eBhish’— Luvuyo Equiano Nyawose

eBhish' — articulations of Black Oceanic presence eThekwini

Luvuyo Equiano Nyawose

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"In honour of all the black brilliance and beauty, squandered and diminished yet never extinguished."

Emma Dabiri (2019)

Contents

Acknowledgments

Ngokukhulu ukuzithoba ngibonga uMvelinqangi, abantu abadala, abakithi, uMa (ongasekho emhlabeni), uGogo noMhkhulu Mncube, kanye noNomusa Makhubu kakhulukazi – noNontobeko Ntombela, noIngrid Masondo, noNkule Mabaso, noPortia Malatjie, noThulile Gamedze, noAnelisa Mangcu, noBonolo Kavula, noThabisile Nyawose-Sibiya, noBalindile Ngcobo, noAmogelang Maledu, noPetrus van Staden, noMawande Ka Zenzile, noSimoa Nangle ngokungeseka nokungiyala kulelibanga elide ngaze ngaphumelela.

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Declaration

Explicatory Document

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SUPERVISOR Associate Professor Nomusa Makhubu

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution and quotation from the work, or works, of others, has been attributed, cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

March 2021

Dedication

This one is for me.

Credits

eBhish' video piece

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List of Illustrations

Abstract

The legacies of colonialism and apartheid echo in many forms of social practice in contemporary South Africa. Ibhish' laseThekwini (the Durban beachfront), a seaside public space, is imbued with a racialized tension that stems from these colonial histories. Historically, the beach was the nation's premier seaside destination and drew crowds of white beachgoers, particularly during the summer holiday season. Beach culture was established and sustained through visualisation, particularly in popular culture and media, which largely catered to white people. The beach pictorial archives housed at the Old Court House Museum eThekwini reflects this bias, as we find that in it, the predominance of white beachgoers is depicted throughout the beach's history. Since the 1990s, demarcations of those previously white beach areas changed with more Black beachgoers in the predominantly public beaches and white beachgoers relegating themselves in more secluded (lesser public and more private) areas.

I have been documenting Black beachgoers to understand the nuances of Black social life ebhishi (at the beach). In the understanding of this social life, one of the notions that become important is the ocean as a witness. We might think of the ocean as a subject which holds memory. This is particularly important in my work as it looks at how I relate to the ulwandle (the ocean) and engage with the beach as a meeting point of Black people in summer holidays, and as an articulation of an unnameable space (a metaphysical realm) beyond the constraints of capitalist leisure which is crucial for spiritual survival. Through my work, I'm contributing to a contemporary archive of Black social life ebhishi, one with humanising, tender and intimate moments aimed at inscribing our place in the seaside eThekwini.

Introduction

Every historian of the multitude, the dispossessed, the subaltern, and the enslaved is forced to grapple with the power and authority of the archive and the limits it sets on what can be known, whose perspective matters, and who is endowed with the gravity and authority of historical actor. (Hartman, 2019: xii).

In this research, I examine the eThekwini beach pictorial archive housed at the Old Court House Museum eThekwini. Using the mediums of video and photography, I have been documenting the use of the beachfront (2018–2020), specifically by Black visitors, and observing the area's spatial politics in relation to class and race. This documentation intervenes with the existing colonial and apartheid beach archive. The ideology, spatial habitus and legacy of colonial and apartheid regimes are still ingrained in contemporary South Africa. Past and present policing of Black seaside leisure is directly attributed to the history of the beach and the subsequent archives, which established and continues to sustain ideals of leisure as white. In response, I emphasize the archiving and affect of Black life and Black seaside leisure.

I am interested in the use of public space for the primary purpose of enjoyment, whether individually or in groups. Black[1] leisure can be defined simply as partaking in a non-work activity without being harassed and questioned. Leisure, under apartheid, was often curtailed by punitive measures. It is under these conditions of repression that Black leisure represents a paradox. It is, on the one hand, liberating, and on the other, stultified by the oppressive white gaze. Owing to the dehumanization and criminalization of the Black body during the colonial and apartheid era, the post-apartheid South African public sphere seems unaccustomed to any forms of Black presence apart from those related to labour and vagrancy.

I was born eThekwini (formerly, Durban)[2]. Growing up, my family and I visited ibhish' laseThekwini[3] (the Durban beachfront) every summer. I swam for hours in bliss at the packed beach. I have vivid memories and photographs of my family and I. The space holds a lot of significance for me. The history of Black people's relationship with ibhish' lase eThekwini has largely been marked by discrimination and segregation. Our absence in visual archives reflects this, as they are largely populated by historical photographs of white beachgoers.

eBhish' is interested in the finer happenings. It is a self-reflexive endeavour: an archive in the making, unfettered by the tropes of representational image-making. It critiques the colonial impulse to name and functions also outside of the objectifying pressure of representing Black leisure. Instead of being held by it, it is a matter of being in it. This relates

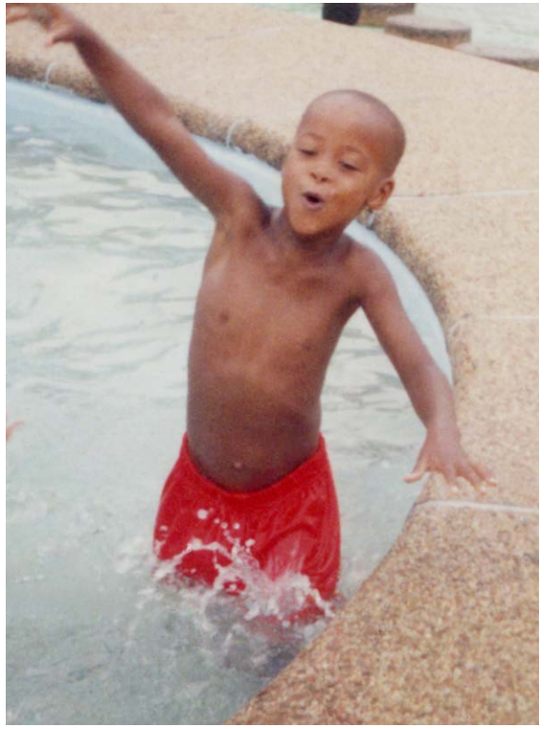
1 — In contemporary South Africa, most spaces are still heavily segregated. The beach is no exception, particularly in the summer eThekwini. Even within the Black group (vis-à-vis Biko), there is segregation, which historically, there has been (due to the apartheid zoning of Black, Indian, and Coloured demarcations). Beach culture is a racialized experience. Most South Africans stick within their racial and class groups. Comedian Carvin Goldstone, a Durbanite, illustrates this point succinctly in a skit from 2018. Viewing link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQbdpUjJdOA. Accessed 20 August, 2020.
2 — Durban was named after a governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Benjamin D'Urban, on the 23 of June, 1835. Prior to that, it was known as Port Natal. iTheku is the proper noun. eThekwini is a prepositional version which means in/at the theku.

specifically to the gathering of Black people ebhish' laseThekwini, as an articulation of an unnamed and unnameable space, a metaphysical realm which goes beyond what meets the eye and flesh, and yet is crucial for our spiritual survival. Keguro Macharia writes, "the name cannot be thought, now, without the problem of the post-taxonomic imagination we have inherited and that we inhabit. This is a problem of how we got stuck in time, stuck by time, stuck as the timeless, but also as the belated" (Macharia, 2016: 37).

Saidiya Hartman (2019) argues that the past is not a time that is over; it is a historical force that produces our now. It is important, therefore, to address the invisibility of Black leisure in public spaces. Through my work, I am building a contemporary archive of Black life ibhish'. One with humanising, tender and intimate moments aimed at inscribing our place in the seaside eThekwini. *eBhish'* centres "intimacy and embodied knowledge that is enabled through agency, subjectivity and self-articulation... [I]t is not about self-marginalisation, but rather an attempt to eradicate totalising interpretations that once serve[d] homogenis[ing]" perceptions of Blackness (Ntombela, 2019: 96).

The anthropologist Christopher Pinney provides an approach to reading images beyond the fixed connotations of representation:

> **Pinney terms "Looking Past" to describe a reading practice [in] which subaltern subjects challenge dominant visual representation and photography in particular. Pinney writes, "Looking Past" suggests a complexity of perspectival positions or a multiplicity of layers that endow photographs with an enormously greater complexity than that which they are usually credited. The photograph ceases to be a univocal, flat, and incontestable indexical trace of what was, and becomes instead a complexly textured artifact concealing many different standpoints, both spatial and temporal in respect to it. (Cited in Gopinath, 2010: 4-5).**



Top Left — Figure 1, *eBhish' laseThekwini*, 1998.

Bottom Left — Figure 2, *Umcimbi omuhle wezibizo*, 2001.

Pinney's concept above foregrounds my approach with this body of work: to depict the nuances and finer utterances (seen and unseen) of Black leisure and Black life ebhish'.

My relationship with photography began at home with personal family albums. On special occasions (umcimbi noma umsebenzi), my family would hire a photographer and videographer to document us. As I grew up I became increasingly curious about image-making, and was granted permission to use my parents' point-and-shoot camera, often used to document umcimbi noma umsebenzi. By the time I entered formal schooling, I had been fully immersed in photography at home. To use bell hooks' observation, the camera to me was something that, "gave to black folks, irrespective of class, a means by which we could participate fully in the production of images... [I]t is essential that any theoretical discussion of the relationship of black life to the visual, to art making, make photography central" (hooks, 1995: 57). A photograph of me, taken by my father, wearing bright orange swim shorts ebhish' in 1998, was the genesis of this photographic research. From an early age, I have been documenting (and, have been documented in) intimate history and articulations of my community from our perspectives.

Photography is more than a form of visual representation. It is a tool for refusing negative portrayals of Black people, particularly by white-dominated institutions. My practice is foregrounded in the willingness to be vulnerable[4] beyond the slippery history of photography, and to create multivocal imagery which permeates fixed notions of time. The images, taken on old 120mm and 35mm film cameras, are captured while swimming. Although composition is important, the act of swimming whilst documenting is key. The photographic process becomes fluid, like a performance. The output is, at times, well-composed and focused, at others, there is a soft focus with a skewered horizon line, discarding formal rules of photography and composition.

Through this research, I take an in-depth look at the history of ibhish' laseThekwini. Presented through a historiography, I unpack systemic enactments, allowing us to better understand the past that has not passed, but reappears always and ruptures the present (Sharpe, 2016:41). Drawing from the history of ibhish' laseThekwini, I critique the photographic archive and its representational politics. By doing so, I hope to foreground the multiplicity and fluidity of Black leisure and Black subjectivity, as well as the interrelated meanings of water and the sea as spiritual.

3 — Throughout the essay, I will use ibhish' laseThekwini, ebhish lase'Thekwini or ebhish' when discussing the Durban beach. This is in line with the renaming of the city from Durban, (a colonial name) to eThekwini. This does not abide by the English convention or naming of the space, but it is culturally and colloquially acceptable. In isiZulu, ebhish' means at the beach and ibhish' means the beach, depending on the context. There are moments in which the English language requires the inclusion of 'the' or 'at'. In this case, those words are excluded.
4 — Whether the photograph captured is problematic or not, vulnerability is always inevitable around the camera.

Black people have long histories (pre-dating the arrival of colonialist settlers) with the Indian Ocean, the body of water connecting various rivers across KwaZulu Natal: aMatikulu, uMfolozi, uThukela, uMvoti, Umgeni, uMkhomazi, Umzimkulu, Umtamvuna, uMhlathuze, uMlalazi which, in turn, feed and flow from multiple river sources and stream back into the ocean. The relationship between these rivers and the ocean is crucial as it connects both worlds in boundless ways, both seen and unseen.

These formal archives and the violent anglo-history of the beachfront have been important for my research, but they are not central to it. eBhish' is a gesture toward a chorus of truths that acknowledge the multi-layered nuances of ulwandle which de-centers the fixed notions of an archive. The meeting of what artist Carlos Amorales terms as 'liquid archives', which transgresses rigid and fixed frameworks of archives as systems of collecting and cataloguing historical records –offering fluidity, resulting in "malleable entities that create meaning in myriad and unforeseen ways" (Platow, 2014: 52)– and Indian Ocean scholar Michael Pearson's 'amphibious history', which argues that the "history of the ocean needs to be amphibious, moving easily between land and sea" (2003:5), grounds the theoretical framework of this self-reflexive, practice-led research, as a generative engagement with the physical and metaphysical connections which Black people have with water.

Methodology

Affect becomes a portal through which history, memory, and the process of archiving itself are reworked, in order to critique the ongoing legacies of slavery, colonialism and contemporary forms of racialization - to imagine alternative forms of affiliation and collectivity. (Gopinath, 2010: 165).

This research is led by my creative practice as a photographer/filmmaker and engages with public space. Susan Sontag frames this as "participatory practice". She writes: "to take a photograph is to participate in another person's mortality, vulnerability, mutability... [A]ll photographs testify to time's relentless melt" (1977: 4). *eBhish'* employs a methodology which uses my personal experience to describe, analyse and understand cultural experiences. It is through my lived experience that I began an auto-ethnographic approach of photographic documentation. Using an embodied (rather than technical) practice, I swam and immersed myself in the beach crowds. It is what Hartman terms a "mode of close narration" that places the self within a social context. The documentary style of mostly black and white photography acts as a "critical fabulation" (Hartman, 2008:11) to evade a fixed reading of time. In response to erasure, Hartman's framework suggests the temporality of "speculative arguments and exploiting the capacities of the subjunctive (a grammatical mood that expresses doubts, wishes, and possibilities), in fashioning a narrative, which is based upon archival research... a critical reading of the archive that mimes the figurative dimensions of history... intended both to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling" (Hartman, 2008:11).

Most of the photographic work is shot on analogue 120mm and 35mm cameras using black and white film. Through the use of black and white photography, there is a modification of time.[5] Achille Mbembe underscores the use of black and white film as a "time of entanglement", which mediates time from linear and homogeneous perception. Black postcolonial subjects experience it as "an interlocking of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones" (Mbembe, 2001:16).

In many ways, in deciding to document Black people, I had to be critical of my framing and avoid the typical representational tropes. Historically, through regimes of formal and informal violence, the Black body has been inscribed with various signifiers, primarily as currency and labour. Consequently, in the contemporary, Black leisure is read as a spectacle, and as out of the ordinary. Michelle Harris argues for a critical visual literacy of the consumption of photography, insisting we decode and reflect on the imagery we encounter and create, as the medium of photography can be used as a tool to present a nuanced perspective of our human experience (Harris, 2020: 33). As such, the framing and methodology of the work is particularly important. By employing methods of documentary aesthetics, I engage with the geographic situatedness of the work, notably the reclaiming and re-inscribing of the beach (Mabaso, 2014: 2), which affirms and articulates both the ordinary and the exceptional texture of Black life (Campt, 2017: 7).

Although this research excavates my lived history and the histories of the space and Black life eThekwini, the visual documentation is accompanied by qualitative, unstructured, in-depth interviews with Black people – specifically with close friends, acquaintances and family– concerning their understanding and relationship with the ocean and leisure. Their stories were voice-recorded to generate an understanding and orality of Black life and the ocean from within a South African context.

Theoretical framework

The entanglement between liquid archives and amphibious history is central to this research. Carlos Amorales' notion of the "liquid archive" provides porous approaches which expand methodologies and understandings of "the creation of meaning", moving from fixed and rigid to fluid and infinite (Platow, 2014: 52). *eBhish'* engages with an "amphibious history" which moves between land and sea (Pearson, 2010: 8). These frameworks facilitate an engagement with the argument of Black presence (physical and metaphysical) ebhish'. With amphibious history, we move seamlessly through land and sea, utilising liquid archives as the compass which allows us to see its streams.

Heather Hughes (2014) presents a historical overview of the KwaZulu-Natal coast and the Indian Ocean as an "amphibious history":

5 — The artwork is untitled, but is dated with the day the photograph was taken and made.

the politics of the land as the politics of the sea (Pearson, 2010:8). Hughes argues the political importance of the Indian Ocean as a means to establish and maintain the political and economic dominance of the European settler colonists. The Indian Ocean helped to develop the British maritime Empire in the 16th century, through state-sponsored seaborne trade. The Steam Age (1770–1914) accelerated large-scale movement of labour across continents in the Indian Ocean region. By October 1899, the Indian Ocean played a critical role to the Imperial forces for the deployment of troops and supplies throughout the South African War (1902). These histories have a substantial impact on the dehumanisation of Black people who were enslaved, displaced and used as labour force. In addition to the sea as witness to history, Hughes speaks about life on the littoral. Here, Hughes refers to archaeological evidence which locates Black people who were hunters and cattle-keepers on the coastal dunes of KwaZulu-Natal. Hughes notes two shipwreck accounts which took place in Coffee Bay (*Sao Bento*, 1554) and Cape of Good Hope (*Sao Joao Baptista*, 1622), to further reinforce the archaeological findings which place Black life close to the beach (Hughes, 2014).

Therefore, it is crucial to forge ways of better understanding the conceptual complexities of the Indian Ocean as the locus of imperial dominance and violence, while at the same time holding significance as a sacred realm. In this way, Black leisure signifies a counter-history, one that can be understood through metaphors of "liquidity" and constant change.

COVID-19 and the beach

History has interruptions, yet archives present history as coherent. Formal state archives conceal disruptions, crises, ruptures and violence. The moderation of Black people and denial of Black leisure is evident in the beach pictorial archives. The COVID-19 pandemic has been debilitating to the capitalist structures around which the modern world is built and, in this regard, has exposed various shortcomings in many sectors of our country, particularly regarding matters of poor service delivery and corruption. The pandemic, which disproportionately affects Black people, has exacerbated inequality and class difference in the country. In relation to this research, it has also impacted on leisure. On the 14th of December 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation and imposed restrictions on the forth-coming festive season. Ramaphosa announced that Kwazulu-Natal's beaches would be closed on the 16th, 25th, 26th and 31st of December as well as the 1st and 2nd of January, 2021. This decision to close these beaches specifically (and not beaches in, say, the Western Cape) carries significant racial undertones, given that amabhish' aseThekwini[6] are frequented by Black people, while Cape Town's premier beaches are dominated by tourists and the white elite. Due to an alarming rise in COVID-19 cases, Ramaphosa re-addressed the nation on the 28th of December, 2021, and closed all beaches until further notice, a decision which many white South Africans expressed dismay over. Evidently, in contemporary South Africa, the legacies of apartheid reverberate and continue to divide a still segregated society. The COVID-19 pandemic presents a huge problem, because the world has established a reliance on constantly moving exploitation processes which propel illness. Only this time, the effects are not solely faced by poor, Black people.

6 — Beaches in the eThekwini municipality but especially eThekwini.

The Anglo History of Ibhish' laseThekwini

Time itself has become a reparative affect (Wiegman, 2014: 14).

For many Black middle and working-class South Africans, ibhish' laseThekwini has become a favourite summer holiday destination. It has inspired many popular kwaito and gqom summer anthems and is marketed by the eThekwini municipality as "South Africa's Playground". This cultural site is ranked as the sixth main tourist attraction in the country (Odhiambo & Van Zyl, 2012). Formal history is entangled with archives which were weaponized through colonial violence and domination over space. Up until the late 1980s, however, it was a whites-only space of leisure. Colonial and apartheid laws fostered separated developments, turning the country into multiple nations in one. Beach signage, built on historicized archival violence, functioned as a divisive mechanism, forming a border that distinguished who was a citizen and who was not, essentially decreeing people as non-citizens/unhomed.

In contemporary South African society, "the veil" (Du Bois (1997 [1903]: 38) has not been lifted. The country is living in a time that might well be described as palimpsestic: "a parchment that has been inscribed two or three times, the previous text having been imperfectly erased and remaining therefore still partly visible" (Alexander, 2005:190). For many years, ibhish' laseThekwini was the premier destination for white families. Tourism density would peak over the summer months, and especially during the festive season (Preston-Whyte, 2001:589). The Reservation of Separate Amenities Ordinance, No. 37 (act) of 1967, stipulated leisure activities to be racialized and separated. Beaches and hotels were zoned according to apartheid-era racial groups, as exclusively white, Indian, Coloured or black. Moreover, white beaches were well-resourced with amenities and facilities, and were easily accessible (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982: 16). In 1982, the Durban City Council designated a section of the beach for all races. This was supported by hotels in an effort to influence tourism, but was contested by local white residents who expressed their dismay in local newspapers (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982: 30).

Space/Public sphere and race – ibhish' and ulwandle

The etymology of the words (synonyms) *ebhish'* and *ulwandle* in the isiZulu/isiXhosa languages are instructive. The word *bhish'* is borrowed from the English word *beach*. The scholar's isiZulu dictionary defines beach (noun) usebe lolwandle, ugu lolwandle; ibhish'; (verb) ngenisa isikebhe ohlabathini; ocean (noun) ulwandlekazi' sea (noun) ulwandle; and shore (noun) ugu lolwandle. From the above entries, it is clear that the word *ibhish'* is borrowed from the English word beach. Furthermore, it is notably not only the word that is borrowed, but the concept as well, as seen in some of these sources where the verb form of the word is also used or explained. However, this borrowing is not for a lack of description in the isiZulu language, but rather as an addition to what already exists. The *ogwini lolwandle* (isiZulu)/*incam yolwandle* (isiXhosa), as well as *indawo yokubhukuda* (isiZulu)/*indawo yokuqubha* (isiXhosa) definitions are precisely indicative of that. *Ulwandle* in both languages refers to the sea/s. It seems that it also refers specifically to the Indian Ocean.

This is because Kwa-Zulu Natal, where the language (isiZulu) originates, has the Indian Ocean right at its doorstep. Additionally, the word refers to other vast expanses, such as the sugar cane example mentioned in the isiZulu-English dictionary. As a word, it also alludes to the 'outside' (ngapha*ndle*) or the wild, as the word *endle* presupposes that which cannot be contained or controlled.

David Harvey argues that "space is neither absolute, [nor] relative [n]or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances" and on human practice (Harvey, 1973: 13). The borrowing of *beach* from English is not merely a borrowing of the word, but rather the use of an idea or relation to land. The notion of the beach seems, under capitalism, to be in a dialectical relation to the workplace, for instance. The *beach*, like the *garden*, has a civilising effect on what is otherwise just land, and defines it according to a relation of free-time versus captured time. Unlike *ulwandle*, where the seas are not actually defined according to their potential facilitation of human leisure, in the form of, say, *beaching*.

Many South African cities have inherited a geography which places most whites in luxurious, gated communities. As a result of the Group Areas Act of 1950, many groups were separated into racial distinctions which stipulated where they would reside, as well as their proximity to the city. eThekwini, many Black, Cato Manor residents were forcefully removed into settlements (townships) like Kwa-Mashu and Umlazi. Those who could not afford rent and the cost of living were forced to move back to their homelands. The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970, permitted Black people living throughout apartheid South Africa to be legal citizens in the homeland designated for their particular ethnic group. In the process, Black people were stripped of their South African citizenship, and their civil and political rights.

The Sea Shore Amendment Act of 1972, empowered the Minister of Agriculture to delegate control over the beaches to executive committees. The committees would then confer control to local and provincial authorities. Provincial authorities enforced the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953, and many beaches were zoned and separated into racial groups. If anyone breached this act, they would be fined up to approximately R200, or face a year of imprisonment and in some cases, both (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982).

Since the 1800s, ibhish' laseThekwini has been used by mostly white pleasure-seekers (Thompson, 1888). The colonial and apartheid state deliberately prioritized recording and preserving the narrative of these white bodies. This is reflected in the archive, which prioritised the privileges of white experiences and naturalized their bodies as neutral/'normal' within the frameworks of leisure.

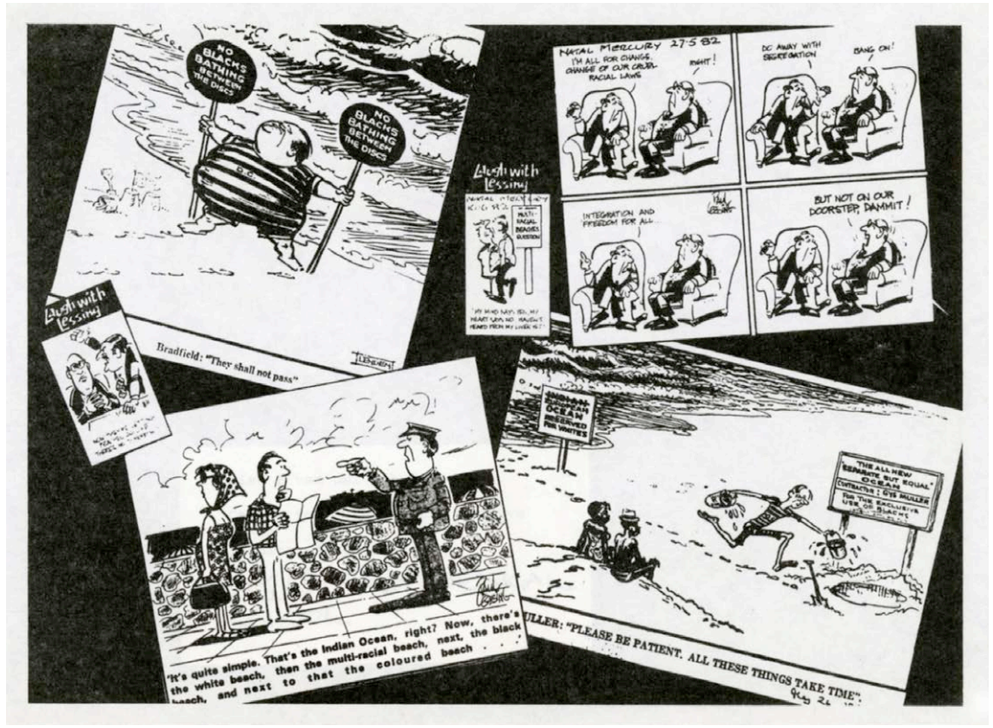
The racial exclusiveness of the archive has its origins in the material and ideological circumstances of colonial rule. Under British colonial rule, the African people's 'natural' state was limited to living

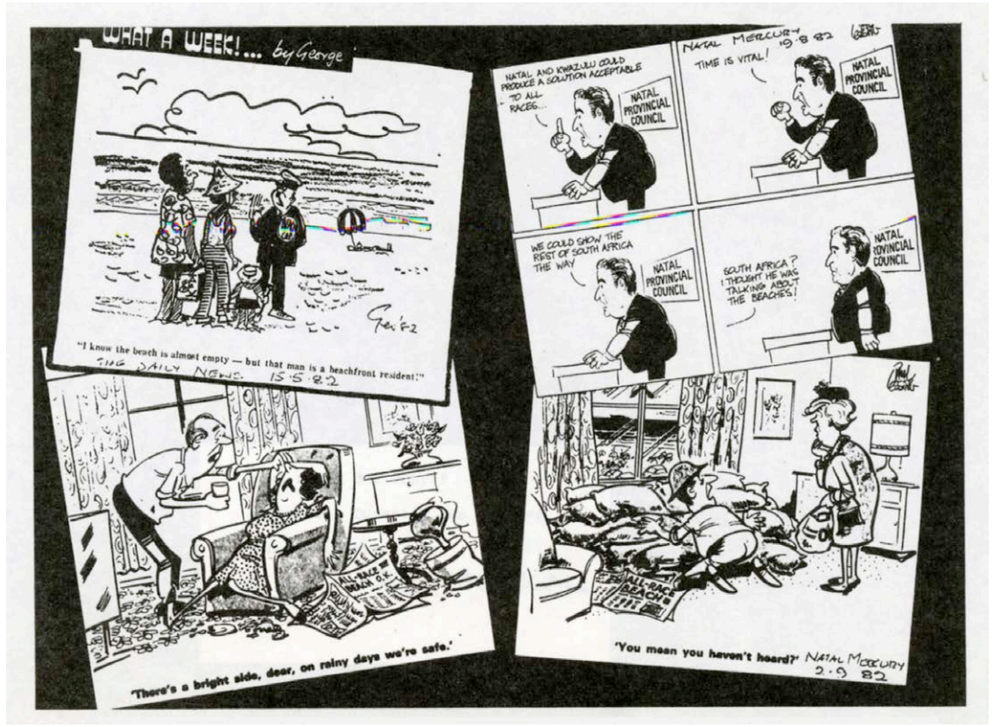
in self-sufficient homesteads. Black bodies were perceived as indolent. The colonial settlers positioned themselves as the 'ruling race' and supported this claim with an archive they constructed (Hughes, 2012). Using the beach archives, the apartheid state controlled and sustained the racial status quo of the colonial milieu, whereby Black people were perceived as "diligent and docile by day and invisible by night" (Maylan cited in Posel, 1985: 1).

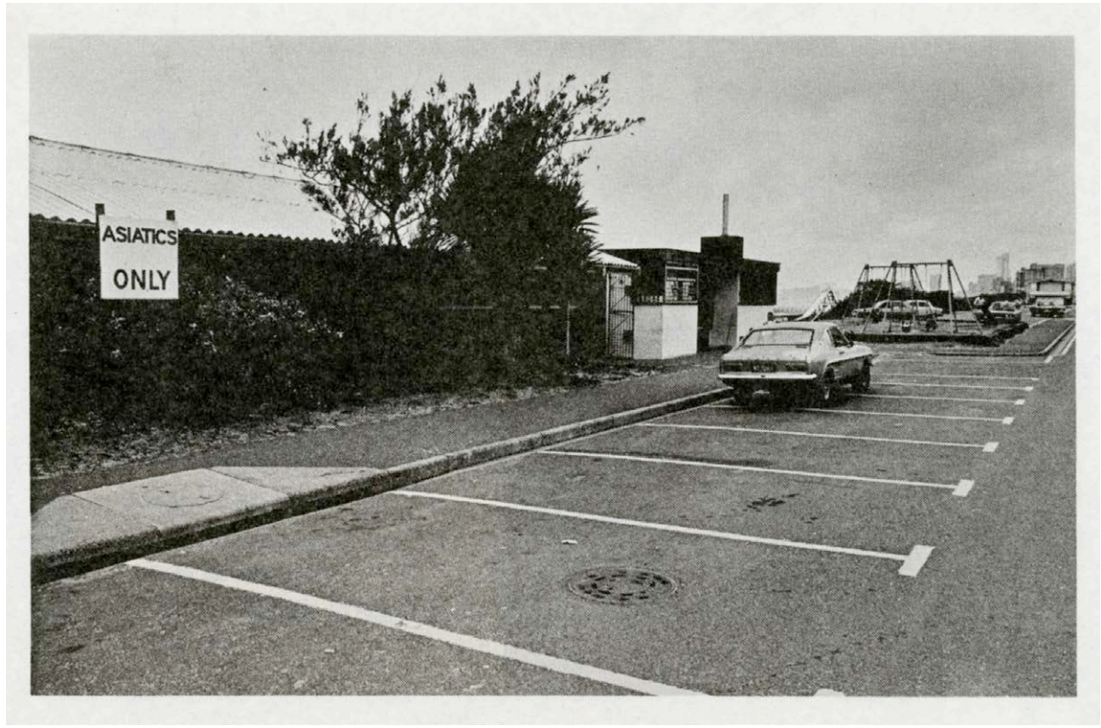
Black people have often been removed from the spaces that their labour helped to create and were then forced to live in homesteads or hostels. A romantic image of "tribal" and "wild" space as the cradle of Black identity justified this practice and dissimulated its political functions (Packfard, 1989). Black presence in colonial milieu was for labour. During the first four to five decades of colonial settlement, Black men were the primary labour force. Black women were encouraged to remain in their rural homesteads. Domestic, Black men were known as "houseboys", and were often required to wear a uniform of unbleached calico trimmed with red braiding to distinguish them from the other urban workers (Hughes, 2012: 187). Most of the men worked in the city's docks or pulled rickshaws. In the beginning of the twentieth century, a significant number of Black women worked in the city and settled there. By 1904, there were an estimated 200 families residing eThekwini, mostly in informal housing on the city's borders (Ibid., 2012: 187). Most women ran beer halls, which a significant number of migrant workers frequented. The beer halls became very popular, and soon after, the city officials monopolized the sale of utshwala (beer). The proceeds were defrayed into the costs of administering Black people in the city, and for the construction of infrastructure which policed and restricted Black life (Hausse, 1996: 35). Although the beer halls were a space constructed for leisure and expression through music and dance, many were subject to frequent police raids (Hughes, 2012: 191).

In September 1929, in an effort to diffuse discontentment from its growing Black, urban population, the city council set aside a stretch of beach from Vetch's Pier to the breakwater, forming the northern entrance to the harbour, for African use (Hughes, 2012: 194). The beach was marginal and was a very dangerous stretch of land. Tides and waves would carry swimmers too close to the rocks, making the space undesirable. The Provincial Notice 206 of 1930, made provisions for segregated beach facilities. The beach had no lifeguard and the city council was to appoint "volunteer African lifesavers". This presented a problem, since there were no facilities available for the necessary training. There was no swimming pool eThekwini that Black people could use. With no proper training and reluctant, white lifeguards, there were several drownings (Hughes, 2012: 198). Still, this marked the emergence of a beach culture among Black people eThekwini which quickly became popular, especially in the summer months from November to March.

Although there had been a growing number of rezoned, and integrated beaches, in June 1977, the Durban City Council voted against opening up the city's beaches to all races. This stirred a major public







Above — Figure 3, *Indian Beach*, (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982).

Top Left — Figure 4, *Daily News*, (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982).

Bottom Left — Figure 5, *Natal Mercury 2.9.82*, (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982).

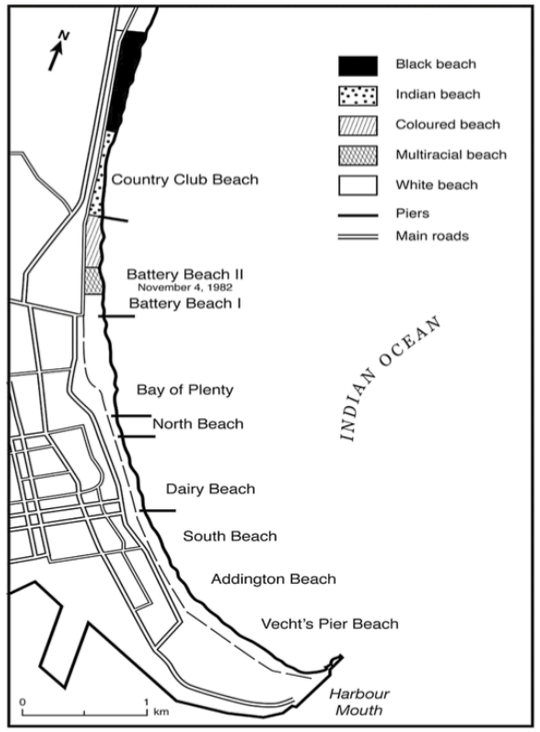
debate. Several years later, in 1981, the city examined and seriously considered the feasibility of opening up a multiracial beach. The council approved the re-demarcation of the previously assigned white-zone of the Durban Country Club to be made an Indian Beach (see figure 3).

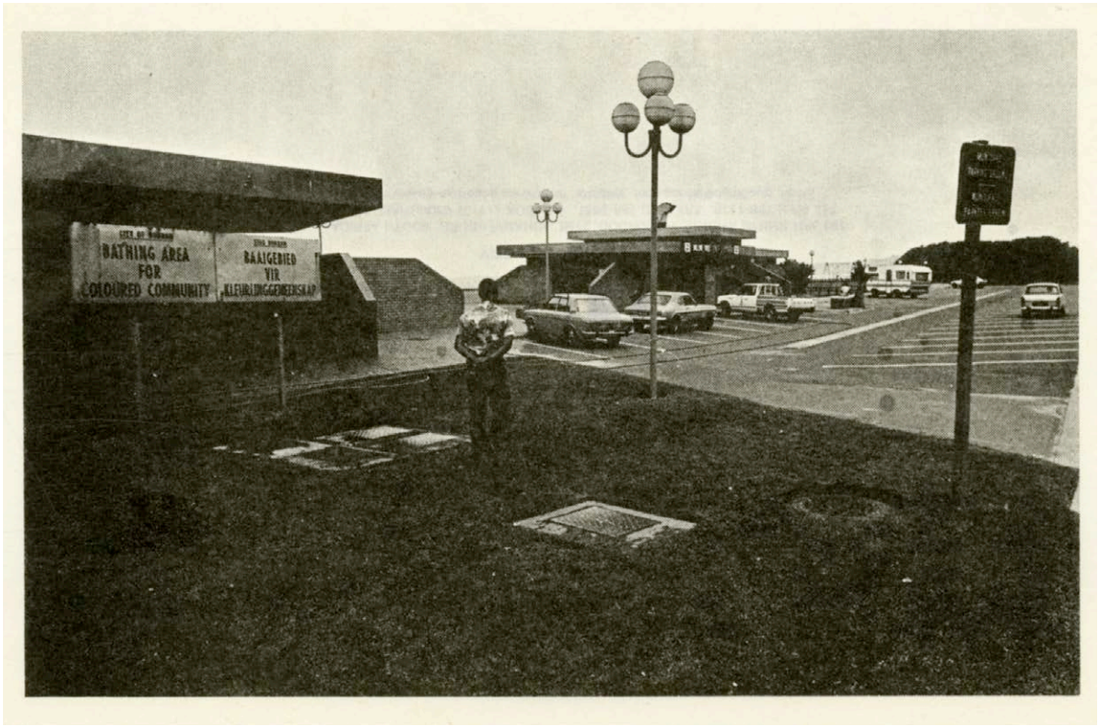
From the 14th of October 1981 to the 5th of September 1982, the debate surrounding multiracial beaches took centre stage in local press, and made the front cover on several occasions (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982). Public sentiments and concerns were conveyed through cartoons in popular newspapers, including the *Daily News* and *Natal Mercury* (see figure 4 and figure 5).

On the 30th of August 1982, the Durban City Council voted in favour of opening a stretch of beach to all races. On the 4th of November 1982, Battery Beach II, situated between the white-zoned Battery Beach and the Coloured Beach, was opened to all races (see figure 7). On the opening day, only a few beachgoers were present during the historic turning point. That same year, many white residential areas across the city installed swimming pools in their homes. This was a clear signal of their attitude toward seaside integration (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982). In November 1989, F.W. de Klerk ordered the desegregation of beaches across South Africa (Wren, 1989). F. W. de Klerk asserted, “It has been decided that all beaches will henceforth be accessible to all members of the public" (Wren, 1989).[7]

7 — Christopher S. Wren, “South Africa Decides to Open All Beaches to Blacks,” *The New York Times*, 17 November, 1989. https://www.nytimes.com/1989/11/17/world/south-africa-decides-to-open-all-beaches-to-blacks.html (Accessed 5th February, 2021).

(formerly, Pietermaritzburg) and in the Gauteng Province (SAHO, 2011). eThekwini's subtropical climate is one of the main reasons it attracts many Black families from across the country. The city's proximity to Johannesburg (Gauteng), makes it a default Black leisure space. This direct commute is convenient for many middle-class families like my own, who are based in Gauteng, and are looking for a quick getaway. The driving distance between eThekwini and Johannesburg is 569.1km, which takes approximately 7 hours on an average of 80 km/h. For people from Gauteng, it is a viable vacation because they have the financial means to schedule it in. For those living there, it is a trip to the city. Being deprived of access to this space for many years has created a connotation of luxury. Considering the apartheid regime's Group Areas Act (1950), ebhish' laseThekwini is a heterotopic space. It is what Michel Foucault calls a "counter-site, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault, 1984: 24).





Above — Figure 8, *Coloured beach*, (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982).

Top Left — Figure 7, *Multiracial beach*, (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982).

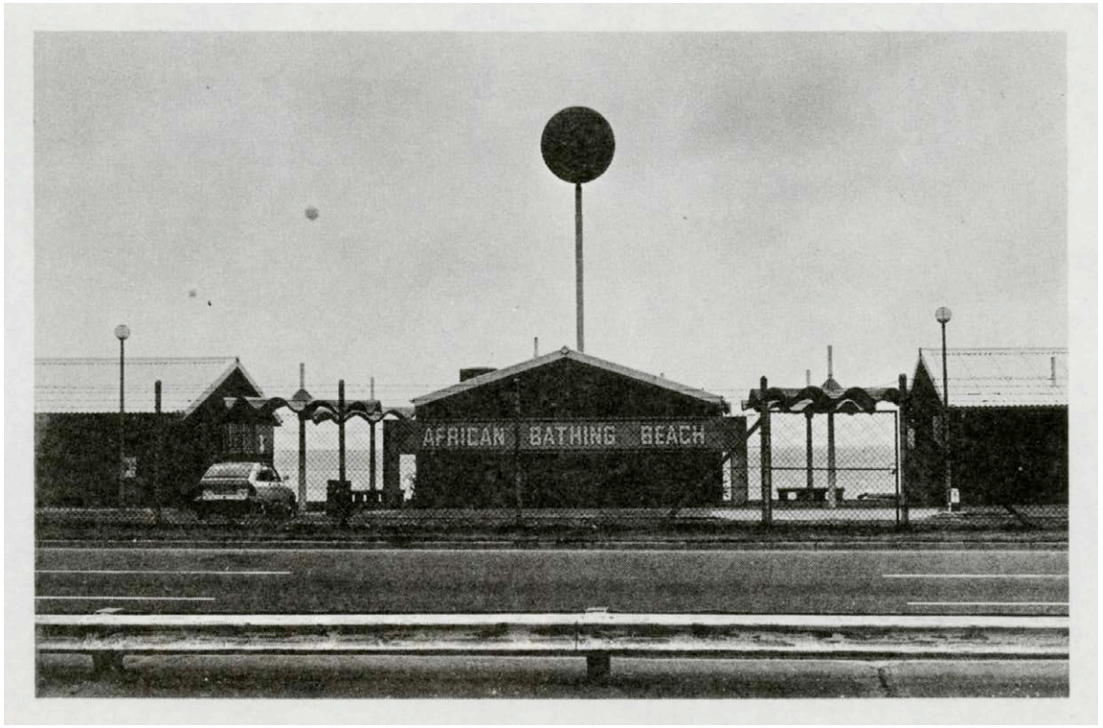
Bottom Left — Figure 6, *Durban Beachfront in 1982*, (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982).

During the 1980's a surge of public protests as a part of the strategic national resistance movement led by the ANC –which began in 1970s, with worker's strikes and various significant youth-led, national revolts and uprisings, such as the 1976 Soweto student uprisings– were fundamental in the resistance against the apartheid regime, the whitening of the coastlines and the re-framing of them as uninhabited, thus erasing centuries of Black social life and historical engagements with their coast.

Strand beach in Cape Town was also one of the significant beaches which had persistent waves of public protests, and many people defied apartheid racial zones in numbers. These protests drew crowds of all ages, and were forms of refusal and reclamation of public space.

The inhumane regime responded with force and arrested many, but this did not deter others from coming again, and in droves. Beaches throughout the country became a battlefield transgressing the regime, remembering that "beaches [had] marked the beginning of conquest and subsequently became the playground for white leisure seekers" (Hofmeyer, 2018).

Since the late 90s, ibhish' laseThekwini has attracted hundreds of thousands of people, many from the KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces. There are an estimated 50 million South Africans, with Zulu people making up approximately 25% of this count. Although the majority of the rural Zulu population remains in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, most Zulu people live in the urban centres of eThekwini, uMgungundlovu



Above — Figure 10, *Zubeida Vallie, Strand beach, Cape Town*, circa 1980s. (Center for Curating the Archive, University of Cape Town, Special Collections Libraries).

Top Left — Figure 9, *Black (African) beach*, (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982).

Bottom Left — Figure 11, *Tony Grogan, We will fight them on the beaches. We will never surrender!*, 1981. (Special collections, University of Cape Town Libraries).

iBhish' laseThekwini is a site of convergence. As a symbol of seaside leisure, it has since become accessible for Black middle and working-class families who arrive in cars, buses and minibus taxis from near and far. Growing up, a week after schools closed for the December holidays, we would go to the beach as much as we could, sometimes even unsupervised. iBhish' represented a break from our day-to-day routine of the year, our homework and exams temporarily replaced by unadulterated Black joy of sunny days at the beach. By the 16th of December, our parents would be granted summer leave, and this meant that we could finally gather with cousins from different parts of the province and country. In my recollection, there were no white people present, and this was the norm for the summer period. Although the country had been attempting to desegregate, most racially zoned spaces remained largely segregated. Today, they still are and eThekwini in the summer is a prime example.

The Beach Archives eThekwini

The Old Court House is one of the oldest public buildings eThekwini in the central business district. Over the course of time, the building has performed various state functions. Originally, it was a courthouse, enforcing colonial legislation. The courthouse had been operational during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, the Anglo-Boer War, as well as the Bhambatha Rebellion of 1906. During the first and second World Wars, the building served as a recruitment centre. Later, it was a public library prior to becoming the city's biggest his§tory museum (Durban Local History Museums, 2018). The two-storey building houses archives of the history of eThekwini (formerly, Durban) and material objects of historical significance. Achille Mbembe denotes that "there cannot therefore be a definition of 'archives' that does not encompass both the building itself and the documents stored there" (Mbembe, 2002:19).

'Archive' is derived from the Greek word *archeion*: a government house (in plural, official documents), from archē, meaning to rule, and government. Archives are constructed by the state. Their primary function is to control and shape what and how we remember. Archives directly influence individual and collective memory, and are grounded in a national identity which informs our values, norms and beliefs as a society. H. I. E. Dhlomo highlights how "time and again our position and future have been prejudiced and made insecure by reference to our past" (Peterson quotes Dhlomo, 2002: 28).

Within the archive of images, there was a manipulation of power, excluding the experiences of seaside leisure of people who aren't white. Then, when Black subjects are included, they are reflected as a labour force. As seen in the examples below, they are caring for white children, or working as rickshaw drivers. Often, they are framed in the periphery of the shoreline. Jacques Rancière's argument reinforces that the political is always aesthetic, in the sense that regimes of representation and perception delimit "the visible and invisible" and "speech and noise" in ways that shape "the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience" (Rancière 2004: 13). In making and controlling these images, and then presenting the archive as objective, white experience was positioned as the singular truth.

Michel Foucault writes, "[T]he quest for truth was not an objective and neutral activity, but was intimately related to the will to power of the truth seeker. Knowledge was thus a form of power, a way of presenting one's own values in the guise of scientific disinterestedness" (Foucault as quoted by Harvey, 1988: 279). eBhish' is a gesture toward a chorus of truths that acknowledge the multilayered nuances of the beach as a site of leisure, as well as through the metaphysical, which de-centers fixed notions of an archive:

> **Our concerns, desires and curiosities are repeated through time and space, and so while we are not necessarily creating new knowledge, we are constantly re-inventing and reworking formats in order to explore things together. Finding ways for people to exist collectively and share ideas, thoughts and feelings - even**

Top Left — Figure 12, *Children's playground on the South side of Beach road, showing swings*, undated [filed P105].

Bottom Left — Figure 13, *Durbanites seated on the beach at foot of West St*, 1900 [filed Q78.108].

on a very small scale - is radical. This is what I associate with knowledge production. It's shifting the structures that determine how we meet with each other, finding ways to be multiple within ourselves, despecialising, being playful, and I guess making constant attempts to flee the machine, 'the man' or whatever you want to call it (Gamedze, 2019).

Instead, what the archive reflects is Black pain, which in turn, reflects the apartheid state's agenda. As Katherine McKittrick notes, "the repetitive circulation of Black pain", which is to say, the visual archive of Black suffering, "becomes so ordinary that the pleasures of looking, again and again, incite a second order of violence" (McKittrick, 2014: 21). The intentioned inclusion of Black people in the archive as subserviently watching whites at leisure forms itself to the colonial and apartheid state violence, as it asserts white presence in positions of power.

Archival images from 1918 to 1970 depict ibhish' packed with beachgoers. In the contemporary, particularly in the summer, however, crowds of Black beachgoers are seen to be "the dirty masses", or the "hordes of non-swimmers"[8]. The racist distinctions drawn between white and Black crowds frames Black bodies as being in "excess". It is also reminiscent of Ariella Azoulay's argument that "the solidity of the archive, its congealing of imperial power and its constant reproduction of imperial temporality, forecloses from the imagination the eventuality of co-citizens acting and interacting with each other against the archive's premises and the regime of privilege for which it stands" (Azoulay, 2019: 222). This rhetoric persists and permeates beyond ibhish' laseThekwini, and is a clear indication of the attitudes towards Blackness in South Africa.

Archives are a vital tool to build intellectual frameworks. Remembering (or re-creating) the past through historical research in archival records is not simply "the retrieval of stored information, but the putting together of a claim about past states of affairs by means of a framework of shared cultural understanding" (Schwartz and Cook: 2002). Archives themselves are a part of that claim and therefore shape that same understanding.

Leisure spaces are constructed out of the material environment and are legitimized by both social and political norms. This construction relies heavily on visual communication through photographs and maps (Preston-Whyte, 2001: 584). While the history of eThekwini's first African beach can be found in archival documents, the visual archive is underrepresented. The loud absence of imagery depicting Black bodies participating in leisure echoes the inhibiting objectives of the state. Instead, Black bodies are seen in the background performing labour tasks.

For most, ibhish' laseThekwini is a repository of memory, but one rarely documented:

8 — See blog post by "Abigail", "Durban beachfront: the mass festival mentality", 7 January, 2012. http://birdcagesandbookcases.blogspot.com/2012/01/durban-beachfront-mass-festival.html (Accessed 17th February, 2021).

Top Left — Figure 14, *Durban Beach*, 1918 [filed Q81.2415].

Bottom Left — Figure 15, *Refreshment building and ocean beach*, undated [filed H61.936].

Memory, like history, is rooted in archives. Without archives, memory falters, knowledge of accomplishments fades, pride in a shared past dissipates. Archives counter these losses. Archives contain the evidence of what went before. This is particularly germane in the modern world. With the disappearance of traditional village life and the extended family, memory based on personal, shared storytelling is no longer possible; the archive remains as one foundation of historical understanding. Archives validate our experiences, our perceptions, our narratives, our stories. Archives are our memories (Schwartz and Cook, 2002: 8).

These formal archives have been important for my research, but they are not central to it. My premise has been on constructing what Carlos Amorales (2007) calls a "liquid archive", which transgresses rigid and fixed frameworks of archives as systems of collecting and cataloguing historical records. Liquid archives are fluid approaches, resulting in "malleable entities that create meaning in myriad and unforeseen ways" (Platow, 2014: 52). The intention is not to fill or respond to existing archives, but to build on, corroborate, and affirm moments of Black leisure, intimacy, joy and dignity. Therefore, the notion of the beach as subjective, as a vessel which holds history, myth and memory is central to my research. It not only considers senses of self in relation to the beach and ocean, but also unpacks the various mythologies and ideologies around the beach and ocean which have contributed to the continued racialisation of the space:

Water as a queer archive reminds us that planetary time is not stratigraphic time. Water's queer archives instead invite us to build communities out of an antichronormative swell of time, which is also ineluctably about forgetting. We must learn to live with our dissolutions with whatever grace we can mutter - and sometimes even embrace them. We must also learn to read in watery archives the politics of erasure as a way of approaching differential mattering in the Anthropocene. We must learn to read for the different scales of these dissolutions, and their effects, as an ethical project. We must learn to parse our trauma through matters of fact, but with feelings too, remembered and dissolved in archives of aqueous planetarity (Neimanis, 2018: 196).

Thinking in relation to Astrida Neimanis's notion of water as queer archive invites us to approach our understanding of time and archive more fluidly. Her theory, which asks us to think through anthropocene archives as watery archives of feeling, does not "render our human existence more permanent, nor will it absolve us of responsibility for the dissolutions done. Rather than yearning for stratigraphy's certainty, though, archiving with water invites us to submerge ourselves in a temporality that is queer, and that rejects the neatly meted out, measurable and controllable time of stratigraphy, despite the comforts that its stony archives seem to offer" (Neimanis, 2018: 196). Liquid archives, or water as queer archive, reject European humanist categories and instead flood us with endless possibile approaches and engagements.

Above — Figure 18, South beach,
Durban, about 1970
[filed: 99.2879].

Top Left — Figure 16,
Paddling ponds, beach,
1900–1910 [filed Q75.475.27].

Bottom Left — Figure 17,
Paddling pond, Durban
Beachfront, 1976 (Daily News).

Black Leisure eBhish'

Addressing history in the present is to speak to a future unknown. We cannot immediately understand, in relative opacity, how the events of the present will affect our futures. This unknowing, however, should not stop us from undoing what has become obsolete (Ngcobo, 2018:15).

How does one archive affect? This is a complex endeavor.
How does the archive allow us to map this terrain?
What are the shortcomings?
How is Black leisure ebhish' disruptive of white leisure?

One of the core functions of the colonial project was to make the daily existence of Black life –apart from labour– as invisible as possible to the white, ruling class. Fanon asserts, "[B]eing over-determined from without, the Black body is hyper-visible and invisible at the same time" (Fanon, 1967: 109). Between 1950 and 1980, invisibility was formalized and maximized through grand apartheid (Group Areas Act, etc.) and petty apartheid (moral legislature such as beach segregation and public amenities signs). Forced invisibility also manifested itself in the media and local history, and in imagery and text. Popular culture exclusively served the white, ruling class, and Black life and Black stories were largely disregarded or misrepresented (Maylam, 1986). The construction of seaside leisure ebhish' laseThekwini took place from within a political ideology that created and maintained rigid ethnic boundaries. Consequently, this enforced a particular indoctrination to white beachgoers. It engendered ideas that created and sustained fears between groups that enhanced the "We" of shared identity, and exacerbated the perception and definition of "Others'' as outsiders (Crang, 1998). The formation of imaginary boundaries is one way of attempting to induce fear of the "Other". Leisure spaces are not immune from this response through which identity is preserved against outsiders.

Colonial and apartheid laws restricted movement and policed Black bodies. Black lives were surveilled and denied many freedoms, including the freedom of leisure. The Pass Laws of 1866 restricted Black mobility. Any Black person found outside of their residential area, without a pass from an employee or government official, would be arrested (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982). By 1948, when the apartheid government was in power, indigenous Africans were not permitted to manoeuvre through certain parts of the country and were prohibited from owning or purchasing land outside of the prescribed area. Although the black population were (and are) the majority, they occupied 13% of the country's land, while the Europeans occupied 87%. Due to the Separate Amenities Act No. 49, which commenced in October of 1953, racial segregation of public premises was legalized (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982). Consequently, Black people were restricted from accessing prime spaces, including spaces of leisure such as the eThekwini beachfront.

Leisure, David Jewell explains, involves traversing and utilising spaces open to the public (whether publicly or privately owned) for the purpose of engaging in pleasurable activities. These are generally

non-work related or after-hour pursuits, many of which entail the face-to-face interaction that carries the potential for group identity formation and political mobilisation. Leisure takes place in a variety of public venues, ranging from live performance spaces like concert halls, social clubs and beaches, to participant sports venues like skating rinks and soccer fields. Similarly, public streets that are suitable for strolling, cruising, playing, parading, partying, or simply moving about are commonplace leisure locations (Jewell, 1997). In the contemporary, leisure is intrinsically tied to class. Thorstein Veblen's, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), argues that leisure (non-work) illustrates social status. How do we spend our free time? What do we spend our free time doing? Pure leisure is the prerogative of the bourgeoisie while, for the working class, it is a temporary, measured and limited comfort. Within a South African context, as a nation built on racial capitalism, the division of leisure (like the division of labour) is racialized. For many years, Black people have found ways to experience leisure, but systemic reverberations of colonial and apartheid restrictions have left amenities and being a part of the public limited. As a result of the systemic whitening of the definition of leisure and normalization of leisure as exclusively white, for Black people, the notion of leisure has a different psycho-social formation.

Racial capitalism and Black leisure

The structures through which black labour is reproduced [...] are not simply "coloured" by race; they work through race (Hall,1980: 340).

As the development, organization, and expansion of capitalism was pursued astride racial directions, so too was social ideology. As a material force, then, it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism. Cedric Robinson asserts that he "used the term 'racial capitalism' to refer to this development and to the subsequent structure as a historical agency" (Robinson, 2000: 2). Robinson argues that capitalism and racialisation are parallel processes. The former is impossible without the latter: bodies can only be imagined to exist for pure labour, because they have been racially distinguished or objectified into something un-human. Thus, the distinction between the apartheid era and South Africa's contemporary becomes less material, as we still live under capitalism, which is only possible through the dehumanising force of race. Robin D. G. Kelley reiterates, "[C]apitalism did not break from the old order, it simply evolved from it to produce a modern system of 'racial capitalism' dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism and genocide" (Kelley, 2017).[9]

Racial capitalism in South Africa relates to race, class and accumulation. In other words, when the apartheid was judicially dismantled, what system remained? The contemporary state maintains the violent systemic structures which produced deep racial, class and gender

9 — Robin D. G. Kelley, "What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?" *Boston Review*, December 21, 2017. http://bostonreview.net/race/robin-d-g-kelley-what-did-cedric-robinson-mean-racial-capitalism (Accessed 20 January, 2021).

inequality (Kelley, 2017). Many Black South Africans still live below the poverty line. Following the post-1994 euphoria, we are dispossessed and used for cheap labour. This, in contrast to rapid corruption and poor service delivery. There are regular headlines of government mismanagement which is seldom reprimanded or permanently dealt with.

The ANC [African National Congress] policies... [have] fostered and embraced the rapid growth of a black elite and middle class in the post-apartheid period, as one of the most striking signs of the erasure of the racist regime of the past. While this trend had been seeded in preceding decades, the statutory de-racialization of economic activity, along with policies of affirmative action, boosted the existing momentum for upward mobility. And since 2003, with the passage of the Black Economic Empowerment Act, new opportunities have been created for a rapid reallocation of wealth to black entrepreneurs, albeit to a small group of beneficiaries (Posel, 2010: 159).

These policies have benefited a small minority. For many South Africans, the quality of life has not changed, and the promise of social and racial equality remains dim. "The ANC led [initiatives to deracialise the economy have significantly contributed to]... an autonomous sense of individualism, accomplishment and success among the new black elite and middle class, which has found expression in lavish forms of lifestyle and extravagant patterns of consumption in the face of rising levels of poverty, unemployment and socio-economic inequality" (Cloete, 2014: 38). For the Black elite, pure leisure is a leap outside the racialised class. Moreover, as Alexander argues, there has been little change with transforming the structure of the economy. He asserts:

[O]wnership and control of the commanding heights of the economy... have remained substantially in the same hands as during the heyday of apartheid. It is perfectly justifiable to say that what we used to call the apartheid capitalist system has simply given way to the post-apartheid capitalist system. The jargon of those who make the decisions has changed (everyone has become 'non-racial' and 'anti-racist'), a few thousand black middle class people have boarded the gravy train and are being wooed into the ranks of the established (white) elite, but the nature of the state remained fundamentally unchanged (Alexander, 2002: 64).

The question of Black leisure represents a tension between racial capitalism and leisure. Leisure is seen as opposed to capitalism: "free time" versus "work time". It is the fact of not owning one's own labour (thus time) that's the fundamental issue. In the contemporary, we all exist within the same structure, but the notion of "free time" is designed to make it more possible to accept a capitalist, realist conception of the world. Arguably, if we take this into account, then the notion of leisure is fraught with the idea that enjoyment only exists within a

Above — Figure 19, *eBhish'*, still from 3-channel video, 3:40 minutes, 2021.

constructed framework of class division. To a degree, it accepts a colonial parameterisation around where social enjoyment does and doesn't live.

The articulation of Black leisure ebhish', eThekwini is despatialised. It is an articulation of an unnameable space, a metaphysical realm as well as a fun, social, summer practice which disrupts capitalism's spatialisation of space and free/unfree activity. This is what happens on December sixteenth, December twenty-sixth, December thirty-first, January first and the days in between.

Articulations of Black leisure

Video art merges multiple disciplines together such as motion picture, performance, sound and temporality. Time is central in the production, as the video artist dictates duration to engage differently with the audience (Malatjie, 2020). Historically, video art subverted the need for a commodified art object that could be sold, displayed, and collected. Catherine Elwes adds, "[A]rtists wanted to create an encounter with the viewer that was... immediate". Performance art also achieved this, as "no artefact stood between the artist and the audience and no object remained after the event" (Elwes, 2000: 6). Video art was similarly a "suitably ephemeral medium" that defied art objectification (Ibid., 2006: 6). Furthermore, both performance art and video art focused on the participation of the viewer. As Elwes states, "[V]ideo and performance relocated the meaning of a work to the creative space opened up by the encounter between artist, technology, performance, props and the audience" (Elwes, 2006: 8).

The form and composition of the video piece is presented in multiples of three, conveying an interplay between the expansive and the intimate nature of Black life at ebhish' in summer. The three-channel video piece is composed of drone shots and ground level view shots. The drone shots depict a mass of beachgoers swimming as a unit. Visually, these sweeping visuals speak to cartographies of control, histories of mapping, aerial geography, taxonomy and separation. This is in contrast to the ground level view shots which depict a more intimate exploration of the

space with a direct view of the beachgoers. Woods asserts that maps work to situate our lived perceptions of "the territory" from within a frame that has been put into place in the past. They "*map locations* so much as *create ownership at a location*" (Woods, 1992: 21). During apartheid, the beach had boundaries and borders which delineated ownership of territory, not simply to record locations, but to divide (Woods,1992: 22).

In a way, the aerial shots (formed by Black people in chorus) work as a map to *remake* the territory. In the meeting place between the present-tense "world" and the past-tense map of "the world", the three-channel video piece acts as the view of the people who stand in the field while holding a map of the field, oscillating between frames of reference that are, in some sense, both imagined and real, evoking what Woods calls the "whatever-is-not-here-present-to-our-senses-now" (Wood,1992: 5).

The video work is scored by a diegetic sound which moves fluidly from sounds of crowds to sounds of the ocean. The deliberate jump cuts are to pull the viewer in and out. The piece speaks to Arthur Jafa's filmmaking technique called "Black Visual Intonation" (BVI) which, according to the artist and filmmaker, reflects the structure and cycles of Black culture. The BVI methodology led Jafa to approach filmmaking through the structure of Black music. Jafa explains his mode as "the use of irregular, non-tempered (non-metronomic) camera rates and frame replication to prompt filmic movement to function in a manner that approximates Black vocal intonation" (Jafa, 1987: 267). Semiotically refusing normative expectations of Blackness, specifically at the beach (by taking up space), the sound composition rejects the "expectations of how black people are meant to sound (or not sound) in certain spaces – and a signal of the impure nature of the experiences of blackness in an anti-black world" (Malatjie, 2019: 10).

Filmmaker Pratibha Parmar states, "[I]mages play a crucial role in defining and controlling the political and social power to which both individuals and marginalized groups have access. The deeply ideological nature of imagery determines not only how other people think about us but how we think about ourselves" (Parmar quoted by hooks, 1992:

Above — Figure 20, *eBhish'*, still from 3-channel video, 3:40 minutes, 2021.

5). During apartheid and colonial South Africa, most Black families saw visuals of iTheku through popular media, such as television programmes and postcards, depicting mostly white South African families. The visuals fed to them through the media made many Black people yearn to be a part of the prime subtropical beach with its lavish hotels. eThekwini became the archetype of a summer paradise. Its architecture evolved in tandem with global, seaside trends, from an English sea-bathing seaside resort, to a colourful Floridian one with surfers, water parks and modern beach amenities.

Before apartheid formally ended in 1994, various public spaces began integration. In November of 1982, a portion of the beach was opened for all races (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982: 30). When democracy was ushered in, the African National Congress government focussed on promoting national unity under the term "Rainbow Nation". The optimism was seen in the slight increase in racial diversity at ebhish' during the summer holidays. However, as the years went by, the population of white beachgoers significantly decreased.

The contemporary is proliferated with various forms of "imperialist nostalgia" (Rosaldo, 1993), which insists on particular beach attire, beach etiquette and questions the ways in which Black visitors engage with the water. This presents past injustices as "innocent", thus making white societies appear "orderly", mourning the Black "native traditions" (which they have methodically destroyed), and humiliating Black people through various violent indoctrinations (Rosaldo, 1993).

Humiliation has been "[weaponized] in social efforts to exclude certain groups and persons" (Nussbaum, 2004: 107). Most Black people are mocked for the way they swim. In her poem "Water", Koleka Putuma uncloaks the politics of water, the history of colonialism and maritime history behind the stereotype:

And I often hear this joke
About Black people not being able to swim,
Or being scared of water;
We are mocked
And we have often mocked ourselves
For wiping our faces the way that we do when we come out of the water-
Compare it to how they do it all bay-watch like
And how we, so ratchet-like with our postures and kink.
Yet every time our skin goes under
It's as if the reeds remember that they were once chains
And the water, restless, wishes it could spew all of the slaves and ships onto shore
Whole as they had boarded, sailed and sunk
Their tears are what have turned the ocean salty,
This is why our irises burn every time we go under.[10]

White people, being granted full access to public facilities like swimming pools, were able to learn to swim from an early age. In contrast, most Black townships had one public swimming pool, which was often under-resourced and overcrowded. Most people, like my grandparents and parents, never had the opportunity to learn how to swim. Unfortunately, in democratic South Africa, this remains unchanged.

In this way, Black leisure ebhish' laseThekwini becomes in and of itself a form of refusal, a certain kind of a transgression against white supremacist values and aesthetics. Whereas the archetype of white seaside leisure has an established hierarchy of prioritized bodies, (tanned, ripped, skinny), Black seaside leisure welcomes all body types. Those who do not have swimming garments (a swimming costume, or swimming shorts) use whatever garment they have. For those without a swimming cap, a plastic bag is an option. There are many who avoid the water, and sit by the beach, simply enjoying its rehabilitative qualities. Arguably, these forms of openness-as-transgression have become the symbol of Black leisure ebhish' laseThekwini.

10 — Extract from Koleka Putuma, "Water", *Collective Amnesia*, 2016.

Within a South African socio-political context, the politics of difference raises issues of exclusion and inclusion. Seaside leisure spaces are not immune from this response, and can become spaces of exclusion in which identity is preserved against outsiders. As the public space is inscribed by both spatial and mental structures, the beach is one of the places where power is affirmed and exercised. Without a doubt, the push-back against Black leisure in even the most subtle forms is an example of symbolic violence as unnoticed violence (Bourdieu, 1997: 163).

In his acclaimed novel *Mating Birds* (1986), Lewis Nkosi conveys the experience of alienation ebhish' laseThekwini, where it was not safe to enact leisure or to appear to be looking across racial boundaries. Set in apartheid, *Mating Birds* tells the story of Ndi Sibiya, a Black man who is jailed and sentenced to death for 'looking' at a white woman named Veronica at a segregated beach. The novel is a yearning for liberation, for a more just future in which human relations are not distorted by oppressive laws or racial prejudice (Graham, 2006: 149).

The December summer holiday popularly known as Dezemba (adopted from colloquial *Ke Dezemba Boss*), is a time of leisure for most South Africans. Historically, most Black people were denied prime seaside access and were displaced to townships and homesteads, often far away from the sea. Apartheid legislation imposed strict curfews limiting Black mobility. Laws such as the Native Act of 1952, instituted throughout South Africa, made it compulsory for all Black people to carry a passbook at all times when within white, designated spaces. Within the context of iTheku, Black people entered the city to work in docks, rickshaws, infrastructure and domestic labour. Their access to leisure was impeded. These systematic apartheid laws, imposed on

Left — Figure 21, *Untitled 26 (16th December 2019)*, 2021.

our mobility and agency, established a routine for Black people, thus becoming a normalized, fixed way of life.

As a result of European and British colonialism, South Africa adopted the Gregorian calendar. Originating in pre-Christian Rome, it is divided into 12 months, 365 or 366 days in total, anchored by the concept of weeks. Capitalist economic development was built and sustained on this module, and determines how many days people should work in a year. In December, most countries with Christian historical links celebrate Christmas and are given a holiday from work. Locally, popular culture feeds into the euphoria of the summer season:

> ***Hello, hello!***
> ***Hello, December! (Hello!)***
> ***Whatsup? (Is it on?)***
> ***In the area!***[11]

In contemporary South Africa, economic inequality and equity disparity remain high. The Dezemba[12] summer holiday season is the main period when most Black people have a short break away from their routines to gather with friends and family. Throughout the year, many save through community initiatives like stokvels, which are divided in Dezemba. Some earn a thirteenth salary or a bonus salary; this becomes an allowance for most families to have disposable income to spend on treats and leisurely activities (Hlalethwa, 2018).

Since the late 90s, most summer anthems are released during this period, all vying for the coveted title of Song of Year, Ingoma ehlukanisa unyaka, which ushers us into the new year. Similar to how Rap and Hip-Hop music narrates Black experiences in the United States, South African Kwaito, Durban Kwaito and Gqom became the genres through which to narrate the experience of Black life and aspirations in townships using a Black vernacular tied to the community and its youth culture. In defiance of overwhelming unemployment, limited opportunities and inequality, young musicians and producers chose to imagine possibilities for themselves and carve out a new livelihood. For example, the once unattainable "Durban leisure", became the subject of a popular Summer Anthem and Song of the Year in 2007, made by Professor and Tzozo called "Woz' eDurban" (Kalawa Jazmee, 2007). The song's chorus encourages people from various parts of the country to pack their bags and travel to ibhish' laseThekwini:

> ***Pakishani, pakishani, pakishani, pakishani - ziph' ikhwama?***
> ***Pakishani, pakishani, pakishani, pakishani - siyahamba manje!***
> ***Pakishani, pakishani, pakishani, pakishani - siy' eDurban!***
> ***Pakishani, pakishani, pakishani, pakishani - siy' eDurban!***
> ***Ziphi ikhwama? ziphi ikhwama? siyahamba manje, siy' eDurban***[13]

11 — TKZee, "Dlala Mapantsula", BMG Records Africa, 1998.
12 — Dezemba comes from the colloquial "Ke Dezemba Boss". It refers to the festive season, a pause and break for some from the cycle of labour, beginning on the 1st of December. During this period, many South Africans congregate with family and friends in leisure.
13 — Professor and Tzozo, "Woz' eDurban", Kalawa Jazmee, 2007.

The music video was filmed ebhish' laseThekwini and features emblematic motifs of the beach including rickshaws, the ocean, architecture and features dancing scenes in various public spaces. This form of self-determination both maintains and reproduces social life and refuses a certain script of what Black leisure should be.

For many years, Black people were denied leisure and were expected to obey and uphold the apartheid regime. Through mass media, the white middle class were depicted as the sole and rightful users of the ibhish' laseThekwini. The imagery dispersed through motion pictures, still photographs and postcards was ideologically intended to centre whiteness in seaside leisure. In the contemporary, Black life and Black experiences at the beach have been re-inscribed through the establishment of Black beach culture in eThekwini and reinforced by popular culture. My body of work is an endeavour to affirm the importance of Black leisure. It seeks to reflect and project Black experiences within the space and capture the everchanging rich landscape.

Black abjection – The Black body in the public beach

Within a decade, formal apartheid ended, and ibhish' laseThekwini opened to all races. However, in a post-apartheid South Africa, this seaside leisure remains restricted, policed and questioned. Racist social media remarks about Black people at the Durban beach by some white residents of eThekwini have continued, and recent incidents have gone 'viral'. On the 2nd of January 2016, Penny Sparrow made a Facebook post in which she refers to Black people on the beach as monkeys. Sparrow's racist remarks were echoed by Justin Van Vuuren on social media who himself called for the privatization of public property and referred to Black people as "the scum of the nation".

The racially motivated call for the privatization of public property illustrates Van Vuuren's abjection of Blackness in public, rendering Black people as undeserving of leisure, and therefore as objects which function solely for labour. Sara Ahmed adds a Foucauldian dimension to the scholarship of disgust by emphasizing the performativity of aversive emotions. She notes:

> **[W]hen thinking about how bodies become objects of disgust, we can see that disgust is crucial to power relations. The relation between disgust and power is evident when we consider the spatiality of disgust relations... [D]isgust at 'that which is below' functions to maintain the power relations between above and below, *through which 'aboveness' and 'belowness' become properties of particular bodies, objects and spaces* (Ahmed, 2004: 88, emphasis added).**

Ahmed describes how the attribution of disgust constitutes the disgusting object: a subject feels something to be disgusting (a reception that relies on a history previous to the encounter), expels that thing (either literally or metaphorically), and through expelling it, finds it to be

disgusting. In turn, this disgusted response becomes "the truth" of the object, thing or person deemed revolting (Ibid.: 87). In short, through the act of being disgusted, the subject constitutes the disgusting object. Ahmed argues that this process always operates discursively, and that images and signs of disgust become habituated through repetition. Disgust does not come from nowhere but relies upon "histories of articulation", which bind signs of disgust to specific objects and bodies (Ibid.: 92). As she writes, "[T]he attribution of quality to substance... relies on the *figurability* of disgust" (Ibid.: 90, emphasis added). Fred Moten expands on this. He writes, "[B]lackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of Real, for in its magnetizing of bullets the black body functions as the map of gratuitous violence through which civil society is possible - namely, those bodies for which violence is, or can be, contingent" (Moten, 2013: 240).

With reference to the Lacanian notion of Jouissance (enjoyment of the other), it can be argued that from within the frame of the white gaze, the leisure of the Other is seen to be repulsive. (Hook, 2017: 3)[14]. Based on the pleasure principle, jouissance fuels racial hate. The pleasure of the "Other" is regarded as a threat. This can be seen in how the hate-speech by the likes of Sparrow and Van Vuuren tends to primitivize and hypersexualise the Black subject as animalistic. It reflects the precarity of white civility, and its dependence on the control of the bodies of Others who seem to have less repression of enjoyment. The archetypal "primitive" in the white imagination is presented as a figure with unbridled leisure: lazing about in nature, eating fruits and copulating without a care in the world. Jouissance engages with how leisure is imagined and socially structured. Amber Jamilla Musser's concept of "brown jouissance" attempts to focus on the "moments when Thing, Other, and object converge to form selfhood" (Musser, 2018: 13). Musser provides us with frameworks for a "mysterious fleshiness that resists legibility but hovers on the surface... Brown jouissance, I argue, gives us ways to think about the possibilities of re-signifying that affective fleshiness, by showing that which is not encumbered by discourses of sexuality, but that which traffics in sensuality, that amorphous quality of fleshiness that [Hortense] Spillers[15] argues was assigned to the captive body" (Musser, 2018: 9). Musser turns to "the pornotrope", which "allows us to see the violence of excess without flattening the violence at its core". She writes:

> **To think with the flesh is to hold violence and possibility in the same frame, it also the act of reclaiming and remaking selfhood, and asserting that selfhood though not a sovereign subject exists in relation to minority knowledge production**

14 — Dereck Hook, "What is 'enjoyment as a political factor'?", Duquesne University and University of Pretoria, undated. https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/61737/Hook_What_2017.pdf?sequence=1

15 — "1) the captive body becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality; 2) at the same time -in stunning contradiction- the captive body reduces to a thing, becoming being for the captor; 3) in this absence from a subject position, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of "otherness"; 4) as a category of "otherness ," the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general "powerlessness," resonating through various centers of human and social meaning". Hortense Spillers, *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book*, 1987.

system and entomologies of sensuality [and pleasure]... we are able to see that flesh becomes something else, a space of possibility, interiority and creativity – rather than merely abdicating subjectivity, these reclamations of selfhood through brown jouissance, provide a scaffolding for imagining and prioritizing ways of being that centre co-existing, caring and sensuality (Musser, 2019)[16].

The formal archive deliberately abjectified Black leisure. Public expression of Bblack leisure was moderated, surveilled and criminalized. Other forms which were not legible to the white gaze were framed as disgusting. Musser's brown jouissance provides space for both leisure and sensuality and like liquid archives, brown jouissance fosters life creation, even around places that previously represented state violence.

16 — Imagine Otherwise: Amber Jamilla Musser on Valuing Embodied Knowledge. (July, 2019) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuUVWmRRkYM (Accessed 9th February, 2021).

Black Spirituality and Water

Sizothandaza
Sizonxusa
Sizobhabhadiswa
Sizodumisa
Sizobamunye
Sizokhumbula
Sizokwelashwa
Sizokhuluma nabadala
Sizozalwa kabusha

In many ways, the beach carries a multi-layered currency. It is a site of leisure and worship: the meeting point of two seemingly juxtaposing elements. It is my belief that, when we visit the beach, even for leisurely purposes, we are spiritually restored. There is a connection between two worlds: amaThongo and the present. In engaging through what Alexander refers to as a "palimpsestic time", the beach exists in a time which is both "here and there, then and now" (Alexander, 2005: 190). The beach is used as a site of cleansing the soul from the woes of living in the world whilst Black.

The diabolical apartheid law, Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1957, prevented many from praying at the beach. This sacred act was misread and misinterpreted as witchcraft, which was banned by the state. Those who were found guilty would be fined a hefty fee, or imprisoned (Harnischfeger, 2002)[17]. Many traditional healers and izangoma were prevented from practicing traditional ceremonies and praying. This jurisdiction of eurocentrism was not only a grave violation to the flesh, but that of the metaphysical Black body, and persisted well into democratic South Africa, feeding into the systematic stigma associated with traditional healers, abathandazi and izangoma.

In my view, when we go ebhish', it is spirituality in motion. When we congregate in groups (emanzini), there is an interplay of leisure and metaphysical reignition: Black people collectively traversing physical and spiritual terrain. This is a spatial-temporal dynamic force in action, enjoyment and fun underlaced by spiritual reconfiguration. To the common eye, this looks like leisure, but there is an unnameable, finer evocation. This view correlates with Credo Mutwa's understanding of amahlengetho (dolphins) as both playful and sacred, linked to Sirius (Canis Major) as well as ancient beings. Amahlengetho carry sacred knowledge and enact interspecies communication; they are totem animals for some families and clans, and have significant cultural significance (Mutwa, 2015)[18]. Moreover, isizwe samaZulu (Zulu people), believe that mermaids possess divine properties. Colloquially, they were believed to emerge from the waters at night, resulting in many avoiding rivers, dams and the ocean after nightfall (Bernard, 2013: 7).

17 — Johannes Harnischfeger, "Witchcraft and the State in South Africa", 2002. http://www.africana.ru/biblio/afrocentrism/12_Harnischfeger.htm (Accessed 5 February, 2021).
18 — "Credo Mutwa Speaks - Dolphins", 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=166iR3XQp7o (Accessed 3 October, 2020).

Left — Figure 22, *Untitled 22 (April, 2020)*, 2021.

Nguni aquatic spiritual beliefs and practices

With every beach trip, we would collect seawater into empty two or five-litre plastic bottles. Similar to my family and I, *Untitled 24 (April, 2020)* depicts a person collecting sea water with five-litre plastic bottles. My grandparents and parents use the sea water to cleanse themselves internally, externally and spiritually. To cleanse internally, we drink sea water to remove toxins. External use is typically done as protection from evil spirits. This practice has been passed down for generations. The idiom *kukhona okushaya amanzi* (loosely translated to being cautious, or "something is beating the waters") signals the sea water's sacred and divine powers. It is a customary belief that water is a medium between the subterranean, the terrestrial and celestial worlds, uniting them together in the vital, cosmic flow of life.

In my many conversations with elders, friends and family, there is a thread of reverence for the ocean. Generally, most conversations emphasized the belief that the ocean acts as a portal for ancestral, spiritual connection. The ocean is deeply tied to our mythologies and beliefs and our metaphysical understanding of the abundance of multi-world worlds, which can be accessed through the water. In these various conversations, there are correlations with practical uses which transverse tribal categories. These conversations, which also speak to our collective memories with the ocean across generations, score the exhibition. Furthermore, the recordings bring the flesh, through embodied knowledge, into the space. Musser argues that "flesh is the site through which knowledge is taken in and produced... and becomes externalised, [informing] how we organise ourselves."[19]

Water is generative and constitutes life. Through water in its various manifestations we communicate, teach, initiate and establish reciprocal relations (Bernard, 2013: 138). Berglund writes that these divine and sacred properties are exclusively associated with "living water". In response to Berglund's question of whether the "waters of the snake" were "special waters", his source reveals: "It is as I said, water that is living, running in the river. That is the living water. If the water had been in a dam as you asked (a while ago), then there would not be a snake in it. It is the living waters" (Bernard quotes Berglund, 1976: 146). We believe that *living water* has spiritual properties responsible for life. Obstructing its flow in the form of a dam renders the water lifeless, as the snake/mermaid divinities will not reside there. For many divine healers, a frequent term used for such rituals is umsebenzi (work): a ritual of exchange. For some traditional healers, these sacred places are where they tap into the aquatic life-force to appeal for rain and other blessings, or cross the portal into the spirit world. Izangoma use the living waters for a variety of purposes. Some pray, intercede, baptize and heal people, connecting with ancestral realms which reignites their spiritual abilities.

There are various modes of traditional healing. The most common are diviners (iZangoma), herbalists (iZinyanga), and faith healers (aBathandazi), and each perform a particular role in the community (Nene, 2013: 39). Nene quotes Kohler (1941: 6) and notes: "iZangoma are the keystone of this system because they are the media of supernatural powers, that is, the ancestor spirits (*amathongo/amadlozi*) of their clans" (Nene, 2013: 39).

Traditionally, we believe that *ulwandle liyikhaya lamadlozi neThongo* –an ancestral realm which carries spiritual reverence– was created by uMvelinqangi (the Most High/divine consciousness). As such, there are various beliefs and practices connected to it. For instance, when twins enter the ocean, it is customary for them to throw a silver coin into the water as an acknowledgement of the sacred space. This is also done by iZangoma.

iZangoma are chosen by abantu abadala (amaThongo), ancestors who call them typically through dreams. During initiation, iSangoma becomes, as Credo Mutwa puts it, "the house of dreams'' (Booi, 2004: 5). Some diviners/spiritually gifted people dream of water, while some diviners may only experience the underwater in a dream. This rare yet sacred occurrence only happens at specific living waters, i.e. specific pools, rivers or the sea. This is an indication of ubizo; they are being called by ancestors to undergo training through water (Booi, 2004: 5). The serpent, *inyoka yasemanzini,* is the healer, particularly for people

19 — Imagine Otherwise: Amber Jamilla Musser on Valuing Embodied Knowledge. (July, 2019) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuUVWmRRkYM (Accessed 9 February, 2021).

who have a link to water ancestors. When they are called, they generally see the water snake or a snake in water. This signifies life and healing (Siwani, 2020)[20]. Following the dream (the dream is an instruction, a guide), the diviner seeks to locate the site, which may be unknown to them, where they perform propitiatory rituals to initiate connections with water sites, at which ritual supplications can periodically be made to appeal for material, social and spiritual links (Bernard, 2013: 140). Upon return, through considered counsel with isangoma, they have to undergo periods of spiritual training aimed at establishing communication abilities with idlozi kanye neThongo (their ancestors) through dreams and various states of consciousness.

Religion, Water and Leisure
The interplay of spirituality, leisure and pleasure

In Freudian psychoanalytical theory of personality, "the pleasure principle is the driving force of *the id* which gratifies all needs, wants, and urges. In other words, the pleasure principle strives to fulfil our most basic and primitive urges, including hunger, thirst, anger, and sex".[21] In contrast with Christianity, pleasure is associated with the original sin, by which we're all "born with a built-in urge to do bad things and to disobey God... [It] forms parts of the *Doctrine of the Fall*, the belief that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they 'fell' from perfection and brought evil into a perfect world".[22] In the context of African independent churches, which merge and reappropriate Christian European thought and beliefs with African indigenous religious practices, how do we position African thought in relation to leisure? Although there are no clear answers, this complication and despatialization of Christianity –where, for instance, in the context of African independent churches, the beach can be a site of both leisure and a site of worship– creates a space to engage with, and enact multiple modalities of Black life.

Sabelo Mlangeni's *Mfundisi Ndlangamandla eFernie* depicts uMfundisi (loosely translated to priest) in a riverbank. The image was exhibited at his Wits Art Museum (WAM), *Umlindelo wamaKholwa* in 2018, curated by Kabelo Malatsie and Joel Cabrita. The exhibition's focus was the Zion church, whose faith is Pentecostal, "meaning its practices include speaking in tongues, purification, healing, baptism, etc. It's exegetical emphasis on Zion greatly characterizes the anticipatory longing for 'place' that is central to the Ethiopian movement... [The Zion's church is a result] of the separatist tradition that precedes it, as it is also that of a spatial displacement engendered by the native land act... [E] choes of this background can be felt and seen in their liturgical practices which are based on combining African traditional practices and the Christian faith" (Joja, 2018). *Mfundisi Ndlangamandla eFernie* draws our vision to the large river: a site of worship, leisure and more. The black and

20 — Email correspondence with Buhlebezwe Siwani, November, 2020.
21 — Moccia L, Mazza M, Di Nicola M, Janiri L. The Experience of Pleasure: A Perspective Between Neuroscience and Psychoanalysis. *Front Hum Neurosci*, 2018: 12,359. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnhum.2018.00359/full (Accessed 9 February, 2021)
22 — "Original Sin", BBC - Religions - Christianity, 2009. https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/beliefs/originalsin_1.shtml (Accessed 11 February, 2021).

Above — Figure 23, Sabelo Mlangeni, Mfundisi Ndlangamandla eFernie, 2002.

white photograph is a meeting of embodied release through social and spiritual practices, revealing the complexity of the site, whilst refusing ascribed and fixed forms of existence. In either context, the water bears witness and facilitates a coming together in community or in congregation, and centers embodied/ephemeral knowledge production. In other words, a liquid archive. Mlangeni's "[interest] in the Zion Church as a community, where people gather like spiritual [siblings]... and ukulinda/umlindelo is very central to this; it's a time when a community is created by the experience of waiting together" (Lim, 2018).

The legibility of the water in this context is religious. The subject, uMfundisi, is in the midground of the image wearing a white garment. In the foreground, where uMfundisi's gaze is fixed, there are a few straws of grass. To the viewer's right, there is a large rock from which one can assume is "the entrance" to the water. To the left and background, there is a bush and other forms of vegetation. Mlageni's use of black and white photography permeates time, transporting viewers to "a time before". This methodology made him reflect on "amaQaba, the people who resisted Christianity and Western civilisation" (Lim, 2018), interlacing the past, present and future. This can be easily read as representational resistance, but refuses that ethnological framing. Kevin Quashie (2012: 4-5) reminds us:

> **[R]esistance is hard to argue against, since it has been so essential to every black freedom movement. And yet resistance is too broad a term—it is too clunky and vague and imprecise**

to be a catch all for a whole range of behaviors and ambitions. It is not nuanced enough to characterize the totality of black culture or expression. Resistance exists, for sure, and deserves to be named and studied. And still, sometimes, when the term "resistance" is used, what is being described is something finer.

Given the history of South Africa and formations of the Zion church, the relationship between the land, water and uMfundisi, is stark. The porous photograph alludes to current constatation of many Black South Africans on land, above all, without perpetuating hegemonic practices of representation. It articulates the intricacies of seen and unseen worlds, as well as the history and faith of the Zion church.

Black Subjectivity

Through thinking about Black leisure and Black spiritual expressions, how can we think about Blackness and Black subjectivity? Considering the humiliation, the limitations, how (or, where) do we locate subjectivity? Is it through Black objecthood, as what Fanon calls "a zone of nonbeing", explained by Lewis Gordon as follows?

> **Fanon raises this schism between individual and structure through making an important distinction. That the study of the black as a form of human study requires understanding what he calls *ontogenic* and *phylogenic* approaches. Ontogenic approaches address the individual organism. Phylogenic approaches address the species. The distinction pertains to the individual and structure. Fanon adds that such distinctions often miss a third factor—the *sociogenic*. The sociogenic pertains to what emerges from the social world, the intersubjective world of culture, history, language, economics. In that world, he reminds us, it is the human being who brings such forces into existence. What does recognition of such a factor offer our understanding of the black problem and what blacks want? The black is marked by the dehumanizing bridge between individual and structure posed by antiblack racism; the black is, in the end, "anonymous," which enables "the black" to collapse into "blacks." Whereas "blacks" is not a proper name, antiblack racism makes it function as such, as a name of familiarity that closes off the need for further knowledge. Each black is, thus, ironically nameless by virtue of being *named* "black." So blacks find themselves, Fanon announces at the outset, not structurally regarded as human beings (Gordon, 2006: 2-3).**

Seeing as Black people have been categorically rendered nonbeing, could liquid archives offer us approaches to think about Black subjectivity?

In his seminal text, *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W. E. B. Du Bois unpacks the material causes of systemic racism and its effects on Black American identity. Du Bois believed that at the dawn of twentieth century, the society which restricted Black Americans from achieving equity in a post-slavery era, would persist and pose a problem for Black American identity. Du Bois argues that Black and white Americans were separated by a colour line. This colourline not only denied Black Americans fair access to jobs, education and opportunity, but also weighed heavily on their souls and prevented them from achieving their potential as human beings. Du Bois describes "the veil" as a barrier which prevents white Americans from recognising Black Americans as citizens, thus relegating them to subaltern status. Moreover, "the veil" prevents Black Americans from seeing themselves as anything other than the ways they were portrayed by white Americans. Du Bois speaks of "lifting the veil" as an allegory for white American society to recognise the humanity of Black Americans and affirm them as equal citizens:

> **After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born**

Left — Figure 24, Santu Mofokeng, "Replacing of Sand Washed Away During the Floods and Wave Action," South Beach, Durban, 2007. Santu Mofokeng/ Santu Mofokeng Foundation.

with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (DuBois, 1997 [1903]: 38).

In *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Toni Morrison eloquently conveys this racial divide. Morrison writes, "[I]t is the blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edged with distaste in white eyes" (1970: 49). This abjection of Blackness is imbued into various aspects of society and is evident in racial disparity (Rose, 2020). Tricia Rose defines structural racism as "the normalisation and legitimization of an array of dynamics– historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal– that routinely advantage white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of colour)" (Rose, 2020)[23]. Can the Black body attain subjectivity as Audre Lorde describes it: a call to consciousness and the discovery of the origins of the self, a desire for wholeness, personal freedom, and cultural determination (Lorde, 1984: 17)? Although whiteness clouds the way, "we have tremendous life. But life is not analogous to those touchstones

of cohesion that hold civil society together" (Hartman and Wilderson, 2003: 187). Fanon writes:

I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the sources of the world, and then I found out that I was an object in the midst of other objects (Fanon, 1986: 82).

Writing this during a global pandemic, which is disproportionately affecting Black people, further reinforces Fanon's statement. Repressive apparatuses such as police and prisons, as well as the social structures which preserve these racial, racialised and racist historism remain intact (Davids, 2017)[24].

Here, in South Africa, we share with the United States the ongoing legacies of white supremacy and state violence. The threat of white supremacy in its numerous forms is always present, even when we proclaim Black Lives Matter: for Collins Khosa, Sibusisio Amos, Petrus Miggles, Adanne Manuel, Robyn Monstumi, Ntando Sigasa, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Mike Brown, Sandra Bland, Nina Pop, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner and countless others. da Silva's "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(Ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World" (2014) engages with Fanon's understanding of Blackness as object. de Silva implores us to "hope that the End of the World will emancipate the Thing from Categories (strategies of particularization) as well as from anything that resembles an attempt to give it an Essence (of the teleology of Spirit or the flow that is Duration), whether or not it is modelled after time" (2014: 87).

Right — Figure 25, Cedric Nunn, Coloured Beach, Durban, 1982. Local History Museum, eThekwini

Left — Figure 26, Tracey Rose, Lucie's Fur Version 1:1:1 - Annunciation - Context, 2003. Medium: Colour Lamba print. Dimensions: 74 x 96 cm. Edition 1/8. Courtesy the artist and Dan Gunn, London.

Photography and Black subjectivity

The weaponization of representation is ingrained in power and control. Elizabeth Ellsworth denotes how "[r]epresentation presents its subject again, in ways that have mediated it through language, ideology, culture, power, convention, desire". In other words, representations shape our understanding of truth and therefore "set the terms of culture" (Ellsworth, 1997: 76).

Historically, photography was used as an ethnographic tool to police, survey, and manage the movement and activities of the subaltern (Spivak, 1988: 104). Photographic technology was instrumentalized to capture the subject (a body) and place them in a hold of representation. "Surveillance is the key to colonization" (hooks, 2014)[25]. Visualisations produce an "Other", cementing colonial and imperial frameworks. In the contemporary, photography continues to be dominated by legacies of a colonial consciousness repressed in the present (Sealy, 2019: 6), and deeply embedded in the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2017).

The question of consent cannot be avoided. At the beginning of this endeavour, I burdened myself with impossible standards. These were largely framed by a quest of affirming and asserting our collective narratives into the history of art in a less western-dominant perspective. Given the proximity of the space and subjectivity, I wrestled with how close to get, what to reveal and whether or not the work was ethically produced. These questions I cannot answer, but what revealed itself to me in studying photographs akin to Bob Gosani's[26]

photography of Dolly Rathebe[27] at the 'African' beach (which opened September, 1929) in July, 1955, for the Drum Magazine, was a significant turning point. Drum was an important publication for Black creative practitioners who were actively shaping how Black cosmopolitan life was produced and represented in society. Moreover, the contemporary work is not made in a silo, acknowledging the contributions of artists like Santu Mofokeng, Cedric Nunn, and Tracey Rose, who through their own lens' and positionalities have engaged with the site, too.

These contributions made it clear that I was a subject actively collaborating in the making of the image, one with a clear position. Moreover, on various visits most people exercised their agency when asked to be photographed, proclaiming *cela ungshutha nami*[28] which opened up dialogue about the intent before the making. Here, I am not overlooking the power dynamics of appearing with a camera. In these articulations of agency, what some of the people understood is that there is waiting involved. By this, I mean in addition to swimming while documenting, I would wait for the images to reveal themselves. In many ways I was searching for memories and for the future. I would wait for the moments in between. Some of the photographs are posed, and this is also important to document, and to bear witness to. So are the mundane pauses which are equally significant. But, there is also waiting in terms of the processing of the film, which at times due to humidity, or water damage, and other elements, have not yet been developed. There are many photographs which have never left ulwandle, but were made nonetheless, and perhaps they will come, perhaps not.

Right — Figure 27, Dolly Rathebe photographed by Bob Gosani, 1955. Bailey Archives

Left — Figure 28, *Untitled 1 (December 16th 2019)*, 2021.

Untitled 1 (December 16th 2019), is an example of how Hartman's temporality at the fictional crossroads between past and future presents an understanding of time as elastic, mouldable; time which is fluid and moves like water; time like memory, which speaks to various temporalities, thus complicating an understanding of history as fixed and therefore reliable. The photograph, made in contemporary South Africa, could be perceived as dated from the 1980s as it transverses time.

Above Left — Figure 29, *Untitled 2 (January 1st 2020)*, 2021.

Above Right — Figure 30, *Untitled 3 (1st January 2020)*, 2021

Untitled 2 (1st January 2020) stylistically explores nostalgia and absence. The photographs are not concerned with presenting Black leisure as a spectacle, but rather as Georges Perec's "infraordinary": the mundane as reverence. The work explores the link between archive, affect and the everyday. It is an intimate history (Hajratwala, 2007), a narration of the self in relation to an opaque past, and a stubborn present.

In many ways, colonialism has led to our own sense of alienation. *eBhish'* highlights articulations of shared public intimacy at the beach: moments of Black tenderness, Black joy, Black love. In the de-colonial era "critical internations" (hooks, 1995: 59) have carved space for Black communities to image and visualise ourselves, thus re-framing photography as a "potentially emancipatory practice" (Masondo, 2020: 11).

White people, having been granted full access to public facilities like swimming pools, were able to learn to swim from an early age. In contrast, most Black townships had one public swimming pool, which was often under-resourced and overcrowded. Most people, like my grandparents and parents, had never had the opportunity to learn how to swim. Unfortunately, in democratic South Africa, this remains the same. In this way, Black social life ebhish' laseThekwini becomes, in and of itself, a form of rejection, and a certain kind of a transgression of white supremacist values and aesthetics. Where the archetype of white seaside leisure has an established hierarchy of bodies, (the centralized white, tanned, toned, lean figure), Black seaside social life differs.

Those who do not have so-called swimming garments (a swimming costume, or swimming shorts) use whatever garment they have. For those without a swimming cap, a plastic bag is another option. Seen in, Untitled 7 (December 26th 2019), 2021, is a still moment shared between a couple at the shore. There are some who may not submerge into the water, but instead sit by the beach, enjoying its rehabilitative qualities. The couple

Left — Figure 30, *Untitled 3 (1st January 2020)*, 2021

lounge by the shoreline, inviting the water to ebb and flow around them. Arguably, these forms of openness-as-transgression have become the examples of beaching ebhish' laseThekwini during Dezemba.

Untitled 6 (December 26th, 2019), 2021, depicts an intimate yet public affection shared between a Black couple. The couple is seen gently holding each other as they face the open waters and other beachgoers. *Untitled 8 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021, and *Untitled 9 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021, are two moments of self-fashioning through the selfie, which I interpret in this context as an expression of public proclamation of belonging.

The aural registers of the vibrance of Dezemba are an evocation of sonic memory. If you listen to the image you can hear the waves and splashing, which is directly linked to race and space. Here, Jennifer Lynn Stoever's "the listening ear" is a tool that demonstrates how some ideologies of race are dependent on what we hear. It describes how listeners can construct a racial identity from an auditory experience –be it through voice, music, or background noise– and create a racial divide by classing these sounds according to their perceived cultural, political, and social value (Stoever, 2016: 14). In recalling the making of Untitled 21 (January 1st, 2020), 2021, I remember being in the eye; the meeting point among a mass of people, singing popular anthems, playing and giggling. At

Right — Figure 32, *Untitled 6 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021.

times humming improvised and spontaneous melodies underscored by ulwandle, which continues to move in and out of us, even in the aftermath.

Amongst us there were some who were afraid, clinging and pulling onto familiar strangers, this fear underlined by a reverence for ulwandle. This is an embodied memory which speaks to cultural beliefs teaching us to respect ulwandle as some of our ancestors reside there, and so this fear acknowledges these beliefs and their histories, but also speaks to collective holding. That even amidst the fear of what lies beyond, we hold each other, and collectively transverse. It is the essence of this meeting point. Additionally, the title of the body of the work of eBhish' is significant. It references the sonic memory, derived from the song we sang as kids en route to the meeting point, *eBhish' Durban, ebhish', bhish', bhish', Durban!* and locates our rightful place on the shores.

At its core, the work presents the embodied memories and contemporary scenes my family and I and "most people raised Black" (Putuma, 2016), have experienced over the years. Scenes of our fathers carrying us, our grandparents watching over us at the pools, and us as children, "giggling, splashing in our black tights and Shoprite plastic bags wrapped around our new weaves" (Putuma, 2016). Activated through sound, they produce a chorus of Black joy which reverberates through motion in the water as a melodic symphony of intimate histories.

eBhish' draws from the poignant work of Santu Mofokeng's *The Black Photo Album / Look at Me: 1890–1950* research project, which attempts to redress the absences of historical photographic representation of Black working and middle class South African families from 1890 to 1950, and offers insight into how Black people were visualised, framed and represented. Mofokeng asserts that "when we look at them we believe them, for they tell us a little about how these people imagined themselves. We see these images in the terms determined by the subjects themselves, for they have made them their own" (Mofokeng, 2004). An alternative reading of the collection of photographs depicting "the rise and fall of a class of educated, urban, Christian Africans in the late 19th- and early 20th-century South Africa" could be that of Black alienation. Although the collection –which features mostly Victorian and Edwardian era portraiture– depicts a conventionalised art for the epoch, and is "starkly different from most historical collections of African photographs... [The images] do not classify their subjects in 'tribal' terms, nor display them in 'traditional' dress or settings. These are family photos, commissioned and paid for by the people in them" (Campbell, 2013). Campbell asks if "[in] freeing themselves from one colonial script did [the black subjects] simply write themselves into another? To use the language of Steven Biko and Black Consciousness movement, were [the subjects] victims of 'mental colonisation'?" (Campbell, 2013).

Is Eurocentric photographic depiction of Black subjectivity ever entirely positive? Can Black subjectivity escape the white gaze given its weaponization through European Imperialism? Is it merely a question of re-framing toward emancipatory praxis? These are just some of the central questions (on Black subjectivity) to wrestle with, particularly because photography is affective, and has been instrumental in constructing forms of Black alienation in the colonial and post-colonial.

Lauren Berlant's notion of "cruel optimism" unpacks our relationship to objects through affect and photography. Berlant asserts that our attachment is, to a degree, optimistic towards objects. She argues that, historically, these objects can be cruel and hinder us, for example (in the case of Black subjectivity), fixed racialized, classed, and gender portrayals:

> **"Cruel optimism" names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility. What is cruel about these attachments, and not merely inconvenient or tragic, is that the subjects who have *x* in their lives might not well endure the loss of their object or scene of desire, even though its presence**

Above Left — Figure 33, *Untitled 8 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021.

Above Right — Figure 34, *Untitled 9 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021.

> **threatens their well-being, because whatever the *content* of the attachment, the continuity of the form of it provides something of the continuity of the subject's sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world. This phrase points to a condition different than that of melancholia, which is enacted in the subject's desire to temporize an experience of the loss of an object/scene with which she has identified her ego continuity. Cruel optimism is the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object *in advance* of its loss (Berlant, 2006: 21).**

Why is a visual reading of identity formation, national narrative and cultural memory centralised when critically unpacking archives? If we consider Tina Campt's notion of "listening to images", we might begin to think about ways to read photographs and understand the fluidity of Black subjectivity. Campt writes about vernacular photographs which hum with a quiet intensity, drawing viewers in to listen. The sound which we register circulates on a lower frequency and cannot be heard unless we develop a particular reading practice attuned to feeling the presences and absences that the photograph records (Campt, 2017). The sonic registers of the vibrance of *Dezemba* are an evocation of sonic memory. If you listen to the image, you can hear the waves and splashing, which is directly linked to race and space. Here, Jennifer Lynn Stoever's "the listening ear" is a tool that demonstrates how some ideologies of race are dependent on

Above — Figure 35, *Untitled 21 (January 1st, 2020)*, 2021.

what we hear. It describes how listeners can construct a racial identity from an auditory experience, be it through voice, music, or background noise, and create a racial divide by classing these sounds according to their perceived cultural, political, and social value (Stoever, 2016: 14).

The images present a semiotic language which refuses to swallow the indignity framed by a misrepresentation of Blackness in a so-called formal history, that is, history fixed in time. Instead, the intimate black and white images depict humanising moments shared by Black beachgoers, reiterating a place Nomusa Makhubu calls "a continuous negotiation of belonging, of identity, of sentiment" (Makhubu, 2020: 79). Neimanis prompts us to absolve ourselves from the "false promise of the official record, chronologically ordered and stacked in order to learn about the present that might endure into a future without us. Through navigating water as queer archive, we better equip ourselves to develop differently affective relations to a past we are currently making, and a future that will be significantly forged by us even as it is also our own dissolution" (Neimanis, 2018: 196). Liquid archives allow the legibility of what was once rendered illegible.

Conclusion

Picture what we can *create* if we dare give ourselves permission to imagine freely (Gqola, 2013: 2).

Growing up in eThekwini, summer at the beach was often the highlight of the year. My family and I would gather in the packed car with camp chairs, cooler boxes and treats. En route, as kids, we would sing gleefully, *eBhish' Durban, ebhish', bhish', bhish', Durban!* It became a ritual which was closely associated with our excitement. This excitement reverberated with crowds of other kids who would also splash about the public pools. I have fond memories of a mixture of sea water and chlorine. I'd often swim for hours until my mother would drag me out of the pool. These memories, and Black beachgoers like me, are not reflected in the eThekwini pictorial beach archive. The archive is overwhelmingly white. This is a reflection of the former apartheid regime and colonial past: an amphibious history, which moves between land and sea (Pearson, 2010).

The Indian Ocean has witnessed various amphibious histories. The beach, like many spaces, was weaponized to distinguish the white rulers from the Black subaltern. Hughes argues that eThekwini's premier status was a white playground and drew many crowds (Hughes, 2014). White beach delight is easy to locate in historic imagery, (postcards, photographs) in museum archives and private collections. These records serve to confirm the racialised leisure economy. Yet, there are no records of similar imagery for Black beach life (eThekwini). In post-apartheid, although it may seem that Black leisure is something that is part of the everyday, there remains a general backlash and uneasiness from the public in the understanding of working and middle class Black leisure at restaurants, public beaches, parks, etc. During apartheid and in the contemporary, the Black body is seen as synonomous with labour. Consequently, Black leisure (the absence of labour), is jarring and results in an abjection.

My multimedia work, *eBhish'*, examines the archive housed at the Old Court House Museum eThekwini. Using video and photography, I have been documenting the use of the beachfront, specifically by Black visitors, in relation to spatial politics, class and race. Throughout the process, I conversed with friends and family about their multi-use of the beach and their relationship to the ocean. These recordings counter historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations on various nguni aquatic beliefs, mythologies and practices, and form an integral part of my final presentation. *eBhish'* is a reflection of self in relation to the sea. It investigates the various myths around the ocean and the beach which have contributed to the continued racialisation of the space. It is a contemporary archive of Black life at the beach front, one with humanising, tender and intimate moments aimed at inscribing our place in seaside leisure eThekwini. This iteration is the seed phase of what I hope will become a lifelong, generative and critical engagement with the beach and public space. Through the process of actively engaging with fluidity, imaginative and speculative elaborations, I traverse the terrains of the ephemeral, affective and non-linear liquid archives which offer multiplicity and remind me of our shapeshifting ways as Black people, moving from land, to sea and beyond

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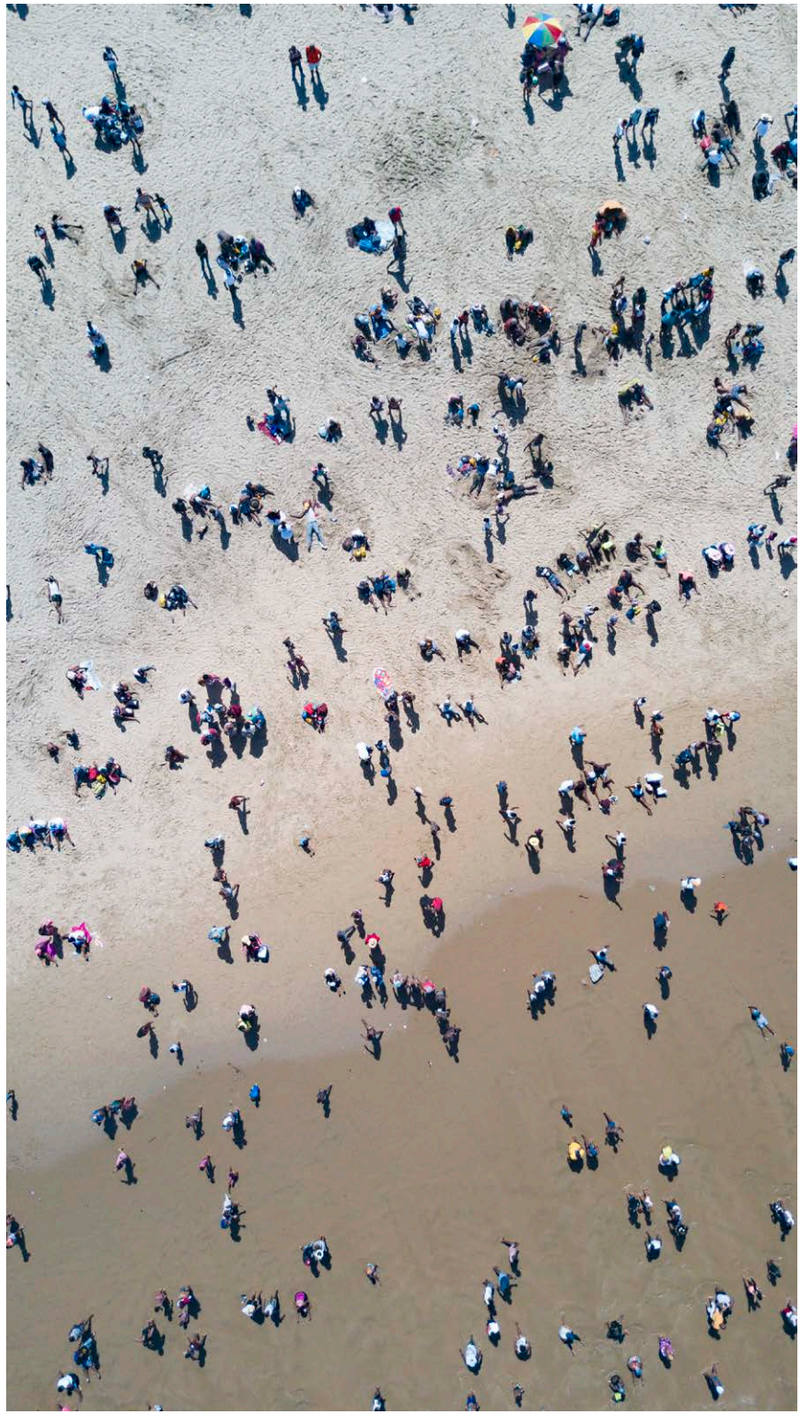
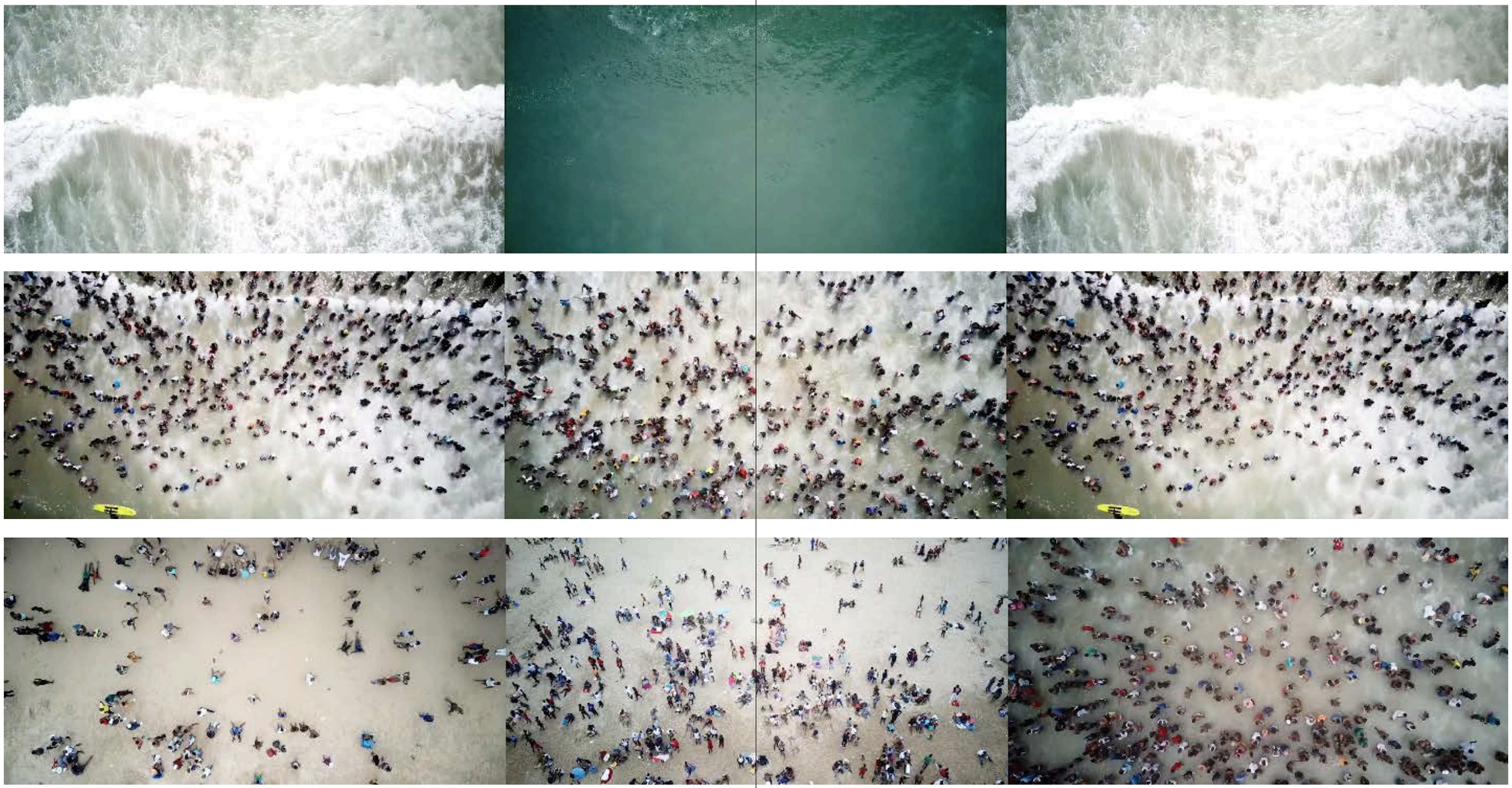
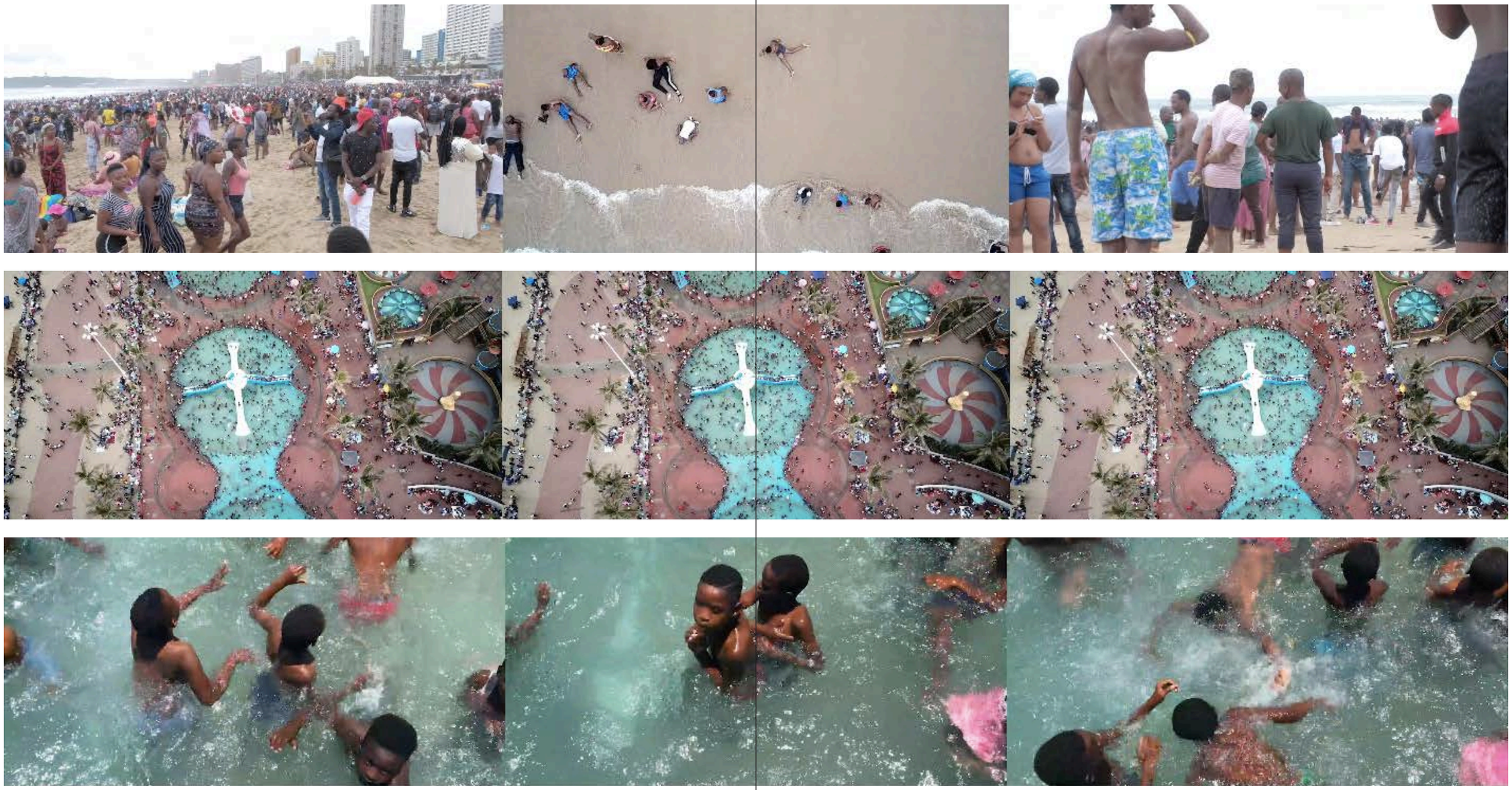
eBhish' — Selected Works

Luvuyo Equiano Nyawose


AMOUR







List of Works

PAGE 89 *Untitled 1 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 90 *Untitled 2 (January 1st, 2020)*, 2021
PAGE 91 *Untitled 3 (January 1st, 2020)*, 2021
PAGE 92 *Untitled 4 (January 1st, 2020)*, 2021
PAGE 94/5 *Untitled 5 (May 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 97 *Untitled 6 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 98 *Untitled 7 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 100 *Untitled 8 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 101 *Untitled 9 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 102 *Untitled 10 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 103 *Untitled 11 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 104 *Untitled 12 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 105 *Untitled 13 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 106 *Untitled 14 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 107 *Untitled 15 (January 1st, 2020)*, 2021
PAGE 108 *Untitled 16 (January 1st, 2020)*, 2021
PAGE 109 *Untitled 17 (December 26th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 111 *Untitled 18 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 112 *Untitled 19 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 114/5 *Untitled 20 (January 1st, 2020)*, 2021
PAGE 116/7 *Untitled 21 (January 1st, 2020)*, 2021
PAGE 118/9 *Untitled 22 (April 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 120/1 *Untitled 23 (May 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 122/3 *Untitled 24 (October 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 124/5 *Untitled 25 (October 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 126/7 *Untitled 26 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 129 *Untitled 27 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 130/1 *Untitled 28 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 132/3 *Untitled 29 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 134/5 *Untitled 30 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
PAGE 136–141 *eBhish'*, 2021. (stills) 4K video, sound, 3 channel widescreen projection. 3:40 minutes

eBhish' — articulations of Black Oceanic presence eThekwini.

COVER *Untitled 30 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021
INNER COVER *Untitled 28 (December 16th, 2019)*, 2021