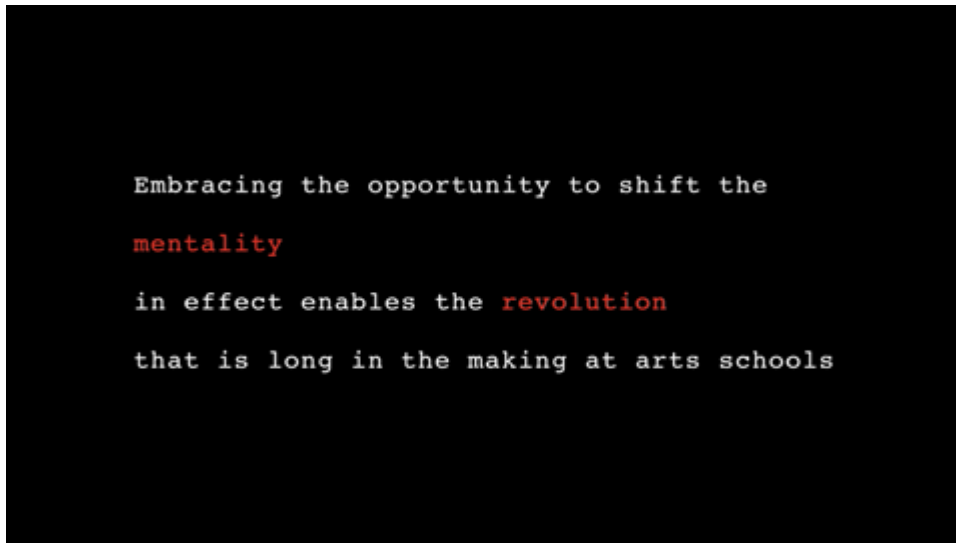
(IMAGE / TEXT: Jyoti Mistry and David Andrew)

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Current research interests include the tracking of histories of arts education in South Africa and southern Africa more broadly; the *Another Road Map School Africa Cluster* (Cairo, Harare, Johannesburg, Kampala, Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Maseru, Nyanza) research project; the *On Location* research project with the Konstfack University College of Arts, Craft and Design in Stockholm, Sweden; and the reimagining of the arts school and artistic research in the context of the Global South. He is a member of the task team for the NEPAD Regional Conferences on Arts Education in Africa (Johannesburg, South Africa, 2015, Cairo, Egypt, 2017).

Jyoti Mistry is Professor in Film at Valand Academy, University of Gothen-burg in Sweden. She works with film both as a research form and as a mode of artistic practice. Select works include: *Cause of death* (2020) *When I grow up I want to be a black man* (2017), *Impunity* (2014), *09: 21:25* (2011), *Le Boeuf Sur Le Toit* (2010), and *I mike what I like* (2006). Her work has featured at festivals and museums including the Berlinale International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, Rotterdam International Film Festival, Durban International Film Festival, Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume Paris, Kunsthalle Zürich, Kunsthalle Vienna, Museum der Moderne Salzburg and the Eye Film Museum, Amsterdam.

Select publications include: *Places to Play: practice, research, peda-gogy* (2017) explores archive as exemplar of "decolonised" film practices. She has edited special issues of the *Journal of African Cinema:* "Film as Research Tool: Practice and Pedagogy" (2018) and the International Journal of Film and Media Arts: "Mapping Artistic Research in Film" (2020).

She has taught at University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa), New York University; University of Vienna; Nafti in Accra and Alle Arts School at University of Addis Ababa. Mistry was in the Whitney Museum Independent Artist programme and artist in residence at California College of Arts, and a DAAD Researcher at Babelsberg Konrad Wolf Film University. In 2020, she completed a residency at Västerbottens Museum in Sweden working with the indigenous Sami collection. In 2016-2017 she was Artist in Resi-dence at Netherlands Film Academy. From 2017-2020 she was principal research investigator on a BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) cross cultural project that explores image-making practices. Currently she is editor in chief of PARSE (Platform of Artistic Research in Sweden) and on the editorial board of L'Internationale Online.

The Paradox of the Art School in a University
Zen Marie

The debates about art and research and the seemingly endless variations of art as research, research as art, practice-led research, practice-based research, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, all circulate around a fundamental paradox. It is a paradox similar to that in psychoanalysis of trying to access the subconscious through the conscious. Such at attempt in relation to art is filled with clever tricks, but those trying to access the subconscious are always aware of the difficulty, if not futility, of this ambition.

It is a paradox that moves across registers of the rational and intuitive, the linear and the non-liner. It is a paradox that I will explore here, in terms of the art school within the university. It seems as if we, in the art school, similarly deploy a myriad of tactics in order to fix, programme and rationalise processes that are in fact fluid, spontaneous, ephemeral and intuitive. I believe that it is a mistake to attempt to resolve this paradox.

We should rather hold onto the structure and challenge of this paradox in order to mobilise the fullness of the radical, critical potential that sensory, sensual and embodied forms of knowledge hold. We must value the paradox, as we resist mechanised, technocratic methodologies of measurement and assessment that are part of increasingly neoliberal and commoditized forms of knowledge gate keeping.

Forms of knowledge and decolonisation
The core of the matter relates to the kinds of artefacts or objects we deem to be legitimate carriers of knowledge. The university relies on forms of rational argument that draw on scientific method or variants of Hegelian or post Hegelian dialectics as authoritative and *universally* accepted vehicles for knowledge production and transmission.

While rational argument in its various forms may be universally accepted as a carrier of knowledge, it is by no means uncontested. Even within the history of the university (and Western knowledge) there are numerous contestations to the hegemony of what has more recently been enshrined within high modernism and structuralism. And certainly, the pushbacks that coalesce around postmodernism and post structuralism, for example, are important to learn from. However, while we can thank the likes of Derrida for concepts that are un-writeable or unspeakable, we need to register these challenges and attempt to go further.

Practices and modes of working that are performative, sonic, embodied, haptic, visceral, visual, (perhaps even olfactory), must resist the compulsion to establish equivalences, or to find programmatic systems of measurement and assessment. It is in this resistance or in the stubborn refusal of equivalence that we find the radical potential of the aesthetic as a form of knowledge production.

It is here that the aesthetic enacts the double movement of a refusal to conform, but at the same time, performatively asserting forms and contents that are not merely oppositional or reactionary, but substantively iterative of epistemologies that are unprecedented, new, and emergent.

In this way, the ambition and radical potential of the paradox of the art school in the university should be for nothing less than moments of epistemological breakage or rupture, which have implications that resonate far beyond the university.

These moments, where old orders of doing, making and thinking are undone, reorganised and revised are the kinds of radical moments that can contest positions of privilege that opportunistically feed on our daily lives for the enrichment of the academy, the state and neo-liberal global orders more generally.

For us, especially for those of us situated on the continent of Africa, working in the increasingly contested space of the university, it is clear that the urgency of the project to dismantle the hegemony of these global orders is also a project to dismantle the *intellectual, cultural and economic* legacies of colonialism and apartheid.

The terms of contestation move between, and across, post colonialism, decolonisation, africanisation and pan africanisation, with such terms hotly debated as the ground for contestation is carved out and delineated.

If all of this sounds too revolutionary or even quasi mystical, allow me to sketch a few practical examples where the paradox of the art school in the university comes to challenge convention and would seem to align itself to a broader project of radical politics.

If we take seriously the aesthetic as a challenge to epistemological form, structure, and administration, then we need to question a number of aspects of the university that we currently take for granted. While there are many issues to add to this preliminary list, I will look specifically at four: entrance criteria, assessment, the privileging of the written text, and the peer reviewed journal.

Entrance criteria

At the moment, for university acceptance in South Africa, we use the Admission Point Score (APS), which is calculated from high school leaving exams. This is a form of evaluation that is based on two assumptions:

1. That the structure of exams, which are predicated on rote learning and memory retention, is the kind of pedagogical model and assessment tool that is appropriate for evaluating and projectively assessing a potential student.

2. That all high school education is delivered and received in a standard and consistent manner across sites (and across learners within sites), which in turn allows for a point-based system to be a meaningful index or metric that gauges a student's performance.

We know both these assumptions to be highly problematic. To blindly administer the APS system as if it constitutes an even playing field is to be complicit with the exclusion of students from schools that are under resourced in the most extreme ways. In South Africa this is effectively to exclude poor black students from university. And this is even before we get to the question of fees.

The Art school, by virtue of the kind of work we do, has the opportunity to contest this. We already augment the APS system with the audition, interview or evaluation of a portfolio. While it would not be a huge leap to propose a more fundamental overhaul of acceptance criteria, it would address the limits we place on access and thereby diversify knowledge production.

Assessment

We also need to radically and critically revise our processes of assessment: the examination structure as it currently stands is modelled entirely on the examination of written work. The application of exam policy from the social sciences to the creative arts is as clumsy as it is crude. Aesthetic or practice led work urgently calls for a complete overhauling of the examination system as studio or practical work is clearly at odds with many elements within current exam policy.

This begins with (but is not limited to) the awarding of a mathematically derived percentage to creative work. Again, the challenge posed by the aesthetic can be mobilised in service of broader questions of how we assess knowledge as successful, valid or legitimate.

Written form

The insistence on the written form as *the* privileged and authoritative vehicle of knowledge production needs to be reconsidered. The challenge of post graduate work in this regard is especially important, as we are increasingly asking why it is that we need a written component to support often rich, rigorous, critically and theoretically engaged practice.

To challenge the privileging of written form is to ask questions about the legitimacy of orality and other modes of knowledge production outside of Western traditions. Connected to this issue, is the primacy of the English language as the prioritised medium of instruction and examination. Again, the fact that the aesthetic explicitly proposes alternative modes of communication means that it can potentially work in line with broader calls to reform the university in terms of its language policy.

The peer reviewed journal

We also need to question the peer reviewed journal as the gold standard of research. Journals and their attendant economies have become profitable to a few select publishing houses that increasingly support insular and often mediocre networks of people and institutions. The peer review as a form has long been unquestioned as the accepted method of assessing and legitimating knowledge production.

Aesthetic and creative practice has struggled to fit into this economy and now poses serious questions about its continued legitimacy. This issue has recently been taken up in an online journal, *Ellipses*, a project based at the WITS school of arts, which aims to challenge the peer reviewed journal from the vantage point of the aesthetic.

End comments

These are just some of the urgent tasks facing a university that is committed to change. In all these areas the nature of aesthetic practice and creative research poses challenges that begin in the respective creative disciplines but go beyond to affect the very core and nature of academic work across the board.

Often, the argument for not being able to do this work is that the problems seem too big, too deeply systemic or that there is simply no time—student numbers are too high and academics and administrators are barely keeping up with processing the roll-out of what already exists.

What is clear from recent events in, especially, the student movement, is that these are excuses and that they are not enough. Mediocrity will not be tolerated. The pace and rate of such debates needs to quicken. It is not safe anymore for lacklustre, bellicose, slothful academics, technocrats and administrators to preside and profit over institutions that have in most senses failed.

What is needed are creative and brave leaders who possess the imagination, and are willing to take the risk, in challenging the very terms and conditions of knowledge production. These are leaders who will be able to think of knowledge as something other than an instrumentalised commodity to be sold according to increasingly neo-liberal business plans. They are people who can embrace the revolutionary potential of the epistemological break that both the aesthetic and the project of decolonisation provoke.

I realise here that the manner and specifics of such a project— which sees the aesthetic as part of an epistemological break or rupture, which can work in line with the call for a more public, engaged and critically responsive university, and which treats the university as a space that challenges rather than creates privilege—is a complex and immense task. But it is a task that I believe is not only urgent but imperative.

———————————————

Zen Marie is an artist who works in a variety of media. Core to his practice is a concern with how meaning is formed through different media, spaces and processes. While working from a position that begins with photography and filmmaking he increasingly works in performance, sculpture, graphic processes and writing. While Marie has engaged with many thematic areas of focus, including international sport, identity, nationalism, and public infrastructure, the binding link between these diverse areas has always been the relationship between power and the subversion of power. Marie lives, works and lectures in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Relocating the Centre: Decolonising University Art Collections in South Africa
Bongani Mkhonza

The collection of art by South African universities was inherent to colonial practice and central to this was a Eurocentric, colonial logic of classification and justification. As a decolonial project, I argue for the relocation of that particular centrality and question the *situatedness*—the epistemic involvement within a particular space or context—of the philosophies that inform the university art collections in South Africa (Daniel and Greytak 2013; Mignolo 2003; Walsh 2007). I then argue that, because of the legacy of colonialism in Africa, the tastes and aesthetics of art collected by university art collections are still largely influenced by Eurocentric epistemologies and their imagination of Africa (Mungazi 2005). In South Africa, like in many other former European colonies, "the production of knowledge […], has long been subject to colonial and imperial designs, to geopolitics that universalizes European thought as scientific truths, while subalternising and invisibilising other epistemes" (Walsh 2007: 224). Under the guise of neutrality and the universality of philosophies, as shaped by postcolonial theories "provocative arguments have been advanced to the effect [that] African philosophies were very few […] moreover, were a reaction to colonialist imagination of Africa as an ahistorical and dark space that is bereft of humanity" (Mpofu 2014: 1-25). This article derives its theoretical lens from the decolonial advancements pioneered by influential scholars from cultural, feminist, and postcolonial studies, mostly from Latin America and the global South.

Art collecting in South Africa, mapping the colonial logic
The multiple meanings ascribed to objects gathered for supply and storage in museums emerge from different theoretical perspectives and diverse fields, like ethnography, anthropology and material culture theory. The elements from which meanings can be derived broaden the scope of museum studies and allow for objects and artefacts to be interpreted and reinterpreted from a wide range of theoretical approaches so as to deepen the knowledge on the items kept (Antoš 2014: 115-128). John Mackenzie examines in detail the origins and development of museums in six former British Empire colonies, including South Africa, in the 19th and 20th centuries (2009: XV-272). He exposes the political and ideological reasoning behind the question of why museums collect. He posits that museums are not neutral cultural spaces, but have policies, either formal or informal, designed around particular ideologies. Pointing to the power relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, Davis argues that imperial powers often collect, define, classify, and represent the cultures of the colonies in a predetermined way so as to create a particular way of thinking about the coloniser and colonised.

In South Africa, based on colonial logic, museums in Cape Town always made clear distinctions between artefacts of natural history, ethnography, and cultural history, and even housed them in different buildings. Furthermore, as noted by Elizabeth Rankin, "White culture had been separated from ethnographic material" (2013: 80 et seq). Rankin demonstrates how in South Africa such cultural traditions were reconfigured, especially after 1994: "The Social History Museum, which had since 1960 represented European settler

history (together with some antiquities), has set that material aside and been redeveloped as the Slave Lodge Museum—the original function of the building it occupied" (2013: 72–98).

According to William Simmons, the colonial method of categorising cultural artefacts reflected "an expression of the widespread ethnocentric idea that one's society is the norm and what lies outside is a distortion of that standard" (1988: 1). From this perspective, it becomes clear how "historians and anthropologists have interpreted the encounters between Europeans and native people" (Simmons 1988: 1). Examples of such collections of history, artefacts and cultures are exhibited in ethnographic museums to this day and some researchers still use these collections and exhibitions to produce knowledge about those cultures. Such prevailing knowledge systems are shaped by a European bias towards colonised native cultures; something that my arguments in this article seek to counter. In line with my perspective, Lynda Kelly (2006) affirms that:

> Museums, their missions, their civic, social responsibilities, and their modes of engagement with communities are in a constant process of transformation in response to social and economic imperatives at local, national and global levels. There is a need for museums to stay relevant and be responsive to pressing social and environmental issues such as population and sustainability, social justice, and Indigenous rights (2006:1).

To this end, it is important to measure the impact of museums and art galleries on the cultural wealth of society.

On the ontology of why art is collected by museums

The history of art collections is closely linked both to the reason behind the collection and the historical period in which it occurred. My intention is, from a rational frame of reference, to examine the way in which university museums play a major role in institutionalising the conception of a collection (Macdonald 2006). The process of collecting by museums in general "recontextualise[s] objects […] collecting removes objects from their original contexts and places them in the new context of the collection […], this re-contextualisation of objects primarily in terms of other objects with which they are considered to be related, is a fundamental aspect of the kind of collecting legitimised by the museum" (Macdonald 2006: 82). In this sense, from its inception, the act of collecting involved context and meaning-making so the idea that artworks are intentionally or unintentionally re-contextualised by museums through an act of collecting is not new. Tony Bennett (1995) states:

> The space of the museum […] thus becomes one in which art, in being abstracted from real-life contexts, is depoliticized. The museum, in sum, constitutes a specific form of art's enclosure which, in Crimp's postmodernist perspective, art must break with in order to become once more socially and politically relevant (1995: 92).

According to Bennett "the origins and early history of the public museum an institution on whose distinguishing characteristics crystallized during the first half of the nineteenth century" (1995: 92). I consider Bennett's genealogy of a museum as a tracing line to suggest that museum artefact collection was also formalised around the same timeline. This claim is also highlighted by Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown (2005):

> During the great age of museum collecting which began in the mid-nineteenth century, this was a one-way relationship: objects and information about them went

from peoples all over the world into museums, which then consolidated knowledge as the basis of curatorial and institutional authority. Often this relationship was predicated on another set of relationships, between museums as institutions within imperial powers and source communities in colonised regions (2005: 1).

The advancements given by Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown (2005); Theodor Adorno (1967); Douglas Crimp (1985) and Anne Coombes (1988) on why museums collect artefacts provide clear evidence to construct a thesis to address the question at hand. The question of how the collecting processes were organised in ways in which progress became synonymous with colonialism. Here, I rely on my considerations of René Descartes' *Second Meditation* (Beck 1965) to map the genealogy of museums to their practice of collecting objects and artefacts, and their colonial justification. I consider Cartesian philosophy to be fundamental in the modelling of the paradoxical power relationship which privileges the European thinking "mind" over the non-European peripheral "'body" (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 240-270). In accordance with this philosophy, the notions of a modern museum were framed by the European thinking "mind" situated at the centre as the apparatus to be used to collect, arrange, classify and study the cultures of the non-European "exotic" periphery. The paradoxical relationship between the mind and its material existence, as elaborated in Cartesian philosophy, is at the heart of the question: why do museums collect objects and artefacts? The Cartesian propensity to separate the thinking mind from the body creates hierarchies of importance within itself. The mind is positioned at an active level, which allows it to process thinking that creates certainty about its existence and enables it to produce knowledge about the body.

While this perspective prevails, the epistemic sustenance of the former colonial museums and their art collections can never be conceived outside of this Western philosophical logic, which, as part of its colonial mission, must by definition misrepresent non-European cultures. The main purpose of art collecting, as seen from a typically conservative European mind, was to capture and create new ethnographic knowledge systems about the non-European-colonised other, which would, later on, be used to query their humanity. This Eurocentric logic can be interrogated to a great degree through the works of authors such as Cole (1985); Griffiths (1996); Schildkrout, Keim (1998); Krech , Hail (1999); O'Hanlon , Welsch (2000). Thus, "within this context, ethnographic collections, in particular, were built up on the premise that the peoples whose material heritage was being collected were dying out, and that the remnants of their cultures should be preserved for the benefit of future generations [of the Empire]" (Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown 2005: 1). Hitherto, the agenda was to maximise the prospect of successful conquest and mastery of the non-European other. For example, in the so-called former southeast Belgian Congo, colonial "administrative officers were expected to spend 20 days per month in the bush and were encouraged to publish their ethnographic impressions in one of the Belgian Congo's numerous 'native affairs' journals" (Young 1965: 12). David Maxwell goes further to reveal that in the Congo "a strong impetus to collect and classify came from the Belgian museums..., and the colonial museum in Tervuren" (Maxwel 2008: 325-351). Put differently, Maldonado-Torres asserts that "the Cartesian idea about the division between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* (consciousness and matter) which translates itself into a divide between the mind and the body or between the human and nature is preceded and […] built upon an anthropological colonial difference" (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 240-270). The colonial powers collected artefacts from the colonised societies and cultures for their development. This model was perfected using museums and "it became a model of power, as it were, or the very basis of what was then going to become modern identity" (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 244).

Museums and art collections in general are institutions of power and knowledge production. According to Maldonado-Torres, after the knowledge systems that create hier-

archies in understanding humanity were produced, "the whole world was practically seen in the light of this logic" (2007: 243). Corresponding with the model of Euro-colonial advancements—as asserted by Emmanuel Arinze in a 1999 public lecture in Guyana—it goes without saying that "over the years the museum culture has spread to nearly every part of the world and today it has become uncommon to find any country that does not have a museum." I draw parallel arguments with Maldonado-Torres's (2007) theory on coloniality, which asserts that:

> The Cartesian idea about the division between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* (consciousness and matter) which translates itself into a divide between the mind and the body or between the human and nature is preceded and even, one has the temptation to say, to some extent built upon an anthropological colonial difference between the *ego conquistador* and the *ego conquistado* (2007: 245).

For Maldonado:

> The very relationship between colonizer and colonized provided a new model to understand the relationship between the soul or mind and the body; and like-wise, modern articulations of the mind/body are used as models to conceive the colonizer/colonized relation, as well as the relation between man and woman, particularly the woman of color […] this difference translates itself into European and non-European and into lighter and darker peoples (2007: 244).

Franz Fanon refers to the above scenario as a relationship between people in the "zone of being and in the zone of non-being" (1963: 2).

Within this context, it is worth noting that in the "post-colonial" era, museums around the world and, especially in the former colonies, have been changing their epis-temic position about the power relations that symbolised where they started. Arinze, for example, in the 1999 public lecture mentioned above, advocates for a transformed version of a museum:

> In our modern society, it has become necessary and indeed urgent for museums to redefine their missions, their goals, their functions, and their strategies to reflect the expectations of a changing world. Today [it is advocated that], museums must become agents of change and development: they must mirror events in society and become instruments of progress by calling attention to actions and events that will encourage development in the society […]. They must become part of the bigger communities that they serve and reach out to every group in the society (1999: 1-2).

Arinze's assertion demonstrates that the epistemic colonial residue that is still reflected in the image of museums can no longer be sustained. His proclamation is a call for the transformation of museums, that is, the transformation of not only the image but also the plural epistemic representation of objects, artefacts, and artworks. Such transformation, however, should not conceal what John Comaroff calls "the tensions and contradictions of colonialism" (1989: 661-685). The transformation of both the image and the represen-tation of museum content henceforth paves the way for immediate in-depth exploration of theoretical insights on Africa from both sides of the proverbial fence. Other scholars, such as Dubin (2009), Mudimbe (1988), Mungazi (2005) and Wilkinson (2000), suggest that during colonialism African artefacts were archaeologically excavated, collected and exported to museums in Europe to be studied and appreciated ethnocentrically. This, coupled with other more abrasive cultural assimilation methods, altered the way African culture was

created, seen, read, and interpreted. This modification extended colonisation to the aestheticisation of art in Western terms. Henceforth, studies produced during this era mostly depicted African art as inferior, primitive, or absurdly romanticised.

For instance, some European philosophers used their experiences to develop, for the first time in history, particular ways of seeing and reading African cultures. Among the critics of such philosophers, Kwame Botwe-Asamoah singles out two in particular: "prominent among such infamous European scholars were the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher, David Hume, and the nineteenth-century German philosopher, Georg Hegel" (2005: 6). Hegel's thinking on Africa was strongly influenced by the school of theological rationalism and its thinkers including Rousseau, Lessing, Kant, Hermann, Johann Herder, and Heinrich Paulus. Hegel states: "this is the land where men are children, a land lying beyond the daylight of self-conscious history, and enveloped in the black colour of night. At this point, let us forget Africa not to mention it again […], Africa is no historical part of the world" (1956: 99).

However, what is worth noting is that such philosophies developed tools of analysing African art and cultures that were not there before colonialism. Some argue that these tools of analysis assisted in making visible to the Europeans, and to the Africans, the fields of culture that, before colonialism, had never been conceived of outside of their original contexts. The perspectives as debated demonstrate that over the years, colonial thinking has immersed itself deep into the museum collections. Interestingly, it also remains unimaginable to me to abandon the discourse and practices that maintain the foundations of the museum in Europe as a centre and its former colonies as the periphery of the same postcolonial structure. To this end, African art produced in the pre-colonial era, during the colonial and postcolonial era remains under the Eurocentric institutional structures and laws of aesthetics in terms of its philosophical readings, its intrinsic value, and its interpretation.

I believe that Afrocentric philosophies have an ability to frame the new reading of art produced in postcolonial Africa. Along with Molefi Asante I contend that Afrocentricity, as a process "of thinking from where you are", has the capacity to renew our contact with Africa, and to lead us into a greater and more intimate appreciation of the cultures and peoples of the continent (1993: 62). Scholars working within Afrocentricity have "in trying to reconstruct African thought by evaluative analyses of its intellectual foundations, shown how there can be a different and more worthwhile way to identify what is authentically African about African thought and therefore African art" (Wilkinson 2000: 293). Going forward, researchers need to ask themselves, what do these polemics around the collection of art mean for the future of university art collections?

'Situatedness': Debunking the illusion of neutrality towards Afrocentricity

The arguments raised in this article are part of the negotiated process of exploring possibilities beyond the Eurocentric epistemic position. I employed decolonial critical perspectives to explore the geopolitics of philosophies used to determine what is collected in university art collections. The construction of my arguments was mainly informed by the ongoing discourse on "decolonising the Westernized university" and its museums' management policies as put forward by Grosfoguel, Hernández, and Rosen Velásquez (2016).

My contention was premised upon the claim that the injustice has been perpetrated by the way Eurocentric philosophies have, as Catherine Walsh puts it, "historically worked to subordinate and negate 'other' frames, 'other' knowledge, and 'other' subjects and thinkers" (2007: 224). Walsh supports this claim by asserting that, "to speak of the geopolitics of knowledge and the geopolitical locations of critical thought is to recognise the persistence of a Western hegemony that positions Eurocentric thought as universal while localising other forms of thought as at best folkloric" (2007: 225). And African cultures have been for many years portrayed by museums in general in this inferior fashion.

Aimé Césaire, in the 1960's, pioneered the movement of scholars which objected to the positioning of Eurocentric thought as universal, while stagnating and localising African thought and imagination to just ethnographic data that existed outside of any philosophy. Césaire viewed Eurocentric knowledge as provincial rather than absolute, thus asserting: "I'm not going to confine myself to some narrow particularism" (Césaire 1972: 84). In my deliberations, I have explored the geopolitics of knowledge systems, and as a result am proposing Afrocentricity as the philosophy upon which universities in Africa could anchor their acquisition of artworks. However, it is important to point out that I am not proposing Afrocentricity as an alternative to Eurocentrism, but rather as a way to examine the agency of Africa. As Molefi Asante (200) asserts:

> The idea of examining African phenomena from the standpoint of Africans as human agents in not a reactionary idea, but rather the only correct and normal way to engage the information […], it is not Eurocentrism that gives rise to Afrocentric perspective but rather the idea of Africans speaking for themselves. While it is true that dominant interpretations of Africa have been Eurocentric, the Afrocentric response would have been necessary regardless of the previous centricities (2002: 97).

According to Asante (1993), as cited in Houessou-Adin (1995: 188), "non-hegemonic, it is not a philosophy that blindly claims African superiority over other cultures […] [but rather] posit[s] that it is possible that many perspectives cohabit, live side by side" (1995: 185-200). According to Ayele Bakerie "the idea of centeredness finds perhaps its most dynamic articulation and movement in the theory and praxis of Afrocentricity" (1994: 131–149). Afrocentricity as a paradigm of thought

> recognises the need to look at Africa's cultures and history from their own centres or locations […], it is a proposition to validate, regenerate, create, and perpetuate African life and living whole and unhindered, informed by African perspective or world outlook (Bakerie 1994: 131–149).

Asante further says: "the theory posits that African peoples are active, primary, and central agents in the making of their histories." Afrocentricity has its African history, philosophies, and indigenous knowledge systems; however, cultural policies in Africa do not take into consideration the possibility of centring art collections on such African thought (Asante quoted in Bekerie (1997: 12).

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Africa.

Ukuqhuqh Inkwethu yobuKoloniyali: Getting Rid of the Thick Layer of Colonial Dandruff on our Heads
Unathi Kondile

An adapted version of a presentation at the 3rd Space Symposium: Decolonising Art Institutions on Friday, 25 August 2017.

Meaningless memory: imagining the self with the tongue of an other

> Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated —over-populated—with intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process.
> (Bakhtin, 1981).

In 2012 whilst employed at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in Cape Town I decided to embark on a study on how to transform the media and institutions like Michaelis through language. This was sparked by conversations I'd had with isiXhosa speaking students over the years; a student would express a concept in isiXhosa and the student and I would agree that it would be an excellent concept to execute as an art project. Once the work was up for examination the student would have to define and explain their work in English. Needless to say this did not work; often they would struggle to express the originating concept behind the work, which may have relied on an understanding of traditional customs or been a play on particular customs. This would result in a low mark or even failure. I watched this student frustration play out for nearly seven years at the University of Cape Town. Some students would drop out feeling the curriculum was not designed for them and did not speak to them. The institution, in its colonial nature, was not for them.

It came as no surprise when, on 9 March 2015, student activist Chumani Maxwele threw human faeces at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town. It also came as no surprise when the concept of decolonisation began to gain momentum in the

same year. Prior to that Cape Town university and others across the country had been grappling with an indeterminate agenda of transformation. The primary focus until 2015 had been on getting more black academics into the academy, ensuring black academics would be notched up to professorship at the same rate as their white peers. There was also the agenda of admitting more black South African students and making the university environment conducive to them. So, for a very long time, transformation was fixated on race, and conversations rarely crossed over to language. At times transformation would lean towards addressing gender and equality in general. But language remained the elephant in the room.

As part of my study I decided to re-establish an isiXhosa newspaper, *Isigidimi samaXhosa*, which would cover current affairs, business and the arts in vernacular. Working with twenty volunteers from across the country and Fine Art students we got the publication out in August 2012 and it continued monthly until July 2014 when it was taken up by Independent Newspapers. Renamed *I'solezwe lesiXhosa* it became South Africa's first daily isiXhosa newspaper from March 2015. In the same year I relocated to East London in the Eastern Cape Province and began to work very closely with rural communities. In so doing I noticed a trend of museums and community art centres being developed in rural areas like Qunu and Hamburg, others in city townships, like New Brighton in Port Elizabeth. What struck me about these centres was that after a while they become white elephants. Most of them have since then been shut down. In this paper I use the examples of the Red Location Precinct in Port Elizabeth, the Nelson Mandela Museum in Qunu and Emthonjeni Arts Centre in Hamburg to consider the reasons for this.

Imagining ourselves into existence
On the 16th of September 2016 my reporters and I headed to the rural town of Alice in the Eastern Cape where the Minister of Arts and Culture, Nathi Mthethwa, was to unveil the tombstone of Nkosi Tyali of the Imingcangathelo chiefdom. Many rural dwellers

from surrounding villages attended, they were mostly elderly isiXhosa speaking people.

All speeches were conducted in English and the inscription on the tombstone itself was in English. There was no translator on site. In a rural setting, where many of those in attendance never went to school and had little grasp of English, the presiding authorities began to unpack the memory of their chief in a language "foreign" to the audience.

The inscription on the tombstone reads:

> Herein lies the son of King Ngqika, Tyali of imiNgcangathelo Chiefdom. A direct descendant of King Phalo, King Rharhabe, King Mlawu and torch bearer of the grand-father's house in his role as ixhiba [loose transl. head] of amaNgqika. Having departed on this earth on the 12th of May 1842, this gallant warrior rests in this Tyhume valley after fighting and participating in numerous anti-colonial wars … .

How is it that we address one another in English knowing full well that the majority speak isiXhosa? When tombstones are not even written in isiXhosa what kind of memory do we seek to create for ourselves? Do we imagine ourselves in the languages of an other? It would seem so.

This is where decolonisation has to start. In language. When you fail to articulate yourself in your own language amongst your own people you have been thoroughly colonised. There has to be a conscious attempt at ridding oneself of such captivity.

The use of English has long been seen as a performance that reflects one's level of education or *ubugqobhoka* as we would call it in isiXhosa. To speak English is to distance oneself from the state of being an uneducated person or *iqaba*. For a Xhosa artist, creating memories of the self in the English language can be seen as a performative battle between *ubuqaba* [state of being an *iqaba*] and *ubugqobhoka*.

This further exemplifies a rejection of self and begs the question "in what language do you see yourself as a person". The authentic self has been eroded and the people of the colonised culture find themselves immersed in colonial structures and practice. The problem begins when these colonial structures work against such people.

Ukuqhuqha inkwethu yobukoloniyali

A loose translation of the above subheading would be "getting rid of the thick layer of colonial dandruff on our heads". The problem with language being one of the most brutal forms of colonisation is how natural, innocuous and fluid it seems. It is common to hear rural parents say that the English language opens opportunities

Unveiling of Chief Tyali Tombstone in Alice in 2016. Photograph by Siyanda Jantjies. Courtesy of L'solezwe lesiXhosa.

Xhosa and Rharhabe royalty pose around Chief Tyali's English tombstone in Alice in 2016.
Photograph by: Siyanda Jantjies. Courtesy of *I'solezwe lesiXhosa.*

for their children. English is seen as an enabler and therefore it becomes very hard to problematise it. Yet, as Michael Bakhtin asserts, language is not that simple:

> Ulwimi aluyonto icangcatha ihamb' ihlala apha naphaya, esuke yosuleleke nakomnye umntu. Ayonto isuke ibe yeyomnye umntu. Ingakumbi olungengolwakhe. Ulwimi lugcwele qhu ziinjongo zabanye abantu. Ukufundisa omnye ulwimi lwakho ukuze afane nawe, athethe njengawe, akusokuze kumenze wena. Leyo yinto enzima kakhulu.
> (Holquist, 1992, isiXhosa translation by Unathi Kondile).

English translation:

> Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—over-populated—with intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process (Holquist, 1992).

One of the Michaelis School of Fine Art Masters students I encountered at the time of writing this paper was Mawande Zenzile. Our interaction began in 2012, during his undergraduate years towards a BA Fine Art.

In 2016 he embarked on his MFA studies, battling to find a supervisor who could fully grasp what he was working on. Zenzile's research was on Decolonising Visualisation: Freeing Ourselves from Western-centric Culture. Only in 2017, in his last year, after battling away for x years, did he find a suitable supervisor in Dr Nomusa Makhuba who guided him until completion. In this student's earlier years and whilst I was still at Michaelis he would come up with deep isiXhosa titles for his work. I recall him trying to explain the term *Igoqo* (a space for matriarchy) in English, it did not make sense. His work, titled *Ukubeka Inqawe,* also had to be explained at length. Yet, if these were presented to an isiXhosa speaking audience they would make sense and reflect the intelligent play on these words. It becomes cumbersome to have to go through university or art school expressing yourself in an other's language for your work to be understood and for you to attain a pass. Dominance over "an other" is easily transmitted via language. You can hand back land, give back buildings and businesses, but if the language of operation is still that of the previous owner you will find it very hard to progress. And that is where we find ourselves. We inhabit spaces that were not created for us and we expect these to adapt to our expectations.

Appropriation of existing colonial structures is a futile exercise. What we should be working towards is the establishment of new spaces. Spaces that can be customised to our own needs. This requires a lot of work

and patience. We further need to develop more literature in our languages, begin to conceptualise in our languages, write dissertations in our languages and submit these as such. That is when genuine transformation begins.

        To bring in more black academics and to increase the black student body does nothing to change the institutional culture if the language remains English in these places. In the next sections I will give examples of how language and "foreign" culture fails when placed in the wrong context.

Port Elizabeth: Red Location Precinct

In 2005 the Red Location Precinct, comprised of a library, art gallery and museum, was opened in Port Elizabeth's New Brighton township. The total cost to build the precinct was estimated at 2.1 billion ZAR. The materials used to construct the three buildings were corrugated iron, concrete and wood, which mimicked the style of the corrugated iron shacks surrounding the precinct.

        Imagine the sprawling gigantic eyesore of a 2.1 billion structure that houses books, historical artefacts and expensive artworks in the midst of dire poverty.

The residents would not have it. In October 2013 residents of the Red Location area of New Brighton shut the precinct down. They were protesting for houses. They wanted better houses. Bigger houses. The sight of the expensive precinct was an insult to their woes. Windows were broken, tyres burnt until the precinct was completely closed. Today it remains closed with no hope of ever re-opening.

Debates raged in numerous letters to the editor of Port Elizabeth's *The Herald* newspaper, with the blame for this closure rightly assigned to the protestors. What was wrong in these debates was the assumption that the protestors lacked an appreciation of the Red Location Museum's presence. Terms like "boosting the local economy", "attracting tourists" and so forth were bandied about in an attempt to make those involved in the museum's destruction feel guilty.

        In reality, nothing about that museum spoke to any of the local community's needs. It was a project brought about by a "foreign couple" that wanted to share their personal encounter of Port Elizabeth. In other words this was a foreign memorial site brought

Pathway through Shacks Leading to the Red Location Precinct in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, 2017.
Photograph by: Unathi Kondile.

Temporary Closure Notice on Red Location Museum Window, in Port Elizabeth, 2017.
Photograph by: Unathi Kondile.

into a space that could not possibly appreciate it. How can people implant their own memorial in a space belonging to others? In a space ridden with poverty, how can one imagine an appreciation of art, memory and libraries? It is Amilcar Cabral who stated: "Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward."

The primary concern for Red Location residents was housing, not a cultural institution towering in their midst. To them it was a meaningless sight

Qunu: Nelson Mandela Museum

Twenty seven kilometres outside of Mthatha in the Eastern Cape there is a left turn that leads into Qunu village. On top of a mountain sits a beautiful modern structure with an art gallery, museum, library, lecture theatre, conference venues and offices. The museum was opened to the public on the 10th of February 2000.

This museum in Qunu has been closed since December 2015: there was initially a large sign saying it would re-open in April 2016— which was later changed to April 2019. This has since been amended to 2021. The closure was related to pay disputes and undisclosed internal squabbles.

The first time I entered this museum was in October 2012, while distributing copies of *Isigidimi SamaXhosa* newspaper. There were school buses outside and many eager learners queuing inside. The security guards mentioned that it was also frequented by tourists. In the year of Nelson Mandela's death the place was buzzing with tourists all wanting to soak up the life of Mandela.

Inside the museum you will find that all the exhibits are labelled in English and signage around the buildings is in English. Who was this site built for? It was certainly not built for the surrounding Qunu community. A rural Qunu dweller does not one day suddenly think to take a stroll to their local museum. To them it is yet another expensive structure intruded into their midst.

The usual "boost the local economy" rhetoric is bandied about, but then one has to pause and wonder why it is now closed. Surely, if a structure of that sort has a steady income and stream of visitors it cannot just close. Does the community share a sense of ownership over it? Can they too be protective of that space? The idea of an entire space dedicated to one man is surely an act of deifying someone. Are museums the way in which Xhosa people usually remember someone? If not, then what are the ways in which we Xhosas create memories of our deceased heroes? Who and how is the ancestor, now known as Nelson Mandela, recognised by his people? Do they speak to Mandela through these buildings or through the traditional means of

Entrance to Nelson Mandela Museum in Qunu, 2013.
Courtesy of Nelson Mandela Museum Photographic Services.

Sign outside the Nelson Mandela Museum in Qunu, 2017.
Photograph by: Unathi Kondile.

slaughtering a goat and brewing traditional beer? Is there such a thing as a public ancestor? And traditionally how do we collectively remember an ancestor, if indeed such an ancestor exists?

Our ancestors do not inhabit large constructed spaces, but are recognised through customary practices. The erection of museums is therefore a foreign concept that does not speak to the majority Africans who live around these structures. Such structures begin to take the form of meaningless memorial sites. Their closure evokes no protests or clamouring to see them reopen.

The 21st of February is recognised worldwide as International Mother Tongue Day. This year, on the 28th of February 2018, the Pan South African Languages Board (PanSALB) visited the Nelson Mandela Museum in Mthatha.

The intention of the visit was to request that the museum include isiXhosa or at the very least provide isiXhosa translations below each picture or Mandela artefact. The Eastern Cape PanSALB manager, Xolisa Tshongolo, said: "We have come across a terrible sight of this museum that is in a Xhosa speaking region but has no isiXhosa translations on its walls."
The spokesperson of that museum in Mthatha, Siyanda Silinga, promised that they would do all they could to include isiXhosa. It is now expected that all works in the museum will carry an isiXhosa translation as well. A report detailing this was carried on the I'solezwe lesiXhosa website.

The fact that a language board has to personally visit a museum and request that they include their mother tongue in their establishment is worrying. How can your own language be an oversight? It is this persistent need to accommodate others prior to getting your own house in order that will see us not progressing.

At present, it is common to hear isiXhosa speaking people saying that isiXhosa is a difficult language to read. Some go as far as saying they prefer English. Upon closer inspection you find that they are inept with English. But still prefer English.

Hamburg: Emthonjeni Arts Centre
Driving towards East London from the small coastal town of Port Alfred one comes across a sign that says Hamburg, a small village that was founded by German settlers in the 1800s. The turn-off leads one into ten kilometres of very bumpy gravel road after which mud huts appear and then the sprawling cream-coloured Emthonjeni Arts Centre appears on the mountain.

The structure was built at an estimated 40 million ZAR and includes twenty-two bedrooms for artist residencies, plus a theatre, gallery, shop, restaurant and craft centre. It was run by Nomsa Mazwai, who, when asked about the reason behind opening an artist residency in middle of a rural area responded: "A lot of people who live here were very talented and their work would not sell and so the idea was to expose their work to international markets."

Out of the three examples used in this paper Emthonjeni Arts was by far the most community inclusive. Artists and the elderly people from Hamburg were regularly on site, producing arts and crafts, including bead work. It was often said that there were more staff members than visitors at the centre, which was true. When last I was there, in December 2012, I was the only guest, and I ate alone in a restaurant that did not have many of the items listed on their menu. I wondered how long the centre would last and why such a structure had been built in such a small village with a small population and a terrible road leading to it.

On the 24th of October 2014 the following notice was posted on the Emthonjeni Art Facebook page:

> As some of you know, we had to close our doors as the government withheld /didn't send our remaining startup funding. Emthonjeni Arts had to dissolve and is in the process of liquidating. We no longer operate the facility in Hamburg. This is what we managed to create in under 18 months. Sustainable rural development.

One thing about rural areas is that they have no real central area, everything is spread out and there are many villages within villages. You travel long distances and the roads are gravel. One has to wonder how one even begins to establish an artists' residency in the middle of far-off rural village.

Emthongeni sadly stands as another Eastern Cape white elephant.

Conclusion

Having gone through the above three examples one is left with one question: Why did they fail?

The simple answer is that they were not built for the people. Self-aggrandising models of memory and popular culture do not work in a predominantly rural province like the Eastern Cape. We have to begin to conceptualise cultural centres that include the local people. Emthonjeni Arts was a good idea but built in the wrong area. It would have been best placed in a big township like Mdantsane in East London; here it could have employed people to create craft work on a large scale for export to international markets. Rather than being located in Hamburg and waiting for a handful of visitors to make the long journey the centre, theatre and performing spaces could have been built in Mdantsane and used to train some of the local youth in that populated area.

As for the Nelson Mandela Museum in the small village of Qunu, it has simply been a case of appropriating forms of memory that are foreign to the local people and placing them in the midst of those not attuned to such customs. This is exacerbated by the fact that eve-

Temporary Closure Notice on Red Location Museum Window, in Port Elizabeth, 2017.
Photograph by: Unathi Kondile.

rything is then done in English in a predominantly Xhosa region. A museum of this nature would work abroad or in a big city like Cape Town.

The Red Location Museum is another example of an intrusive outsider gift. You cannot erect a symbol of wealth in the midst of poverty. Each day the locals wake up in their shacks to be greeted by a 2.1 billion structure right outside their door. It is to spit on the faces of the poor. It should have been placed in Port Elizabeth's central business district.

Lastly, as someone who runs an isiXhosa newspaper and regularly interacts with rural dwellers, I have seen the confidence and intellectual rigour of isiXhosa speakers engaged in discussions. I have equally seen the same people reduced to invisibility or not being listened to when, in different settings, they articulate their ideas in broken English. While I have used isiXhosa as an example for decolonisation, it is simply because it is the language I am working with. I could just as well have used any other vernacular language.

We need decolonised institutions that operate in our local languages. It cannot be that twenty four years into this democracy there are still millions of people who cannot have a voice that is equal to others because they do not know or have strong command of English. Decolonisation will not come from the appropriation of colonial spaces; it will come from self-reflecting and acknowledging the authentic self first. The fastest and easiest starting point is language. The temptation to be understood by the world first, without being understood in your own home, will forever undermine the self. Let us imagine ourselves in our own languages.

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Reshaping Wax
Addis Ababa—the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design
Bekele Mekonon

The Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in Addis Ababa, which has survived multiple official regimes, reached its sixtieth year in 2018 according to the European calendar. During its long journey, the school gradually and unconditionally embraced a Eurocentric "Academie des Beaux-Arts" type of educational structure that has never been questioned.

Modern education in general and Art education in particular was given serious consideration after the 1941 return from exile of Emperor Haile Selassie. Locally the first institution of its kind, the Addis Ababa Fine Art School was founded under the Department of Education and Fine Arts. Fifty years later, the school was renamed in honour of its founder, Alle Felegeselam.

Felegeselam, a young, enthusiastic Ethiopian art graduate from the Art Institute of Chicago in the early 1950s, worked diligently for the formation of this important school. He was lucky to have influential supporters from Haile Selassie's palace, including Princess Tenagnewerk (elder daughter of the Emperor) and Kebede Michael (government minister, poet and prolific author). With help from the Emperor and sympathetic members of the expatriate local business community, the art school was built and inaugurated by Haile Selassie on 23 July 1958, the date of his own birthday.

Felegeselam became head of the school and the only Ethiopian teacher. The rest of the faculty members were Europeans who came to the country for various purposes. To give a typical example, one of the earliest contributing teachers was an Austrian professional sculptor called Herbert Sailor. He left Vienna on an adventurous motorbike journey, crossing the Mediterranean and riding through the North African desert until he reached Addis Ababa in mid-1956. There he decided to suspend his trip and remain for good. Within two years of his arrival, Sailor was invited to join the brand-new art school, where he became a prominent instructor in drawing and sculpture for more than 17 years.

Alongside the school was a group of traditional painters working in separate studio spaces in a distinctly traditional style. However, the sudden intoxication of the newly introduced naturalistic technique had begun to undermine the traditional approach and both students and teachers of the school turned their backs on the modest traditional artists and their home-grown style. Traces of their work can still be seen on hundreds of canvases that remain piled up in storage.

The question that remains unanswered is why the school's curriculum failed to incorporate even a tinge of indigenous elements. This is even more surprising given that Felegeselam was himself from a family of traditional painters who ascribed to strictly orthodox religious values and beliefs. Today it is hard to imagine the new art institution on the soil of independent Ethiopia with not a trace of Ethiopian traditional culture in it.

It was at that critical inaugural moment, according to several scholars (Elizabeth Giorgis and Essey G. Medhin) *et al* (2010) that the Alle School of Fine Arts set the cultural agenda for the curriculum that was to be unquestioningly followed from then on. While a "master-apprentice" system is an old and widely practiced approach, this was not encouraged within the new art school, even as an alternative channel alongside the modern one. Instead, the Eurocentric art education system was emulated in its totality and not only in the subject of Art. Possession of a university degree became what people strove for in every discipline. As Ethiopians, our voluntary acceptance of this situation has meant that homegrown or indigenous scholarship has been severely marginalized. The result is that conducting a workshop or a master class by homegrown intellectuals outside the university system in places such as monasteries is very difficult to do.

After a couple of decades, some concerned Ethiopians began to criticize the deliberate absence of homegrown knowledge in the curriculum of the modern education system including that of the art school. Among the champions of local knowledge was Eguwale Gebreyohanis, who, in his *Yekefitegna timihirt zeyibe* (The methods of higher education), (1965) wrote: "[T]he curricula of modern education should include the prolific resources that comprise traditional knowledge."

At the early 1970s Ethiopians began returning from both eastern and western Europe to replace the faculty at the art school, which was still dominated by European instructors. These Ethiopian graduates from European higher education institutions (particularly the ones returning from France and Germany) succeeded in creating an alternative agenda within the established curriculum of the school. Gebre Kirstos Desta introduced a German expressionist flavour, while Skunder Bogassian injected the curriculum with afro surrealistic fusion. The excitement elicited by the new ideas was immense and continued to be fertile ground for decades. It was primarily students who were attracted to and followed those tracks who eventually succeeded in their careers both in Ethiopia and abroad.

Coming back to the nature of the curriculum, even though the basic principles of the European academies were routinely applied, up until 1974 there had still been a measure of flexibility, and teachers could adopt alternative approaches like the ones mentioned above. In this regard, the generic nature of the curriculum left room for some flexibility, moreover, the professional and intellectual balance among the instructors at the time was a major factor. Students had the opportunity to open up their minds with multiple artistic options to follow.

The nonaligned foreign policy of Haile Selassie meant that students were sent for further studies to both Western and Eastern Europe. Most students who had an artistic and cultural background preferred to join East European academies, which functioned more or less according to a 17th century French academic canon. From 1975 until the collapse of the Soviet Union, a great number of Ethiopian students were educated in Eastern European academies. Nearly half of them returned home to become art school instructors during the next 45 to 50 years.

With the 1974 replacement of Haile Selassie's regime with that of the socialist military junta, the art school faced an inevitable challenge from the party propagandists. In order to continue to exist the art school was required to serve the regime by producing propagandistic material, such as posters, illustrations and murals. It was during these 17 horrendous years that the art of poster making, along with the work of the admirable

German Expressionist artist, Käthe Kollwitz, was introduced locally for the first time. Benefiting from the crafts and skills of the school, the regime remained friendly to the existence of the art school. The dominance of instructors from Communist Eastern European academies meant there was a prevalence of ideology of the same origin. It was pointless to think of fundamental change or revision in that particular curriculum at that moment in time.

At the beginning of the 1990s more than 98 per cent of the school's instructors were from Eastern European academies. Despite recurrent political-economic changes in the country during the 1990s, this homogeneic pattern among instructors meant that the schooling system remained unchanged.

While the original objective of the art school had been primarily to produce art teachers, the institution ended up producing primarily practitioners of art, with strong technical skills in their respective fields.

Despite the school's resistance to change it has managed to survive for more than sixty years (1958 to the present). One of the reasons for this is that it was for most of the time the only higher education institution for art in the entire country. Another reason for the school's survival has been its strong studio-based training programme, particularly in drawing and painting. Furthermore, as long as the Alle School of Fine Arts has continued to provide the best art skilled technicians in the Ethiopia, the government has remained happy, which in turn means that the school continues to receive state funding.

While there is no question that skill is in itself a valuable asset, the school's resistance to change needs to be questioned: *In a rapidly and continuously changing world, is it feasible to continue as an art school, by adamantly subjecting Art to a narrowly fixed and outdated rule?*

– There is no reason to remain this narrow in outlook other than the failure of a system that excludes artists from any involvement in the current massive reconstruction process of Addis Ababa.

– There is no reason for remaining so limited other than the stagnant teaching process, which produces voiceless artists who are incapable of understanding the recent act of neo patronization by the Western embassy mission in the capital and its authoritarian meddling in the artistic affairs of the country.

What is to be done?
Nowadays, the question of reinventing a system within art schools has become a global one. From my recent informal conversation with Ugandan and Kenyan professionals, I have learned that the nature of the problem in the eastern region of Africa seems more or less identical.

Professors in East African institutions should genuinely come together and commit themselves to serious and profound academic discussion and debate, particularly on the fate of their respective institutions in the 21st century. The existence of serious problems should be admitted and strongly prioritized.

If "change" is the agenda, then the button can be triggered only from within the system. In the past ten years, the demand for change has increasingly been knocking on the tight doors of the existing system, from both the artistic community outside the Alle

school and from within the school. To a great extent the demand for change from the students supersedes the intellectual sphere of their teachers.

No matter what the reaction from the Alle school is, here is nothing to prevent the institution from testing the new possibilities already observed among artists around the globe. It is time to go forward before students lose faith in the school.

The necessity for change — an immediate solution

There is always an alternative solution for a given problem. In a system like education, particularly in art education or an art production system, there are numerous formal and informal alternatives.

For various reasons, such an informal reaction is unlikely to work in the current Ethiopian political and economic environment. The challenge should be happening on a more formal level in relation to the legislation, particularly as regards the "Harmonization rule" in the higher education proclamation of July 2009. This rule stipulates that only thirty percent of the total university intake will be comprised of social science and humanities students and seventy percent will be engineering and other hard sciences. This ratio is a clear indication of the Ethiopian policy's short-sightedness regarding the arts and the soft sciences. Furthermore, there are clear contradictions in the current policy for national art with billions spent on Art education at the same time as the intake numbers are reduced.

"Harmonization" is a guiding control system that is intended to homogenize subjects across universities in Ethiopia. For any subject offered, every university offering that subject is required to harmonize its content with that of other Ethiopian universalities. In other words, the content (of sociology, for example) must be the same if not an actual replica for all departments in the country. Ethiopia currently has 33 universities (MOE, 2016). Besides Alle Arts School at the Addis Ababa University, only Mekele University has so far managed to open an art department. However, a second university is on its way to opening an ambitious art department with a budget more than 500 million Birr (close to a quarter of a billion SA rand) on the bank of the Blue Nile.

These art departments have no choice but to follow the harmonization rule. This means a duplication of the existing curriculum of the Alle. If all 33 universities were to open identical art schools it would mean national bankruptcy in the art education of the country. And if the Alle Arts School, Fine Arts is going to set the curriculum for the entire country this makes transformation within the school itself all the more urgent.

Recommendations

Following my emphasis on the need for urgent system transformation, I make the following recommendations:

1. Think of a new educational system that is responsive to the local realities and compatible with the global standard. New is always relative—it is important to capitalize on what is already best in hand, and then to look for what complements that to fill the gap that makes it nearly complete.

2. Consolidate the curriculum with relevant theoretical and philosophical inputs to make the existing expertise meaningful to its time. Engage the professors and the students in the process. Every chapter of Eurocentric art history is already in question. It is time to engage in a deconstructing process rather than maintaining the status quo.

3. Introduce comprehensive guidelines and versatile techniques that closely respond to the contemporary demand.

4. Introduce new selection criteria to identify talented students. From my personal experience the rule that we have been using so far is insufficient, particularly in a less urbanized Ethiopia. As in any art school in the developed country only those candidates who demonstrate high level performance will have the chance to join a school. Talent can be demonstrated in several ways, but the majority of candidates, who may come from underprivileged parts of the country, will always be overlooked if a single-rule talent search process is used. Multiple criteria should be introduced to identify multiple forms of ability.

5. Curriculum change alone is not enough to bring about the necessary change. Rather, the actors on the ground should believe in it, dedicate and play in harmony. In the case of the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design fundamental structural adjustment must be initiated. At this point, the frightening "animal" called adjustment might offend many who trained within and comfortably live through the old scheme. It is critical to convince these groups that change is inevitable and for the good of the next generation and the country in general. Furthermore they should be assured that they will not lose their titles and jobs because of this transformation. Instead there is room for them to continue to contribute with the skills they have.

Already there is a glimmer of hope in the occasional activities of the art schools, such as workshops, as well as the regular schedule of the new graduate programme. However, the non-traditional performances, the workshops and the regular graduate programme are currently run in a hostile environment. Animosity, insecurity and deflation are evident. I personally believe these small glimpses of new possibility are the initial steps along the bitter road towards the inevitable change.

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Bekele Mekonnen was first appointed as a junior lecturer at the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 1984. He continued in this position until 1987 and then worked as a lecturer between 1994 and 2010. From 2011 until the present he has worked as a senior lecturer at assistant professor level. From 2001 until 2004 he acted as director of the school for one term and from 2010 to 2012 he completed a further term. He led the task force for the upgrading of the school in 1999-2001. During the years 2001-2013 he served as a member

of the academic council, the head of the Sculpture Department and as a chairperson of the Curriculum Revision Committee. He currently coordinates the graduate programme in the Film Production Department. His ongoing and long term involvement in the school's academic affairs and frequent visits to higher learning art institutions abroad have enabled him to make a critical comparison between the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design and others around the globe. In 1998 he and a group of colleagues instituted a process towards fundamental change in the academic structure of the school which placed the curriculum at the centre of this transformative process.Today, despite the challenges from the traditional establishment, the struggle for inevitable change continues alongside the rushing shuttle of each day.

Painting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Culture and Identity
Henri Kalama Akulez interviewed by Ruth Sacks

Ruth Sacks: Henri, please tell me briefly about colonial histories of painting in the DRC?

Henri Kalama Akulez: Painting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was introduced from its inception by the idea that art should be the expression of collective cultural identity. As a result, paintings were produced in the name of the culture that had to be expressed—if one believed to have it—or to find it again if one thought it to be lost. Congolese artists, mostly graduates of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Kinshasa, are very limited in their choice of means of expression, as they believe that they can only express themselves and deploy their talent within the restricted framework of ethnic identity. The concepts of culture and identity are perceived as static entities, a heritage that indelibly marks the individual and defines it in a certain and authentic way. The desire to account for this "African cultural identity" has generated over the years an "African art" that came out of what I call the "mould of African art", a stereotyped and sanitised art, comprising the elements of an "African painting": African masks and statuary, African pictograms, ideograms etc. This approach is the product of internalisation over generations and the different perceptions and conceptions of culture and identity, including identity (primitive), authenticity (Bantu) and "Magicians".

RS: One of the aims of the publication *ONCURATING.org* is to think about what "decolonising" might mean in terms of making art within institutions. Decolonising is a major preoccupation in South African universities at present. To my understanding, the overall concern is to work out ways of breaking with pedagogies and histories that uncritically follow structures first laid down in colonial and apartheid practices. My impression of spending time at Académie des Beaux-Arts is that the discussions and concerns taking place are different to those in South Africa.

Could you give an idea of what you feel are the most pressing issues are at ABA today?

HKA: There are three big issues that we have to deal with, with equal urgency, at ABA: The first is the environment in which teaching must take place. We do not have sufficient material for teaching. Teachers have to make do without a single bench or drawing table, only plastic chairs. Teaching can not be well organized under such conditions. This is what we've been facing and what we need to resolve in terms of infrastructure.

The second is to have a good curriculum: a curriculum that suits and looks after the kind of student who is graduating from this school. We are reviewing studios and constantly working on this and on the question of what we have been teaching until now.

The third issue is the quality of the teachers: are they qualified, and if they are not, what can be done with an unqualified teacher? We need to get the funds to get teachers on exchange programmes, but also organize exchange programmes for students. Students should be able to go on to get a Masters and PhD. So these are the main issues to address: the infrastructure, the curriculum and the quality of the teaching.

RS: Is decolonising a similarly dominant concern in the Kinshasa academy?

HKA: How to decolonise the institution? The problem is seen in a different way. What we are dealing with in art today—and the work that is being done—is more concerned with the heritage of the Africanist painters. These were mainly European artists that came to Africa, for example, Fernand Allard l'Oliveir, Jean Dunand, Maurice Loutreuil, Lucie Coustutier, and Marcelle Ackein (mentioned in Lynne Thornton's *Les Africanistes Peintres Voyageurs 1860-1960,* 1998). The work they did set up certain archetypes of African art. The Congolese people quickly forgot that this way of working was a colonial style of painting. They took it as authentic Congolese painting. The tendency is rather to see all new media and new approaches of contemporary art as colonial works. These are the kind of works that are seen as colonising the school and the ones that should be kicked out of the institution. This attitude forgets that we have always been in a colonial way of working

at the school and that we now have to decide what we think is best for the institution. So this is the situation: being in a colonial mentality without being aware of it.

RS: New media—video, photography—these are all seen as a colonial medium?

HKA: Yes, for some. Some students see these modes of working as trying to copy a Western way of working and therefore a colonial way. They think that we should remain African, while they are not aware that those paintings are colonial too.

RS: Would you say that this is encouraged by the conservative part of the academy? (I am thinking here of the factions that were visible in the Kinshasa Conference that took place in January 2016, which was held of ABA).

HKA: They are not conservative so much as they are unaware of the colonial heritage of African art and an African way of working. For me, decolonising is getting out of that mould and having the choice of having the kind of teaching we want to have and the kind of artists we want to promote and produce at the school.

RS: I think that is really interesting for a South African audience. Would you mind clarifying that choice again? What, for you, it means to decolonise?

HKA: To decolonize, from our side, is having the right to choose what we think is better for the need of society and for the need of artists; to not be put in a ghetto which we cannot get outside of because we are unable to see the larger situation. For example, I have a Jamaican friend who was asking an Afro-American woman (who is a descendant of slaves): "Would you be a Christian if your slave master had not been not a Christian?" In the same way, a lot of people are not aware that what is perceived as African is, in fact, a colonial way of perceiving Africa and perceiving art. This is because up until now there has been a lot of documentation which shows that it was not a genuine African way of working, but work done by the outside. So, we should be able to allow for choice through the kind of teaching we do: especially if anyone is questioning if Africans should be interested in video or photography and insisting that they should only be working with wood or stone. Africans should be able to make architecture or whatever we choose for ourselves. Changing our ways of teaching and allowing for choices; this could be a way of decolonising.

RS: Can you share some of the strategies you have been pursuing to try and open up these choices since becoming director?

HKA: I'm a teacher, first and foremost. At the beginning, we talked, organized a lot of meetings with teachers in the departments, trying to promote the coaching of the kind of teaching that would help us to listen to the students. The students are connected. They are connected to the internet, so they have some awareness of what is going on in the world. We should not be discouraging them and offering them something that doesn't match their needs. So—and this is also becoming very challenging to teachers—we open up the horizon for the students.

Since we revisited the curriculum, teachers are preparing lessons rather than teaching only what they know. They now need to prepare lessons because there is a document which asks them to do so. The classes need to be prepared, otherwise they will be improvised and that could look bad or even ridiculous to the students.

RS: Could you explain further about this preparation?

HKA: The idea is to prepare the aim, or the objective of the class. So classes are prepared in order to fit the different levels of students. To ascertain what is most important to 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade.To ascertain what the needs of the senior students are. It is in this manner that the teachers must be prepared. So, for example, in the 1st grade we might have had a student who was having more difficult classes than a student who was in 5th year. It must be appropriate to the grade and the level.

RS: Could you talk a little about how you have worked to counteract stereotypes of African art in your own artistic practice?

HKA: When I was starting in this school, there was this idea of African art and being an African artist. This was mainly an approach that appropriated Cubist paintings from modern artists who were inspired by African masks and took everything which appeared as a little bit exotic or bizarre (whether it came from Oceania, or wherever). People didn't know, so everything which was a little bit strange could easily pass as African. So, you find that the teachers in the Congo were encouraging this, and criticizing art for not being "African".

So my first training started there. But, somehow, I got through this and when I finished I got a good mark and I ended up being an artist. I listened to myself. I don't think that art comes from the brain but from what

is within. So I used my brain if I wanted to sell some work to tourists. It was like taking a book, like the one by Josef Cornet, a Belgian who worked for the museum. He wrote a lot on the technical details of Congolese masks or statuettes (in books such as *Art of Africa: Treasures from the Congo*, 1971). I could just copy from the book and sell some art, because this is the kind of work people expect.

But then the artist is still restricted because he/she is not listening to him/herself. Instead, I make work which is abstract: abstract in the sense that it is not realistic. But it is also abstract in the sense of the abstract you provide when you write a thesis, for example. It is what is essential, as opposed to not being figurative. It is abstract in the sense of what is essential for me. My work tries to keep the essential part of what I feel and what I appreciate. But people can also see it's abstract according to the general understanding. In the past, I called it "cosmic vibrations" to refer to trying to capture my feelings. It's a kind of working to help one reach a catharsis, a way out. This was more important than pleasing people.

RS: I understand that you have always sold your work and been very supportive of the idea of the artist as a businessman.

HKA: Yes, so this is what was such a big surprise, that being different helped me a lot. So it has not been about listening to what people think I am supposed to be doing, but rather about trying to please myself first.

RS: Can you tell a little bit more about your academic work in your PhD thesis and how this relates to your painting practice?

HKA: My PhD work was more of a discussion concerning culture and identity in Congolese painting. I described how the perception of culture and identity in the DRC created an African art mode. This culture and identity were perceived as a genetic gift, as if once you are born you are marked or defined. You can be a Congolese born in New York and spend 50 years there, but because you are an African, or Congolese, you are expected to be the same as other Congolese who have lived for 50 years in the Congo. And if you're an artist, you should spend your life with ritual culture, according to what tribe you are from. If I am not trying to make work about my culture, I am accused of not being African enough. So, this is the environment.

What is being produced from this culture is work that regularly references masks, cowries and ideograms or pictograms (which used to be a way of writing in Africa) and using brown sacks. Using these is seen as an expression of culture. This results in works that all look like they came from the same mode: "African" art.

I deconstructed this mode because, in today's world, African artists should be able to talk about what is happening and take part in what is happening in America, Australia, etc. African people cannot spend all the time only making work about being African. That is like saying to a woman that she can only make a painting about feminism or being a woman. And that she has no right to talk about men. It is a form of auto-exclusion. Art should be open. The field should be opened up and expression should be democratized.

This is how my work fits in. I can talk about myself and my environment without necessarily bringing up masks, cowries, jembe or whatever. Masks are not only African. There are Asian masks and European masks. In Europe I have found that they also have popular works (similar to the *peintures populaire*) in their history. And if you look closely at those images, they fit very closely with African ones. But why, when it comes to Africa, are these the works that international curators pick up? Why is it that in France, it is someone like Daniel Buren (or other artists) that are featured rather than craft artists?

RS: Can you tell me a little more about pursuing your PhD through a Chinese university? Was it easier to talk about the Congo from another place that wasn't Africa or Euro-America?

HKA: This was a PhD level of work. I could have done it in New York or South Africa or wherever because this is the topic I wanted to pursue. The institution I attended was international, with Taiwanese, French, and Belgian scholars, and my main supervisor was Franco-Chinese. I don't think that locations make a difference. The problems I dealt with in my thesis were ones which I wanted to resolve for myself and for my country. I don't think that because I am an African I should be different. There are Europeans working on African culture, so Africans should be allowed to work on whatever they want. I had that discussion with our Brazilian friend Emi Koide. When she goes to Europe, people remind her that because she looks Asian, and people think she is Chinese, that she should be working on her own people. How rude is that?

RS: My interest in the Chinese institution partly comes from our current focus on international South-South institutional relations, instead of always looking to

Euro-American. For example, in my own PhD experience at a South African institution, I found that most of our model for study was based on what happens in the American institution.

HKA: That also comes from colonization and we should be trying to change that perspective. We have a colonial mentality. What we think about China is informed by the mainstream media, what they think about it. One ends up thinking that serious studies can only happen in Belgium or in France or the UK. And we were raised to think that this was normal. And that is how we think about China too. I think a PhD which is written in Congo is written in no poorer condition than one in China, which is part of the first world. China is a developed economic country where there is a lot of investment in education. This is very complicated and difficult to explain to people.

RS: What has always struck me about Congo is that the central question is not only about how the colonial regime constructed an idea of African art, but also the Mobutu regime (Mobutu Sese Seko's rule took place from 1965 to 1997). Could you give your own impressions of the impact of Mobutu's influence on the Congolese art world today and what this means for teachers and students at ABA?

HKA: Sometimes it can be very difficult to tell the difference between Mobutu's ideas and the colonial ones. Mobutu's time was affected by types of colonial work. The colonial perceived of the African as primitive. And the work they promoted, which a lot of Africans are still doing, also perceived Africa as primitive. When Mobutu invented an image of Africa he was trying to make a positive identity. But this positive identity was also recycled. He took a perception from modern art, especially modern painters' work on African masks, such as Picasso. Mobutu tried to recuperate what was already recognized as art, essentially masks and statuettes. But at the same time, in trying to invent this national identity, the art came up with two identities: the primitive one and the pan-African one.

   This perception also came from Senghor with his Negritude ideology and Kwame Nkrumah and his consciousness. Mobutu, for his part, produced *recours a l'authenticitié* (return to authenticity). This is the situation. The art environment is still influenced by these two identities. It was in Mobutu's time where an idea of African art was promoted. A lot of this art was copied from other images. I can show an image and people tell me the nationality of the artist, they will say "Congolese".

For some, they can't name the artist but they are certain that it is a Congolese artist.

RS: Was there anything you did not get to say at the Artsearch Symposium in Johannesburg (which took place in 2017) that you would like to say now?

HKA: I wanted to talk about the new dynamic that is coming in with new artists, people who are decolonising themselves and functioning in an international realm. These are people who are artists before they are African. They are not saying "I am African, therefore I have to work like this." There are artists like Ange Swane, Vithois Mwilambwe, Eddie Kamangwa, Hermès Maurice Mbikaya, and Dolet Malalu who are outside of a colonial way of viewing Congolese art. I would rather show people who are decolonising themselves and moving beyond the normal categories.

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Henri Kalama Akulez, PhD. is the current chancellor of the "Académie des Beaux-Arts de Kinshasa", Democratic Republic of Congo and the first professor to hold a PhD degree in arts. He has been part of this institution since 1996 as a student, and since 1999 as lecturer, professor and head of the oil painting department. In his first year as chancellor he introduced several modernisation campaigns, infrastructure projects and strategies to improve the quality of teaching in order to elevate the ABA to an international standard. His advanced studies brought him to the prestigious "China Academy of Art" in Hangzhou for eight years. As a painter he has travelled and exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in Africa, Europe, Asia and North America. His atelier "Kalama-les ateliers réunis", founded in 2007, has been pioneering the promotion of promising artists from the DRC and has been changing the local art scene ever since.

   Henri is representative of a trend that aims to evolve from certain stereotypes in what is generally considered as "African Art". He is working constantly to improve people's awareness of the implied (unconscious) "primitive art" expectations when referring to "African Art". In helping to open minds, he is also certain that this will contribute to liberate a certain form of creativity with artists of African origin - one that can actually help African people and countries develop in their own ways as well. Henri is currently building what will be the first professional fine art gallery in Kinshasa.

Ruth Sacks is a South African artist who lives and works in Johannesburg. She has been a doctoral fellow at the Wits Institute for Social & Economic Research (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg). Her thesis, entitled *Congo Style: From Belgian Art Nouveau to Zaïre's l'Authenticité,* was submitted in January 2017. In her artistic practice, Sacks focusses on the medium of artist books, the most recent being *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under Seas* (2013). Her current research is centered around African independence aesthetics and postcolonial design. She has exhibited widely locally and internationally, including at the African Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (Italy, 2007), ZKM Centre (Karlsruhe, Germany, 2011) and Performa (NYC, US, 2009). Sacks lectures at the Wits School of Arts (Division of Visual Arts), as well as the Market Photo Workshop, and is a laureate of the HISK (Higher Institute for Fine Art) in Ghent, Belgium.

Building a School of Thought, the Case for ISADEL Mozambique
Miguel Marrengula interviewed by Nkule Mabaso

Miguel L. Marrengula is a Professor of Sociocultural Animation and Development Studies at Faculty of Cultural Studies at the Higher Institute of Arts and Culture (ISArC) in Mozambique. He is the co-founder of the Higher Institute of Local Development Studies (ISEDEL) and has been acting as Deputy General Director since 2013. The Higher Institute of Local Development Studies (ISEDEL) in Mozambique offers courses in education, the environment, public administration and public health. He is also the founder and Executive Director of Mozambican Agency of Applied Research (AMPAS) since 2012. Marrengula's research interests are: Sociocultural Animation (Art and culture for development), Cultural Heritage, Cultural Education and Art Didactics, Local Development and Social Work (art and culture in social work and child protection). He has published in socio-cultural animation and social work journals.

Nkule Mabaso: What inspired or lead to the founding the Higher Institute of Local Development Studies (ISEDEL)?

Miguel Marrengula: There have been many factors and inspirations leading to the founding of our University, but I will discuss two basic ones:

a) The first and most important push factor was the need to have our own academic space, where we could share, think and discuss our ideas and philosophies of science and development. This would be (i) an opportunity to have our own jobs and provide jobs to others (entrepreneurship); (ii) a place to exercise academic freedom and develop our own episteme (since Mozambique, from my point of view, has been one of the countries where positivism—as an academic view of the world—is dominant, and this perspective has ignored the role of local and endogenous knowledge for development and has also suppressed the possibilities of its development in academia); (iii) a place to promote academic changes towards the development of local and endogenous knowledge by Mozambicans and for Mozambicans.

b) In Mozambique, access to higher education has been one of the clearest indicators of social inequality. For me and my colleagues, access to higher education should be a right for all citizens. Based on this we wanted to contribute by providing more opportunities to the vast population of Mozambicans who have, for generations, been struggling to get access to higher education.

NM: In practical terms what does it mean to develop you own epistemes—what ontological assumptions, epistemological perspectives and methodological frameworks, philosophies and orientationsframe the institution?

MM: In all our curricular approaches, we emphasize the promotion and valuing of local knowledge.

With the active participation of local communities, we practise participative development through researching local approaches, practices and perceptions of development.The philosophy and orientation of our institution is based on epistemological pluralism (there is no one way of understanding reality, there is a multiplicity of ways of understanding reality). Our university aims to understand the diversity of the socio-cultural and unique characteristics of the Mozambican people, and their development prospects. We do this thorough in-depth research of local knowledge and practices vis-à-vis trends in global epistemological approaches.This perspective includes understanding local philosophies of life and socio-cultural practices (in their political, economic, social and cultural dimensions) in order to develop consciousness (awareness) about problems, priorities and social development situations. An understanding and acceptance of the multiculturalism and transculturalism of Mozambican society and the philosophy of "endogenous" studies is reflected in the curriculum plans of all courses taught in our university. We focus on the need to share skills and sources of essential knowledge, and on impelling a critical analysis of development practices and the application of local knowledge in the transformation and social change of Mozambique.

NM: How have you gone about developing the curriculum and the orientation of your critical methodologies in relation to how colonialism has shaped schooling, education systems and research in Mozambique?In your response please relate the material consequences of colonialism, and the continued "neocolonial economic relationships" to the eurocentrism of sociological studies and the contention that Africans are ever subjects of development and not its producers.

MM: The history of Mozambique has been shaped by diverse political and social dynamics. In terms of education, these dynamics have largely influenced the perspectives of what Mozambican education should be. For example, during colonial times, education policies emphasized the need to promote colonial culture and thus the whole curriculum development was based on that perspective. After the independence of Mozambique in 1975, national policies focused in the construction of the so called "new man" who would follow the philosophies of the Marxist Leninist ideals, which were based on the positivist idea of knowledge that would follow the scientific approach of knowledge production. However, this approach, instead of opening opportunities for local knowledge to develop, portrayedsuch knowledge as superstitious and fantastic, with local practices designated as witchcraft. This closed off possibilities for the development of local knowledge relegating it to the dark dimension of mythological understanding. In 1987, with the introduction of new liberal economic approaches, educational politics acquired a perspective that linked education to the idea of the capitalist knowledge.

This is still the reality and most of the practices related to traditional knowledge are still criticized and not understood as a source of valuable knowledge for local development. It on this ground that ISEDEL designed the orientation of its critical educational methodologies, where the focus is on valuing and promoting local knowledge as a valuable source of human development and social change. In this sense, ISEDEL's curricular programmes emphasize the use of local languages and the need to address the critical dimension of what is locally valuable and understandable so as to build up a different perspective of local development. In this approach, locals are called upon to contribute what is important in their culture and local practices for the development of their realities.

NM: What approaches does the university employ that decenter dominant perspectives that relegate native knowledge to nativism and recast indigenous knowledge as not new knowledge but rather "natural resources"?

MM: This is the major challenge institutions like ours face. In this context, there is a need to transform the general understanding within our staff (administrative and academic) towards an understanding of epistemological pluralism as the institutional academic philosophy. This is because the training of the staff members in general has been framedwithin the dominant academic perspective, making it difficult to promote change.

However, at ISEDEL we have been promoting open discussion on epistemological pluralism and we involve all professionals in activities towards change. For example, we ran monthly meetings with community leaders (endogenous leaders) and local active individuals; in these meetings we have cultural performances and discuss social problems. In this platform, we have the possibility to demonstrate the role of endogenous knowledge in social development actions. The participation of students, course managers, teachers and researchers playsa major role, since it becomes the main laboratory for social development and a place for validating local knowledge as a main source of understanding and finding solutions for development matters.

Associated with this approach, all our curriculum plans integrate a set of knowledge production activities that enforces the need to use local knowledge in educational process: in all courses there are subjects like (i) local language (Bantu language lessons), (ii) ideas and perspectives of development, (iii) community based approaches in research methodologies and strong content attached to (iv) local sources of knowledge in the majority of academic disciplines.

Training our staff has been one of the most challenging tasks to achieve this main goal.

NM: What kind of research does the university undertake and what have been the social achievementsand outcomes of these research activities?How do you measure these achievementsin the face of theoretical abstractions that inadequately connect to the local conditions?

MM: ISEDEL is for local development studies. There are four main research perspectives taking place:

– Anthropological research—engaging mainly with medical anthropology and public health studies (focus on local endogenous medicines and the medical

pluralism approaches). These research activities analyse the local native medical approaches and their role in the perceived wellbeing of the 70 per cent of the national population which does not have access to formal health care facilities.

– Social service and welfare—the actual and on-going research activities are related to the existing social welfare systems, which are not recognized as official welfare systems. In this, ISEDEL focuses on understanding the diverse cultural and social setting of the caring and social protection strategies that communities have developed over generations.

– Endogenous nutrition practices—at ISEDEL the Centre of Endogenous Nutrition and Food Sovereignty runs a set of research programmes that focus on traditional food and nutritional practices. This concerns biological agriculture and the need to preserve local knowledge about food production and nutrition. Here we also address issues related to food conservation and processing using endogenous knowledge and practices.

– Traditional medicine and healing practices—ISEDEL has a Centre for Research and Promotion of Traditional Medicine, which focuses on understanding the historical healing practices for the last 1.500 years and the phytochemical composition of traditional medicines used within Mozambique. The most difficult challenge in this is finding the right partners and financial support to carry out such research paradigms.

NM: Self determination drives the need to develop alternative education and learning systems outside of existing institutions, but do you not feel that stepping out of the mainstream academe removes the responsibility, or the possibility of developing counter hegemonies, or a broadening of the intellectual domain within the mainstream academy in that you exist in parallel but do not really permeate the discipline or change its accepted paradigms? And in fact you might undermine broader attempts to dismantle structural issues within the education system?

MM: The reality is that we are not changing any disciplines, what we are doing is creating a space for our students to see the reality using multiple perspectives so that they can understand the dominant paradigms and have the chance to question these paradigms taking into consideration their socio-cultural setting. Our interest is to build a conceptual understanding of what knowledge is available, how it is constructed and what possibilities there are. Our students and lecturers need to construct and de-construct the academy; the way it has been designed and the way they see it. Actually

we are not even interested in dismantling the structural issues within the education system, we are engaged in clarifying and opening the grounds of knowledge production in our society, which has lately been dominated by the following: faith violence (religions struggling to destroy social and cultural platforms using forced conversion), cultural violence (through marginalization of endogenous traditional practices including local languages, beliefs and practices), psychosocial, economic and political violence (the growing social inequalities, social problems and collective dementia).

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Miguel Marrengula is a Professor of Sociocultural Animation and Development Studies in the Faculty of Cultural Studies at the Higher Institute of Arts and Culture (ISArC) in Mozambique where he also acts as the Pedagogic and Scientific Central Services Director. Marrengula is the co-founder of the Higher Institute of Local Development Studies (ISEDEL) and has been acting as Deputy General Director of ISEDEL since 2013. He is a visiting lecturer at Tampere University in Finland. He is the founder and Executive Director of the Mozambican Agency of Applied Research (AMPAS) since 2012. Marrengula's research interests are: Socio-cultural Animation (Art and culture for development), Local Development Studies and Social Work (art and culture in social work and child protection). He has published in socio-cultural animation and social work journals and he is a registered member of the African Schools of Social Work Association (ASSWA).

Nkule Mabaso is contributing editor to the Oncurating Journal and is the director of Natal Collective an independent production company active internationally in the research and presentation of creative and cultural Africana contemporary art and politics. She graduated with a Fine Arts degree from the University of Cape Town in 2011 and received a Master's in Curating from the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) in 2014. She headed the Michaelis Galleries at the University of Cape Town between January 2015 and June 2021. Mabaso's practice is collaborative and research interests centre around theorizing and articulating nuanced aesthetic questions from the black female vantage point.

Photo Gallery

These images document the activities across both the locations and events (*ArtSearch* (Wits), March 2017 and *Third Space Symposium* (UCT), August 2017) from which the contributions in the issue are drawn. The symposia, performances and the attendant exhibitions as multimodal and poly-vocal introspections and reflections, deliberation and conversations took place at an exceptionally volatile moment in South African higher education markedly 2015-2017.

Artsearch Symposium at the University of the Witwatersrand in March 2017

Using artistic research as way to address decolonising practices, this three-day symposium brought together international scholars and practitioners from various disciplines. The presentations offered creative strategies to transform art institutions and recognise previously unacknowledged artistic practices and forms.

Jay Pather, *Rite*
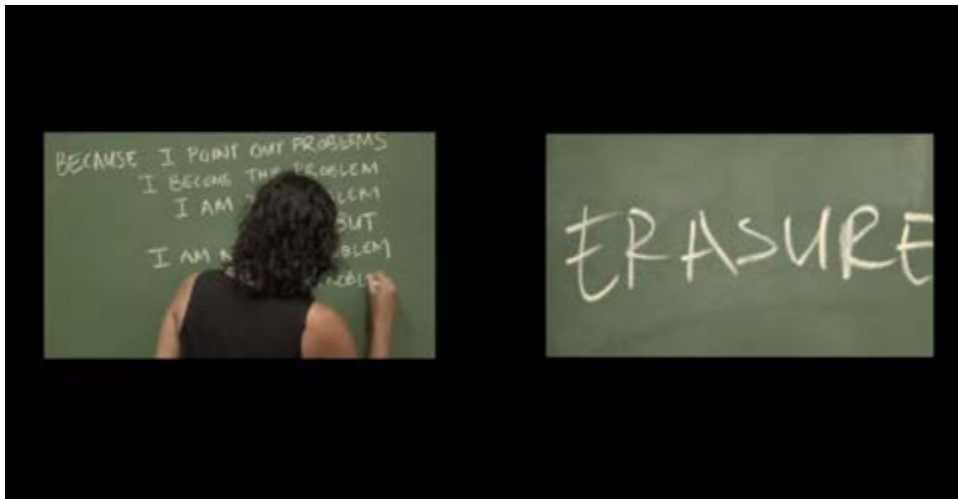
Sharlene Khan, *ERASURE*

Dada Masilo, *In Rehearsal*

Nduka Mntambo, *Asymmerties*

ArtSearch graphic from video documentation

ArtSearch graphic Reworking archival and source material
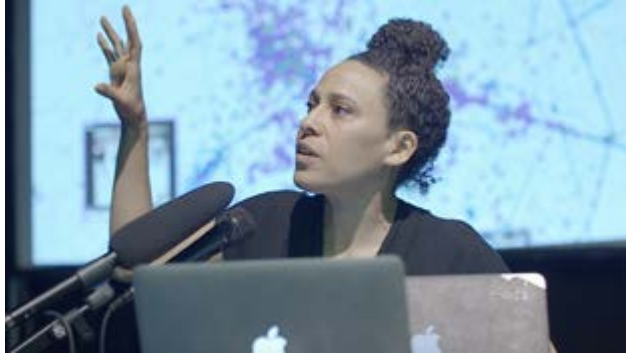
Beth Coleman

Zen Marie

George Shire

Henri Kalama
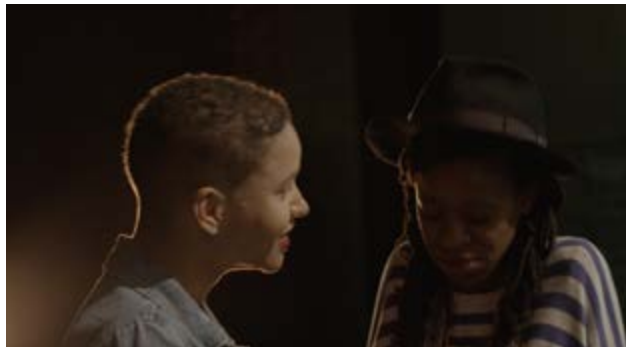
Nobunye Levin and Kitso Lelliot

Koyo Kouoh

Ruth Sacks

Jay Pather

Rael Salley, Eyal Sivan, Nkule Mbaso, Henri Kalama

Klara Björk, Linda Sternö and Mieke Bernink walk through the
Market Theatre precinct

Rael Salley invites participants into his presentation

Participants mingle at *ArtSearch*

Eyal Sivan in communal cookout

Nduka Mntambo and Kalle Boman in communal cookout

Mieke Bernink and Tracy Murnink in communal cookout

Commual cookout

Participants at Afrika Freedom Station at *ArtSearch*

Participants at Afrika Freedom Station at *ArtSearch*

3rd Space Symposium
at Cape Town University's
Institute of Creative Arts
in August 2017

Centred on creative practices including performance, dance, theatre, film and visual arts, the second iteration of the *3rd Space Symposium* focused less on institutional transformation and more on multiple aesthetic practices and strategies that challenged canonised Western and European art modes. It drew from unresolved histories and experiences that had been rendered invisible under colonialism and apartheid, and through race and class privileges.

Nocmebisi Moyikwa performing *Qash-Qash,* 2017

Robert Machiri, Memory Biwa

Intervention by *Drama for Life*

Desiree Lewis

Harry Garuba

Hlonipha Mokeona

Palesa Shongwe and Nobunye Levin

Kharnita Mohamed and Brain Kamanzi

Lwazi Lushaba

Rike Sitas

Samuel Ravengai

Unathi Kondile

Mbongeni Mtshali and Mark Flieshman

Mandle Mbothwe and Jay Pather

Jyoti Mistry

On Artistic Practice

Butoh and the Third Space: Inhabiting Difference and Difficulty in Academia and the Performing Arts in South Africa
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The paper *Butoh: Lingering between Life, Death and Transformation in the Arts* was delivered at an inter-disciplinary academic symposium entitled *The Third Space* at the University of Cape Town[1], South Africa in May 2016. In this chapter I use that paper, referred to as "the performance text", and its accompanying video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuIxeVZtUg0), as well as reference the actual performance to explain how my socio-political, artistic and academic positioning in South Africa grapples with Homi Bhabha's (1994) notion of the "third space".

I hold the third space as an liminal consciousness and argue that the embodiment of liminality and asynchronicity can bring about a re-imagining of processes of transformation in South Africa. In the context of this paper, asynchronous refers to how the deliberate sandwiching of a formally spoken text and a technical, muscle-bound, linear movement, created an uncomfortable sense of discord between what was conveyed and received in aural, visual and visceral realms. For me, the potential for creating new knowledge lies within this ostensibly discordant space. I will show how the design and content of my 2016 performance paper connects to ongoing discourses about and processes of decolonisation[2] in South Africa. In addition, I describe the challenges and advantages of using alternative modes to deliver academic papers. I argue for the embodiment of difficulty and strangeness as a key strategy in developing processes of transformation in South Africa.

The performance paper was originally designed to re-articulate my hybrid identification as dancer and academic; it deliberately situated me in-between conventional notions of academic and artistic presentation. In other words, symposium papers are conventionally read to an audience of relatively like-minded academic peers and dramatisation or theatricality is generally avoided. By contrast, conventional artistic presentations, like dance, are physically active, usually vocally passive, and performed in theatrical environments where costume, lights and music add value to the spectacle. Given that these two forms are usually separate I deliberately sought to integrate them. The text of my performance paper was verbally articulated from memory and made complex with my simultaneous butoh-esque solo physical performance.

My use of multiple channels of delivery meant that, within an academic structure, the work remained performative, in the sense that it was a physical delivery of text that conventionally assumes the character of being spoken from a relatively passive body. It re-imagined typical South African performance aesthetics, which are strongly influenced by African and Western aesthetics. Such typical perspectives carry a particular cultural format for the presentation of formal academic papers. By contrast, the mixed style of my performance paper exemplified a symbiotic relationship between what was being physically performed and what was being proposed via the academic content.

Simultaneously, the embodiment of my text may have served to heighten and subvert both conventional dance and conventional academic expectations. In creating the performance text I believed that an analysis of the quality of the dance performance and the academic text, each in its singular format, would be insufficient in speaking back to the theme of the symposium. However, how did the combination of dance and oral performance as an academic engagement of my topic sharpen the argument? Why has this type of delivery generated a positive reception of a performed paper?

Broader social and political contexts in South Africa continue to inform my strategies in both performance and academic research. However, South Africa's colonial history and its offshoot, apartheid, are but two amongst several reasons that significantly complicate the perception of individual cultural identities in South Africa. To me, the third space is a blurred space where cultural spheres overlap (Bharucha, 2000), and this in turn creates identities that are not necessarily coherent or complete. I integrate my physiological female gender, racialised Coloured classification (described as neither White nor Black in the South African Registration Act 1950), and related social, economic and political experiences in South Africa, in order to physically interpret material from multiple objective and subjective points of view. In so doing, I re-imagine my identity (Erasmus, 2001) and move beyond an identification that is based on certitudes and hermetic descriptions of oneself, others and the surrounding world.

My research findings and recommendations are thus borne from within me and made manifest through me in a butoh-informed performance paper. Through my personal dance practice, my body becomes a site for interrogating issues that may be difficult to articulate verbally. Exploring alternative ways of balance, release and struggle are but a few ways I have found to embody parallels with the socio-political milieu in South Africa. I argue that uniform systems of identification within the performance arts as well as academia have no place in South Africa and should dissolve in order to find new ways of growth that include difference. This will require that individuals acknowledge and accept that developing strategies of transformation will require a search for multiple tools to enable that transformation.

Butoh and liminality

The Japanese contemporary dance form, butoh, is used as a tool in my performance paper to interrogate how notions of difference and strangeness can open up potential ways in which the body and persons can be perceived in an interdisciplinary context. Drawing from Japanese aesthetics that view life and death as a continuum, I was able to use butoh to demonstrate how transformation happens in-between the polarities of beginning and end, and yet remains uncertain.

The performance starts from a foetal image, signifying birth, and then proceeds with one long, slow, straining sequence, irregularly syncopated with awkward balances and sudden jerks that constrain breath and sound articulation. I move especially slowly towards an upright position and end up standing. Overall, the movement language seems hesitant and unbalanced, exposing a vulnerability that hangs between the continuum of life or birth in the beginning, and motions toward an inevitable end. However, a stepping action in the final stages of the presentation suggests incompleteness and the mode of delivery projects an onward journey. Similarly, the conclusion of the written text is punctuated with an ellipsis. Against the background of the 2015 and 2016 student protests at universities in South Africa and the threat of a re-occurrence in the near future, this sense of uncertainty and continuing effort implied in the ellipses is intended to add contextual nuance to the performance paper.

I find it helpful to interrogate the notion of liminality (Turner, 1995), which, from a corporeal perspective, I define as being in-between oppositional states.

Ketu Katrak describes liminality as "a space for the female protagonist to [...] resist domination and attempt to reconnect with their bodies and communities" (2006:2). To me, an understanding of my own liminal identity means refusing absorption into broad narratives of race, gender and class. I argue for more complex, nuanced definitions of oneself, others and the environment. Therefore, my sense of liminality recognises my cultural habitus (Bourdieu, 1986), but is not only located within the community. Similarly, Jacob Dlamini responds to the uniform, box-like physical and mental stereotypes perpetuated in attributing blanket notions of struggle to all Black people in South Africa and states: "For many, the past is a bit of this, the present a bit of that and the future hopefully a mix of this, that and more" (2009: 12).

This chapter, as well my performance paper, in conjunction with the video, will show how an embodied thinking process that avoids singularity or uniform conceptions of identity could add meaning to the Arts, as well as re-imagine and transform the *status-quo*. For me, the performance paper was a foretaste of liminal experiences that are necessary to subvert structure, roles and relationships encumbered by the many categorisations of self (Turner, 1995: 75). Understanding Turner's notion of liminality as a phase between the past and the future, in the context of this performance paper, I interpret the moment that lingers before delivery as a past, and a future as the moment following the end of the presentation. I describe the performance paper as a liminal experience because it resulted in a sense of individual distinctness which, I believe, could provide a template for the reformulation of reality, as well as incite people to different processes of action and thought.

The performance paper deliberately challenged the audience as well as myself to negotiate a space that was both corporeal and intellectual. It positioned my thoughts and feelings as experiences that existed in between the performative and the scholarly. A few individuals in the audience seemed to be challenged by the simultaneity of my speech and movement in what may have been experienced as a largely academic space – the symposium. In discussion with audience members after the performance paper, a few admitted to assuming that the voice, which was mine and live, was a pre-recorded soundtrack. Some acknowledged an involuntary need to categorise the seemingly conflicting, different actions: in other words, as the delivery of the paper progressed they became aware that they were either listening or watching, as opposed to doing both simultaneously. However, as soon as this realisation became conscious, they were able to integrate the two senses, and in a way, open themselves to feeling the performance paper. Several felt moved by the difficulty of the delivery and conveyed to me that it brought their attention to the struggle of transformation. In relation to a South African understanding of transformation, I ask: What does transformation mean if one already begins such interrogation from a fluid, energised perspective?

Further, in relation to strategies and tools of decolonisation, a reflective analysis of the audience reactions made me realise how the passage of time was an important element for some individuals who, in the course of the performance, became open to discovering the familiar in the unfamiliar and vice versa.

I find butoh a useful tool to re-interpret and re-position myself beyond the reductive, singular thinking and limitations embedded in institutions and social interactions in South Africa. The mixed style of delivery in the performance lecture suggests how the application of butoh principles could generate a different consciousness of the

body and enable individuals to create associations with hybrid elements of identity, ultimately disrupting hegemonic truth claims and racist superiority. Moreover, butoh enabled me to embody qualities of ambiguity, strangeness and difficulty, which I believe, are inherent to ongoing transformation processes in South Africa.

[level 2] Thinking body, dancing mind

The contemporary dance curriculum[3] taught at several high schools in South Africa refers to American and European dance companies, such as Alvin Ailey or Pina Bausch, as exemplars of contemporary dance technique. Both these companies hold the ballet form central to their dance training and performances. In South Africa ballet as a form is made complex with its embedded colonial aesthetics of race and class. My performance paper referred to ballet and showed how this culturally loaded dance form can transform and be interrogated using butoh, phenomenology and interculturalism. The performance paper included butoh principles as a tool to deliberately shift embedded, singular perceptions and patterns of line, form and technique. By utilising butoh, I argued for incorporating strange or relatively unknown and uncommon ways of perceiving identity into established ideas and ways of self-representation. Katrak claims that different ideological configurations are needed to liberate colonised people: "Colonized peoples […] are adept at using and transforming the master's tools, […] as well as to talk back to the colonizer" (2006: 38). In the performance paper I refer to the hybrid Caribbean language, Patwah[4], to explain how assimilating butoh principles within dance-making in South Africa, could forge a new dance language created from the notion of rebellion against the established order. This, I believe, could launch a creative revolution that is aligned to a less singular and more fluid perception of social and artistic identities.

The performance paper made parallels between Patwah and Afrikaans, a language inherited from Dutch colonisation in the 1600s. Due to the colonial repression of indigenous languages and the enforcing of their foreign language, Afrikaans is still spoken by the majority of Black people in South Africa today. In terms of subverting the power of this language, which is associated with the oppressor, the performance paper made particular reference to how Afrikaans has been reclaimed by the Coloured community in Cape Town, in its colloquial combination of *cuss* words, slang, Cape Malay[5], Dutch and English. The combination of different languages has created a particular dialect, which in turn distinguishes the colloquial Afrikaans, as predominantly spoken by the Coloured population, from the way it is spoken in the capital, Pretoria, for example, or any other city for that matter.

The spoken delivery of Afrikaans in my own hometown of Cape Town "blurs the White man's tongue, tone and power" (Dr. G Samuel, Personal communication, Cape Town, 2017). While a particular phrase used in the performance paper, "*jou ma se*", (literally translated as "*your mother's*"), has no direct translation, it is embedded with nuances of vitriol and crass humour. It is the equivalent of an adjectival phrase, but the noun that it would qualify remains unstated. The phrase itself can therefore remain open and will be understood by those who have an intimate grasp of the cultural nuance. In this way, the particular form of Afrikaans used in the performance paper emphasised a sense of my individual identity in relation to a community that defies a uniform description and resists hegemonic constructs of colonial languages. Like Mesthrie's (2008) notion of varieties of English as opposed to the authority of Queen's English, I used Afrikaans to 'inhabit' (Ingold, 2000) a third space and make sense of my multiple social, political, artistic and scholarly experiences from the perspective of a thinking body and dancing mind, as expressed by Chungliang Al Huang and Jerry Lynch (1992).

The style of delivery attempts to identify elements that could trigger transformational processes. Through embodied imagination, understood in Gilbert and Tompkins' (1996) terms, I experienced how the palpable spirit or presence of a person or thing can penetrate the psyche and willfully bring about a particular movement or action. In the performance paper, I chose to convey a predetermined verbal script that was connected to a fluid yet undetermined physical action. The successful delivery required a meta-physical focus that was not solely dependent on my degree of concentration and discipline, but also required the external assistance of a voice prompter. This does not mean that voice cues were offered each time I seemed to hesitate or pause. Rather, whilst remaining physically passive, my assistant maintained a connection with me by embodying an energised restraint that listened before deciding to intervene, and thus waited to act. This forced me to dig deep and allow real sensations of vulnerability, loss and difficulty as I navigated my way through the text. At times the asynchronicity of the delivery resulted in my verbal re-sequencing of the written text. This simultaneously destabilised my assistant and compelled a sharp attention to various nuances of my performance. On the few occasions where I required an external prompt, it felt like an inner voice was guiding me. In this way, the delivery enabled an embodiment of the asynchronous physical and cognitive challenges that I believe are intrinsic to transformative processes in South Africa.

The experience makes me wonder if current transformation processes of individuals in South Africa require an external element, which is linked somehow, but remains secondary, and which is attuned to the intuitive responses of the individual. I believe that it does, and that we can discover the nuances of intervention in moments that are discordant, different and difficult. I am of the opinion that we are not just our bodies but are also bodies of wisdom from multiple sources within and around us. My interrogations thus far substantiate the idea that transformation processes require imagination and a focus that is willing to engage with the unfamiliar. My performance practice continues to explore the nuances of these statements (job, 2017, 2019).

The nature of my performance paper collided and collapsed different elements to enable a meeting of differences. It blurred polarities and in turn, expanded the limits and assumptions we hold about ourselves (Bharucha, 2000). The aim of this hybrid presentation, finally, was not to put forward an ideology of fusion as a tool for transformation and cultural or interdisciplinary homogenisation. To me, the body itself (and particularly the body in South Africa) is already in a liminal space perceptually and thus at the threshold of transformation of a different order. In order to decolonise learned structures and develop spaces conducive to transformation in South Africa, I hold that more individuals may need to explore aspects of asynchronous, difficult, strange and vulnerable identities.

To receive the full impact of this article, I invite you to read the performance paper[6] below in conjunction with viewing the video footage[7].
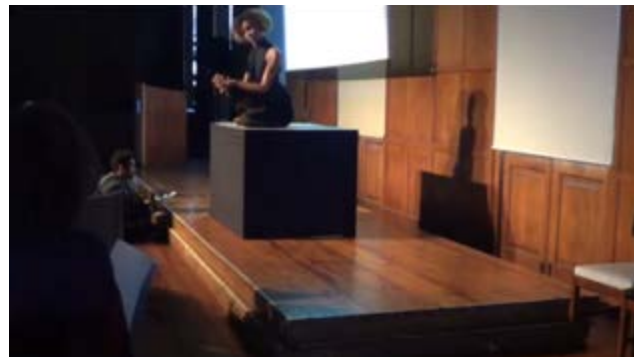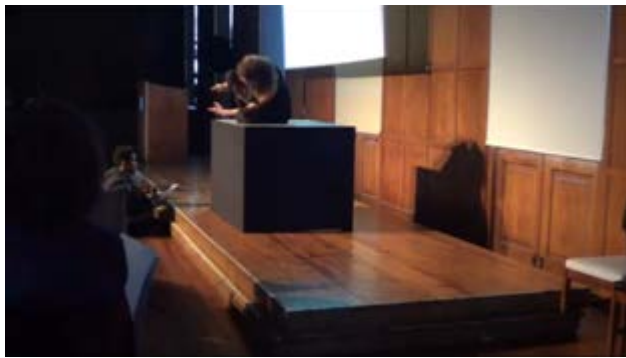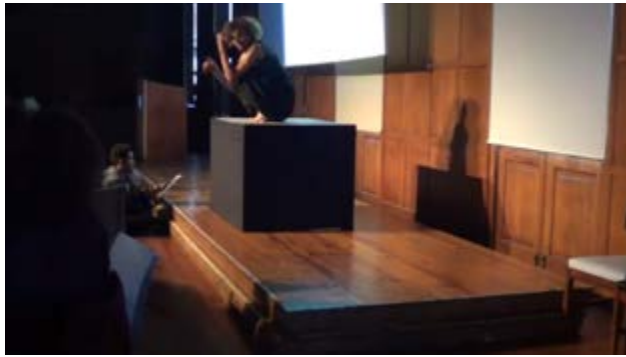
jackï job (2017) *performance paper: Butoh Lingering between Life Death and Transformation in the Arts,*
Hiddingh Hall, UCT
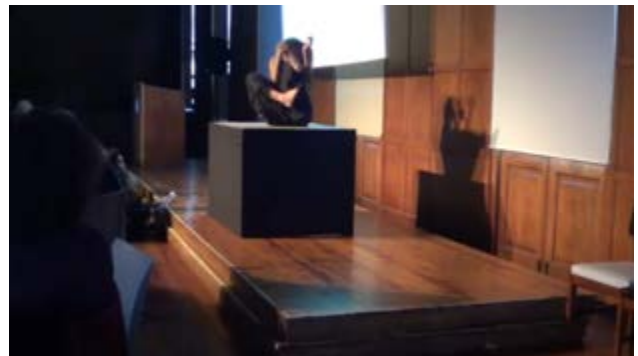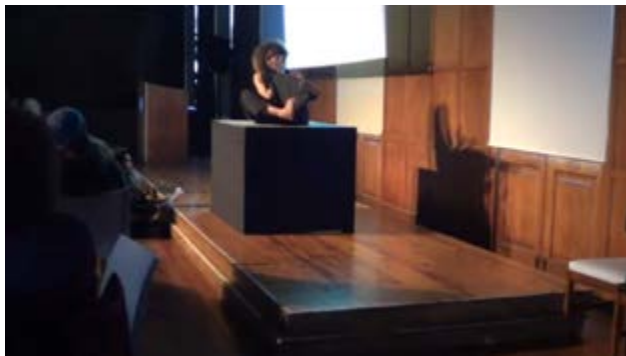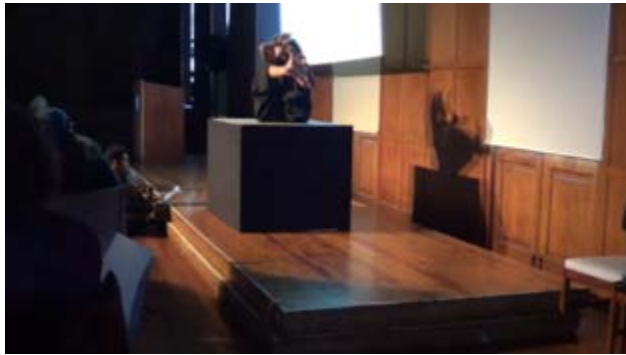
The Performed Text
Butoh: Lingering between life, death and transformation in the arts
In 2013, a brief experiment with Cape Town City Ballet, or rather, what I should call a prologue to an experiment, involved my conducting a series of butoh workshops with a few dancers of Cape Town City Ballet. Along with other similar experiences, this particular interaction re-enforced my belief in the value of re-imagining individual identities, which in turn aligns with re-imagining our human interactions in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual South Africa.

I think dancers speak a number of languages and if Dance were a country, it could be described as multi-lingual. If that country were South Africa, the official languages would be African Dance, Contemporary Dance and Ballet.

Against the socio-political contexts of South Africa, ballet occupies a central position that many wish to re-appropriate. Given the complex and even obvious racist, sexist and colonialist issues embedded in ballet, compounded by the general perception of its being a White dance form, it could be seen as a microcosm of other – # Must Falls – struggles in the country. Three years ago, I wanted to see how the application of butoh principles in ballet could shift the intention and way of expressing ballet's movement language. If the application of butoh could potentially influence the thinking and per-formance processes of ballet, it could in principle offer a prologue or a way to reclaim or re-appropriate colonial places and spaces.

Understanding places, in De and Sarkar's (Levine & Perera, 2002) terms, as a lived experience where people, cultures, languages and artistic expressions unfold, I asked, how could the multiplicity of languages and cultures of dancing, moving, expressive bodies, migrate from one economic, social and political context to another, and in that process transform and re-imagine actual spaces? And in the process, how could it be possible to realise a personal connection to that context, even though it might be per-ceived as different? On a personal level, I hope to find and potentially use my authentic voice in a process of this nature.

Authenticity, or truth, admittedly is a loaded, relative and subjective term. Yet, most recognise it in action, on conscious and even subconscious levels. It is a kind of know-ing that is felt in the gut. I wish to dance-speak, from that source. The phenomenolo-gist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, said the essence, which I interpret as truth, is located not above, but beneath the sensible world (1968 : 220). This made me wonder if and how I might find truth up on tippy-ballet-toes. A question possibly answered by another philosopher, Robert Sokolowski, who claimed that in the search for truth, or authen-ticity, "there needs to be a digging into cultural things that we directly encounter, and an unpacking of them down to their elementary categories in order to unbuild them" (Sokolowski, 2000 : 167). Part of this talk thinks of ballet as the cultural thing that needs to be dug into and suggests butoh as a tool to help deconstruct it to its basic intention – which according to the Russian ballet star, Anna Pavlova, is "to bring something from within ourselves and thus make our stage personalities alive and vital" (quoted in Magriel, 1947 : 61). Many might agree with me that this quotation has resonance across the performance arts.

Therefore, beyond ballet, there are several questions related to performance that one might ask. Such as, what are the basic elements carried and embedded within our bodies that need to be unbuilt? How is it possible to bring something personal and vital to performance that could unbuild and re-imagine binary and reductive classifications

and significations of oneself, others, places and spaces? Given the long-standing authority, power and influence of the established order, what kind of process could disrupt the hierarchy of knowledge ownership? How does one find and utilise a fluid, energised, body that is geared towards a process of transformation?

In a brief answer to these questions, I suggest that some attention needs to be directed at how butoh principles, as well as its perception of the body and surrounding worlds, could be applied to performance disciplines. But an additional question remains that has more direct pertinence to the theme of this symposium. Where does that re-imagining and transforming position oneself, others, places, spaces? I believe that that positioning is not *over here*, neither is it *over there*, but in-between, and can be found through an intercultural-phenomenological experience of the body. Rustom Bharucha claims "in-between spaces are found when we open ourselves up to other spheres and find overlapping in blurred spaces that bring us together" (2000 :122) . For me, that overlap happened when I experienced butoh in Japan. Framed within theories of interculturalism and phenomenology, the 2013 prologue to an experiment, which I call butoh-ballet, added lateral perspectives to my proposition that the application of butoh principles could disrupt hegemonic forms, thus presenting us with the potential of an in-between, difficult to articulate, even uncomfortable site, that definitely has individuals physically and even meta-physically, experiencing a re-imagination of identities in South Africa.

A word, liminal, comes to mind. That of being on the threshold. Not inside, not outside, and I would add, not above and not below, but teetering, even lingering, somewhere in between. Mikhail Bhaktin (in Katrak, 2006 : 9) suggests that a positioning outside of time, space and culture is immensely important to expanding one's creative understanding. My lived experience identifies with this inside-outside positioning in various ways. Between 2003 and 2011, I lived in Japan, and was thus removed from South Africa in time, space and culture. During this time, my worldview shifted as I developed an appreciation of asymmetry and restraint, qualities and dynamics not readily supported in the West. On returning to South Africa, which I maintain is also Westernised, this insider-outsider's frame of reference persisted. I lived within my local South African community, but felt separated from a persistent reactive behaviour. I also felt separated from the broader national-identity propaganda, namely, '*Simunye, We Are One*'. I continue to vacillate in between. Also, as a dancer, my barely mentionable ballet foundation is steeped in a socio-economic and political history that coincides with apartheid, which effectively and intentionally isolated me from conventional training trajectories followed in the ballet world. This left me in the in-between space of contemporary dance, a dance form often positioned in between ballet and African dance. (As an aside, much like the labelling of Coloured people in South Africa).

With broad reference to South African dancers of African dance, contemporary dance and ballet, my identification as an independent solo performer for the last 20 years, has further set me apart from the majority of South African dancers whose skills are honed in ensembles and companies. Therefore, my lived experience, both as a South African and a dancer, has positioned me in an in-between space that "complexifies" my bearing of a whole-hearted allegiance to a specific side. Most of the time, I feel movable connections, energised with the potential for re-imagining my identity and that of the status quo.

The co-founder of butoh, Ohno Kazuo, says that when the personal life and performance merge, an authentic portrait of an artist emerges (Ohno & Ohno, 2004 : 158). My personal life is mixed, intercultural—a description understood in Richard Schechner's terms, as being on my way from something towards something. He adds "else" and says, "Towards something else" (2002 : ix). But to me, the nature of that something remains to be seen, with literal eyes, as well as with the eyes of understanding.

Butoh entails the body in research. A question is formed, then expanded on and deepened in the practice of Butoh. So to synthesise my previous questions into one question: How can one re-imagine oneself, others, places and spaces with a fluid, energized body that is geared towards the process of transformation?

Hoe werk daai dan? Ek is hie, maar oek hie. I am, omtrent en heeltemal soe. Jy sien my dan, of hoe? Miskien? Maybe? Yes sir, naai ma'am. Wat kyk jy? Vra vir jou ma. Ja, joune. er...jou ma... er...Daai za Lady wat nogal try ne. Talk is cheap, but actions, daai is wat praat. Daar sittie sergeant. Kyk! Look and listen. Dan verstaan jy...alles...soema alles...en a hele klompie meer. Jou ma...

Ketu Katrak (2006 : 35) refers to how the hybrid language of Patwah enabled the people of the Caribbean to rebel against the status quo. I connect this to how Afrikaans was and is used amongst the Coloured people in Cape Town specifically. Patwah and colloquial Afrikaans—the language of the colonizer, is re-designed, shifting a sense of ownership, and, in the process, forges a language on independent terms. For me, butoh is *net soe*. Ja, butoh is just like that. In the country of its birth, Japan, one could, for example recognise traces of the predominant religion, Buddhism, particularly in its sense of union with nature. Japanese butohists, coming out of a society strongly focused on the importance of the communal whole and orderliness, developed the form, and much like the speakers of Patwah, they were intent on rebelling against the order.

In the context of dance in South Africa, and ballet in particular, embracing butoh philosophies might disrupt an underlying Christian foundation and its ideas of beauty and goodness. Butoh remains unattached to worldly objects, yet finds the body connected to everything. A Westernized aesthetic might describe it as undefined, abstract, mystical, and dark. For me, these are but a few of its embedded characteristics, which, when applied, could create a sense of borderlessness and freedom in the body. In phenomenological thinking, darkness, in combination with a sense of error and vagueness, enables a rebellion against the status quo. Ja, butoh is *net soe*. It's just like that. It embodies a rebellion against the status quo. Unlike ballet, primarily focused on perfection, precision and its perpetual upward and outward reaching, butoh demands an inward direction, looking into darkness. Once in the dark, after a few moments the eyes readjust, and it becomes possible to see light in the dark. The eyes, both physical and the eyes of understanding, change and readjust. And this subtle shift, I believe, allows for an authentic artist to emerge.

From looking into darkness one might think of death, a subject most want to avoid. But death is inevitable. Both butoh and phenomenology support the importance of interiorising death, intermingling it with life, and remaining cognizant of a constant cycle that, once embodied, becomes less frightening and more uplifting. Death and life—both interwoven in the fabric of time. Butoh and phenomenology perceive all the elements of time as elastic and always interlinked. With a sense of the past, present, as well as the future, always interlinked, one is not limited to a particular time frame, as I am in this presentation. I believe that jumping across realities of the past, present,

future, and even performance disciplines, as I have attempted to do today, enables a journey into histories of one's body and all that one is connected to, and allows both you and me, the observer and participant, to imagine, to anticipate….Something…. Secret…

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Notes

1 The event was held at The Gordon Institute for Performance and Creative Arts (renamed the Institute for Creative Arts in 2016), and is situated within the University of Cape Town's Humanities Faculty. The institute holds interdisciplinarity, live art and public spheres as key themes in their facilitation of research projects in the creative and performing arts.

2 In 2015 the University of Cape Town experienced student protests relating to the perpetuation of colonial ideologies within the university. The campaign "Rhodes Must Fall" shortly followed by "Fees Must Fall" exposed underlying political and racial tensions between staff and student bodies, and created a general sense of uncertainty about the future of the university. The student protests forced a re-thinking of academic and financial processes, as well as socio-political representations within the university procedures and structures. At the time of writing this article, several issues remained unresolved and threats of recurring student protests were looming.

3 The curriculum also includes African dance and urban dance styles such as hip-hop.

4 Following the Jamaican spelling in Politics of the Female Body (Katrak, 2006).

5 Cape Malay is a language spoken in Cape Town predominantly in the Muslim community. It bears traces of Indonesian and Malay languages, brought to Cape Town by the Dutch slave trade in the 1600s.

6 This is the originally written text that my voice-prompter followed. Analogous to the nature of live performance, the spoken text diverted from the original sequence in parts.

7 The side camera angle and low volume in the actual audio-visual documentation have no deliberate intent and merely reflects the spatial and technical logistics of the day.

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jackï job's independent, professional dance career began in 1994. Since then she has conceived more than 60 original works, with performances in Africa, Asia and Europe. job lived in Tokyo from 2003-2011. During this time she engaged in dynamic collaborations with an array of eclectic artists and served as a guest teacher at a few universities across Japan. job received her MA in dance research from the University of Cape Town in 2014. Since 2016, her PhD research interrogates the meaning of liminality and its impact on the perception of personhood and transformation in South Africa. She is currently engaged as a lecturer across the Dance and Drama Departments at the University of Cape Town, and intends to still be spiritedly engaged with the Arts beyond 90.

I Make Art – Voicing Voice, Speaking Self and Doing Criticality
Sharlene Khan

This paper was first published in: *I Make Art* (2017),
Sharlene Khan and Fouad Asfour (eds), Johannesburg: Sharlene Khan (i)

It started off as a reaction to my silencing.

I had written an opinion piece in a South African art magazine critiquing the lack of racial transformation in the visual arts field in South Africa. Practically overnight I went from up-and-coming artist to art world pariah, non-existent as the White monied habitus closed ranks. What had I expected? That they would sing my praises when I opened my mouth? Over the next two years I produced *What I look like, What I feel like* in which I presented comparative images, which tried to communicate the contradictions of public-private personae: my own feelings of feeling victimised, hurt and angry set against public perceptions of me as a radical, an activist, an angry black woman—none of these meant in a positive way.[ii]

Fuck the World, 2008. Photograph courtesy of the artist

Postgraduate Beggar, 2008

Lonely Socialite Seeks Lonely Socialite Seeks Companion, 2008

Anybody but Sharlene, 2008

Autobiography and the use of my body in masquerade to dress up in excessive caricatures of Self and Other became the vehicle by which I reclaimed my voice, my visibility, my position and right to speak against the art industry and academia, which showed in a variety of ways the long arm of power.

[PERFORMATIVE PAUSE. BREATHE. SILENCE]

It started off as a reaction to my silencing.

The German curator of an international collaborative project said on leaving Johannesburg that I didn't need to show my new performative video in Berlin because "we've already seen all that".

They'd already seen all of that.

    Already seen all of that?

Feeling that my voice and language were deemed insufficient, I restaged John Baldessari's iconic *I Am Making Art* (1976) into a declarative statement:

I MAKE CONTEMPORARY ART

Using the language of acknowledged canonised works, my repetition
became a marker of difference, of otherness, a s-t-r-a-i-n-e-d
signifier as I tried to mimic the ephemerality of Baldessari's
nonchalant gestures. My body refused to mimic the authority
of whiteness, of maleness and I was, yet again, an Other on
the margins attempting to force my way into the Western art
centre—like those feminists, those Arabs, those Africans, those
performers, those public artists, those new media people.
Mimicry became mockery in the space of almost-but-not-quite,
almost-but-not-white, almost-but-not-right.[iii] The slippage
of the not-quite became a space of play, of humour, of popular
culture spoofing, of the carnivaleque, the first fart joke,
blackface, the space of Homi D. Clown.[iv]

*I make art, I make art, I make art, I make art, I make
art, I make art, I make art, I make art, I make art, I
make art, I make art. I make art, I make art, I make
art, I make art, I make art, I make art, I make art, I
make art, I make art, I make art, I make art, I make
art, I make art, I make art. I make art, I make art, I
make art, I make art, I make art, I make art. I make
art. I make art. I make art.[v]*

I Make Art, work-in-progress

Repetition re-authorises, but not-quite. It slides, it slips, it tries to hide and it exposes.

Spot the difference. Spot the difference.

Repetition disrupts. Repetition renews. Repetition rejuvenates. Repetition regenerates. Repetition avenges.

[PERFORMATIVE PAUSE. BREATHE. SILENCE]

It started off as a reaction to my silencing.

An encounter with a person in a position of power over me—my decision not to work with someone I didn't feel comfortable with being ignored, my concerns trivialised. Reduced to a voice I didn't recognise {LIKE ME, LIKE ME}, one that was small, weak, accommodating {LIKE ME, LIKE ME}, wanting to be liked {LIKE ME, LIKE ME} and not be perceived as a 'troublemaker', yet again.

Not again!

Not this time.

Critique us she said. So I did, but not in written discourse
sandwiched amongst other people's thoughts and three syllable
catch-phrases. In my words rather, uninhibited, unrestricted,
unmediated, raw

    —do you believe that?

Fanon's idea of the racially epidermalised body fractured, sent
on the four winds by the language of racism, essentialised, fixed
in its history, its ancestors, its appearance became the chosen
visual iconography: a set of eyes to gaze at, a gaze that looks
back.[vi]

I SEE YOU.

A set of hands wringing in despair, anxiety (menace?).
Fragments of a captive body and a maddened mind, a language, a
discourse: Subaltern, Alterity, Centre, Margin, Glocal. Sartre
prophesied, "What then did you expect when you unbound the
gag that muted those black mouths? That they would chant your
praises? Did you think that when those heads that our fathers
had forcibly bowed down to the ground were raised again, you
would find adoration in their eyes?"[vii]

***

[SCREEN 2: VOICE-OVER]

And then that anger turns into a rage and it's the kind of rage you hide, the rage you have to mask, because you know the people in charge, in power can't handle that kind of rage, they can't handle your perspectives, your criticism and so you feel the need therefore to mask everything—to mask yourself—

[SCREEN 2 VOICE-OVER: CLOSE, HIDE, CONCEAL]

—so that you fit into this structure and you end up putting on this entire performance even when it is not explicitly asked for and you hate yourself because you have become 'complicit' in hegemonies so that you can 'get through', so that you can succeed, eventually. But I think part of the fallacy is believing that it is not asked for because even if such things are never uttered, they become the unspoken and unwritten scripts that are still performed to keep up appearance.

[SCREEN 3: DO, DO,DO!!!]

[SCREEN 2 VOICE-OVER: SHE SAID YES, SHE SAID NO]

But what if you don't fit in and you don't want to mask it? What if you choose to challenge them, to push back?

[SCREEN 1: NO, NO] —simultaneously—[SCREEN 3: NO, NO]

Are they able to accept this?

[SCREEN 3: NO, NO]

Can they incorporate this or is the only possibility available to shut down and disavow my blackness and my rage?

And no, my rage is not an illegible one. It is not one that I cannot articulate. It is not just symbolic violence but rather it is a violence that has been put upon us as colonised subjects. More than half of my life I was subjected to white Afrikaner indoctrination in various forms and having come out of apartheid I have had to question so much of who I am, what I am, what am I doing and why?

[SCREEN 2 VOICE-OVER: WHO AM I? WHERE DO I COME FROM?
WHAT AM I DOING IN THIS WORLD?]

Why this way? For whom? What is this really about? This endless questioning in this sea of ignorance. And this questioning leads to this raging about why we have accepted certain things and why things went unquestioned for as long as they did; how could I not know; why did you allow this; what did you do?

[SCREEN 3: WHY?! HOW COULD YOU? YOU STUPID IGNORANT BITCH!
I HATE YOU.]

And that rage has grown and it kind of starts to creep out of you because there is so much to be angry about every day… Every. Single. Day. I think what Western feminism has done is to speak of rage, but in an academic manner, to sanitise and neutralise it and make it palatable so that it becomes currency, so that you can get a book publishing deal, and get your paper published and people invite you to conferences and it's all nice, 'cause nobody wants to deal with a raving bitch let alone an angry black woman. I mean rather than screaming at somebody and saying "this is not how I want to be treated" —

[SCREEN 3: THIS IS NOT HOW I WANT TO BE TREATED]

—and effecting a change right there and then (even them hating you openly is a change I think), noooo. You have to take it to dinner, have a polite conversation with it and even pay for supper. I mean confrontation is a part of everyday life, but instead with such important issues like race we have to negotiate, we have to hear that other person's point of view and understand "where they came from". What you can hope for at the most is that they resort to a masquerade of their own where they pretend to tolerate you for a given time in the hope that eventually you will shut the fuck up or even better still, leave their world untouched when you finally depart.

It's their world. It's always their world. And you're always a visitor who has to learn the house rules. And you learn this shit from the time you're born, even if you're born in a black majority country, only being exposed to other Indian people. Everyone wants a Barbie—you've got to get a Barbie. She's a princess, she's beautiful. Look at her long pretty blonde hair (just like Shirley Temple's blonde curls) and which you can comb and comb. And her sparkly blue eyes and small nose and pretty pink mouth. And look at that pretty pink pony she has and the pretty pink carriage that carries her and Ken to a happily ever after. And look at her dress, oh look at her dress. But you can't afford Barbie. You beg and plead but that stupid doll eludes you. Instead you get little baby dolls with their stupid little bonnets and stupid plastic bottles with which you can feed them and then they pee all over you as the water runs right through them. And the ugliest little doll with a horrible head of hair and a head bigger than her whole body that lies in a peanut shell. And then the hair gets matted and can't be combed and sits like this big clump, which is slightly removed from the plastic scalp, and then the doll's eyelids go weird and one always hangs limply and an arm pops out and the doll looks like this thing that accuses you of not taking care of it and the stupid loop keeps saying "Mama Mama" and you can't turn

it off and you need a stone to break the back open and bang it shut, and you finally do and it stares with its half-opened eye silently, watching. Always watching.

Not like Barbie at all who always remained posed, dignified, even when you stripped her off all her clothes, she still stood there smiling in her nakedness. Always that smile, perfect, like Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz *or* Anne of Green Gables *or Miss South Africa. Miss South Africa always looked like a real life Barbie—beautifully white without a scar, long flowing blonde or brown hair, blue or green eyes, long white hairless legs and graceful white arms, pearly white teeth. She looked great in a swimsuit and in evening gowns and I bet you that if you undressed her she would also stand there smiling in her beautiful white nakedness. I wished so much that when I grew up I would be white and every night I dreamed that when I grew up I would be this beautiful white girl named Cristina (Chris for short which would cause all sorts of delightful confusion), and I would have long blonde hair and blue eyes and a perfect build and I could sit at a pool and be white and beautiful and if I chose to dive into the water, I would rise gracefully and one day I would meet the love of my life and he would be impressed by my whiteness and my swimming and cycling and skiing and diving and snorkeling, my singing and dancing.*

As beautiful as Barbie was, she still couldn't dance as well as all those Bollywood actresses—Madhuri Dixit, Sri Devi, Pooja Bhatt, Dimple Kapadia. They were flawless too, with big brown eyes and ample breasts and curvy hips which could shake in all directions as they danced. They could dance! And they sounded like angels. And even when they cried, it looked sooooo beautiful. I would have settled for being one of them.

But I wasn't. I wasn't Barbie beautiful or Bollywood beautiful except in my dreams. I was a painfully skinny, hairy, big nosed, crooked toothed girl with all sorts of scars on my legs left by god knows what poor people's diseases, and when I became a teenager I was introduced to the joys of acne and the ugliest square glasses—like the ones all the scientists in '70s and '80s sci-fi movies wear. Acne—what acne?, that will stop with age? See a specialist, no, not necessary. Here's an ointment. Maybe you have too much heat in your body. And of course I couldn't run, jump, bike or swim to save my life. To top it off I had a too big attitude and not enough reverence for anything. At 16 I got contact lenses and they were coloured blue and in some small way I made Cristina come true. And when she did, I realised how stupid other people became—they would look at my eyes and were truly impressed. Guys suddenly became interested, not just in my eyes but in my lineage—do your parents have blue eyes, did your grandparents have blue eyes? Does it run in the family? I hated them. I hated myself.

[SCREEN 2 VOICE-OVER: HATE, HATE, HATE *whispering*]

And I learnt to hate Miss South Africa.
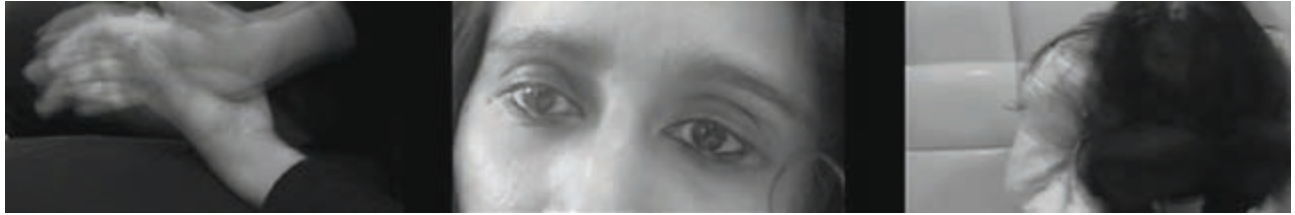
Always their house, their rules. What did it matter if I knew other stuff about the Ramayana, or the Bodhisattva Padmapani or Tagore or Lata Mangeshkar and Kishore Kumar? No, it had to be Shakespeare's Macbeth *and poems about Irishmen dying and gyrating circles heralding the fall of things. I had to learn "Oh Susanna", "Jimmy Crack Corn", "Old Folks at Home" and stupid songs about yellow submarines and "ob-la-di-ob-la-da". I had to hear about die "bobbejaan who klimmed die berg" and to "borsel my tande tarieps taraps" and "Ons vir jou Suid Afrika".* ♫

[SCREEN 2 VOICE-OVER: TARIEPS, TARAPS, TARIEPS, TARAPS]

[SCREEN 3: BOBBEJAAN KLIM DIE BERG SO HASTIG AND SO VASTIG…, TARIEPS TARAPS…, EK BORSEL MY TANDE TAROU…, ONS VIR JOU SUID AFRIKA! ♫]

I had to learn about weird little girls covering their brother in the snow with their naked bodies and Paul Kruger's fucking thumb being shot, and the pyramids of Giza and flying buttresses in Gothic architecture, and boring Irma Stern and about Gandhi's Satyagraha campaign against the bloody British but not one word about children being massacred in Soweto or golden rhinos being forged in old fires in the south. They teach you for years to learn to sew, stitch and mend and then when the country's ripped apart and you're now having to learn "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" and the new English last part and welcome Nelson and Winnie and you're looking around thinking—how could I have not known? Why didn't anyone tell me? How? How? How?

  [SCREEN 2 VOICE-OVER: HOW, HOW, HOW *in crying voice*][viii]

<div align="center">***</div>

Did you think that I would sing your praises when last I
opened my mouth? What did Ama Ata Aidoo call us: "Sister
Killjoy"'?[ix] What does sister Sara Ahmed call us—"feminist
killjoys", enders of that "good feeling", the promise of
happiness, of diversity, the ones who bell hooks says makes backs
harden and brings a hush to a room of liberals and radicals.
[x] And yet they call on us to activate the angry black woman
stereotype, to use negativity as a radical methodological
tool which sparks a reaction, which sets people off, which
is a starting point of creativity as we work out ourselves,
our traumas, our otherness. Anger as a mask, a distance that
affronts and still seduces, that pretends at a familiarity even
as it forces back. Self-reflective emotion, neo-didacticism.
Who am I speaking to? YOU, and YOU, and YOU and YOU. And me.
Not for the purposes of a re-wounding: I tell you my pain—you
tell me your pain, I tell you my pain—you tell me your pain, I
tell you my pain—you tell me your pain, I tell you my pain—you
tell me your pain, but rather locating that pain within history,
societies' institutions, cultural beliefs, and economies,
as well as one's own personal Freudian pathologies. Not as a
hierarchy of oppressions—

1. Race
2. Class
3. Gender
4. Sexuality
5. Nationality
6. Religion
7. Education
8. Disability
9. Age

—but in an understanding that in my life these positions
slide-slip- intersect-interlock-interweave.[xi] South African
Indian woman-of-colour artist, half Muslim—half Christian,
heteronormative, poor black middle- class wannabee. Unhomed.
[xii] Not white, not black, not coloured.[xiii] Not "fly". ☹
Homeless. Subaltern. Apartheid's child, post-apartheid's post-
modern R&B girl-woman, neo-colonialism's visual artist. Neither
here nor there, but somewhere, something, someone else. A
space of uncertainty, of ambivalence, of hybridity. A journey
of wandering to come back to oneself, the Self that never is
without an Other—can one be one's Other? A doppelganger of
creativity?

[PERFORMATIVE PAUSE. BREATHE. SILENCE]

Neither one nor the other, someone, something else. A space of
ambiguity, of impurity, of ambivalence. What is this space? What
is this mask? What is this postcolonial masquerade?[xiv]

                            ***

SCENE 3: GARDEN[EMMERENTIA][xvi]

> *DOROTHY*
> *Toto—I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.*
>
> *DOROTHY*
> *We must be over the rainbow!*
>
> *[Shot in colour to represent new SA—Mandela democratic elections]*

ACT 2:

Glinda, the 'Good' Witch of the North appears.

> *GLINDA*
> *I'm Glinda, the Witch of the North. Ding Dong!*
> *The Wicked Witch is dead!*
>
> *[Images of UNESCO speeches and Miriam Makeba speaking to security council]*

"Wicked" Witch of the West appears.

> *WITCH*
> *Who killed my sister? Who killed the Witch of the East?*
> *Was it you? Answer me!*

[Flicker through images of killed "Communists" Che, Dulcie September, Biko, Chris Hani, Patrice Lumumba]

***

> DOROTHY
> *No—No! It was an accident! I didn't mean to kill anybody! —.*

> WITCH
> *Give me back my slippers! I'm the only one that knows how to use them. They're of no use to you! Give them back to me!*

[Flicker through images of American presidents]

> WITCH
> *I'll get you, my pretty, and your little dog, too!*

> DOROTHY
> *Oh, I'd give anything to get out of Oz—but which is the way back? I can't go the way I came.*

> GLINDA
> *No – that's true. The only person who might know would be the great and wonderful Wizard of Oz himself!*

> DOROTHY
> *But, how do I start for Emerald City?*

> GLINDA
> *It's always best to start at the beginning—and all you do is follow the Yellow Brick Road.*

[INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC "FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD" —IRIS OUT]
[xv]

***

The space of the "after", the new, the crossroads of capital, history, culture, the "chaotically pluralistic but internally coherent"[xvii] —AFRICA! The space where content-meets-genre-meets- aesthetics-meets-production-meets-money, or rather the lack thereof, meets-audience-meets-foreign-cultural-institutes-meets-fong-kong- distribution-networks-meets-rampant-consumerism-amid plentiful-resources- amid-plentiful-foreign-divestors-meets-poverty-unemployment-disease- illiteracy-poverty porn-and-detrimental aid. What is the postcolonial masquerade? What is my postcolonial masquerade? It is a politics of aesthetics, a politicisation of aesthetics MEETS all that intersects in the postcolonial's life. It takes neither content, genre, medium, production, reception nor market for granted,

but examines these as they inform the aesthetics and discourses that talk to postcolonials first, and to those Other people up there (up here) in the North, second. It pretends, it mimics, it seduces, it plays, it laughs, it farts, it gestures, it questions, it interrogates, it interrogates, it interrogates. It speaks loudly. To itself, to its community. Sometimes it has to shout. It whispers, lovingly. It dresses up and appears, simply to disappear and emerge among ambiguities. It is even as it is not.

Notes

i A different version of this performative writing piece is presented in my artist catalogue *I Make Art* (2014) and to the 2015 online text 'I Make Art — Voicing Voice, Speaking Self and Doing Criticality', Reconstruction, Vol.15:1".

ii Sharlene Khan, *What I look like, What I feel like* (in order of appearance): *Fuck the World*, *Postgraduate Beggar*, *Lonely Socialite Seeks Companion*, *Anybody but Sharlene*, all works are mixed media digital photographs on Entrada (including embroidery, embossing, charcoal, painting), 61cm x 84xm, 2008.

iii Inspired by postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha's idea of colonial mimicry and the "almost-but-not-quite".

iv Character from the American TV parodic series *In Living Color* (1990– 1994), created by Keenan Ivory Wayans.

v Sharlene Khan, *I Make Art* (2011–2020), Twenty-one black–and–white and colour digital videos with sound (running time: 1:01), 1 x 10 metre drawing, 1 x wall drawing

vi Fanon 1952/2008.

vii Sartre 1948/1964

viii Sharlene Khan, *Nervous Conditions* (2015) made up of *Nervous Conditions I* (2013) a three-channel Black and White wall-to-wall digital projection with sound (running Time: 30:07 min) and a TV DVD display; *Nervous Conditions II* (2015) and a Black and White digital projection with sound (running Time: 25:53 min); and *Nervous Conditions III* (2014) a Black and White digital projection with sound (running Time: 04:00 min).

ix Aidoo 1977.

x Ahmed 2010.

xi This is based on black feminist theories around
intersectionality and the understandings of intersecting,
interlocking oppressions by Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Patricia
Hill Collins, and Kimberle Crenshaw among others.

xii This term is appropriated from Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*.

xiii South African official racial categories.

xiv This term is appropriated from cultural scholar Niti
Sampat Patel, although she doesn't apply the term to visual art
productions.

xv Sharlene Khan, *No Place* (work-in-progress). Colour video
projection with sound and sculptural installation (running time:
22:55 min).

xvi Script based on the script for the feature-length film *The
Wizard of Oz* (1939). Available at: http://www.wendyswizardofoz.
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xvii Mbembe 2001.

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Sharlene Khan is a South African visual artist whose work often incorporates a range of media that generate installations and performances that focus on the socio-political realities of a post- apartheid society and the intersectionality of race-gender-class. She uses masquerading as a postcolonial strategy to interrogate her South African heritage as well as the constructedness of identity via rote education, art discourses, historical narratives and popular culture. She holds a PhD (Arts) from Goldsmiths, University of London and is Associate Professor at the Department of Fine Art at Wits University.

Land as Milk: The Body as a Border
Nwabisa Plaatjie interviewed by Lindokuhle Nkosi

Lindokuhle Nkosi engages with director and theatre maker Nwabisa Plaatjie about her adaptation of the play *The Native Who Caused All the Trouble*. In doing so the two black women exchange meditations on the body, the land and the natives who dare to disturb.

Lindokuhle Nkosi: Nwabisa, you have described the land as something that leaks. Something that purposefully or accidently loses or emits contents. The leaking land as something that can exude, but also as something that allows things to escape. The leaking land as porous, as perforated. The land as a gaping wound and a cautious, safe cleft.

In accordance with popular narrative, the land is something that can be taken and taken back. Or rather, it is a thing to be given, still useful for all its leakiness. The land is breathing, it is heaving. It is racialised and gendered and politicised and it is here where you meet it in your re-imagining of the play *The Native Who Caused All the Trouble* (Van Rensburg, Keogh, Cooke, Haysom & Kani, 1989).

Nwabisa Plaatjie: Land is something that we use. Land is something that we are. Land is something that leaks. Something that gives things to us. Something we pollute at times. Something that we are constantly engaging with in our daily lives.

>	*[Nwabisa's voice comes through steady, but she pauses often, sometimes breaking a word unnaturally. Stopping mid-speech to find, to allow for exploration, what land can be. If there are other ways to describe it.]*

NP: Of course, there's much more [to it than the] simple narrative of "Give us back the land". We can use the land as a resource, but when I was doing this particular play, I was following uTselilo's narrative of land being something that is God given, that does not belong to anyone. I was looking at it from an embodied point of view. Looking at this, I had to start with myself, as a female, as a black woman. This is why I delved in deeper

kulendawo [to that place/reality]. I made the main character a black woman. I looked for a black female protagonist to play uTselilo.

LN: *The Native Who Caused All the Trouble* is a re-interpretation of a play written by Vanessa Cooke, Fink Haysom, and Danny Keogh, which made its theatre debut in 1986. Three years later, in 1989, it would be adapted for screen and a movie of the same name would tell in celluloid the story of a Mosotho man called Tselilo—played by John Kani—who, believing that the land is not something that can be owned by anyone but God, takes the leadership of the day to court. Pitting man-made laws against God's laws, Tselilo called into question the nation-state, and the idea of the native.

Based on actual events and set in 1937, the happenings play out 24 years after the enactment of the Native Land Act of 1913 (Feinberg 1993: p.x) and just one year after the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936 (Feinberg 1993: p.x) came into effect. The 1913 Native Land Act came after centuries of colonial dispossession and alienation of black people, putting into statute what had already been the de facto law of the land. It relegated the black majority to seven per cent of South Africa's land.

This 1913 Act would stir a person (with a name very similar to your own)—Sol T. Plaatje—to write the seminal text *Native Life in South Africa* (2016 [1916]). The first chapter begins: "Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually, a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth."

In your version of the play there is a similar change in status—from human to sub-human— which impels Tselilo to challenge his "nativeness". Having earmarked land for the construction of a church, he returns to it only to a find a shack erected on the premises. It is now occupied by an Indian man who is the legal owner of the land. Tselilo evicts the man from the premises and is eventually arrested for doing so.

Tselilo is an unlikely protagonist: his radicalization, spurred by religious fastidiousness, depicts the ways in

which, for black people, even the desire for the mundane becomes extraordinary. The everyday is spectacle. Places of prayer are places of protest. Worship is woe. And the power of the sacred is something that can be deputised to whiteness.

In the 1980's staging of the original version, the story is told from the perspective of Edna, a liberal white woman. Edna is married to a policeman, who, while sympathetic, is the same officer who cuffs Tselilo and carries him off to jail. In order to be heard, Tselilio's screams must be transcribed through the concerns of a benevolent collaborator.

NP: It's based on a man who fought with colonial officials about the law that they can't own land; land belongs to God and he wanted to use a certain piece of land to build his church. So, this man fought with them… And then Cooke, Keogh and Haysom wrote a play around that, which was *The Native Who Caused All the Trouble*.

They were quite aware of their own positionality as white people, and we are introduced to the story of Tselilo through a third person, through a couple. When I decided to do the adaptation, I focused solely on the story of Tselilo, the story of this man who decides "I'm going to fight these officials because land cannot belong to anyone."

*

> The Rabbits Who Caused All the Trouble *is a short fable by James Thurber first published in* The New Yorker *in 1939. Used as allegory, "the rabbits" refers to persecuted minorities while "the wolves" in the story are the oppressors. As the wolves enact their violence, the other animals are just mute spectators as the events build up, leading to a genocide.*
>
> *"They were trying to escape," said the wolves, "and, as you know, this is no world for escapists."*

*

LN: While the character of Tselilo is a man, in your rendition the part is played by actress Faniswa Yisa. In a 2017 conversation with *Mail & Guardian* journalist Faye Kabali-Kagwa (2017), you locate the border on the body, and the body as that of a woman.

NP: We can't talk about the land without engaging with the body, and I'm talking about the female body. I'm talking about the physical body and the limitations

and the fears, and the stories, and the narratives, and the politics that go along with it.

LN: With actress Faniswa Yisa as the lead, Tselilo is feminised, but all the other characters address Tselilo as a man. Sand leaks from a container balanced on her head. She births a sand baby. She cradles and rocks it as it bleeds hard gravel.

NP: Sand in the play is used to represent land in an embodied form; this includes a baby, where the sand takes a leaking form. Or [actress] uNomakrestu who had the boobs made out of sand, spilling… spilling sand…. We can say that sand represents the land as a resource, the land as milk. Or when Tselilo gives birth to the land and this land being taken away and she's rocking it like a child.

Sand got to be a metaphor for the many forms that land can take. Land as a commodity, as something that can be sold. Land as something very significant to culture and being.

*

LN: On the 19th of April 1907, an Mfengu man, Enoch Mgijima, who was at the time a member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, was out hunting small game when an angel appeared, addressing him as follows: "I have sent you to these people because I am worried that although they worship me, they are not honest in their worship of me. I want you to worship me according to your old traditions."

Almost exactly three years later, Halley's Comet made its return, visible from Earth for the first time in 76 years. The comet passed so close that the Earth moved through the comet's tail, and many groups of people all over the world took this as a sign that the end of the world was beginning.

When Mgijima saw the comet, it affirmed the vision he'd had in the field three years earlier: God was angry. God required human beings to return to their Old Testament beliefs. It was at this time in 1912 that Mgijima left the Weseleyan Methodist Church. In November that year he would begin to pray over people, dipping them into the waters of the Black Kei River, baptising them as his followers—as Israelites (Edgar 2018).

Mgijima later went on to join the Church of God and Saints of Christ, but his visions, which had become

Nwabisa Plaatjie (director), Reimagining *The Native Who Caused All the Trouble*, 2017. Performance created with the support of The Theatre Arts Admin Collective Emerging Theatre Director's Bursary. Images courtesy of the Institute for Creative Arts, UCT.

increasingly violent, were incongruent with the teachings of that church. Refusing to renounce his visions, he would be excommunicated, taking his Israelites with him.

In 1919, Mgijima stood in front of his tabernacle and uttered these three words, "Juda, Efrayime, Josef, nezalwane" [Judas, Ephraim, Joseph and brethren]. Those who followed him and heard understood. They were to travel from their corners of the world to the holy village of Ntabelanga to await the coming of the Lord. To the chagrin of the authorities, three thousand Israelites then descended upon Ntabelanga, where the Israelites, had been occupying and building on the land without the permissions required by the law.

For a year, the government tried and failed to evict Mgijima and his followers from Ntabelanga, resulting in a confrontation in May 1921. Around 200 Israelites were killed by the police, a hundred were wounded and 141 people, including Mgijima, were arrested in an incident that has come to be known as the Bulhoek Massacre.

The 141 arrested were brought to trial in November of that year, charged with sedition or "violent and forcible conduct against the authority of the state". All the charged Israelites were found guilty and sentenced to hard labour: sentenced to work the land that they could no longer belong to.

As black people *and* as women would you say that we have been twice displaced?

*

NP: The narrative is changing. It's hard for me to hold onto the idea that I'm twice displaced, probably because I think times are changing and I think it's an incredible period to be black and to be a woman, especially with the opportunities that are coming our way. There are women rising who are inspiring us to be better versions of ourselves and encouraging us to be our greatest selves.

Which is also something that I liked in Tselilo, the main character—it was his courage to fight authority, to be unreasonable. That is what I find about young black women and older black feminists in this generation—it is that everyone is being encouraged to be quite courageous and to fight for their dreams, to become who they want to be.

I acknowledge all the violence and the crimes that women have faced. I acknowledge the oppressions that we face on a daily level, but on the other scale of things

there is a wave of black feminism that is constantly encouraging us to be our greatest selves. You know, forcing everyone to accept our greatness, and I think that that part has more power than the oppressed side or being displaced in a type of way.

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Qash-Qash: One Mirror Image of Black Womanhood
Nomcebisi Moyikwa interviewed by Linda Makgabutlane

Introduction

As theatre makers and teachers, the work[1] we make often depicts a situation that has occurred in society. We grapple with story, then plot, usually with a beginning, middle and end, moving circumstances, or condition, to the role of context, from which, story, emerges. It is not common in theatre making to place condition in the foreground of a work, where arguably, we should. We seldom depict blackness as a *condition*: a mode of being or existing. Which is a worthy project as representation matters and is still necessary. Nomcebisi Moyikwa's *Qash Qash* (2017) is a work in which Moyikwa—who in this instance is both theatre maker and performer—sensitively begins to articulate black womanhood as a condition. A condition is something one is subject to, so the work viscerally enacts what it is that black women over generations have been subjected to.

Qash Qash (2017) eloquently presents black women as being collective in how we negotiate our way through the world. We are presented as a network that is not limited to being domestic, either in scale or in its concerns: so this work is far from being a "kitchen table" drama. At the start of the performance, Moyikwa asks that race and gender be prioritized in the audience seating arrangement. First, black women are asked to find seats, then, black males are asked to seat themselves, and then other folk are asked to stand, cast in the piece as a secondary (standing) audience. The politics informing the work are quickly established. Before the on stage performance begins, the black women audience members are asked to each hold a saucer with a teacup on it, thus also forming part of the work.

On stage we first encounter Moyikwa in what appears to be a personal setting, her bedroom. The misty atmosphere and dim lighting suggests she is in a liminal state, either sleeping or dreaming. Watching the dreamer on stage the audience hears her thoughts and fears broadcast into the room, this anchors Moyikwa as she moves, and we, the audience, focus and try to breathe calmly, while witnessing the fine balance as Moyikwa, who seems only partly conscious, walks along a ledge: the edge of the bed.

Cups and saucers in hand we, the black women audience members, ground her dream state, acting as those who are awake while she sleeps; as small reflective glimpses or fellow travellers on this journey. Moyikwa makes it off the bed, but still appears to be in a liminal space. She seems to walk through her fears and fantasies, both having equal strength, as forces at play on her mind and the world on stage.

We are now holding teacups, as our mothers, sisters and grandmothers do, while we relate our lived experiences to them. This gesture and suggestion of tea drinking echoes how black women observe and softly offer support to each other in moments of struggle and through similarities and differences, in a manner that only black women have and will come to know.

Moyikwa journeys on and allows her audience to acknowledge parts of their own inner lives through her journeying. Set against her success in articulating a state of vulnerability, our thoughts and emotions empathise with and then recognise her complex interplay of confusion, fantasy, fear, humour and song as our own too. We know we have been there. With the cups in hand, we now remember in our own lives the moments of needing to confide in other black women. Moyikwa's and our thoughts, fears, fantasies, and doubts become silenced by the live gospel choir that suddenly forms part of the performance on stage.

While the teacups, music and other women serve as a palette centring the work, the gospel choir, dramatic and surprising, is a vital element of the work. The choir enters the stage only once her vulnerability has been established, they enter suddenly, singing black spiritual hymns with vigour, raising our spirits, giving us hope and quenching our rising anxiety over the outcome of her journey. Their sound-scape consists of singing and clapping, vibrant, like faith- spiritual belief- and breathing personified. They are the only other bodies we see on stage, before they exit, quickly. In this performance, Moyikwa eloquently articulates a particular aspect of subjective black womanhood as spanning across generations, as collective in identity, and as determined by those who make up her audience. Her

Nomcebisi Moyikwa, *Qash-Qash* (2018), ICA Live Art Festival, UCT Hiddingh Campus

political perspective is announced early in the work through her prioritising of black women and actively including them in the performance in an agentic role. This serves to remind one that black womanhood sometimes needs a networked holding space in order to be sustained. While folks who are non black women continue to have the agency to subject lack women to various stresses, they-for a change- can be positioned at the edge of stage and our care or concern.

This work sits in the sweet spot of enabling the audience to identify with both the narrative and the textual honesty of its depiction of the social position of black women.

This interview considers Moyikwa's approach to performance making and questions the theories that underpin her work in order to make a broad enquiry into the strategies and processes that informed her choices in the making of the performance *Qash-Qash: One mirror image of black womanhood.*

Linda Makgabutlane: Please explain the narrative that *Qash-Qash* explores and what your intention was in making the work.

Nomcebisi Moyikwa: In *Qash-Qash* everything follows from the principle that the black subject is not to

be reduced to a simple symptomatic—resisting, reactionary—subject, but rather that we hear in her what is "unreal", calling attention to modes of black articulacy previously overlooked. I was proposing that, in order to stage an utterance (not an explanation or analysis); we include thought of the black subject in her primary language (not the language of transformation, recovery, rediscovery, or freedom). What was proposed, then, was a series of portraits that offer the reader a discursive site: the site of me speaking within and through myself.

This reading attends to the enjoyment, relations, pleasure, fantasy, absence, dispossessions, traumas, anxieties, expectations, expenditure, silence, magic, attachments, and negotiations attached to the making of "new" forms of personhood that are formed in journeying to find narratives that move beyond responding and reacting to colonial and apartheid narratives. *Qash-Qash*, known as the game of wonder and described in a physical way, is that moment when one begins snapping one's fingers when he/she is trying to explain that which they know and feel, but cannot remember or cannot explain in verbal language. It is that which is already felt, but which, however, remains nameless and formless. It also speaks of that which is not attainable, not explainable, cannot be stolen, cannot be repossessed, that which was left for those who were stripped naked. It remains mysterious to those for whom it was protected and reserved. Its existence can only be confirmed by the

Nomcebisi Moyikwa, *Qash-Qash* (2018), ICA Live Art Festival, UCT Hiddingh Campus

body that is hosting it and it can only speak through the body that shelters it.

"We remain on the road searching for what is, in most cases, already within us and for what is us", said Mandla Mbothwe (2014) in Alude Mahali's paper titled *A Museum of Bottled Sentiments: The 'beautiful pain syndrome' in twenty first century Black South African theatre making.* This particular expression alludes to what I felt and still feel every day in my attempts to find a self-definition that moves beyond responding and reacting to colonial and apartheid narratives. It speaks of my body's gesture caught in action and not contemplated in repose—the body of athletes, unprepared orators, statues—what in the straining body can be immobilized. I struggle in a kind of lunatic sport, I spend myself. *Qash-Qash* is myself at work; making, "worlding".

LM: I enjoyed watching the work as it felt close to my experiences of being guided by other black females of older generations, like my mom and grandmother. I was reminded of how I both draw on them and differ from them, and how parts of their influence inform me in varying degrees and have lead me to my own (different) ways. What socio-political condition informed the piece?

NM: What I was attempting to do with *Qash-Qash* was to imagine what it means to be human. Being human, in this context, signals not a noun but a verb.

Being human is a praxis of humanness that does not dwell on the static empiricism of the un-fittest and the downtrodden and situate the most marginalized within the incarcerated colonial categorization of oppression; being human as praxis is, to borrow from Maturana and Varela, "the realization of the living" (Wynter, 2015:8).

LM: Yes you are quite correct—the socio-political condition can be easily equated with the human condition. What informed your choices in the set, props and materials you used in the performance? What shifted from the conception phase to what we saw on stage and why or how?

NM: I never know why I choose my props. As a theatre maker I always navigate towards sets and props that have the potential of making language and worlds. For example, a kettle for me has that—it boils, it hisses, it sweats, spits heat that forms a fog which then gets swallowed by the coldness of a room. That's one world. Another world is the world of the familiar where we recognise the kettle for its function(s). Boiling water to make tea maybe? That's another world.

I also thought about the relationship that this object has accumulated with the person who put it on. What does it mean to put it on? What does it mean to

boil water? What possibilities this language we get from "ukwenza" (doing) has. Can we possibly think of words as worlds? We however need to enter language as we do worlds and think of the possibility of detaching them from their historical and conceptual meanings. This is a process of considering, not only the end of the historical, social and political meanings of language, but also the meaning of meaning itself. This is an invitation to "attend to words and things beyond what is ordained by their immediate occasion and the most impelling necessities they address or appear to address" (Sekyi-Otu, 2003:7).

I borrow the phrase "farthest meaning" from the "The Return" chapter of Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*. The quest for meaning is depicted as the journeying mind's movement through three circles of understanding: the closer meaning, the closest meaning and the farthest meaning (Armah 1973:149). The journey predicts a continuous return to each of these points—located in time and non-time—for a revision of understanding. Language then is read as an on-going process that only exists as "languaging"; not as isolated items of behaviour (Maturana & Valera, 1992:210). Languaging is a process in which you can turn language into an object that you own—you possess. It becomes then an object, with a grammar and vocabulary that you have and regulate.

LM: I'd like to make reference to other performance art forms, specifically jazz, as to me, what most forms of performance have in common is that they attempt to move people. So I see little sense in excluding music as a reference. In *Qash Qash* you included a church choir in the performance, so I'm going to assume we are both at ease including music or musicians when discussing the performance and your practice. Jazz musicians, Terrace Martin (2017) and Robert Glasper (2017), who were recently part of the Cape Town International Jazz Festival, say that being able to move people informs how they do what they do. What single obsession from your personal biography were you finding necessary to interrogate with this specific work?

NM: The necessity for *Qash-Qash* is to be found in the following consideration: that the black subject's discourse is today one of extreme displacement. This discourse is spoken, perhaps, by thousands of subjects, but warranted by less; it is completely abandoned by the surrounding languages: ignored, disparaged, or decided by them, severed not only from authority, but also from the mechanisms of authority. Once a discourse is thus driven by its own momentum into the backwater of the "unreal", exiled from all the gregariousness, it has no

recourse but to be/become the site, however thin, of a confirmation. It is a site/s of confirmation. That confirmation is, in short, the subject of Qash-Qash.

LM: We live in and relate to our Self and others in relation to space, so, as a lecturer who teaches undergraduate students. How do you approach making black students feel both recognised and human in your rehearsal and teaching spaces?

NM: I teach at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I am teaching black students. That is the gift that my ancestors gave me this year. I do not want to refer back to my teaching days at UCKAR) because I am still too fragile from how my black femaleness was used in that university. I recognise your question, but I choose to not answer it. This is to say that I choose breathing a little lighter just for once. I teach students who are like me now and I choose to focus on that because where I am now my breathing is not interrupted.

LM: No. I understand we also face the tensions of being black at the University of Cape Town, I do my best to remain optimistic, but I stay away from the word "transformation" because it gets spoken of more than it can be seen to occur. So using the term at times just gives a false sense of action—Frantz Fanon (2008: 8) describes even the small act of speaking as the condition of man existing for the other. In this instance, to be human can be seen as being for the other. Fanon goes on to describe two dimensions of the black man: one where he is among black folk and another when he is amongst the white man. Fanon describes colonial subjugation as the cause of this division of the self; however, he goes on to state that he is more interested in changing the world than in knowing it. How has being in the academy for an extended period of time—a place where access to or mastering of the English language can make white supremacy (as one logic) seem most at home—influenced your being and your work? More importantly how do you see performance as beginning to address making change in the world?

NM: I think we need to start seeing performance as a way of knowing—as an epistemology. As a process of "worlding"—a process which takes on concepts, bodies, objects, languages as sites that occupy worlds within them. Then maybe we can start thinking about not putting into theatre/performance the burden and responsibility of changing the world/making changes in the world. That maybe we recognize the other world(s)—no matter how temporal they are—that are being "worlded" by performance.

LM: The audience was part of the piece in varying degrees—black females then black male audience members and then other races. I understand performance art as an experimental art form that comes into being either through an interactive or a direct relationship with the audience. What were your aims when considering the role of the audience, the narrative of the piece and the merger of these two in space?

NM: The audience were for me what Puwar refers to as space invaders:

> There is a connection between bodies and space, which is built, repeated and contested over time. While all can, in theory, enter, it is certain types of bodies that are tacitly designated as being the "natural" occupants of specific positions. Some bodies are deemed as having the right to belong, while others are marked out as trespassers, who are, in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically and conceptually), circumscribed as being "out of place" or displaced (2004:8).

I started the work recognizing and possibly accepting that being black, being woman, means that I will always be the body "out of place". Because it is certain to me that feeling displaced does not only occur when one is in close proximity to whiteness and to patriarchy. It is also in the fact that our ontological reasoning is prearranged by structures of whiteness and patriarchy or is an effect of these structures. It might be that in the post/transitioning South Africa, "we occupy the tenuous position of being both insiders and outsiders, but to a certain degree, we are 'space invaders'" (Puwar: 2004: 10). We are outsiders, we are out of place, we are displaced. However, in *Qash-Qash* the place of the outsider was occupied by the audience members. For once I felt like "ndikwam" (I am in my own space) and that I was not invading, and I also made an exception of reserving seats for black women that I had invited myself. Abanye mabazibone bazohlala phi (the others can sort themselves out). I did not have time to think about them.

LM: Warone Seane (personal communication, 2018 March 14), a classmate and friend in theatre, recently asked me who my favourite black South African female theatre practitioner or manager is. She is one of mine and has been for a long time, and I've found that I delight in the act of recognising more and more black females in theatre. I think it's also that theatre is one of those arts that allows for and usually calls for collaboration. Do you have a favourite black female South African or African theatre practitioner or manager? And if not the work of an African female, whose work are you currently most interested in? Then secondly, what peaks your interest in their work?

NM: I have a white one; Meg Stuart because she questions and realizes living and being alive. She intrigued by breath; holding; kissing; intimacy; love and and and.

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Notes

1 While Moyikwa has reworked the performance over time, the commentary here relates to her 2017 performance at the University of Cape Town's Little Theatre. Although this particular performance was situated as a work in progress, I found its premise to be conceptually concise.

Nomcebisi Moyikwa, born in Grahamstown (South Africa), is a feminist scholar choreographer, writer in practice, mother and a teaching-artist. She began dancing and involved in making of theatre at an early age in Grahamstown (South Africa).

Nomcebisi is also part of the Rhodes Drama Department part-time stuff. She is the drama 1 movement co-ordinator, a Somatics (second year course) teacher, postgraduate movement training teacher and in 2016 was a Physical Theatre 3 teacher. She has also taken workshops focussing on physical theatre and choreography at UCKAR, at Wits and for National Arts Schools Festival. She is also an Arts Manager and Administrator for First Physical Theatre Company.

She is now currently working towards becoming a black academic, non-raced and gendered artist/choreographer/performer, critical

teacher and an outstanding mother. Her latest work, *Qash-Qash* premiered in Cape Town in August 2017 as part of ICA 3rd Space Symposium on Decolonization.

Linda Makgabutlane, raised in Johannesburg, is a performer, teacher and theatre maker. She obtained a Bachelor of Architectural Studies degree from the University of Cape Town. Prior to completing her B.Tech Drama Degree at Tshwane University of Technology, B.A Honours (Drama) and M.A in Theatre and Performance (theatre making) at the University of Cape Town.

Professionally, she has worked on projects with South African filmmakers, visual artists, Art facilitators and as a theatre lecturer.

Her current area of interest within performance research is in postcolonial cities and somatic performance practices.

Performing Blackface: Reflections on Zanele Muholi's *Somnyama Ngonyama*
Nomusa Makhubu

In 2014 the activist photographer Zanele Muholi embarked on a photographic series titled *Somnyama Ngonyama* which is translated: "Hail, the Dark Lioness." Compared to their[1] previous work documenting black LGBTIQ+ communities in South Africa, this series is distinct in that it is characteristically high-contrast close-up portraits of Muholi utilising various objects (pot scourers, clothes pegs, plastic pipes, chopsticks, ropes, etc.) as accessories. The most recognisable characteristic is the darkened skin, contrasted by lightened eyes and lips. Usually printed in a large-scale format and as wallpaper, the *Somnyama Ngonyama* series is equivocal. On one hand it is presented as an affirmation of black identity, while on the other it is strikingly evocative of blackface minstrelsy. Laboured with conflicting messages, the series presents a double bind.

Much effort has gone into shaking off perceptions associating these photographs with blackface. Firstly, Muholi has continually emphasised that unlike the racist practice of blackface minstrelsy, their face in this work is not darkened using cork, shoe polish or makeup as would minstrel performers, but that it is digitally darkened using postproduction software such as Photoshop[2]. As a practice that emerged in nineteenth century America, minstrelsy was performed by white entertainers who darkened their skin, lightened or exaggerated their lips to mock black people.

Secondly, in their artist's statement Muholi explains: "by exaggerating the darkness of my skin tone, I'm reclaiming my blackness, which I feel is continuously performed by the privileged other." This statement operates as a mode of politicising the work so that it seems to be about taking "blackness" back from the minstrel performers. But one could ask: what kind of blackness is being reclaimed here? Is it the kind of blackness that needs to be reclaimed? This colourist view seems reductionist and dwells on assumed singularity of the "performance" of blackness.

In the third instance, there is the view that darkening in this work is "an aesthetic of blackness" and not blackface *per se*. Citing Hlonipha Mokoena, Mark Gevisser (2018) points out that "the images flirt dangerously with racist iconography" but because "Muholi has chosen the darkest dark" they "demand that we see the beauty in it, as well as the pain." The blackface aesthetic, it is argued, "might lead to it being viewed only as irony or parody when in fact its message is deadly serious" (Gevisser 2018). The photographs return to the order of performance in which this tight linking of notions such as beauty and pain are a reminder of the spectator. Who is imagined as the viewer? Whose gaze is being titillated? The performance might not be by the privileged other, as in classic minstrelsy, but has the circumscribed audience changed? Fusing "race" into surface aesthetics, it is mainly the pigmentation or darkening of the images rather than what is performed that signifies blackness. Given that the blackface motif is ineludible in this work, how are we to understand the discomfort it inevitably creates?

Muholi's focus on race coincides with recent anti-racism decolonial uprisings in local higher education institutions such as the RhodesMustFall and FeesMustFall movements founded by students as well as similar civil society movements. It is also foregrounded by the deepening racial fault lines globally: the rise of Black Lives Matter across central America, the ongoing protests in the Netherlands against the blackface tradition of the Feast of St. Nicholas where participants dress up as Zwarte Piet (Black Pete), the Moorish companion of St. Nicholas, or Sinterklaas. In South Africa, haunted by the realities of racial segregation, the socio-economic reinforcement of race has remained the fundamental cause of social unrest and breakdown. South Africa is continually re-racialised, revealing the failures of the reconciliation project. It is within this milieu, that Muholi's large scale darkened photographs are staged.

One must, therefore, pause and reflect on the representation of race as it intersects[3] with sexuality, gender and class in these works. Muholi's early work documented black lesbians who live in black townships. Constructed through apartheid policies of separate development, townships were built on the margins, far from economic hubs to house black labourers who worked in white

Fig. 1: Zanele Muholi, *Save me*

Fig. 2: Zanele Muholi, *Blown*

areas. Townships are still exclusively black and under-serviced. Here, black working class LGBTIQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex and Queer) communities face the worst injustices and, unlike the middle class in South Africa, they cannot be protected through private security and health care, etc. The denial of basic rights for the LGBTIQ+ proletariat is coupled with the worst kinds of scapegoating and hate crime. Muholi continues the fight for gay and lesbian rights. As co-founder of the Forum and Empowerment of Women (FEW) and Inkanyiso, she has been active in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex (LGBTI) organisations (Neidhart 2006: 95). She registered the organization Inkanyiso in 2006. Through collective work, the members of Inkanyiso document the 'unseen' aspects of black lesbian lives in townships. By doing so, they create an archive that addresses the absence of these stories in historical narratives. They also reveal the resilience to the injustices faced by black lesbians as well as trans-men and women. Muholi equips young people (high school students) with cameras and photography skills so that they can see their worlds differently. For Muholi, it is important "to re-write a black queer and trans visual history of South Africa for the world to know of our resistance and existence at the height of hate

crimes in SA and beyond[4]." This archive is a significant part of queer activism.

The *Somnyama Ngonyama* series, however, calls for frank engagement with the multiple dimensions of race in the artistic practice of self-representation and activism. In thinking about race and performance, I will also discuss Ntando Cele's *Black Off* performances, in which she plays Bianca White, a middle-class South African white woman. Here I consider the chasm between the consumption of race as image or the minstrelisation of racial politics and the labour of activism. To do this, I focus on three themes; namely, language, labour and hierarchies of racial value.

Language: Ventriloquism and the Black body

In the photographs *Save Me* (Fig.1), *Blown* (Fig. 2), and *Fifiyela* (Fig. 3) Muholi's mouth is concealed, closed or covered. Rising out of a pile of blown-up white rubber gloves, Muholi raises their arm in a hand-puppet gesture in *Save Me* (2015) and has their white-gloved hand covering their mouth in *Blown* (2015). Their eyes are shut. Their mouth is closed.

Fig. 3: Zanele Muholi, *Fifiyela*

Language is more than what is spoken. Muholi's *Somnyama Ngonyama* series forms part of a particular photographic and artistic visual language. It is important therefore to reflect on language, in the sense of the discourse it produces and the Anglocentrism that thrusts it into a confounding discourse in the process of translation (for example, isiZulu terms denoting blackness into English). There is also the need to consider performative language in Muholi's photographs.

English hegemony is, for most former colonial second-language speakers, a silencing apparatus. Generally, in South Africa, those who cannot speak it, are considered illiterate and, in effect, excluded from skilled work and relegated to cheap unskilled labour. This exclusion in South Africa contributes to the trivialisation and silencing of Nguni languages. It also becomes the language of rebelling against its own colonial history. Reminiscent of Audre Lorde's (1984: 112) question: "what does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?" Lorde's (1984: 112) popular argument that the masters tools "may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change," is important in exploring what gets lost in the

process of translating "blackness" into Anglocentric discourses.

Muholi oscillates between the insistence on isiZulu as the language in which they practise and creating a set of meanings for Anglocentric spaces. The title "Somnyama Ngonyama" which is "the dark one" and "the lion" is translated by Muholi as "Hail, the Dark Lioness." *Somnyama* and *mnyamane* are among the words used by black children to mock those with a darker complexion – a form of self-denigration that emerges from the violent racist language used by others against black people. Muholi attests to have fallen victim to this denigration and points out that to call someone *somnyama* was not only to say that they are too dark but to declare that they are ugly because of the darkness (Wortham 2015). *Ngonyama* could be used to refer to a lion or a monarch. It is curious that Muholi chose to give gender to the word lion as "lioness", given that Muholi's oeuvre critiques gender. The phrase *Somnyama Ngonyama* does not contain the word "Hail" but implies it in the sense of the double meaning in the word *ngonyama*. Translating the phrase to "Hail, the Dark Lioness" gives the impression that there is a shift in register and in the meaning of dark (which transforms from denigration to pride). In the process of translation, however, is a flattening of meaning and a new imperious superficiality the phrase gains in its English form.

In these translations, there seems to be a conflation of darkness and blackness since the word "mnyama" seems to denote both. However, if blackness here is not just the colour black but represented as a racial, cultural and political identity, then the appropriate word might be "nsundu" or "abansundu"; alternatively, "ntu" or "abantu" as the demonyms for black people. Although racism and colourism are interrelated, black identities are not reducible to pigmentation. In looking at *Somnyama Ngonyama* one is compelled to search *beyond* the representation of race through the emphasis of skin darkening to find something complex in the language of performing the self.

The work generates a discourse that skirts around the issue of race and performance and fixates on skin colour. Jenna Wortham published an intimate article in the *New York Times* describing an engagement with Muholi in Syracuse. Wortham (2015) describes Muholi as such:

> She's handsome, blessed with an abundance of melanin that keeps her looking much younger than her 43 years. She carries herself with the

casual swagger of an off-season soccer player and dresses the part, favoring cuffed jeans, popped collars and a black trilby hat. In her self-portraits, however, she likes to alter the contrast so that it darkens her complexion into an oilslick black, sharpening her soft edges and transforming her charisma into ferocity.

The insistence on the surface (the melanin, complexion, etc.) is promptly transposed into racialised notions of beauty. Wortham states: "part of the reason [Muholi] drastically darkens her skin tone in the photographs" is to "undo the damage of growing up in a society that drew its strength from demonizing blackness." This is "her most deliberate declaration that she is black and that she is beautiful." Wortham (2015) cites Muholi who explains that this project "was a way 'to make something beautiful that is not usually perceived as such… To talk about the aesthetic of blackness and the presence of 'black' in spaces that were mainly white.'" In a sense, the work is defined as translation of perceptions on what is to be perceived as "ugly" and "beautiful" in relation to race. It is also presented as a translation of blackness in white spaces. This point is provocative in that it not only implies a transgression of *still* racialised spaces but it also suggests a staging of blackness. This may be interpreted through the visual and performative language, akin to fashion photography, that is used in the photographs.

The body in *Somnyama Ngonyama* presents semantic traffic that makes it indecipherable since the oppressive language of identity categories obfuscates meaning. To be confronted with the surface of a body, is to be hurled into a de-historicising language. This can be also read in light of Hortense Spillers' interrogation of the relation between the body, language and the ownership of black bodies. Spillers (1987: 69) describes the African and European encounter, as a "descent into the loss of communicative force" for the African because "the captivating party does not only earn the right to dispose of the captive body as it sees fit, but gains, consequently, the right to name it." In naming a person 'kaffir', 'queer', 'black', 'woman', 'dark-skinned', language is used to internalise concepts of inferiority and superiority. In the series generally, the words "black", "dark" and "lioness" become hollowed out and echo conflicting ideas, which accentuate the violence of language.

Spillers argues that the socio-political order of the New World "*represents* for its African and indigenous peoples a scene of actual mutilation, dismemberment, and exile"

(Spillers 1987: 67). Under these conditions, she states, the "*theft of the body*—a willful and violent severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire… we lose at *least gender difference in the outcome*, and the female body and male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific." Further, "externally imposed meanings and uses of the body are interrupted by the interlocking of or a "point of convergence" at which "biological, sexual, social, cultural, linguistic, ritualistic, and psychological fortunes join" (Spillers 1987:67). The body "reduced to a thing" returns not as text but as image.

Save Me (2015) was made in the early stages of *Somnyama Ngonyama* and has not been publicly exhibited. However, it is a powerful image that in some ways contextualises the hollowing out of language in the publicly exhibited works in the series. The hand puppet gesture in this image suggests a "speaking for" and "speaking over" or a dislocation of the speaking subject. The title, *Save Me*, not only suggests deliverance and emancipation but also negation and vulnerability. It is the silencing and the blinding that conveys the circumstance of black subjectivity. This work draws attention to a kind of ventriloquism through which the concerns of black people, women, queer, poor people are voiced by those who, not bound by these terms, "speak for" the other, often in a language that is not their own. Photography, after all, was instrumental in colonisation as long as the white interlocutor could 'speak over' the mute photograph which was mobilised as "evidence" of the backwardness of the unspeaking primitive (Hartman, Silvester and Hayes 1998). The translation of these works for consumption in white spaces, suggests an "invisible hand", as it were, where the works represent the forces of the market as opposed to black experience. Photography is described by Allan Sekula (1986: 6) as a "silence that silences" in which "oral texts" yield to a "mute testimony." The camera captures aspects of the human condition that words fail to describe.

These photographs delve into the complexity, and perhaps a cul-de-sac, of relational identity where blackness in terms of whiteness and femininity in terms of masculinity, or the seeming inevitability of the oppressive counterparts are reproduced through modern imperialisms.

Performing Race and Relational Identity

In *Still Mourning* (Fig. 4), also part of the work made in the early stages of the series that was not publicly shown, Muholi's explicit parody of blackface is disarming. In this photograph, Muholi poses in a typical 'coon' gesture

Fig. 4: Zanele Muholi, *Still Mourning*

Fig. 5: Zanele Muholi, *Phaphama, at Cassilhaus, North Carolina*, 2016

with both hands raised. Through whitened lips, whitened eyes and whitened hands, Muholi's performance evokes American blackface minstrelsy which created derogatory stereotypes such as Sambo, Jim Crow, Pickaninny and Mammy. Popularised by Thomas Rice, blackface minstrelsy portrayed black people as inarticulate and stupid, ludicrous and servile. Racist stereotypes can be seen in other works in the series such as *Phaphama, at Cassilhaus, North* Carolina, 2016 (Fig. 5) in which Muholi wears round dishwashing pads on their head and a bow tie such that the outline mimics Sambo woolly hair or *Khwezi, Chicago*, 2016 (Fig. 6) where the plaited hair resembles the Pickaninny nappy hair stereotype or *Thulile I, Delaware*, 2016 (Fig. 7) where Muholi carries a golliwog.

Muholi's Still Mourning also hints at the Kaapse Klopse – an annual Cape minstrel festival that is part of Cape "coloured" identity[5]. It is known as "Die Tweede Nuwe Jaar," marking the 2nd of January as the day when slaves (brought from Malaysia, Indonesia, Bengal and Central Africa) could take a day off. Klopse appropriates Ameri-

can blackface performance mocking African Americans which was encountered when American performers visited the Cape in the mid-1850s. Minstrelsy in Cape Town is still practiced as an important part of Cape heritage and a cultural event consolidating "coloured" identity. It is controversial because, for the educated elite, it is perceived as a perpetuation of demeaning racial stereotypes for the entertainment of mostly white tourists and "an unnecessary reminder of the atrocities suffered in the Cape" (Bardien 2020). It is reminiscent of the incorporation of slaves by the Dutch in the celebration of Twelfth Night, a festival in the Netherlands. Towards the end of slavery, Cape minstrelsy was used as satire and came to symbolise a sense of freedom (Bardien 2020). Nadia Davids (2013:19) argues that "Blackface in the Cape is mobilized not to invoke racist caricature but rather as a mask that promises freedom, or at least freedom by imagined affiliation." In a similar vein, Muholi's work equivocates between being a reminder of racial stereotype and being satirical. Though not always as explicit as in Still Mourning, racial stereotypes are no doubt fundamental in the Somnyama Ngonyama

Fig. 6: Zanele Muholi, *Thulile I, Delaware*, 2016

Fig. 7: Zanele Muholi, *Khwezi, Chicago* 2016

series. The question that arises is: how are they to be interpreted when performed in Muholi's photographs?

Muholi's oeuvre (Faces and Phases) is known for its documentary representation and not necessarily as performance, at least not in the strictly artistic sense. The Somnyama Ngonyama series radically shifts that register and Muholi explicitly performs different people in different parts of the world. For each of the portraits, Muholi performs a different persona that is given a name and location in each title. The use of props enhances the performance and staged nature of the portrait. In their artist's statement, Muholi explains: "experimenting with different characters and archetypes, I have portrayed myself in highly stylised fashion using the performative and expressive language of theatre." Muholi then says: "My reality is that I do not mimic being black; it is my skin, and the experience of being black is deeply entrenched in me."

In the photographs themselves, Muholi sits for a portrait. The objects used in the portraits then become the basis of a "performance," since without these objects the photographs would be a replication of the same portrait of Muholi with darkened skin and lightened lips and eyes. Perhaps the replication, as part of staged production, is in itself a performance. For Muholi, the body is the "material" that can be "mixed" with objects "to further aestheticise black personhood." This implies that the performance of black personhood relies on the blackface aesthetics and the objects. One becomes aware of the pot scourers, washing sponges, boxes, clothes hangers, a bowling bag, clothes pegs, chopsticks, safety pins, sunglasses, inner rubber tube, gas masks, scissors, shoes and other objects used as hats or headwear. The ambivalence lies in the interpolation the black body as object and the more complex notion of black personhood or "being black" and not "mimicking" it. Considering this then, one could deduce that it is not blackness that is being performed by Muholi but rather racialism becomes theatricalised in the politics of the production of this work.

Writing about the experience of Muholi's production process, for example, Wortham (2015) defines it as an "elaborate choreography." In the article, she recounts the experience.

> [Muholi] had invited me over in the early afternoon to watch her process, but she wasn't ready to begin until late at night. It was as if she kept finding reasons not to take her photo. [...] She finally asked her assistant, Lerato Dumse, a quiet woman with a shaved head, to help her start setting up around 10 p.m. It was late evening when Muholi disappeared into the bathroom [...]. The sound of water and the sweet smell of soap drifted into the living room. Minutes later, she emerged, cargo shorts slung low around her hips, the band of her boxers visible. A pretty blue-and-white cotton fabric called a *khanga* was loosely tied around her chest like a cape. Her only tattoo, an outline of the entire female reproductive system, was visible on the still-damp skin of her left shoulder. Muholi and Dumse spent the next hour fiddling with the lighting and taking test shots, conversing in Zulu as they peered and frowned at the readouts on the digital camera.
>
> The late-summer humidity kept causing a dewy shine to sprout above Muholi's brow, and she rummaged around in the kitchen for something to soften the glare it produced. She found some flour and rubbed it in circles on her forehead. Then she propped a pink plastic mirror onto a counter and stared into it with intense concentration, first creating a tight collar around her neck with the tape and then making four long spokes down her body, carving it into sections. [...] The process dragged on. Muholi reapplied tape, adjusted lighting, played African gospel songs on her laptop. This elaborate choreography seemed to be a kind of prolonged foreplay, a delaying of the inevitable moment when she would step in front of the camera and stare into its lens. [...] The lengthy preparation bordered on playful, but Muholi insists that it is not pleasurable, but necessary.
>
> It was almost midnight by the time Muholi was ready to take her photograph for the day. She eyed a wire fruit basket on the counter nearby and placed it on her head. It could have read as silly, but on her, the effect was Afrofuturistic, even debonair. As she lifted her face to the

camera, her visage melted into something pleading and vulnerable. I was perched behind Dumse, who was shooting the photo, and could see Muholi's eyes, full of a searching, woeful expression. It was hard to look into them directly.

The article defines the process building up to the making of the photograph as a "choreographed" performance but also captures a second performance in front of the camera, which transforms Muholi's "charisma and ferocity" into a "pleading and vulnerable" visage and "a searching [and] woeful expression." These conflicting messages are embedded in the work, equivocally advocatory and yet divulging vulnerability.

This then brings us to the need to understand how, in the work, Muholi deals with subjecthood and objecthood. The series, it can be argued, is a Fanonian paradox. Frantz Fanon (1967: 8, 172) defined the colonial experience as one that "seal[s]" the black person in "a crushing objecthood" and into "thingness." He states: "I arrived in the world, anxious to make sense of things [...] and here I discovered myself an object amongst other objects. Imprisoned in this overwhelming subjectivity, I implored others" (cited in Gordon 2015: 49). He defined this existential complex, as a loss of subjectivity or the "zone of nonbeing." Muholi often emphasises, however, that these photographs, due to the exaggerated darkness of the skin tone, are a reclamation of blackness. "The black face and its details" Muholi argues, "become the focal point, forcing the viewer to question their desire to gaze at images of my black figure." The focus on skin tone is poetically captured by Fanon when he says:

> I am overdetermined from the exterior. I am not the slave of the "idea" that others have of me but of my appearance. I move slowly in the world, accustomed to no longer pretending to appear [...] Already the white eyes, the sole truth, dissect me. I am fixed. Having prepared their microtome, they objectively cut away pieces of my reality (Fanon 1967: 93).

The "aestheticization" of blackness locks desire within the consumption of the black body as material and as object, especially within the mise-en-scene of the commercial artworld.

Citing Fanon, Pramod Nayar (2013: 74) notes the spatial terms in which the condition of blackness is defined as "a claustrophobic condition of being trapped by his skin colour" and argues that "the skin is thus a trap, a con-
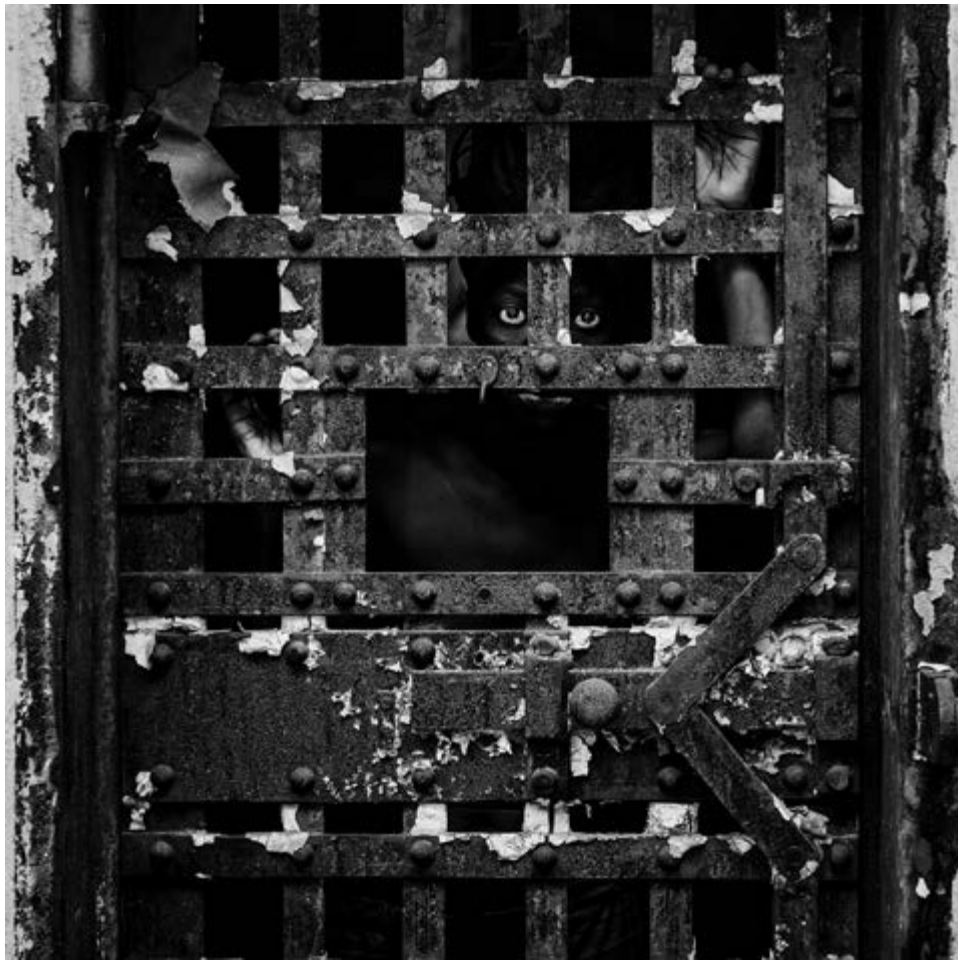
Fig. 8: Zanele Muholi, *MaID VII, Philadelphia,* 2018

fined space from which there is no escape." What is striking about Muholi's work is the sense of confinement. For example, in *MaID VII, Philadelphia,* 2018 (Fig. 8), Muholi peeks behind bars as they seem to disappear behind a prison door. In most photographs in the series, the spaces are neutral. They could represent any place, or they could symbolise non-place. Some of them are staged in front of blank backdrops, others behind various indistinguishable backdrops. Yet, the titles emphasise a sense of place through the different locations of places that Muholi has visited or has worked in. Place names perform a recovery of space, which is absent in the photographs. While skin is a trap, a prison of sorts, in Muholi's work, it seems as though the place names seek to create a re-assurance of "being in the world." The place names are an existential gesture.

In Muholi's work, this seem to be an assertion that "I am" and "I exist in the world" against the void that is represented in the photographs. However, it is also defined by Muholi as alienating and dislocating. In explaining the use of place names in this work, Muholi

says: "[t]his shuttling around sometimes make [*sic*] me feel disoriented, disconnected and almost homeless." They lament having to "continually justify [their] presence." Given that locatedness is central in reading how blackness is performed as object in relation to space, the notion of black personhood in the work becomes even more complicated. Muholi's representation of blackness then becomes relational; in other words, dependant on its relationship to whiteness and to place.

Muholi raises the question of space in relation to where the work is shown. If the work, emphasising blackface, is shown in white spaces, Muholi was asked by Mary Wang (2017) in Vogue, does it not perpetuate and reinforce racist stereotypes? Muholi responded by saying that "How we challenge whiteness [sic], if we're scared to access the spaces given to us? [...] We can talk about white walls, but there are no black walls, and the black walls don't have resources. So if there's a space that is open to me, I give it to all of us" (referring to the team Muholi travels with). The entanglement with "white spaces" that Muholi defines also suggests that blackface

Fig. 9: Zanele Muholi, *MaID I, Syracuse,* 2015

in the images, rather that it being a performance of black personhood, appears to be a theatrical reflection of whiteness. It is difficult to discern the meanings Muholi attributes to whiteness, but it consistently presents identity as relational and suggests blackface and "aesthetics of blackness" as a foundation of whiteness.

In thinking about the performance of race, I was drawn to Ntando Cele's whiteface performance in which she lampoons a white South African middle-class English woman, Bianca White – a self-involved, wealthy 'philanthropist'. In the performance *Black Notice* Ntando Cele wears whitening make-up, mimicking South African white accents. The character Bianca White is ignorant and unaware of her own racism. She sees herself as a liberal white saviour who is "helping" young black people to find themselves through the non-profit organisation she founded, RIAC (Raise Individual African Children). During the performance she presents a slideshow of "these lovely young people" but shows colonial photographs, including a photograph of Cele without makeup. White makes racist jokes such as "Why don't shark eat blacks? Because they think blacks are whale shit." She also echoes typical racist statements such as "in fact I like blacks. I used to have a lot of black friends when I was growing up until my daddy sold them all and

bought me a dog." Curiously, White always boasts that she is "a quarter Zulu," "a fifth Khoikhoi," "a third generation Afrikaans meisie" and declares "I am almost black" and struggles to pronounce the "click" sound. As she addresses the audience as "fellow white people," she reminds them that "blacks are not the only ones who live in Africa, we whites are also African." The audience generally laughs at White's racist remarks. In this satire, however, White has episodes of paroxysm, which makes her more tragic than laughable.

Bianca White is borne out of Cele's frustration with the fact that blackface in the Netherlands, where she is based, is still prevalent and yet there is no equivalent whiteface. Cele also conceptualised Vera Black, a black woman who performs punk rock and sexualised but transgressive dances for a mostly white audience. During the performance Black screams: "Thank you I don't need your help, thank you I'm fucked up by myself." In an interview with Kadiatou Diallo, Cele says that Vera Black is a difficult character because she comes across as an "angry black woman" and so the audience is generally tone deaf to her message[6]. Cele mentions that Vera Black makes her audience angry, considering her "not funny."

The performance of racial stereotypes negotiates sentiments of contempt, hostility, anger and shame. This negotiation in Muholi's work is subdued perhaps because the satire is difficult to locate in the series as whole. The work operates on the surface, drawing attention to skin colour and to aesthetics. Blackness as a composite concept brings together a flux of identities that seem to be suspended in *Somnayama Ngonyama* into a fixed set of typecasts.

Race and labour: Hands as metaphor

Often symbolising subservience and subjugation, the hands are a provocative element in the series. In *Blown*, *Save Me* and *Still Mourning* – all works that were not shown publicly – hands are in white gloves or white paint. In *Somnyama Ngonyama* the diptych titled *MaID I, Syracuse,* 2015 (Fig. 9), Muholi poses, wearing white latex gloves, as a body builder in one photograph and strangles herself in another. White gloves, like the whitened mouth and eyes, are part of blackface costuming. White gloves in blackface performance caricature black obsequious servitude. In the current series, *Phila I, Parktown*, 2016 (Fig. 10) depicts Muholi covered in black inflated latex gloves. These gloves connote protection and cleaning. These are three levels of reading Muholi's use of gloves and emphasis on the hands: labour and class, contamination and disease, dirt and cleanliness.

In the photographic essay, Muholi has titled a few images *MaID*, which refers to "ma identity" and to domestic work (maid). Although hands are not always visible in the whole series, the reference to domestic work as *umsebenzi wezandla* (manual [hand] labour) has been there even in Muholi's early work. In 2008 Muholi created a series titled *Massah and Mina(h)* (or Master and Me) to commemorate her mother who was a domestic worker. Minah is typical name of a domestic worker in South Africa but in Zulu, the word "mina" also means "me". In this work, Muholi is seen framed between the legs of a white woman kneeling and scrubbing the floor. Dressed as a domestic worker she plays the role of a servant but, given the intimacy portrayed in the photographs, she is also a lover. In *Somnyama Ngonyama* there is a set of works titled *Bester* after Muholi's mother, where she uses domestic objects such as clothes pegs, washing sponges and other cleaning material. Other *Bester* works vary in terms of the objects used.

In South Africa, cleaning and sanitation is black work. A majority of middle class South African households employ black domestic workers. Most white South African children grow up in the presence of a black nanny.

Fig. 10: Zanele Muholi, *Phila I, Parktown,* 2015

A typical blackface stereotype in South Africa is therefore the black domestic worker as witnessed in comedian Leon Shuster's dressing up as the domestic worker, "Mama Jack" or the various incidents where white students dress up in blackface as black domestic workers with cushions tucked in to emphasise buttocks[7]. The hands, as do thick lips and big buttocks, symbolise the denigration and dismemberment of the black body which in popular culture is not represented as whole but in synecdochic parts. The art historian Amelia Jones' (2002: x) suggests that "the self-portrait photograph, then becomes a kind of technology of embodiment, and yet one that paradoxically points to our tenuousness and incoherence as living, embodied subjects."

Furthermore, references to the black labouring body are evident in Muholi's use of a pile of gloves that are reminiscent of the severing of hands in the Congo Free State for the extraction of rubber under King Leopold's reign. Peter Forbath (1978: 105) describes "baskets of severed hands" that were set down at the feet of European post commanders" had become "a symbol of the Congo Free State." He continues to add that the severed hands of

Fig. 11: Zanele Muholi, *Massa and Minah 2,* 2008

Congolese who did not fulfil labour quotas had become "an end in itself" or "a sort of currency" such the Force Publique soldiers went out to "harvest hands instead of rubber" since they were "paid on the basis of how many hands they had collected." Muholi's use of rubber gloves is a metaphor for the disfiguration of the black body and the ways in which labour value is constructed through its object-ification.

These gloves also connote the boundary between purity and impurity, dirt and cleanliness. There is a Zulu proverb that states: *izandla ziyagezana*, meaning that people are interdependent (one hand depends on the other hand for its cleanliness). Latex gloves are used to keep hands clean or from contamination and disease. The glove as a layer over skin, which hides or protects, connotes the vulnerability of the human body and the precarious relations between people which are perpetually defined by boundaries and barriers. The concept of dirt threatens structures of bourgeois sensibility and serves as a reminder about which hands do the cleaning (*yisiphi isandla esigeza esinye*) and which remains with the stains. The proletariat is often thought to be dirty as is the township or 'informal settlement' and seen to be 'out of place' when in bourgeois spaces. Yet, these are people employed to work sanitation, with sewage, cleaning suburban and CBD streets and cleaning suburban houses. The rubber glove in Muholi's photographs alludes to the ways in which the conceptualisation of dirt and cleanliness or contamination and dis-ease has bearings on social relations and hierarchies based on

race and gender. These photographs point to layers of society where hierarchies cannot be sustained and where identities are illusive or irresolute.

Thoughts…

> Just reading that a person can be black and still perform in blackface, making fun of black people for a living, and at the same time be a genius and be an incredible entertainer and at the same time be extremely conflicted and feel like – just feel terrible for doing that, essentially, which is what Bert Williams felt, from what I gather, from what I read – all of that just made – was so incredible to me. (Salvant 2015)

What feeling does the work provoke? I end on the question of "feeling" not as a conclusion to the ongoing reflection on *Somnyama Ngonyama* but as way to address the sense of discomfort created by the work as a way of understanding its complex and conflicted nature. It seems necessary to move a step beyond the objective analysis of work's aesthetics and to be immersed in the subjective moment. Being black, do I see blackness in these images? Is there something familiar or something estranging?

Given that this photographic essay deploys a strategic visual language that recuperates familiar but disconcerting iconography of blackface to show the continuation of racial prejudice, does it advocate for the mis-

representation of black women? The performance of blackface by black performers is seen as a way of adopting that which is demeaning in order to emancipate oneself from it. This process of recuperation and translation implies that something in what is adopted changes. In other words, it implies that blackface is radically different when performed by black performers than when performed by white performers. But what makes it emancipatory? Is it the possibility that when white audiences see these images, they might feel guilt or complicity? What happens if that feeling never emerges? What happens if "black aesthetics" and the resistance it purports, in this instance, is pleasurable to consume because the aesthetics are so beautiful, playful and skin-deep?

In this reflection, I have considered the transition or translation of "blackness" into Anglo-centric spaces. It is not only that much gets lost in translation but that much gets invented that is particularly interesting. Can black personhood be translated and constructed from blackface tropes? If not, then surely something else gets produced. Are the images in Somnyama Ngonyama aimed at imagining black life differently, seeing it differently, and thereby freeing it from its entanglement in the master-slave/subjecthood-objecthood relationship upon which the relational identities of blackness and whiteness are founded? The performance, I argued, divulges more about the politics of production (and consumption) than the performance of blackness. Blackness as Muholi often opines is the interminable labour of becoming. It is the emotional labour of encountering and undoing time and time again the work of racism. And in undoing the work of racism we find ourselves in its machinations. Left with more questions than answers, I search and yearn for the emancipatory aesthetic in these images.

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Notes

1 Zanele Muholi's preferred gender pronoun is "their". In this paper, "their" is used except in quotes where

authors refer to Muholi as "she, her", which is the gender pronoun that Muholi previously used.

2 All statements by Muholi are taken from the Stevenson website except where otherwise indicated, accessed 30/04/2020, https://www.stevenson.info/exhibition/1440

3 I am drawing on Patricia Hill-Collins and Kimberle Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality which points to the complexity of multiple oppressions. Crenshaw (1991) defined this as structural vulnerability of womxn of colour.

4 https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/art/a-calendar/node/617213 accessed 06/05/2020

5 So-called Cape coloureds are descendants of the pastoralist Khoe, San and Xhosa. The arrival of English and Dutch settlers, French Huguenots in the 17th century, slaves who were imported from Madagascar, West and East Africa, India, Indonesia, as well as German immigrants in the 18th century has generated an intricate socio-political history.

6 http://www.artistsonafrica.net/podcasts/ntando-cele-on-whiteness-as-theory/ accessed 06/05/2020.

7 A recent case involves students at the University of Pretoria. accessed 20.05.2015. http://mg.co.za/article/2014-08-09-blackface-students-suspended-from-residences/

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Willful Walking
Nobunye Levin

Premise

Stills from *In the Mood for Love* (2000).

Mrs. Chan in Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000).

Walking as an act of longing.

The camera moves alongside, watches and follows.

Imitating the slow waltz of two people dancing (Kar-wai as cited in *Interview with Wong Kar-wai*, 2001), never touching, only longing. The camera: a participant in her subjectivity, a participant in her longing. It dances with her (Doyle as cited in *In the*

Mood for Doyle, 2007), so we dance with her too. The use of slow motion produces the erotic – the capacity to feel (Lorde, 2007) articulating an aesthetics of desire that is felt in duration. A haunting score, "Yumeji's Theme", composed by Umebayashi Shigeru, accompanies her melancholic walk.

Still from *In the Mood for Love* (2000).

Mrs. Chan walks, she goes out to buy noodles. Her longing and the unhappiness it produces permeate the environment of the marketplace and the street. Her mood soaks the city streets.

Still from *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961).

Marceline in Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961) walks.
Walking as an act of remembrance.
Marceline walks through Paris. A wide shot, she is positioned towards the edge of the frame. The camera tracks back as she walks towards it. The city street is infused by her grief.

2

The cause of Marceline and Mrs. Chan's sadness is different.

But it is felt and experienced as they engage in the activity of walking. The city streets form the backdrop of their sadness.

The idea of the city, as steeped in the sadness of a character, reminds me of Sara Ahmed's discussion of Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway. Mrs. Dalloway is a white woman. Ahmed describes Mrs. Dalloway's walk through London as she goes to get flowers and the sense of unhappiness that seeps through this everyday task (2010). She describes it as a feeling that is felt as "almost a thickness in the air" (2010, p. 70).

Mrs. Dalloway's sadness is caused by her disappearance (Ahmed, 2010). During her walk she disappears:

> But often now this body she wore (she stopped to look at a Dutch picture), this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing—nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway (Woolf as cited in Ahmed, 2010, pp. 70-71).

Ahmed shows that "becoming Mrs. Dalloway is itself a form of disappearance" (2010, p. 71). This disappearance is produced through "living somebody else's life (…) going through motions that were already in motion before you even arrived" (ibid.). Mrs. Dalloway has achieved the milestones that seemingly "promise happiness" (Ahmed, 2010) yet they have led to her disappearance and sadness.

However Ahmed demonstrates how sadness is a form of consciousness raising that can inform women of what they've given up for happiness (2010). In Mrs. Dalloway's case, she has given up herself. The link that Ahmed makes between sadness and consciousness raising is about making a link between feminism and unhappiness (2010). Ahmed argues: "Feminists might kill joy simply by not finding the objects that promise happiness to be quite so promising. The word *feminism* is thus saturated with unhappiness" (2010, p. 65).

Still from *SpilLover* (2020).

[1]

A black woman walks through Cyrildene, Johannesburg. In the midst of a troubled love affair she walks. Walking to ward off waiting. Willful walking. Walking as a consciousness raising activity, a transformation of subjectivity. Walking as an erotic exercise. The erotic is the capacity to feel, therein lies its power for women (Lorde, 2007). Dissatisfied with waiting here comes what Sara Ahmed terms the "feminist killjoy", disrupting "the promise of happiness" (Ahmed, 2010) through willful self-recognition.

Waiting
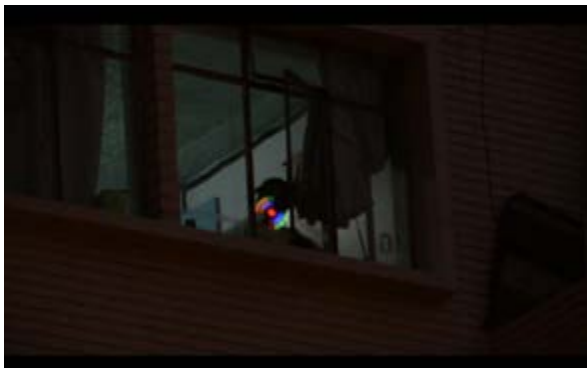
The walking woman walks for an indeterminate number of days. She walks day and night. Walking to ward off waiting. Waiting for reciprocity; permission to love. She looks up. A child plays, carefree.

There are others who do not wait; "in this café, I look at the others who come in, chat, joke, read calmly: they are not waiting" (Barthes, 2010, p. 38).

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[1] All stills that follow in this fragment, *Willful Walking*, are from *SpilLover* (2020).

In seeing those who do not wait she is reminded of her own waiting: "Later that night
we had sex, now my desire was useful to him" (*SpilLover*, 2020). She desires love
with a force of appetite. Her appetite comes from a connection to her capacity to feel.
The beloved admonishes her appetite for love through his lack of reciprocity and his
ambivalence towards love. He reciprocates her desire but only where it can be
contained and where it is useful to him. His reproach is illustrative of how women
"are taught to separate the erotic demand from most vital areas of [their] lives other
than sex" (Lorde, 2007, p. 55).

When a woman waits, she often relinquishes something. There is loss involved in the
activity of waiting. Much like Mrs. Dalloway, you can disappear (Ahmed, 2010); you
can lose yourself in waiting: "Waiting! It empties out your life. Your thoughts are
more with him than yourself. You become your own afterthought" (Ndebele, 2003, p.
88).

You can be driven insane by waiting. Like Mamello/ Patience in *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*:

> The fifth breakdown came. It was my mind shutting off once more,
> protecting itself against the pain of its own thoughts. But I'm fine now. Fine.
> But insane. Mamello! The girl of Letlala. Mosia. Daughter of the clan of the
> cat. Waiting! Crouching, stalking the future for hope. He will come back.
> Will he ever come back? He will remember me. We go way back, don't we
> (Ndebele, 2003, p. 27)?

"When you are waiting, you know the meaning of desire" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 44).

Sometimes waiting produces a kind of death, eroding desire, the desire to begin again: "I do not have the strength to wait anymore. Nor do I have the strength to start a new life" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 28). So much can die in you while you wait (Ndebele, 2003).

The end of waiting can signal your disappearance. The assimilative reward of the heterosexual couple restored under patriarchy. In Pascale Lamche's documentary *Winnie* (2017), following events that depict Nelson Mandela's release from prison and his reunion with Winnie Mandela, Winnie says in an interview: "I was horrified when I realised that I had lost my identity and suddenly I was nobody, Mandela's wife."

But, did Winnie wait? Winnie was willful. She reunited with Nelson Mandela after his release from prison, demonstrating a kind of waiting. But, she was *always* Winnie *not* Mrs. Nelson Mandela. She willed in "the wrong way" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 3): she waited, but in "the wrong way"; she pushed against her erasure so that she was never erased.

Winnie, constantly in conflict with "the movement" (the ANC), with Nelson Mandela, with the patriarchal order; Winnie, this is the "correct" behaviour of women-in-waiting (Ndebele, 2003), this is how the "mother of the nation" should behave. A "woman-in-waiting" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 41) must be silent and wait. The "mother of the nation" must nurture, never instigate. But Winnie knew that "your silence will not protect you" (Lorde, 2007, p. 41).

Winnie, I'm not sure you really waited?

Certainly not in the way that Penelope apparently waited for Odysseus. It is said that Penelope's fidelity was only to Odysseus. So much so that she became "the ultimate symbol of a wife" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 2): "so loyal and so true" (Homer as cited in Ndebele, 2003, p. 2).

Winnie, your sense of fidelity was so much more complex. It also reached beyond Mandela and even beyond "the movement" and the anti-apartheid struggle. It always included a fidelity to a sense of self, and self-determinism.

Winnie, I yearn to know how you felt.

In heterosexual relationships of love, waiting is often gendered. Barthes states: "historically the discourse of absence is carried on by the woman" (2010, p. 13).

It is the woman who waits, "woman is faithful (she waits), man is fickle (he sails away, he cruises)" (Barthes, 2010, p. 14). "(…) The blurb of an imaginary book about a South African woman during the long years of struggle against apartheid" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 1):

> So what does a woman do in the absence of her husband, who is in jail, in the mines, in exile, or is dead, or away studying, or spends most of the time on the road as a salesman, or who, while not having gone anywhere in particular is, never home because he is just busy fooling around? This woman has seen all kinds of departures, has endured the uncertainties of waiting, and has hoped for the return of her man. Departures, waiting and return: they define her experience of the past, present and future. They frame her life at the centre of a great South African story not yet told. This book tells the stories of unknown women, and that of South Africa's most famous woman, who waited.

South Africa's most famous "woman-in-waiting" (ibid.): Winnie Mandela (Ndebele, 2003). I'm not sure she waited, at least not in the way that is patriarchally required of women-in-waiting (ibid.).

"Winnie does not wait. She goes and gets what she wants" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 87). It was in the interest of the nation yet to come to partly conceive of her as a "woman-in-waiting". One of the many roles she was made to play: the villain to Nelson Mandela's saint, the wayward adulteress to Nelson Mandela's restrained stoicism.

Winnie was conceived of as a "woman-in-waiting" who "waited in public" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 39). Part of this conception was due to her being a public figure. She was a political leader in "the movement." "Her presence was active and pervasive" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 40). But more importantly for the nation yet to come: she was married to the most famous political prisoner in South Africa, possibly in the world.

Winnie was the mother of the nation yet to come, and Nelson, its father. Accordingly, it was required that she be made into a "woman-in-waiting" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 41). The nation yet to come depended on it. Through her body they enacted their love for Nelson Mandela. As the nation yet to come waited for Nelson Mandela, it was required that Winnie assume the waiting of the nation, that she become the "woman-in-waiting" (ibid.). Exemplifying the appropriation of women's bodies in male-driven narratives of the nation (Hayward, 2000, p. 98). Women's bodies narrate the life and death of a nation, or, its rise (ibid,), as was the case for the nation yet to come. A patriarchal discourse that frames agency and power as a trait of masculinity (ibid.) and points "to the gendering of what the nation takes to be as itself (the masculine subject) through what it has (the feminine object)" (Ahmed, 2003: np).

The nation demands certain things of *other* bodies "in the name of love" (ibid.), thus Winnie Mandela, the "woman-in-waiting". "What are we doing when we do something *in the name of love*" (ibid.)?

But, Winnie, she was willful.

"To wait is to extend one's investment and the longer one waits the more one is invested, that is, the more time, labour and energy has been expended" (Ahmed, 2003: np).

We see this in the story of Delisiwe in *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* (Ndebele, 2003). Delisiwe's husband acquires a scholarship to study medicine overseas. At first, he is diligent in finding ways to bring her and their children along. "But after three years of effort, he tires" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 14). Delisiwe, tired "(…) of living in a state in which she is just about to go" begins to wait but never abandons "(…) hope of departing one day" (ibid.). "It becomes a way of managing the state of waiting" (ibid.). "So, she never really waits" (ibid.). "Hope and uncertainty define her consciousness" (ibid.). "She comes and goes, in limbo. Waiting. Not waiting. But waiting" (ibid.).

So much time, energy and labour invested in an "absence without duration" (Ndebele, 2003, p. 1). "The *failure of return extends one's investment*" (Ahmed, 2003: np).

"The project of her love and devotion to her absent husband" gives Delisiwe hope (Ndebele, 2003, p. 14). It "tells her definitively to start waiting" (ibid.). "Woman is faithful (she waits)" (Barthes, 2010, p. 14). "*To make someone wait*: the constant prerogative of all power" (Barthes, 2010, p. 40).

In the tenth year of her husband's absence, Delisiwe discovers she is pregnant (Ndebele, 2003). A rupture in waiting. A momentary refusal to wait.

As she walks, the walking woman declares: "I want to play the part of the one who doesn't wait" (Barthes as cited in *SpilLover*, 2020).

Walking

Task driven wandering

Feeling herself disappear into waiting, the walking woman walks to the market to buy vegetables. There is no necessity to buy vegetables. Walking to complete the task provides her body with a use other than waiting. Walking counters the inactivity, the disempowerment of waiting.
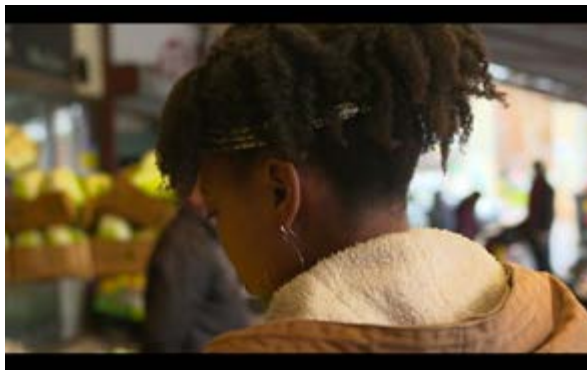
The task provides the orientation for her walk but it does not provide the intention. The intention of her walk is the need to be busy; there is "so much sadness in the very need to keep busy" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 75). Like Mrs. Chan and Mrs. Dalloway, she walks immersed in sadness. The need to keep busy is also about wanting something else for yourself, even though you might not know what it is or, how to acquire it. This is about walking as an act of desire. So that even task driven walking becomes wandering.

She walks, perusing the vegetables. Inspects them for defects, feels their firmness and considers which of them to purchase. As she does this, she feels her waiting change proportion. Previously she felt herself engulfed by waiting and

had no sense of its proportions (Barthes, 2010). Now she is able to discern some of herself beneath its heavy shroud.

Walking to complete a task directs her to her body's capacities; the walking woman battles with the woman who waits.

Here we see how the capacity of the body can direct one towards becoming someone else, the capacity of the body to enact a transformation of subjectivity. In the act of walking you can re-make yourself or remind yourself of

who you are.

Wandering

The walking woman walks to ward off waiting. She feels restless. She walks with her sadness rather than sit with it. Sometimes her walking takes on the form of wandering. She willfully wanders as she seeks something other than the

disempowerment of waiting. Wandering facilitates seeking because it is a contemplative activity. Wandering is thinking in motion that can direct a seeker. The walking woman is a seeker.

Hence, what is seemingly directionless wandering can provide orientation. It is in the directionless nature of wandering, in its ability to facilitate and privilege contemplation through a lack of direction, that orientation can be attained.

While wandering, the walking woman is directed towards the cause of her unhappiness, which is waiting. While she has always known that this is the cause of her sadness, her body's capacity to move allows her to examine this cause anew.

She had always deemed waiting a necessary sadness because she is in love: "Am I in love?
Yes, since I am waiting" (Barthes, 2010, p. 39). She believed happiness would find her if she waited: "Happiness follows for those who will right" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 4). But in her walking, she begins to question the form of this waiting and thus waiting itself.

Her waiting is contingent on a repression of her appetite, an inactivity or refusal of her desire. This was in the belief that the beloved's reciprocity was necessary to permit the experience and expression of her desire and appetite. She waited for the beloved's reciprocity, denying *her* feelings and *her* capacity to feel. This denial of self resulted in her disappearance into waiting.

In willfully wandering she re-locates herself: she will no longer wait for permission to feel.

Reciprocity

The walking woman loves. The erotic functions as a "source of power" (Lorde, 2007, p. 53) for her. She moves "erotically through power" (Lorde as cited in Sandoval, 2000, p. 164,5) employing "*desire-in-resistance*" (Sandoval, 2000, p. 164,5). The walking woman loves, expresses her love, and has an appetite for love in spite of a lack of reciprocity.

The beloved refuses to reciprocate her love, fearful of love and of her appetite for it, fearful of her clarity of feeling and purpose. He is ambivalent towards love: "We fought. He said he didn't know" (*SpilLover*, 2020). Yet he exploits her love; he receives it without reciprocity; demonstrating the patriarchal asymmetry (Gunnarson, 2017, p. 189) that often informs heterosexual love. An asymmetry that is legitimatised through the idealisation of the romance plot (Cooper as cited in May, 2017): women provide love while men receive it.

With this appropriation of love without reciprocity, this exploitation of women's love (Jonasdottir as cited in Gunnarson, 2017), men gain "surplus worthiness" (Gunnarson, 2017, p. 187). In this patriarchal non-reciprocal framework, where women provide love but do not receive it, women's self-worth is diminished and men are positioned

as more worthy. Men matter more and they come first, they set the terms that women must follow in order to be loved.

In this unequal non-relational framework, love and happiness is contingent on those who come first. "Those who are positioned as coming after" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 56) must follow the terms of those who come first. "For those who are positioned as coming after, *happiness means following someone else's goods*" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 56). The walking woman may only experience and express her love if the man, the beloved, reciprocates. These are the terms that she must follow. His happiness, needs and confusion (confusion surrounding his ambivalence to love) come first and the walking woman must follow, on his terms so that she may be happy, so that she may be loved.

His power to enforce these terms, even if this enforcing and the production of the terms themselves is unconscious, comes from the love he non-reciprocally takes from the walking woman, through this he gains "surplus worthiness" which produces his power. Her disappearance into waiting is a consequence of this non-reciprocal appropriation of her love. In this asymmetrical exploitative non-relation, it becomes difficult for her to conceive of herself as "self-evidently worthy" (Jonasdottir as cited in Gunnarson, 2017, p. 187). So, she feels less self-assured; her capacity for self-recognition, her connection to what she feels is diminished. It must be denied or repressed. She participates in this denial because her self-worth is diminished owing to her exploitation; an exploitation that produces an asymmetrical need for the man (Gunnarson, 2017), the beloved: love's rule under patriarchy.

Willfulness

The walking woman is unwilling to be seated at the table of waiting[2] (Ahmed, 2014, p. 2) any longer. She recoups her capacity to feel through willful wandering. Walking as an act of desire. Desire as a mobile technology that motivates us to go further; as capable of driving the body and will beyond their limits (Foucault as cited in Sandoval, 2000, p. 164,5).
Willful walking.

She loves.
She loves by refusing the prison of the dream of romance (Ndebele, 2003) that patriarchy enacts upon women. In this particular romance dream, which is also a prison, the walking woman is imprisoned by the beloved's ambivalence to love, believing that she must wait for reciprocity in order to feel. "Romance and its attendant norms have been constructed as damaging, unequal relations requiring women's self-abnegation" (May, 2017, p. 42): romantic fantasy encourages self-annihilation in the name of fulfillment (May, 2017).

To be clear, this is not about a disavowal of the necessity for reciprocal love relations. Instead, it is about a disavowal of the patriarchal use of reciprocity as a condition for the expression of women's feelings or their ability to feel at all. It is a disavowal of reciprocity as a tool of domination where reciprocity is used to instil fear, so that women are afraid to feel or express feeling unless reciprocity is offered. It is a disavowal of reciprocity used as the horizon for ambivalence to love where that horizon works to suppress women's feeling.

Consequently in this instance, "self-annihilation" (May, 2017, p. 42) speaks to the inability to feel what one feels when one does, a refusal of women's desire and

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[2] I have changed 'happiness', which appears in Ahmed's text, to 'waiting'.

agency. The walking woman reconnects to how she feels, she loves: an affirmation and expression of her desire and agency.

She does not decide to *provide* love without reciprocity, which would produce the conditions of her own exploitation. Rather, she loves through walking, through a reconnection with how she feels; self-recognition through a reconciliation, recognition and affirmation of what she feels.

The walking woman is willful: "someone becomes willful insofar (…) as they will in the 'wrong way'" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 3). She fails to comply (Ahmed, 2014). She loves in spite of a lack of reciprocity, refusing happiness as "a shared object" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 56); "if one person's happiness is made conditional on another person's happiness, such that the other person's happiness comes first, then *the other person's happiness becomes a shared object"* (ibid.). She is a "feminist killjoy": a willful woman, "unwilling to get along" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 2). Willfulness and unhappiness share an itinerary (Ahmed, 2014, p. 3). "We learn from our traveling companions" (ibid.).

Mannete goes in search of her missing husband who left Lesotho to work in the mines in South Africa. She does not find her husband. She decides to return home out of concern for her children who she has left behind. Unknown to Mannete, her husband has settled down with another woman and started a family (Ndebele, 2003). Mannete breaks Penelope's Law as imagined via patriarchy; she searches for her husband rather than sit and wait (ibid.).

The walking woman walks, wanders, searches…searching for herself.

She locates herself through reconciling with herself. A reconciliation with herself that is about a reconciliation with her capacity to feel. An erotic exercise: a reconciliation with

oneself that is about a reconnection with repressed feelings. Reconciling with oneself, "a special kind of reconciliation" (Ndebele, 2017, p. 117). An exercise in going "inward" (Gunnarson, 2017, p. 188) where love provides a certain kind of knowing (Ferguson and Jonasdottir as cited in May, 2017): a knowing of oneself.

Love: as a way to attain self-recognition through reconciling with one's feeling of and desire to love.
A decolonial move. "It is love that can access and guide our theoretical and political '*movidas*'– revolutionary maneuvers toward decolonized being" (Sandoval, 2000, p. 140,1).

The walking woman is willful, she wills "too much" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 3) towards love, allowing herself to be engulfed by love, an expression of her appetite for it. Here, in the inside of herself, which is also the space of being engulfed by love, there is no such thing as loving too much, disavowing "historical alliances between love and reason", a "revolutionary possibility" (Davis as cited in May, 2017, p. 35).

The space of our interiority is "a space inside *and* outside the whole" (Irigaray as cited in Gunnarson, 2017, p. 190, *emphasis added*). Going into ourselves gives us access to a space "that dissolves dualisms between self and other, inner and outer" (ibid.). Going inside ourselves, being engulfed by love is to enter "the gentleness of the abyss" (Barthes as cited in Sandoval, 2000, p. 140,1). In the abyss "consciousness becomes transformed in so far as it has moved into and through what Barthes calls the 'zero degree' of all meaning, the place in which the obtuse third meaning emerges to haunt all we think we know" (Sandoval, 2000, p. 140,1).

"Third meaning": that which "haunts any other two meanings in a binary opposition" (Barthes as cited in Sandoval, 2000, p. 143,4). Sandoval argues that Barthes's notion of the "third meaning" is analogous to her concept of "differential consciousness"; "not consciousness in its usual mode, but not unconsciousness either" (2000, p. 144,5). "Rather, Barthes's work invokes another (differential) consciousness" (Sandoval, 2000, p. 144,5). Moreover "differential consciousness refers to a process Derrida describes as 'unnameable' even as he interprets its processes" (Sandoval, 2000, p. 4,5).

Enabled by willful walking, this is what it means to go "inward", and between the "inner and outer" space, to be engulfed by love which, in this instance, provides access to self-recognition via reconciliation with repressed feeling.

Self-recognition through the feeling of love.

Loving as you will, love that is "unnameable", evading capture and resisting containment.

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Filmography

Chronicle of a Summer (1961) Directed by Edgar Morin & Jean Rouch [Film]. France.

In the Mood for Doyle (2007) Directed by Yves Montmayeur [Film, YouTube]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tqmBHZGx04 (Accessed: 20/04/15).

In the Mood for Love (2000) Directed by Wong Kar-wai [Film]. France & Hong Kong.

Interview with Wong Kar-wai (2001) Interview by Michel Ciment & Hubert Niogret [Special Features Disc *In the Mood for Love*, DVD].

SpilLover (2020) Directed by Nobunye Levin [Film]. South Africa.

Winnie (2017) Directed by Pascale Lamche [Film]. France, Netherlands & South Africa

Nobunye Levin is a filmmaker, scholar and lecturer. She teaches in the Film and Television department in the School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. She completed a creative PhD in Film and Television at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her films have been screened both locally and internationally.

Her filmmaking practice and research is often concerned with the politics of aesthetics and is informed by the epistemic, poetic and political possibilities of cinematic experimentation. In her filmmaking practice and research she is preoccupied with feeling and "thinking in and through" film practice to produce affective cinematic experiences. She is a postdoctoral fellow in Decolonising Screen Worlds in the ERC-funded project "Screen Worlds: Decolonising Film and Screen Studies" based in the School of Arts at SOAS, University of London.

Decartographical Sketches
Nduka Mntambo

fig. 1: Preliminary cartographic collage. [2020] Image by: Nduka Mntambo.

Note 1—Tender mapping

You are here. Sometimes a dot, sometimes a red arrow; it is the orienting mark that your eye searches for once confronted with a Plexiglas panel map or a way-finding system in a shopping mall, or a strange street in a city, a university campus, or the sterile halls of a hospital. The situating mark that reassures you of the immediate position of your body concerning time and space. The establishing dot that demarcates the spatial parameters offering a momentary respite in the face of dislocation and disorientation.

You are here, a fixed starting point towards a myriad of possible moves.
You are here…now.

A reader who is looking at the second line of the second paragraph of a document that wants to become a map, a map of the artistic worlds, which was fabricated and manipulated with both the enthusiasm and the uncertainty of a blind cartographer. You wonder about the usefulness of reading the map of time and space that you might have not traversed and might never again experience, except in shifty images and validating annotations and citations that you expect in a document of this nature. Maps, according to Bruno's (2002:2) beautiful musings "are records of learning and they follow experience, they come into existence after the path has been travelled".

You are here.

However, what is before you does not resemble a diagrammatic representation of physical features: it looks nothing like scientific attempts to render the spherical in two dimensions on a piece of paper. This beginning neither offer critiques of the Mercator's projections nor the cartographer's paraphernalia, such as globes and quadrants.

So why then retain the idea of the map as a framing device?

Perhaps a useful starting point would be to think about the activity of mapping rather than the noun "map". If a map is a completed document, Abrams and Hall (2006:12) remind us that "mapping refers to a process—on-going, incomplete and of indeterminate, mutable form. Mapping applies to plotting points and finding common terms of reference with which to analyse data: it benefits from lack of finality denoted by the word map".

The agency of mapping, notes Corner (2011:225) "is doubly operative: digging, finding and exposing on the one hand, and relating, connecting and structuring on the other. Through visual disclosure, mapping both sets up and puts into effect complex sets of relationships that remain to be fully actualised." The mapping practice in this document is less about asserting scholarly authority, epistemic stability, and artistic control and more about making visible the process and exploring new sets of possibility.

The composition of the article before you is best read by mobilising the three mapping operations: "fields", "extracts" and "plotting". Corner (2011:229) defines the field as "a continuous surface; the flatbed; a paper or a table itself; schematically the analogical equivalent to the actual ground, albeit flat and scaled". This formulation includes the frame, orientation, co-ordinates, scale, units of measure and graphic projections.

The active mapping field you will be traversing in this document is oriented towards questions about cinematic practices and texts on the cities of the Global South. I survey this mapping field as viable modes of knowledge production within the discursive frame of artistic research. My critical surveying practices examine how we write and read particular forms of African urbanity from within. By this I mean, what representational and epistemic strategies can be employed to contest teleological and essentialist canonised narratives from elsewhere, which have historically characterised the spatial visualisations from above.

The epistemic invitation before you is merely one that asks you for a moment to enact the position of a drifter—to be part of the mapping of alternative itineraries and the subverting of dominant "academic" readings and authoritarian regimes of seeing. The terrain you are about to drift in is primed for wandering, as it is not composed of a single layer. Its palimpsestic topography involves the superimposition of various independent layers, one upon the other, to produce a heterogeneous and "thickened" surface (Corner 2011:235).

Note 2—Cartographic Blots

fig. 2: Blotted Map Collage. [2020] Image by: Nduka Mntambo.

On Material thinking

> (Material Thinking is) an apt image of remembering beyond nostalgia. It captures the way in which creative collaborations individually create indistinguishable blots. It also suggests how, collectively, their appearance makes possible a new conversation… And it is out of these implicated processes that a third apprehension emerges. When it emerges in this way, it constitutes material thinking. Carter (2004:5)

Following Carter's (2004) conception of material thinking, I think through the three processual artistic experiments titled *Prompts and Projections: Tomorrow we will remember the things we have forgotten (2017); Store in a Cool Dry Place (2016); and Cinema is Wasted on Cinema (2016)*. The three works emerge in this writing as blots, which disrupt the easy reading of the cartography of the cities the Global South.

In a foreword to Studies in Material Thinking, guest editors Rosenberg and Fairfax (2008) describe Paul Carter's notion of material thinking as "the plots of all of those individual or singular journeys that have been taken intersect, they gather, coagulate and ultimately produce a blot on the map; a thickening at those points of intersection between the various passages. The individual journeys are arrested in the swelling of the blot."

The following parts of this document are structured as blots in the urban cartographic enquiry and are positioned as instantiations that explore various visual forms of knowing. This structuring device—of blots on the map-— furthermore follows Sullivan's (2010:159) idea that conceives "contexts of contemporary art and cultural production as expanding and opening new sites for research". He argues for the potential of artists to be directly involved in diverse research communities, which means they take on increased responsibility as theorists. Moreover, the space between theory and practice becomes a site for making art and doing research, while positioning creative enquiries

beyond disciplinary boundaries, cultural borders and technological divides. The artist-theorist makes use of the transformative power of art and resistance practices as a means of individual and cultural change.

Furthermore, I explore each of the creative projects around the conceptual framework by Paul Goodwin and John Oduroe (2008) in a conversational piece of writing titled "Revisioning Black Urbanism and the Production of Space". The set of questions offered me exciting entry points in the conception and articulation of my creative research projects. For the present purposes, I will consider two questions concerning my artistic practice, as articulated by Goodwin and Oduroe

> How can architecture and urbanism engage constructively with "other- ness" and "difference" within the fabric and wider morphology of cities? Can or should "Black Urbanism" be built? (2008:7)

Of course, Black Urbanism can constructively and keenly engage with the fabric and broader morphology of cities. Following Eshun (2003:288), if we take seriously Toni Morrison's argument that the African subjects that experienced capture, theft, abduction, mutilation, and slavery were the first moderns, then the city is indeed the exemplar par excellence of modernity. Eshun argues:

> African subjects underwent real conditions of existential homelessness, alienation, dislocation, and dehumanisation that philosophers like Nietzsche would later define as quintessentially modern: Instead of civilising African subjects, the forced displacement and commodification that constituted the Middle Passage meant that modernity was rendered forever suspect (2003:288).

This question is furthermore explored in the first blot—*Prompts and Projections: Tomorrow we will remember the things we have forgotten.*

Blot 1—Prompts and Projections: *Tomorrow we will remember the things we have forgotten*

fig 3: *Prompts and Projections: Tomorrow we will remember the things we have forgotten.*
Installation Poster. Artsearch Symposium 2017.

In my collaboration with theatre maker Mwenya Kabwe in the project *Prompts and Projection: Tomorrow we will remember the things we have forgotten* (2017), we toyed with ideas espoused by Eshun (2003: 288) of "establishing the historical character of black culture, to bring Africa and its subjects into history denied by Hegel et al". Consider the ontological violence enunciated by Hegel when he wrote:

> The peculiarly of the African Character is difficult to comprehend, for the reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all ideas—the category of Universality. In Negro life, the characteristic point is in fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realisation of any substantial objective existence (1956:93).

Speaking back to the Hegelian paradigm, Kabwe and I mobilised the colossal figure of Edward Nkoloso, a Zambian school teacher in the 1960s, who was convinced that Zambians were going to beat the Americans and Russians to space. Our project was a declaration to assemble counter-memories that contest the colonial archive. We predicated this artistic and epistemic enterprise on Edward Nkoloso's speculative exploration of space travel within the rubric of Afrofuturism. Our mobilisation of Afrofuturism as a conceptual placeholder for our artistic experiment at the Afrikan Freedom Station embraced Eshun's formulation of Afrofuturism:

> as a multimedia project distributed across the nodes, hubs, rings, and stars of the Black Atlantic. As a tool kit developed for and by Afro diasporic intellectuals, the imperative to code, adopt, adapt, translate, misread, rework, and revision these concepts, under the conditions specified in this essay, is likely to persist in the decades to come (2003:300).

In wrestling with the aesthetic and epistemic provocation offered by Eshun and the possibilities of Afrofuturism, our project aligns the question of futurity with ideas espoused by Mbembe (2015:54). He argues that art is an attempt to capture the forces of the infinite, an attempt to be the infinite in practical form, but the form that consists of consistently doing, undoing, redoing; assembling, disassembling and reassembling. These ideas, Mbembe argues, are typically "African" and fully resonate with the digital spirit of our times.

Having developed the mobile icosahedron structures for multifocal projection from the previous artistic project, the collaboration with Kabwe brought performative and textual possibilities. Kabwe had been writing daily pieces of speculative and projective texts centred on the historical figures of Nkoloso and the female boxer Esther Phiri. Through a series of articulations and remixing of time, space and actions of the two characters, Kabwe's writing weaves a Sankofaric text about various forms of African subjectivities projecting themselves outside the colonial/post-colonial scripts. Mwenya's conception of these texts is captured in a letter she sent to me at the inception of our collaboration:

> *Dear Nduka,*
>
> *Thank you for the piece you wrote on Chale Wote, I so enjoy what you invoke here, and Accra has a special place in the heart. There is also much obvious resonance between our projects, so I look forward to this process. Your opening quote from Binyavanga is on the money and the Spirit Robot merely is a perfect image. The following may also just become the beginning of a conversation towards what we eventually realise at our exhibition—A way of thinking/making "out loud" together. Firstly the speculative genre is relatively unexplored in the medium of live performance as compared to literature, fine art, film and digital media so I am partly trying to explore what the possibilities are for this genre in this form. I am also very much drawn to the migratory mythology in speculative fiction and the emancipatory politics at play—particularly in terms of African sci-fi. The "prompts" have also become a practice of thinking speculatively that have a particular kind of traction for African knowledge making. As pieces of performance writing (or something), they also try to reconsider the place of the written text for theatre—they [are] after all designed as prompts for theatre-making and yet, perhaps because of the genre lend themselves more easily (perhaps) to be interpreted in other mediums. Then again, they could also exist simply as text (for live performance). I am also keen on the conversation about the distinctions to be made between Afrofuturism and something else that might be called African Futurism.*
>
> *I really like the scenographic dimension of your mobile sculptures. The kind of space that the structures take up and their quite literal function as revolving "stages" for the films. I plan to write more of these pieces, prompts, propositions, samples, moments, glimpses, raindrops… so we will have a more extensive collection to play with.*
>
> *Mwenya*

We started working in the studio with the icosahedron mobiles mounted and Mwenya performing the series of speculative texts. I projected images that I had been collecting on the field-research trips from cities of the global South (Johannesburg, Mozambique, Kenya, São Paulo, Arusha and Cairo

fig. 4: Mwenya Kabwe textual prompts. The texts that Mwenya composed are structured around the notion of a chronotope Artsearch Symposium Installation. 2017

The selection of the space for presenting this work was crucial, as we had conceived the installation as an epistemic contraption/engine in which ideas might take flight. We selected the Afrikan Freedom Station based in Westdene, Johannesburg. The space fashions itself as a decidedly Afrocentric radical third art space, experimenting with various articulations of freedom imaginaries. The ethos of the space is to ask what kind of objects, ideas, creations can we make if we consider ourselves genuinely free. We conceived the mounting of the installation at the Afrikan Freedom Station in the vein of Meschac Gaba's Museum of Contemporary African Art (2013).

Toua and Miller (2016:190) argue that Gaba's Museum, as a mode of artistic expression, is intended to challenge the canonical thinking and ethnocentric prejudices that have surrounded African art for far too long. In addition to interrogating the very idea of a museum, Gaba's ground- breaking installation confronts the problematic Eurocentric impulse to look at Africa through an exclusively ethnographic lens without also exam-ining, for example, widespread inequalities resulting from unfettered global capitalism.

On a much more humble scale compared to Gaba's installation at the Tate Modern, we installed the work in the 4m x 3m mezzanine section, which is called Bantu TV— Angazi but I am sure, a tiny and contemplative space for audio-visual installation.
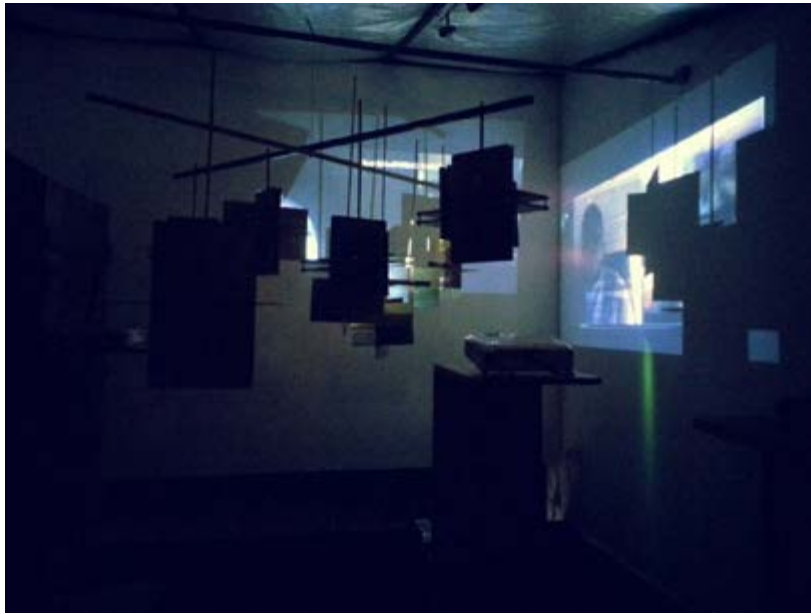
fig. 5: Installation View of Prompts and Projections: *Tomorrow we will remember the things we have forgotten: Afrikan Freedom Station,* Artsearch Symposium 2017.

Our installation's programmatic intentions were characterised by the discombobulating presentation of mobile sculptures for projection; fragmented text offered both in sonic form and on actual pieces of paper scattered around the exhibition space. The installation was accompanied by live syncopated experimental piano compositions from the jazz musician Malcolm Jiyane. Gedye (2016) reflects on Jiyane's innovative of utilisation of the midi controller in an interview with the artist, where Jiyane describes his sonic praxis as:

> "... the beauty of not knowing" what things will look like when they "bloom", and the beauty of knowing if you plant something and nurture it, it will grow. "It is the mystery of it, the avant-garde of it," he said. "The soil is very generous".
> Gedye (2016)

Through the synthesis of Malcolm's sonic experiments, Kabwe's kinetic body/voice, the light/shadow play of city images and text projected on the mobile icosahedron, the installation evolved into a dense multimodal palimpsest text playing within the rubric of futurity.

**Blot 2 —*Cinema Is Wasted on Cinema:*
The Four Tyrannies**

fig. 6: *Cinema is Wasted on Cinema* installation view of multiple video projections (2016)

> If we have had 8000 years of text masters we now in a position to ask them to sincerely move aside and allow the image master to come forward, to confound the notion of ourselves. How is it that we have had over 114 years of cinema and still, I would severely argue that it has not yet developed its autonomy, its vocabulary, it still lives on the three phenomena of literature, theatre and if you are very lucky painting
> Peter Greenaway (2010).

In this iteration of my cinematic cartography enquiry, I draw a substantial amount of conceptual and aesthetic inspiration from the English image maker, Peter Greenaway. Given my articulated antinomy between knowledge from the global southern and northern episteme, it might seem paradoxical that my methods of working with audio-visual material references are indeed celebratory, of Greenaway's oeuvre, whose primary fascination is European classical visual arts. Perhaps the aesthetic discoveries of the final project, *Asymmetries* (2018), resolved or, at the very least, atoned for this paradox.

Bruno (2002:285) describes, in the section of her work titled "the Geometry of Passion", "the practice of Peter Greenaway as a film director and artist trained as a painter and obsessed by architecture, the fashioning of space, and the cartographic enterprise that offers cultural mapping". As a scenographer myself, I have always been fascinated by Greenaway's articulation of the architectonic in films such as The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover (1989), The Belly of an Architect (1987), Prospero's Books (1991), and the sensual, The Pillow Book (1996). The choreography of his mise-en-scene in these feature-length narrative films, which is characterised by fragmented, multiple screens, calligraphic motion graphic texts, elaborate sets and costumes, excites me immensely.

However, it was in my interaction with his multimedia installation works, such as The Tulse Luper Suitcases (2003) and Nine Classical Paintings Revisited (2006) that I started to take seriously, in my own practice, Greenaway's provocation that cinema is wasted on cinema. Below I will share extracts from a lecture he titled "New Possibili-

ties" (2010), delivered at the Zurich University of the Arts, Master of Advanced Studies in Scenography programme. The extracts and images from my film will illuminate some of my concerns that structured the experimental register of my installation work titled Cinema Is Wasted on Cinema (2016).

The work mobilises techniques of projection mapping and the assemblage of disparate audio-visual sources to make an argument for the architectonic possibilities of cinematic practice. Working with Greenaway's ironic distrust of the textual, this blot of my conceptual mapping will privilege visuals from the film as a primary rhetorical device. I will also offer an analysis of this iteration through the prism of texts on digital cinema and experimental cinema; particularly the work of Malcolm Le Grice (2001) and Lev Manovich (1995). I will also mobilise Clara Mancini's (2003) work on Cinematic Hypertext (CH) to account for how I conceived of the rhetorical potentialities of using projection mapping, specifically with the textual elements of the installation experimenting with the Isadora projection mapping software, instead of the usual linear film editing techniques.

The projection mapping Isadora software is an interactive media playback platform that combines a media server, a visual programming environment, and a powerful video and audio processing engine. It has a taxonomy of control parameters that consists of instantaneous commands/generators allowing the user to manipulate the multiple videos' scale, horizontal and vertical positions, opacity, blending, layering, image tracing and tracking. It also offers an opportunity for the user to fashion the parameters of the image in relation to the surface that the image is projected upon.

fig. 7: *Cinema is Wasted on Cinema,* installation view showing the control parameters of the Isadora software (2016)

Greenaway captures the important consideration between image and the surface onto which it is projected in his "New Possibilities" lecture when he argues:

> One of the things that I find perplexing is the way in which the whole activity of projection never seems in any form associated with the actual object projected upon. Projection as it regards to scale and as it views the architectonic can be attractive for all kinds of reasons. The notion of being able to programme activi-

ties away from the strictures of the famous Godardian assertion that cinema is
the truth 24 frames per second, to be able to organise a cinematic programme,
is essential. It is part of the language of mutability, the ability to continually
change and change…
(Greenaway, 2010).

Therefore, the controlling idea of my installation's visual programming was, in the first
instance, to consider what might happen if I remixed and re-scripted the images from
the diverse urban conditions

of cities that I had amassed during my research field trips and set up a multimedia
conversation with the other contemporary films made about selected African cities.
The conceit was to explore what would happen if I domesticate this global urban
imagery, by projecting it onto the swimming pool and the garden of my northern
Johannesburg suburban home.
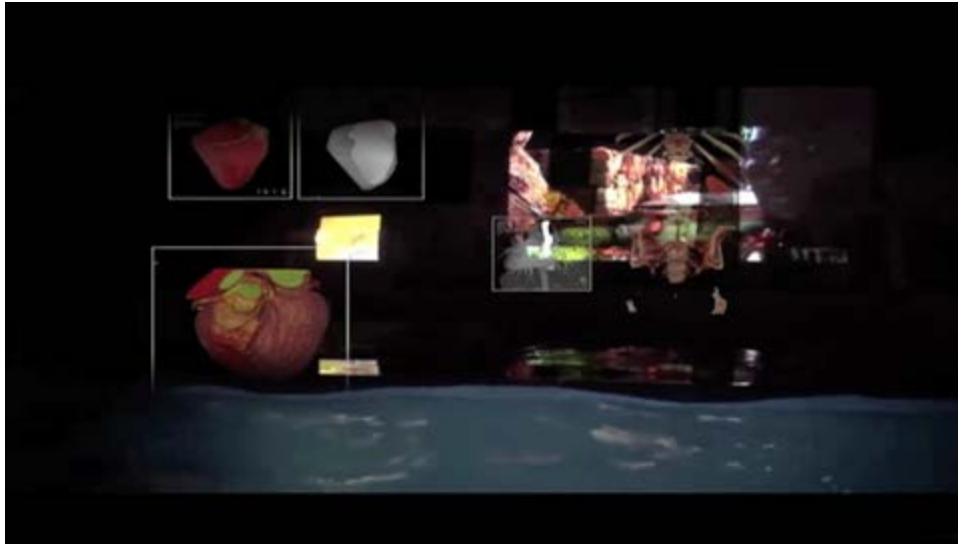
fig. 8: *Cinema Is Wasted on Cinema* (2016), installation view of the swimming pool with projected images.

Greenaway argues that cinema, not only for external reasons, seems to be collapsing;
coalescing into disappearance and evaporation. He lists (his insistence on cataloguing
is well-documented) four tyrannies which have been inimical to the advancement of
cinema.

(1) The dominance of text-based cinema.

(2) The predominance of a single frame.

(3) The tyranny of the actor.

(4) The most challenging thing to understand, which sounds very paradoxical,
is the notion of the tyranny of the camera.

The first tyranny about the cinema's reliance on text media presented me with challenges, as the three main films studied in my thesis are indeed text-based. Conversations on a Sunday Afternoon (2005) references strongly the work of Somali author, Nuruddin Farah, titled Links (2005). I Mike What I Like (2006) is a spoken-word film based on the poetry of Kgafela oa Magogodi, and Steve Kwena Mokwena's experimental film, Driving with Fanon (2005), draws much pathos from Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth (1961).

fig. 9: *Cinema Is Wasted on Cinema* (2016), installation view of projected images from *Driving with Fanon* (2005).

In order to deal with the first tyranny of privileging text-based film practice, I conceived of the configuration of the images as a form of cinematic hypertext drawing from Mancini's (2000) argument:

> ...cinema and hypertext have several features in common. Like cinema, hypertext is a visual medium, the computer screen being a visual field where narrative space and time arise from a temporal articulation of spatial components. Like cinema's shots, hypertext components constitute "self-standing cores" of content, whose connection effects and expresses a strong semantic relationship Mancini (2000:236).

I organised divergent texts from the three films as spatio-temporal nodes, which, while retaining their distinct rhetorical registers, are able in the eye and mind of the active spectator to generate a set of heuristic activities. Mancini (2000: 236) proposes that in cinematographic discourse the chain of fragments is made by the author, while in hypertext discourse this chain is co-produced by the author and the user. The user is similarly committed in hypertext and film engagement, as in both cases she has to reconstruct a coherent semantic world, starting from fragments.

Furthermore, Rosenberg and Fairfax (2008:sp) argue that the work of Adrian Miles (2008) promotes a "heuristic, poetic and iterative 'thinking—within' (not quite the thinking of thinking so much as the thinking of thought-as-writing) which not only aligns itself with design but is itself 'design thinking'". Miles (2008:3) argues that to write hypertextually is to regard the link as the performative and enabling connection

of parts into mobile wholes. These wholes are constituted not only from the sum of their parts, their content nodes, but also from the variety of possible relations established between them through their link structures.

Therefore, in my experiment, Nuruddin Farah's novel Links (2005), which is mainly about the brutal violence in Somalia, remixed in Khalo Matabane's (2006) film sequence about the violence in Johannesburg, becomes a hypertext node. The Matabane sequence connects with Kgafela oa Magogodi's fragmented poem "Itchy City" (2006) in a hypertextual mode.

Furthermore, Magogodi's poem echoes Steve Mokwena's (2005) forlorn ruminations in the streets of Freetown with the ghost of Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth (1961) in his pocket.

The sets of juxtaposition offered above might seem like the conventional montage in cinematic practice. However, the set of coding parameters that the Isadora software allowed for, created a radical re-organisation of the three texts" visual nodes, whose interaction was not characterised by linear semantic coherence. I programmed the installation to produce unpredictable connections and disconnections between the texts, demanding that the spectator's heuristic inner-cartography continually adapt, question and re-cast the texts.

To deal with the remaining three tyrannies of the dominance of the single frame, the privileging of narrative (actor), and the tyranny of the camera apparatus, I offer a survey of the answers that Lev Manovich (1995) advances in response to the question "what is digital cinema?" My discussion of these answers illuminates how my installation Cinema Is Wasted on Cinema (2016) wrestled with these tyrannies.

Manovich (1995:2) arrives at a definition of digital cinema by abstracting the common features and interface metaphors of a variety of computer software and hardware which are currently replacing traditional film technology. Seen together, he argues that these features suggest a distinct logic of a moving digital image. This logic subordinates the photographic and the cinematic to the painterly and graphic, thereby destroying cinema's identity as a pure art medium.

In my experiment, Cinema Is Wasted. On Cinema (2016), the logic of the dominance of a single frame, the privileging of narrative, and the tyranny of the mono-focal camera apparatus is dismantled. The conceptual register of entanglement is instantiated through the non-representational imagery via affective tactics of the painterly treatment of the plastic nature of digital image making.

fig. 10 : *Cinema Is Wasted on Cinema* (2016) installation view of projected images
from the film *Driving with Fanon* (2005).

Blot 3—*Store in a Cool Dry Place*

The project Store in a Cool Dry Place (2016) is a collaborative work conceived by film-maker Jyoti Mistry as a response to a call for a group exhibition titled When Tomorrow Comes (2016), initially staged at the Wits Art Museum and later at the Michaelis Galleries at the University of Cape Town. The curators of the exhibition, McInnes, Mistry and Titlestand (2016:1), framed the project around concerns of the apocalyptic and ventured to ask " how might art face up to droll dystopian fantasies of social and environmental collapse? The curatorial vision of the exhibition sought to 'engage the saturated field of representation comprised of stock imagery and the worn-out currency of metaphor and metonymy'".

The exhibition call provoked thinking about apocalyptic narratives as sites that invite visual conjectures beyond stereotypes offered in dominant visual cultures such as Hollywood disaster films. In response to the call, I worked with two documents as points of entry in the conception and ultimate realisation of my intervention in the exhibition. The first was a piece of writing titled Pushing On /Off Buttons of Consciousness (2016) and the second was video footage of the rituals and processes of coffin making in three African cities (Addis Ababa, Johannesburg and Accra). The brief was to think through how to re-imagine and disrupt the logic of the single screen epic narrative of the "end of times" narratives and create a sculptural structure in which the furtive video fragments/imprints of the city imagery might be projected.

The document, Pushing On/Off Buttons of Consciousness by Mistry (2016), is written in a first-person voice, which oscillates between tidal waves of panic, non-panic, contemplation, and confusion about the language of the apocalyptic in different discourses of science, philosophy, representation, religion, and politics. The writing is presented in vignettes interplaying between instantiations of hearing, reading, and seeing, punctuated by the on/off state of feeling:

Panic.

But I consider myself, a "not so regular civilian".   When I hear: I wrestle with the jargon, work with words carefully and distil their meanings meticulously.

When I read: I unpack the logic, find the causal relations in the way arguments are presented, and even when the language is scientific (far removed from the ways I am schooled to use words), I work hard to understand.

When I watch: Like most civilians, I respond emotively. I am moved by the responsibilities that are asked of me as an inhabitant of the planet. But I am also highly aware of how strong emotional reactions can be elicited through moving images. How a skilful construction of images assembled with the right music and appropriately chosen sound bites serve to produce alarm and fear; to educate and conscientious through emotion. The use of the medium is to create a necessary panic to incite action.

Panic... panic

What stood out for me in the writing was that each vignette was bookended by a Phi symbol, which is offered as a visual cue for a moment of balance in-between the rapidly swinging discursive pendulum: an attempt to arrest, albeit momentarily, the surging telos of the "end of the world" narrative and propose an aesthetic respite; a moment to balance out the politics and poetics of the apocalyptic narrative.

I held on to the idea of balance through the Phi φ symbol in the first conceptual sketches and with my scale ruler in hand, I confronted the 1.618 golden ratio measurement as a starting point. The conceit of the golden ratio in mathematical terms arises from dividing the line segment so that the ratio of the whole segment to the larger piece is equal to the ratio of the larger piece to the smaller piece—a division in extreme and mean ratio. This ratio has been appropriated in the Western art history, architecture and literature, as a measurement of perfectly realised beauty and symmetry.

With these measurements in mind, I started drawing and modelling a series of golden rectangles which references the dimension of the monofocal cinema screen and is very close to the 16: 9 aspect ratio that is the international standard for television and computer monitors. In order to complicate the two-dimensional nature of the golden rectangle, I started folding a piece of the rectangular paper in different geometric forms and ultimately ended up with the skeleton of the icosahedron.

As a polyhedron with 20 surfaces, the icosahedral presents an opportunity to experiment with multiple screens, which can be projected into from multiple focal points. The first tests for projection on icosahedron resulted not only in multiplying the surfaces of the images, but there was also an exciting play of planes that happened as the images were refracted at the dihedral points of the icosahedron skeleton. The subtle movement of the suspended mobile seemed to be editing the images as they started to merge with images projected from various focal points. Steyerl (2012:27) argues that when we start to think through multiple screens, we can disrupt the prescribed focal points of dominant cinema, and can create a new and exciting spatial vision of multi-

fig. 11: Projection test image on the 1:1 scale model of icosahedral skeleton object.

screen projections, which creates a dynamic viewing space, dispersing perspective and possible points of view. The viewer is no longer unified by such a gaze, but is somewhat dissociated and overwhelmed, drafted into the production of content.

The icosahedral multi-screens presented the possibility to instantiate Steyer's (2012) provocation, but also to take it forward and wonder what happens if the screens are not stationary. What if I designed the icosahedral multiple screens in the form of mobile structures suspended in space? What would happen to the furtive images/imprints when projected on a moving target?

A moving target that is made out of multiple golden rectangles and structure that requires proportional balance to facilitate the movement of the object. The Phi φ symbol recurs.

fig. 12: Installation View (Video Detail) of the *Store in A Cool Dry Place* at Wits Arts Museum (2016).

The title of the installation, Store in a Cool Dry Place, was an interesting starting point for thinking through the video footage for editing and projection. Mistry (2016:25) describes the title as referring to the "ubiquitous instruction on most consumer products, an idea of suggesting the ideal condition for preservation; a way of forestalling the inevitable deterioration of the various ingredients making up the consumer product".

Cinematic editing, particularly the technique of continuity editing, is concerned with the idea of preserving the unity of time and space in order to offer a coherent product. Elements like shot sizes, angles and variation, consistent screen direction and 180-degree rules are all ingredients by which the tempo-spatial integrity of the cinematic image and its mono-focal presentation are instigated and sustained. Instead of adopting the techniques of post-production to structure the images of making of coffins, and the affective religious rituals in Accra, Johannesburg and Addis Ababa, I became interested in what Steyerl (2012:183) dubs "re-production".

fig. 13: Installation View (Video Detail) of the *Store in A Cool Dry Place* at Wits Arts Museum (2016).

The prefix "re-", points to repetition or response, a state in which the production of images is endlessly recycled, repeated, copied, multiplied, but potentially also displaced, humbled and renewed. Thinking about bodies in post-production, Steyerl argues:

> While cuts have moved centre stage in economic discourse, cutting or editing is also a traditional tool of cinema. While editing is usually understood as a modification in the temporal dimension, cinema also cuts bodies in space by framing them, retaining only what's useful to the narration. The body is disarticulated and rearticulated in a different form. As Jean-Louis Comolli dramatically states, the frame cuts into the body as sharp, crisp, and clean as a razor's edge (2012:179).

My working process of assembling images is neither held together by a grand mimetic narrative, nor "sharp, crisp, and clean as a razor's edge". The editing process in this iteration is conceived of as a reproduction of displaced images and bodies, which are connected by the contemplation of destruction, decay and rituals of preservation.

Constantly recycled, the fragments wrestled for space in the extreme and mean ratio of the mythic golden rectangle compositional regime. Using three micro projectors, the images projected on the mobile were diminutive in scale, and they were constructed to challenge the assumption of a grand narrative, while resisting the spectator's easy cognitive grasp by being projected onto a moving target—a mobile that resists the stability of the image.

Concluding Note—*Asymmetries* Installation (2018/19)

fig. 14: *Asymmetries* Installation View at the Point of Order Project Space in Johannesburg (May 2018).

The three projects were plotted as "journeys that have been taken that intersect, they gather, coagulate and ultimately produce a blot on the map; a thickening at those points of intersection between the various passages". The three projects are iterative instantiations that ultimately congealed into the final installation titled *Asymmetries* (2018/19).

The creative project, *Asymmetries* (2018/19), offers tentative, situated, epistemic sketches explored through various artistic practices. These practices contest normative and oft-canonised registers for conceptualising and visualizing African urbanity. In artistic research methods, practical knowledge is made visible, and its process made evident, which serves to challenge epistemological research paradigms.

Furthermore, the installation, *Asymmetries* (2018/19) was conceived as a making-thinking-spectatorial research project on the urban [context/reality/situation/environment?], premised on strategies developed through modes of artistic research. The approach is inspired by AbdouMaliq Simone's (2013) enquiries, which capture the difficulties of theorising many quarters of African cities; where complex social interactions challenge normative modes of research in urban spaces.

Asymmetries (2018/19) functions as a multi-channel installation; the artwork consists of images projected onto mobile sculptures designed in the motif of the icosahedron suspended on beams. The multiple mobile screens offer various registers of mapping

contemporary urban beings and their objects. The installation project demands a different conception of the relationship between the screen, the image and the viewer. I present the assemblage of images from various cities, which requires a framing; reframing; and deframing that defies a totalising whole. Instead, the experience evokes tentative, incomplete and constantly moving-evolving ideas that at times move together and at times , move against each other; and on occasion allow for coalescence.

fig. 15: *Asymmetries* Installation View at the Point of Order Project Space in Johannesburg (May 2018).

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Nduka Mntambo is image-maker working/playing in the interstices of urban spatial practices, experimental filmmaking and pedagogy. He holds a PhD in Film and is the Head of the Film and Television program at the Wits School of Arts (WSOA). In May 2018, he presented a large scale exhibition titled *Asymmetries* at The Point of Order Project Space in Johannesburg and in 2O19 the work travelled to Michaelis Galleries in Cape Town. The most recent iteration of the work was presented as an Installation Performance Lecture at the Art Research Africa Conference in 2020 The installation won the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences Award for Best Visual Art 2020. The video component of the *Asymmetries* installation was selected for 20th Edition of the Videoex Internationales Experimental Film and Video Festival in Zurich, 2018. His documentary film titled Human (e) Settlements: Urban Challenge, which looks at the state of housing and human settlements in South Africa, premiered at the UN-Habit: World Urban Forum 6, Naples, Italy 2012. His experimental film; IF THIS BE A CITY, which is an exploration of the politics of space, citiness and desire, was selected to be part of the Johannesburg Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2015 and was also part of the Urban Flux Film Festival, which was an official project of the France South Africa Seasons 2012/2013. He has worked extensively as a production designer including productions such as *I like I Mike What I Like* (2004) directed by Kgafela oa Magogodi which was later adapted to the eponymous feature-length film directed by Jyoti Mistry. He collaborated with filmmaker Jyoti Mistry on a video installation titled *Store in a Cool Dry Place* which explores the ritual of coffin production in three African cities: Accra, Addis Ababa and Johannesburg. The exhibition opened at WAM (Wits Art Museum) and later travelled to Michaelis Galleries at UCT (University of Cape Town). An iteration of a PhD research field notes titled, *Notes from the Lighthouse in Ga- Jamestown* was presented at the ArtSearch Primer held at the Dance Factory in Newtown, and the DFL 9TH Africa Research Conference held the constitutional Hill 2016.

Caught up in Multiply-Layered Skirts, or What's a Stripper Doing in *Julius Caesar*?
Jay Pather

The title refers to a comment by a theatre critic of my production *Qaphela Caesar!* at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. While calling it a "magnificent reflection of power" she wrote:

> you feel assaulted by dance that is literary and obscure … hampered by an excess of metaphors, references and symbols, so many, it gets caught in its own multiply-layered skirts (Sassen 2012)[1].

This paper explores what "literary" dance might look like bringing attention to forms of choreography and theatre making that are akin to ways of writing an article, a book or a research paper. The critic's comment points to the hazards of dense, research-heavy theatrical productions and serves as a good prompt to investigate why and how such productions have emerged, and what their place in the field of research might be.

Theatre and dance criticism in this country is rare, and in many respects these art forms are uninterrogated beyond a simple judgement of whether an audience may or may not like a production. It is not my intention to challenge much of that. Sassen's comment, though, serves as an ironic starting point to get to the bottom of my admittedly dense, multi-layered and in many instances obscure work, and to probe its referencing, its forms and its subjects. My intention is also to unpick the work in the quest for something that contributes to the field of literary dance in a substantial way—be it at the intersection of media, the various sites of the works, the perpetual interplay between tradition and modernity, or the collaborative processes of research and creation. The interplay between the works' forms and content, derived in the main from contemporary South African society, is an exercise in disruption, fragmentation, impressionistic collage and unresolved conclusions. I subtitled *Qaphela Caesar!*, which Sassen critiques above, *a multi-media massacre of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar* for good reason.

I examine three productions (*Body of Evidence*, *Qaphela Caesar!* and *rite*) and consider this "hybrid" approach to research in theatre making—how a single performative moment can be imbued with multiple influences, references and points of entry and exit to grapple with a single question: how does the production serve as a vehicle for meeting complexity with complexity and sometimes opacity? The context and subject of these mixed media productions—memory and apartheid, truth and reconciliation, the spillages, slippages, overflows of emotion, the attempts at making meaning and the desire for reconstruction—lead me to consider form in our society, its multiple manifestations, its colonial roots and its rhizome-like appearance. The preponderance of deconstructed and reassembled political formations in contemporary South Africa, starting with the nation's tenuous grasp on human rights and its politics (the improvised relationship between the socialist origins of the ruling party and late capitalism is an example), forces me to think of a layered and complex matrix in considering both the kinetic and the still body as it navigates such assaults on its resilient yet fragile frame. In art making, one impulse in the face of such a conundrum may be to weed out, clean up, reduce and essentialize. My dominant impulse is to overlay and overflow,

as well as riff into ironic self-consciousness, in a sometimes anarchic manner, but with an attempt to embody the disruption and rupture that is so visible in our society's fabric. And it is not always palatable, nor easy to digest.

In considering the three productions, I focus on a dominant choreographic research approach in each.

1. Embodiment and collaborative research in *Body of Evidence*

In the early 1990s, Dr Leonard Lehrer, a forensic scientist at the University of Cape Town, approached me with some alarming findings as a result of examining bodies that had met their end through violent means in the Eastern Cape Province. The most striking finding was the fact that for every one death as a result of political violence , there were seven deaths of women as a result of domestic violence, killed by someone they knew (a conclusion based on the prevalence of blunt instruments, grabbed in rage— murders committed without a strategic motive.)

Body of evidence, by Jay Pather and Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, 2009.
Photo by Val Adamson, courtesy of Jay Pather.

Body of evidence, by Jay Pather and Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, 2009.
Photo by Val Adamson, courtesy of Jay Pather.

Fifteen years later, as the prevalence of such violence grew, I wanted to focus on structural violence from a personal point of view. I probed the containment of violence in one's body as a result of continued and pervasive economic, physical and psychological abnegation, despite external political transformation.

In the workshop process, with eleven performers from the Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, based in Durban and ranging in age from 22 to 72, I found processes of working that examined the body as a filing cabinet of memory. Through a series of workshop performance rituals that developed a safety net for mining personal experiences, I journeyed with the dancers into improvisations and compositions around pain, affect, structural violence, abnegation and the body's kinetic and vocal responses.

The production foregrounded my interest in collaborative choreography that had developed over many years. The singular choreographic voice had proven to be reductive and simplistic, so I had looked for ways in which choreography could emerge as a result of a group process, where individual dancers had a strong hand in the development of the final work. This manner of working has its precedent in workshop theatre practices in South Africa. So, while my references were the subject of memory, structural and interpersonal violence; my field of research was grounded in the dancers and the immediacy of daily experience. At the outset a code of ethics was established from intense discussions which covered individual volition and agency to step in and out of processes to the awarding of choreographic credit to all participants involved in the process. This collaborative choreographic model meant the research was embodied even before we started actually rehearsing the work.

Before we explored the central themes or content, the workshop sessions comprised more formal choreographic elements, such as the use of interpersonal and personal space (kinesphere), subjective temporalities, the body and its architecture, and exercises in emotional and sense memory and its form in terms of colour, texture, shape, rhythm. As a means of acting training I drew heavily on the principles of early twentieth century Russian director, Konstantin Stanislavsky, to reach sense and emotional memories. In what has become known as the Stanislavsky Method, this recall precipitated a mimetic approach to acting, reproducing these states as "real" actions of a character for a genre of theatre known as "realism" or "naturalism". In preparation for *Body of Evidence*, the dancers were taken through a series of these recall exercises extended through metaphoric use of "cellular memory within the body", and then led to give form to these through pieces of movement, visual drawings, and installations with the use of objects and sound. Stanislavsky's Method then generated impulses of recall *as points of ignition* that resulted in idiosyncratic and highly subjective dance language that eschewed the mimetic and worked with surreal imagery. The result was a cacophony of phrases of movement, sometimes vocalized, containing opaque abstractions of the actual feeling or memory of that feeling.

Importantly, my original intention—to give an elegant, kinetic form to the chaos of intensely personal experiences of violence—was itself disrupted and upended. A completely surprising, direct and evocative dance language began to emerge. Sometimes immobilized and static, sometimes repetitive and diffuse, it took the form of mysterious and messy non-sequiturs rather than coherent, recognizable dance phrases.

On stage, these episodes occurred against and within projections of body parts that were sketched by Henry Vandyke Carter, who illustrated the anatomical guide for students by Henry Gray, in their iconic book *Gray's Anatomy*. The drawings are both detailed and naïve, prompting a sense of symmetry and order in the body, which the performances challenged and superseded. But the drawings nevertheless offered a forced coherent frame which the performances spilled out of.

I shall focus on the experience of one of the dancers, Nelisiwe Rushualang. Her study of violence was prompted by the response of a middle-aged white woman whom Rushualang sat next to on a park bench. In one of the workshops Rushualang who, like all of us, had experienced violence on a large scale, honed in on her sense of annihilation in this encounter with someone who did not do much more than subtly turn away, tauten her neck and avert her eyes, making it impossible for Rushualang to simply sit restfully on a park bench. This tautening of the neck was to become Rushualang's main metaphor and point of departure. She moved quickly from this experience of disdain to embodying it. In doing so, she felt more in control of what was, for her, a devastating moment. Her physical realization of this state of disdain included using bandages to tie her neck in a set position and, with bandages coming up to her head, holding at the centre a blonde wig propped up by a long stick.

In the production, set against a large-scale projection of a *Gray's Anatomy* drawing of a cross section of the throat and neck, Rushualang is brought in by five dancers with onion sacks on their heads, each holding one of the bandages connected to her neck. Rushualang's entrance is discomforting yet regal. Much later, in a scene played out against projections of internal views of the rib cage and thoracic cavity, she and her "husband", Siyanda Duma, perform a scene of paranoia and vigilance, the ribs now doubling as high gates, a protective cavity or a cage of cartilage and bone. The anxiety and holding of one's breath while attempting to enjoy the privilege of the generous

space of their living room, is exacerbated by composer James Webb's deconstructed sound of the movement of the rib cage during difficult breathing. Attached to Rushualang's bandaged hand is a light that she uses to hunt out any potential violation of her security.

During the course of this duet between Rushualang and Duma, another dancer, Ntombi Gasa, enters in a typical South African maid's uniform, but also wearing a massive faux fur coat (holding an obscure story of desire). She sprawls out on a long table, looking on in a kind of boredom at this constant replay of paranoia. As the scene builds, the other dancers belly-roll their way along the floor like guerrillas, slowly and unobtrusively, silhouetted against the bottom of the projection of the rib cage, where the diaphragm might be. On their backs are little cardboard houses. As they flood the stage, there are moments where there appears to be an entire housing settlement underneath and inside Rushualang's supposedly impenetrable womb of safety. As the performance becomes increasingly anarchic and chaotic, Rushualang in her regal dress falls to her knees hammering the floor as she navigates the chaos, her bandages now pull at loaves of brown bread trailing behind her. In the final moments, Duma cuts the bandages and releases Rushualang's neck, leaving the loaves of bread behind as they make their way slowly out of the ensuing chaos to their rib cage home.

That this development in the work came from a single collaborative image—the stiffening neck of a woman observed, felt and replicated in numerous generative formations— speaks to this notion of embodied and collaborative research.

2. Architecture, form and site in *Qaphela Caesar!*

The initial impulse for creating the mixed-media, site-specific production *Qaphela Caesar!*, based on William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, came at a time of great political upheaval in South Africa. *Qaphela* in isiZulu translates as "Beware" and serves as both an exhortation to Caesar to be careful and an injunction to be careful *of* Caesar.

Under Nelson Mandela, South Africans were convinced of the intimate and direct relationship between governance and society, but with Mbeki and then Zuma, politics became disaffected and removed, with machinations stemming from the ambition and political desires of individuals, and the populace at a remove. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* served as an evocative vehicle for these regimes, but more importantly it was a frame and a structure to look back and forward in time. The use of Shakespeare's work was intended to comment on the capitulation of the South African government to Western political machination. An opening sequences plays a black and white movie of *Julius Caesar* (featuring Charlton Heston), while the African continent watches, learns and imitates.

There were several other points of intersection with Shakespeare's original and my sense of contemporary South Africa at the time—the rising notions of dictatorship; the tussle between the good fight of the past and the political expediency of the present; prophesy and tradition and their role in politics; xenophobia and mob violence; conspiracy and repetitive betrayals; incitement and the spillage and overflow of spiraling emotion.

I also wanted to reference the process whereby this default colonial education brought me to Shakespeare in the first place. For example, at Drama School I was compelled to attend a Language Laboratory to undo deviant sounds in order to speak Shakespearean

Qaphela Caesar by Jay Pather and Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, 2012.
Photo by Val Adamson, courtesy of Jay Pather.

iambic pentameter. So, amongst other disruptions, I staged an interjection with actor Mwenya Kabwe. We handed out original scripts to the audience, imploring them to get us back "on track" and then insulted their lack of proper Queen's English in their reading.

The various locations of the productions provided a concrete structure to contain this level of layering and came to determine its form: the Cape Town City Hall, the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and the Pretoria State Theatre. I shall comment largely on the Cape Town production.

The Cape Town City Hall is a large Edwardian building built in 1905 from materials and fixtures (such as the massive organ) from England. The City Hall also boasts the balcony from which Nelson Mandela spoke for the first time straight after his release in 1990 to a massive, bewildered, adoring and jubilant crowd. His speech, starting with the words: "Comrades and fellow South Africans, I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy and freedom. I stand here before you not as a prophet, but as a humble servant of you the people," has become an iconic marker of selfless leadership[2].

As contained within this one building, these disparate historic events , the colonial circumstances leading to the creation of this building as well as Mandela's historic speech signalling the onset of democracy , provided compelling material for the melding and collapsing of time and space continuums as well as political epochs, memory, history and future.

Ultimately it was the presentation of the work in 14 rooms of varying dimensions, across two floors of the City Hall that provided its structure. Starting in the foyer and working back and forth through the various rooms helped realize my interests in memory and time, bringing the audience into a surreal dreamy space rather than retelling the narrative. The flow from space to space provided an episodic sensibility. The audience met near the historic balcony and waited in the ornate hallway of Edwardian pillars and balconies from which dancers watched surreptitiously.

From here the audience was led through the 14 rooms with each room given a particular theme as the tragedy unfolded:

1. a room for a press conference
The large room leading from the entrance foyer was set up with tables and chairs for a press conference. Used as a press briefing room for the 2010 Soccer World Cup, insignia and detritus still remained. This suggested that the entire production begins indeed with Caesar's assassination and a press conference convened straight after. The audience entered to a character not in Shakespeare's play—a smartly suited man in a pig's mask who sat and watched. He appears throughout the production. The conference began with Mark Anthony's 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen' monologue, delivered by Mwenya Kabwe as if to a press corps made up of the audience. This is slowly interrupted by the plaintive singing in isiZulu of Caesar's partner Calpurnia (played as a *sango*ma (diviner) by Nelisiwe Rushualang), as well as dancers and opera singers interspersed amongst the audience. The disruption rises to a cacophony as Calpurnia, uninterested in the political machinations of Anthony, leads the audience upstairs to the even larger banquet room of the City Hall.

2. a large room for nostalgia, debris and deal making
Here, the work begins with the projection of a 16 mm black and white film of *Julius Caesar*,[3] and a plaintive cleaner wheeling in a dust bin, in some apocalyptic future. Caesar, played by Nkhanyiso Kunene, emerges from the bin and gets dressed in a once sharp, now dusty suit. This transition takes us backwards in time. To the strains of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* and bracing, modernist choreography, great swathes of men and women perform with discipline and style at the Opening of Parliament and Inauguration. It is also here that a quieter choreography of conspiracy begins.

3. a room for hot air
The audience is then led into a small blue room, akin to a smoking room full of politicians in suits with their pants around their ankles, shuffling around aimlessly. Hanging limply from their mouths are white balloons used as speech bubbles that inflate and deflate in their earnestness to please and say the politically expedient thing. Caesar, in the centre of it all, makes ridiculous gestures to an opera singer's rendition of "Brindisi" (The Drinking Song) from *La Traviata*.

4. a room for courage and conscience
This is a quiet scene in one of the smaller, more intimate rooms, wood-paneled with wall-to-wall narrow cupboards. The audience enters to see Brutus gazing at a tall chair with desire and hunger. His wife Portia enters and their duet ensues with Portia's original text on conscience spoken by Mwenya Kabwe. This ends when eight conspirators led by Cassius emerge from the cupboards, cutting though the intimacy of the duet. After an athletic and aggressive group choreography, Brutus leaves with the conspirators. Another singer, standing on a cupboard, begins a Blues song, and Portia is joined by several women who also emerge from the cupboards.

5. a room of power, sex and prophesy

The Mayor's Parlour, a dark wood-paneled room with impressive ceiling-to-floor windows and doors, is in the centre of the Hall. There, the smart-suited man in the pig mask dances the tango with a fellow dancer also in a pig mask. Brutus and the conspirators enter and, seduced by the sounds of the tango, begin a choreography of excessive masculinity. This gives way to a stripper, who approaches a pole in the centre of the room and performs as the choreography accumulates and becomes raucous, overflowing with obscenities and an excessive display of masculinity.

6. a room for farewells, the women know

The audience is then ushered into a very small room, where the herb *mphepho* is burning, and is then drawn into a ritual begun by Rushualang as Calpurnia. Actor Mwenya Kabwe speaks the text of prophesy.

Qaphela Caesar by Jay Pather and Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, 2012.
Photo by Val Adamson, courtesy of Jay Pather.

7. a room of death
Caesar's assassination is comprised of a walk-through of a room in which 12 headless, stuffed black suits in various positions of fleeing hang from the ceiling, blood quietly dripping from the sleeves onto the white floor. The soundscape of animated flies envelops the room. Audience members step on bricks to make their way through. In one corner Caesar lies wrapped in a blood-soaked grey blanket. Calpurnia gently cradles his head to the soprano vocals by a young singer in a school uniform standing on the mantlepiece.

8. a room of aftermath, expediency, no return
Underneath two large platforms Brutus experiences the first flush of power. Two dancers above him on the platforms perform a disturbing duet. One wears a protective miner's mask, another, a white mask made of clay. One grates a piece of red soap while the other slowly tears open taut plastic attached to his skin, unleashing knives and forks that clatter around his feet.

9. a room of war
A section of fast and urgent group choreography erupts in a large room with several video projections of fire. Portia performs a solo as she tries to retrieve hundreds of shoes left by fleeing and dying citizens.

10. a room for ghosts
Brutus sits in a room that is saturated with hanging video tape as information bleeds and spreads. It is an unwinnable war. Caesar's ghost appears and a duet between the two ensues to the plaintive singing of a sangoma (diviner) in *isi Zulu*.

11. a room to escape
This is a small and simple room overflowing with shredded paper that emerges from a shredding machine operated by a bored secretary. She chews gum while inserting document after document. There is, however, a window open and a curtain blows. In between the sound of the shredder and the wind, we hear Brutus's last words on repeat: *Caesar, now be still.*

I killed not thee with half so good a will.

12. a passage of regret
A long passage extends down the entire length of the City Hall. The audience is led down this passage following a moving platform. At the back of the platform is a screen onto which is projected slow motion, black and white footage of South African protest marches between 1950 and 1990. A drag artist in full regalia stands in front of the screen and as the procession moves, in faux solemnity they lip sync to Barbara Streisand's rendition of *Memories (Like the corners of my mind/ Misty water coloured memories/ Of the way we were.)*

13 a room for announcements—the new order
The audience is led to a room with a podium. In the play, Octavius is inaugurated as the new King and here he appears as another actor dressed in drag, as the then leader of the opposition party, Helen Zille.

14. a room with a view—borrowed, blustering, blue
The audience is led into a large empty banquet hall with Mr and Mrs Pig in the centre and a table of glasses filled with wine. The audience can only see the action through windows overlooking a large balcony. An Afrikaans youth band is lit up brightly out-

side on the balcony, singing nationalist rock songs, and they lead the audience into a heady celebration of the new order.

3. Interrupting structure, suspending narrative: *rite*

At the turn of the twentieth century, Igor Stravinsky provided a score for choreography by Nijinsky that caused something of a furore. *Le Sacre du Printemps* was a series of nine movements that culminated with the sacrifice of a young woman to appease the gods of rain and usher in spring. The structure is formal in its development of narrative and divided into two main sections.

Part I, titled *Adoration of the Earth*, comprised the following movements: An Introduction; Augurs of Spring; Ritual of Abduction; Spring Rounds; Ritual of the Rival Tribes; Procession of the Sage and Dance of the Earth.

Part II, *The Sacrifice,* also begins with a fairly long Introduction and goes on to Mystic Circles of the Young Girls; Glorification of the Chosen One; Evocation of the Ancestors; Ritual Action of the Ancestors and the Sacrificial Dance.

It was instructive that the description of the final two sections was as follows: (Evocation of the Ancestors) *The Chosen One is entrusted to the care of the old wise men, and,* (Ritual Action of the Ancestors and the Sacrificial Dance) *The Chosen One dances to death in the presence of the old men.*

Over the years, the number of productions of Stravinsky's score that have critiqued and commented on this sexist interpretation easily outnumber straightforward re-stagings of the original work. Setting the work in contemporary South Africa, which has some of the highest incidences of gender-based violence in the world, was not as obvious a decision as it may have appeared. Performed at Maboneng, in downtown Johannesburg, *rite* dealt with the tension between cultural attitudes towards femme-identifying persons and a contemporary grappling with this in a society where the development of African tradition and indigeneity have been severely disrupted and disrespected. I used Stravinsky's taut structure to create a conversation between tradition and the contemporary. I did this by interrupting the flow of the music after each section (which featured traditional, modernist choreography, in some instances comprising classical Zulu and Tswana dances) with a section of contemporary performance, often including video projection, text, and conversation with the audience. This mechanism helped both drive the narrative to its compelling if horrific end, and create moments of inertia, suspension and bathos that put into question the pressing drive of singular traditions. I choose three instances in the work to illustrate this.

In Part II, after what Stravinsky calls "the Mystic Circles of the Young Girls", dancer, Ntombi Gasa, sits in front of the dancers who have just performed the "Mystic Circles" and speaks directly to the audience about virginity testing in her community. In the course of Gasa's telling of a personal story, the other dancers become agitated and question the wisdom of sharing the intimate secrets of a closed community. (The revolt against telling cultural secrets, led largely by the male dancers, is something that actually happened in a rehearsal.) We decided as a company to stage the revolt by retaining aspects of argument that emerged in the rehearsal and allowing the dancers to improvise around this. This allowed persuasive, dissenting views to emerge. At one point, a young female dancer stops everyone and pointing to the audience (at the Dance Umbrella Festival) challenges Gasa: "These people have taken everything from us why do you want to sell them secrets of our culture as well?"
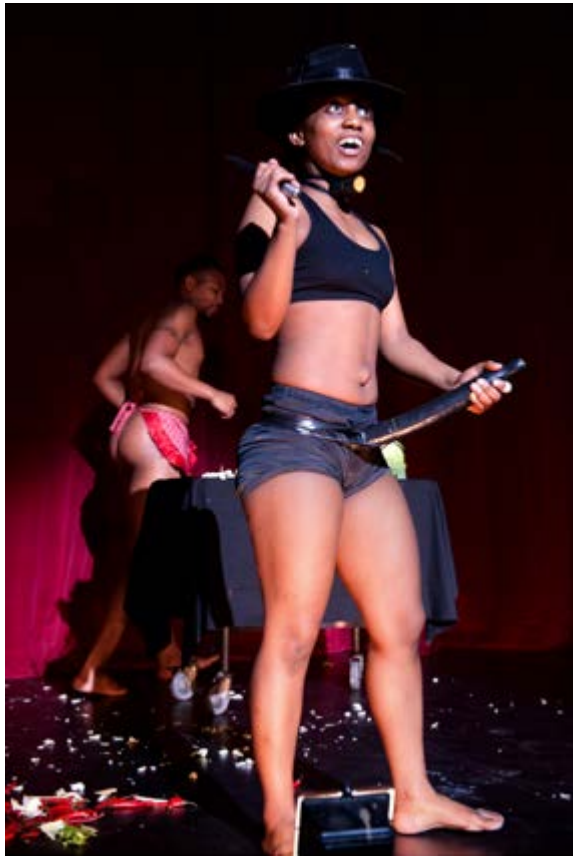
"Rite" by Jay Pather and Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, 2015.
Photo by Val Adamson, courtesy of Jay Pather

After another section, "Ritual of the Rival Tribes", two dancers engage in traditional stick fighting in an athletic fight sequence that results in one of the dancers (Sibusiso Gantsa) "killing" the other (Mxolisi Nkomonde). As Stravinsky's score ends and the body is lifted by Nkomonde's "mother", the last strains of this movement see Gantsa ostracised by the community. The contemporary sequence that follows meditates on black masculinities. The production, a critique of the original *Le Sacre du Printemps,* with its ritualized killing of a young maiden while a group of elderly men watch, nevertheless had to confront the emasculation of black men in particular—a subject that became a strong point of contention during discussions and workshops with the cast. This moment, after a traditional fight sequence that valourizes masculine violence, was a moment to begin probing the paradoxes and complexities of contemporary masculinities via a single character.

Gantsa's solo is full of interruptions and failures. In an image constructed by Gantsa himself, he wears his trousers upside down. With the pelvic region at his feet, keeping his legs from moving freely, a second dancer hangs cabbage leaves, portending hunger and lack, around him, creating a bizarre universe. A few male dancers in blond wigs and red stilettos—a faux impersonation of the "white madam"—play with the audience, further disrupting the focus on Gantsa. Finally, a group of black women in Afro wigs move in, balancing the coveted cabbages on their heads. The four men in their blond wigs take the cabbages from these women and begin pelting Gantsa with them, first playfully then more violently, while the four women sing and dance to Beyoncé's *Put a ring on it*. The "blondes" then snatch the Afro wigs from the women's heads, causing them to stop singing, hand them the bruised cabbages and flounce off. Gantsa con-

tinues to dance in spite of all of this. The four women slowly bring the cabbages to their mouths and start eating them furiously, using their teeth as graters or sharp knives and slowly approach Gantsa. The sound becomes impossibly loud, Gantsa turns faster and faster, and with the four women's teeth gnashing away at pieces of flying cabbage, the lights fade.

rite begins with a tense late-night discussion (using text and dance simultaneously) between a man (Mxolisi Nkomonde) and a woman (Chuma Sopotela) about a film they have just seen. This escalates into an argument and Nkomonde launches into a verbal attack that catapults him into psychic darkness. Sopotela flees as Stravinsky's music

"Rite" by Jay Pather and Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, 2015. Photo by Val Adamson, courtesy of Jay Pather

begins, opening with a plaintive flute taking us back to an old time (and yet something that impinges on the now). Past, present and future blend and fall over one another. And so both the traditional and contemporary tragedy begins.

In the end, as Stravinsky's music drives towards the sacrificial dance of the maiden, the two time-frames—the traditional and the contemporary—intersect once more. After the climactic sacrifice where the maiden falls to her death, the rain does come—in the form of an obviously rendered recording of a Highveld thunderstorm. The dancers remove their traditional cloth, put on plastic raincoats and hold open white umbrellas onto which television static is projected. The large group make attempts at some kind of communication and leave to reveal a contemporary Sopotela again. Nkomonde finds her and implores: "Where have you been? I've been going crazy searching for you. I made one stupid, unthinking mistake and you disappear. Say something? Don't just stand there. Please say something." She waits, then turns sharply to face him and puts her hand on his mouth shutting him up. In this silence, the final two minutes of Stravinsky's music is played again, all the way to the climactic finale. There is silence for a moment. Sopotela removes her hand. And unexpectedly, a bewildered not as yet "woke" Nkomonde, walks away.

Sopotela's agency in silencing Nkomonde and getting him to listen follows a range of investigations into a continuum of gender, violence and tradition in contemporary South Africa. And yet, there is no easy solution. Sopotela's gesture of agency, like gender-based violence in South Africa, remains untenable, suspended, unresolved. These experiments in form do not only have their legacy in rehearsals of global contemporary deconstruction, but in a legacy connected to South Africa. Layers of image and movement, open-ended forms, absurdity, the non-sequitur—all conspire to destabilize the conventional theatre structure and meet the complexities and nuances of trauma that has not been attended to, where audience, site and artist conspire to create a field of witness of the disruptive and the extreme. This is where the multiplicity of layered skirts comes in, and it is where my productions tend to stay these dense monsters that seem impossible to navigate.

I opened this article with a comment from a theatre critic, I end with another. Also writing about *Qaphela Caesar!* Mary Corigall wrote in the *Sunday Independent*:

> In his work, Jay Pather adopts a hybrid language that not only tests the boundaries of physical rhetoric but is drawn from a multiplicity of disciplines; film, literature, theatre, and other forms of popular culture are all grist to this choreographer's mill. In Qaphela Caesar!, synchronised choreography, film excerpts, videos and documentary footage are woven into a string of vignettes that are populated by dancers, a real-life stripper, an Afrikaans pop band, a sangoma and witch doctor (sic)... it is the intrinsic excess in his work that gives it its meaning. There are so many scenes, so many ideas, so many ironic gestures that the viewer simply cannot contain—or even process—it all. He presents a reality that has been warped through the lens of theatrics to the point at which its underlying obscenities rise to the surface[4].

And I guess, as with all research, one hopes that someone sees the point of it all.

Notes

1 Robyn Sassen, 'Dance Umbrella: Qaphela Caesar!' 20 February 2012, https://www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=29257

2 Nelson Mandela, Speech delivered on release from prison, (Cape Town, 11 February 1990).

3 Joseph L. Mankiewicz, dir. *Julius Caesar*. 1953.

4 Mary Corrigall, 'Dance Umbrella: Has SA dance moved on since Orlin's "Daddy"?' *The Sunday Independent*, 4 March 2012.

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Jay Pather is director of the Institute for Creative Arts (ICA) at the University of Cape Town where he is Professor. Here Pather has created structures for interdisciplinary collaboration in the form of Fellowships, a Post Graduate Programme in public and live art, public lecture programmes and interdisciplinary conferences. His research and artistic work deploys site-specific, interdisciplinary and intercultural strategies to frame postcolonial imaginaries and matters of social justice. He curates the *Infecting the City* Public Art Festival; the ICA *Live Art Festival*, the *Afrovibes Festival* (Amsterdam and UK) and currently an edition of South African performance art for the Spielart Festival in Munich. Recent art works include *Qaphela Caesar (*a deconstruction of Julius Caesar), at the old Johannesburg Stock Exchange in downtown Johannesburg and *rite*, a re-imagining of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Recent publications include articles in *New Territories: Theatre, Drama, and Performance in Post-apartheid South Africa* edited my Marc Meaufort*; Changing Metropolis ll* edited by Marie Polli; *Rogue Urbanism* edited by Edgar Pieterse and Abdul Malik Simone; *Performing Cities* edited by Nicholas Whybrow and *Theater* Magazine (in press). He serves as a juror for the *International Award for Public Art* and on the Board of the *National Arts Festival* of South Africa. He was recently appointed Fellow at University of London and made *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres* by the French Ministry of Culture.

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