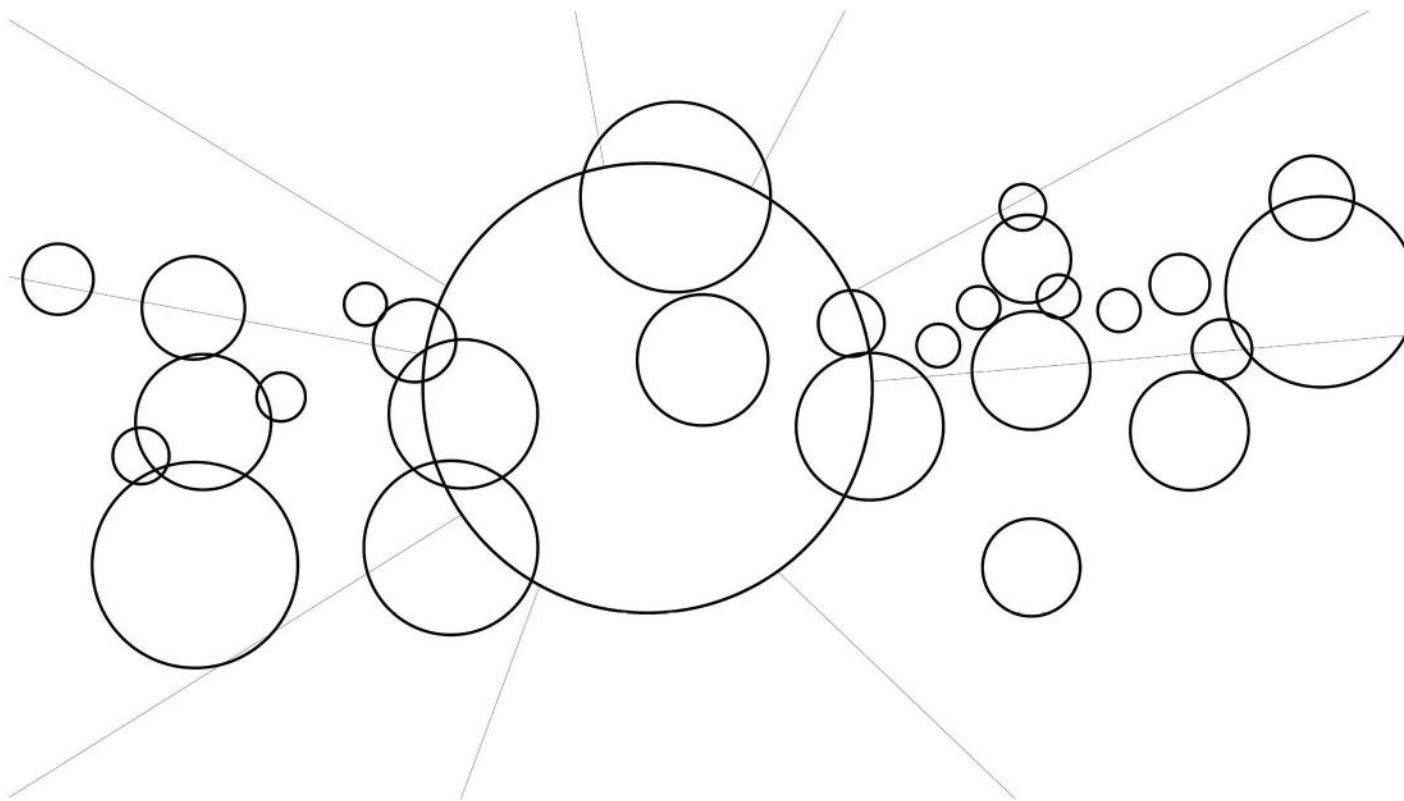




University of Cape Town

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Transnational Identity, Historical Entanglements & the Living Archive:
Between Medu & Me

MKNKIM001

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In partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the

Master of Fine Art (MFA)

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DECLARATION

I, **Kim Karabo Makin**, hereby declare that the work on which this thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this document, from the work, or works of other people has been attributed, cited and referenced appropriately where relevant.

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Date: 21/10/2021

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Dedicated to my paternal grandfather, *Grandpa*, and my maternal grandmother, *Nkuku*.

To those who paved the way for **our** future.

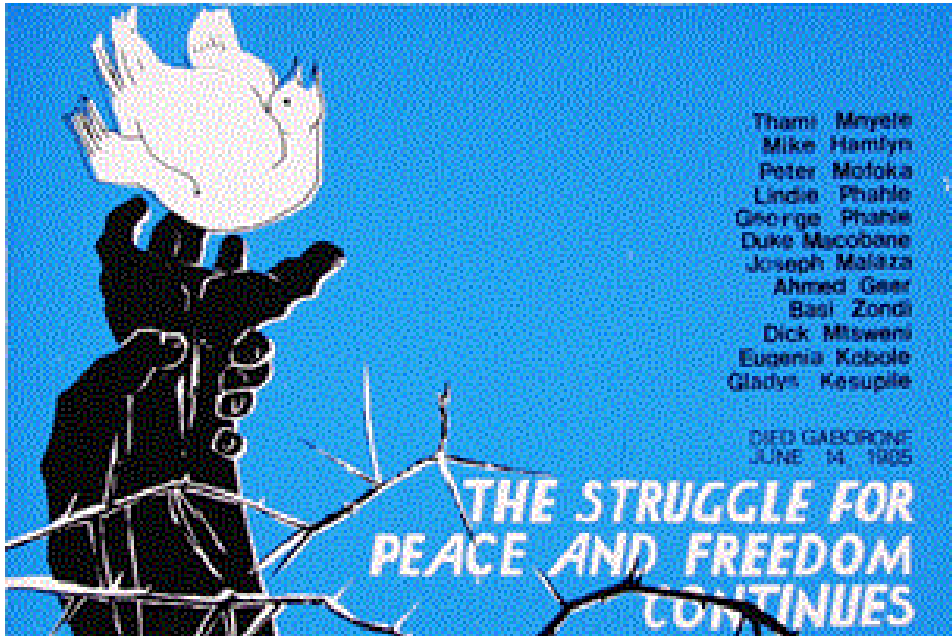


Figure 1: Judy A. Seidman, *June 14 memorial*, 1985, Silkscreen, Gaborone.¹

¹ “This poster and a similar banner was designed and printed by Judy Seidman for the mass funeral; it was made in defiance of the Botswana government who stated that [Medu Art Ensemble] should not produce any printed material about the raid. It should also be noted that t-shirts commemorating artist Thami Mnyele were designed and printed illegally by the activists from the Silkscreen Training Project in South Africa, and brought to Gaborone by activists coming to the funeral on busses from Johannesburg” (Seidman, 1985).

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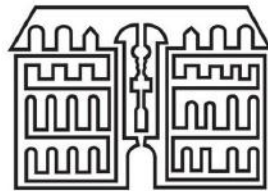
To my mom, dad and brothers; Masego, Michael, Craig and Leungo, as well as the extended Leepile, Makin, Kruse and Kerkham families; Uncle Tony, Uncle Setsiba & Uncle Sekano; Granny, Aunty Shirley & Uncle John, Richard, Catherine, David, Hailey & Matt. Aunty Ilza, Uncle David, Jenna & Aiden. Aunty Margaret, Aunty Joan, Uncle Kevin, Aunty Ruth & Quba.

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Finally, to Michaelis, for making me feel like I'm constantly running in circles... With much uncertainty, I think I've managed to find my centre. Thank you. Onwards and upwards! ☉

ЖМК



the doors of culture shall be opened is an audio-visual exhibition and self-reflexive research project that unpacks transnational identity, historical entanglements, and the living archive, through Medu Art Ensemble as the case in point. The project expands on the relationship ‘between Medu and Me’, as a method of engaging fragments of the archive, the construction of history, and identity formation across Botswana and South Africa. As the culmination of research and fieldwork in Gaborone and Cape Town from 2019 to 2021, the title of the exhibition references a Medu poster once housed in the University of Cape Town’s Special Collections Library. The project aims to unpack and sound a space that centres dislocation, by providing some analysis of the post-traumas of Botswana in the anti-Apartheid struggle, with an emphasis on lived experiences, as well as oral traditions of storytelling and radio.

The exhibition and accompanying research document work together to present creative and scholarly ideation of the relationship between art and history in contemporary Botswana and South Africa. With a look at history as circular and cyclical, the project uses a narrative tone in order to engage in an open dialogue with fragments of the archive. In this way, I map the interconnected timelines of individual and collective memory, using photography, sound, installation and sculpture (namely ceramics and assemblage).

With a focus on Medu, I engage an extended conversation of Botswana’s national history as entangled with aspects of South Africa’s. By tracing a coming-of-age story of identity formation across neighbouring nation-states, I simultaneously unpack transnational identity through an exploration of the living archive. With a look at sound as spatialised and socialised, I reengage the interlocutors of history, as in circular motion with my individual present and collective future.





Introduction

² As my citizen mother was married to a non-citizen, I could not claim Motswana citizenship despite being born in Botswana, by Sections 4 and 5 of the Citizenship Act of 1984. This was compounded by the fact that my father had adopted his then-British citizenship through his father, disabling my father from passing down the British passport another generation.

³ Unity Dow is a Motswana judge, human rights activist, novelist, and former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (2019-2020). She became Botswana's first female High Court judge after successfully challenging the Attorney General of Botswana in the Citizenship Case (1991).

Reflecting on particular moments of history from my subject position, I begin by critically engaging the socio-politics that inform my particular sense of self and belonging with respect to citizenship and culture. With this introduction, I provide a personalised background that culminates in the production of a number of artworks intended at re-engaging particular aspects of history (as contextualised, socialised and spatialised) through myself. By critically reflecting on my lived experience of statelessness — thus reflecting on my identity as relative to my parents, and the nation-state — I engage transnationality as a product of the socio-political structures that exist historically across Botswana and South Africa.

I was born stateless in Gaborone, Botswana in 1994, to a Botswana-born, Motswana mother and Southern-Rhodesia-born, South African/British father, who later naturalised to become a Motswana ('by papers'). Significantly, the year 1994 marked the end of neighbouring South Africa's Apartheid laws, which would have legally prohibited my parents' interracial marriage. Although I could not claim any citizenship at the time of my birth,² I later obtained Motswana citizenship once the law recognised Unity Dow's successful ruling in the Citizenship Case (of 1991).³

Sections 4 and 5 of the Citizenship Act of 1984 of the Republic of Botswana asserted that a child "born of a marriage between its mother and a non-citizen father... is an alien" (Dow, 1995: 31), thus, setting the precedent for any child to follow the citizenship of their

father (as is the case regarding Setswana customary law and/or tribal allegiance (Schapera, 1970: 5)). Effectively, this act resulted in several children who were born to non-citizen fathers being rendered ‘stateless’. Dow suggests that the effect of this legislation was “to punish a citizen female for marrying a noncitizen male” (Dow, 1995: 42). In an application against the Attorney General of the Republic of Botswana, Dow contended that Sections 4 and 5 of the Citizenship Act “offends against the Constitution in that it is discriminatory and an inroad or limitation on her basic rights and freedoms” as a citizen female (Dow, 1995: 30). As a consequence, I was granted limited rights to the state of Botswana, until a terminal point that required me to declare my citizenship.

Subsequently, my Motswana citizenship was limited to my 21st birthday,⁴ which I celebrated in 2015 (during my first year of the Bachelor of Art in Fine Art (BAFA) program at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town (UCT)). This meant that my mid-year vacation was spent in between immigration offices in my hometown, where I had to go through a process to reapply for Motswana citizenship.

⁴ The Republic of Botswana does not recognise dual-citizenship, thus a citizen of Botswana that has supposed access to another citizenship has up until their 21st birthday to renounce or reclaim their Motswana citizenship. Significantly one’s 21st birthday is also considered a rite of passage in the context of South Africa, when one typically receives the ‘key’ to adulthood.

Significantly, 2015 also marked the year that ‘Rhodes fell’ at UCT. Student protests which erupted throughout the country sparked conversation around remnants of South Africa’s racist history and the manner in which aspects of it live on in the institution. #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall and associated student movements

⁵ The youth uprisings that began in Soweto and spread countrywide on 16 June 1976 have been described by commentators as “the tipping point in the struggle for liberation” against the apartheid state (Ntsaluba, 2016). Profoundly attributed to changing the socio-political landscape in South Africa, events that triggered the uprisings can be traced back to policies of the Apartheid government that resulted in the introduction of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 (South African History Online, 2019). Furthermore, the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the formation of South African Students Organisation (SASO) raised the political consciousness of many students while others joined the wave of anti-Apartheid sentiment within the student community (South African History Online, 2019). Some forty years afterwards, in 2016 Fees Must Fall arguably became the biggest student protest movement in democratic South Africa, drawing much comparison with the Soweto uprisings (ENCA, 2015). Significantly Medu Art Ensemble was formed soon after the 1976 student

successfully highlighted the need for further reconciliation regarding South Africa’s traumatic Apartheid history. In particular is the protest that took place at Parliament in November 2015 under the #FeesMustFall banner, which was later said to be conversant with South African student protests in 1976 (see figure 2).⁵ I believe that this corroborates my conception of history as cyclical. This concept is not inconsequential to the circular visual logic visible in the artworks of this exhibition as a strategy to present the notion of recurrence, repetition and particular cultural markers of history and culture. By extension, something is to be said here about my experience of the post-traumas of Apartheid South Africa, not only in present-day South Africa but in neighbouring Botswana with a particular look at the case of Medu Art Ensemble.⁶



Figure 2: 1976? Photo taken at the University of Cape Town’s 2015 #FeesMustFall student protest, Parliament, Cape Town. Credit: Imraan Christian

protests, as a cultural front group in Gaborone, playing an influential role not only in shaping the ANC struggle, but furthermore in stimulating the growth of arts in Botswana (Morton, 2009: 1). “Although the ANC was never allowed to operate formally in the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Botswana, it nevertheless maintained a small, loose structure in the country following the armed uprising by Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK) in 1961. Much is already known about the activities of this group in the 1960s, due to the publication of the memoirs of Fish Keitseng, the local MK point man. By the early 1970s, though, Keitseng was too well-known an operative to be used for more than occasional help. As a result, the ANC was to establish a new structure in Botswana in the years following the 1976 Soweto Riots” (Morton, 2009: 1). Significantly, Mnye — leading figure of the ensemble’s visual arts and graphic design, is described as ‘joining the struggle’ after 1976 (Morton, 2009: 4). In addition, following the 1976 uprisings, Gaborone supposedly became the “first stop-over for the

thousands of teenagers and other youth fleeing across the border to sign up with the ANC” (Morton, 2009: 18).

⁶ Something is to be said here about the impact of Apartheid South Africa on neighbouring countries across the region. In a ‘Conversation between Achille Mbembe and Albie Sachs, moderated by Koyo Kouoh’ at Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art’s *Radical Solidarity Summit* (2020), Sachs tells the story of losing his arm by a car-bomb whilst on exile in Mozambique. On the topic of *Solidarity: Historic Contexts of Pan-Africanism and the Transnational Struggle*, Sachs — South African anti-apartheid activist and former judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa speaks specifically to his personal indebtedness to the people of Mozambique for saving his life. It is in this particular sense of transnational solidarity that I find Nyelele and Drake’s recount of the 19 May 1986 SADF raid on Gaborone, ironic; “*The dead man and all of the injured were citizens of Botswana. The housing complex*

which was attacked had once housed a South African refugee; but he had left in 1983 and since that time the only occupants were citizens of Botswana. It makes a bitter irony of the statement in the leaflets dropped during the raid: “We regard the people of Botswana as our friends and neighbours. We have no fight with you” (Nyelele & Drake, 1985).

As a consequence, I believe that my lived experience, with respect to my identity in relation to that of my mother and father, introduces the ambiguity in what it means to be a Motswana — nationally, culturally, regionally, and personally. Furthermore, I believe the year 2015 contributed to a reshaping of my identity politics, emphasising my racialised, gendered, immigrant status, as a multicultural Motswana in South Africa. Thus, the exhibition ‘*the doors of culture shall be opened*’ presents an audio-visual research project and exploration of lived and historical experiences of transnationality. Through the intricate tracing of a personalised familial⁷ archive, the project pays particular attention to the role that historical context plays in identity formation across borders.

⁷ That is both familiar and/or relating to me/my family.



Colour Theory (detail), 2020

Transnational Identity

“The categorisation of a racialised and gendered immigrant status created in us a sense of confusion regarding our new identities, including the dominant society’s perception of these identities”

(Beoku-Betts & Njambi, 2005: 117)

African feminist scholars in women’s studies, Josephine Beoku-Betts and Wairimū Ngarūiya Njambi unpack the particulars of *Negotiating Spaces of Dislocation and Transformation in the Study of Women* (2015). In so doing, the pair expand on dislocation as being tied to a particular transformation of identity. With respect to the tensions embedded in the categorisation of a racialised, gendered immigrant status, against the dominant society’s perception of these identities, Beoku-Betts and Njambi unpack issues of identity and difference in the analysis of women’s lives (2005: 113).



Colour Theory (ongoing series), 2020, Pantyhose, wood, canvas, Dimensions variable



Colour Theory, 2020, Installation view at Michaelis Galleries, Cape Town

In acknowledging my particular experience of ‘modes of identity’ and self-definition across Botswana and South Africa, I acknowledge a “sense of confusion” regarding the formation of new identities associated with dislocation (Beoku-Betts & Njambi, 2005: 117). I believe that dislocation implies a relational nature of different spaces between ‘here’ and ‘there’, presenting “a nervous condition of always on the move but never arriving” (Cheng, 2018: 21). In this way, I believe that the experience of dislocation introduces an agency or mutability in one’s self-definition that may contrast hegemonic definition. Thus, I consider my transnationality as having introduced a fluidity and multiplicity in the ways that I self-identify (Snyder, 2012).

The Dislocation Of Me

Over the last eight years, as I constantly travel across the borders of Botswana and South Africa, I have outlined a transnational space within which I exist. Viewing location as a powerful tool for contextualising the creative process as embodied experience (Harris, 2006: 698), I acknowledge the role that dislocation plays in adopting an altered perspective of ‘home’. Clare Harris suggests that a focus on “border cultures” and “the networks in which people and ideas circulate” proposes a more “dynamic model of the world as it is experienced by many contemporary artists” (2006: 699). Whilst acknowledging the history of the border culture across Botswana and South Africa, I believe my identity to be innately transnational. In attempting to navigate the context of my identity formation across borders, *the doors of culture shall be opened* opens with an abstract exploration of this transnational space, as an alternate dimension between ‘home’ and ‘away’.

⁸ Turiya Magaddelela (b. 1978) is a South African artist based in Johannesburg. Her practice has been shaped by the city, the people, politics, violence and passions within it, where she translates her experiences into fabric-based works, creating abstract compositions (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2019). Magaddelela has been quoted as saying, “*I make my work from my personal life experiences. I don’t make social or political commentary... I always want to leave it open to the viewer’s personal interpretation, and I find that talking about a work you made or writing about it narrows down the meaning that it is supposed to have*” (Everard Read, 2021).

The earlier discussion on transnationalism potentiates a space to unpack notions of creolisation and its particular form of racialisation. In so doing, my creative practice is particularly concerned with exploring notions of race and racialisation with reference to my lived experience through the use of particularly socialised materials. Here I will continue to discuss my particular use of ‘nude’ pantyhose as a racialised medium in order to visually present the manner in which my dislocation between Botswana and South Africa has informed my identity politics.

⁹ Interested in the visual arts, dance, body mechanics and matters of the spirit Senga Nengudi tends to use a variety of natural (sand, dirt, rocks, seed pods) and unconventional (panty hose, found objects, masking tape) materials to fashion her works. With these materials, along with her background as a jazz musician, Nengudi also uses notes and sounds to improvise a composition. The thrust of her art is to “share common experiences in abstractions that hit the senses and center, often welcoming the viewer to become a participant” (Nengudi, n.d.).

¹⁰ Magadla’s contribution to the biennial, *S’Maidical*, is a series of “giant tapestries made of tights, which covers the ceilings, resulting in a cave-like structure” (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2019). Throughout the opening week, as a performance, she sewed pantyhose on a sewing machine in the exhibition space, “calling attention to labour conditions, gender disparities, as well as the intertwined histories of sexually and racially grounded violence and abuse” (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2019).

In attempting to define the transnational space within which I exist, *Colour Theory* is a comment on race as a social construct. *Colour Theory* translates the basic world of colour into a racialised palette of varied ‘nude’ pantyhose. To reimagine the world of colour within this scale, is to reimagine my sense of self within South Africa’s racialised landscape. Here I explore my identity as racialised by offering variations of the racial spectrum, with reference to the painterly colour wheel. With this work, I contemplate whether the variation of hues are in fact, variations of the same colour, or instead, whether each shade presents an individualised colour in its own right. By extension, I propose similar questions about racial categorisation and the associated social dynamics. Having said that, I explore pantyhose as a particularly socialised material with reference to artists such as Turiya Magadla⁸ (see figure 3) and Senga Nengudi⁹.



Figure 3: Turiya Magadla, *S’Maidical*, 2019, Commissioned for the 16th Istanbul Biennial. Installation view in Istanbul, Turkey.¹⁰

Magadla's work in particular, balances politically charged narratives with exquisite aesthetics. Through the stitching, layering, and collaging of commonly found objects such as pantyhose (as well as correctional services uniforms, amongst others), she creates powerful, original art pieces. In particular, I find that Magadla's practice materially translates aspects of her personal life experiences, through the use of socially charged materials. In this way, Magadla's particular use of pantyhose is said to refer to the context of South Africa, by alluding to a discussion around racial and sexual discrimination as well as femininity and eroticism (Everard Read, 2021). Interestingly, Magadla's particular use of material creates a relationship between artist and viewer by speaking simultaneously to her personal experiences in conjunction with the specific socialised nature of the material (Everard Read, 2021). I believe that this dynamic also expresses the tension I experience within identity politics between self-identification and social categorisation/hegemonic recognition.

In unpacking what constitutes 'nude' (as a racialised motif in my work), my local store stocks 'nude' pantyhose in four basic colours, from lightest to darkest as follows: Bare Beige, Beach Bronze, Mexican Silver, and Blackmail. The colour wheel as we know it, at the most basic level, features three primary and three secondary colours. Thus, I consider the extent to which I may redefine colour theory to follow the racialised colour distinction of the 'nude' pantyhose that are available to me in my immediate surroundings. In this way, I believe that the 'nude' pantyhose from my local store presents a particularly socialised material that challenges the manner in which hegemony defines race as Black or White. In addition, *Colour Theory* introduces an exploration of the circular as a social symbol of my identity and sense of self. I expand on this as the exhibition continues to engage historical entanglements. By extension, the works that accompany this series similarly feature a material translation of my sense of identity as abstracted in a range of 'nudes'.



Molenza (Shield) (crop), 2020, Photograph projection, Installation dimensions variable

¹¹ Botswana baskets are made mainly by the Bayei and Hambukushu women in the North Western regions of the Okavango Delta. In addition, the Etsha Weavers Group, a Botswana craft group made up of skilled basket weavers, has played a pivotal role in bringing attention to Botswana basketry as a unique art form. Whilst Botswana's distinct basketry is considered a cultural symbol — originally for its utilitarian purposes, and most recently for more decorative purposes, it is important to acknowledge the particular history of these groups of people, as having immigrated to Botswana. The Bayei are said to have immigrated to north-western Botswana and north-eastern Namibia, from the kingdom of the Lozi people (or Barotse) in western Zambia. Furthermore, the history of Etsha settlement in north-western Botswana dates back to 1967 when 3,300 refugees from the Hambukushu tribe in Angola crossed into Botswana, fleeing Portuguese attacks during Angola's war of independence. Therefore, I consider Botswana's distinct basketry as reflective of our national culture, as historically entangled in the region.

Molenza is a colloquial Setswana word used to describe a pantyhose worn specifically on one's head, usually to protect hair or a fresh hairstyle (for example, whilst sleeping or doing household chores). The *molenza* that appears in this series began by adapting Botswana's distinct basketry's coiling method to the racialised language of pantyhose — the varied brown hues of the 'nude' pantyhose also incidentally resemble the natural palm leaf used to weave baskets in Botswana.¹¹ Resembling the 'Shield' Setswana basket pattern, the abstracted basket form is intended to materially unpack my multicultural, Setswana identity in Cape Town's racialised landscape. In this instance the Setswana basket takes on new form, to resemble a headwrap of sorts merged with a basket carrier (a basket/drum traditionally carried on a Tswana woman's head to transport goods), as a signifier of my identity as a Motswana woman. In this way, the *Molenza* series aims to unpack my identity as racialised, cultural, gendered, national, traditional, and contextual.

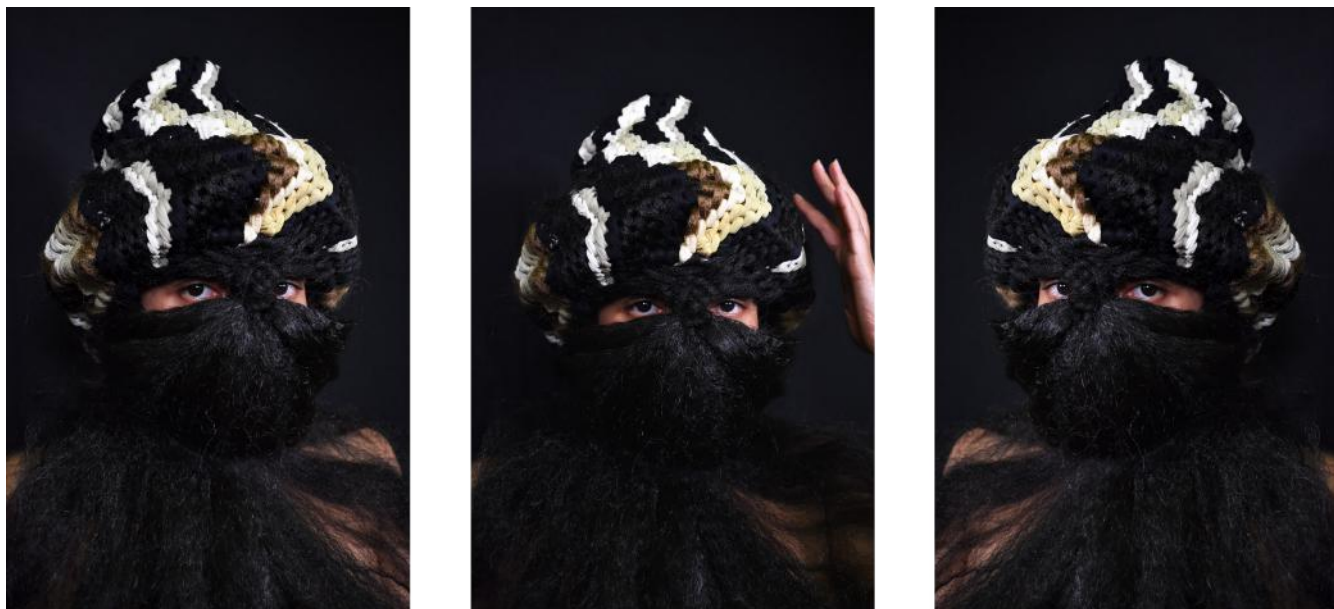
Where symbols take on new and unique identities, without direct attachments, nor linear or fixed notions of culture and self, *Molenza (Shield)* functions as a symbolic extension of me. Where the headpiece appears to extend from my skin tone, and the 'Shield' pattern becomes a part of me, I consider the extent to which the basket symbol presents some aspect of my identity. I believe that this initiates a conversation on cultural symbols, with respect to the cultural value of the Shield across Botswana and South Africa (as is discussed later with reference to the discussion by Neil Parsons).



Molenz (Shield), 2020, Wall installation, Installation dimensions variable

¹² With reference to the ethos of Medu Art Ensemble.

In addition, with this work, I contemplate ‘culture as a weapon or tool for change’,¹² and thus consider the ‘Shield’ basket pattern as a cultural symbol forming part of my traditional ‘armour’ and ‘skin’ (this also extends into the brief discussion on figure 11 later).



Molenza (Urine Trail of the Bull), 2020, Archival lightjet print and Diasec, approx. 50.8 x 33.8 cm (each)

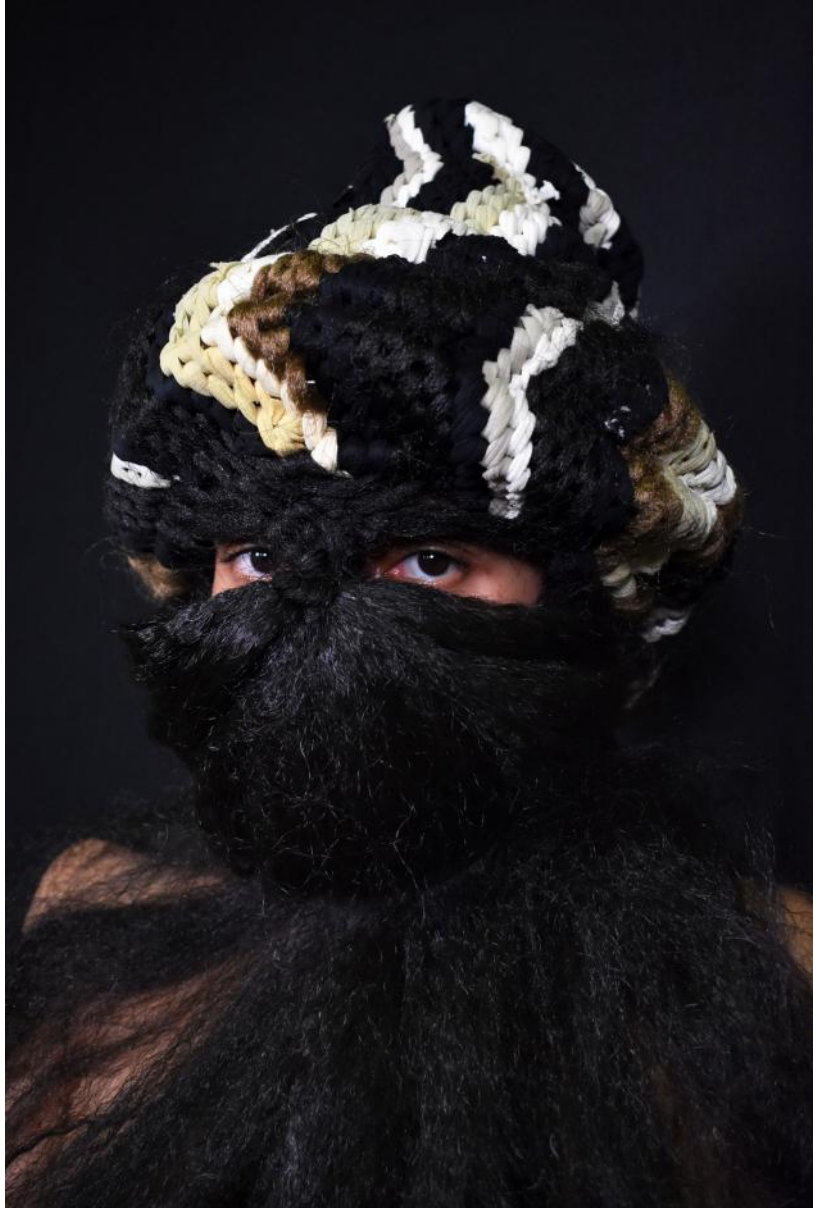
Where *Shield* extends from my skin as racialised, *Urine Trail of the Bull* extends from my hair. Thus, *Molenza (Urine Trail of the Bull)* materially combines pantyhose with synthetic hair fibre to consider the extent to which hair texture forms a part of racial identity and recognition. In this way, *Molenza (Urine Trail of the Bull)* also considers the black pantyhose as a ‘nude’ of sorts. Here, the ‘Urine Trail of the Bull’ pattern has been used particularly as a comment on the cultural significance of the bull in Setswana society as a gendered symbol of wealth.

In a similar way, the *Untitled* ceramic basket series contemplates the Setswana basket without any pattern (such as those represented by ‘Urine Trail of the Bull’ and similarly ‘Shield’) as a symbol of Setswana identity. By remaking the iconic cultural symbol as a ceramic with irregular form, the series attempts to pose questions about the cultural value of ceramics in European and Setswana traditions of ‘arts’ and ‘crafts’.



Untitled, 2020, Ceramic basket series, Installation view







Untitled, 2020, Ceramic basket series (ongoing), Dimensions variable

¹³ “Is that person born of a collective history of a people scorned, dispossessed, exploited, enslaved, and oppressed? Is that person born of the sound of the drum, of master improvisors, of the makers of gold, pyramids and jazz? This criteria might seem open but the truth is that for one to be an African there is an undisputable blackness that has to run through one’s veins. It follows then that an Africanist is one who acknowledges this complex and layered history, one who in their thinking and action seeks to advance the knowledge and the interests of fellow Africans... To be an Africanist is to take a certain position, to deliberately work and conduct oneself in a way that seeks to achieve an Africa that is radically different from the one we have. It is to work towards an Africa that has its own identity, culture and that is self-aware and dependent. To be an Africanist is to fight against anything that seeks to perpetuate the suffering and oppression of Africa and its people.” (Dlamini, 2020)

¹⁴ The visual arts unit of Medu notably included: Thamsanqa ‘Thami’

Medu Art Ensemble was a cultural organisation based in Gaborone, Botswana between 1977 and 1985, that was primarily focused on the use of culture as a “weapon” or “tool” against Apartheid (“Memory of the World Register: Medu Art Ensemble”, 2016). Affectionately known as *Medu* for short — translating to ‘roots’ in Sepedi — from a grassroots level, the cultural front was engrained in the strands of South African resistance and Africanist culture (“Medu Art Ensemble”, 2019).¹³ Comprising mainly (though not entirely) of South African exiles, adjacent to the border in neighbouring Botswana’s capital, the group of ‘cultural workers’ ran units specialising in writing (including research production and poetry), theatre, film, music, photography, graphics, and the visual arts (“Medu Art Ensemble”, 2019).¹⁴ Their artistic and cultural output is thought to have flourished right up until ‘Operation Plecksy’, “a murderous raid undertaken in Botswana by the South African Defence Force” (SADF) on the 14th of June 1985 (“The Art Institute of Chicago Presents The People Shall Govern! Medu Art Ensemble and the Anti-Apartheid Poster”, 2019).

Twelve people were killed in the June 14 targeted raid on Gaborone (see figure 1), including Thamsanqa ‘Thami’ Mnye — leading artist and figure of the ensemble,¹⁵ as well as Mike Hamlyn — “SA draft resister” and Medu treasurer (“Medu Art Ensemble”, 2019). A number of houses of Medu members were destroyed, with the people in them killed, and, thus, overnight, Medu ceased to exist. Consequently, many members left the country, whilst others remained in Botswana as “members of the underground, not as artists in residence” (“Medu

Mnyeale, Judy Seidman, Gordon Metz, Sergio-Albio and Theresa Gonzalez, Philip Segola and George Nene . Other cultural activists included: in literature and drama, Mongane Wally Serote, Mandla Langa, Bachana Mokwena, Keorapetse and Baleka Kgositsile; and in music, Jonas Gwangwa, Hugh Masekela; other members included George and Lindie Phahle, Tim Williams, Mike Hamlyn and Uriel Abrahamse.

¹⁵ Mnyeale’s home in Tlokweng (now considered a part of ‘Greater Gaborone’) was owned by Mr Andrew Matlapeng. My mother was staying with the Matlapengs in Francistown, Botswana at the time of Mnyeale’s death. My eldest brother was born in January 1985 in Serowe, Botswana.

¹⁶ The June 14 raid on Gaborone was one of four raids by the South African Defence force in Botswana in 1985 (Nyelele & Drake, 1985).

Art Ensemble”, 2019).

Thirty years after the raid and subsequent demise of Medu, I found myself leaving my home in Gaborone to pursue creative opportunities in Cape Town. Despite the fact that I was born and bred in Gaborone — the capital that once provided a base for Medu’s cultural activism — to my surprise, it wasn’t until 2016 (my second year at the Michaelis School of Fine Art) that I learned of Medu for the first time. Ironically, I left my home in Gaborone in order to pursue tertiary education in Fine Art, only to learn of a flourishing arts scene that once existed in the very spaces I frequented. That said, it is worth noting here that art was only introduced as an “optional” subject in the Botswana Junior Secondary School curriculum in 1988 (Brennan, 2006: 321), notably after Medu’s demise. Furthermore, Fine Art education at a tertiary level remains unavailable throughout present-day Botswana.

I vividly recall seeing “Gaborone” projected on the lecture slide in my second year Art History course. I thought that there must be another Gaborone in South Africa that I didn’t know about — as the course focused largely on Resistance Art in the context of South Africa. In this way, my introduction to Medu provided me with new perspective of my hometown. Furthermore, it provided news (to me) of Gaborone’s art history, as well as Botswana’s historical entanglement in neighbouring South Africa’s socio-politics. This contributed to a new contextual understanding of my ‘home’ from a dislocated position.

In a commemorative booklet on June 14 (for the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Thami Mnyele Memorial Monument in Ekurhuleni), Libero Nyelele and Ellen Drake outline the unsuspecting nature of Botswana, particularly as “the darling of the international community” — a model for peaceful democracy and racial harmony (Nyelele & Drake, 1985). Here, Nyelele and Drake significantly describe 1985 as the year that Botswana “lost its innocence” (Nyelele & Drake, 1985).¹⁶ Playing an influential role in the Apartheid Resistance whilst simultaneously stimulating the growth of arts in Botswana, I am particularly interested in reflecting on Medu’s suppressed narrative in Botswana as a contemporary Motswana artist myself.

At present, little to no formal archival record or material trace of the ensemble exists in the Botswana National Archives or the Botswana National Museum & Art Gallery.¹⁷ Paradoxically, in 2019, the Art Institute of Chicago hosted *The People Shall Govern! Medu Art Ensemble and the Anti-Apartheid Poster*, which drew from a recent, unequalled gift of nearly 90 posters from the Artworkers Retirement Society, as well as a complimentary gift of posters and period materials from Johannesburg art dealers, Warren Siebrits and Lunetta Bartz (“The Art Institute of Chicago...”, 2019). The exhibition also presents a rare film of Medu’s 1982 Culture and Resistance Symposium and Festival of the Arts, which was on view from 27 April to 2 September 2019 (“The Art Institute of Chicago...”, 2019).¹⁸

¹⁷ By numerous personal visits to the Botswana National Archives in Gaborone in 2019 - 2021. It is worth noting however that the National Archives are analogue.

¹⁸ Interestingly in the exhibition’s press release, curators Antawan Byrd and Felicia Mings are listed as having “travelled to South Africa” to research the collective — excluding their visit to Botswana (“The Art Institute of Chicago...”, 2019).

With that said, I believe the violent acts of the SADF in Botswana created an evidentiary gap in Medu’s material output and trace, apparently maintained only in Botswana. In this way, the Apartheid government captured some documents as a means of censoring and silencing anti-Apartheid expression. In addition, it may be argued that, as a peace-keeping measure, the Republic of Botswana made the decision to formally distance itself from the supposed ‘terrorists’ as a response to the SADF raids. Succeeding the June 14 raid, the five Medu units, “made up almost entirely of Batswana, lacked the funding and professional leadership Medu had provided”, and Medu soon fell into disarray (Morton, 2009: 21; “Medu Art Ensemble”, 2019). Thus, I explore the extent to which the June 14 Raid may be considered as a critical turning point in Botswana’s history, resulting in the stunting of Botswana’s creative development.

In this way, Julie Taylor (2020) assesses the role of individual agents in relation to South African art history and the marginalisation of Black Radical Thought. Taylor proposes that by giving greater theoretical weight to “agency”, whereby individual actors (as opposed to structures) propel the course of history, we may better understand the marginalisation of Black Radical Thinking in South Africa (2020: 17). In a discussion around building rigorous counter-histories, Taylor analyses individual and collective agency in relation to systems of power (2020: 17). Despite the Apartheid state’s partial yet violent success in erasing Medu archives and its authors, it appears that the Medu collection still exists to be viewed in the custodianship of several private parties. This is discussed in relation to Athi Mongezeleli Joja’s debate around the ‘private ownership’ of Medu artworks, where Judy Seidman claims to have “the only remaining [archive] in SA (of the other two, one has disappeared, and the other is partially intact” in the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Archives) (Joja, 2019). Furthermore, Taylor points to the personal archiving practice of artist Ann Gollifer,¹⁹ who started working at the Botswana National Museum & Art Gallery as a Senior Technical Officer just four months after the June 14 raid (Taylor, 2020: 19).

In 1985, whilst working to re-catalogue the national art collection, Gollifer made a comprehensive list of all of the Medu posters and put several copies of each into drawers for safe-keeping.²⁰ She still has a

¹⁹ “Newly arrived in Botswana in 1985, British-Guyanese artist Ann Gollifer acknowledges that she was politically naïve at the time and had little knowledge about southern African politics. Gollifer was soon employed as a senior officer on a temporary and part-time basis at the National Museum and Art Gallery in Gaborone” (Taylor, 2020: 19). Coincidentally, Gollifer and I currently live on the same street in Gaborone, Botswana, and have for over 10 years.

²⁰ As I have noted from a series of personal discussions with Gollifer on the topic.

²¹ Confirmed personally by a number of visits to the Botswana National Museum & Art Gallery, and furthermore, in discussion with Gollifer.

²² Based on (recorded) personal discussions with Segola between 2017 and 2019. I had the opportunity to engage some of Medu’s newsletters in his possession.

copy of the list, along with a few copies of some of the posters that had been in the collection, making a copy of each before disposing of piles of unused posters (Taylor, 2020: 19). Despite this, to date, the Botswana National Museum & Art Gallery has no record of the poster catalogue nor any of the posters.²¹ Furthermore, Lesiga Philip Segola — Motswana citizen, occasional Medu member, and former Principal Curator of the Botswana National Museum & Art Gallery — has a vast and untouched personal archive of Medu in his back house.²² Whilst the Truth and Reconciliation Commission arguably made efforts to reconcile the injustices of Apartheid, it appears that to some extent, compensation by Apartheid South Africa to Botswana for the damage to life and property remains unresolved to this day (“Ditshwanelo Press Statement”, 2016). This is shown through the gap in Medu’s material archive and national memory in Botswana to date.

²³ Taylor captions an image of the original graphic by Thami Mnyele, as a “design for a mural 1985 [Thami was killed before mural was painted]” (Taylor, 2020: 11). This appeared in the Mmegi newspaper, Botswana, 1987 (Source: Seidman, J., 1987. “No Direction Home: Thupelo Art Project Exhibition, Botswana National Museum and Art Gallery, June 18 to July 9, 1987”. Mmegi wa Dikgang Vol 4 (24): 8), and as a clipping in Gollifer’s personal archive (Taylor, 2020: 11).

²⁴ I refer to ‘sound’ here as a verb.

²⁵ Something is to be said here about the existing (though somewhat limited) archive of Medu available via the UCT Libraries Special Collection, as dislocated from Medu’s original context.



Figure 4: ‘the doors of culture shall be opened’, digital sketch/edit by Kim K. Makin based on Medu Graphic by Thami Mnyele (1985) — as printed in Medu Newsletter, and later edited for C. Kellner & S. Gonzalez, eds. *Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective* (book). Johannesburg: Jacana Media.²³

With that said, as I began to uncover the story of Medu by attempting to sound²⁴ it, I started by fragmenting the Medu poster (see figure 4) that I found in the UCT Jagger Library Special Collections which was a donation from the 90s.²⁵ By transposing particular moments of the poster into works of art in space, I fragmented the poster as a creative method for re-engaging Medu’s archive in the present from my particular point of experience and position. This translated as a constellation of circular moments, intended for extraction into an installation of sound and sculpture (see later discussion of *Untitled (radio cabinet)*). Interestingly, this ‘constellation installation’ seemed to visually and conceptually lend itself to Otobong Nkanga’s *The Weight of Scars* (figure 5).²⁶



Figure 5: Otobong Nkanga, *The Weight of Scars*, 2015, Woven Textile and photography/Yarns — viscose bast, mohair, polyester, bio cotton, linen, acrylic and inkjet print on 10 laser-cut forex plates, 251.5 × 612.1 cm. Photograph by M HKA

²⁶ Otobong Nkanga (born in 1974 Kano, Nigeria) lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium. Her multi-disciplinary practice spans tapestry, drawing, photography, installation, video and performance, and addresses the politics of land and its relationship to the body, as well as the complex and fraught histories of land acquisition and ownership (e-flux, 2020). Nkanga’s practice connects threads that reveal the entanglements of bodies, land and natural resources (e-flux, 2020).

Through Nkanga’s particular constellation of memory in woven textile and multiple interconnected circular photography plates, *The Weight of Scars* represents a network of scars. In this way, Nkanga establishes a historical and affective cartography of the African continent, as if to “well up the wounds of oblivion” (Lawrence, 2018). Thus, Nkanga connects threads that reveal the entanglement of bodies, land, and natural resources. Her creative practice often engages aspects of her lived experience and memory, for example, by reconstructing and intertwining childhood memories and scenes of violence pertaining to Nigeria’s past (Lawrence, 2018). In so doing, Nkanga’s practice expands on photography by arguing that everything that precedes the taking of the picture or happens after the fact, cannot be contained in a single static image. Therefore, while a picture may constitute

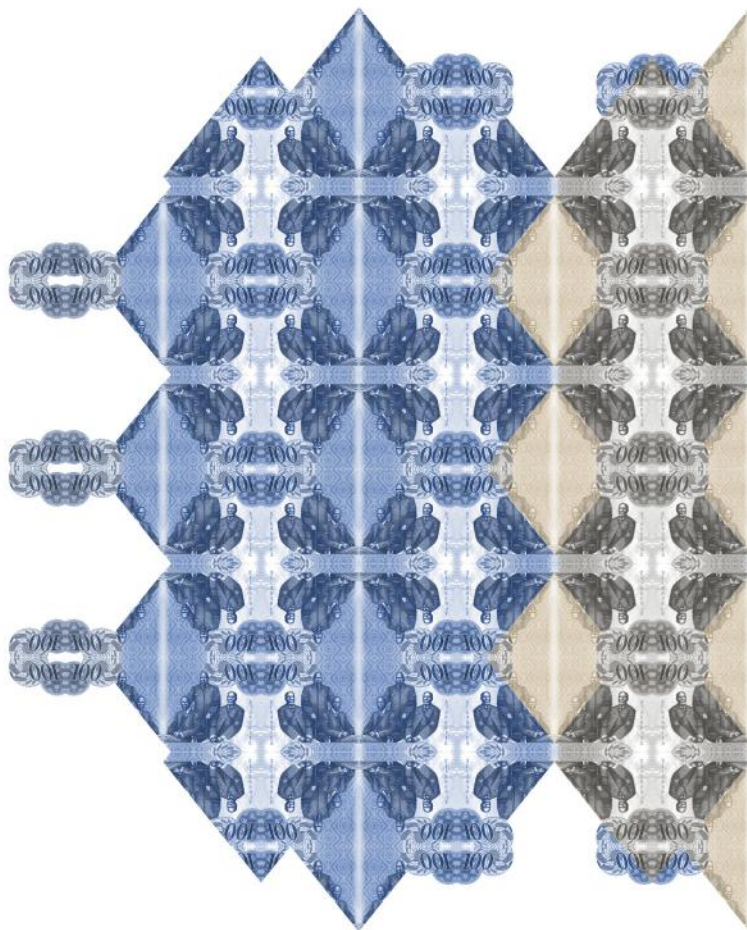
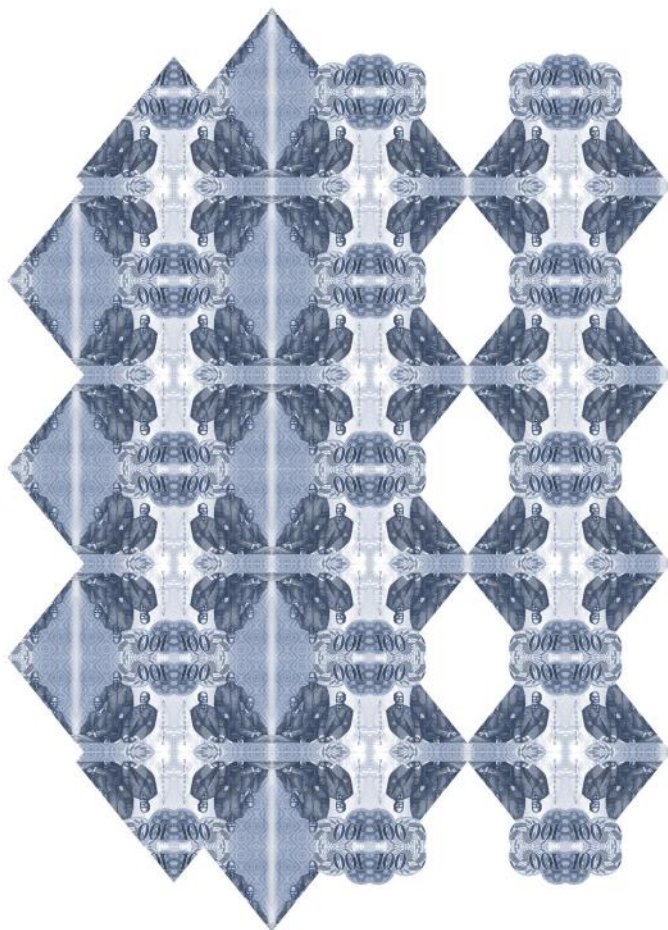
some piece of evidence, Nkanga argues that it doesn't necessarily capture the entire truth (Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, 2015).

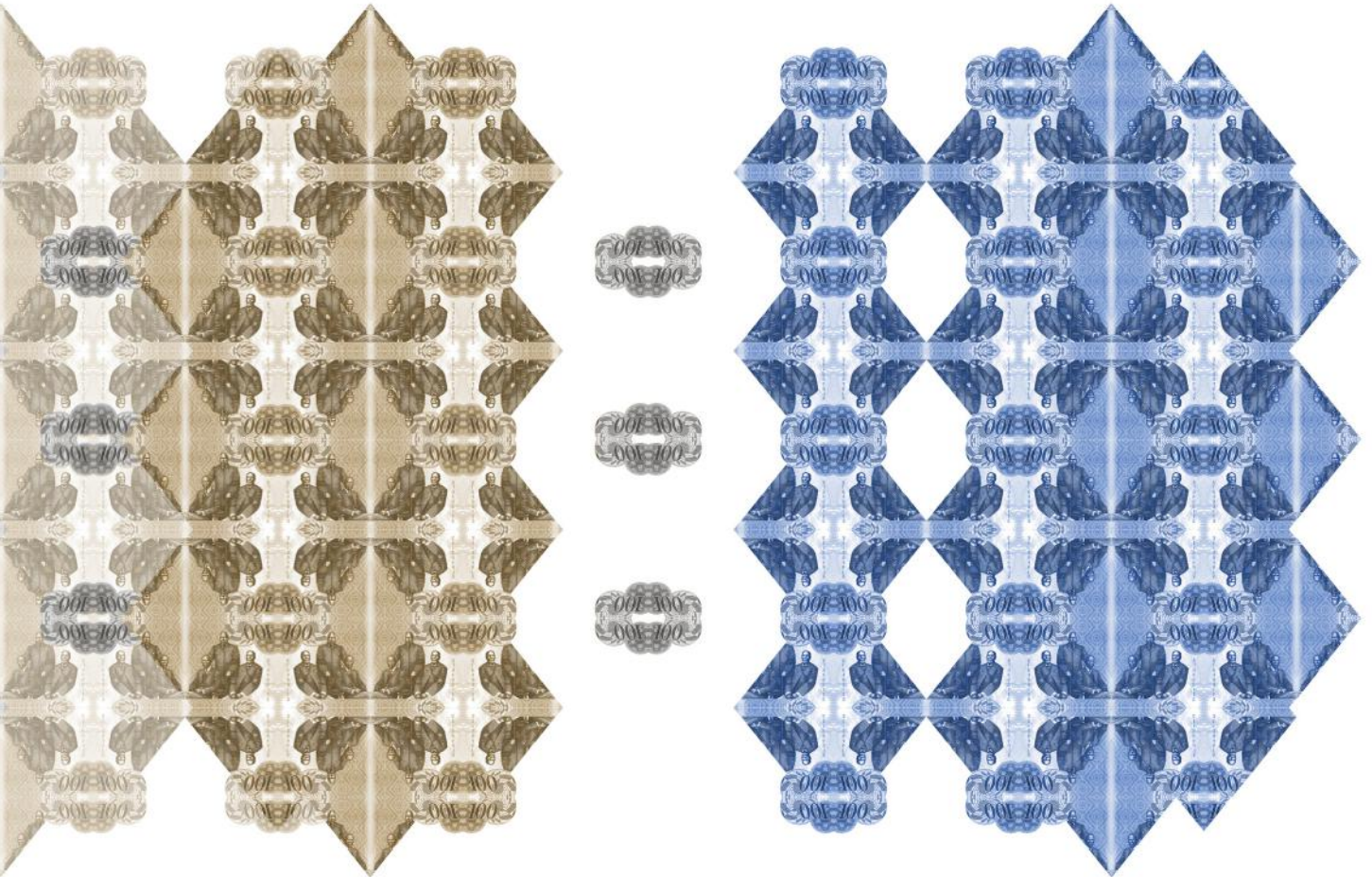
Following Nkanga's thesis of partial truths that are embedded within images, by engaging Medu's memory as a fragment of the archive, *the doors of culture shall be opened* aims to challenge the construction of dominant nationalist historiography in the postcolonial sense, which tends to detail some national struggle for "freedom" or "independence" (Pandey, 1992: 50). Based on my own experiences of becoming across borders, I recognise and appreciate the need to challenge 'grand narratives' because of its privileging of the "general" over the "particular", the larger over the smaller, and the "mainstream" over the "marginal" (Pandey, 1992: 50-51). Thus, with this body of work, I represent a counter-narrative, re-curating aspects of my history in contemporaneity.

Due to the fact that academic training within the discipline of Fine Art is still so "heavily tied to geographically discrete definitions of culture" (Harris, 2006: 698), I believe that Medu poses a substantial challenge, providing some backing for a deterritorialised view of "culture" and "history". As I attempt to reconcile a history of my hometown that was omitted from my upbringing, I question the extent to which context is informed by place versus people. In the case of Medu, I suppose this begs to investigate the extent to which its history was, as its founders, in exile.

*so I would like to say, when people ask, how is exile;
it is quiet here.
But that is a lie, or, a half-truth –
here, the bad things I once said about memory
come back.
memory is a thin red-hot membrane on the brain
it vibrates all the time
makes sounds
rings and chimes
and once
when over-used, can shrivel like burning plastic –
do not ask me what life is
for
like memory it is thin it vibrates and can shrivel
and, once, long ago
I believed some people who talked about life being birds flying freely:
you see what memory can do?
but listen*

— excerpt from *Exile* by Mongane Wally Serote (1982)





Botala jwa Botswana (the Blue of Botswana), 2020, Photomontage on natural canvas, approx. 173 x 55 cm

²⁷ A term borrowed from the title of the article *Historical entanglements, conflicting agendas and visions: Radio Botswana and the making of a national radio station* (Mosime & Mhlanga, 2016). By mapping out government control of the media in Botswana from its colonial beginnings to the first fifteen years after independence, here Mosime and Mhlanga argue that the history of government-owned and controlled media in Botswana can be understood through a history of “coloniality and its entanglements” — with the influence of apartheid South Africa’s role, and the invention of Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) hegemony (2016: 55-56). Notably in 2020 the word ‘entanglement’ arose with new meaning and significance by American actress Jada Pinkett Smith. In the ‘Red Table Talk’ video conversation with her husband Will Smith, Jada uses “entanglement” to describe the brief relationship she had with August Alsina about four-and-a-half years ago (whilst her and Will had a brief separation) (Seemela,

Historical Entanglements²⁷

My personal experience of the historical entanglement across Botswana and South Africa is linked not only to my coming-of-age story across borders but also to my patrilineal story of migration and the colonial history of Botswana. In this respect, I ask: to what extent is my Motswana manner innately informed by a certain sense of South African-ness? By exploring Medu’s memory as a fragment of the archive, I consider what the ensemble’s story tells of creative development in Botswana and the construction of national histories. Furthermore, by interrogating my position as a contemporary Motswana artist, my practice considers Medu’s ethos as foundational to the future of the arts in Botswana. Similarly, I consider my social responsibility in applying my Fine Art training from Cape Town to the creative development of Botswana.

To begin, whilst pre-independent Botswana was formally a British protectorate, theorists assert that Bechuanaland Protectorate (BP) was effectively subjected to two colonial powers; South Africa and Britain (Mosime & Mhlanga, 2016: 57). With South Africa’s domination outpacing the British in certain crucial areas of policy and administration, it also acted as a catalyst towards both Botswana’s independence and the emergence of governmental control of the media (Mosime & Mhlanga, 2016: 57). In this way, the end of South Africa’s dominance over then-BP was catalysed by the marriage of Sir Seretse Khama (heir apparent to the Bangwato throne and,

2020). In the video, Will asks Jada to be clear about what she meant by “entanglement”. Though she responds with some difficulty, subsequently the term became a buzzword across social media platforms — arguably “one of 2020’s biggest buzzwords” (Seemela, 2020). With that said, in this chapter I consider and unpack the nuances of interconnectedness that seem to ‘entangle’ history across Botswana and South Africa.

²⁸ Traditionally, large Tswana towns were divided into segments called wards, “which represented the major ethnic and family divisions within the community” (Denbow & Thebe, 2006: 21). This means that often times members of the same ‘home village’ fair some close or distant familial relationship. In primary school, my grandmother helped me trace back my matrilineal line in a family tree project, suggesting some extended relationship to the Khama family (as we both form a part of the Bangwato, from Serowe).

subsequently, Botswana’s first President) to a white British woman, Lady Ruth Williams, in 1948 (Mosime & Mhlanga, 2016: 60). That same year, Daniël François Malan of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party was voted into power as Prime Minister of South Africa (from 1948 to 1954), and formally instituted Apartheid as an official policy of the state. Acknowledging Khama’s marriage would greatly offend the position of not only the Malan government’s policy against mixed marriages but many separatist white South Africans as well. Thus, on 31 October 1949, the newly married couple was declared prohibited immigrants in South Africa (Parsons 1987: Mosime & Mhlanga, 2016: 60).

My matrilineal line forms a part of the Bangwato, and so we fair some supposed, extended relationship to the Khamas.²⁸ Interestingly, Lady Ruth and Sir Seretse Khama’s interracial marriage may have, arguably, set a precedent for interracial marriages in Botswana, with the example of myself and a number of my friends who are also ‘mixed’. Where Botswana is considered a symbol of racial harmony, based on the history of Lady Ruth and Sir Seretse Khama, it is significant to note the high presence of mixed-race children in Botswana. With that said, my project aims to reconsider the construction of Botswana’s national history with respect to the politics of race, gender, culture, and the archive. Oreyonke Oyewumi proposes that “many Africans come to know their societies only through what Western anthropologists and missionaries have written about them” (Oyewumi, 1997: 477-

²⁹ A multidisciplinary artist born in Mochudi, Botswana, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum's practice draws on mythology, geology and theories on the nature of the universe (Tiwani Contemporary, 2021). Through drawing, painting, animation and installation, "she creates multi-layered narrative landscapes that seem to appear simultaneously futuristic and ancient" (Tiwani Contemporary, 2021). Taking the multifaceted nature of identity as her focal point, her work captures an aspect of duality and/or multiplicity. She says: "I am interested in the fragility of the hero, the ways in which the hero is both heroic and anti-heroic; both a victor and a perpetrator, who can experience violence, but also cause violence" (Biswas, 2020). "Through the formation of her alter-ego Asme, as well as a re-examination and translation of established archetypes, Sunstrum generates personal narratives that draw attention to the intricacies of black female identity; reaching past stereotypes and reshaping how black women are made visible in art" (Biswas, 2020).

478). Thus, my approach uses a mix of resources in order to contrast Western theorists and historians with contemporary Botswana theorists as well as my lived experience, upbringing and family narrative. In this way, I am particularly interested in the narrative world-building and layered compositional style of Botswana artists such as Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum²⁹ and LegakwanaLeoMakgekgenene³⁰.

Botala jwa Botswana features a repeated pattern design that borrows and extends from the face of the one-hundred Botswana Pula note. This significantly includes a depiction of the Three *Dikgosi* (Chiefs), who are monumentalised as fathers of the nation for their role in the Republic of Botswana's grand narrative. Where the use of money seems to denote an aspect of cultural currency,³¹ the varied pattern of geometric triangles and circles in *Botala jwa Botswana* also seem to interestingly resemble the design of Botswana's traditional dress, *letaisi*.³²

By intricately weaving the history of the Three Chiefs with the cultural value of particular geometric patterns and traditional dress, *Botala jwa Botswana* unpacks the layers of our societal make-up and fabric based on my lived experience of daily life in Botswana. Therefore, *Botala jwa Botswana* critically engages the colour blue with respect to a particular sense of subjective nationhood. The title investigates the colour blue as subjective in the context of Botswana,

³⁰ As an artist LegakwanaLeo Makgekgenene “expands and broadens the mediums they work with, reminding viewers that art has the capacity to be timeless, while grounded in recognition of varying histories as well as looking forward to new imaginings. The realms of physical and digital overlap and intersect in a vibrant culmination of photography, photo-manipulation, live video, animation, sculpture, costume making and integrated sound pieces. Their work aims to re-materialize the metaphorical spaces where taught ideologies and memories are held, recognising how narratives, conceptualisations and entrenched understandings play a role in shaping African Contemporaneity. In this way, their practice catalyses a challenging of experiential environments, and furthermore how we engage with them.” (Art Times, 2020)

³¹ Interestingly, the Setswana word for ‘money’ — *madi*, also translates to ‘blood’, depending on use of tone and context.

³² Also known in Sotho as shweshwe, shoeshoe, sejeremane, as well as terantala (derived from Afrikaans tarentaal), and ujamani in Xhosa, letaisi refers to a particular printed dyed cotton fabric widely used for traditional clothing across Southern Africa (Pheto-Moeti, et al., 2017). Originally dyed indigo, the fabric is manufactured in a variety of colours (most notably blue, brown and red), and printing designs, characterised by intricate geometric patterns. It is suggested that 19th century German and Swiss settlers imported the blaudruck (blue print) fabric for their clothing, and helped entrench it in Southern African and Sesotho culture (Pheto-Moeti, et al., 2017). The name shweshwe is derived from the fabric’s association with Lesotho’s King Moshoeshoe I. Moshoeshoe I was gifted with the fabric by French missionaries in the 1840s and subsequently popularised it (Pheto-Moeti, et al., 2017). Ironically, genuine shweshwe fabric, which is commonly used to make contemporary Botswana’s traditional attire is stamped as “printed in South Africa” (by Da Gama Textiles).



with a critical look at the cultural value and meaning of “*botala*”. Interestingly, ka Setswana “*botala*” may be used interchangeably to denote the colour blue (as in the phrase *botala jwa loapi*, which directly translates to ‘the blue of the sky’), or otherwise green (specifically known as *botala jwa matlhare/setlhare*, which specifically refers to the colour of the leaves/trees, or arguably, the ‘blue’ of the leaves/trees). However, both colours may be referred to simply as *botala*.

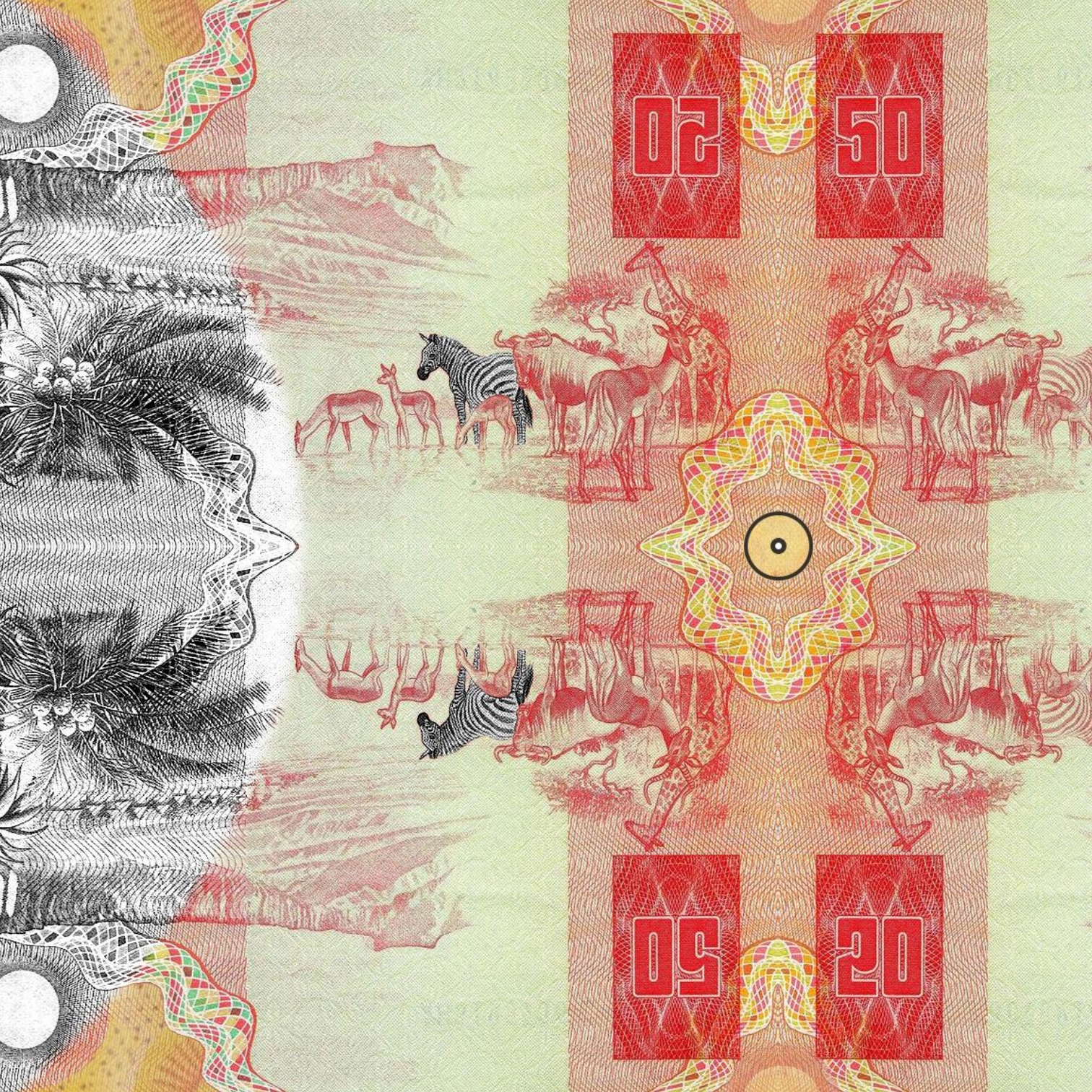
Left: *Botala jwa Botswana (the Blue of Botswana)* (detail) 2020, Photomontage on natural canvas, approx. 173 x 55 cm.

Photograph by LegakwanaLeo Makgekgenene

With respect to the notion of Linguistic Relativism, I believe that *botala* suggests a particular type of colour concept that is specific to life and culture in Botswana. In considering the manner in which language shapes the way that one thinks about the world, *Botala jwa Botswana* unpacks the colour blue as symbolic of the shades of the nation, and is, in some ways, representative of my experience of the unique spirit of my home in Botswana.



Letsatsi, our Daily Sun, 2020, Photomontage on cotton fabric, approx. 217 x 83 cm



Letsatsi ka Setswana translates to the sun, though the noun phrase may also be used to describe ‘a day’. Whilst experiencing the Covid-19 Lockdown in Cape Town’s wet, winter months, I began an intimate reflection that considered the cultural value of the sun in Tswana cosmology. This study extends from a personal investigation of my intimate relationship with the sun as a source of daily life, as well as in my intellectual efforts to unpack geometric symbols of Setswana identity from a position of dislocation.

Thus, in extending from a conversation of cultural value, *Letsatsi, our Daily Sun* features the tail side of an old South African 50 Rand note, repeated to form the background of the photomontage. The note interestingly illustrates a flat, arguably ‘Table’-like Mountain under a glowing circle for the sun (repeated through a patterned layering that resembles a *shweshwe* design). Significantly, I found this note slotted in an old book from my paternal grandfather’s bookshelf, entitled *World Book of Makins*, alongside some seemingly random newspaper clippings I am still attempting to make sense of. My grandfather was originally from Nottingham, England. He left in his early twenties, soon after his mother’s passing, when he saw an advertisement in the newspaper that read ‘Come to Sunny Rhodesia’.³³ Whilst the advert may have been embedded in the problematics of Western imperialism, my grandfather claimed to have been attracted to the idea of the warm African sun, in the midst of a cold and wet England.

³³ Present-day Zimbabwe; this ad was reportedly put out to increase British occupation in then-Southern Rhodesia.

My grandfather later married my South African grandmother, and the family later relocated to her home in Cape Town.



the doors of culture shall be opened, 2021, Installation view at Michaelis Main Gallery, Cape Town.

Photographed by LegakwanaLeo Makgekgenene

I often think about how different my life would have panned out (perhaps in a parallel universe), had my grandfather not made that cross-continental move. With that in mind, *Letsatsi, our Daily Sun* unpacks the sun as a familial and cultural symbol of my identity that is imbued with transnational significance. Whilst acknowledging the central role of the sun in daily Tswana life, the work contemplates my relationship

with the sun via dislocation. By extension, the work presents a Venn diagram-like form in considering a geometric depiction of the transnational (and intergenerational) space that exists for me between Botswana and South Africa, imagined as a transitional ‘grey area’.



Figure 6: Botswana National Coat of Arms

The central convex shape and accompanying zebras in *Letsatsi, our Daily Sun*, all of which are highlighted in a grayscale, present some visual similarity to the shield and accompanying zebras that appear on Botswana’s National Coat of Arms (figure 6). For me, this interestingly invokes a memory of Neil Parsons’ discussion on the inappropriateness of the shield that appears in the Botswana National Coat of Arms, where he argued that the shield was not of Tswana design but that it, instead, depicted Zulu tradition. This sparked a particular public debate in 1975, amongst discussion of newly independent Botswana’s new currency.³⁴ On the topic of cultural value, whilst there was considerable public debate regarding the national symbols that were to appear in the new currency, the ‘Zulu shield’ still appears in the Botswana National Coat of Arms today,

³⁴ After Botswana attained independence from Britain in 1966 it continued using the South African Rand until 1976 when the country introduced its own Pula currency which depicted local scenery, culture and history. The introduction of the Pula currency was meant to assert Botswana’s independence from South Africa even though the country continued to rely heavily on South Africa economically.

supported by two zebras, Botswana's National Animal.³⁵

Letsatsi, our Daily Sun presents an intimate reflection on my day-to-day experience and the manner in which this is informed by the home space (during Lockdown, in dislocation). Ultimately *Letsatsi, our Daily Sun* considers 'home' as an idealised space of transnational dynamism that one may create for themselves, based on a feeling of familiarity and association.

³⁵ It is argued that Botswana's political independence from South Africa had been asserted through the adoption of a new national anthem, new coat of arms, and a new flag in 1965. Whilst political independence is thought to have been asserted through the establishment of new national symbols, it is important to acknowledge the colonial association attached to the coat of arms (designed by the wife of George Winstanley who was a colonial government official in Botswana. His wife Bridget designed the coat of arms for which she received the Member of the British Empire (MBE) medal. Though there was some controversy about this as supposedly she got some of her ideas from Isabel Fawcus, wife of Peter Fawcus, the Resident Commissioner and Sheila England, wife of Russell England, member of the first Legislative Council).

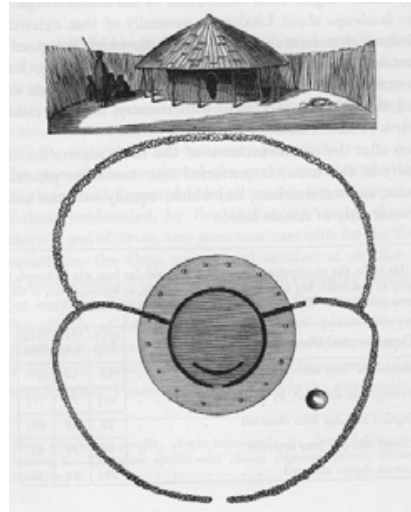
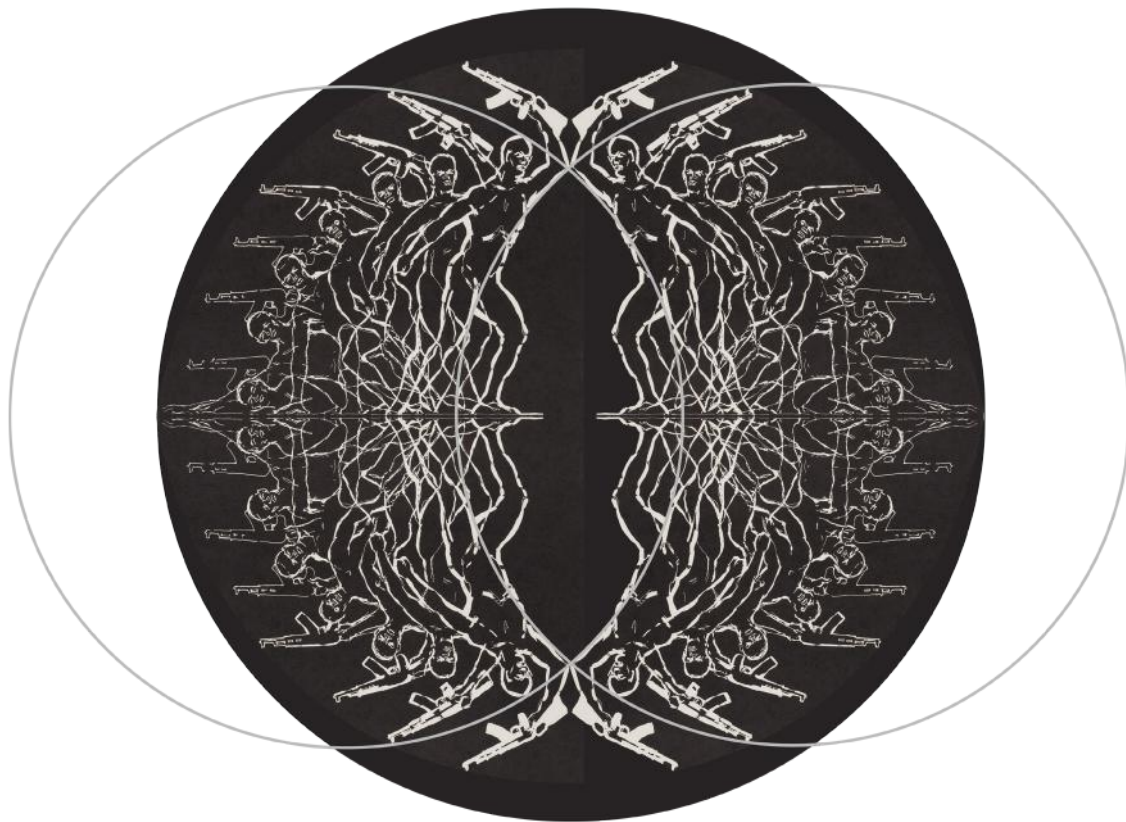


Figure 7: William Burchell's engraving of a bilobal homestead

(Steyn, 2012: 116)



Shades of Change, A Revolution, 2020, Photomontage on cotton fabric, approx. 105 x 133 cm

Shades of Change, A Revolution also makes use of the Venn diagram icon (as in *Letsatsi, our Daily Sun*) as a symbol of my transnationality, where my project considers ‘Medu and Me’ in three parts; in between Botswana and South Africa, neither/nor, both/and. In this way, *Shades of Change, A Revolution* presents an ongoing dialogue between Medu and me, imagined as a rotating circle of men armed by Medu’s creation. Furthermore, I believe that the Venn diagram symbology suggests the presence of a liminal/transitional in-between space, which, in some ways, may also resemble the bilobal construction of traditional Setswana homes (figure 7). Here, it is also worth mentioning that the layout of Tswana communities is historically thought to have revealed a “consistent pattern of connectedness and spatial relations” between the chief’s dwelling, the *kgotla*, and the ceremonial kraal (Steyn, 2012: 117). Therefore, *the doors of culture shall be opened* presents a circular visual language specifically as a value-laden marker of identity in Botswana (also with reference to local crafts such as baskets and pottery).

Shades of Change, A Revolution presents a digital edit and multiplication of a part of a Medu poster from the 1982 two-man play entitled *Shades of Change*, as presented by Medu at the Botswana National Museum (figure 8). Significantly, the form that features in the original poster is transformed and repeated here, to create a literal full revolution. In this way, the original Medu poster is productive in considering history as circular, referential, and cyclical. The work has been crafted in a specific way so as to reengage the Medu poster in the contemporary moment. This is done with consideration for the manner in which Medu has implicated change for cultural production in the transnational space between Botswana and South Africa in the audiences called forth by this exhibition. In so doing, *Shades of Change, A Revolution* considers how the current socio-political moment as I experience it is reflective of a collective sense of history and artistic purpose in the region, as was outlined by Medu.³⁶

³⁶ In an unpublished essay (courtesy of Medu Art Ensemble), Mnyele expresses his personal commitment to a sense of community, as central to his art practice (Mnyele, 2008). In attempting to understand his role as an artist ‘in the struggle’, here Mnyele contends that it is the sentiments of the surrounding community, that actually ‘determines us and our activities’ (2008: 22). He writes that “whatever artistic indulgence we engage ourselves in must not be blind to the river of life within and around us, that social stream from which art feeds and is nourished: the community”, and goes on to say that it is therefore basic that “the artist is a sensitive being moved by this national grief and struggle of the community... the river that feeds and nourishes the work of art” (Mnyele, 2008: 22 & 26). Thus, Medu’s artistic production pioneered a number of community-based activities in Gaborone such as art classes, workshops, symposiums and exhibitions - involving the University of Botswana, the Botswana National Museum and Art Gallery, as well as an art rehabilitation program with

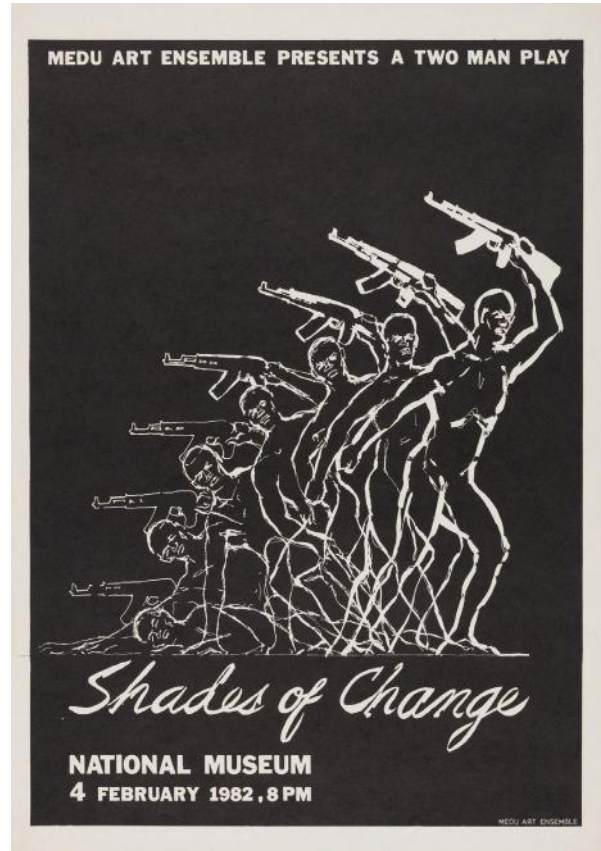


Figure 8: Albio Gonzalez, *Shades of Change* (Poster), 1982, Offset lithograph on white wove paper, 605 × 423 mm (Source: Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Artworkers Retirement Society)

Botswana Prison Services (where Mnyeale worked with inmates like Zimbabwean-born artist George Nene). In so doing, it is clear that the creative production under Medu saw members consciously engaged in a creative practice exemplary of Botho/Ubuntu, as an African moral ethic that demands interdependence, communalism and the subservience of the individual to the welfare of the community as a whole (Steyn, 2012: 113). By this “social contract of mutual respect, responsibility and accountability” (Steyn, 2012: 113), it is understood widely across sub-Saharan Africa, that one cannot realise their ‘true self’ in opposition to or isolation from others (Metz & Gaieb, 2010: 275). Instead it is considered principal to one’s sense of individuality, to identify as a member of a common group, actively and harmoniously participating in their community practices (Metz & Gaieb, 2010: 276).



Figure 9: Front page of *The Botswana Guardian* reporting on the June 14 Raid, 21 June 1985

(Source: Botswana National Archives)

Where I consider Medu’s role as central to Botswana’s early creative development, I reengage Medu in the contemporary as a springboard for an extended conversation on Botswana’s creative identity. Underscoring that, I argue that the June 14 Raid and subsequent demise of Medu may have equally contributed to Botswana’s creative stunting. The photomontage and sound installation *on Gaborone, 1985* (discussed below) considers the June 14 raid on Gaborone by the SADF as a traumatic turning point for Botswana’s creative development. It unpacks an intertextual reimagining of a commemorative memorial booklet entitled *The Raid on Gaborone: June 14, 1985* by Libero Nyelele and Ellen Drake (1985). Forming a part of the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Thami Mnyeale Memorial Monument (Ekurhuleni), the booklet details the four SADF raids on Gaborone that took place in 1985, with a focus on June 14 and its regional impact. Significantly, 1985 is described as the year that Botswana’s capital ‘lost its innocence’.



on Gaborone, 1985, 2020, Photomontage and sound installation, Dimensions variable

on Gaborone, 1985 considers the image of an innocent civilian, Prince Mampane’s blown-up car as an icon for the June 14 Raid on Gaborone as it appeared on the front page of *The Botswana Guardian* following the event (figure 9). In the accompanying article, Mampane is noted as having “approached the

SADF roadblock on his way from the disco, unaware of what was going on” (The Botswana Guardian, 1985: 1). His car was hit with a hand-grenade and, by a stroke of luck, Mampane is said to have crawled out of the blazing car into the adjacent ditch.

The more that is revealed to me of the SADF raids on Gaborone, the more I become aware of the Botswana Government’s unsuspecting nature. This is echoed sonically in the sound installation that reverberates within the gallery, as then-President Sir Ketumile Quett Masire reacts to the damage of the raid by claiming that “we don’t know what we have done to deserve this”, and that “they should have told us” (Masire in Yakgale, 2013). *on Gaborone, 1985* presents my attempt to picture 1985 in Gaborone through a layering of limited archival findings of image and text, as well as through aural storytelling. I meditate on 1985 as a traumatic turning point in Botswana’s history, by trying to piece together the layers of archival findings that succeed 1985.

With respect to transnational identity, my project considers the extent to which my individual identity is defined by historical entanglements across the region. It continuously considers my position in how I interact with national histories, exploring connections and similarities across the region. This was echoed in conversation with a (Michaelis) colleague and friend, Akudzwe Elsie Chiwa (from Zimbabwe), in discussing our immigrant status as dislocated in the context of a locked-down South Africa. *Night Migrant* (see installation image below) presents a material collaboration between Chiwa and me. Forming part of a regional discourse on nurturing creative and cultural exchange during the Lockdown period, where significantly art was considered non-essential, The Botswana Pavilion³⁷ extended its national purview to bring together artists and collaborators from Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe in order to engage in a series of collaborations via dislocation. Where the outbreak of Covid-19 restricted movement through the closing of the borders as Lockdown encroached in the Southern African region, I strongly feel that the Lockdown emphasised a new sense of radical transnational solidarity within art practice.

³⁷ The Botswana Pavilion is an artist collective and creative platform comprising of Batswana artists Kim Karabo Makin, LegakwanaLeo Makgekgenene, Thebe Phetogo, Thero Makepe, and Sade Shoalane. Like many countries in the Global South, Botswana has never presented a national pavilion in Venice, and so the group of emerging contemporary artists have taken it upon themselves to actively interrogate Botswana's creative identity collectively, across national and international borders, by engaging counter-narratives and debates around the nationalistic nature of occasions such as biennales. In 2019, the first and second chapters of The Botswana Pavilion took place concurrently with the Venice Biennale, with the exhibitions No Return at Gallery MOMO, Cape Town, and later Subjective Nationhood at the Botswana National Art Gallery, Gaborone (with support from Sefalana). The collective went on to conceptualise a group exhibition titled Collective Ties which was scheduled to take place in May 2020 in conjunction with an artist residency at The National Gallery of Zimbabwe (Bulawayo) by Phetogo. The sudden lockdown and closure of national borders in the region due to the outbreak of Covid-19 gave new dimensions to the collective's transnationality, which informed the reconfiguration of the project. Shifting from regional visibility to international circumstance, The Botswana Pavilion presented their third iteration (with support from Pro Helvetia, Johannesburg), Collective Ties as an online exhibition (via ArtSteps), along with a series of online interactions (in partnership with Southern Africa Arts (British Council). With an adjusted understanding of space and travel across neighbouring countries, as artists and collaborators were dotted across Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe, The Botswana Pavilion aimed to interrogate methods to reflect on themes of transnationality, identity formation, history and context. With a focus on creative and cultural exchange in the region, the collective produced a series of collaborative projects conducted via dislocation. (Pro Helvetia Johannesburg, 2020)



the doors of culture shall be opened, 2021, Installation view at Michaelis Main Gallery, Cape Town,

Photographed by LegakwanaLeo Makgekgenene

Using the materials that form a significant part of our independent practices related to our personal identity politics and national counter-histories, *Night Migrant* combines Chiwa's particular use of velvet with my use of pantyhose. As embodied or personified materials that are socialised within a particular sense of our individual racialised, gendered and cultural identities, *Night Migrant* also considers a collective sense of purpose in the region. Here, my reference to Botswana's distinct basketry as a cultural symbol (much like in the *Molenza* series) is extended within the context of Zimbabwean mythology in conversation with Chiwa, which associates the form with witches who are said to travel at night using baskets. Thus, in speaking to a sense of mobility that is embedded in our collective sense of identity in the Southern African region, *Night Migrant* significantly unpacks our individual and collective experiences of dislocation, long-distance travel, and art as 'taboo'. Through a series of conversations, *Night Migrant* presents an artistic reflection of collective identity and purpose.

Right: Akudzwe Elsie Chiwa & Kim Karabo Makin, *Night Migrant* (detail) 2020, Mixed media, approx. 170 x 100 cm



The Living Archive³⁸

³⁸ There can be no doubt that in the space of the post-apartheid, many South African scholars have been actively prioritising the heritage, hegemony and potentialities of the concept and corporeal reality of the Archive. Of particular note is Premesh Lalu and his text *The deaths of Hintsa: postapartheid South Africa and the shape of recurring pasts* (2009), which reimagines the evidentiary claims of the colonial archive. His work, and scholars at the Centre for Humanities Research have sustained a discourse of the Archive beyond the shadow of disciplinary logic that attends colonialism — having also played a crucial role in reinvigorating a discourse of the archive. While my project relies heavily on placing artworks at the centre of my argument, I also acknowledge the work of many South African scholars (like Lalu) who continue to work in this critical space, beyond the number I am able to mention in this project document.

“...the “non-wordness” of sounds — the aspects of sound that cannot be reproduced on the written page. This is not so much a strict opposition between notated sounds and written words as it is an augmentation of words with sounds or a mix of the two.”

(Weheliye, 2000: 549)

As an exercise in delinking from Western methods for curating the archive in contemporary Africa, I propose an investigation of the living archive as an applied form of knowledge, particular to the transnational space within which I exist. Regarding Tswana narrativity in the historical record, Barry Morton describes Botswana as “active users of narrative discourse”, noting the existence of oral tradition in particular as often overlooked by colonial predecessors (Morton, 2011: 53). By acknowledging Botswana’s strong oral tradition, whilst considering culturally specific ways of remembering and curating histories, I believe that an investigation of Medu’s memory in Botswana precipitates an exploration of the living archive. With a focus on the radio DJ as a critic, sonic educator, and curator of space (Weheliye, 2000: 545), I unpack ‘the mix’ and radio, as methods or mediums of curating the living archive. In addition, I will outline the manner in which this has been employed to curate the particular sound of the exhibition and body of work, *the doors of culture shall be opened*.

The Pan African Space Station (PASS) in Cape Town — founded by Chimurenga in collaboration with musician and composer Neo Muyanga in 2008 — is a periodic, live pop-up radio studio, performance and exhibition space, research platform and a ‘living archive’, in addition to being an ongoing, internet-based radio station (PASS, 2021). With reference to Chimurenga’s existing collection of documents about Pan-Africanism, Alice Aterianus-Owanga describes Chimurenga as “creating a fluid and moving archive, which crosses borders between genres, between the archive and the repertoire, and between text and performance” (Aterianus-Owanga, 2020: 261). Thus, one may consider ‘the living archive’ as a live sounding of the archive as expressed through lived experience and shared storytelling. In this way, I am particularly interested in Chimurenga’s FESTAC ’77 mix (2020), as exemplary of methods for curating or re-curating the archive in contemporary Africa. A curated selection of memories, accumulated through the journeys of Chimurenga, I believe the FESTAC ’77 mix opens new spaces of resistance and critical imagination by transcending physical borders through the digital realm (Zeitz MOCAA Radical Solidarity Summit, 2020). As a way of travelling back in time to reimagine FESTAC ’77 through music, poetry, archival recordings, storytelling, and personal reflections, the digital mix also offers a new space for listeners to engage this particular moment in history from their homes.

Alexander G. Weheliye (2000) proposes that the concept of ‘the mix’ serves as a means for cultural analysis that acknowledges the centrality of music and sound in Black cultural production. He asserts that ‘the mix’ offers a strategy for the construction of modern Black identities, by creating an alternative space that co-exists with its other components (Weheliye, 2000: 537). In this way, ‘the mix’ differs from a hybridizing approach that purports to erase two factors (black/white; colonizer/colonized; self/other; and so on), replacing them with one that combines both (Weheliye, 2000: 537). Instead, ‘the mix’ brings together seemingly disparate elements without the illusion of replacing these dualities (Weheliye, 2000: 537), and it is in this vein that I frame my particular use of the Venn diagram symbology in *Shades of Change, A Revolution*, and similarly *Letsatsi, Our Daily Sun*. In this case, rather than a product that results from the randomness or irony evoked by the terms ‘bricolage’ and ‘pastiche’ in the postmodern

sense, ‘the mix’ locates Black subjectivity and cultural production primarily in sound. In so doing, I believe that this conception of ‘the mix’ recognises sound as socialised.



Figure 10: Emeka Ogboh, 2015, *Market Symphony*, Site-specific, mixed-media sound installation. Installation view at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art.

The relationship between sound and space as socialised is a notion that is explored conceptually through the works of artists like Emeka Ogboh³⁹ and James Webb⁴⁰. Through sounds that permeate public spaces and serve as an interface for collective and subjective everyday experiences, Ogboh’s work is said to require a phenomenological immersion, resulting in the viewer experiencing or imagining Lagos aurally. Similarly, Webb’s *There’s No Place Called Home* uses specific foreign bird calls and songs

³⁹ Born in Enugu in 1977, Emeka Ogboh is a sound and installation artist who explores how private, public, and collective memories and histories are translated, transformed, and encoded into sound and food. His works contemplate how sound and food capture existential relationships, frame our understanding of the world, and provide a context for critical questions on immigration, globalisation, and post-colonialism. (Enwonwu, 2019)

⁴⁰ James Webb is an interdisciplinary artist, known for his site-specific interventions and installations. His practice often involves sound, found objects, and text, invoking references to literature, cinema, and the minimalist traditions. By shifting objects, techniques, and forms beyond their original contexts and introducing them to different environments, Webb creates new spaces of tension. These spaces bind Webb's academic background in religion, theatre, and advertising, offering poetic inquiries into the economies of belief and dynamics of communication in our contemporary world. (blank projects, 2021)

that are broadcast from speakers hidden in local trees, in a recurring, worldwide intervention. With a look at their respective practices and particular use of sound, *on Gaborone, 1985* specifically explores sound as sculptural. Thus, the gallery space is particularly activated through the sound installation, where the use of surround sound speakers introduces a three-dimensionality to the sound as socialised and spatialised. In the work, the mix mobilises a new method for curating fragments of the archive, specifically where violent histories are concerned.

In her text *In Defense of the Fragment*, Gyanendra Pandey asserts that “violence produces the necessity of evidence gathering, of uncovering hidden processes and contradictions that we might normally prefer to ignore” (1992: 35). Pandey outlines the “difficulties of writing the history of violence” (Pandey, 1992: 27). With respect to Medu as a fragment of the violent acts of the Apartheid state, I propose an exploration of the living archive. To this end, the ‘radio cabinet’, which forms a central position in the exhibition space, features a mix *on Gaborone, 1985*, that resounds from speakers dotted across the room.

A featured mix on the June 14 raid, was made with the intention of sounding Gaborone in 1985, and furthermore, in detailing Botswana's position in South Africa's anti-Apartheid struggle. This is communicated through the use of selected playback of radio and television signals, namely a mix of music, stories, and reports which

⁴¹ Future was a South African 80s group, described as having a Funk, Soul, Pop/Synth-pop, Bubblegum and/or Boogie style genre. They were popularly known for their tracks “Party Weekend (in Gaborone)”, and “Our Love Is So Strong”, released together as a cassette, maxi-single in 1984 (Discogs, 2021). In 2016, South African rapper and entertainer AKA sampled their song “Party Weekend” for his single “One Time”, without the necessary credits and permission from the group. One of the two surviving members of the group Enos Thembinkosi Lubisi went on to sue Universal Music South Africa (the label under which AKA released the song), stating that he wanted to be declared the sole holder of the rights of both “Party Weekend” and “One Time” (Mkhabela, 2018). Something is to be said here about the resurgence of “Party Weekend” into the contemporary South African soundscape, with respect to the reconciliation of Apartheid South Africa, and neighbouring Botswana, in the present.

play interchangeably with the second mix, *Kgosi Segofatsa Afrika* (discussed in greater detail later) on a loop with intermittent pauses. These are positioned separately with *Kgosi Segofatsa Afrika* as an introduction to the exhibition, in sounding the transnational space that I have outlined as existing across Botswana and South Africa. Positioned centrally in the Main Gallery, *on Gaborone, 1985* notably includes a Radio Botswana jingle interspliced with segments from the South African Broadcasting Corporation’s (SABC) Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Special Report, as well as then-president of Botswana Masire’s reaction to The Raid on Gaborone 1985, and South African 80s group Future’s song, *Party Weekend* (1985).⁴¹

Right: *Untitled (radio cabinet)*, 2020, Audio sculpture, wall installation and mural, Installation dimensions variable, Installation view at Upper Gallery, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Photographed by LegakwanaLeo Makgekgenene







the doors of culture shall be opened, 2021, Wall installation in progress at Upper Gallery, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town, Photographed by LegakwanaLeo Makgekgenene

Where I find Future singing cheerfully about travelling to Gaborone to party for the weekend, I imagine a Botswana in 1985 that formed a place of refuge for many Black South Africans under Apartheid. Interestingly for me, this contrasts the present-day context, where many young Batswana enjoy escaping just across the border to South Africa for the weekend for similar reasons. To my mind, this highlights the irony in the historical entanglements across Botswana and South Africa. With a number of sound symbols, in this mix I curate a soundscape that pertains to my initial archival research and speculation, imagining the sound of Gaborone in 1985.⁴²

In Botswana, radio is the most popular local media and can be recognised across the public soundscape through a distinctive local sound. Interestingly, radio is a unique medium that does not require one's full attention but still has the ability to fill a room, permeate space, and transcend national borders. With reference to Steven Connor, Weheliye explains that the singular space of the visual is “transformed by the experience of sound to a plural space; one can hear many sounds simultaneously, where it is impossible to see different visual objects at the same time without disposing them in a unified field of vision” (2000: 543). In this way, the auditory experience is thought to give way to a plural, permeated space, as a channel through which voices, noises and musics travel” (Connor in Weheliye, 2000: 543).

⁴² The mix also features snippets from the TRC Special Report which includes the voices of Apartheid spy Craig Williamson, ex-Medu member Tim Williams, mother Hilda Phahle (of George and Lindie Phahle, Medu members whom were killed in the June 14 raid), former MK Commander Snika Zikulala, as well as some featured SABC reporters. Notably, Zikulala describes Botswana as a ‘conduit’ for cadres training mostly in Angola and Zambia.

⁴³ The radio cabinet has been crafted to echo and extend the visual presence of the cabinet I experienced in my grandmother's home growing up. It visually resembles the cabinet, but instead various other materials (such as pantyhose and the geometric hexagonal pattern) of symbolic importance have been included in the art piece, and crucially the audio component references. Here, the cabinet explodes into the gallery by breaking the silence with volume, but furthermore, by extending the contents of my grandmother's radio cabinet into an accompanying wall and sound installation.

⁴⁴ By introducing the term 'artscape', Harris asserts that a "focus on 'border cultures' and the networks in which people and ideas circulate, proposes a more dynamic model of the world as it is experienced by many contemporary artists who migrate for economic, political or personal reasons" (2006: 699). In this way, Harris appendixes Arjun Appadurai's "famous division of the global economy into ethnoscaples, mediascaples,

With reference to the iconic radio cabinet that featured centrally in my maternal grandmother's home (figure 9), *Untitled (radio cabinet)* explodes into the gallery as a mouthpiece of Botswana's domestic space, telling news of the socio-political situation surrounding Medu in Gaborone in 1985.⁴³ With this work, a number of seemingly 'disparate elements' come together in forming the structure and sound of the radio cabinet. In this way, each component structures various social, political, cultural, and aesthetic formations. Here, the transnational space is defined specifically by an existing soundscape, mediascape, and artscape across Botswana and South Africa.⁴⁴



Figure 9: 'Radio cabinet in my Nkuku's (Grandmother's) home',

Image taken by Kim K. Makin, 2019, Serowe, Botswana

technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes” as a way of giving particular emphasis to the idea of cultural flows (Appadurai in Harris 2006: 699). To substantiate, she suggests that “art (and its history) has always been concerned with this kind of literal and metaphorical terrain” where art works may be produced in very specific places but as products “regularly circulate far beyond their originating context” (Harris, 2006: 699).

⁴⁵ My creative practice at present combines my Fine Art background, with my experience working on-air as a radio DJ, presenter and host on UCT Radio from about 2015-2020.

⁴⁶ Something is to be said here about the use of baskets as riot shields, and furthermore the particular kind of basket used here, as a cultural symbol of Bechuanaland Protectorate.

In *The Grooves of Sonic-Afro Modernity* (2005), Weheliye introduces concepts of citizenship that allow for multiple spheres of belonging, with the mix as a model of Black temporality. In this way, I view my identity as converging between multiple spheres of belonging. Interestingly, Francis B. Nyamnjoh specifically outlines the spheres of belonging in Botswana specifically as “ever-diminishing circles of inclusion imposed by race, ethnicity, class, gender and geography” (Nyamnjoh, 2007: 325). Therefore, I unpack my identity sonically as a radio DJ through ‘the mix’, and visually with a series of circular forms.⁴⁵

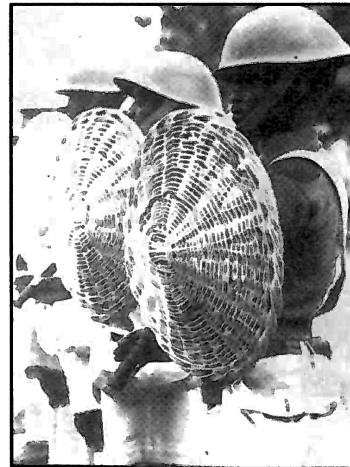


Figure 10: *Bechuanaland Protectorate Riot Police, 1964.*⁴⁶

(Keitseng & Morton, 1999)

⁴⁷ Hughes expressed a concern that apartheid propaganda could come into Botswana through adverts prepared in South Africa. The content could contain an implicit acceptance of the racial structure of the then separatist society there. He, however, conceded that marginal backing of apartheid could be considered a lesser evil looking at the financial rewards – and that if commercial broadcasts were in Setswana the racial issue would perhaps not arise (Mosime & Mhlanga, 2016: 64).

⁴⁸ Colonial policy projections towards the High Commission Territories (HTCs) of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland were that they would eventually become part of the Union of South Africa. Therefore, the Bechuanaland Protectorate “was virtually a monetary/fiscal province of South Africa” (Mosime & Mhlanga, 2016: 59). Under the Broadcasting Act of 1936, “the state-owned South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was granted total control of radio broadcasting in South Africa, which included the HTCs (Mosime & Mhlanga, 2016: 59).

In acknowledging the “powerful presence of a coercive and quite overbearing neighbour, South Africa with its South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC),⁴⁷ and a paternalist British voice alongside an anxious postcolonial government”, Sethunya Tshepho Mosime and Brilliant Mhlanga assert that Botswana’s historical entanglements in the region contributed to shaping the eventual identity of Botswana’s national radio station, Radio Botswana (2016: 55-56).⁴⁸ Radio becomes a particularly interesting springboard and medium to discuss identity formation and spheres of belonging in Botswana, with respect to the history of radio in Botswana depicting its multiple origins and conflicting visions as to the role and nature of broadcasting in the colony and postcolony.

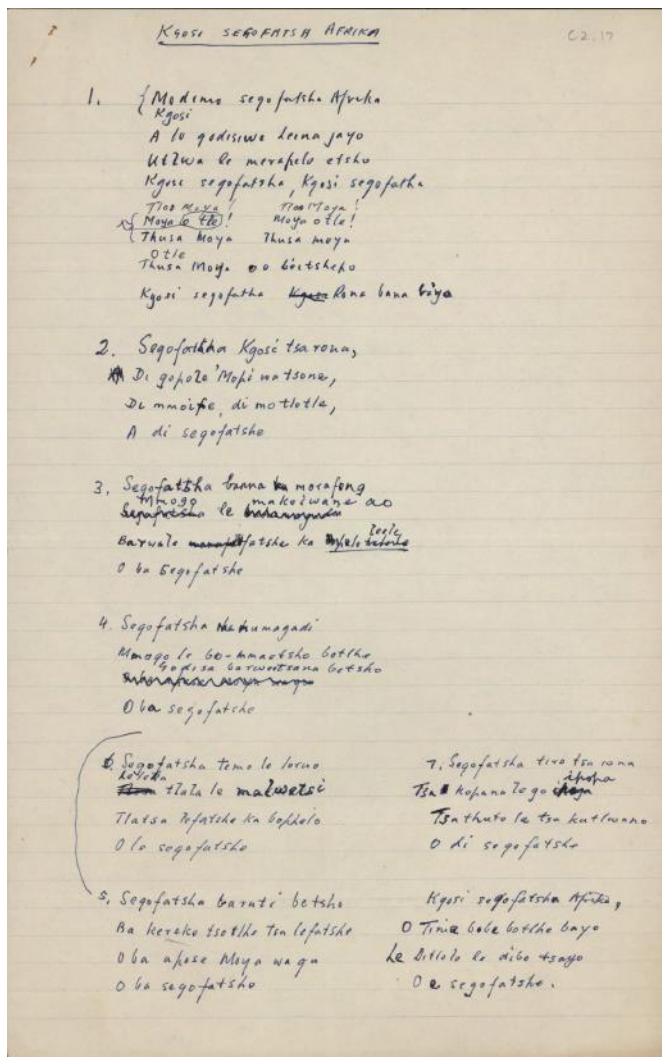


Figure 11: *Kgosi Segofatsa Afrika*, the Tswana translation of Nkosi Sikelel' I-Afrika.

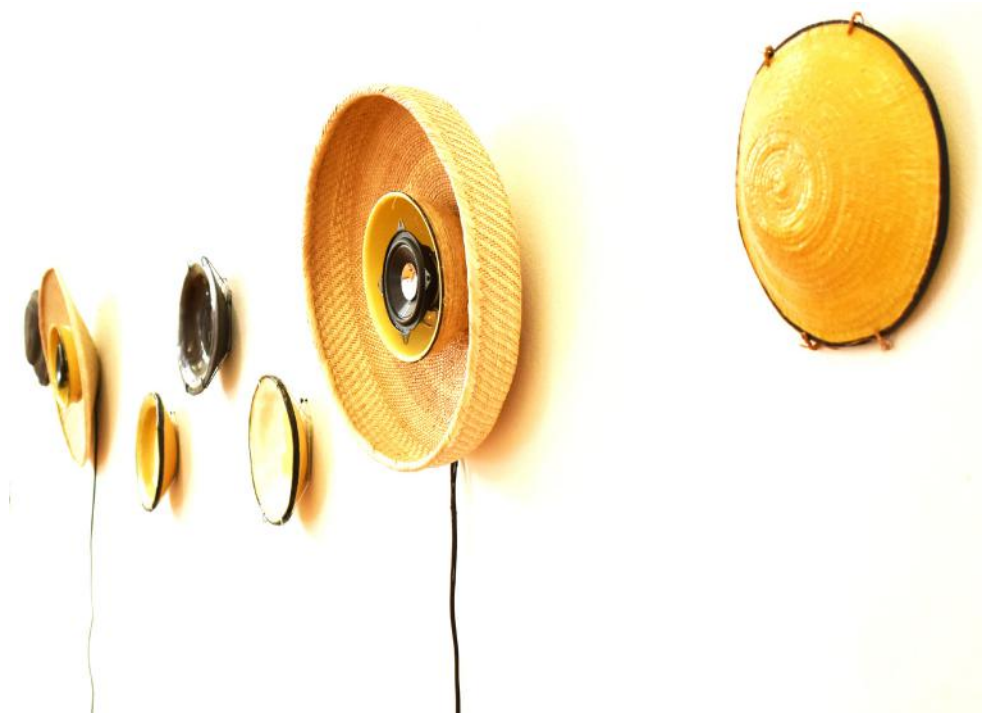
(Source: Z. K. Matthews, UNISA Repository)

As careful consideration of historical entanglements and nation-building, the *Kgosi Segofatsa Afrika* sound installation outlines the transnational space that exists across Botswana and South Africa as a sort of personalised bilingual dyslexia or accidental code-switch. Parsons suggests that *Kgosi Segofatsa Afrika* (the Setswana translation of *Nkosi SikeleleVi Afrika*⁴⁹) was the national anthem of Botswana from at least the 1940s until the mid-1960s — as was said to be the case elsewhere in the region (Makgala, 2006: 673). It is argued that Botswana’s political independence from South Africa had been asserted through the adoption of a new national anthem, along with a new coat of arms and flag, in 1965. As I learn of this history of my home Botswana whilst studying in South Africa, the sound installation I put together of the same title imagines the song using only the lyrics (as in figure 11). By my own musical mixing and reimagining, the mix makes reference to the national anthems of the neighbouring nation states at present, *Fatshe Leno La Rona* (Blessed Be This Noble Land), and *Nkosi Sikelele’ iAfrika* (God Bless Africa).

The installation layers audio fragments of the anthems as an aural exploration of the imagined transnational space that exists for me personally. Based on my experience across the ‘borders’ that divide these nations, *Kgosi Segofatsa Afrika*, in my opinion, considers a transnational border culture. By dotting the audio across the room from multiple speakers, the particular installation of the sound creates a ‘choir’ of sorts, with spatial recognition. Through the ‘surround sound’ mix that is administered via a combination of repurposed

⁴⁹ A liberation struggle anthem from South Africa (Makgala, 2014: 505), forming a part of South Africa’s national anthem currently.

baskets and enamel dishes (as pictured below), the sound installation actively presents a dialogue with the archive. Therefore, in viewing sound as spatialised, the sound installation highlights the listener's position as relative (to the sound as well as the associated social symbol). I believe that this also highlights the listener's position in engaging the audio and associated history as 'sound' or 'noise'. This subsequently extends the conversation about the construction of the archive, where the exhibitiongoer, viewer-turned-listener is invited to participate in a spatialised aurality that highlights their subject position in engaging the archive.



Untitled (radio cabinet) (detail), 2020, Audio sculpture, Installation dimensions variable,

Installation view at MFA Review, Ritchie Bindery Gallery, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Photographed by Parker Donaldson



Untitled (radio cabinet) (detail), 2020, Audio sculpture, Installation dimensions variable,

Installation view at Upper Gallery, Michaelis School of Fine Art,

Photographed by LegakwanaLeo Makgekgenene

This particular installation interestingly connects each individual work into a collective living body. In some ways, through the particular use of cultural object symbols as socialised speaker ‘vessels’, the sound installation imagines a choir of people resounding in the space. In this way, the audio considers history as embodied, by activating the particular cultural objects to speak up. By aurally mimicking the interconnectedness of socio-history in the region, the installation introduces the tension between an individual and a collective sense of identity.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ This is best captured by the Setswana proverb, ‘*motho ke motho ka batho*’ (translating to ‘a person is a person by/through people’, or ‘I am, because we are’).

⁵¹ As is emphasized through the historical entanglement of Radio Botswana and the South African Broadcasting Corporation, significantly in the Republic of Botswana’s formative years, and neighbouring South Africa’s apartheid regime.

Through a spatialised aurality, sound, installation, and sculpture, I consider symbolic mediations of my identity and creative present across Botswana and South Africa as cumulative; to some extent informed by those before me — in particular, I view my creative present (and future) across Botswana and South Africa as, in some way, informed by Medu’s history. My work considers the cosmologies of the interlocutors in this story.

Thus, the work explores ‘the living archive’ as a method for exploring and curating the historical entanglement of Botswana and South Africa.⁵¹ Furthermore, the work socialises the domestic cabinet, as a passive interlocutor in the living archive that is finally given the space to take centre stage. This work importantly refocuses my initial disappointment in Botswana’s limited national archive of Medu into a generative starting point in considering the manner in which the archive lives today. The work considers how, at the time, this cabinet

(as seen in figure 9) may have brought news of the SADF raids on Botswana to my family and the extent to which the story resounds unsuspectingly in contemporaneity, through the local lives that received this impact. Lastly, the mix also introduces the cyclical nature that underscores the exhibition and considers the extent to which the sound mix may constitute a social symbol, and thus a tool in activating spaces as sites of memory.

Conclusion

“I was thinking about how artists’ writing in the academic context is treated as a footnote to the ‘art’, as opposed to something that is interchangeable or in some sort of circular union with it.”

- Thulile Gamedze, in conversation with Thebe Phetogo (2021)

In closing, I believe that this project opens up a space for multiplicity in identity formation and history, where it is important to acknowledge and trace an interconnected relationship that exists as per context. In so doing, I believe that this project highlights the transnational space that exists historically across Botswana and South Africa. In the telling of a cyclic and circular history, through a combination of the audio and visual, *the doors of culture shall be opened* opens up the opportunities for creative exchange and cultural production in the region. By looking at history and geometry as cultural symbols, this project critically considers culturally specific ways of engaging histories in the region. This begins to introduce a balance of individuality and collectivity within cultural production. With a focus on alternative art practice, I reengage Medu Art Ensemble not only as exemplary of the historical entanglements across Botswana and South Africa but also as an opportunity to open a discussion on the trajectory of creative development in Botswana. In so doing, I have identified sampling and remixing as methods for curating the living archive and in re-curating histories in contemporary Southern Africa. Viewing an engagement of the aural archive as intertextual practice, I also consider individual agents in the formation of national histories and personal identities.

I believe that the project seems to, in some ways, come full circle with the devastating mountain wildfire that took place in late April 2021 near the University of Cape Town's Upper Campus, ultimately destroying much of the University's Jagger Reading Room, which held the library's Special Collections.⁵² It is in this library that I, for the first time, got my hands on a Medu Newsletter and poster. The Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) has since announced an initiative to assist recovery operations, which calls on researchers with photos or scanned copies of materials from the Jagger Library collections to submit images for the University (SPARC, 2021).⁵³ With that said, I highlight an individualised positionality in intentionally pursuing the cyclical motions of history and art-making, where now I have the opportunity to contribute back to the limited and/or destroyed archives. Finally, I emphasise a social responsibility in consciously considering and curating the manner in which fragments of the archive may resound in the present and future. With particular reference to Botswana's national memory of Medu (or lack thereof), I believe this fragment of the archive to be particularly significant in understanding the trajectory of Botswana's creative development. At the centre of this imagined future must be the artist, as creative producer of critical objects and vanguard of this process of archiving a collective memory, whilst simultaneously brushing up against a constructed history.

⁵² Collections in the reading room included numerous artifacts on African history, ephemera, manuscripts, maps, and rare and antiquarian books, many of which were largely lost to the wildfire.

⁵³ In light of the fire at the University of Cape Town on April 18th, academics and other researchers around the world who have worked in these special collections and have taken photocopies or mobile phone images of documents may be able to contribute these to help recover some of the lost records.



Figure 14: *Building reduced to rubble*, 1985. House number 5007, servants' quarters, Gaborone village; owner: Botswana Housing Corporation; tenant: Eugenia Kakale Kobole and Gladys Kelape Kesupile.

(Source: Libero and Ellen, at Botswana National Archives, Gaborone)

Figure 15 (right): *Building reduced to rubble*, 2019. House number 5007, Village, Gaborone.

Images taken by Kim K. Makin



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Figure 2: *1976?* Photo taken at the University of Cape Town's 2015 #FeesMustFall student protest at Parliament. Credit: Imraan Christian [Online] Available at: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-10-27/south-african-photographer-imraan-christian-why-feesmustfall-was-just-beginning>

Figure 3: Turiya Magadlela, *S'Maidical*, 2019, Commissioned for the 16th Istanbul Biennial. Installation view in Istanbul, Turkey [Online] <https://bienal.iksv.org/en/bienal-artists/turiya-magadlela> Accessed on: 20 February 2020

Figure 4: *'the doors of culture shall be opened'*, digital sketch/edit by Kim K. Makin based on Medu Graphic by Thami Mnyele (1985) – as printed in Medu Newsletter, and later edited for C. Kellner & S. Gonzalez, eds. Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective (book). Johannesburg: Jacana Media

Figure 5: Otobong Nkanga, *The Weight of Scars*, 2015, Woven Textile and photography/Yarns - viscose bast, mohair, polyester, bio cotton, linen, acrylic and inkjet print on 10 laser-cut forex plates, 251.5 × 612.1 cm, Photograph by M HKA [Online] Available at: <https://www.muhka.be/programme/detail/27-in-situ-otobong-nkanga-bruises-and-lustre/item/13184-the-weight-of-scars>

Figure 6: *Botswana National Coat of Arms* [Online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_arms_of_Botswana

Figure 7: *William Burchell's engraving of a bilobial homestead* In: Steyn, G., 2012. The influence of botho on social space in Botswana since independence. South African Journal of Art History, Volume 27: 116

Figure 8: Albio Gonzalez, *Shades of Change (Poster)*, 1982, Offset lithograph on white wove paper, 605 × 423 mm [Online] Available at: <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/244087/shades-of-change>

Figure 9: *Front page of The Botswana Guardian reporting on the June 14 Raid*, 21 June 1985 (Source: Botswana National Archives)

Figure 10: Emeka Ogbob, 2015, *Market Symphony*, Site-specific, mixed-media sound installation. Installation view at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. Available at: <https://www.omenkaonline.com/emeka-ogboh-on-sound-mnemonics-and-collective-experiences/> Accessed on: 30 January 2021

Figure 11: *Radio cabinet in my Nkuku's (Grandmother's) home*, Image taken by Kim K. Makin, 2019, Serowe, Botswana.

Figure 12: *Bechuanaland Protectorate Riot Police, 1964* In: Keitseng, F. & Morton, B., 1999. *Comrade Fish: memories of a Motswana in the ANC underground*. Gaborone, Botswana: Pula Press.

Figure 13: *Kgosi Segofatsa Afrika, the Tswana translation of Nkosi Sikelel' I-Afrika*. [Online] Available at: http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/6169/ZKM_C2_17.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Figure 14: *Building reduced to rubble*, 1985. House number 5007, servants' quarters, Gaborone village; owner: Botswana Housing Corporation; tenant: Eugenia Kakale Kobole and Gladys Kelape Kesupile. In: Nyelele, L. & Drake, E., 1985. *The Raid on Gaborone, June 14, 1985: A memorial*. Libero Nyelele and Ellen Drake. (Source: Botswana National Archives)

Figure 15: *Building reduced to rubble*, 2019. House number 5007, Village, Gaborone. Images taken by Kim K. Makin



sound the doors of culture shall be opened by scanning here

