Report on Cape Town, Daniela Franca Joffe

Introduction

Between 25 and 29 March, the Work Package 5 team met with artists, architects, curators, activists, and museum directors in various sites around Cape Town, for a series of dialogs about heritage, the colonial past, decolonial art and activism, and the contemporary moment in South Africa and Cape Town. The conversations were open- ended and unstructured and mostly involved active listening on the part of our group to whatever the speaker felt like sharing about themselves, their work, their practice, their politics. Our questions emerged organically and opened up a space for the speaker to go deeper in certain directions or for certain ideas to be workshopped in dialog format.

In this sub-report, I document five of the conversations that took place that week, in the order in which they unfolded, to give the reader an immediate sense of the ideas our group was exposed to in Cape Town and the way in which these ideas ebbed and flowed over the course of a week. These are the five conversations included:

- *Thania Petersen,* visual and installation artist
- *Ilze Wolff,* artist/architect
- *Doung Anwar Jahangeer*, artist/architect
- *Bonita Bennett,* director of the District Six Museum
- *The Rev. Cedric van Dieman*, chairman of the Protea Village Communal Property Association

The overall intent behind this text is to present a variegated picture of how colonial heritage functions in the imagination and interventions of prominent artists and practitioners in the city.

The different aesthetic and civic discourses and practices included in this text could all be viewed as examples of the ECHOES principle of reemergence (Knudsen, 2018), in that they are all committed to addressing the specters of the past and the colonial entanglements of the present in a way that opens up to a different kind of future. A range of supplementary theoretical frameworks could no doubt also be applied to them. For the most part, however, I have allowed our Cape Town interlocutors to speak for themselves, since this felt like the most respectful way of presenting their ideas.

In addition to the individuals included in this report, our group also met with the following individuals during our week-long Cape Town workshop:

- *Judith Westerfeld,* visual and installation artist
- *Calvyn Gilfellan***,** CEO of The Castle of Good Hope
- *Erica de Greef, Lesiba Mabitsela, Liesl Hartman, Tammy Langtry, Michaela Limberis,*

Gcotyelwa Mashiqa, former and current members of the curatorial team at Zeitz MOCAA

- *Owen Martin,* chief curator at the Norval Foundation

- *Rhoda Isaacs,* project officer for the Recentring AfroAsia Project and member of the Making Music Productions team
- *Meghna Singh*, visual artist and filmmaker
- *Stephen Symons,* poet and scholar
- *Steven Robbins,* academic and author

Details of some of these discussions will be included in subsequent reports.

Thania Petersen

"We are the good, we are the bad, we are the damaged": Close-readings of past, present, and future

Thania Petersen is a multidisciplinary artist whose work to date has included photographic self-portraits, installations, and multisensory-based performance. We met her on the morning of Monday, 25 March, at the WHATIFTHEWORLD art gallery on Buiten Street in Cape Town's Central Business District. It was the final day of her show *IQRA*, and she had agreed to meet with us to talk about her latest work and about her artistic practice more generally.

Thania began by emphasizing that *IQRA* marks a shift from her previous work in self-portraiture, which "directly dealt with our past and readdressing our history" (Petersen, 2019). She explained that this previous work was an extended intervention into the systematic erasure and diminishment of South Africa's Cape Malay community:

> I come from a community in Cape town called the Cape Malays. I lived in England for a very long time, and when I returned back to South Africa—you have this idea of what you expect "home" to be. But I didn't feel at home at all. I actually felt quite ignored. People asked me in the street, Where are you from? So then I tried to understand how people saw us, as a people. We're not taken seriously at all. If you think of "Cape Malay", you think of Bo-Kaap and curry and colorful houses. And this is not our contribution to society. We have had an unbelievable impact on shaping the culture of this country and culture … We are responsible for Afrikaans—the very language they claim is Dutch is actually a creolized language, created first by the Malays and written in Arabic script, not even in English script. The food that you eat. You can't walk down the street at a certain time of the day [without hearing] the *adhan* of the mosques. We are intertwined into the very existence and culture and fabric of South Africa, but we are not given any recognition at all. (Petersen, 2019)

She framed her earlier work as a "counter-narrative", one that necessarily had to be

carried out through art, since colonial narrative- and art-making have been integral to the edifice of erasure that she is working against:

> Art has been very instrumental in diminishing our importance as people, because of the way we were portrayed—especially by colonial painters, people like Irma Stern. The Malays were always kind of seen as decorative, always seen in the landscape as being quite submissive, quite pretty … So, for me, when I came back from London, I felt the need to use art to counter that damage, in a sense. So the first lot of work that I did was based on lots of self-portraits, and the reason I put myself into my work was to create visibility for people who have become invisible in South Africa. So that was very much a counter-narrative.

The impetus for this counter-discourse was the discovery of her own royal bloodline, and the radical way in which the truth about her personal heritage departed from received ideas about Cape Malay identity. As she put it:

> We're always taught in schools and in our education system that we were slaves, we were slaves. They kind of give you this impression that you were picked up on some beach in Sumatra and thrown here and helped to build this glorious colony. But when I went into it … when I went to the Indonesian consulate … I discovered that we were actually royalty. We were the complete opposite of what we are taught. I am, and so is probably a lot of the community, a descendant of a man called Tuan Guru. He's buried in Bo Kaap, and he was in fact a prince, and so were most of the men who brought here in the first lot of … ships, because they were causing a revolt in Indonesia … and so the only way to prevent them from creating some sort of political revolution—because they had the power, they had the money, they had the education—was to put them in exile on Robben Island … What matters is how far removed we are from the truth. It's the complete opposite end of the scale. (Petersen, 2019)

Thania's *I Am Royal* series (see FIGURES 1–2) in particular allows the suppressed truth about Cape Malay heritage to reemerge (Knudsen, 2018). The artist's directly implicated body is draped in explicit markers of Indonesian grandeur and photographed at "sites significant to issues of slavery, forced removals" (WHATIFTHEWORLD, 2015). These include Bo-Kaap (an inner-city district where Moslem migrants settled in the 1800s), the Cape coast (the site of Dutch, slave, and political-exile arrivals at the Cape), "earlier" District Six (a mixed community of former slaves, artisans, traders, and immigrants in the century leading up to apartheid), "later" District Six (the site of apartheid-era forced removals, in the aftermath of the 1950 Group Areas Act), and Athlone (an apartheid-designated "Coloured" group area on the Cape Flats).

The decimation, devastation, and dispossession associated with many of these sites are juxtaposed in this series with the self-possessed, sovereign, stately image of the artist-as-queen. The artist inserts "herself in the geography of history and time and reinterprets the language of colonialism, the gaps between, to embrace the fullness of being human" (WHATIFTHEWORLD, 2015).

Thania's work of "expanding and deepening the narrative to assert a victor as opposed to

a victim" (WHATIFTHEWORLD, 2015) continues in *IQRA*, but now with religion— and Islam in particular—as the artist's main focus. Broadly speaking, *IQRA*, meaning "read" in Arabic, is about the corruption of the essence of Islam by Saudi Arabia's main cultural export: Wahabism. It features a series of hand-embroidered prayer mats in a range of different styles, whose bottom edges are marked—almost scorched—by the nullifying black that has become a stand-in for Wahabism the world over (see FIGURES 3–4).

These prayer mats, the artist explained to us, "are trying to talk about and show the infiltration of these new and hardcore extreme ideologies into our sacred spaces" (Petersen, 2019). In terms of her choice of media, she said that "embroidery and textiles

have always been a way of retaining or celebrating cultural history", whether in Palestine, in Iraq, or in Afghanistan (Petersen, 2019). They represent "storytelling and recording and holding onto cultural histories and identities" (Petersen, 2019).

FIGURE 1: Thania Petersen, *Bokaap* (2015), *I Am Royal* series. Photograph by WHATIFTHEWORLD gallery

FIGURE 2: Thania Petersen, *I Am Royal* series, *Cape Coast* (2015). Photograph by WHATIFTHEWORLD gallery

In our conversation, Thania made a clear link between the rise of religious fundamentalism—not within Islam exclusively, but "across the board"—and the ongoing legacy of colonialism:

> My more recent work deals with a postcolonial global narrative, and almost a modern or contemporary colonialism, which I believe feeds off and is fueled by our older colonial situations … If you think about it, [the countries where religious nationalism arises] are all these sort of postcolonial situations, because people do not know who they are anymore. We are not who we think we are. We are not "African" and we are not "Indian" and we are not "European". We are completely mixed. There's no such thing as homogeny. There's no such thing as purity. But I feel like people are trying to find a space where they can find a sense of purity, and they're doing that within their religions. (Petersen, 2019)

Behind this cautionary narrative is, again, a deeper counter-narrative about Islam and about religion in general, one that seeks to reconnect us not only with the primordial wisdom and beauty of ancient texts and teaching, which we are invited to "reread", as it were, but also with the decolonial and liberatory potential inherent in religions such as Islam, whose history also needs to be reread and reclaimed.

The artist brought this message home by describing what Islam has meant for communities in the colonial and apartheid South African context:

> From our perspective, being a Muslim community in South Africa … Islam has never been anything but liberating for us. It has been a liberating force. And throughout colonialism, it was a counter-narrative, it was a revolutionary narrative. It spoke against colonialism, it spoke for brotherhood, it spoke against racism. Tuan Guru opened up the very first mosque in South Africa and the very first interracial school, and it's standing still today in Owal Street in Bo Kaap.
> People from all over came, all races, all colors, whether they were from Mozambique, from Ceylon, from Madagascar … They came out of their attraction to this counter-narrative, which liberated them. It made them feel good, it made them feel worthwhile. It made them feel that the people who were … enslaving them were nothing but pieces of shit, because actually that's what they were—sorry, but let's face it. Suddenly, you see these people doing these barbaric things, and you don't admire them, you think that these are inhumane, ungodly things.
> And you lose your respect, and you don't love for this world anymore. You live for something else. (Petersen, 2019)

The total divergence between what the artist has always known to be true about Islam, on the one hand, and its manifestation in forms such as Wahabism and jihadism, on the other, "propelled" her to create *IQRA*, as a means of "reading into" the troubling global state of religion: "Because what is happening in the world and the Islam you see—that is not Islam," she told us (Petersen, 2019). The exhibition seems in part to be about facilitating, through close reading, the reemergence (Knudsen, 2018) of a revolutionary, transcendental energy within Islam that has been buried and betrayed in the

postcolonial moment but that the artist understands to be at the heart of the religion's legacy.

FIGURE 3: Thania Petersen, *IQRA* (2019). Photograph by WHATIFTHEWORLD gallery

In the piece *Al Hurra* (which roughly translates as "Free Woman"), this close reading turns to Muslim womanhood, challenging the mainstream conflation of Islam and women's oppression (see FIGURE 4). The artist told us that this conflation frustrates her, because it is completely incongruent with her experience and upbringing within the Cape Malay community:

> There's nothing worse than being a Muslim woman and everybody says to you, Oh, shame, poor you. We don't come from a patriarchal community in any way in Cape Town. The Malay community is a matriarchal community. It's very much equal … The women have always ruled the house, laid down the law, disciplined the kids. The women are very strong and respected within the community. I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that, because of apartheid and colonialism, and because of our history, economically we were on par with the men, because we worked as well. So we don't come from a society where the men work while we sit at home … Home industry has been a very big thing, and women have always been at the forefront of that in the community and therefore have always earned enough … money to assist. There's never been any economic imbalance in the house and therefore there's never been any patriarchal bullshit happening, really. As far as I know—that's my experience. So that, for me, is another thing that really irritates me. (Petersen, 2019)

Thania explained that this irritation prompted her to do research into Islamic women who chose to be Muslim of their own accord and whose remarkable life-stories are "completely forgotten … buried away" (Petersen, 2019). These women include Sayyida al Hurra, 16TH-century Andalusian pirate-queen and devoted Sufi; Razia Sultan, 13th- century Sultan(ah) of Delhi and outspoken advocate for gender equality and neutrality; Nana Asma'u, revered 19TH-century Hausa-Fulani scholar, poet, and teacher of both men and women; and Sarah van de Kaap, who is the artist's favorite, "because she's our own" (Petersen, 2019). Van die Kaap was the daughter of a freed black slave who inherited and owned property in her own right in Bo-Kaap, including the building that in 1794 became the famous mosque and school that Tuan Guru would develop and that remains operational to this day:

> The very first patron of education, and free education, across the board, was a woman in Cape Town, a woman of color: Sarah van die Kaap. And she's completely forgotten. There are all these incredible women in our histories who we just erase. So this is also a way of memorializing and bringing them out again. (Petersen, 2019)

Forgetting and remembering; erasing and bringing back. These processes are not neatly resolved or concluded in Thania's work, nor in her discourse about the work, where one force does not win over the other and both must instead be reckoned with.

In the prayer mats on display all around us, for example, the scorched blackness seemed at times to be creeping ominously upwards, threatening to swallow up the mats' vibrant colors, patterns, and inscriptions once and for all—while, at other times, the vibrancy and color seemed rather to have emerged, or reemerged, victorious out of the scorched blackness. Similarly, at the center of the gallery stood an imposing totem pole made entirely of thick, life-denying black thread but nonetheless still dotted with thousands of tiny *azimats* (talismans), containing "the life-affirming mantras of the world's religions" (WHATIFTHEWORLD, 2019). He re, again, the tension between dark and light, despair and hope, was striking, with no clear victor or neat resolution at our disposal.

FIGURE 4: Thania Petersen, *Al Hurra* (2019). Photography by WHATIFTHEWORLD gallery

This tension emerged strongly in the final part of our conversation, when Thania spoke openly with us on the subjects of identity and restitution in the current South African political moment. Though she had used the designation "Cape Malay" throughout her talk with us, she now qualified this usage and expressed a desire to move beyond such designations, necessary though they have been for her in the past:

> You go through all these things and you realize, actually the only way forward is to just call yourself African, because you are African, because we *are* Xhosa, and we *are* Sotho, and we *are* Khoi … If you come from a lineage that has been

> created in Cape Town, we are a creolized society, we have all got each other in each other … If you really think that you are pure in any way and you don't have a little bit of Dutch and a little bit of this and a little of that in you, you are very sadly mistaken … When I came back [from England], I really wanted to be one of those pure people. I wanted to be *that* Malay, who came from Indonesia, and Tuan Guru, and all these things.
>
> Eventually, I had to work through it and realize: this is not OK. It is OK to know where you come from, but don't … hold onto that fantasy of something that's precolonial. Because it's very attractive to be something precolonial, because it's a time that's glorious, it's a time before rape, it's a time before pillage, a time before abuse, and so we all want to be there. But that's not who we are. We are all the things: we are the good, we are the bad, we are the damaged. And we have been damaged. We're damaged. Everyone in this Cape Town is fucked … We need to actually now work together to heal our trauma. Because we're suffering from post-traumatic stress—I really believe that … Now we need to realize, I am the same as you, and you are the same as me. (Petersen, 2019)

Immediately, however, the artist shared her discomfort and sadness at having articulated this vision of restitution based on sameness, entanglement, and unity. As appealing as this vision might be to her ideologically, she expressed how difficult it is to commit to it fully, in the absence of any real sign of socio-economic justice or change in the country. In doing so, the extent of the damage and trauma that she had just been describing became poignant:

> But even saying that now, I feel really uncomfortable saying a part of me is white. Because of what they did! But actually we have to work through these things. But I don't know … I don't have the answers. I just know that separation is not the way, because separation perpetuates apartheid … Even now, having this conversation makes me feel sad. You don't want to be a traitor to your people in any way. You don't just want to be like Mandela and say, Oh, look, freedom, rainbow nation, when it's not. And at the end of the day, that kind of ideology also doesn't change anything. That rainbow nation bullshit didn't change anything. It just kept the white people in their positions and kept the black people working for them and kept the Malays making the food …
>
> To be honest, I really do think that economics is a big part of it, and that [only when] people really just give back everything that was stolen and there is a sense of economic equality, then people can actually have a conversation about who we are. But until that point, I don't feel like I want to stand next to someone who stole my graveyard in Constantia and say, We are the same people … I don't want to call that man sitting in that house next door my brother, my sister. I don't want to be a part of that. I don't even want to be called a South African if he's a South African. That's the kind of trauma that I feel.
>
> But I do feel an allegiance to my black sister and my black brother. I do feel an allegiance to my Indian sister and my Indian brother. I do feel like *we* are one,

> because we have a shared history, which is a bit different, because we're on the other end. But until they fix things—and I think this is the responsibility of the white people in this country—only they have the power to change things, only they have the power to say, Let's redistribute this, let's put up trauma centers in every flipping corner of every neighborhood, let's put up rehabilitation centers, let's take all this money that we're living off the interest of (because … half of the families in this country are living off the interest of their colonial wealth) and let's put it back. And only until that happens are people of color going say, You know what, let's all be South African. But until that point we're not ready. I'm not ready. And I love people! But there's a hurt. There is a hurt that exists. (Petersen, 2019)

I think this powerful statement by the artist, in addition to encapsulating so lucidly what is at stake in the contemporary South African dilemma, raises important questions about readiness and timing. We may want to move past binary separations, embrace entanglement, and put our hope a decolonial future. We may know, theoretically, that this is the only way forward. Yet we may, quite simply, not be ready to do so, because of how much remains broken and unresolved—both materially, in the socio-economic structure of the city around us, and internally, in our own traumatized hearts. And this state of being is not only entirely valid but also sacrosanct. It should not be tidied up, theorized away, or resolved, in the same way that the prayer mats and the totem pole do not have to be one thing or another, either all darkness or all light.

Concluding our conversation with Thania, visual artist and filmmaker Meghna Singh, who had joined us for the meeting, summed up where we had arrived:

> I thought it was interesting how you started off being quite progressive about identity, when you said it should be all mixed, and I'm South African above all, and then just after that you claimed, There is hurt, and I actually can't be that. I can't actually be that progressive. So that was very honest. One could relate to that when you were talking about it … There's idealism, and in theory that's how we should move forward. But then, no, you can't do that, because there's too much hurt. (Petersen, 2019)

Nick Shepherd from our group then added, addressing Thania: "Which is maybe where we're at, as a country, right? That little crux that you're talking about" (Petersen, 2019). Through Thania's honesty and transparency, we had accessed the crux of colonial heritage in South Africa, with all its messy, heavy baggage. Welcome to Cape Town.

Ilze Wolff

"Heritage that can pay homage": Interventions in and into space

After enjoying a delicious cake that Thania had baked for us and viewing the show's film installation piece, *BAQA*, we set off on foot to Wolff Architects on Buitengracht Street, at the edge of Bo-Kaap. There we met with architect and artist Ilze Wolff in the studio she shares with her husband and partner Heinrich Wolff. Thania joined us for the conversation.

Spread out on the table where we sat in the studio were different issues of *Pumflet: Art, Architecture and Stuff*, the publication Ilze co-founded several years ago as part of a series of public engagement interventions. Before we discussed this ongoing project, Ilze gave us an overview of her architectural practice, contextualizing it within the "charged landscape" of the country:

> On the one hand, we develop buildings, we make architecture, we make interventions in space through bricks and mortar. And on the other hand, I also like to say that we make interventions *into* space, which is about thinking about loss and thinking about not the bricks and mortar but … the social imagination.
>
> As an architect in South Africa, you cannot actually ignore the charged landscape that we sit in, in terms of the history of forced removals, the history of colonial conquest, and the history of spatial injustice, essentially. How do we situate ourselves in this world where we're actually making space, we're intervening in space? How do we do that mindfully and with a consciousness of the deep history of our space? (Wolff, 2019)

Ilze went on to explain that, for her, the way into this mindfulness and consciousness has been narrative and storytelling. Through an unrelenting questioning in search for the real "story" behind any project, she brings a "challenge" to the practice of architecture:

> How we get to that kind of consciousness is through a deep engagement with very obscure narratives. I always try to figure out: What is the story? I always ask people in our studio, when they embark on a project: So, what's the story? What is the story here? And narrative and storytelling are so much a part of how one makes any intervention … It's a way into research. It's kind of a challenge. I think what I bring to the architectural practice is a challenge—it's not an easy thing to do. The easiest thing to do is just to draw the plans, do what the client wants, meet the budget, everybody's happy, no leaks (which never happens!). But that's the easy way of dealing with it. The other, more unsettling way is to question: Why are we even doing this? Is our intervention necessary? (Wolff, 2019)

The challenge might take the form of telling a client that they do not think a building should be constructed at all, or else it might mean convincing the government that the

in the plans for a local hospital (Wolff, 2019). Sometimes this means that projects take many long years, as issues get negotiated and dissected, to say nothing of the general bureaucratic slowness involved in government work in particular.

Because of the long duration of most projects, Ilze found the need to develop an alternative, more nimble platform for disseminating and receiving ideas in the public sphere. And so *Pumflet* was born:

> Because, for me, these projects take so long, I needed, we needed a quick way to think through and present some of our projects that are simmering—that are on the stove but not ready to present in a proper "dinner" setting yet—and to explore them with people in a public setting. We wanted to figure out a way to develop a public culture around our research, and exhibitions and these kinds of settings … are a way to do that. Lectures and talks and trips and open-house tours … were a way to think through how do we actually collect these wisdoms that we can implement back into our practice. How do we develop our agenda, essentially, and how do we develop our position. (Wolff, 2019)

While this series of work plays out in the public setting, in the form of workshops or site-specific events, every intervention leaves a remnant in the form of a printed pamphlet-type book (*Pumflet*). The "method" for *Pumflet* emerged when Ilze was asked to design a poster for a friend's play about the unearthed human remains at Prestwich Street in Cape Town. Nadia Davids' play explored this difficult history through a combination of language and movement, with choreography by Jay Pather bringing the text to life (Wolff, 2019). "It was very beautifully expressed, that history, and I wanted to be part of it," Ilze said, "because it's part of thinking about architecture differently" (Wolff, 2019). While using white tape and photographs to create the poster for the play, she became "very interested in creating graphics that were not computerized", an aesthetic that remains central to the *Pumflet* books' design (Wolff, 2019). She explained her choice of tape: "The tape and the putting together of the actual publication is all cut and paste … The way you place the tape becomes very important, because it becomes a way of marking something or taking out something or even erasing mistakes" (Wolff, 2019).

When Thania mentioned that this method reminded her of childhood, and of being unmediated by screens and devices, Ilze affirmed how valuable the process has been for her creatively:

> I've found bookmaking and these kinds of publications a really good way of ordering thought. You've got a lot of thoughts in your head, but how does one edit it to become a coherent statement or position? With essay-writing, one can also think through that, but with images and graphic design it becomes a little bit more transitory. It crosses many boundaries for me, and I've found it really productive. If there's nothing to put on a page, you can always put a piece of tape there, for now. (Wolff, 2019)

In one book, "Luxurama", Ilze documents an intervention she made at the old Luxurama Theatre in Wynberg, which during apartheid served a "mixed" audience for many years—through a loophole in the draconian Separate Amenities Act—and was a stage for big international acts such as Percy Sledge and Eartha Kitt. With the building long since

fallen into disrepair and disuse, Ilze decided to stage a ceremonial funeral for the building as part of the 2018 Live Arts Festival in Cape Town. The ceremony included a historical tour of the building by its former manager, a performance by a funeral procession band, and a celebratory tea party at a homegrown local café (Wolff, 2018B). This ritual paid homage to the building's complicated heritage and various forgotten specters, who were allowed to reemerge (Knudsen, 2018) before being laid to rest.

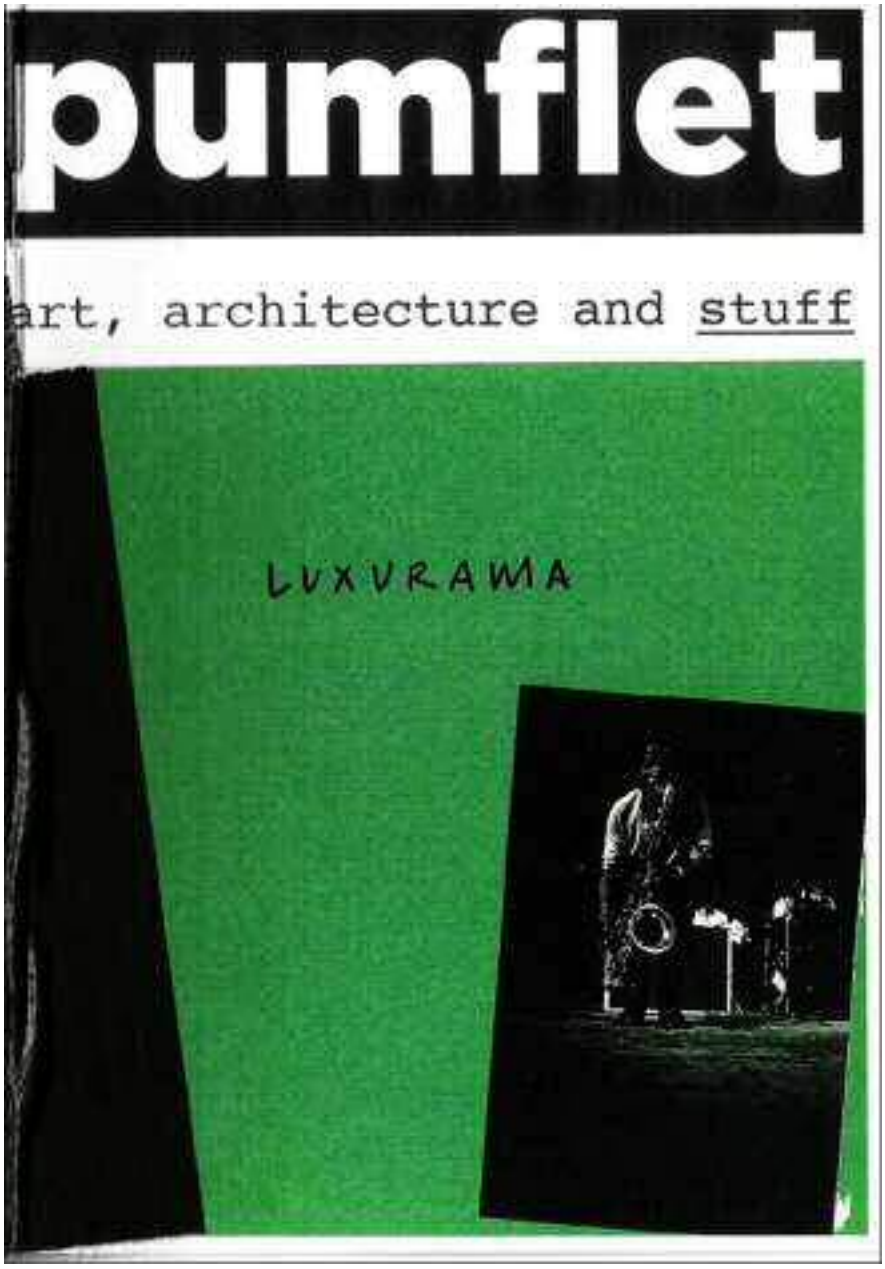

FIGURE 5: Ilze Wolff, "Luxurama", cover page, *Pumflet: Art, Architecture and Stuff* (2018). Image supplied by artist

FIGURE 6: Ilze Wolff, “Luxurama”, sample page, *Pumflet: Art, Architecture and Stuff* (2018). Image supplied by artist

FIGURE 7: Ilze Wolff, “Luxurama”, sample page, *Pumflet: Art, Architecture and Stuff* (2018). Image supplied by artist

The "Luxurama" book gives this ritual an after-life befitting the subject matter. It documents the process in a spectral sort of way that is in keeping with the style of all the *Pumflet* editions: empty space; floating heads; long, introspective letters from Ilze to her collaborators; isolated clippings from newspapers, journals, musical scores, and social media (see FIGURES 5–7). Together, these fragments, cut and pasted and held together with tape, form a story of how and why the intervention unfolded, and of the Luxurama itself (Wolff, 2018A).

Later, our conversation turned to the challenges or interventions that Ilze has made beyond her personal practice, in the broader institutions of architecture and heritage. This part of the conversation turned on the small missionary town Wuppertal in the Cederberg mountains, which late last year was razed to the ground by a devastating wildfire. Because of its perfectly preserved Cape Dutch architecture, the town had, pre- wildfire, always been "a prime pedagogical site for architects", and Ilze remembers going there as a second-year student to "study" it, to draw the landscape, and, as she put it, "maybe talk to one or two of the inhabitants" (Wolff, 2019). Mostly, as second-year students, they were there to party. With the town reduced to ashes, she realized that the architecture community needed to do things differently this time:

> When I heard over December that this village had burned down, I was quite moved. I thought, maybe this is a way for us to engage, but not in the same way that we did when we were second-year students? The Cape Institute for Architecture put out a call to say that they wanted to raise funds to help rebuild the houses … [Wuppertal] is very rich, in terms of pedagogy and studying, but there's a violence in studying that. I went to the meeting and I said: Can we please not do that? (Wolff, 2019)

Ilze's vision of doing things differently involves using architecture as a generative, restorative force, one that reads "heritage" seriously and deeply and that tells the whole story of a place and its people. She described what this would look like in the Wuppertal context:

> So our intervention in Wuppertal is to go and—we want to assist the heritage process, because it has to take place, but how does one do it so that it doesn't stifle? How does one do it to actually restore some of the dignity that was lost when people came there and just examined? I and the people who are interested in being part of this team want to have a conversation with each one of those [inhabitants]. There are only 53 homes—it's not a lot. Imagine if you just have a conversation with everyone.
>
> The other aspect is to pay homage, because these homes were built by descendants of slaves, descendants of workers, descendants of Khoisan. They were never acknowledged. And it's so easy to acknowledge. I've been looking at the history of architects that have documented Wuppertal. They say: Oh, the church was done by so and so and so. That was done by so and so. Everyone has names. And then the houses were done by "unknown builders". So I thought maybe it would be interesting if the Cape Institute [for Architecture] could say:

> This is of heritage value because these individuals or these families built them, or these were the architects of it. Without becoming all preachy or pretentious about it. But if this is our so-called heritage, then let's be serious about it. About who contributed to this heritage. (Wolff, 2019)

Here, Ilze offered up a counter-practice to the institutional status quo in South Africa, where colonial structures are meticulously preserved for students' benefits, while the actual needs and histories of those who live in them today are seen as incidental to the main event of the built environment. What would it mean to simply talk to the inhabitants, she wondered, to find out what *their* vision of rebuilding *their* town looks like?

As a model for this more attentive, more reverential style of heritage, Ilze cited Sol Plaatje and the investigative work he did in the aftermath of the Native Land Act of 1913, which forced the black majority into 7% of the land. She is drawn to Plaatje's process because of the way it pays homage to and commemorates the injustices of the past:

> I'm interested in heritage that can pay homage and that can think about what Sol Plaatje talks about. Sol Plaatje went on this tour of observation to understand the effects of the [Native] Land Act of 1913—he went ten years later. To me, that is a kind of a heritage practice: how do you observe, how do you think through, the legacies of spatial violence. And that tour of observation should still be ongoing. And I'm trying to do that with this practice, going through every situation and thinking … whose heritage? Heritage has benefits as well, in terms of homage, in terms of multiple construction of imaginaries, narratives, storytelling, indigenous knowledge, local knowledge—those kinds of things, the kind of life-giving aspects of it. But there is a threat that heritage can be a kind of a—killing … It becomes a kind of a death. (Wolff, 2019)

Paying homage, charting legacies of spatial violence, tours of observation, life-giving heritage, heritage-as-death. These are some of the key words we took away from our life-giving conversation with architect-artist Ilze Wolff. In a trendy hipster joint around the corner in Bo-Kaap, an area where community protests against rapid gentrification have been more or less constant for the past several years, we continued our conversation over lunch. Three days later, on 28 March, the community won its four-year-long battle to have Bo-Kaap declared a Heritage Protection Overlay Zone (Chambers, 2019), and in early May, a week before the national elections, 19 sites in the area were declared national heritage sites, in an unprecedented (and strategically timed) move by the Department of Arts and Culture (Evans and Somdyala, 2019).

In Wuppertal, tucked away in the depths of the Cederberg mountain range, heritage protection and a fixation on the built environment served the architectural discipline but became a "burden" for residents, to borrow Thania's term (Wolff, 2019), who were not only treated as dolls in a pretty dollhouse but who also could not alter or adapt their houses in any way—even as drought conditions made their historic thatch roofs impractical and, ultimately, extremely dangerous (Wolff, 2019). In Bo-Kaap, however, situated as the area is in the very center of Cape Town, heritage protection of the built

environment became the only way to counter free market forces that would turn the dense lattice of centuries-old cobbled streets, mosques, and brightly painted houses into an urban playground for the rich. Heritage, as Ilze had articulated, could be life or death, depending on who it is serving. She had taught us that this very question—whose heritage?—was the most important one to ask.

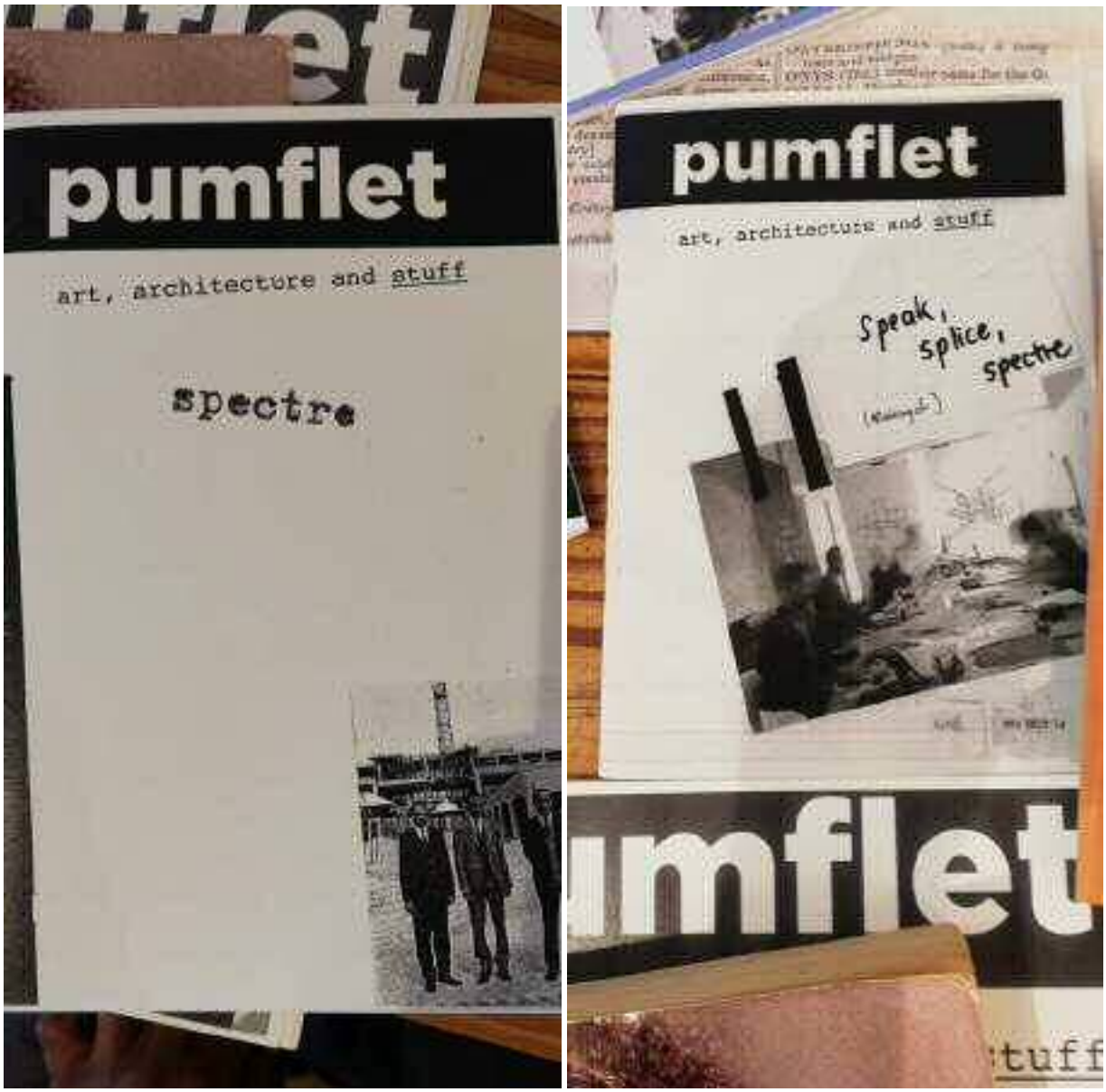

FIGURE 8: Ilze Wolff, Israel Ogundare, and Megan Ho-Tong, "Spectre" and "Speak, Splice, Spectre (The Making Of)", *Pumflet: Art, Architecture and Stuff* (2017). Photographs by Shawn Sobers (2019)

Doung Anwar Jahangeer

"Architecture without walls": The liberatory magic of inbetween space

Doung Anwar Jahangeer is a Mauritian-born, Durban-based artist and architect who has made many creative interventions in Cape Town, as well as in various cities around the world. Doung joined our group at the District Six Museum on the morning of Tuesday, 26 March, and together we did a tour of the museum with a man named Joe Schaffers, a former District Six resident and a storyteller at the museum. The experience was humbling. From the District Six Museum, we went to the South African National Museum, where Nick spoke to our group about the museum's former "ethnographic galleries" and about the San rock art still on display. We then got lost for a while in different eerie rooms filled with stuffed buck, fish, birds, and giraffes, before regrouping at the nearby Company's Garden Restaurant for lunch and a conversation with artist Judith Westerveld. Our day ended a roundtable discussion and exhibition walk-about with the young curatorial team at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA).

On Wednesday, 27 March, we sat down with Doung to hear more about his work over coffee at Muizenberg beach. We picked up the conversation again the following afternoon, before Doung flew back to Durban. When asked about his current projects, Doung explained to us that he prefers to think of his work in terms of a "process":

> I don't believe in the concept of a project. My experience has led me to understand that it is about process, and then projects become strategic moments in the process that help to define the momentum. So my work is like that. It's got no beginning and no end. There is a kind of beginning: the beginning is this colonial disposition that comes with me … but there's a moment where there was a pivot. It was not necessarily a shift but the realization of a different lenses through which I could reimagine myself. So the work is not something detached from the personal. So I'll show you three projects within this process. (Jahangeer, 2019)

Doung speaks here of a "pivot" that instigated a process of "reimagining" himself and stresses that his various projects or interventions are "strategic moments" in this ongoing process (rather than ends in and of themselves). By the eighth year of this process of reimagining, Doung told us, he arrived at the philosophical underpinnings of his personal practice of architecture, which he summarized as follows:

> The underpinning philosophy was, one, I was saying: Architecture without walls. And then number two, which came out of a realization I had in Mumbai, on the pavement: People in space make place—this is the romantic view, if you will. But the more inspirational view of architecture, and the flipside of it is: A dislocated people make a dysfunctional space. (Jahangeer, 2019)

Out of these principles, Doung's NGO Dala (meaning *to make* or *to create* in isiZulu) was born, established as a "vehicle for social change" rather than a vehicle for "making profit" (Jahangeer, 2019).

Doung then proceeded to tell us the "story" of the pivotal events that led him to this point, framing it as exactly that: "This is also a story. I'm giving you a story. It's nothing other than that" (Jahangeer, 2019). His story began with his travels through Africa and India after his completion of his postgraduate architectural degree in Durban. It was while travelling that his perception of architecture underwent a sea-change: "As a result of these travels, I understood architecture as a living thing, not a static sort of built form" (Jahangeer, 2019). The "realization" he had on the streets of Mumbai, alluded to in the quote above, played out like this:

> This is where the idea of "architecture without walls" came from. After a long day of being a tourist, I was sitting on a bench, with my *Lonely Planet*. My wife was looking for a place for us to go and eat, and I was sitting there, zoning out … looking through space. But in that moment of looking through, there was a momentary focus where I saw a family on the pavement. The wife was starting to light a fire next to a tree that was dead, the man was playing cards, the grandmother was sleeping literally on the back of a stray dog, and the kids were playing with firecrackers. It was twilight. Day and night were some form of inbetweenness, where time and space become entangled again.
>
> I see this and I'm like, shit, public space is becoming private. I said to [my wife] Miranda: I'm going to walk through them and see what happens. I went and I walked through it and I was invisible. I walked back. I stood in the middle of it and I pretended [to be] the tourist looking around and trying to see this building or that. I wasn't chased out. I wasn't disturbed and asked, Who are you? I again just became part of it. Then I walked off and there was no fuss. So then again: Visibility, invisibility. Skin, body. Inside, outside. Binaries—it all started to make a little bit of sense. *That* architecture. (Jahangeer, 2019)

"Architecture," Doung told us, *that* architecture, "is how people appropriate their struggles into magic. The magic of living" (Jahangeer, 2019). The architecture Doung had glimpsed in this pavement scene in Mumbai had nothing to do with walls or with the binaries that govern traditional architectural practice: private versus public, visible versus invisible, inside versus outside, and so on. Instead, it was an unbounded "living thing", in which displaced people were creating their own dysfunctional space: in this case, a complex, private home space in the middle of a busy public street.

Doung returned to Durban from his travels charged with this new knowledge, but his "quest for investigating the profession in a more poetic way was denied by the school of architecture twice" (Jahangeer, 2019). This rejection led to "a profound disillusionment with the institution of learning of architecture and the profession of architecture" and, ultimately, to a "deep depression" and a number of suicide attempts (Jahangeer, 2019). Desperate, he embarked one night on what he calls a "suicidal walk". In the white, middle-class academic circles where he had spent the majority of his time since arriving

from Mauritius, the black inner-city of Durban was portrayed as a hotbed of murder and violence, a place to be avoided at all costs. So that is exactly where Doung went, heading out on foot from the suburbs:

> I knew where to go to find death. So it was a suicidal journey towards the middle of town … And when I got down to town, the actual opposite happened. People were asking me about my name, about where I was coming from—people were curious. And meanwhile my neighbors in the suburb have never asked me. They didn't know what is the sound of my voice. So I was confronted with another paradox: Who's right? Going towards my death made me find my life again … The polarities, the binaries, of being born and dying were put face to face. (Jahangeer, 2019)

In embarking on this walk from the white suburbs to the black inner-city, Doung went from the certainty of his death to the life-giving experience of human connection, curiosity, and community. And so the walk turned everything on its head, blurring the binaries of life/death, black/white, danger/possibility, suburb/city.

This profound existential experience left him fascinated by what exists in the "inbetween" spaces: the spaces between binaries, a space he himself has always embodied through his mixed heritage. Walking became a method for exploring and practicing this architecture of the inbetween:

> And out of that came the other conceptual frame that ties my whole work: how the inbetween space renders the binaries as absurd constructs. The inbetween, the creole, the creolization aspect of my own background started to come into play. So this is the walk for me. (Jahangeer, 2019)

Doung's City Walk initiative emerged directly out this process and has seen him walking alone and with groups for over 17 years, in 13 different cities around the world. At various points during our conversation, Doung pointed to striking images he had taken of grass sprouting through cracks in the concrete surfaces of the cities he had walked through. These instances of defiant nature have been highly significant and suggestive for him as he has formulated a decolonial architectural practice:

> This idea of the grass growing through the cracks of this urbanity that is so controlled and ordered is the most consistent thing and the most creative thing that I've come across in my world. And that, to me, observing the city through walking also, has led me to understand the little grass in the crack, in the fissure, in the betweenness, in the voids and the absence that gives meaning to presence, that we too often are not seeing because we are too busy *looking at*. You'll find an attitude that is resistant, dissident, revolutionary, and liberatory. Those are the qualities of this very invisible force that often people would refer to as "resilient", but I would turn it around: we are resilient to *its* force.
>
> So this, for me, became essential when I started to think about this notion of creolité, creole culture, inbetweenness. How do I position the architectural

> practice in that? And this is what it comes to: asphalt, concrete, you name it—as soon as human control fails, nature prevails. As a form of redemption, as a form of poetry. (Jahangeer, 2019)

These instances where human control breaks down and nature takes over are powerful, in the same way that a street family building a home without walls is powerful, or that the creole is powerful, because these situations suggest larger creative processes at work—processes that architecture should include rather than shut out. As Doung explained, "resistance", "dissidence", "revolution", and "liberation" are "keywords" that have informed his architectural process since he left architecture school (Jahangeer, 2019).

Doung then went on to talk about some of the interventions he has made within the "bigger discourse formulation" process that he is committed to (Jahangeer, 2019). One of these interventions is his Imbomvu series, which involves working with colonial statues. "Imbomvu", meaning red in isiZulu, is the name of an earthy red clay used in the Zulu tradition to announce that the wearer has undergone a transition, such as becoming a mother or a sangoma (traditional healer), "but it is also as simple as protecting you against the sun", explained Doung (Jahangeer, 2019). In this series, the artist used the imbomvu clay to facilitate a process of metamorphosis for colonial symbols on the South African landscape. Among these symbols was the Queen Victoria statue in central Durban, which the artist defaced/refaced with clay and renamed "Ma Dlamini", a common Zulu name for a maternal figure (see FIGURE 9).

FIGURE 9: Doung Anwar Jahangeer, *Ma Dlamini* (2012), Queen Victoria statue, Durban. Image supplied by artist

This powerful act of transfiguration is both "forgiving" and deeply "dissident", both an act of love and an act of monsterization, as the artist told us:

> It started not rationally: it was just an impulse that I had, a love, a calling, to work with the Queen Victoria in Durban. Because that sculpture was so beautiful that I always wanted to do something with her, like make love to her, in some way—in a metaphorical way …
>
> It's that grass that grows in that crack that is equally forgiving but yet very dissident, that renders beauty but at the same time monsterizes, brings it out, that defaces but at the same time refaces, that collapses the boundaries of hatred and love. (Jahangeer, 2019)

The transfigured Ma Dlamini—who is both colonial monarch and Zulu matriarch—occupies that inbetween architectural space that Doung is interested in, where boundaries are neutralized and where the entanglement (Knudsen, 2018) between categories such as foreign and indigenous, beloved and loathed, monster and mother is left intact.

FIGURE 10: Doung Anwar Jahangeer, *Matebese Family* (2012), Settlers' National Monument, Grahamstown. Image supplied by artist

Seeking to "carry on this thinking, this love affair" (Jahangeer, 2019), Doung performed a similar intervention in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, where we worked with the Settlers' National Monument, defacing/refacing the statued settler family with imbomvu clay and renaming them "the Matebese family" (see FIGURE 10). This is architectural practice as Doung defines it: it uses clay rather than walls to make, or remake, space (in this case, the space occupied by colonial symbols), and it renders that space dysfunctional and messy by introducing into it the ghosts of the displaced.

Emphasizing again the revolutionary, dissident nature of the Imbomvu series, Doung linked his process to what Fanon called the "fighting phase" of a national movement, where the combat is of a discursive nature rather than anything physical (see FIGURE 11):

> The aim of the process is the develop a discourse, like Fanon talks about, and the title of the whole body is Fighting Phase, which is Fanon's third step of liberation within a national culture. And he talks about not picking up guns and spilling blood again, unlike what we are hearing today in South Africa, but to develop a literature, another discourse that enables us to restitute and to assimilate the energies of the colonizers. (Jahangeer, 2019)

The distinction that Doung makes here between discursive liberation and more violent or literal liberatory energies is comparable to the difference between reemergence (Knudsen, 2018) and removal (Kølvraa, 2018) in the ECHOES framework, where removal is linked to movements such as Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) that understand restitution in terms of a complete overhaul of colonial structures. Doung in fact addressed the tension between his work and that of RMF during our conversation:

> The Rhodes Must Fall, the "Must Fall", program, is something that I understand where it's coming from, I value its intention, but I remain a bit skeptic[al] in how it's executed, and how it has developed its language and its form. Because it very quickly, to my mind, became capitalized into a rhetoric that is political but not politicized. So, in that sense, this work [in the Imbomvu series] talked about it and said to our colonial legacy that it's not something to dismantle concretely—on the contrary, it is something to keep closer to us, something to better understand. It is, in the words again of Fanon, to reverse the conception of assimilation and to start to appropriate the culture of the colonizers, not to carry on in the rhetoric of decolonizing the minds of our fellow beings but maybe to start decolonizing the minds of the colonizers. So, in a sense, this is a moment of exchange, of forgiveness, maybe, of not defacing but refacing, not of expelling but of welcoming them home. (Jahangeer, 2019)

Here, Doung confronts head on the question of South Africa's colonial heritage and legacy and contrasts the will to dismantle, deface, and expel coloniality with the will to decolonize it in a deeper way by keeping it close, refacing it, welcoming it in. He asks: What would it mean to "reverse the conception of assimilation" and appropriate for ourselves the cultural remnants of the colonizer, absorbing them into our own practice

and therefore neutralizing their charge? This is in many respects what his architectural/artistic practice is about.

While Doung's work and discourse makes space for "a moment of exchange, of forgiveness", he is very clear on the fact that this process must be owned by—and its conversation must be on the "terms" of (Mignolo, 2009:4)—those who have been colonized. It cannot be owned by Europe. In the second part of our conversation, which took place the following afternoon in central Cape Town, Doung shared his thoughts on the current state of cultural exchange between Africa and Europe. These thoughts have been shaped in particular by his interactions with European cultural agencies operating in Africa and by his experience at a workshop he was invited to in Frankfurt. I quote what he said at length because, as he said, it "echoes with ECHOES":

> This echoes with, I think, ECHOES … And this is based on my engagement with the Goethe Institute and the Pro Helvetia in a very direct way about their presence as cultural agents in Africa who base themselves as teachers of their own language and then, secondary to that, funding cultural projects, which are decided by them—what is appropriate or not. I've been working with them a lot, and this has been sitting with me a lot.
>
> It was also raised in this program in Frankfurt. It was called "Afropean: Mimicry and Mockery", and it looked at drawing a parallel between apartheid and institutionalized racism in Germany. So that was quite interesting. But immediately, for me, the word "Afropean" was quite evocative and quite provocative. It seemed to me, based on my relationship with those European cultural agents, that there is consistently this desire for Europe to feel condoned with what they've done with colonization …
>
> It's not direct. For me, over the course of a lot of interaction, it seems there is an underlying discourse that … feels like a kind of fetishism, of not being able to let go. Like a criminal who always wants to come back to the site of the crime … to see what's happening, see whether they will be caught or not. It feels weird, but that's how I'm starting to feel. We, here, we don't have programs that will invite European artists to come to Africa and ask them, OK, so we want you to do a program around this and this and that. But it is constant from the other way around, and the agenda is not always transparent. So I don't always know why Pro Helvetia is coming and telling me that they want to engage with me because they want to develop a two-year relationship between Switzerland and South Africa—for what? Who asked for that? And who's telling us that this is what needs to be done? And there is the power of capital also. So it's complex. (Jahangeer, 2019)

When African artists are constantly responding to invitations and requests and instructions from Europe, they are not setting the agenda, and the agenda, moreover, is not necessarily transparent to them. How can they avoid being coopted into Europe's efforts to absolve itself of the past without giving up any of the power or capital it gained from the past?

These astute observations necessarily raised the question of ECHOES' own agenda and even of the very dialog taking place between our research group and Doung in the moment recorded here. Doung's response was this:

> Just like the work on the statue, what I'm saying is that it's offering a very good potential for us to keep the criticality alive, to pronounce those questions and to polish it so that we can then start to understand better—not to do anything, but just to understand better what's next. (Jahangeer, 2019)

The point, as Doung notes, is not to try to change anything—after all, as ECHOES researchers working with a Global South context, we cannot change our position as participants in a project directed and funded by the Global North. Rather, the point is to remain conscious of that position, to interrogate it, to foreground it, and to bring it into our dialogs wherever possible, following Doung's example. This, perhaps, is how we keep the criticality alive and how we move towards a decolonial future of North/South relations—towards "what's next".

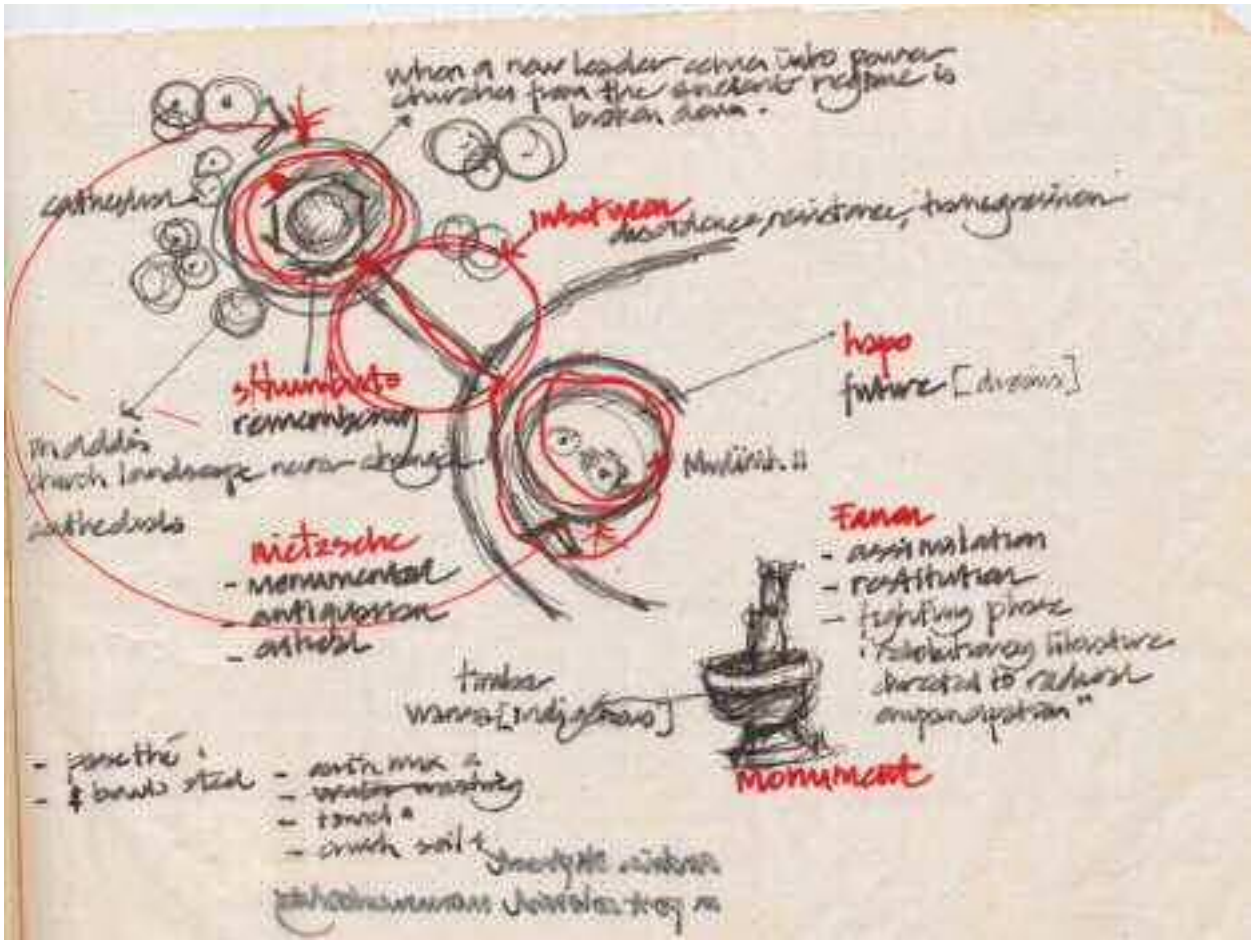

FIGURE 11: Doung Anwar Jahangeer, sketches towards a liberatory discourse of the inbetween. Image supplied by artist

Bonita Bennett

"Growing history from below": The museum as memory-keeper and change-agent

On Thursday, 28 March, after a fruitful conversation with Gcobani Sipoyo, of the South African Heritage Resources Agency, and Calvyn Gilfellan, CEO of The Castle of Good Hope, in The Castle's Centre for Memory, Healing and Learning, we walked up the road to the District Six Museum on Buitenkant Street. In the museum's Homecoming Centre, whose gate is engraved with a quote by Langston Hughes (see FIGURE 12), we met with museum director Bonita Bennett, who has worked at the museum since 2001.

FIGURE 12: Entrance to the District Six Museum Homecoming Centre. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

During our conversation, Bonita told us that she came to the museum via human rights, activism, and education, as have most of the members of her team. After leaving formal teaching in the early 1990s, Bonita decided to commit herself fully to the non-profit sector, and among her first positions in this space was as the coordinator of a research project around land claims at the University of Western Cape. The project involved interviewing claimants and verifying their claims to the homes they had lost during apartheid forced

removals.

It was Bonita's involvement in this project that inadvertently reignited her deep interest in narrative and narrativization, which had been instilled in her during her undergraduate studies in sociolinguistics:

> Besides education, my formal studies was in sociolinguists … That is what got me interested, really, in narrative. Coming back to being a community and student activist in the 1980s, it was always about working in communities and growing history from below, and how does telling stories not only as edutainment but also narrating yourself and making sense of your own chaotic life through narrating this very coherent story—it's always been part of my life. (Bennett, 2019)

Growing history from below and narrating the chaos of apartheid lived experience was not what the land-claim work at the University of the Western Cape was about, however. As she told us:

> Our job was to do the verification interviews. And that for me was such an eye-opening experience, because I also had to lead this team of researchers who were trained in research in a very particular way, and were very great at what they did, but they couldn't hear what people were communicating. And by their template that they had, most of the people who were being interviewed and telling their stories actually would not have qualified for the land claim, for the simple reason that people were using the opportunity of the land claim not as an opportunity to just [give] the forensic information: I lived in, say, Windermere in 1950 and I moved at this time and this was the plot number and this was the erf number and these were my neighbors. That's all that the land commission wanted. But it started with: You know, I remember I was wearing a red dress when somebody came with this notice, and then it was raining. All these kinds of narrative things that people were listening to and being quite cynical about it.
>
> So for me it was really interesting to understand the needs of people and how people remember, and the needs of the commission in order to do their important bureaucratic work of who qualified and who couldn't … It was kind of unrelated to District Six, but it really got me very much keyed into listening in a very different kind of way. (Bennett, 2019)

As she explained, this desire to "listen in a very different kind of way" is what drew her to the District Six Museum, where her first job involved organizing the sound archives and the extensive oral histories that had been collected in the years since the museum's inception: "It was absolutely wonderful. I put on those headphones, I went into those sound archives, I don't think I spoke to anyone for a year or two, and I lived in this bubble of people's stories. It was such a privilege—and I still draw on that, the details" (Bennett, 2019). She described her arrival at the museum as "a kind of homecoming" (Bennett, 2019).

In contrast with initiatives such as the land commission, the museum was created in the late 1980s for the express purpose of being a custodian and keeper of community

memories. The museum emerged out of the Hands Off District Six movement, which fought to stop the removal of families from District Six and—when that was not successful—lobbied to prevent development on the demolished land and "ensure that the apartheid dream of this white neighborhood never materialized" (Bennett, 2019). Bonita described the museum's origins as follows:

> At [the Hands Off District Six] conference in 1989, very interestingly, there were two major decisions that people made. The one was that all talking and all thinking about the rebuilding of District Six, whatever happened on that land, had to be done in the context of building a democracy and restitution, and that anything else that happened outside of that framework was not to happen. And the second important decision was the call for a place of memory. And that's how the museum comes into being.

Right from its inception, this museum was going to be something altogether different from traditional South African museums, and its inception therefore represents an important historical moment for Bonita:

> For me, I'm very interested in that moment. I've been doing a lot of thinking and looking at the early documents and talking to people, because it was such an unusual and very, very strange decision to make. The late 1980s, when this decision is made, is at the tail-end of apartheid, a time when locally … there's no precedent for a museum that's leading social change or part of social change. And by my very light [examination of] the museum world at that time in South Africa, I think that South African museums were standing outside of this whole broad movement of the "new museology" that started across the world in the 1970s. There's no sign that I can see that South African museums were part of any kind of transformation, either social or internal self-transformation. (Bennett, 2019)

A museum specifically conceived as a place of memory and as an agent for social justice and change, in the context of an untransformed and conservative museum space in South Africa, naturally raises the question of whether such a place should have been called a museum at all. Bonita discussed the issue of naming with us:

> When I look at the records of those minutes, I don't think people used the word "museum" at the time. It was a place that had to be the *keeper* of people's memories—that's what they spoke about. In subsequent meetings after that, people start talking about the museum. When I came into this museum, it was at a time where it was going through this whole struggle: Is this a museum? Is it a place of memory? Can it be both? Is it one or the other? Is it a community center? … And just having spoken to some of the people who were involved at the time, because I wasn't, they say: Very soon after that decision about the place of memory, they started using the word "museum". (Bennett, 2019)

While Bonita herself was initially ambivalent about the term "museum", tending towards the site being designated as a place of memory and healing instead, she eventually understood that it could have no other name. As she explained:

> For the community, when everything else was crumbling around them, when everything seemed like it was in flux, there was this broken landscape that people notionally knew that they wanted to return to but had no idea how that would happen. The museum was the thing that would be permanent, that was not going to go anywhere, that was going to be a place of safekeeping. And when I got an understanding of that, I was sold on the idea that we are a museum …
>
> And I think occupying the name "museum" has allowed us to enter the field in a different way … Some of the more traditional museums in Cape Town were the ones that were asking us, Don't call yourselves a museum! You can just be a community project. I think it was also part of the discomfort of people around us, feeling, I suppose, challenged by having to think about transforming themselves and their practice as well. (Bennett, 2019)

In "occupying" museumness and emerging as what it is today, the District Six Museum became a permanent and solid fixture on a broken landscape and also disrupted tradition museum practice in the city, setting a new precedent for what museums could and should do. "A place of memory and healing" became the museum's byline. On the museum's website, it also identifies itself as a "site museum of conscience" (Sites of Conscience, 2017).

The museum found its home in the old Methodist Church building on Roeland Street in Cape Town in late 1994, after existing as a mobile movement for the previous five years: "it … moves around to different communities, to community centers, shopping malls, church halls, calls upon people to bring their stories, their artefacts, photographs, and then it also calls on people to start preparing for return, restitution" (Bennett, 2019). The timing of the museum's launch in fact proved seminal, particularly for the project of return and restitution:

> The museum launched on the 10th of December 1994, which is kind of the beginning of South Africa's democracy. Also, the Land Restitution Act of 1995 then is also quite groundbreaking in its provision of giving restitution to people who did not hold title deeds but who lost their right to land—so it's not title deed that they're claiming back. And so the museum becomes that place where a lot of sense-making also happens. There was a land court that happened, for example, in 1999, that was held in the museum.
>
> In 1999, there was a kind of contestation … around individual claims and community claims. The District Six claim was submitted as a community claim, but traditionally the community claims within the Land Restitution Act were more appropriate for rural communities, where people were still [a community in] a more coherent sense … The District Six community did exist but in some sense didn't exist as a coherent whole, so this diaspora didn't qualify to be a community claim. And that was then challenged in the Land Court, which was held in the museum in 1999. It was a very, very close walking together with memory, restitution, and the community that was part of that as well … [The

> outcome was that] the community was able to claim as a community claim. (Bennett, 2019)

The physical site of the former District Six, thanks to the sustained efforts of the Hands Off District Six campaign and its ally movements, remained throughout apartheid and early post-apartheid an undeveloped "memorial scar" on the landscape (Ernsten, 2017), its emptiness leaving open the possibility of the physical return of former residents and their descendants. In 2005, this possibility was actively taken up by the District Six Museum and its partners, who launched the Hands On District Six campaign as a way to drive the community land claim and hasten the government's implementation of a restituted District Six (Ernsten, 2017).

Bonita explained to us that the restitution process has been slow and mired by bureaucratic, practical, and political obstacles: "It's taken more than 10 years to bring 165 families back. There are 2,000 more families. I mean, my maths is bad, but even I can see that's another generation or two" (Bennett, 2019). She also told us that the museum is not as involved in the restitution process as it was during the Hands On District Six campaign. This is partly because there are now many more actors in this space than there were in the 2000s—too many, arguably—which has led the museum to take on "more of a support function" and become "more of a holding space, but also a place of sense-making, because there's quite a lot of confusion, quite a lot of distress, around what's happening with restitution at the moment" (Bennett, 2019). But beyond this, the museum has also "very consciously" sought to "take on a different role" within the District Six community (Bennett, 2019).

FIGURE 13: Laying stones ("remnants") on Hanover Street in District Six during an annual Walk of Remembrance. Photograph by Jan Greshoff, from the District Six Museum website (2019)

Today, most of the museum's interventions are site-based and involve what Bonita described as "embedding an ongoing story into the site", even as the site itself is constantly changing as restitution unfolds at its drawn-out pace. This work is commemorative and processional, rooted in remnants and storytelling (see FIGURE 13– 14):

Most of our public engagement takes place outside of the museum. A lot of it is site-based: it's processional walks, it's storytelling on site. People love also just scratching and finding things …

If you'll walk in the site, you'll see—some of them are gone, but some of them are remnants—with every Walk of Remembrance that we do at a certain time, we try and leave a remnant on the site. So you'll see there are some mural-type wheatpastes coming from the archives, and new stories and wishes that people have written at different points through the site. Obviously, it's going to change with restitution, because some of the buildings that we're marking are not going to be there anymore. But we're hoping to also create a model for how people engage with a changing environment as well as how you can kind of embed an ongoing story into the site.

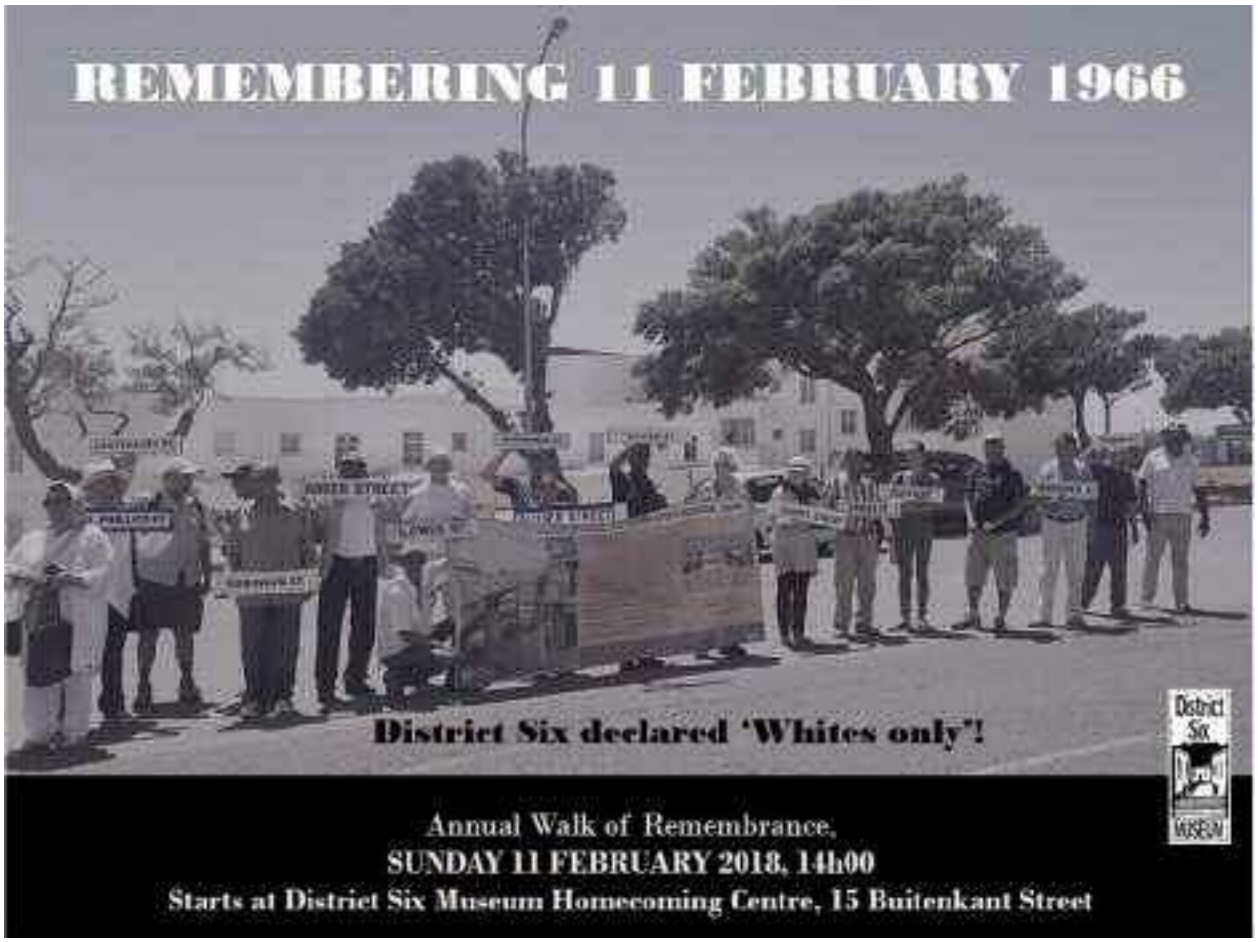

FIGURE 14: District Six Museum poster for the 2018 Walk of Remembrance, held every year on 11 February to commemorate the day District Six was declared a white group area in 1966. Photograph from the District Six Museum website (2019)

The museum's site-based practice is so strong that, according to Bonita, it is now faced with the opposite problem to that of most museums. Coming to terms with this problem

has been a learning experience and has set in motion the museum's current strategy of recalibrating its priorities and placing more attention on the museum building itself:

> We actually realized a few years ago that we have the opposite problem of museums. I think we were trying to reframe this whole thing of what a museum does, and focusing very much on the processional and doing that work *not* in the museum, that we actually have neglected our museum, and we're now revising it. Suddenly we realized: We walked away from this building, and it just runs on its own because it runs on its own, but you actually can't do that, so we're actually taking stock of the physical space.
>
> We are occupying this word "museum", we want to do it differently, but you actually can't completely ignore museum practice. And so we are also looking at how does that building tell a revised or a broader story. So that's where are. People usually have the opposite problem: they're very busy with the physical building and keeping it pristine and so on. (Bennett, 2019)

The District Six Museum's commemorative, processional work remains firmly entrenched, however. As a result, it has been able to provide advisory support to other communities in Cape Town with histories of displacement, dispossession, and forced removal that do not necessarily have access to a physical space to house their story—Langa township, for example. This effort of "making a case for the power of memory and its importance" in the absence of physical museum space has not been easy for the museum, with some seeing it as "advocating for non-museums", but overall it has been well-received, Bonita said: "The point was that, in the absence of the resources needed to create a museum, there are quite a number of other things that can happen, and I think people have taken that on board" (Bennett, 2019).

Another challenge that the museum is navigating at the moment is that of scope: how can it represent as great a diversity of stories and memories as possible, both within the District Six community and beyond it, with the limited space and resources it has? Addressing this issue will be part of the museum's current revision strategy, as Bonita explained to us:

> In the time that I've been at the museum, there've been people that will come in and say: What about this? You've left out this. Why don't you talk about the minstrels? This is only about the middle-class. What about the gangsters? What about the crime? What about the underside? All of those things. Our way of dealing with that is: You can't tell all of that in a permanent exhibition, although we are busy revising some of that at the moment, so that it also speaks a lot to some of what's happening now with restitution. But I think people have also come to understand [that] we think of our museum not as a finished product: Even though we call it a permanent exhibition, there's a way that you can layer in. So there's a cloth [in the museum] where you can have your story. You can actually get some people together and do a temporary exhibition. We have all kinds of different conversations and programs. And this space [the Homecoming

> Centre] is also meant to be complementing what's in there [the District Six Museum] …
>
> It's a lot of ongoing contestations. I've had several skirmishes with people who appear in my office: Why are you not telling the story of the Khoisan? Well, because, first of all, we're not a Khoisan museum. But it's part of the story. We always tell people: You are the expert. That's not my expertise. The Khoisan story is part of the Cape Town story, and very importantly. You have to come to us and see how we can support you. That's the way we've tried to deal with that. I'm sure there are many more gaps that we don't know about, but we try and keep our public programming and our conversations with the former residents active and ongoing, so that we always try to discover new ways [of engaging]. (Bennett, 2019)

Throughout our conversation with Bonita, it was this spirit of humility, openness, and collaboration that came through most strongly, along with her commitment to listening in a different kind of way, to growing history from below, and to making space for people and their memories above all. Jargon and "talking the talk" are not of much interest to Bonita. It is doing the work that matters. This excerpt from our conversation is indicative:

> I think we're constantly revisiting our views on certain things. So the whole thing around the discourse of museums: We've been very conscious of—I've certainly been conscious, and I've challenged my colleagues: Don't use terms that you can't occupy with integrity. So don't say, We're co-creating, because everyone's talking about co-creating. I say, Do the work and you don't need to use the term. And in the same way with "decolonizing museums". Our work is very much based in the theory of decoloniality in terms of museums, but you'd never see anywhere any of us talking about decolonizing. I think this has been helpful in centering our practice, but, on the other hand, it maybe is not quite a weakness but [something that affects] the way other people see us. (Bennett, 2019)

Elaborating on this last point, Bonita said that she has, for example, been approached in the past by people who have offered her their services as storytelling consultants, assuming that storytelling is not part of the museum's practice because it is nowhere explicitly named as such (Bennett, 2019). Meanwhile, narrative and narrativization are absolutely central to the museum's practice, as became clear to us in the first five minutes of our conversation with Bonita. Integrity comes at a cost, in other words.

Towards the end of our conversation, Shawn Sobers from our group picked up on Bonita's earlier comment that neither she nor the people in her team come from a heritage background, and asked her whether she thinks this has been an advantage or a disadvantage in terms of their work. Bonita answered this way:

> From where I'm sitting, it's been an advantage, but that's my very subjective view … We almost mirror the way the museum started, without the baggage of museology, and so we could start fresh. We could create it, in a way, because we

> are not bogged down, I think, by all the ISO standards that one needs to create for all kinds of things within museums. We do have a set archival practice and an exhibition strategy and all of those things in place, but we work very lightly with that, because with education and human rights activism, it's always about people, human beings … So I think it's been an advantage. (Bennett, 2019)

From where we were sitting, we thought so too.

FIGURE 15: The visitors' wall at the District Six Museum. Photographs by Shawn Sobers (2019)

FIGURE 16: Part of the permanent exhibition ("Digging Deeper") at the District Six Museum. Photograph by Paul Grenden, from the District Six Museum website (2019)

FIGURE 17: Exterior of the District Six Museum in Cape Town. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

The Rev. Cedric van Dieman

"The main heritage here is the community that was removed": The Protea Village story

On the last day of our Cape Town workshop, we meet with two writer-scholars in the city: first, Stephen Symons, poet and researcher on militarized white masculinities during apartheid; second, Steven Robins, academic and author of the book *Letters of Stone: From Nazi Germany to South Africa*, an account of his journey into his personal heritage and archive.

From Steven's house in Newlands, we made our way down the road to Protea Village, which—like District Six and scores of other suburbs in the city—was declared a white group area during apartheid and subjected to forced removals. We were accompanied by Steven, his wife, Lauren Miller, and a student of Steven's. Meghna Singh and the Swedish cultural attaché to South Africa, Hedda Krausz Sjögren, also joined our group.

Protea Village is located opposite the entrance to the Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, in one of the most expensive and exclusive suburbs in Cape Town: Bishopscourt. There, outside an old stone church, we met the Rev. Cedric van Dieman and his wife at their car. The reverend is the chairperson of the Protea Village Communal Property Association and, along with a dedicated team of colleagues, he has led the community's successful land claim in this area since 1995.

The reverend's wife stayed to rest in the car while he took us on a 45-minute walk through the Protea Village area, which was his home until he and his family were removed in 1966. Below, I transcribe his story in full, as he told it to us. The transcription becomes a visual essay thanks to the photography of Shawn Sobers from our group. Questions posed by our group are included in italics.

"We were moved in 1966 and I was about 16 years old at that time, so we were moved from—we were scattered actually—the whole community was scattered to places like Manenberg, Lotus River, Grassy Park, Hanover Park, Heideveld, Steenberg, Retreat, and all of that. I resided in Lotus River since that time, with a little bit of movement from here to there, in ministry, but that was my base, until now. Now I've sold there and moved into my biological mom's home in Bridgetown now, in Athlone.

[See FIGURES 18–19] "So this church was built by the community of Protea Village in the 1800s. The plaque reads that it's been built in 1884. The community was a combination of slaves that were freed from the Bishopscourt area and other places, and also people that were imported from places like Franschhoek that came to work on the road that leads from Groote Schuur to Hout Bay. Cecil John Rhodes built that road.

"From that time onwards, from the mid-1950s up until the early 1970s, people were periodically moved from place to place. The church has subsequently been renovated—this bit has been added and it's been widened—but it was a very nice little parish church where our community worshiped.

FIGURE 18: The Church of the Good Shepherd, Protea Village. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

FIGURE 19: Plaque and inscription outside the church. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

FIGURE 20: The grave of the late Frances van Gusling (“Hatta”). Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

FIGURE 21: The grave of the late Frances van Gusling (“Hatta”). Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

"The Group Areas Act was actually a law that was promulgated by the government to say that people of different colors must live in different areas. This was declared a white area. We were no longer allowed to live here, so we had to move. Coloured people were moved to the Cape Flats, essentially. Black people were moved from where they lived to places like Langa, Nyanga, Gugulethu, and eventually Khayelitsha. And then the rest of the affluent areas were essentially white areas.

[See FIGURE 20] "Around the church here is the cemetery where our community was buried when they passed on. We have subsequently stopped the burials. In fact, the Church Council stopped the burials. There's actually one grave that is very recent of a 98-year-old lady: she was the last one that was buried here. She was the most prominent one, because she was adamant that she didn't want to take money [during the land- claim process]: she said she wants to come home.

[See FIGURE 21] "This is the grave of the late Frances van Gusling. She was known to us as Hatta. As you can see, she was born in 1909 and she passed on in 2008. She was my neighbor in Lotus River. They have subsequently opened this Garden of Remembrance for the ashes of community members to be buried there.

[See FIGURE 22] "So this is the graveyard and the cemetery where a lot of community was buried. And this building in front of us is currently known as The Hill Pre-Primary School. The status quo of the school has been [in place] since about 40 years ago—it was just about after we've been moved.

FIGURE 22: The Hill Pre-Primary School. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

They have done quite a bit of renovations to the building. This is the actual building where I went to school." *And then it became a white pre-school. And today?* "Today, because of the laws of the country, anyone can go. It's a public school." *But it's*

expensive. “Yes. We are busy engaging them now with regard to that and on how our development would impact on their parking, which is currently informal. They don’t have any formal parking. But probably the development will impact on part of their parking. The church is actually the owner of the school, so they are leasing the property to the school. The Anglican church.

[See FIGURE 23] “I just want to show you: this is the entrance to the school here. But when we were at the school, the entrance was actually there. In fact, these were the original steps where we entered into the school. They say in District Six they had the seven steps, and I think we’ve got about eight steps. So we’re one up on them!

FIGURE 23: The former entrance for the school (with its eight steps). Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

[See FIGURE 24] “This forms part of the land which was claimed. In fact, the whole area of land where our community lived on amounted to about 28-plus hectares. But the land that is vacant at this time is about 12.8 hectares. This is currently zoned agricultural. But they have established an arboretum on this portion of land. But that’s also subject to claim.

FIGURE 24: The arboretum in the Protea Village site. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

"This area was not primarily populated by our community—it was a bit of a forest area. But further down I'll show you an open patch where our recreation area was, where we played rugby and we played cricket, you know. Here in Protea Village, we didn't know that a game like soccer existed, until some people came from District Six and mixed with our community. Then we discovered soccer, but it was never played in Protea Village.

How big was the community? "It's difficult to say how big it was at the time, but it could be a couple of hundred. It could have been, say, between 250 and 300 families. But we have only received claims from about 132 families. We tried to persuade others and they thought, Ag, man, that's a pipedream. You know?

"There's a lot of people that's still out of the fold, for various reasons. But eventually, 46 of the 132 opted for the financial compensation, which was nothing really. Because each of them received at the time, 2005, R17,500, which is like pocket money. So we are left with a community of 86 claimants at this point in time."

Why would people go for that option, knowing the value of the land here? I can understand desperation, maybe, or age? "You know, age could be one of the reasons. The most important reason would probably be poverty. Because R17,500 in their hands meant so much more to people who were living in squalor and poverty—to get R17,500 in their hands, it was like hitting the jackpot. So unfortunately, despite our attempts to persuade them not to take the money, those 46 took the money.

"And so then, after a time, the claim was split between the financial compensation and the development option. And then there was another group that wanted to opt out and wanted money. We got the approval of the department to have them cede their claims to other members of the community who did not manage to come to court, nor their descendants. So the number remained the same, but the claimant list changed.

“When we lived in this community, there was no running water, there were no ablution facilities. There were no water toilets, so we had the bucket system. Our source of drinking water was from a natural spring, which is still here today. I will show you now.

FIGURE 25: The spring at the Protea Village site. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

[See FIGURE 25] “This is the spring. The water has recently—I mean as recent as about 10, 15 years—been tested by someone from UCT [the University of Cape Town] and it’s drinkable. So this spring was our source of drinking water. Some of our community that lived in houses that had electricity and toilets had water, but the majority of people had to carry water. In fact, like myself. Later I will show you where I lived so you can see the distance that I had to carry water maybe as a boy of ten, with two buckets.

[See FIGURE 26] “Subsequently, when they established the arboretum here, this water was actually just running and there was a pipe—strange enough, it was a wooden pipe— that lead from here and that took the excess water to the river. In them establishing the arboretum, that pipe was removed. Whether it be accidentally or otherwise, but it was removed. Then they created about three ponds. That is where those three ponds came from, with the result that a lot of this land is not developable, because of it being wetlands and eco-sensitive, et cetera. So maybe we could just walk across here.

“The spring was covered with iron. Part of our development plan is to build a memorial here.” *To make it a provincial heritage site, I believe? Are you having any success with that?* “With the heritage assessment? We’re meeting with the heritage committee on the 10th [of April]. They had a bit of an issue with the felling of trees, et cetera. But we’ve showed them aerial photos of the area as it was, and the reason that it’s so densely tree-lined now is because nothing has happened on the property.

FIGURE 26: The reverend indicating the swampy wetlands that formed when the arboretum was created, rendering the land undevelopable. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

"We are also eco-sensitive and we wouldn't want to just willy-nilly chop down trees, but we want to prove to Heritage Western Cape that the main heritage here is the community that was removed. So that should be the main focus. It is not like we want to just destroy the landscape and build a concrete jungle or something. We would want to build reasonably good houses."

Where did people in the community work? I heard some worked at UCT and at Kirstenbosch. "Yes, a lot of people used to work at UCT. I, for one, also at one stage worked at SANBI [the South African National Botanical Institute], at that time the National Botanical Gardens."

I wanted to ask you about the trees. They're non-indigenous species? "A tree survey has been done, with the environmental and heritage impact assessments, and then we had a peer review so that we had another opinion on what is indigenous and what is alien, and what should go, what must go, and what must stay." *I've seen the plans and they don't show many trees. It's a very densely developed area without the trees.* "We've done a thorough study. Our development partners are very, very meticulous and they do a very good job."

The oak trees and the pine trees were actually Cecil Rhodes's. Rhodes had this policy of planting them out. "And then you've got the poplar trees, too." *It's the way that settler colonialism expresses itself in the natural world—by planting up trees*. "Trees from their part of the world. And trees that grew well!

[See FIGURE 27] "The open patch here that you see here used to be our rugby field, and in the center of the rugby field there was a bare pitch, which was our cricket pitch. And I mean, we did not have lawnmowers and stuff. I don't know if we just ran the grass flat!

I'm amazed as to how rugby fields are being kept today. And, mind you, rugby being a winter sport, our rugby field was across here, with one set of poles that side and one set this side, which means the field was slanting as it is—sloping. So if you were playing that way, the right-wing didn't want to play this side because there was a lot of waterlogging, mud. If you were attacked in that area, you could drown! But we had our fun, we had good times—on the rugby field and on the cricket pitch as well.

FIGURE 27: The old rugby field at Protea Village, with its striking mountain backdrop. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

"On this portion of land, it was not primarily populated with our community, but there were some people, a couple of houses, that were on here, and some informal houses as well. So it could have been about six or so families that lived here. And before that school was built, there was a school we used to know as "the Old School"—it was just alongside the rugby field.

"Many of our community members lived along Winchester Avenue. Many lived on Bishopscourt Drive, on both sides of Bishopscourt Drive. Then, as you go past the shop around the corner, there were about six semi-detached units where six of our families lived. And then the three stone cottages were also semi-detached and six of [the families in] our community lived there. Those who worked in the botanical gardens were given accommodation there.

"Then, down Rose Street, round the bend, on Kirstenbosch Drive, there were people living there. Mostly on that side was what we used to call the "Stegman Cottages". There we had—I cannot really say how many, it's too far away to think of, but we've got it documented—we had a lot of houses and a lot of informal houses, as families got married and they built themselves an informal dwelling, et cetera."

Some of those houses are still standing? "No, no, no. The stone cottages are the only houses that are still standing, and the houses down the road around the corner to the shop, just those few houses, that row of houses at the bottom side of the shop—those are still there."

So all those people are part of the land claim community? "No. What we did: Obviously, you wouldn't want to go to Mr. Booth [William Booth, a well-known criminal defense lawyer living in the area] and say, Mr. Booth, you need to move. He used to live there [*pointing in the direction of a nearby residential area*]. He took us to court—we lost five years in litigation. Subsequent to that, when he lost the case and he could not appeal because of a lack of funds, he then opted to sell his house and move. And, ironically, the person that bought his house, his name is Diedrich Otto and he is the total opposite of Mr. Booth. He's in total sympathy with the project and says, Well, the right thing needs to be done. So at least there's one big plus.

"[William Booth] was contesting the whole land claim, saying that the minister did not apply himself—or I think herself—at the time. According to him, the surrounding community was supposed to be part of the settlement agreement as interested parties. But this was basically a total misunderstanding of the interpretation of the "interested parties" as far as the [Land] Restitution Act is concerned. What the Act says is that people who are currently owning the land or residing on the land or leasing by whatever means—they would be interested parties. But not people who live adjacent to the land.

"We didn't want to bother to do another injustice to correct an injustice that had been done at that time, to fight for land that people are living on today—they bought that land, in actual fact. We cannot really say that they stole the land. They bought it, maybe in ignorance.

"The majority of people that live in Bishopscourt and Fernwood Estate do not even know—they may know now, but they didn't even know when they bought in here that there was a community that was displaced from this area.

"We are going to subdivide some plots here, of about 1,000 m^2, which would sell for about 8 million per plot. That is to cross-subsidize the project." *You had to pay for sewage and electricity lines yourself?* "In our settlement agreement, the city pledged to put the bulk and link services in place, but that's also subject to budgetary constraints. We are at the point where we are submitting our budget, our request, for the bulk and link services. It's a fairly big amount, probably an amount of R40 million. We've run up costs already, for professional services, of over R2 million. And we're a poor community that doesn't have money."

Is the Anglican church helping? "Initially, we approached the Archbishop of Canterbury. Because the church at the time when we were moved were mere spectators and not doing anything or saying anything. They just followed the status quo of the government, the Group Areas Act … We got somebody to go to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and they were very forthcoming, saying there could be a budget that could be of assistance, but we need to work it through the Archbishop here.

“He [the South African Archbishop] assigned a bishop who was part of our community at the time, Bishop Christopher Gregorosky, to assist our community. So obviously the first thing we needed to have was a business plan, and we did not have one at the time, so we could not move forward in that area until we had a business plan in place. Now, we do have a business plan in place and it’s being refined. It needs to be submitted to the national department for approval. And also the alienation of some of the land also needs the minister’s consent.”

How often do you come here? “Not that often, actually. The very first time we had a reunion here, it was really an emotional time, where I didn’t really feel I wanted to go home. That could have been in the mid-1990s. We submitted our claim already in 1995, so we’re looking at 24 years down the line now. But at least we’re getting somewhere.” *The next generation will benefit*. “Yes, yes. It’s a matter of: I may benefit some, but it’s a matter of creating our first-generation wealth—or, I would say, re-creating our first-generation wealth.

“Heritage Western Cape did a site visit, without anyone else—they just did a random site visit. And they picked up some stuff and they took photos of the stuff. Then they came with that report to say: Well, the trees, the spring—the spring is a place of heritage. But the most important thing that community actually wants now is to be resettled. So what we have here are the plans.

FIGURE 28: The reverend showing us the community’s detailed development plans. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

[See FIGURE 28] "This is actually the layout of what the development would look like, eventually. In that area, which is that area down there, we would build 86 houses for our community, with a plot size of about 300 m² each, with a house size of 100+ m², and that is dependent on the amount of resources that we can generate from this land here [*pointing at the larger, 1,000 m² plots*]. For this, we need to get approval from the minister and consent to alienate it.

"These will be probably general residential houses, 22 of those, and then there would be about 28 single-residential ones. These plots will be very small, about 100 m². Initially we were going to get plots of about 160 m². These here will probably be about 200 m², which is not too tiny, if you think about Newlands, Fernwood—the new houses in Newlands, if you would look at those. But these here will be between 400 and 500 m². And these would be the 15 erven, which would be 1000 m² each. And those [*pointing*] would be the houses for our community.

"And this green area will remain public open space, and we will be transferring that back to the City of Cape Town. And the parks and the roads obviously will be transferred back to the City of Cape Town."

Will you be keeping the trees here? "There will be a lot of trees that will be kept. There will be a lot of new trees that will be planted. In fact, on that side of the road, you will see there's a lot of Oak trees—some of them need to go because of their age and their health. But we will actually widen the road verge, in order to keep those trees. We have a setback, in actual fact, for the community's houses, for those trees, you know.

"There's a lot of existing trees, and there will be new trees planted on the road where the community is going to live, and then the others that will be kept on this side as well, so there's a lot of trees.

"This land will be sold free-hold, outrightly, to someone who's going to build a 15 million house there. Then this here we will sell with lease-hold for 99 years, with also a perpetual income resource for the community. So every time Peter sells to Paul, then a percentage of the sale amount comes to the community. We have a communal property association [CPA] in place, right now as we speak. The CPA will remain in place. This is where the community basically lived. I lived close to Rhodes Drive. I had to walk right across there, through the fields, to go fetch water. We were sent to fetch water, but then you find the guys playing rugby on the field. Then my bucket stands there—I'll take the hiding when I get it, for taking so long!

"We are now at the stage where, in fact we're looking at, I would say, if we look at the development as it is, if everything goes well, if everything goes according to plan—we should be in a house by, we should be getting title to our house by, 2023." *When will building start?* "I've been a builder in my day, but legislation changes, regulation changes. Nowadays, you have to do a heritage impact assessment, an environmental impact assessment, a traffic assessment, a visual assessment, all of these assessments you need to do—all of that speaks to the environmental impact assessment, and it costs huge amounts of money."

With no external support? No international support? "With no international support. Well, we didn't request any international support. We would welcome international support, however! You know, if we could sell less of the land, then we would want to. But to make the project work, we need to sell a certain amount of land.

"I've been the chairperson of [what was] previously the Protea Village Action Committee since 1996, and then I stepped down in 2006, and then I was the vice-chair for the five years that we were in court. From 2011, I was reelected unanimously into the seat again. The reason I stepped down: at that point in time, there could have been a conflict of interest because I was a builder and I would have an interest in the building and I would have to step down. But since I've retired now, I don't have any personal interest. I may have an interest for the community, where the community could benefit from the building of the houses, et cetera, but other than that.

"It's as if I'm being a glutton for punishment, because, you know, you get a lot of flak from the community. We got about a R2.1 million planning grant from the department recently and we've got a loan agreement with our development partners, whereby they make *x* amount of money available, and whatever we use of that they will charge interest on but not the whole amount. So we've got R2.1 million and it was transferred into the CPA bank account, and we paid back whatever we'd borrowed from the development partners and then just continued to pay the professionals. And some of our community went to the department and said, Listen, we heard there's R2.1 million, and whose account did it go? And when do we get our portion of it? Not understanding really what it's all about … I've got a committee of seven. We're very supportive, very united as well, whereas there are other communities who are very much divided and committees that are very divided. I thank God for that. I thank God for the project and for what we are looking forward to.

FIGURE 29: The reverend's satchel. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

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Appendix: Gallery

With Thania Petersen at the WHATIFTHEWORLD gallery. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

With Thania Petersen at the WHATIFTHEWORLD gallery. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

In Ilze Wolff`s architectural studio. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

Ilze Wolff demonstrating, via this powerful photograph, the principle of architecture supporting what already exists in space, rather than this interaction working the other way around (where empty space is filled according to the structure that has been built). Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

With Doung Anwar Jahangeer in a coffee shop in Cape Town. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

Doung Anwar Jahangeer outside the Cruise Terminal at the Cape Town Harbour. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

With Bonita Bennett at the District Six Museum. Photograph by Shawn Sobers (2019)

With the Rev. Cedric van Dieman at Protea Village. Photograph by Elvan Zabunyan (2019)