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**OUTLINE**

## RESEARCH REFERENCES AND ETHICS

The author has used existing published books, journals, articles websites and interviews as the research and reference material for this study. Only personal interviews have been used as the research material for the dialogical study in chapters three and four. Full transcripts of the interviews can be found as an annexure to the thesis and copies of all signed consent forms from interviews have been provided by all participants to the department.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the limited scope of this project, it is recognised that the selection of collectives interviewed is not exhaustive. A more comprehensive study for future researchers or a broader study can certainly be pursued to build on this, initial, work. This paper is limited to a selected number of collectives and individuals whose experiences the author believes have significant relevance to the topic under discussion. This study does not aim to give data which establishes a national trend on art collectives in South Africa, nor to provide a national overview as to why collectives in South Africa dissipate after a period of time. Rather, it is an exploration of the artistic strategies collectives have employed and the challenges to sustaining collective practice, within a particular contextual period of art making. The collectives included are very focused on the Western Cape of South Africa and many members in the collectives cited in this study have institutional affiliation to the University of Cape Town, Michealis School of Fine Arts. That said, the members in each collective originate from all over the Southern African region.

The author has included her own collective projects as case studies in the dialogical exploration in the last two chapters. As the author of the study and artist member included in this research, the author does not claim neutrality or objectivity in the study, and the findings may represent this entanglement.

Reflecting on the author's own experiences of collective practice provides useful insight to produce conversations around diverse South African collective practices and opens up the narratives into the management of these fluid relationships. As such, the authors' personal experience of collective practice still has merit to the study and may be useful for other artists or researchers wanting to explore this topic or field.

The decision of whom the spokesperson of the collective would be for the interviews was left up to the respective collectives to decide. The author was not privy to, nor made aware of, any communications or transparency amongst group members in the process of deciding who would speak on behalf of the collectives.

The tension between a single authorial voice and the collective voice is present throughout the work. This tension is not only present in the practice of making collaborative work but also in its authorial representation. The way collectives manage this tension is not unanimous and may vary greatly. Agreements may be reached within the collective and subsequently modified as working relationships evolve over time.

While it is common for collectives to appoint a spokesperson for interviews, it would have in the author's opinion, provided more comprehensive representation to have interviewed more than one member of each collective. As interviewees were giving freely of their own time to the study, the author could not demand that the whole collective participate in interviews. Each collective was also provided a transcript of the interview to share with the broader members. A copy of the interview in

thesis context was also shared to ensure that any oppositional opinions from the group could have been included.

The last two chapters use a dialogical approach[1] to the authorship of this study. The collective members speak for themselves in dialogue with the author about their experiences. The dissertation strives to create a dialogue around art collective practice within the South African art world, focusing on a number of different and diverse topics. What emerges as a result of this approach is less of a critical analysis and more of a differentiated reflection of the experience working in collective practice, which are highly contextual and individual responses to situational and structural influences.

Only one of the other selected international collectives (Raqs Media) covered in previous chapters of the thesis were included in the dialogical study in chapters three and four. This was due to the inability to access members in the other two international collectives for interviews. The author attempted to get an interview with new members of the Guerilla Girls for the study (none of the original members are still involved) without success and many of the Laboratoire Agit'Art members have now passed on or are inactive.

The author chose to include the Raqs Media data due to their sustained length of practice as a collective over three decades, and due to the fact that they provided insightful views on how to sustain collective practice that would benefit the exploration of the topic. The author wanted the dialogical study to have a contemporary South African focus within the time period of the last two decades. The six interviews for analysis reflect this desire to provide a particular, local South Africa lens.

[1] Dialogical: 'relating to, or characterised by dialogue. participating in dialogue' (Dictionary.com)

# INTRODUCTION

I am an alumnus of the University of Cape Town who graduated in 2004 with a BAFA from the Michaelis School of Fine Art. Having worked collaboratively in most of my early work, my renewed interest in collaboration started in 2014 with the collaborative work *Karoo Disclosure.* I furthered my research into collaboration with the completion of the collaborative work *Ubulungiswa/Justice* during a Postgraduate Diploma in Fine Arts in 2015 at the University of Cape Town. My interest in this area of research emerged through my own practice and interest in what challenges working collaboratively posed in terms of production, exhibition and institutional support.

The criteria for selection was that the collectives must comprise three or more artists who have produced and authored work together under an umbrella name. The collectives must also include multi-disciplinary practices. I am particularly interested in exploring collaborative models that draw from multi- and inter-disciplinarity and thereby break down silos of art production and definitions used in institutional and commercial practice and pedagogy.

The case studies for this dissertation focus on a model of collaboration in which the artists' work as individuals on their own work and also work collaboratively to produce work as a collective. I use the term collective practice and collaboration interchangeably, taking both terms to have the same meaning. When I refer to collaboration I refer to the Roberts definition where in 'collaborations shared labour becomes a distinct mode of production through the subordination of the artist's individual will and identity to the group' (Roberts 2004: 557).

I aim to unpack and reflect on the different strategies and methodologies employed by collectives to raise fundamental questions about the nature of artistic work, authorship, autonomy and to 'address the basis of art's relationship to democracy, the art world and capitalist relations of production' (Mabaso 2016: 3).

When referring to 'the art market' or 'art world', I am referring to the supply and demand for contemporary works of fine arts (producing, selling and buying of artworks); the value of an artist's work; the representation of artists by galleries and art institutions; the marketing of artists and their artwork; the perceived economic and investment value of artists and their artwork and the inclusion of artists and artwork in art collections, art fairs, auctions and biennales (the economy surrounding art). (Schneider, F., & Pommerehne, W.1983)

The South African art market has been heavily influenced by socio-political concerns and political activism up until the end of apartheid and has shifted discourse to identity politics and re-dressing representation post 1994. Kester (2005) also suggests that collective, social and activist contemporary works tend to exist outside the network of galleries, curators and art market functions internationally.

That said, local artists have achieved great prominence overseas. According to Ruarc Peffers, Director at Aspire Art Auctions (2018), 'the South African market punches well above its weight and is responsible for some of the top contemporary art produced and traded globally – including in major art centers like London and New York.' The 2017 *Africa Art Market Report* lists 10 of the top 20 modern artists (born between 1850 and 1939) and seven of the top 20 contemporary artists (born after 1940) are South African. 'This assessment is judged by the artist's value at auction and the number of exhibitions in museums and commercial galleries.' Carin Smith (2018)

South African contemporary artists have also made a huge impact on the discourse on African art and representation around the globe in recent decades. It is within this larger political context that this dissertation seeks to investigate how collectives use collaboration to confront and reimagine historical, spatial or systemic violence and can be used as an artistic strategy for redress.

The research also intends to interrogate collaboration as a field of practice in relation to individualistic practice as a problem of cultural form. Wrights and Roberts posit that ‘collaboration in art is as much bound up with value – artistic value, the value of artistic labour, the value-form of capitalism – as it is with politics and representation’. (Wrights and Roberts 2004: 531)

The concept of a dialogical art practice is derived from the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin who argued that the work of art can be viewed as a kind of conversation; a locus of differing meanings, interpretations and points of view (Kester 2004). Kester argues that within the framework of dialogical practice what ‘unites this disparate network of artists and arts collectives are a series of provocative assumptions about the relationship between art and the broader social and political world, and about the kinds of knowledge that aesthetic experience is capable of producing.’ The last two chapters use the methodological framework of dialogical practice as a departure point for the exploration of the disparate narratives provided by collective members.

The first chapter looks at contemporary art collectives in South Africa who have produced work in the last two decades (2000 to 2020). The chapter looks to interrogate the following: does race and gender affect the way collectives produce contemporary art and the artistic strategies employed? Is collaborative art practice an effective strategy with which to ‘break into‘ the art world? How has collaborative art practice amplified or bridged the divide between the centre and the periphery? How do contemporary South African art collectives use collaborative practices to confront representation in the art world and address concerns around visibility?

Two distinct groupings of collectives have been identified: the first grouping explicitly references the artworld in its approaches, using different strategies to disrupt, subvert and redress barriers to access. The other identified group has broader political, cultural and social concerns and is more engaged with identity politics, history, race and public space. The chosen collectives are, in order of date of inception: Galerie Puta (2003), Avant Car Guard (2004), Doing it for Daddy (2006) Gugulective (2006), Centre for Historical Enactments (2010), Burning Museum (2013) and iQhiya (2015).

The first chapter interrogates the factors that motivate artists to work collectively under an umbrella name in a group. This chapter reflects on whether the forming of these collectives required identification with an external driving force as a group such as race, gender or shared identity and interests and how this differentiates or influences the collective’s authoring. It will also look into the individual careers of some of the emerging artists who leveraged a collaborative platform to launch individual careers in the commercial sphere of the artworld.

Chapter Two uses three international case studies to look at the history of art collaboration in the context of the socio-political conditions of their art production. It looks at how collectives use collaboration to confront and reimagine historical, spatial or systemic violence and asks the question: does collaboration coincide with periods of more general political or social crisis? I have drawn on international collectives in the third chapter when they played a particularly important role in institutional and ideological shifts given their political and historical contexts.

Collective art practice takes many forms and shapes and has many precedents internationally rooted in art and cultural activism, from the likes of famous duo collaborations for example British, Gilbert and George (1967), Serbian Marina Abramović and German Ulay (1976 until 1988) to international collective art movements like Fluxus (1960s and 1970s), the European Situationist International (1957 to 1972), to New York’s (1989) REPOhistory, and the likes of South African Medu Art Ensemble (1978), an art collective that advocated for an end to apartheid in South Africa. A deep exploration of these precedents is, however, beyond the scope of this document.

More recent socially engaged critical practice collectives internationally include: Austrian arts collective Wochenklausur (1993), Ala Plastica in Buenos Aires (1991), Superflex in Denmark (1993),

Huit Facettes in Senegal (1996), Grapus in Paris (1970 to 1991), Temporary Services in Chicago (1998), The Beehive Design Collective USA (1990s) among many others.

I have chosen to focus on eleven collectives (three international collectives and eight South African) chosen for the socio-political conditions of their art production for the purposes of this study. The Guerrilla Girls (USA) collective emerged from the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s to address gender discrimination and lack of representation in the artworld of female artists. Laboratoire Agit'Art from Dakar (1970's and 1980's) is strongly linked to the sociopolitical history of Senegal and grew out of the rise of the post-colonial critique in Africa in the second and third decades after independence. Raqs Media Collective from Delhi, India (1992), work within the discourses of institutional critique and decolonial theory. Through their body of critical and curatorial work, 'Raqs' project aims to rectify the history that colonialism had on India, politically, economically and culturally.

The South African collectives emerged in a post-apartheid, post-colonial South Africa in a country struggling to address the political, spacial, institutional and systematic racial injustices of the past.

All the collectives in this study include three or more artists who have produced and authored work under an umbrella name. The collectives also include multi-disciplinary practices and the international collectives selected have practiced together for over a sustained period of time (two decades or more).

Grant Kester (2011) argues that in the 1980s and 1990s a new generation of collectives emerged that experimented with multiple authorship. Okwui Enwezor contributes to this argument in saying that times when the constitution of the artistic personality is most radically in question often coincide with periods of more general political or social crises. 'Such crises,' Enwezor writes, 'force reappraisals of conditions of production, revaluation of the nature of artistic work, and reconfiguration of the position of the artist in relation to economic social and political institutions.' (Enwezor 2007)

Kester maintains (2011) that the last two decades have witnessed the rise of a powerful neoliberal economic order dedicated to eliminating all forms of collective or public resistance to the primacy of capital. He suggests that the recent proliferation of collaborative practices are part of a cyclical paradigm shift within the field of art, even as the nature of the shift involves increased permeability between 'art' and other zones of symbolic production.

Roberts (2004: 563) reasons that the growth of collaborative practice in art remains utterly peripheral in terms of the day-to-day business of the art world, and proposes that co-authorship can only be perceived as a hindrance to the sort of possessive individualism that underpins authorship. However, while this may be general trend there are also ways in which the art world has drawn in and exploited collective practice, as something special out of ordinary and marketable, particularly duos such as Jake and Dino Chapman, Langlands and Bell, the Starn Twins and locally South African Hasan and Husein Essop.

Wright suggests that the symbolic economy of art mirrors that of the general economy – that of recognition and competition based on the strategic exploitation of disparities in talent and social capital, where teamwork is the exception (Wright 2004: 533-4).

The last two chapters look into the mechanics and methodologies of collectives: the structures, agreements, processes, decision-making, roles, finances and copyright. These chapters include five local and one international example, and include interviews with member/s of each collective.
I wrote this section in a collaborative way to allow the dialogical methodology to become central to the authorship approach underpinning this study, deliberately distancing the authorship from a singular subjective critical analysis, to allow for a more collaborative and dialogical exploration of the

practice of collectivity[2].

These chapters also touch on the success or failure of these collectives over time, considering questions such as: why do collectives dissipate? How do they work or not work (the effects of interpersonal dynamics and power)? What are the implications of the cessation of the collective and what becomes of the afterlife of the work and authorship?

What is needed, Livingston (2011: 223) suggests, are substantive, shared artistic intentions that pertain to the procedures the artists are to follow or the nature of the work to be done. Those intentions must lead to the kinds of intentional actions that count as authorship or art making.

Bishops (2006) and Macêdo (1999) agree that it is the working processes and procedures and intentionality that provide the significance and conceptual density to collaborative practice. Hagoort (2005) argues that we must weigh the presentation and representation of an artist's good intentions.

Wright & Roberts (2004: 532) consider collaboration to be a space of interconnection between art and non-art, art and other disciplines, that continually tests the social boundaries of where, how, with what and with whom art might be made. These chapters interrogate the different working practices of each collective to explore similarities and differences to interrogate the challenges to sustaining collective art practice.

Interviews with members of the following collectives are included as part of this research analysis: iQhiya (Thuli Gamedze), Burning Museum (Justin Davy and Tazneem Wentzel), Avant Car Guard (Michael MacGarry), Raqs Media Collective (Shuddhabrata Sengupta) and Gugulective (Dathini Mzayiya), and I refer to my own work as a collaborative member of *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure*.

[2] Collectivity refers to individuals who are considered as a group and the experience of feeling of shared responsibilities, experiences and activities. (Cambridge Dictionary)

# CHAPTER 1
# STRATEGIES OF JOINT AUTHORSHIP

This chapter examines contemporary South African art collectives that have produced work in the last two decades. Eligible collectives must have comprised three or more artists and have produced and authored work together under an umbrella name and have used performance[3] in their practice. The case studies for this dissertation focus on a model of collaboration wherein the artists' work as individuals and work in collectives as described above.

The chapter will look to answer the following: do race and gender affect the way collectives produce contemporary art and the artistic strategies employed? Is collaborative art practice an effective strategy with which to 'break into' the art world? How has collaborative art practice amplified or bridged the divide between the centre and the periphery? How do contemporary South African art collectives use collaborative practices to confront representation in the art world and address concerns around visibility?

This chapter will interrogate the motivations of artists who choose to work collectively and will reflect on whether the forming of these collectives required identification with an external motivation, such as a race and gender, and how this differentiates or influences the collectives' authoring.

Throughout this chapter I will unpack the different motives and strategies employed by these collectives – their similarities and differences – and the influences of these on group composition, practice and modus operandi.

The Collectives

I have chosen to include the following collectives in this analysis (listed chronologically from date of formation): 1. Galerie Puta (2003), 2. Avant Car Guard (2004) 3. Doing it for Daddy (2006) 4. Gugulective (2006), 5. Centre for Historical Enactments (2010), 6. Burning Museum (2013) and 7. iQhiya (2015).

These are further divided into two groupings: the one with broader political, cultural and social concerns that engage with identity politics, history, race and public space; the collectives in this group are comprised of mixed gender collectives. The other grouping locates their references and strategies around the art world, using different approaches to redress barriers to access and the status quo and using performance as a strategy of disruption. These collectives are all made up of homogenous gender groups.

The first grouping comprises Gugulective (2006), Centre for Historical Re-enactments (2010) and Burning Museum (2013), collectives composed of artists from mixed gender and race categories that work with a multi-disciplinary modality across mediums. The collectives work mostly with installations, but also work performatively to include art forms considered outside of traditional visual arts practice e.g. poetry, music, street art, etc.

The formation and practice of these collectives was motivated by broader social exclusions and political factors, and their focus is on speaking from the periphery to the centre (rather than trying to gain access to the centre – even though this inversion has been an outcome of their practices). The experience of gender in these collectives seems to be less important than the shared political and cultural experience of oppression, white hegemony, marginalisation, colonialism, racism and lack of access, but not limited to its effects in art and the art market.

[3] Performance: when performance is mentions it specifically relates to the practice in performance art when the body is used as the vehicle for language and as the medium in the artwork.

These collectives formed out of a desire to respond and speak back to colonial and apartheid legacies that includes historical inaccuracies, erasures and silences. The collectives attempt to make the invisible visible, to tell untold stories, redress spatial and geographic access and re-imagine new subjectivities and narratives. They work with decoloniality and engage with public space, historic trauma and the rewriting of colonial narratives.

Gugulective was founded in 2006 in Gugulethu. The group consists of musicians, artists, writers, DJs, rappers and poets and collaborated with local communities to empower them through art. Members include Ziphoze Nkosi Dayile, Athi Mongezeleli Joja, Ayanda Kilimane, Kemang Wa Lehulere, Khanyisile Mbongwa and Dathini Mzayiya.

The Gugulective still exists in name but has not produced work since the death of multi-media artist and co-founder Unathi Sigenu, who died in 2013 (Tate n.d.). The collective curated three exhibitions at Kwa-Mlamli's Shebeen in Gugulethu and participated in numerous major shows, including From Pierneef to Gugulective and Dada South at the Iziko South African National Gallery, Museum Africa, the Johannesburg Art Gallery and the Goodman Gallery and exhibited abroad in shows in Germany and Spain (Goodman 2010).

In an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist (Art Basel 2012), Kemang Wa Lehulere says:

> The creation of the Gugulective Collective in 2006 was also in response to lack of access to emerging artists in the art world. It was the usual story of access and art galleries being in the city – it was an immediate response to create and show our own work where we live instead of always going into the city … In a nutshell, Gugulective came from a need to create and show in our own space.

This spatial and geographic differential is described by the collectives as an additional layer that prevents access to visibility and opportunity in the artworld.

According to Global Activism (n.d.), Gugulective operated from a shebeen (an unlicensed drinking place) called Kwa Mlamli, which is its venue for events and exhibitions and was a meeting point for political activists during the apartheid era. They outline that one of Gugulective's goals, in a context of marginalisation, is to make the history and legacy of apartheid visible again and to combat it with artistic methods (Global Activism n.d.).

**Gugulective: Kwa Mlamli**


Images courtesy Gugulective

Gugulective clearly express the collective's concerns around marginalisation and access:

> One of the vicious circles in which South African society in general, and South African artists in particular are caught up in, lies in the fact that the 'black' and 'colored' part of the population still lives predominantly in the spatially separate and underprivileged

> ‘townships’. In the schools there is often no such thing as art classes, and the galleries and museums are all located in the former ‘white’ centers of the cities, so that the local population has virtually no access to art. (Global Activism: online)

In the interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist (2012), Wa Lehulere talks about the Gugulective’s Debt Don’t Rot exhibition. He says that they (the collective) wanted to address the high levels of poverty, marginalisation, access to good schooling and access to basic resources and:

> We were interested in South Africa’s social political history and the fiction of democracy … Gugulethu was an apartheid construct where people were forcibly removed to the township and the architecture is quite specific – for example, when Gugulethu was built there was only one entrance and exit point, and this was so that the police could control the people. So, we were really interested in the urban planning and architecture of the space itself.

He mentions the strong influence of Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement on the Gugulective artists in tackling issues of race and marginalisation.

The Centre for Historical Reenactments (CHR) has been described by *artthrob* magazine (2010) as a Johannesburg-based collaborative-art platform for research and discussion. The CHR website indicates that its members include Gabi Ngcobo, Sohrab Mohebbi, Kemang Wa Lehulere (also from Gugulective), Donna Kukama, Sanele Manqele, Mnali Khoza and Ngceboyethu Jocelyn Ndlovu. Contemporary& 2013 explains that *CHR* is an alternative platform and a site for artistic and historical research that the collective is interested in creating dialogues between creative practices in order to ‘reveal how within their constellations certain histories are formed or formulated, repeated, universalised and preserved.’

‘The Centre for Historical Reenactments (CHR) indicates on their website that it was created to respond to the ‘demands of the current moment through an exploration into historical legacies and their resonance and impact on contemporary art.’ The collective says it ‘set out to look at history to investigate how, within a particular historical hegemony, certain values have been created and promoted into a broader universal discourse, and also aims to address current urgencies, which have grown over the debris of the issues of the past (CHR 2010).

**CHR Centre for Historical Reenactments**

A.  B. 

A. Center for Historical Reenactments, 'Na Ku Randza' 2011. Public intervention in Center for Historical Reenactments’ neighborhood, Doornfontein, Johannesburg. Courtesy: CHR, Johannesburg. Photo: Sanele Manqele
http://www.contemporaryand.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/727x336x11.jpg
B. Cover Image: ‘Museum as Hub: Center for Historical Reenactments: After-after Tears,‘ 2013. Exhibition view: New Museum. Photo: Jesse Untracht-Oakner

The Centre for Historical Reenactments speaks of how art helps people reinterpret history and how it can add to and suggest different historical readings and help in the formation of new subjectivities (CHR 2010). They recognise that historical constructions play essential, almost central, roles in the formation of the apparatus and dominant world order, and propose that within the scope of emancipatory artistic productions, historical reenactments can and do play a significant role as an artistic framework. They created the CHR platform to help deconstruct particular readings of history and investigate how historical context informs artistic creation (CHR 2010).

Burning Museum is a collaborative, inter-disciplinary collective rooted in Cape Town. Its members, Tazneem Wentzel, Grant Jurius, Scott Williams, Jarret Erasmus and Justin Davy, describe themselves as fluidly between the stations of artist, historian and cultural activist (Dantes 2016).

Whilst their work is primarily street-based, they have also exhibited in white-cube spaces both locally and internationally. Most recently their work was exhibited in a solo exhibition at Gallery MOMO in Cape Town and at Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo in Madrid (Dantes 2016). The Burning Museum collective 'are refusing to allow the faces of the community and its previous generations to be forgotten, so much so that they're physically pasting them up on walls and bridges around Woodstock' (Rawoot 2014: online).

Burning Museum formed on the basis of a common feeling of marginalisation and exclusion from the art world in Cape Town and South Africa, which, the collective says, still bears the scars of forced removals (Dantes 2016; Rawoot 2014). The members of the collective have histories of displacement and removals in their families, who were pushed out to the peripheries of Cape Town (Rawoot 2014). 'Burning Museum is leaving a residue – traces,' says Justin Davy. 'It's our way of saying '*kyk hier, ons was ook hier*', or 'look, we were here too'. And we are still here. And we are burning right now' (Burning Museum 2013: online).

Burning Museum is clear about the impact of interventions in public spaces. 'Street art is particularly effective because the canvas is the architecture of the city. Just as billboards affect people subliminally, intervening in the architecture of the city,' says Davy. 'Public spaces are interesting canvases that have left written stories in cement,' explains Tazneem Wentzel (Burning Museum 2015).

In an interview for On Curating, Davey says: 'Most of us come from so-called peripheral areas of Cape Town, which are not necessarily part of the art dynamic or the Cape Town art world. Many of us still commute every day from these areas, in and out of the city.' Burning Museum use the archive in their work and paste up large images on city walls that speak of the permanent displacement enacted by the apartheid-era Group Areas Act and its attendant forced removals. Through this act of subversion, illegally pasting up images in the city as a response to historical displacement, a visual speaking back from the past confronts the present.

Burning Museum provide biting commentary on inequality, erasure and injustices in contemporary South Africa. Similar words are used to describe the Gugulective's interests and concerns in their self-descriptions (Goodman n.d). Burning Museum use strategies of juxtaposition and reinvention to reconstitute and revisit the past and present.

All three collectives state that some form of marginalisation and restriction to access – whether access to public space, sites of memory and trauma, or recorded history – motivated their formation. Each collective tackles these issues in a unique way – by re-engineering access (Gugulective), by intervention and transgression (Burning Museum) and by reimagining and rewriting (CHR).
All three collectives are interested primarily in engaging with public spaces and access. The initial success of the Gugulective collective came because they were able to move art audiences away from the city centre and into the townships. They did this by hosting exhibitions and events at the Kwa Mlamli shebeen, disrupting the status quo by bringing visitors from the centre to the so-called

periphery, their own neighborhood – and in so doing maintained the context of the neighborhood as integral to the work itself (Rossouw 2005).

The Goodman Gallery writes of the Gugulective exhibitions:

> Reimagining the shebeen as an exhibition space, the Gugulective have persisted in having shown in their own neighborhood rather than being pulled into the centre of town. It seems fitting that the Gugulective, in their debut solo show in Johannesburg, exhibit at Arts on Main. Situated in City and Suburban – a mostly distressed inner city district where exclusion from economic advancement is palpable. (Goodman n.d)

However, Arts on Main is part of a gentrification project in Maboneng in the inner city of Johannesburg. There is nothing peripheral about Maboneng, and in fact Maboneng represents an attempt to gentrify and recapture the centre. The irony of Gugulective exhibiting here and literally pulling them into the centre of town as more 'fitting' for them seems lost on Goodman gallery.

Mary Corrigall wrote in her review of the exhibition at the Goodman project space:

> I pondered not on the work I had seen, but what happens when a group of artists working on the periphery of the art scene find themselves at the centre – does this immediately undercut their arguments – especially when they are said to be concerned with articulating the woes of the marginalised? (Corrigall 2010: online)

In fact, Corrigall questions the spatial strategy of the Johannesburg exhibition: 'Does their work lose its edge when it is shown in a conventional gallery space? … Is Gugulective's appeal – particularly to the white-dominated art world – founded on the environment in which they created and displayed their work rather than the work itself?' Corrigall then continues to critique the show by saying she did not think the Gugulective was ready to do a solo exhibition – even in a supposedly experimental space, and that not even the work was experimental (Corrigall 2010).

Thembinkosi Goniwe took issue with this critique, however, and accused Corrigall of not believing that artists working on the so-called periphery should show in commercial galleries. Goniwe also suggested that her writing was indicative of a tendency in (white) critics and arts writers in this country to foreground black artists' biographical history, instead of engaging with their work. Corrigall responded by agreeing with the latter point – albeit suggesting that white artists are often subject to this kind of reporting – and acknowledging herself as one of these critics (Corrigall 2010).

The Centre for Historical Reenactments (CHR) locates itself in the Johannesburg CBD. One of the founding members of the Gugulective, Kemang Wa Lehulere, later joined the CHR after moving to Johannesburg to further his studies. Wa Lehulere has become an award-winning South African artist (Standard Bank Young Artist 2015, among other awards) and is represented by the Stevenson Gallery, exhibiting in international biennales and voted Deutsche Bank's 'Artist of the Year' for 2017.

In strong contrast to the 'unreadiness' ascribed to his work as part of the Gugulective project space in Johannesburg, his rising success in the art world locally and internationally speak directly to Corrigall's words on how emerging and marginalised artists renegotiate spaces 'to meet quite a different set of criteria – beholden to a canon.' Wa Lehulere's success cannot be separated from his work in the collectives of the Gugulective and CHR; in fact, it is that very success within the collectives that can provide marginalised artists with the opportunity to engage with and speak back to centres of power from the periphery.

The work of Burning Museum focuses on people who have been physically displaced, as well as displaced from dominant narratives of history. The colonial roots of gentrification and the poetics of place are represented to the viewer in their imagery. In a sense, their work shows that the colonial project is not limited to 'here' or 'there' (Burning Museum 2015). In an interview, Davey describes how Burning Museum are attempting to subvert the archive, appropriating it to talk about issues of displacement. He makes clear links between the historic links of racial segregation and forced

removals and the current gentrification taking place in areas such as Woodstock in Cape Town – 'In other words, the archive is still relevant, and the issues haven't really changed' (Dantes 2016).

**Burning Museum**

A.  B 

http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/22036/1/the-artists-taking-on-gentrification-in-south-africa

A, B. The photographs were taken from the Van Kalker photography studio archives, a District 6 staple since 1937, Courtesy the Burning Museum.

The Centre for African Studies (CAS) Gallery at the University of Cape Town was looking to answer these questions: How does one bring the outside into the inside? How does one bring people in to visit a gallery or museum space – more so, how does a gallery space in a university engage with people in the city outside of its own staff and students?

To answer these questions, CAS invited Burning Museum Art Collective to engage with the gallery space at the University:

> It's been most exciting to allow the gallery to be taken over and turned into something that it usually isn't. By doing this CAS is hoping that it is seen not only as a space to represent the world but also be open to its influences and work with an awareness of the reality surrounding it. I hope this will allow a two-way flow of audience – from the outside into the university and the university to the streets of Salt River and Woodstock to engage further with these works. (UCT African Studies: online n.d.)

All three collectives – Gugulective, Centre for Historical Reenactment and Burning Museum – show interest in finding a voice for the marginalised, making the unseen seen, reinterpreting and reimagining public space and history as a means of social justice, of providing a voice for the dispossessed and a lens for unrecorded traumas (historical and contemporary). All reference decolonial discourses and discourse around memory, historical trauma, public space and collective trauma.

In her keynote address at the Gordon Institute For Performing Arts (GIPCA) Symposium on Remaking Place, Gabi Ngcobo 2015 said:

> We (CHR) employ citations, transversal research processes, subversion and mediation. These forms are strategies revealing how art could perform transformative effects in political spaces that may not yet be recognised as sites of struggle, and thus how it may be allowed to enter reshaped, refreshed political sensibility. Historical enactments as we see them allow for a politicisation of history within the art context.

Through site-specific interventions CHR locate their questions around a particular site so as to encourage unknown histories to emerge.

In their formal artistic response to these issues, these collectives all utilise multi-disciplinarity, often drawing from influences, sites and forms outside of traditional 'fine arts' spheres, like graffiti and performance. All three collectives would now be considered successful – locally and internationally, and across academic and commercial spheres – and have shown work in prestigious commercial and non-commercial spaces and are cited in academic discussions, papers, articles and journals.

Following is a discussion of the selected collectives in grouping two.

The grouping locates their references and strategies around the art world, using different approaches to redress barriers to access and the status quo and using performance as a strategy of disruption. These collectives are all made up of gender groups in which gender is the same; Galerie Puta (2003), Avant Car Guard (2004), Doing it for Daddy (2006), iQhiya (2015).

Galerie Puta (2003 – 2007) was a Cape Town-based collective that acted as a gallery and featured (but was not limited to) a number of male artists: Andrew Lamprecht, Cameron Platter, Ed Young, Zen Marie and Dan Halter, with Vuyisa Nyamende and Bruce Gordon involved in the early stages (Sloon 2009: 28). In 2003 Galerie Puta curated a show called Meeting: Art in the Water Closet, held in the bathroom of friend and artist Bridget Baker (Rossouw 2005). In 2004 they put on a show at the KZNSA in Durban called Storm, in which the individual artists had simultaneous solo shows in the same gallery. The work was named for the gallery's curator, Storm van Rensburg. Galerie Puta also attended Christian Nerf's 24/7 residency programme at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, where they ended up playing the world-domination board game Risk for 24 hours (Rossouw 2005).

**Galerie Puta**

A. 

B 


A. Galerie Puta, KZNSA, *Storm: HotTopic Q&A session*: https://artthrob.co.za/04june/news/durban.html
B. Meeting: *Art in the Water Closet,* https://artthrob.co.za/03june/reviews/galerieputa.html, exhibition at Bridget Baker's house.

The Avant Car Guard (2004 – 2012) collective was a Johannesburg-based, all-male collective made up of Zander Blom, Jan-Henri Booyens and Michael MacGarry. They produced three publications on their work, titled *Volume I*, *Volume II* and *Volume III*. Avant Car Guard exhibited at a national and international level for several years, with production based on a conceptual, self-reflexive and satirical approach to the art world – its markets and practitioners as well as the process of creating itself (Avant Car Guard n.d.).

Doing it for Daddy (2006 – 2010) formed in 2006 and consisted of Linda Stupart, Renée Holleman, Bettina Malcomess, and Ruth Sacks in the early stages. This was a group of all-womxn artists, critics and curators who situated themselves as both outside and inside the art world. It is from this position that they commented on structures within the artworld and navigated broader frameworks, such as identity, gender power imbalances, history and locality (Stupart n.d)

iQhiya (2015 – 2018) including all black female graduate students from the Michaelis School of Fine Art. Members of iQhiya included: Asemahle Ntonti, Bronwyn Katz, Buhlebezwe Siwani, Bonolo Kavula, Charity Kelapile, Lungiswa Gqunta, Matlhogonolo Kelapile, Sethembile Msezane, Sisipho Ngodwana, Thandiwe Msebenzi, and Thuli Gamedze. They worked across a range of media and some of the artists had never worked performatively before the formation of the collective. iQhiya staged performances and exhibitions at the AVA, Museum Night, Greatmore Studios, Johannesburg Art Fair, Goodman Gallery and Documenta 14 (Leiman 2016).

Notably, all the collectives formed in response to a perceived barrier to entry into the art world. Barriers of race and gender were a factor, as was the barrier to career growth for emerging artists. None of the collectives thought that co-authorship might be an impediment to their individual career trajectories. Of the four collectives below, Doing It For Daddy and iQhiya are described, as 'female' and either all 'white' or all 'black' groups, while Avant Car Guard and Galerie Puta are all-male groups and predominately all 'white' in demographic composition. All groups were comprised of emerging artists.

Doing It For Daddy (2006) began in response to an article of the same name in *Art South Africa* by Sharlene Khan, which referenced famous feminist thinker Bell Hooks' use of the phrase 'Doing it For Daddy' to refer to the perpetuation of white hemogony by white womxn through complicity. They found Sharlene Khan's opinion offensive, simplistic and defamatory towards white womxn in the art world and decided that instead of writing back or shouting, they would form a collective and produce work that could counter the race and gender narratives. (Sloon 2009).

Avant Car Guard (2005) said they started after a group show of theirs was cancelled at Dirt Contemporary – they were going to be doing solo shows and then started thinking:

> Why are we doing this? Why don't we just work as one thing? Like a band would. Make stuff that's one work. We were tired of that whole group show with your solo stuff, trying to find a space to do stuff. (Sloon 2009: 28)

This response indicates a frustration with the lack of opportunity for young artists to show and exhibit work and the limitations facing individual artists within the art market at the time.
Galerie Puta has said they formed in response to its founding members not being selected for the ABSA L'Atelier Competition. They saw the art world as being against them and one of them had the idea to have an exhibition in a toilet (Sloon 2009). Again, this shows frustration at the lack of opportunity and access to show work as individual emerging artists and responding by creating their own collective platform to showcase and co-author work.

iQhiya formed in response to the white boys' club that they perceive as the South African art world. They felt that, 'unlike black male artists, who are the darlings of the industry, young black female artists are under-represented in the industry and are predominantly overlooked by commercial galleries (mostly owned by white men): In various working relations, whether it be on campus, in exhibitions or workshops, we have been confronted with a lack of respect from men' (Leiman 2016: online).

iQhiya's response again mirrors frustration at lack of representation, visibility and access to opportunities for emerging artists, as well as the additional obstacles of race and gender.
From the four examples cited above one can see a similarity in the all-female collectives, which cite race and gender as motivating factors, while the all-male collectives cite access to art-world platforms for visibility as their primary motivating factor. Despite their differences, however, they were all motivated to establish a collective voice in an effort to disrupt the dominant power paradigm and structures. The collectives all referred to a sense of empowerment and a feeling of safety in numbers.

Doing it For Daddy and Avant Car Guard indicated that they felt more comfortable collectively confronting art world barriers, Doing It For Daddy saying that:

> You always have people backing you up … Safety in numbers … I've always liked that with the collective I can make the kind of work I would never make on my own. In terms of playing with the art world, I've always enjoyed the kind of work that is political on some level, but never felt capable of making it myself. With the collective I can go into that. (Sloon 2009: 28)

Avant Car Guard commiserates, saying that 'It gives you more power, definitely,' (Sloon 2009: 28), while iQhiya said that:

> The founding principle of the collective is simple – there's power in numbers … iQhiya came from a place of observation, whereas womxn we noticed a general trend of a limited, or a lack of, access, opportunities and visibility in our respective careers as artists. We started having individual conversations about this and then slowly gravitated towards each other with more womxn, particularly from UCT. (Leiman 2016)

Galerie Puta indicated it was clear that there is power in numbers, but then subverts that claim by ironically stating:

> We've never taken a position of dissent. What we do is massage the art world, massage the whole world. We love the art world. We embrace it and celebrate all that is good and true and pure in it. (Sloon 2009)

In the local South African context, the artists make work individually and under the umbrella of collective authorship and do not consider this an impediment to the joint authorship. In fact, the collectives have proven to be a powerful platform for visibility and the development of individual artistic careers.

The artists involved have employed strategies that subvert with an intentionality to 'break into' the art world. Over the past decade many of the male artists have launched successful solo careers following the dissolution of their collectives and most are now represented by established South African galleries and show at international art fairs (Ed Young, Cameron Platter, Dan Halter, Zander Blom, Jan-Henri Booyens and Michael MacGarry).

iQhiya members have also made significant inroads in the last year, following their launch in 2015. iQhiya artists have performed in prominent spaces from Iziko South African National Gallery (SANG), AVA Gallery, Greatmore Studios, Joburg Art Fair and Documenta and its member show as individual artists on international biennales and residencies, with one or two being signed to commercial galleries with solo exhibitions and a few showing work at the new Zeitz MOCCA Museum.

The question that arises from this observation is: once the collective has achieved the objective it was created for, in these cases to provide a vehicle for visibility, does it cease to have a purpose and does its lifespan naturally end? In the example of Avant Car Guard, Doing it For Daddy and Gallerie Puta the answer would be yes, the collective served the intent for which it was created and since has ceased to produce work collaboratively.

The naming of collaborative work by a collective is important in that it becomes the holding device under which the artists operate as one authorial voice. All the collectives here have chosen names that simultaneously arouse reaction, have dual meaning and convey their conceptual concerns.

The name of the Avant Car Guard Collective is a clear signifier of the collective's theoretical and tactical influences, suggesting the influence of the earlier avant-garde movements of the 20$^{th}$ century while locating the name within the cultural peculiarity and specificity of the phenomenon of car guards in South Africa (informal employment of providing security for vehicles parked in public spaces or parking lots).

Dripping in ironic intent, their chosen name positions the collective as a version of the art petite bourgeoisie[4], while intently polarising the stark contradictions between race and privilege of the classes. Using the name 'Avant Car Guard' cleverly alludes to the functions of privilege inherent in social context of art making in South Africa.

Tracy Murinik (2003: online) writes of Galerie Puta:

> If Duchamp brought bits of the bathroom into the gallery, then Galery Puta takes the gallery into the bathroom … this 'Gallery of the Prostitute' (*puta* meaning prostitute in Portuguese), is a 'proactive' venture, 'where a group of artists have gotten together' and created their own space where they can exhibit, and sell, new work.

Doing it For Daddy coined their name from the writing of renowned feminist theorist Bell Hooks, connotating the ways in which black men and white womxn have become complicit in reinforcing colonial, white male patriarchal systems of knowledge production.

> We read an article in Art South Africa called Doing it for Daddy (which is a Bell Hooks quotation) by Sharlene Kahn, which implied that there were all these evil white womxn that were continuing the hegemony of white maleness in the South African art world and they named all these people. Some of whom we really like. And seemed a bit ridiculous and very confrontational. And quite offensive. (Sloon 2009: 28)

Citing the article directly, Khan (2011: online) wrote that:

> The ongoing privilege of white artists is supported by an elaborate industry founded on the seemingly unshakable hegemony of whiteness ... Both Sobopha and Goniwe were sceptical of this new power broker in the South African art world, and shared the view that these white womxn are, to quote US writer Bell Hooks, merely 'doing it for daddy' … The outcome is the perpetuation of a warped system that continues to disadvantage the majority of this country's citizens.

In an article in the *Mail and Guardian*, Nadine Botha (2015: online) writes that, 'Speaking out against institutionalised whiteness in the South African art system came at a huge cost to Sharlene Khan … Her crime? The 'Doing it for daddy' article in *Art South Africa* magazine in 2006.'

iQhiya means the cloth that covers one's head, or doek. 'There is an intergenerational connection between those who wrap their heads – an ancient inequality that targets black womxn at the intersections of their race and gender, and this potent violence continues to unfold and unfurl in newer and cleverer ways in the contemporary era. We exist in a space of tension, which parallels that of iQhiya – a signifier of both strength and burden with the daily realities young black womxn face. The practice of the collective iQhiya, therefore, is gestural: it is an action that asserts our presence through articulating our own narratives.' (Leiman 2011)

Mtshazo (2016: online) reiterates:

> Whatever you choose to call it, be it a *doek*, headscarf or turban – over the years it has been used as a symbol of power among many womxn in the diaspora. In Mzansi over the past few weeks, we've seen female student leaders during the #FeesMustFall campaign and protests at universities, lending credibility to their cause and

[4] Petite Bourgeoisie: In the mid-19th century, Karl Marx and other Marxist theorists used the term ''petite bourgeoisie' to identify the socio-economic stratum of the bourgeoisie that comprised small-scale capitalists such as shop-keepers and workers who manage the production, distribution and/or exchange of commodities and/or services owned by their bourgeois employers later became to refer to the middle class. (F. Bechhofer and B. Elliott F. Bechhofer and B. Elliott)

> strengthening their fight for a zero percent increase to tertiary fees next year by wearing *doeks*. Their signature headscarf's have been a symbol of unity and an expression of femininity.

Here we see the reimagining of power of the earlier black consciousness movement. One could look at many historical forerunners for examples of the naming of an authorship umbrella under which a group can produce collaborative work, but what is notable in the examples above is that the all-female groups directly positioned themselves within gender and race discourse from the outset, while the all-male collectives preferred to make direct reference to art world structures with their joint authorship.

All these collectives employed a similar strategy of speaking back; some with a confrontational and defiant approach and others aiming to re-represent and re-imagine - but ultimately, respond to, the unequal power relations and status quo in the art world.

The thread of using the 'seriously playful' (Sloon 2009) is resonant throughout the works of the four collectives. Neither of the all-male collectives identify themselves as either all 'white' or all 'male', yet ridicule attempts at gender or race transformation within the production of content and processes of art making. Overt misogyny is displayed in works by Avant Car Guard, such as; *Fucked You In Your Mother Tongue*, *Land Art My Dick* and *'Sometimes, when we fuck our girlfriend, we pretend we are really fucking you'* (in reference to a female gallery owner). Other controversial works include an image of them dancing on Pierneef's grave in Pretoria. One of their members said, 'Initially, it was more about having fun … It still is … I don't want to say it's not serious.'

About Avant Car Guard's work *Phasing Out European Art* (2009), which shows a group of white students dressed in black facing a blackboard with 'I will not use the following – gender, race, politics' written on it in chalk, Sharlene Khan (2011: online) writes that:

> While the title seems to suggest that the collective may be directing this statement to the contemporary international art world, which looks to the Third World for socially conscious work, when read within the local context it seems flippant. The White students appear to be proclaiming they are above defining themselves according to issues of 'gender, race and politics', the cornerstones of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa.

A.  B. 


A. Avant car Guard, Protected by Theory, http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitionsbs/acg/theory.htm
B. AVANT CAR GUARD bury J.H.P. 'Kendell' Geers, 1967 – 1998', http://thenewchurch.co/exhibitions/past/50-50/

Similarly, Galerie Puta responds to questions about gender representation in their collective: 'We even considered making her a full member to access funds which required us to have a womxn member. ...But she was a big, rough lesbian.' (Sloon 2009: 28).

Galerie Puta writes that the Cape Town art scene is 'mean-spirited, social-rank-obsessed and has a generally unwelcoming façade' and highlight petty competitiveness from artists towards their contemporaries in their interview replies. 'I don't want to sound like sour grapes. Actually, it's not sour grapes, it's a blatant fact. These collectives have clearly stolen our model. And done a really bad job with it … And we can't even steal the ideas from the other collectives because they are so lame' (Sloon 2009: 28).

Looking at the works of the two all-female collectives we see evidence of the same defiance in their performative work, a speaking back from the periphery to the centre, echoing the serious, playful defiance and confrontational defamation of Galerie Puta's and Avant Car Guard's antics.

The Doing it For Daddy collective says it explores its own complicity in the art and sociopolitical spectra in a tongue-in-cheek way, as well as the 'oft-hidden mechanisms involved in constructing meaning, identity and history, seeking always a balance between the politically engaged and the seriously playful' (Stupart n.d). They did this by selling t-shirts that read 'Show me the hegemony' at a stall selling frames signed by famous and not-so famous artists outside the Iziko SANG in their Fifteen Minutes of Frame 2007 intervention on the opening of the TransCape 'not another biennale' show, and their award-winning Spier intervention, which took audiences on an inaccurate history tour of the Spier estate to a new vantage point.

'We did trips to the abandoned film set to collect pieces of a fake township and brought them back to build a hideous viewing platform next to the gallery-containers. Visitors could climb to the top of the platform and, with the help of opera glasses, look on to the township in the distance … Sometimes, during the tour, both casual tourists and art folk would get upset as they realised that our histories were not entirely factual.' (Stupart n.d.)

A. 

B. 

http://lindastupart.net/archive.php

A. Doing it For Daddy, Fifteen Minutes of Frame, 2007. Intervention Iziko South African Museum at the opening of Transcape, 'not another biennale'.
B. Doing It For Daddy, The Wrong Side of the River Tour, 2007, multimedia intervention & performance, Spier Estate.

'The work produced by iQhiya is at once playful and sombre; it is alive, and we'd do well not to deny its anger' (Leiman 2016: online). In iQhiya's last work, called *Commute*, the artists drove a minibus taxi and parked it outside Iziko SANG for Museum Night 2016 and stayed in the taxi, dressed up formally and drinking champagne, while broadcasting their voices back to the gallery via huge speakers. One of the artists posted on their Facebook page:

> Last night we were sitting four four masihlalisane in a taxi sipping on tropika and shampeing Riri, Mabrr, and Beyonce were pomping, we were dancing our bodies sticking out the taxi and we even made the things that cannot make the taxi have a working tire. In the taxi we spoke about our presence as black womxn artists,

> documentation, how to preserve our history, whose language do we use in doing that ... when the clock struck nine and night shift was done. We pushed our skorokoro taxi, hopped back in and off to mowbray and khayelitsha went. (iQhiya Facebook 2016:online)

**iQhiya:**

A. 

B. 

A. iQhiya, *The Commute II* (2016), performance Cape Town, photo: Gerald Machona, http://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13582/iqhiya
B. iQhiya, *Monday* 2017, performance and installation. Former Underground Train Station, Kassel, documenta 14, photo: Fred Dott, http://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13582/iqhiya

iQhiya say that their intention is to 'find ways to assert ourselves in spaces and galleries in Cape Town and in other art scenes in South Africa and make ourselves more visible.'

In all the above examples the collectives speak back to power. With 'serious playfulness' they engage directly with the parameters they find themselves a part of, which automatically include the existing South African sociopolitical parameters of gender and race. One notices less differentiation in their approaches to power than in other aspects of their collective authorship. Doing It for Daddy calls it a kind of site-specific 'rugged conceptualism', in which the conceptual collective is positioned as the new avant-garde.

To quote the Tate Museum's online resource on the avant-garde:

> Although the term avant-garde was originally applied to innovative approaches to art making in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is applicable to all art that pushes the boundaries of ideas and creativity, and is still used today to describe art that is radical or reflects originality of vision.

All the collectives in this selection used performative intervention as modus operandi in their collective authorship, though individually their practices are very dissimilar and more inclined towards individual or studio-based practices. The majority of work produced as their preferred mode of collective expression and joint authorship by the collectives manifested in real-time-based performance works that involved the artists as participants. Many of Avant Car Guard's works are records of performative interventions – they produced live interventions at Joburg Art Fair and for their Blank Projects collaboration among others. In the Galerie Puta toilet exhibition many of the participating artists performed during the exhibition, as well as at the Storm exhibition and Christian Nerf's 24/7 residency programme. Doing It for Daddy created performative interventions for their work at Spier Contemporary and TransCape exhibitions and performance works by iQhiya have included all the member artists.

In summation, the analysis of the chosen collectives indicates that race and gender categories affect the way collectives in the South African context produce contemporary art and the artistic

strategies they employed. Whether it is by: aligning with a gender identity position, of being black female artist as a strategy for visibility like iQhiya, by grouping together to speak back to the centre from the periphery like the Gugulective, or a group of white men poking fun at the status quo, gender identity and racial categorisation, these collective strategies have provided artistic vehicles for disruption and intervention.

Looking at the success of the individuals who came from or grew out of this collective art model, it is apparent that these collectives provided a platform from which many of the individual artists were able to start their careers in the art world (often resulting in the dissolution of the collective after some level of visibility and success).

The first grouping of collectives used collaboration as an artistic strategy to address concerns around visibility and access to opportunity because of racial and special segregation in post-apartheid South Africa. Members in the second grouping of collectives successfully leveraged the collectives' visibility to launch their own individual careers; whether this has been an impediment to the collective should be considered in relation to the collectives' original intent.

I outlined similarities in artistic strategies of the selected groups, including motivations; modus operandi, performativity[5] and naming devices. All the discussed collectives used the strategy of the collective authorial voice showing that collaboration can be used as a strategic artistic practice in contemporary art to enable artists to speak back to power and force reappraisals of artistic production.

[5] Performativity: referring to a notion of performativity used in the social sciences that includes the daily behaviour (or performance) of individuals based on social norms or habits. (Young, S. 2016)

# CHAPTER 2

## COLLECTIVE ART PRACTICE AS INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

This essay will explore and interrogate how artists have used collaboration to confront the role of artistic identity and position in relation to economic social and political institutions, and how collaboration can be used to force reappraisals of conditions of production and re-evaluation of the nature of artistic work (Enwezor 2007). For this purpose I will use three international collaborative groups as case studies for discussion: the Guerrilla Girls from New York, USA Laboratoire Agit'Art from Dakar and Raqs Media Collective from Delhi, India. Each international collective selected for this analysis was chosen to represent a different geographic area of art production, including America (1985), North Africa (1970's and 80's) and India (1992); in so doing, providing a broad overview of collective artistic strategies that cross cultural, language and geographic boundaries (albeit arising from different cultural, political and historic influences).

The definition of collaboration here is of a group of three or more artists operating under an umbrella name and producing contemporary artwork together, but also producing work independently. The three cited collectives also include artists working with multidisciplinary art practices.

I use the terms collective and collaborative as interchangeable terms, which Mabaso (2016:22) points out can, 'generally be understood as mutually dependent terms and have been stretched so much that the terms can sometimes even be read as interchangeable, and ubiquitous to the point of obscurity'.

I refer to collaborative art or collective art practice as a 'self-conscious process of production' (Roberts 2004) rather than a model of teamwork. Member artists choose to produce and author work collectively under a group or project name and individual identity is designated less primacy than the collective identity. I am particularly interested in exploring collaborative models that draw from multidisciplinarity and, by virtue of this, break down silos of art production and definitions used in institutional and commercial practice and pedagogy.

The examples of Laboratoire Agit'Art, Guerilla Girls and Raqs Media Collective offer different approaches to collective authorship. Guerilla Girls chose a model of authorship whereby the individual identity of the artists is subordinate to that of the group and, in an act of further dissolution, the participating artists take on aliases under the collective voice.

Raqs Media Collective chose to author as one artist and see the collective as the artist and themselves rather as agent of that artist. The artists of the Laboratoire Agit'Art seem less concerned with authorship and identity than with social practice and space. Their practice is closer to the laboratory model of the early avant-garde, in which various disciplines are brought into critical exchange and alignment (Roberts 2004). They author together as a collective, but also work as individual artists in their own practices.

In the 1980s and 1990s a new generation of collectives emerged that experimented with multiple authorship. Kester (2011) suggests that 'collaborative practices are part of a cyclical paradigm shift within the field of art, even as the nature of the shift involves increased permeability between 'art' and other zones of symbolic production.'

Claire Bishop (2006) proposes that collaborative work is less desirable for the commercial art world as it is more difficult to market and manage than work by individual artists and thereby less profitable. She suggests that collaborative works also usually take the form of less tangible and commodifiable products, such as performances, events, workshops and publications.

The Guerrilla Girls, Laboratoire Agit'Art and Raqs Media Collective were all formed by interdisciplinary groups of artists whose practices are based on experimentation, agitation, process, fluidity and ephemerality, as opposed to formalist or aesthetic values. They place primacy in their political and social ideals. All three collectives show evidence of; confrontation with the constitution of the artistic personality, reappraisals of conditions of production, re-evaluation of the nature of artistic work and reconfiguration of the position of the artist in relation to economic social and political institutions' (Enwezor 2007).

The Guerrilla Girls was formed by a group of womxn artists who banded together to protest the rampant gender discrimination and lack of representation in the artworld of womxn artists. They have been operating under the collective since 1985 and are still active today. Started in Soho by seven womxn artists in response to MoMA curator Kynaston McShine's comment that anyone not in the exhibition An International Survey of Painting and Sculpture should re-examine 'his' career. Of 169 artists in the show only thirteen were womxn. Fewer than this were artists of colour, and none of those were womxn (Stein 2011). Their website says they are feminist activist artists and over 55 people have been members over the years, some for weeks, some for decades (Guerilla Girls 2017).

The Guerrilla Girls collective emerged out of and drew on feminist discourse of the 1960s and 1970s that proposed different strategies to deal with gender inequality. Some artistic strategies from this period aimed to derail, overhaul, decentralise and/or replace, while less leftist approaches leaned towards inclusion, equality and equal representation. The artworld was identified as being particularly exclusionary, not only in gallery representation but in museum collection policies and art history.

The Guerrilla Girls were called quota queens by the critics and were the self-proclaimed 'conscience of the artworld', using advocacy strategies to create visibility for social change. Their goal is 'more access … that's our attitude about change, as opposed to breaking down the system.' (Chave 2011)

Each of the Guerrilla Girls preserves her anonymity by using the name of a famous dead female artist along with her Guerrilla Mask hiding her real identity (Baumann 2017). They pay homage to earlier feminist art historians and womxn artists by using their names as aliases for their Guerrilla tactics, a way of simultaneously evoking their principles of equality and reimagining their histories into contemporary practice. The activists' credibility is bolstered by the fact that they are either artists – and very famous artists have been in their number, as the German feminist magazine *EMMA* revealed in 2016 (Baumann 2017) – or work in related institutions.

'Even if we participated in the art world, we hated it. And we still do; we hate the system. It's so unethical,' said 'Frida Kahlo' and 'Käthe Kollwitz' (Stein 2011).

Their 1989 poster, *You're seeing less than half the picture without the vision of womxn artists and artists of colour,* explains their position. 'What we do agree on unanimously is that womxn and artists of colour deserve a piece of the pie and shouldn't be prevented from getting a big piece, if that's what they're after'. (Chave 2011).

Anna Chave also points out that the Guerrilla Girls founders saw a decline in womxn's standing in the art world subsequent to the gains won by 1970s feminist campaigns, and found the need to appeal to a younger generation of womxn. 'A lot of the things that the Guerrilla Girls did had been done by feminist groups earlier, but with a different language and a different style,' acknowledges Popova. They say their anonymity keeps them focused on the issues, and away from who the Guerrilla Girls might be.

Their anonymity provides a barrier of protection and limits their activism from affecting their individual careers and reputations within the institutions they may work. Over and above this it

keeps the message the central focus and prevents possible issues around personalities and individual profiling within the group, which could be a cause of conflict. They hide their identities under gorilla masks – an idea that came up unplanned: ‘At an early meeting, an original girl, a bad speller, wrote 'Gorilla' instead of 'Guerrilla.' It was an enlightened mistake. It gave us our 'mask-ulinity.’

In a *Boot Print* interview with Virginia MacKenny, ‘Käthe Kollwitz’ states:

> One of our goals is to change people’s minds about the ‘F’ word – feminism. We believe that feminism is a way of looking at the world. We think it’s ridiculous that feminism has been demonised in society – especially in the media – for so long that many people who believe in the tenets of feminism (equal pay for equal work, human rights for womxn worldwide including the right to an education) do not consider themselves feminists. We’ve been fighting this for years. Our strategy: showing that everyone can invent his or her own way of being a feminist, just like we did. Society wants to believe feminism is over, but 150 years of feminism has not overcome centuries of misogyny. There’s plenty to do. There is still much misogyny and violence toward womxn. We are only just beginning to understand, as a planet, that womxn’s rights are human rights. (MacKenny 2009: 19)

The Guerilla Girls built on a prehistory of feminist foundational work from the 1970’s and on the politically motivated conceptual art from the 1960’s, initiatives now generally grouped under the rubric ‘institutional critique’: ‘Without thinking about it at the time, you know, our thing is institutional critique,’ said ‘Frida Kahlo’ and ‘Käthe Kollwitz’ (Stein 2011)

Guerrilla Girls uses statistics, data and quotas to attack the venues, institutions and individuals who have evidenced a lack of transformation policies and a racial and gender bias towards white men. Guerrilla Girls has included the contributions of over 50 womxn who changed art history through their collective work.

The Guerilla Girl members use clever visuals and text combined with humour and statistical facts to expose gender and racial inequality and bias and all forms of institutional corruption in cultural institutions. Examples of their work include posters, letters, banners, stickers, signage and protest plaques. They use political, advocacy and activist strategies and tactics, while operating on the fringes of or outside of the institutional frameworks, with the intention of directly attacking the institutions. They create hype, media attention and visibility to address issues of glaring under-representation in the art world.

Their intention is to ‘undermine the idea of a mainstream narrative by revealing the understory, the subtext, the overlooked and the unjust. They believe in an intersectional feminism that fights discrimination and supports human rights for all people and all genders’ (Guerrilla Girls 2017).

On their website they say they have done over 100 street projects, posters and stickers all over the world, including New York, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Mexico City, Istanbul, London, Bilbao, Rotterdam and Shanghai. They also do projects and exhibitions at museums, attacking them for their bad behaviour and discriminatory practices right on their own walls (Guerrilla Girls 2017).


http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/who-are-guerrilla-girls

They not only target the art-world institutions such as museums, galleries and biennales, but are also quite active and vocal about other areas of gender discrimination, including political administration, LGBTQ rights, abortion policies and film- and theatre-sector under-representation.

In the 2011 interview Virginia MacKenny asks:

> In talking to different audiences the GGs seem to have also extended their content beyond the art world, which was the original focus … You are now part of Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Womxn Campaign and you are engaging the environmental activist group Greenpeace. One of the historical strengths of the GGs seemed to be your dedication to an area that no one else had highlighted and it was this specialisation that gave the group its specific identity. Are you not spreading yourselves too wide into the generic concerns of feminism and into areas where, given the groups that you are working with, there are already people working? While of course it can be argued that all such areas are interlinked in their concerns, are you not in danger of losing your identity and special interest focus?

'Käthe Kollwitz' responded:

> We have always been activists exploring whatever issues we choose to take on. We did our first work about the environment back in 1996. We've also done anti-war posters, works about the homeless, politics, social issues, Hollywood, female stereotypes, etc. Basically we're artists, so we don't worry about the big picture. We've never been systematic in our approach to issues; we just try to do the best work we can. The Guerrilla Girls don't do posters that, like a lot of political art, point to something and say, 'This is bad'. We try to twist an issue around and present it in a way that hasn't been seen before. We want everyone to invent their own crazy way of being an activist, like we do. And their own crazy way of being a feminist.

The Guerilla Girls shifted their focus from the art scene in the US to European Institutions and the conducted a diversity on artists in 400 European museums. The results were made public at a free exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in London (Baumann 2017). They are the longest-standing art collective in history and I think this is due to their anonymity and fluid membership structure.


Two Guerrilla Girls in front of the Whitechapel Gallery in London

http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/guerrilla-girls/

The Guerrilla Girls will tell you that rich white men are to blame for the discrimination against womxn in the art world. 'Museums are increasingly dependent on super rich collectors' donations of money and artworks – and these collectors are usually white men, who predominantly collect art created by white men.' Consequently, museums are no longer documenting the history of art, but rather the history of wealth and power, conclude the activists (Baumann 2017).

Guerilla Girls has named their institutional critique 'creative complaining', a catch-all phrase for their approach. They also make use of humour as a tactic to disarm, dialogue, engage and simultaneously attack.

'Frida Kahlo' and 'Zubeida Agha' said in a recent interview that humour has always been essential to the group's activism, both as a coping mechanism and as a tool to start a conversation:

> When we were sitting around talking about this system ... that didn't welcome us and that didn't want us, there was a little bit of revenge in making fun of it,' explained Kahlo.' When you mock your oppressor, it gives you a kind of psychological power over them, and it might be the only power that you have. And at least it made us feel good. And it made the situation a little more tolerable. And then what we discovered is that if we could figure out a way to present our point of view in a humorous way to someone who didn't agree with us, if we could get them to laugh, we knew we had their attention and we had a little opening into their thinking, and maybe we could just go in there and influence them. (Ignatius 2017:online)
> Humour is very disarming, said 'Agha', a 10-year member of the Guerrilla Girls. 'Kahlo' added, our philosophy of this is sort of: Being angry is a great place to start, but it's not a great place to finish. If you go into a project just angry, that probably won't happen. There is a communication skill that has to be developed – an awareness of how do you influence people? (Ignatius 2017: online).

Guerrilla Girls lament that the structural sexism of museums and the art market is worse than in the world at large and that the situation is no better than when Guerrilla Girls started in the 1980's. They agreed that we are fighting against a rigged system wherein art has become an investment tool (by white male investors of white male artists). (Ignatius 2017: online).

Both 'Agha' and 'Kahlo' agree that it is a vicious circle and unequal access to the sources of production remains. 'Womxn artists, artists of color, and LGBTQ artists bump up against a 'glass ceiling' in terms of monographs, solo shows, and museum acquisitions, and that depresses the perceived value of their work' (Ignatius 2017: online).

While some things have changed for the better, new problems have emerged (such as tokenism) – but some of the biggest wins have been in undermining some long-held premises – one, that museums and the art world are built around a pure meritocracy and, two, that the values inside the museums causing a lack of representation of womxn artists have been called to account. (Ignatius 2017: online).

Virgnia MacKenny asked members of Guerilla Girls if its fame and acknowledgment by the artworld had given them more power … or if its fame merely made it familiar to the art public and 'tamed' the impact of its activities. Käthe Kollwitz' answered:

> That's a great question, and something we think about all the time. In the last few years we've been busier than ever … and faced with a dilemma: what do you do when the system you have spent your life attacking embraces you? People all over the world tell us that our work has inspired them to stand up for what they believe in. The ironic predicament we find ourselves in now has come from the last couple of years where our work has been seen at major museums all over the world. So what's a girl activist to do? We've agonized over this newfound acceptance, but for now we've made the decision to participate in exhibitions and appearances at museums because we want to get our message out to as large an audience as possible and because it's a thrill to criticise art institutions on their own walls. You ask if fame has tamed our impact. I hope not. It certainly hasn't tamed us. We refuse to be tamed, and we want our work to have power. We want it to be unforgettable. We know that we are a model for activists everywhere who want to use their creativity to change issues they care about. (MacKenny 2011:19)

The Guerrilla Girls' legacy and reach has been most effective in its 'outreach', which includes presentations and workshops at colleges, universities, art organisations and sometimes at museums, where they play music and videos, show slides and talk about the history and evolution of their work and interact with audience members. Their Wikipedia page says they 'have done hundreds of these events and have travelled to nearly every state in America, as well as to Europe, South America and Australia'.

Under the title 'Selling-out' on their Wikipedia page it states that after 1985 the Guerrilla Girls were 'lauded by the very establishment they sought to undermine'. They have exhibited at Tate Modern, Venice Biennale, Centre Pompidou, MoMA and more. The page suggests that the Guerrilla Girls have allowed their work to be collected by hegemonic institutions and have been questioned about the efficacy, if not hypocrisy, of the group's working within the system that they originally denigrated (Wikipedia 2017).

The Guerrilla Girls have also been invited to produce special projects for the very institutions it has criticised and been given offers that pose an ethical dilemma. A dilemma that invites the questions for collaborative practice; what does it mean when you are exhibiting and participating in the very structure you were fighting against? Does being embraced and absorbed into the structure mean that you have affected the change you were seeking to bring about, or have you sold out? Does acceptance into these structures make efforts for real change flaccid and ineffectual? Is absorption of the collective by the institutions a means to deactivate, placate and 'gender wash' institutional reputations, or are collectives able to bring about real change by reaching a wider audience through participation within these institutional structures?

Other criticisms that have been lodged against the Guerilla Girls over the years include essentialism, particularly in relation to their two Guerrilla Girl books: *The Guerrilla Girls Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art* (1998) and the controversial *Estrogen Bomb* (2003–13) campaign and an apparent lack of diversity within the group itself. The group was comprised primarily of white womxn, thus guilty of the same tokenism and lack of representation of people of colour the group has accused others of.


[6]http://www.dw.com/en/the-guerrilla-girls-fight-against-discrimination-in-the-art-world/a-37852529

Looking to Africa, the work of Laboratoire Agit'Art collective from Senegal is strongly linked to the sociopolitical history of Senegal before and after its post-colonial independence. One cannot look at Laboratoire Agit'Art outside of the sociopolitical context of their art making.

Senegal's first president after independence, Léopold Sédar Senghor, is said to have established a well-supported cultural system during his term, including art schools, a national museum, festivals and touring exhibitions. This legacy of state patronage is said to have encouraged a new Senegalese modernism and particular artistic system, using theories of Negritude as a guide. Most studies of this period argue that this resulted in a formulaic art school called *École de Dakar,* best known for its fascination with pan-African motifs (Harney 2004).

[6] Essentialism: Standard feminist accounts take gendered individuals to have some essential properties *qua* gendered individuals or a gender core by virtue of which one is either a man or a woman. This view assumes that womxn and men, *qua* womxn and men, are bearers of various essential and accidental attributes where the former secure gendered persons' persistence through time as so gendered. (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-gender/)

Harney (2004) asserts that Senghor regarded art as a medium of change and a tool that could be used to advance his cultural, political and economic development plans, seeing the artist as the representative of and advocate for a new nation:

> All artists, during Senghor's time and since, have had to grapple with the influence of Senghor, his patronage, and the Negritude philosophy he propounded … The Senghorian legacy casts a long shadow over debates about the role of the artist, the structure of the art market and the relationships between formations of identity and artistic practices. (Harney 2004)

In Senegal in the 1970s and 1980s artists who had been trained by the state-funded academies and had benefitted from state support started to question the impact of state monopoly on creative production and distribution. Although diverse in their practice, the Laboratoire Agit'Art artists 'united in critiquing and challenging the prevailing Negritude philosophy in Senegal', a philosophy, which had become institutionalised through the national art academies. They started to imagine new ways to interpret, distribute and showcase their work. Unlike many of the state-sponsored artists, Laboratoire Agit'Art were unafraid to confront political issues and made frequent use of the Senegalese flag, questioning the interplay of nationalism and artistry (Harney 1998).

Harney also talks about the history of Laboratoire AGIT'art as 'A multimedia performance group comprised of artists, cultural workers and intellectuals whose main agenda was to liberate artists from dependence on the state.'

Alvaer (2013) attributes the philosophy of Negritude and the practices of Laboratoire Agit'Art to a conceptual movement that grew out of the rise of the post-colonial critique in Africa in the second and third decades after Senegal's' independence. He suggests that the rise of the movement came from the failures of the post-colonial nation state and economic and social crises. 'Agit'art understood their initiative as a counter power that brings intellectual and artistic diversity into an homogeneous art environment' (Iniva 2014: online).

Alvaer believes it is a simplification to suggest that Laboratoire Agit'Art came into being as a form of rebellion against instrumentalised Senghorian Négritude in Senegal and the Négritude-inspired pedagogy of the École de Dakar. He positions the group's challenges in relation to the early modernists whose task it was to excel in the style of the West to first prove their modernism (Alvaer 2013). Genge compares Laboratoire Agit'Art with the self-staging of Arte Povera and Fluxus, using the 'laboratory' and 'politically-performative experimental space' as institutional critique (Genge 2014).

There are different and varied accounts of who the founding and contributing members were of Laboratoire Agit'Art. The majority of accounts say it started with Tenq (a project space) in 1973 at Village des Arts, which had studios, ran workshops and set up a radio station and magazine. In historical accounts garnered from conversations with members of the group, Clémentine Deliss (2014) indicates that the first theatre workshops happened in 1974, at Cap Manuel, and then much later in the courtyard of writer and dramaturge Gérard Chenet. But they also took place in public locations such as the Musée Dynamique or on the stage of the Centre Cultural Français of Dakar. The Village des Arts was said to be a shared space with other collaborative arts practitioners and theatre makers and Agit'Art remained there until it was evicted in 1983, when it transferred the Agit'Art workshops to Issa Samb's courtyard in the Rue Jules Ferry in order to continue its experiment (Deliss 2014).

Deliss, who is a writer and researcher, spent a lot of time with Issa Samb, writes that initially the Laboratoire Agit'Art was connected to an experimental theatre group called Les Tréteaux, directed by the late Yussufa John. His theatre troupe offered an antidote to the official productions presented

at Dakar's Théâtre National Daniel Sorano, which centred around Aimé Césaire and other proponents of Négritude.

Deliss speaks of the collective as a fluid, free group of men and womxn that began in the mid 1970s with no formal organisation, president, secretary or proper membership system, just meetings; these meetings took the form of a workshop or atelier. Membership to Agit'Art was justified through initiative informed by a critical spirit that questioned any prevalent order. As Issa Samb liked to repeat, 'Anyone who takes initiatives involving the spirit and practice of Agigt'Art is a member of Agit'Art' (Iniva 2014: online). Their goal was to revitalise artistic production and to critique institutional frameworks and the philosophy of Negritude (Harney 2004).

Laboratoire Agit'Art was said to have been founded by writer and performer Youssouf John and handed on to Issa Samb, who became a central and well-known figure in the collective. Deliss writes that the role of Issa Samb was not that of a visual artist but of a philosopher, writer and agitator. Youssuf John was head of the theatre studio and El Sy was head of painting and costumes, responsible for the visual dramaturgy of the group's projects (Deliss 2014).

Deliss, identified additional participants (2014):

> Over the following years, El Sy and Issa Samb introduced me to numerous collaborators of the Laboratoire AGIT'Art. As I understood it, the main quality of the group was its methodology: there were no exhibitions of the Laboratoire AGIT'Art; instead the heterogeneity and the complementary character of its members were reflected in the performances that they initiated together over the years. (Deliss 2014)

From her interviews with Samb and others Deliss gives the most comprehensive account of the collective's participants and methodologies, and was in fact invited to become a member of the collective. Each person in the Laboratoire Agit'art had a particular role and responsibility and Deliss lists the members she met, including; philosopher and critic As M'Bengue, the actors Magaye Niang and Pap Oumar Diop dit Makéna; the theatre director and actor Ablaye Dani Diop; the film-maker Djibril Diop Mambéty; the fashion designer Oumou Sy; the feminist and politician Marie-Angélique Savané; the architect Pierre Goudiaby; arts organiser Mor Lyssa Bâ; the itinerant poet Thierno Seydou Sall; the sculptor Babacar Sadikh Traoré; the photographer and film-maker Bouna Médoune Seye; the trader Abdou Bâ; the banker and collector Libasse Thiaw; Mamadou Traoré Diop, author and advisor to the president, painter Souleymane Keita. Many of the members have now passed away.

Deliss records in her account of her time and visits with Laboratoire Agit'Art that the numerous collaborators were cautious about divulging too many details about how it operated. The collective was founded on an ethos of interdisciplinary experimentation performed and exchanged by the different roles played by each of its protagonists.

Deliss cautions against trying to break the cryptic methodologies they use into an art-historical analysis for the benefit of today's global audience. She brings to the fore 'questions about the accelerated commodification of alternative theories of knowledge production and art practice'. She also questions the language used to disseminate information on former artistic methodologies, the status of the document produced and the ownership of this material and suggests that 'this produces the cannibalistic urge to accumulate the codes of other cultures as one's own' (Deliss 2014:16).

In the cited text on Office for Contemporary Art Norway website they speak of the collective's focus on the 'contingent character of actions, informed by a critique of institutional power: in this critique it aimed to transform the nature of artistic practice from a formalist, object-bound sensibility to practice based on experimentation and agitation – process rather than product, ephemerality rather than permanence' (OCA 2013).

Harney also points out that the objects that existed in the Laboratoire Agit'Art courtyard space were in fact collaborative pieces that served as props for performance workshops rather than as isolated artistic objects. OCA also proposed that they developed a distinct 'aesthetic of the social' grounded in social ideas rather than aesthetic notions. 'Audience participation was paramount to the group's work, as was the privileging of communicative acts over the physical object. Neither utopian nor self-referential, it grounded its actions in the immediate sociopolitical situation' (OCA 2013).

Harney supports this with her account of Samb's ideological influence, insinuating that the establishment of European-style state theatres and museums divorced African audiences from their art and artists from their traditional culture, materials and artistic practice.

The relationship of thinking between Youssuf John and Issa Samb brought theatre and the visual arts together in reaction to the impacts of Senghorian patronage on artistic and cultural forms and products. The Laboratoire sought to reinvigorate artists infected by professionalism and satisfied with poetic praise rather than with informed criticism (Harney1998).

The influence of multidisciplinarity should give great consideration when looking at the collective. From the beginning the inclusion and role of dramatists, filmmakers and musicians such as Djibril Diop Mambéty and Fela Kuti were said to be of great importance in shaping the group's ideals and work (Alvaer 2013).

The collective's practice was ephemeral and included street performances, installations, workshops and happenings. Theatrical staging and the performing arts provided an ideal form of expression to allow audience participation, as well as improvisation and other forms of experimental practice.

> 'Their outlook was political, and community focused, publishing manifestos and creating installations out of street detritus that raised issues about African contemporary society, united in their critique of the philosophy of negritude and institutional practice prevalent in Senegal at the time.' (Harney 2004)

Deliss writes of the character of the Agit'Art yard as incongruent, choreographed chaos, an alchemical laboratory created from a deviant language of philological interpretations, a language of gradual decay and degeneration.

> Between the scattered matter, seemingly caught in a *caput mortuum* phase of degeneration, one could read quotations, aphorisms and traces of experimentation in chalk and charcoal script on black and white boards. There was residue and pamphlets, invitation cards, reminding one to attend diplomatic cocktails, literary readings or exhibition openings, notes scribbled on small pieces of paper by people who had passed by. A long table surrounded by chairs bore witness to daily meetings and impromptu sessions. (Deliss 2014)

Deliss writes about the yard as if it exists as a living monument of decay, as a depot of traces left by communal presence, its objects and texts attached to crumbling walls, covered in layers of sand, dirt and dead leaves. She speaks about the detritus as a living monument of decay acts as an imprint or impression of dialogue and is reminiscent of a specific moment in 'collective and performative time' (Deliss 2014).

‘What remained powerful was the act of verbal reiteration, a mnemonic referencing that recalled absent members,’ writes Deliss (2014:19). ‘Similarly, the narrative about a collective is likely to be recast according to whose participation is vocal at whichever moment in time.’

Deliss writes about her visits to Dakar in the 1990s when there were still several active Agit’Art members. Daily discussions in the courtyard with impromptu visitors and members were still a central part of the collective’s activities, even though they were no longer engaged in producing collective situations. The Agit’Art members repeatedly spoke of the contributions of those who were absent, departed or deceased. Issa Samb similarly exercised this mnemonic restitution in an interview in which he invoked certain people he had known, repeating their names, wondering about their whereabouts and thereby reintroducing their presence within a contemporary frame. A similar strategy is used by Guerrilla Girls when it evokes historical female presence into the contemporary present by using their aliases.

> If the Laboratoire Agit’Art has a love for time, it is not for the irrational and the spiritual. So, don’t talk here about race, don’t mention Gobineau, Meiners, Darwin or Frobenius ... The idea of the supremacy of race is to be excluded. And time goes by, like the red Mosel, like the red Thames, like the Ganges, like the Senegal. Time runs out, and the fascination with memory remains in the impossible amnesia between politics and despair, the wound on the body of painting. I’m sick of seeing drawings, of seeing objects, of seeing the past and of talking to myself about the present. Of which present are you talking about if not of presence itself?
> ...
> The visual arts of Senegal are searching in the luminous outline of the mornings of market days. There one discovers that the museums store only one kind of knowledge, whose colours can only be grasped through an apparent immobility. At least in Senegal, the country I come from, one exists in the movement of colour at all moments of the day. In any case, in this country, painting could not be a goal in itself but simply a means to knowledge and therefore to transformation. If the dream is important, the real, the experienced is at stake. (Samb *1996*)

Today Laboratoire Agit’Art are considered one of the most influential African art collectives of the twentieth century. ‘Laboratoire Agit’Art has attempted nothing less than a reshaping of both the language of Senegalese art and the terms of which artistic production occurs in that country today (Ima Ebong 1991:129).

http://practiceinternational.org/research/atelier-of-issa-samb-dakar

Raqs Media  was founded in Dheli, India (1992) by Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula and Shuddhabrata Sengupta. *Raqs* (pronounced ‘Rux‘) is a word in Persian, Arabic and Urdu that refers to the whirling dance of Sufi dervishes, ‘a highly focused and meditative state, but it’s also a state of

constant movement' (Groom 2017). It can also be read as an acronym for 'rarely asked questions'.

'Raqs asserts that collaborative practice is a consequence and corollary of what artists and individuals draw from each other (as a shared matrix) rather than what they give away. It is neither an altruistic nor a suicidal giving, but a taking from or nurturing of what exists between the members – more a process of unfolding desires' (Raqs 2017).

> The promise of collaborative energies in such an instance would not emerge from the simple junction of the images of an eye, an amputated arm, and a flower, or from a bridge between the time of their specific creations, long ago, and our time now. They would flow instead from the as-yet unpredictable form (which may be neither eye, nor cleaved arm, nor flower) that might arise at their intersection. We do not necessarily know where the maps scanned by our three pairs of eyes will take us. It is this ambiguity that has kept us going for the past 19 years, and it is the desire to know what might happen next, or how we may yet again be surprised by the sum of our cognitive parts, that will keep us going into the foreseeable future. (Raqs 2011: online)

The collective speaks of itself as having a plurality of roles, appearing as artists, writers, curators, filmmakers, philosophical agent provocateurs, as fluid and interchangeable as their works require. Their multidisciplinary practices include filmmaking, video art, curating, installations, sculptures, publications, events, conferences, lectures, workshops, architecture, computer programming and experimental processes. They traverse the globe, working in many different contexts and forms, constantly moving between these modes of practice. 'Their work operates on the cusp of theoretical explorations and metaphorical and aesthetic discourse' (Manacorda 2007).

Manacorda (2007: online) proposes that 'a collective could be conceived as an ecosystem whose interaction produces operative or imaginative knowledge, political and performative actions or products by linking the specific interests of its members'. Raqs' trajectory of restless forms and methods could then be considered an ecosystem of 'kinetic contemplation' to produce a consistency of speculative procedures. In the vision of the Raqs collective the 'discursive is a domain that works ecosystemically, endlessly adapting itself to questions and conversations' (Manacorda 2007).

Raqs has addressed questions about time and history for several decades. 'The group's interest in temporality arose out of their concern with ideas of measurement and the immeasurable' (Groom 2017). Beyond time and history, Raqs' work also touches on industrial forms, economic systems and urban research, viewing urbanism as a 'systemic field of contemporary relations' (Manacorda 2007).

'All our work,' Narula says, 'is an attempt at being sous-chefs and chief tasters in time's kitchen' (Manacorda 2007).

In an interview with Mathur (2009:16) they said,

> In this freedom lies the constantly renewable possibility of positing different modes of relationships between selves and others, between the relative significance of different ways of sharing things, and different attitudes to space and time. …
>
> The times of the past, and the possibility of the future are both mortgaged and held hostage to the urgency of the unyielding present…
>
> All these attitudes, of letting ourselves be open to the uncountable, to plenitude, to others not only as hostile competitors, to a variegated sense of time, require us to consider the quality, rather than the quantity of an experience.

> What we are left with, if we accept these bald facts, is the possibility that artists might repeatedly venture into the territory of imagination in order to point to forgotten, or as yet unconceived ways of thinking non-quantitatively about issues such as scarcity and value, about essence and identity and about our experience of dispersal and duration, about space and time. (Boot Print 2009:16)

The above meditative and poetic texts by Raqs are examples of their thinking and an articulation of its ways of seeing and thinking about time and collaborative artistic production and the role of the artist. The artist as *interlocutor* in the realm of the imagination, rather than as a static individual identity and producer of time- and place-bound objects.

The Raqs Media Collective can be considered one of the most successful contemporary art collectives of the 21st century, having exhibited widely in the most prestigious international art spaces and biennales, including the Centre Pompidou (Paris), Tate Britain (London), Art Unlimited (Basel), Mori Museum (Tokyo), SALT (Istanbul), Museum of Modern Art (Warsaw), National Gallery of Modern Art (Delhi), Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), the Serpentine Gallery (London) and many other international institutions. Raqs exhibited their work at Documenta 11 in 2002 and at the biennales of Istanbul, Taipei, Kassel, Liverpool, Sydney and Sao Paulo, and were co-curators of *Manifesta 7* (2008) and chief curators of the 11th Shanghai Biennale 2016 (Frith Street Gallery).

Noor (2017) positions the Raqs collective's work within the discourses of institutional critique and decolonial theory. He proposes that through their body of critical and curatorial work, 'Raqs' project is still haunted by the desire to rectify colonial history' – the history that colonialism had on India, politically, economically and culturally. British imperialism has had an irreversible impact on how Indians think about their history and traditions. Noor suggests that Raqs' work brings to the foreground the 'philosophical cul-de-sac of institutional critique', whereby the 'critique of a system is often coupled with a necessary degree of participation in it'. He says Raqs' challenge resembles the 'one facing the students in Cape Town: how to simultaneously justify and rail against its presence in institutions that, historically, would rather they not be there?'.

Noor (2017: online) further suggests that Raqs manages to successfully overcome the double bind of generating institutional critique while engaging those institutions, by connecting 'a fraught past to the contemporary moment, without relying too heavily on historical didacticism', thereby initiating the shifts in thinking it seeks to bring about (Noor 2017).

> 'It's a generative discomfort, spurring this practice: the open hand of the past grasping at something unreachable, in a place it will never quite belong … By refusing to limit themselves to rigid, univocal messaging and instead producing a body of work that both attracts and challenges institutions, the collective holds a position of power, simultaneously within and outside of the fixed structures of the artworld.' (Noor 2017: online)

http://www.frithstreetgallery.com/news/artist/raqs_media_collective

In a personal interview, Shuddhabrata Sengupta responded directly to my questions about Institutional Critique.

**Deborah Weber:** *Going to the discussion around institutional critique and engaging with institutions such as museums and biennales – could you speak about your thinking around institutional critique and if that is a self-conscious critical strategy, and then how you have gone about dealing with European institutions and some of the strategies that you have used?*

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta for Raqs Media Collective:** Let's start with the foundational premise. We do not think that artists allow themselves the luxury of thinking that they are innocent of the realities of the contemporary world – artists are not outsiders, we are clear in our understanding of this – there is no outside. Let's say, if there is capitalism, there is no outside to capitalism. We are all implicated in it in various ways – as workers, as people in positions of differential power and decision-making. So institutional critique, for whatever it is worth, in our view cannot afford to give itself the moral luxury of an ethical higher ground from which to criticise institutions. It has to see itself as engaged in and entangled in the messiness sometimes of institutional life, that is one basic principle.

Secondly, there is also, we believe quite strongly, no position of priory innocence vis-á-vis the networks of power that have arisen through the networks of colonialism merely because we live in a country like India or South Africa or China or wherever – we cannot afford to see ourselves as the objects of history. We do not believe that one can continue to perceive ourselves as the objects molded by the forces that have come out of the histories of European colonialism alone. We and our societies have participated in these networks so it is not a position where we can continuously claim as artists from the global south some position of innocent victimhood.

These two being clear then we can undertake certain moves or manoeuvres that try and expand as much as possible the spaces or the democratic, critical, open sensibility within global contemporary art spaces. The recipients of these addresses are no longer only the narrow bandwidth of transatlantic continuum that stretches from the East Coast of the United States and to Britain or France and Germany. We have worked in many different situations, with institutions, in museums in South America, in China, in Southern Europe and Asia, so we are alert to the fact that power exerts itself in many different ways in different parts of the world. So, there isn't one power that we are confronting that is centred in Europe or America and elsewhere are the powerless – we understand power as being a striated living reality in different parts of the world, and it has to be engaged with depending on very specific circumstances. So we have engaged with biennales and museums as artists, but also as curators; so we curated the European Contemporary Art Biennale Manifesta in

2008, we curated recently the Shanghai Biennale, we have curated international shows in India and we will be curating a museum show in Barcelona next year. We see the role of artists as being fully involved in the creation of new realities and new thinking within, outside and between institutions.

**Deborah Weber:** *going back to your thinking around power and participation and this idea of victimhood. That is a very important conversation to open up a bit, particularly for South African collectives working here. If you could maybe speak to me about your thinking around that and how it functions in Delhi, being a little further down the trajectory of post-colonial history and colonial independence? In South Africa with our fraught colonial and apartheid history we are still very much in a process of enormous struggle individually and collectively in dealing with the trauma of the past and trying to reconcile power and address the structural inequality seen in our institutions and spacial geography.*

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta for Raqs Media Collective:** Thank you for the question, much of what you describe of South Africa maps onto India. Of course, every history has its specificities – we never had the violence of apartheid, but have had to deal with the violence of cast, for instance, in India and continue to deal with that. So do the Indian communities in South Africa.

So all the parameters of this network of oppression, violence and subjection exists within, between and across our societies – the position of an artist is one of immense privilege. If you are recognised as an artist there seems to be a certain, at least a theoretical recognition of the fact that you have something of significance to say – if that be the case then I think artists can do better than to place themselves as the nominated victims of social processes. Because they have something that people who are subjected do not have or are denied, which is articulative capacity or at least a notion of public. With that recognition comes some amount of responsibility not to have the entitlement to speak on behalf of other people – you can be a transmitter, you can be a radio station, you can be a mode through which signals of different kinds get processed, magnified or amplified. I do not think anything gives us as artists the moral or ethical authority to say what we are saying is enough in terms of what needs to be said on behalf of other people.

A careful political understanding of power requires us to also have a careful political understanding of the power of artistic practice. Both positively, in the sense that it builds capacities of speaking, and also not positively, as seeing the fact that it should then come with a certain amount of reticence in claiming the position of the victim. This means, I think, that we carefully examine history's ongoing processes of oppression and see through and with these things without the automatic presumption of innocence. If we are living in a world where we clearly understand that science does not automatically give the scientist the position of innocence, I think we should be sophisticated enough to understand that art is also a part of the means of maintaining order in the world – artists are equally not innocent as scientists and other kinds of people.

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In summation this chapter has explored some of the ways in which the three contemporary art collectives Guerrilla Girls, Laboratoire Agit'Art and Raqs Media Collective have used collaboration to confront the role of the artist and artistic production within their context. Each collective used collaboration to confront the role of artistic identity and position in relation to economic social and political institutions, and used collaboration to 'force reappraisals of conditions of production and re-evaluation of the nature of artistic work' (Enwezor 2007). .

Each collaboration offers particular insights into its discursive field of practice and influences from feminism to Negritude and post-colonial and post-structuralist theory. Given each collective was operating independently of each other's influences and situated in different geographic and cultural landscapes, they have all used collective practice, multidisciplinary, shared authorship and ephemerality as strategies for institutional critique deeply rooted in political and social ideologies.

We see this with Guerrilla Girls rise out of the feminism movement in the United States, Laboratoire Agit'Art as a reaction to the philosophy of negritute and state ownership of arts and culture and in Raqs Media Collective emerging out of the late 90's in a post-colonial India, when the far right wing government was in power and had just inducted nuclear tests with protests in New Delhi. Raqs Media bring a new vocabulary of art practice into contemporary art and India through their new media work and collective practice in the late 1990's.

Livingston (2011: 221) refers to the 'Deweyan conception of democracy, wherein communicative freedom is incarnated not in intersubjective speech, but in uniting individual forces around common problems. Dewey is not convinced that real collaboration can take place in the absence of pre-political collaboration, because, for Dewey, the political sphere is not a site for exercising communicative freedom, but a cognitive tool by means of which society looks to explore, deal with and resolve problems specific to the coordination of social action.'

One can see in all three collectives that their practices emerged in relation to the economic and political climate of their country and context. Each collective in their own right establishing ground-breaking reappraisals of art production and institutional practices through their distinctive approaches. They used a variety of collective artistic strategies to critique the institutions they sought to transform from within and without; from activist protests to non-participation, ephemerality, performance, intervention to agitation and provocation. Guerrilla Girls, Laboratoire Agit'Art and Raqs Media Collective provide evidence of 'how collective's art practices emerge and flourish under specific art-historical circumstances' and how the collective body can provide a vehicle for institutional and ideological re-appraisal. (Livingston 2011: 221).

# CHAPTER 3

## METHODOLOGIES: DECISION MAKING, ROLES, MEMBERSHIP AND CONFLICT

This chapter looks into the mechanics of collectives: the structures, agreements, modes, processes, decision-making, roles and strategies of authorship. It presents five local and one international example and includes dialogues with a member of each collective and the author.

Throughout the chapter I seek to interrogate the different working practices of each collective in an attempt to seek similarities and differences that could provide insights into what makes a collective's artistic practice sustainable over time.

The tension between a single authorial voice and the collective voice is present throughout this research. In my experience this tension is not only present in the practice of making collaborative work but also in the authorial representation. The way collectives manage this tension is not unanimous and may vary greatly as is shown in the dialogical study to follow. The author has used the methodology of a dialogical study in the next two chapters to make these tensions overt and bring under consideration objectivity and the complex dynamics between the singular and collective authorial voice.

Interviews with members of the following collectives are included as part of this research analysis: iQhiya (Thuli Gamedze), Burning Museum (Justin Davy and Tazneem Wentzel), Avant Car Guard (Michael MacGarry), Raqs Media Collective (Shuddhabrata Sengupta) and Gugulective (Dathini Mzayiya), and I refer to my own work in the collaborative projects *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure*.

Interviews:

1. Burning Museum (Cape Town)
2. Avant Car Guard (Cape Town/Gauteng)
3. iQhiya (Cape Town)
4. Gugulective (Cape Town)
5. Raqs Media Collective (India)
6. Karoo Disclosure & Ubulungiswa Justice (Cape Town/Johannesburg)

Even though the collectives were operational in a particular geographic region at the time of the study, the members are born all over Southern Africa and represent a broad range of backgrounds and geographical representations.

Interview Questions:

1. How did you come to be a collective, and what were the influences that shaped your formation?
2. How do you make decisions in your collective? (artistic and business decisions)
3. How do you manage roles within the collective?
4. How do you manage membership in the collective? Do you have a process in place if a member wants to leave or join?
5. How do you resolve disagreements?

**QUESTION 1:**

***How did you come to be a collective, and what were the influences that shaped your formation?***

Question one looks at the background of the collectives: how their members started working as a collective and how they found themselves working collaboratively. This question stems from the inquiry into why artists feel compelled to work collectively, what conditions or set of circumstances bring about the desire and need to work as a group of artists and what factors are required to make collective practice a desirable and viable artistic practice. I touched on this in chapter one in terms of strategies of authorship, but in these interviews I sought additional factors that may have influenced members to work collectively over and above their desire to 'break into the artworld' or address an issue together that might have been too challenging as an individual artist.

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**Burning Museum, Tazneem Wentzel:** Scott and Grant had an urgency to make work and they were passing through District 6 Museum where I was working, and then Scott knew Jared from Greatmore. I studied with Justin at Stellenbosch many years before, so we had seen each other around but we were not necessarily friends. I was most familiar with Jared and then connected with Scott and Justin at the museum, so we were floating around nearby each other… but I think it was Scott and Grant, they wanted to have a conversation with people who were interested in making work. We were all intrigued by the idea of just creating work, figuring out a way to work together.

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry**: I met Zander Blom through Jan-Henri Booyens and I met Jan-Henri because he lived next door to me in Durban and we studied at Natal Technikon. He was in first year and I was in third year and then we participated in a site-specific project in Nieu Bethesda and we became good friends there. Then I met Zander through Jan-Henri and we sort of hung out as friends for a while, that formalised itself into wanting to articulate a lot of the things we felt were not being articulated within contemporary art making practice at the time. From a conceptual side it was born out of spending a lot of time together. Out of that it just morphed into, if we are going to spend so much time together, we may as well just formalise it in a way that is productive.

**iQhiya, Thuli Gamedze:** I imagine a lot of collectives just end up starting and do not necessarily plan it, some do, but I get the impression that often there is probably a series of events that puts people into a situation where they realise they have to address things together. I suppose what's important with our collective is that we need to acknowledge that we did not set out trying to make a collective. The first thing that we wanted to do was make an exhibition together of all of our individual works, so of course there is some aspects of collectivising there, but we were first not as a collective of black womxn but as individuals who practice art.

**Burning Museum, Dathini Mzayiya:** The first five people were myself, Lenwabo, Kemang, Unathi and Themba Tsosti, we were kind of introduced to each other. I knew Lonwabo and Kemang. Kemang was at AMAC and we used to go to AMAC and offer studio practice where Kemang was one of the students. So after Kemang graduated he visited us at our studio and ideas developed from there. I got to meet Unathi through Kemang and Themba. Then we met others: Khanyi, Zipho, and Athi Joja came in later, he was a Ruth Prowse and then started at Stellenbosch University.

**Raqs Media Collective, Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** Well we have known each other for more than 26 or 27 years. We met, Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula and I, in a media and communications school that we were all studying at for our MA degrees in Delhi. It was called then the Mass Communications Research centre in Jamia Millia Islamia University. This was between 1989 and 1991 that we were studying there, and once we graduated in 1991 we founded the collective in 1992. We built our practice of working together both on a friendship and also on the fact that in a communications and film school you often work in groups and teams. We enjoyed working together very much and in the time that we were not working together we were often seeing things together; seeing films, reading

books, discussing things, talking to each other, learning from each other… from that basis of conversation we began our collective practice.

From these experiences, together with conversations we were having with two friends who were both academic theorists, (One was a new media theorist called Ravi Sundaram and the other was a film historian called Ravi Vasudevan) both located at a research institute called The Centre for Study of Developing Societies.) This led us to work on a proposal for creating a cross-media collaborative practice and research space, which we christened Sarai, named after the tradition of public houses and inns and traveller's way stations that Delhi historically had.

**Ubulungiswa/Justice & Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** All the artists knew each other through either studying or working together and having close friendships. New members were brought into the group because of their skills and their interest in being a part of the project. They usually knew someone involved in the collective through some form of relationship. I initiated *Karoo Disclosure* through my art network after receiving funding from the NAC to produce the project. Most of the artists in *Karoo Disclosure* were selected based on their skills and after the project was completed wanted to be a part of the next collaborative project *Ubulungiswa/Justice* collaboration (besides the musicians), but many new people joined for this project, so it grew from eight to twenty-two members. I initiated *Ubulungiswa/Justice* during a Post Graduate Diploma at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts as part of further research into collaboration. The initial effort to form a collective failed due to not having a conceptual structure or concept from which the members could start working, this was an experiment to see if ramdom people could collectivise without a common cause or knowing each other. After this failure I tried a different approach and put together a conceptual framework from which to work and shortly after this we ended up working with the members of YIP (Young in Prison) through Clinton Osbourn who was a friend of mine and social worker. Clinton was working at the organisation running an art project for previous offenders. The concept around social justice and the fees must fall movement coinciding during this period, made the project appealing to the participants in the programme. None of the existing members of the collaboration or YIP participants knew each other prior to working on this project.

*Ubulungiswa/Justice* members include: Anwar McWhite, Clinton Osbourn, Damien Schumann, Damien Morrison, Deborah Weber, Elgin Rust, Eric Menyo, Gina Waldman, Jolene Cartmill, Kwanele Dyasi, Loyiso Botha, Lazola Sikhutshwa, Luntu Vumazonke, Luvo Mjayezi, Maileshi Setti, Mandisile Keva, Margaret Stone, Michelle Liao, Nikki Froneman, Roxanne Dalton, Vuyolwethu Adams, Vuyokazi Magobiyane, Xolisa Pezisa.
*Karoo Disclosure* members include: Deborah Weber, Damien Schumann, Elgin Rust, Hendrik Dudumashe, Gina Waldman, Jeannette Unite, Margaret Stone, Maxim Starcke, Michelle Liao, Lisa Bauer, Tom Glenn, Peet van Heerden, Paula Kingwill.

From the above interviews it becomes apparent that artists work within their circle of influence and networks, often working with other artists they know or are friends with and with whom they have common interests or concerns, ideas, backgrounds or other basis of friendship from which to start a dialogue. It emerges from the interviews that members of the collectives found themselves working together through a combination of shared concerns, proximity and common experiences and/or education within the arts.

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**Burning Museum, Justin Davy:** Part of why we formed a collective was to gain some power, as together we had more power, bargaining power or whatever power, than we did individually. In the beginning it was about visibility and getting yourself out there and as artists of colour, it's not easy as a black artist, maybe it's becoming easy? I think part of the reason there was an appeal to be together was because in some way we were all trying to be individual artists and in the landscape we were in, in the Cape Town art world, it was not easy, and it is still not easy, especially as artists of colour. I think it made sense then to think of other ways, because I think we were all trying to be solo artists, and collaboration was another option available to us.

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** It was a very conscious thing, we did Avant Car Guard to promote ourselves and it allowed us, like I said, to say things we could not say in our individual capacity. We felt frustrated that there was a lack of humour, there was a lack of reflexivity and a lot of very serious art making with a capital ART and a lot of all the white males making very bad art like Kendell Geers, so it was born out of that. The overarching methodology was one of wanting to undermine a lot of the institutional seriousness and what we thought was a lack of rigour both in contemporary art in both recent historical and in contemporary practice. By rigour I mean a lack of critical thinking and a lack of reflexivity. And then there was this overarching thing called the contemporary gallery system, which sucks as it's a business and has nothing to do with art. They can be selling bathroom taps, honestly. All of it was angry with that, rather than being angry in the context of South Africa that was already very angry and filled with the South African Male as a uniquely unsubtle species. We wanted to bring a very low-level, very accessible, basic, open sense of humour.

**iQhiya, Thuli Gamedze:** We all agree that black womxn and black queer people and black trans people have largely been written out and dismissed and when they are not, they are objectified within the artworld. We all agree about that and we work collaboratively in relation to that or in relation to something that someone proposes to the group. I don't know if you know this story, but this is one of the things that spurred us on the most, because we wanted to show in the Michaelis Gallery, because we are all from Michaelis, obviously. The gallery has never had an exhibition of black womxn. We put in a proposal and it was accepted and then they went quiet and then we saw an open call online for the time slot that they had given us for exhibition proposal. So we had obviously been meeting about this exhibition and the statement we are trying to make and then this happened at Michaelis, which got us talking even more about our experiences. The important thing was the conversation that it spurred and it was around then that we decided that we were going to conceptualise as a network of artists as a support structure for all of this kind of bullshit.

**Gugulective, Dathini Mzayiya:** So the idea of the collective was born out of I guess the interest of self-reliance and self-management and doing our own things and of course from experiences from some of us who were already practicing as artists in the field. Part of it was that we felt too much rejection with so-called professional art spaces, so with that kind of struggle we thought if we came as a group and formed our own thing we can do justice to ourselves… We decided we wanted to be a black-only collective as we felt this was something we wanted to highlight. We wanted to contribute to knowledge production and awareness in the communities we were living in, about the conditions in the communities. So most of the works were themed around what we wanted to inspire in the communities where we functioned, for example us functioning at the shebeen.

**Raqs Media Collective, Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** We were beginning to chafe a little at the limits placed on how we would make things by the format of television and so on and we wanted to expand the definition of what we were doing and we wanted to interact with other forms of practice, knowledge and activity. The practices that we were entering into were not at that time considered to be part of the vocabulary of the fine arts, let's say in India or Delhi. There was an initial scepticism and suspicion about whether or not we were even appropriately aesthetic, whether we were authentic and whether what we were doing was art and whether it would qualify as such. But there was a widespread acceptance of the way in which we were working from people from outside these communities, from people working in social spaces, from people working in the Universities in research. So we never felt isolated because we had our own communities.

It took time and I think Sarai was an important factor in establishing a whole new range of practices, ranging from performance to more personal work with video, to work with archives, to work with all manner of the dissection of social communication-practices technologies, software… for all of these things to get their recognition as artistic practice. I feel we played a part in making that room happen and making that room available to an entirely new generation of practitioners. Today this is unquestioned, today we are recognised as contemporary artists in India and so are many other practitioners younger than us who were able to find themselves in their practice in the kind of milieu Sarai generated. So it is a very different time now to what it was then.

**Ubulungiswa/Justice & Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** We again collectivised around a network of familiarity, a field of arts practice (we were friends or knew each other through a common person), common interest around an issue; in our case we all felt very strongly against fracking

happening in the Karoo region of South Africa and felt impacted by what was happening in the Fees Must Fall movement and mob justice taking place in the townships.

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Burning Museum, iQhiya and Gugulective were compelled by a common sense of collective negative experiences in the artworld. They hold similar views on the kinds of changes they would like to see and common interest in intervening through artistic practice to make these changes happen.

Raqs Media Collective and iQhiya both quite unselfconsciously broke new ground using collective practice as a platform, while Avant Car Guard and Gugulective chose collectivism as a means to articulate identities and express things they could not as individuals. *Karoo Disclosure* and *Ubulungiswa/Justice* members gathered around ideas and issues they felt strongly about and wanted to articulate, emphasise or bring awareness to.

In the case of Burning Museum, Avant Car Guard, iQhiya and Gugulective, all expressed frustration with trying to operate as individual artists in the art industry and collective practice offered alternative models for self-reliance, self-management and self-promotion for young artists trying to operate in a small and insular industry sector. Burning Museum, iQhiya and Gugulective speak to the struggles for artists of colour in the industry and how working in collectives could provide a 'medicine' (Gugulective 2017) for them.

It emerges through the interviews that there needed to be a compelling struggle that the individuals were facing or an issue they felt passionate enough about that was not being addressed and could not be surmounted or addressed individually. The conditions of collective practice seem also to be influenced through common interests and causes with others working in a similar field, which in this case is the cultural field. Finding these two factors at play; commonality of cause and working in a similar field, being sufficient to bring about the conditions for collective practice to occur.

They felt compelled to work collaboratively as a means of collective bargaining; around shared concerns that they were not able to address individually, the desire to change circumstances that created some barrier to access or opportunity, or to address a social issue. Working collectively became a desirable and viable approach to solving some of these concerns due to the ability of a collective voice to articulate difficult or sensitive issues without responsibility falling to one person. We see this strategic approach in all the collectives, whether to address access, race and gender representation, historical traumas, social injustice or address imbalances within institutions or structures. The collective voice provided the most strategic vehicle with which to address these concerns directly, without running the risk of an individual's being isolated or silenced.

During my research practice in 2015 when I was examining the conditions of why and how collaborative work could be made, it became apparent through the experiments and failures to collectivise that a conceptual framework that is shared is needed for the members to feel compelled enough to want to make work together. My failures to co-create a conceptual framework during these experiments could have also been due to the workshop methodologies I used at the time.

**QUESTION 2:**

***How do you make decisions in your collective? (artistic and business decisions)***

This question interrogates the different methods used in collective practice to make decisions around concepts, projects, partnerships, finances and implementation.

Raqs Media Collective (2011) suggest that when artists collaborate their actions are usually seen as instances of trust, as either leaps of faith across the gulf of individual aloofness, or as betrayals of their fidelity to the cult of the solitary genius.

If two or more persons are to author a work or an utterance jointly, additional conditions must be satisfied. Livingston's (2001) view on this topic is that joint authorship (or co-authorship) is an un-coerced cooperative activity requiring shared intentions (as well as compatible sub-intentions) that are the object of mutual belief among those parties making the work.

Gilbert's theory of plural subjects proposes that what is needed in the formation of artistic groups of co-authorship is at its most basic a joint commitment to create a work of art as a body (Livingston 2011: 223). In debates on artistic collaboration, Bacharach and Tollefsen assert that the joint commitment will entail a variety of other individual commitments to act in a way that does not undermine the joint commitment and will involve coordinating individual actions. The joint commitment will determine what each individual needs to do in order to make it the case, as far as possible, that they create the work as if they were a single author. (In Livingston 2011: 223)

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**Burning Museum, Justin Davy:** It's about respecting those differences. The areas where we overlap, that's where we work, but there are also parts where we don't overlap and that's what makes it spicy and interesting, that's what gives the flavour to the work. We've tried for as long as we've been around to make decisions collectively as far as possible, because that's the point of us being together. But in practice it doesn't always work, obviously, sometimes maybe two of us will have enough time and energy to put into making a decision, sometimes it is left to one person. So I guess there is a level of trust that we have to have with each other. Even if we don't necessarily agree with the decision that is made, to go with it and trust that decision. Also I should mention that we started with five members and now we are down to three members, so maybe that helps the decision-making process, because less opinions to deal with.

**Burning Museum, Tazneem Wentzel:** We all have different ideas of what Burning Museum is to each of us individually. Sometimes those would not necessarily mesh with each other, I think that is a strength too, that we don't have the same idea and it brings different elements to the party. I think it has also been a process from when we started, when we were first trying how to figure out how we can work together, because we come from different disciplines and backgrounds so had to get a feel for that and get a feel for each other. When we were five, we would sit in the studio and talk, and at some point in the process of talking about whatever (it could be random) there were moments when we would all settle on – yeah, that's the idea, that's what we are going with. It changed with time, so as people have gone their own ways the process has also changed. Like Justin says now with three people it is easier to make the decision in a way. Whereas before it would have been a much more intensive process, with many disagreements, conflicting ideas and uncomfortabilities.

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** The way Avant Car Guard (ACG) worked form the very beginning was two-thirds majority, so we would come up with endless ideas and if two people liked it, it would pass. If only one person liked it then we did not do the idea. It was a very robust democracy. One of the rare things about a three-person collaboration is that there is always tension. You cannot get a stalemate, there is either consensus or their isn't. In that sense it kept the momentum going and at one stage we were talking about making the circle bigger, but part of the strength of it was the triangle. Everything either gets agreed upon or not very quickly, in that sense ideas were processed quickly. All our shows would be written as a word document as one-liners, similar to what you would find in a single-cell political cartoon. So it was a line that would say, we are going to riff on Berni Searle and we are going to go to the Joburg Zoo and take a photograph of us interviewing a brown seal and we would say Avant Car Guard interviews Bernie Seal and then we would go to the zoo and shoot that.

So in a sense it wasn't terribly complicated to action things, from a decision-making process that was the rule and that was a rule we were all invested in, so it was easy. Basically because we instituted the two-thirds rule from the very beginning. If we had not done that it would have been excruciating.

**iQhiya, Thuli Gamedze:** Our decision-making process is meetings, our group is divided into committees. I am in the writing committee, there is treasury and marketing and there are temporary committees sometimes. For example, if people are doing a lot of admin for a project. Stuff will be delegated, banking and invoicing goes to Treasury. Emails, each person is responsible for responding to emails for a week, we get a week on emails and it runs alphabetically, which is a dodgy system. If you are too busy then you say sorry, you cannot do it. We also have a WhatsApp group.

When we make collaborative work it is always an open call. If anyone has an idea they want to put forward they can do that. We are democratic, every person in the group has to be happy and that can be very complicated. We all agree on an idea and workshop it for a while, it changes a bit. We meet, usually there are people who cannot come. Often there will be at least one person Skyping in, we also have WhatsApp meetings at certain times. We usually try and meet if it is for an artwork and discussing a work, then it is important to meet in person.

**Gugulective, Dathini Mzayiya:** From concepts and ideas around the works, members would contribute ideas they had and never tried, or had difficulty approaching individually. We would have a string of such ideas and we would decide from what was on the table (remembering we were keeping the style of the collective). We had a sense of how we wanted the idea to come out and how we wanted to represent ourselves and that had to be reflected in the work. I would say we had mostly organic processes and we experimented, because we were on the same page about what we wanted to achieve, it could happen at a lunch at one of the members' houses that something could come up. Some decisions would be made by two or three people, who would decide that is where we would stop and tighten up. It was very democratic. Up to the point that we would send two member of the collective, even one, to represent the collective overseas, it got to that point. We trusted each other and the creative impulses. If someone wanted to change something because they were challenged by a set up, then it was fine. We spent a lot of time together, we did go on outings to different places together when there was negative energy (which happens when you work together) for everyone to loosen up.

**Raqs Media Collective, Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** If one of us proposes and idea, the others have the freedom to say no, then along with the 'no' comes the corresponding obligation to suggest something else, so in that sense the no or negation of the idea or proposal is bound up with the possibility of an offering. A couple of things help you negotiate these processes, one is a certain degree of openness to who you are and who you want to be. I must state that in the very beginning of our practice we had a partnership deed, which had an open-ended nature. That flexibility allowed us to undertake the transformations that were occurring naturally without any corrosive-self-doubt. When younger people come to talk to us about the process of forming collectives one caveat or caution or suggestion we offer is to not restrict themselves with a boiler plate of a manifesto. Because then, when you change, inevitably you think, somebody thinks or all of you think, that change itself is a betrayal from the founding principles or original commitments, rather than allowing oneself to go in the direction of the change that the times are asking you to undertake, so that helped us, certainly.

**Ubulungiswa/Justice & Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** In *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure* our agreements around artistic decision-making grew organically and through meetings, workshops, discussions, emails, social media groups and experimentation. In the development of the work there was no one way used to determine how the work would be made or how it would look and it mostly developed out of the groups skills and interests.

In the decision-making around other aspects like finances, copyright and business decisions we drafted a memorandum of understanding which outlined our agreements around these decision-making processes. In the example of *Ubulungiswa/Justice* we agreed in a meeting that we would need nine of the twenty-two members to agree on any decision to proceed with a decision. In the instance of a disagreement or conflict we assigned a group of three people to make a final decision on finances, artistic decisions and business decisions (three different members for each) to make the process more democratic. We agreed that to insure a smoother decision-making and conflict-resolution process, breaking up the decision-making into smaller groups was a more efficient way of

operating. We could make decision and communicate on whats app groups, email or our facebook closed group.

Our agreement includes the below clauses:
Each party agrees to cooperate with the other parties as joint authors of the Work, to share equally in all tasks and responsibilities as may be necessary to complete the Work, and to do what is necessary to secure its exhibition and screening. This could include social media, design, writing, media, exhibition logistics, formatting and promotion.

Artistic Decisions: The parties agree to reasonably consult over the Artistic control of the entire Work and agree not to unreasonably withhold such consent to any decisions or agreements. In the event that the parties cannot mutually agree, the ultimate decision will be made by Artist 1, Artist 2 and Artist 3 or deferred to parties as outlined in clauses 11 (a) and (b)

Business Decisions: The Parties agree that they shall mutually control the exploitation of the intellectual property rights in the Collaborative Work. The parties agree to reasonably consult with each other on such matters, and agree not to unreasonably withhold such consent to any decisions or agreements. In the event that the parties cannot mutually agree, and no majority vote is found. The party liable for the legal fees shall be the party in disagreement with the collaboration. Each party agrees that any important communication affecting the Work by the public, media, galleries, institutions or businesses must be promptly communicated to the other parties.

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Weaving through the dialogue, we see narratives of trust, friendship and family, even reference to marriage. Meetings, discussion and conflict play a major part in all the collective processes, with conflict identified as a positive driver in some instances. Where we see a breakdown in the collective we also see a breakdown in the relationships of members and distance between the members playing a part in the dissolution.

What one can see in the above interviews is the need to have some foundational agreements and structures in place to aid making decisions within the collective – as will be foregrounded later in the interviews around conflict, decision-making is one of the core areas where conflict arises. There is evidence in all the collectives that foundational agreements and some structures help manage this process. In the case of Avant Car Guard it is the two-thirds majority rule, in iQhiya it is committees, for Gugulective and Raqs Media Collective it is the founding document that outlines their collective intent and for *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure* it is a memorandum of understanding.

It also emerges that deciding on the best structure is an organic process that takes place over time and is refined with experience as the collective practice progresses.

Structures for smaller collectives also differ to larger ones, where there is more opinion and complexity to manage. In the three smaller collectives, decision making seems simpler and quicker to resolve due to the establishment of trust and a few core rules from which the collectives operate: in the case of Avant Car Guar the two-thirds majority, in the case of Burning Museum, trust, and in Raqs Media Collective a ‘no’ must be met with a better proposition.

The complexity of managing the larger collectives requires further study, but seems to indicate that more formal structures like breaking into committees and having agreements are necessary to create a common understanding of intention, ideology and decisions affecting operating expectations.

The quality of the relationships between members arose as a key aspect in collective decision-making, to the point of establishing enough trust to enable members to make decisions on behalf of the collective without consultation if needed. Establishing trusting friendships and spending leisure time together came up in all the collectives’ interviews as vitally important aspects of collaboration.

Experimentation and allowing a process of dialogue and disagreement for creative decision-making also emerged as a key aspect of collective practice. Friendship was revealed to be a cornerstone of the group dynamics in these interviews, based on the close and trusting relationships that formed between members and the close dynamics formed during working together.

Democratic decision-making was also foundational to all the collectives, each collective finding ways to be inclusive of other members' opinions. Avant Car Guard, Burning Museum and Raqs Media Collective all thought that having a three-person collective made decision-making easier and that the tension that exists between the three members was sufficient to produce quality work, and that three was a good number of members to share the workload and be productive.

Tazneem Wentzel remarked: 'Now with three people it is easier to make the decision in a way. Whereas before it would have been a much more intensive process, with many disagreements, conflicting ideas and uncomfortabilities.' Michael MacGarry conveyed that 'anything more than five members is a complete disaster, because it takes so much time to get consensus, to talk to everyone, the thing becomes an endless meeting. It does not become a proactive exercise.'

Despite these opinions we can see by Gugulective, iQhiya, *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure* that bigger collectives can work, but possibly need more formal agreements to aid decision-making and more structures in place to manage the decision-making complexity.

**QUESTION 3:**

***How do you manage roles within the collective?***

What we can see emerging is that roles often overlap and can be loosely defined and open to change and transition. A commonality across all the collectives is that decision making around artistic direction and work seems to be the role of all the members in the collective and is democratic in nature; the collective members need to agree on the idea and tone before a work can be made.

All the collectives work in an organic way, responding to the needs of a particular work or project/exhibition as it arises. The process of experimenting and exploring together is an important process in collective practice, be it with the research phase or idea generation or materials and roles. In terms of roles the collectives seem to be happy with overlap and organic working processes, with basic rules of conduct around certain aspects that allow projects to unfold through dialogue, experimentation and discussion. The aim is to work with members' natural abilities and skills and to allow members the freedom to move fluidly between roles as needed.

Another commonality in the collectives was that members contributed their skills and, where these skills complemented each other, provided greater opportunity for production. As I have chosen to research multidisciplinary collectives, the variance of skills is a pre-defined quality of all these collectives. However, even though there are different skills being combined there is still a lot of overlap within the artistic skill sets.

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> **Burning Museum, Justin Davy:** We realised that we have different strengths. Some of us are better at answering emails, for example, or some of us are better at starting a creative process, so we would delegate decisions that way. Like decisions about how to respond to a person who is asking us for something or delegating the workload in terms of creating a new body of work for an upcoming exhibition, would be delegated to whoever was stronger in that specific field.

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** The early works are structured around photographs that are operationalised in quite a binary way. Our relative roles were pretty overlapped. It's one of the appeals of a collective, the shows we did together were the easiest of my life, after working together for four years you work very much as one person. It's very much an organic thing. Assuming that there are not scheming politics behind the scenes the whole time, if you are managing the process and care about it you spend a lot of time making sure your ideas are passed and someone's ideas you don't like are not passed. Also the reason why the two-thirds majority works so well in a three-way engagement is that you can politic quite hard and quite easily. You can gang up easily and be ganged up on easily. The politics is probably the most time consuming and exhausting thing and everything else is quite easy.

**iQhiya, Thuli Gamedze:** We are also discussing reshuffling people's roles to see if we can do it more efficiently, it all blends into one another. Anyone can put forward an idea, there is a lot of stuff within our group that we are quite bad at, I think in terms of admin and delegation, but our strength, I would say is making collaborative work. Everyone has different artistic practices and we have people from all disciplines, so when we make a work together that is what we do best. That seems to work. Slightly off the record… there are a few of us who put a lot more in, in short, so it's difficult. This is probably difficult with all collectives. In the beginning I did not know exactly where things were going and I was not super involved. Some of us do a lot and some people don't do enough – that's how it's working out. There is a bit of variance sometimes, but there are people who are slightly more consistent.

When we actually make a work or do a performance, that often reaffirms everything that we're doing. With *The Commute,* there were all the small things, like what are we wearing, who's dealing with the driver, who is buying KFC (fast food chain), communicating with gallery about budget, invoicing for performance fee, sound equipment, who is doing the write-up for the Facebook event. Usually the different pieces do come from lots of different places, I suppose it's just different depending on what you are doing or making.

For instance, with Documenta we had a curatorial assistant in Kassel and Athens, so communicating on a collective email with a different person every week is just ridiculous… so it depends on the project. It is just a lot of admin and different things to think about at the same time and everyone does contribute in whatever way, it's tricky. We fantasise about having a secretary, about having someone to do the admin, but they would have to be a member. Usually with these projects there is a main person doing the communicating.

**Gugulective, Dathini Mzayiya:** The first idea was to introduce fresh talent, and also allowing them to become the face of the collective. Have experienced artists working with younger artists who had no experience, most of us who could talk would do interviews and we had members who were writers. We had four people in the collective who used to write, and depending on what we needed to be expressed, we consulted with others to articulate how we as the collective wanted to be seen.

Decision-making was the role of the entire collective, also depending on availability of members and who was closer. Most of us were doing different projects in different spaces and some of us were in different countries, so we used to trust that two or three people could make a decision on behalf of the collective.

For instance, if we were to get a show outside the country and we were invited to participate and we could not take the entire collective; the first choice would be the ones who put more work in the piece that we felt strongly about. It was also important that the people who participated the most would also be considered first, that would result in maybe two or three members going, and we would vote on that. Depending on if it was performative or installation it would also influence who would attend. When we would write about one piece we would have different members writing about the piece and we would either choose the strongest or maybe combine the two pieces.

The writers in the collective are still contributing text on behalf of the collective. Some articles are coming out in publications in Europe and USA recently. But in practice people are in recess… (laughs). Unathi was one of the anchors of the collective and a true believer, he had a lot of faith in all of us and in the collective. He was intelligent, at times he played the role of being coordinator of the project we were doing, finding solutions to problems in the collective.

**Raqs Media Collective, Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** Every work begins with the kernel of something. That kernel can be a hunch, a question, a found image, an experience, a conversation, a fragment of something we have read… we bring these kernels to the collective's attention when we meet. We have a studio in Delhi where we meet every day and we are in Delhi five days a week and the kernels are given the attention and irrigation of our triangulated consciousness and they tend to develop in different directions. Some kernels would require us to go to visit a site and spend a long time with the natural surroundings or with some people and have conversations. Some kernels will require us to spend a long time in an archive – some kernels would require us to learn a new mode of making something.

Different kernels will impel moves in different directions and we have to go with what those moves require of us. Some will require collection of facts and data and finding patterns in different forms of reality, some of it will require active stories, some of it will require dreaming up an image. And because there are three of us and all types of very different temperaments. I think the different temperaments morph into what the different processes require of us and then we come to certain common understanding about the tone of the work, which is very important because it is not just the mix of all the facts and fragments of narrative that go into a work, but we need to have an agreement about tone.

And when we have reached that agreement about tone, which is both what we say and what we don't say to each other, then we have a way of dealing with what comes up, we have a way of treating what arises and a lot of shooting and making happens. Then there is finally a process of editing and letting the material fall through a sieve where what is most pertinent remains and what is in excess we put away, sometimes to be used in a separate project or work. That is the broad contour of how our works come to be made.

**Ubulungiswa/Justice and Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** All the artists were offered the opportunity to choose the roles they wanted to take: during the process of creation through to the administration and production management. This did, however, result in artists choosing to work only on the aspects of the projects they enjoyed and leaving the administration and project managements to a few members of the collective who were performing these roles due to a need and their skills. As I was the initiator of the projects, a large part of the administration, agreements, funding and financial management became my responsibility - with support from a few members like Elgin Rust and Clinton Osbourn. It really did not result in an ideal, equal distribution of workload, even though we did address this issue in meetings. Individuals' work lives and other commitments, and sometimes lack of access, meant that only a few individuals would carry the weight of the logistical and administrative load.

The roles are really left open-ended and allow for any member to contribute more or less as they are able to and have capacity for. We also allow members to give their roles to someone else. For example, in our shooting of *Ubulungiswa/Justice* one member fell sick and another member took his place and performed the role in the film.

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It emerged that a benefit of working with other artists with different and complementary skills is that they could produce more work, quicker and possibly better, than they could if they tried the same work as individuals. Having complementary and overlapping but diverse skill sets seems to be a huge advantage in collective practice. Sharing the workload and financial burdens also emerged as a big advantage to artists who would not otherwise have had the means or the capacity to produce the work on their own.

What seem to have been some successful ways of implementing structures to assist with defining roles and decision-making processes are often dependent on the number of members in the collective. The unequal distribution of workload can contribute to resentment and conflict in the collectives. This did not, however, come up as a factor for the dissolution or breakdown of the collective, but rather as an area of operations that was in constant evolution and under discussion, responding to the needs of the work or project.

What was evident is that all the collectives were comfortable with the idea of overlapping roles that were transient and changeable in nature and there was no expectation that certain members had to be defined by certain roles or could not perform others. Within the area of roles, collectivisation gravitated towards a flat hierarchy of roles pronounced only by skills needed for a particular task and capacity for that task at the time. The nature of collective practice roles and functions being interchangeable, organically developed and non-hierarchical makes it difficult to assess by any traditional business, entrepreneurial or project management models.

The bigger the collective the more complicated defining roles and responsibilities seems to be. In iQhiya, *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure* an area of discomfort exists around some members in the collective carrying more administrative burdens than other members. This discomfort seems to be bypassed in a collective of three. In Gugulective it seems that having one person play a coordination role rather than trying to share the administrative function worked better, as did breaking up responsibility and roles into smaller groups of two or three as with iQhiya. From the examples of having a two-thirds majority in a small collective, or structuring smaller working committees and voting in the larger collectives, it appears that breaking up the collective into smaller parts aids in the ease of managing the roles and complexity.

Looking at Avant Car Guard and Raqs Media Collective it is evident that the tension that exists in a trio of artists can be very productive and allow for productivity to increase. Michael MacGarry noted that 'with three of you, you can do a hell of a lot. It's one of the appeals of a collective, the shows we did together were the easiest of my life, after working together for four years you work very much as one person.'

Dathini Mzayiya said, 'most of us were doing different projects in different spaces and some of us were in different countries, so we used to trust that two or three people could make a decision on behalf of the collective.'

None of the collectives structured any formal agreement around roles and there seems to be a common understanding that within the boundaries of collective practice one's role within the collective can be multiple and varied and offer the opportunity to expand and contract as needed and able.

Yet we see in the case of the Gugulective how the death of one of the members stopped all further activities as a group, though this was also coupled with the rise of individual career aspirations.

Three of the collectives have experienced a death of one of their members, including iQhiya and *Ubulungiswa/Justice*, but this has not yet been seen to be a determining factor in the cessation of practice. I think this rests on the role the deceased person played as a member and how critical this role was to the success of the collective output.

We only see evidence of this within Gugulective, where Unathi took on the role of Coordinator. In the example of Raqs Media Collective we see evidence of complementary artistic and administrative skill sets merging with curatorial practice to allow for even greater productivity and much larger projects to be completed, without having to compromise on artistic integrity.

**QUESTION 4:**

***How do you manage membership in the collective? Do you have a process in place if a member wants to leave or join?***

For most of the collectives membership is not contracted and nothing binds the artists' to work together other than a common interest. All the collectives seem to have a similar view to members joining and leaving the collective, in that they base their collective practices on trust, personal relationships and friendships, and it consequently becomes very difficult to replace a member or bring an additional member into the existing relationship dynamic.

Only iQhiya spoke about bringing in new members so that the network could expand, but this has not yet happened. Existing intellectual property and copyright issues would also need to be considered when new members join a collective. It also emerged that collectives were open to members leaving and returning, being quite fluid and empathetic towards their members' needs.

The collectives have respect for each member's individual lives and careers outside of the collectives and make allowances for members' employment and other commitments, presumably in part because the collectives cannot financially sustain their members on a permanent basis.

Some of the collectives have experienced the death of one of their members, and this has affected them in different ways.

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**Burning Museum, Justin Davy:** Your first questions about people leaving, people are free to do what they want, there is nothing keeping them, no contract binding them to Burning Museum. Like Tazneem said, we came together to open up opportunities for us collectively and individually and that's what has happened and there are no grudges. The ongoing conversation would evolve over time and at certain points people have taken a step back and not left completely. For some people it became more permanent and they cannot commit the time and energy needed for the collective and they stepped back permanently.

**Burning Museum, Tazneem Wentzel:** It is totally understandable if at some point you have other things you need to pursue. Even though you are not a part of doing the exhibitions you will always be a part of Burning Museum, you will always be, in my mind, at least. Grant and Scott will always be part of Burning Museum even if they are not members anymore, because they played an important part and we respect their decisions to pursue their own paths, that is also fine, that is also part of what we wanted, it was one of our ideas to open up new avenues for members. We would work with individual members whenever, it's not as if the relationship has changed between us as individuals. It is also difficult as a collective as it takes a lot of time and you need to get some sense of financial security.

***What about bringing in new members?***

**Burning Museum, Justin Davy:** For our specific collective, introducing new people, especially after the first year of being together, was not possible anymore. We formed such a chemistry and also familiarity, knowing each other's strengths and weaknesses and quirks. We became a family; we are still a family. There was one time when Grant tried to introduce somebody, and it was awkward. We have shared so much already, and you can't just put someone new in the space. For us it was quite important to be closed for a certain amount of time and consolidate something together and our trust was with each other and it was hard to include other people.

**Burning Museum, Tazneem Wentzel:** It has been discussed. For me personally it would be a bit harder to operate under the name of Burning Museum, which I will always associate with certain people. There are people that we collaborate with, but they are not necessarily members and there is a certain kind of dynamic between us. In a way you would be trying to fill certain gaps and that would be too hard, better to start something else rather than trying to replace someone. Like we said earlier, when another person made a decision you had complete trust in the decision they were making. We were very open to collaborate with other people and collaborated with a lot of people, but the unit itself that was the boundary, that is very closed. *Future Nostalgia* was a music collective started the

same time as us and had very similar ways of thinking, so it was very easy to work with them and very nice to work with them.

***Did you establish the collective to work on your own individual careers?***

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** It was a very conscious thing. We did Avant Car Guard to promote ourselves and it allowed us, like I said, to say things we could not say in our individual capacity – certainly for me. So in basically collectively dissing artists whose work we did not like or who were directly competing with us we were able to usurp them and supersede them. We might have used humour but it certainly was not a benevolent act. We did not invest a huge amount of time just to occupy our weekend or to create art, it was done on purpose.

***If you were working full time (first two years) how did you manage to do all the installation work required?***

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** Saturday, Sunday and then the evenings towards a show we would work the whole weekend. Tuesday and Wednesday I would work on my own practice and if we had a show I would take leave. It doesn't take up that much time, I do it now and have a full-time job. And with three of you, you can do a hell of a lot.

***So the ending of the collaboration coincided with the rise of individual successes?***

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** Relative successes, our personas with Avant Car Guard were at a disjuncture with personal personas. Zander was with Stevenson, I was with Stevenson, Jan Henri was working increasingly with Blank Projects. It did not fit right. We couldn't dis artists in the Stevenson stable and then see them at openings, it was just weird. And it ended up we had to self-edit. It started off as a childlike kind of punk exercise, and to still be doing that five years later was weird, when if your own work is quite measured and serious and responsible you ended up subverting your own work. If it carried on we would have done that. I wish we had never done that last show at Blank, it was a terrible exhibition and it ended on a down point. It ended on the dumbest of the dumb point, we became one of the shit artists we dissed.

I think there is also, as groups rise above a certain point, there are people who don't do anything more than four, three works really well. Anything more than five is a complete disaster, because it takes so much time to get consensus, talk to everyone, the thing becomes an endless meeting. It does not become a proactive exercise. I don't think Avant Car Guard ever had a meeting! Size is hugely important and the interpersonal politics are everything. I don't think people work well together naturally, people in general. When people get into groups and committees very little happens, there is an assumption that someone else is going to do it, it's almost as if they create a consensus that someone has to lead. A three-person always has a resistance and a tension. Part of the reason collectives don't really work is because of the pragmatics of how they are constructed.

**iQhiya, Thuli Gamedze:** There is a respect for people's individuals careers. There is supposed be an agreement that if I am not able to do emails or I am not able to do anything iQhiya related for the next month, then that's fine. There usually is an even workload, but there are eleven people – it can be frustrating at times. People think that someone is going to do it.

We have always wanted to be a collective that made room for black womxn and so we have not had anyone else on board because we have been coming to terms with how difficult it is to do this work. What we basically agreed on is that we have eleven of us that started this thing, but within ten years we want the collective to continue, but it won't necessarily be us involved, we just want the space to exist. We are discussing the healthiest way for us, the collective, to move forward in relation to what we want as individuals. Also, the fact as we all finish or most of us finish University and go into the world, there will be more black womxn that have to practice.

At the moment it's unclear. People are super busy and overcommitted, but we want it to exist as a space and for it not to be about the eleven of us specifically. So I think that what is probably going to happen is that people who move away, et cetera, they will probably be replaced by someone, with the understanding that it is not the collective falling apart, but carrying on living. It is a discussion right

now so I am reluctant to say. And I think fluid, more of a case of as people want to leave or have ideas of someone they want to invite, we are aware of how random the group is, it was all the black womxn at Michaelis.

**Gugulective, Dathini Mzayiya:** As time went by the number reduced from thirty, I guess some were not that passionate and of course maybe the vision was not clear enough, so we ended up being eight people. That formed then the core known members of the collective, but we still involved other guys, especially in the first show we did.

We decided we wanted to be a black-only collective as we felt this was something we wanted to highlight. Later that reality was challenged by a lot of things in the art scene itself; some people wanted to join, but we could not let that happen. These were things we were always debating. To stick on the idea of the collective, there we were not apologetic about the fact that we wanted this dimension of the collective. Also, functioning mostly in the township, sometimes depending on the hype of things if the majority decide they don't mind participating on a different idea from what the collective committed itself to do. The better terms we were on amongst ourselves, the better we were when participating in something external.

We would not chase someone out of the collective. People left and came back by themselves. You may go and deal with your pain and come back, or members would persuade you to come back. We have had those kinds of situations, we have not really had a situation where we have asked someone to leave.

***A little bit more about your individual lives, you talk about yourself as a writer, the others, do they have separate practices?***

**Raqs Media Collective, Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** They may not be separate, for instance Yubesh is very involved with a worker's newspaper and works a lot on that and Monica is quite involved in working with younger artists as a mentor, so each or these three emphases place us in different trajectories in different directions. We have different personal lives and personal networks, some of which overlap and some do not. Everyone who knows us quickly realised we are very different individuals and that helps a great deal actually.

The other thing that was important for us is we were not working on what would be called projects. We didn't meet only, or work together only, when there were projects at hand. Initially there were few projects and much more fallow time, but we sustained a practice of meeting and being in each other's presence and talking to each other even during the time when there were no projects.

I think this is important as we see a lot of collectives impelled by the idea of the project of the moment or the project that they are undertaking in the future, so that when the project exists they exist and when the project does not exist the collective has no basis. This, again, was not thought through as a conscious strategy, it just happened and this is the habit of being and working together we developed. Retrospectively I can see that it had a function as it was part of the design, but it emerged organically.

**Ubulungiswa/Justice & Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** We agreed that our membership rights and termination on the basic premise that we (the collective) could not remove a member out of the collective. But if a member wanted to leave they needed to follow procedure and be aware that they would forgo their rights to any remuneration that may be acquired in the life of the collective's work, but they would always retain their copyright and rights to be credited as a member. We did have one member leave and it was not a good ending. The member did something that we found questionable and used the collective work without permission from the collective.

Assignment

a) Either Party may assign monies owing to him or her under this Agreement to a third party with notice to the other Parties.

b) A Party must have consent of the other Parties to assign any of his or her rights or roles in the Collaborative Work under this Agreement to a third party. Decision Making rights and roles should go to one of the designated collaborators and not a third party.

Termination. The parties agree to follow the following procedures, if necessary, to terminate this Agreement:

(a) This Agreement shall be valid for the duration of the Collaborative Work.
(b) If any party withdraws from the collaboration before the Work is fully completed and accepted for screening or exhibition, then the rights to benefit from remuneration of any income generated from the work will be terminated. And all original copyright material will be given over to the collaboration.
(c) If any party withdraws from the collaboration once the work is complete, they will be required to return any material pertaining to the project IP and copyright (including image files, sound files, video files, documents or costume installation elements) to the collaboration.
(d) If any party withdraws from the collaboration all rights to exploitation of the copyright and intellectual property and any decision-making rights will be terminated.
(e) If any party withdraws from the collaboration it needs to be in written notice (See clause 21 on Notice).
(f) If any party withdraws from the collaboration, they will remain entitled to authorship credits for any exploitation of the work but will not be entitled to any financial remuneration from revenue generated through exploitation of the work.

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These discussions about membership should be considered in light of the fact that we are looking for the processes and factors that contribute to the success of a collective effort to produce artistic work over a sustained period of time, and also interrogating what the factors are that cause the dissolution or breakdown of the collective. Looking at Avant Car Guard's very productive four years in comparison to Raqs Media's twenty-six years, the glaring difference is the intention by which the collectives formed and the purpose the collective served for its members.

What emerges from these interviews supports my observation in chapter one that the collectives that formed with the intent to 'break into' the artworld, or were formed with the intent to promote individual careers, are the collectives who do not last beyond five years. It does, however, appear that the acknowledgment of the collective as the artist and not having individual career aspirations impacts the length of time the collective will stay together. In the case of Avant Car Guard it is apparent that the intention of using the collective as a vehicle to promote the individual careers of its members became a factor that contributed to the demise of the collective, as the individual artists started to place more importance on their individual careers.

As I suggested in chapter one, once the collective has achieved the objective it was created for, in this case to provide a vehicle for visibility, does it cease to have a purpose and does its lifespan naturally end? In the example of Avant Car Guard, Doing it For Daddy and Gallerie Puta the answer is yes; the collective served the intent for which it was created and has since ceased to produce work collaboratively.

Either the collective has fulfilled its function to provide individual artists significant exposure and is no longer needed, or the individuals' career aspirations become an impediment to collective purpose. This is clearly articulated by Michael MacGarry and further evidenced by the histories of Galerie Puta, Doing it For Daddy, Burning Museum and Gugulective.

***What led up to the end of or leaving the project?***

> **Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** I cannot speak for the others. For me we did the show at Blank in 2013, which was the last solo show we did. It opened in January and the process of making it was complicated in that we did not have a lot of time together. As I had moved to Cape Town and Zander was in Joburg and Jan-Henri was in Pretoria that also threw a serious spanner in our works. So it was a combination of a gradual growing apart, also because I was living in Cape Town and the nature of the project, it stopped being interesting for me. It had fulfilled its purpose and had a very limited life span.

When it first started we thought it would have a very limited life span. It fulfilled a very specific purpose. Collectives like that (and I know from other working relationships I have had) either make it through the five-year thing and last forever, or they don't and they burn out at the four-year/three-year mark. More or less from the beginning we were at the five-year mark for a five-year marriage collectively. It never had that longevity. It is complicated by a number of other things.

I think when you are quite a lot younger your differences are not that important and as you grow older your differences become more obvious as artists, and in the space of five years as an artist you can change enormously. So it stopped being interesting and on an intrapersonal level basically Zander became one of the artists we used to make fun of and Jan-Henri had huge personal issues so it basically blew itself apart – coupled with the fact that I didn't want to be in the same room as them anymore, which makes it impossible. And I kind of still don't.

***So was that just a breakdown of the relationships?***

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** Yah, sort of. And also a structural, conceptual breakdown in that I don't think Zander and I looked at the world the same way anymore, so that made it impossible. And we were self-editing as our individual careers became more and more prominent. We were self-editing and it just became lame, which is why it died and which is perfectly normal given a project like that. Would be kind of weird if we carried on.

**Burning Museum, Justin Davy:** We came together to open up opportunities for us collectively and individually and that's what has happened and there are no grudges. The ongoing conversation would evolve over time and at certain points people have taken a step back and not left completely. For some people it became more permanent and some could not commit the time and energy needed for the collective and they stepped back permanently.

**Gugulective**, **Dathini Mzayiya:** We always were questioning the role of the individual in a collective. Must the self always be forgotten so that you give space to the collective thinking?

**iQhiya, Thuli Gamedze:** In that sense things might have changed, but everyone has always been thinking their own thing. Definitely the collective has gotten some people a lot of recognition. For me the recognition changes people's approaches and how much time they have and what they want from the space. It is just so different with every person. Ego is a huge demobilising factor of the institution.

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Bishop (2006: 179) states that 'artists are increasingly judged by their working process, the degree to which they supply good or bad models of collaboration.. and emphasis is shifted away from the disruptive specificity of a given work and onto a generalised set of moral precepts... This emphasis on process over product (i.e., means over ends) is justified as oppositional to capitalism's predilection for the contrary..'

Macêdo (2004) suggests that 'a superior model of collaborative practice should view the artists' relationship with their collaborators as more important conceptual density or artistic significance and that criticism should be dominated by ethical judgements on working procedure and intentionality. Hagoort (2005) argues that 'we must not shy away from making moral judgments on this art, but must weigh the presentation and representation of an artist's good intentions.'

Given the above discussion regarding artistic intent and the cessation of collective practice I asked Raqs Media Collective what were some of the factors that allowed them to successfully continue to work together over such a long period of time. What we see here is a clear disjuncture of intent and moral precepts set out by the collectives, which in the long run affect their ability to sustain collective practice that requires authorial renunciation as its most basic principle.

***Please talk a little more about the challenges; either failures or successes, of the process of working together, and specifically the things that have enabled you to continue to work together for such a long period of time.***

> **Raqs Media Collective, Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** There are some very foundational things. In our collective there is a clear understanding that the artist is the collective: we individually are not the artist, so we are in some senses agents and sources for the practice. That enables us to work with rather than against conflict which inevitably occurs. In some levity we say we have been having the same disagreements for 25/26 years. That is not a wreck, that is in fact the engine for what the practice is. It is the continuous process of conversation of disagreement that moves the ideas and concepts, images forward, rather than bog it down within a quagmire from which you cannot escape.
>
> But that can happen only if you admit to yourselves that you are not the artist. The artist is what happens, the art and artistic mode of practice are what emerges between the three of us. So many collectives approach the task of being collective as the accumulation of three or four or five artists, we have never thought that way. It is not three artists come together to form a collective. Three people came together to form an artist. That has helped us along quite a bit.
>
> We can also see evidence of this ideology in one of the earliest recorded art history collaborations of Gilbert & George. George explains that 'We don't think we are two artists. We think we are one artist.' Their method of working is based on a simple rule: never discuss. 'We always say yes to each other,' explains George. (Livingston 2011)

**QUESTION 5:**

***How do you resolve disagreements?***

As Shuddhabrata Sengupta says above, conflict is 'endemic and very foundational' and occurs in every collective. There are, however, different approaches to dealing with potential conflict: one way is to institute a rule, as in the case of Avant Car Guard, who had a two-person majority rule; or a voting process as in the example of Gugulective; or the rule in the Raqs Media Collective that every 'no' should be met with an alternative or better idea; or if the conflict is too difficult, to park its resolution for a later date. Both Burning Museum and iQhiya used meetings to resolve conflict through discussion, both in person and remotely.

The interviews show that conflicts can arise around any aspect of the collective practice, but that the major source of conflict is around decision-making and assignation of roles. What also emerges through the transcripts is that the conflict around decision-making is a vital and important part of collective practice in that it can infuse the collective with a disruption sufficient to increase the quality of its work.

The dynamic of conflict in the collective plays a part in insuring that the best work possible is created, as each member is invested in the outcome of the work. Conflict can become a tool for the betterment and transition of artistic work if self-consciously harnessed by the members. The best approach seems to be to set ground rules and tenets that one can apply to any circumstance as it arises.

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> **Burning Museum, Tazneem Wentzel:** Of course we have had disagreements. I think our process is when there is a disagreement the easier way to solve it is to bring everybody together and talk about what the disagreement is about. A lot of the times it has nothing to do with you, maybe someone is going through a personal matter. Maybe to talk about whatever is bothering them, that was our approach, to have a meeting and to talk about what is the issue.

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** There must have been an awful lot. A lot of our work was focused on undermining established artists or artists who were seen as competition in our age group, or our contemporaries, and sometimes there would be an issue when we would come up with a realty good joke and one of us was either friends with the person or aligned with the person through a gallery. There would be an argument about some kind of neutrality, we have to diss everyone or it's not going to work. So even though there was an internal two-third majority, when it came to subject matter everything had to be available. There could not be any sacred cows, there could not be any kid gloves with anyone. And there were a lot of arguments over that.

**iQhiya, Thuli Gamedze:** It's really difficult. Everyone is opinionated, I suppose. There is a lot of conflict, there are also more quieter personalities. We were discussing this in Kassel a bit, that we need to open up our internal languages of communicating, because people who have a confrontational style end up being the ones who voice their frustrations, and those whose style of communicating is quieter and demand gentle approaches and not reactionary dialogue often get lost.

There are always many disagreements and people are very fiery. I do not like getting involved in stuff personally unless I feel strongly that someone is being unfair. Like I said earlier there are people with more confrontational approaches. I like peace and do not like fighting about things and I would rather have a conversation, but there are personalities within the group that clash quite a lot and we have been discussing now in Kassel that we need to make sure that everyone is heard and not just those who are forthcoming about things. When that style of disagreements happens certain people never say what they feel. There are lots of disagreements and we will often have a meeting to discuss it. There are also things that come up in the WhatsApp group and people get upset and go and discuss it among themselves and come back. People fight about anything, people have very different styles.

I got really angry recently around a document for a conference that was not done properly, because they were criticising me that we were late but it was the other person's fault. So things like feeling like they are not getting enough support and working hard can cause disagreements. It's really hard and tough and I think disagreements and fights would probably be the things that would break us up if that ever happens. We are aware that basically what we need is just time to hang out and discuss things we want to do. And not work, not always just producing would really help the dynamic. We don't have time at the moment.

We had a conflict resolution meeting where we all had to talk about one another and what we felt people should work on, how we could be constituted better. It ended up being very helpful. I thought it was very intense. I don't think it was the best way, but that is what happened. From there I felt a bit surer of myself in the space. We weren't all friends with another because of course we just wanted to make an exhibition together. Then once we were in a collective together there were a lot of things we would discuss about interpersonal relationships and work structures.

**Gugulective, Dathini Mzayiya:** Meetings were a part, especially when there was a query of disagreement between collective members, we would go through a voting process. It is a very hard one and usually meetings could become very long. There is always a challenge in reaching a point where everyone agrees and this can usually drag and become intense. Sometime we would take a break on it and rethink and come back via emails, phone calls, SMS and so on.

There were always feelings (not being heard, consulted or acknowledged), there was always that kind of feeling in a collective. It is also a learning process. Learning to work together, we did not really nail it. We get along as friends and also we got along in the process of collective work. Sometimes we don't get along and piss each other off due to not being consulted. We had a way of resolving it.

We always were questioning the role of the individual in a collective: must the self always be forgotten so that you give space to the collective thinking? Leading the projects in an intense debate over the production of an artwork, these are fights. Some people would not come back after meetings. Key members would then need to intervene, talk and bring peace so that we could work again.

Maybe we get an invite, for example, or discussion to be part of a show – 'what is the idea of the collective' is always scrutinised so that it informs us. Why we should or should not be part of it. So of course the founding documents, which speaks strongly about why the collective, later will always be

challenged and there will be compromises because it may mean we do not participate in projects or get the attention we want. So conflicts about participating in a project or exhibition would be really mostly affected by the idea of the collective.

We would have members that would be naturally interested and willing to compromise a little bit. So we had conflicts around us not keeping to the founding document. We would resolve it by participating in an interesting way so that we would not be neglecting the ideas in the founding document: why the collective, and how we would like to be. Those kind of conflicts, we really brushed them off in a way, because we did not want to lose each other, because we believed we had bigger plans and big ideas.

Our collective did not really have formal funding so we were financing most of our projects. Conflicts around those kinds of things came up. Who was putting in what and we always had to find a way, either sometimes by participating in a show to get money to finance us, which made sense, but we still wanted to come out bold and original without sacrificing. Some other conflicts were natural, that we would disagree about most things. With debating it would depend on whether you could take the debate or not everyone had to contribute or support.

**Raqs Media Collective, Shuddhabrata Sengupta**: The central idea, disagreements are endemic and very foundational. Sometimes there are no disagreements because of the habit of working together and spending time with each other we do often spontaneously agree on things. But when we don't agree, the disagreement itself becomes the mode in which new ground can be reached. It is important to understand that and important to have personalities that are strong enough to weather refusal and criticism, knowing that the refusal and criticism comes not because someone wants to put you down, but because they care for the work that we are doing together. That is the basic principle.

Sometimes deferral post-moment is a very good strategy, that if something is very very difficult then we will not take an immediate decision. We will put it on hold and let it do its own work, and coming back to a proposition after a couple of months, maybe a couple of years, does help. This has also got to do with the idea that now we have a collective future and history. When you have 25 years behind you, you are not so scared of letting things occasionally be undecided for a few months, or even a year.

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Considering the overview of the kinds of conflicts that arise, from artistic or business decisions to individual functions and roles and any other aspect of working with others to realise an artistic work. It is evident that no collective is immune from conflict, and that conflict can play an important role within the function of collective practice.

Raqs Media Collective, who leverage conflict for the betterment of the collective cause have identified that conflict is a central and important component of the dialectic relationship between people and have identified a way to harness the potential latent in the conflict to benefit the collective. The rule dictates that one must provide an alternative and/or better proposition with any veto or 'no'.

It is also apparent that internal conflict between members, if not resolved, can impede the collective's ability to function, particularly in smaller memberships, where a quarrel between two members can trigger the end of all constructive engagement, as in Avant Car Guard. The bigger the collective the less risk of individuals impacting the ability of the collective to persevere over a longer trajectory of time. Both Raqs and Gugulective use the deferral post-moment strategy to deal with conflict that cannot be resolved with an immediate decision.

We see also in iQhiya that conflict is a very common part of their interaction and is a great cause of concern for their longevity. However, the members seem to be self-reflective enough to identify when conflict is becoming an impediment. They are willing to try new ways of approaching their grievances, as evidenced by conflict meetings and discussions around aspects of communication that are not working in the collective, as certain voices are not given the opportunity to be heard.

# CHAPTER 4

## SUSTAINABILITY: AGREEMENTS, COPYRIGHT AND FINANCES

This chapter looks into the sustainability of collectives: the structures, agreements and management of their intellectual property, copyright and finances. This chapter includes interviews with the same collectives as in chapter three as well as dialogues with a member from each collective.

To provide a brief overview of copyright and intellectual property law in South Africa I have cited two law firms that specialise in the creative arts field of law to provide a general overview:

(Vonseidels 2019) state that :

> Copyright is the right given to the author or proprietor of a copyright work not to have that work reproduced without authorisation. Copyright is property and may be sold, assigned or licensed for use by others. For copyright to vest in a work, the work must be the product of original skill and effort and must be reduced to a material form. Copyright cannot, therefore, exist in an idea that has not been reduced to material form. The owner of the copyright in a work is generally the creator or author of the work. Important exceptions to this general rule include: A person who commissions the taking of a photograph, the painting or drawing of a portrait, the making of a cinematograph film or sound recording, and who pays for it in money or money's worth, is – subject to certain provisions, the owner of the copyright subsisting in that work. For films or photographs which are not published within 50 years of the year in which they were made, the term of copyright is 50 years from the end of the year in which they were made. Where a work is made by a person in the course of his employment under a contract of service or apprenticeship, the employer will be the owner of the copyright subsisting in that work. Copyright in works made under the direction or control of the State or certain prescribed international organisations will vest in the State or in that international organisation.

Smit & Van Wyk Incorporated (2019) write that:

> Intellectual property law in South Africa refers to all legislation concerning patents, designs, trademarks and copyright protection. It is meant to protect the intellectual property of legal entities, as intellectual property can also carry significant value and is thus vulnerable for exploitation by outside parties. With the exception of copyright, intellectual property law in South Africa require for this property to be registered in order to qualify for protection. The Copyright Act No 98 of 1978 provides that the following works, if they are original, are eligible for copyright: literary works, musical works, artistic works, cinematograph films, sound recordings, broadcasts, programme-carrying signals, published editions and computer programs. In general, any original work made by a qualified person is eligible for copyright protection. Originality refers to the fact that the author must have created the work through the application of the author's own creativity and labour. A qualified person refers to any national or resident of South Africa or a Berne Convention country.

This chapter also touches on the success or failure of these collectives over time, considering questions such as why do the collectives dissipate? What are the implications of the death or cessation of the collective? And what becomes of the afterlife of the work and authorship?

Through this chapter I interrogate the different working practices of each collective in an attempt to provide guidance, methodologies and frameworks for collective practice, seeking similarities and differences to identify what might make a collective sustainable .

Interview Questions:

7. Do you have an agreement(s) in place, and if not, how do you manage your copyright & IP?
8. How do you manage your copyright and intellectual property?
9. How do you distribute and manage your finances?

**QUESTION 6:**

***Do you have an agreement(s) in place, and if not how do you manage your copyright and IP?***

There is no clear consensus as to what the best option is with regards to agreements and managing copyright and intellectual property. What has arisen from the collective responses is that the area that needs the most consideration is the practice of shared authorship.

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**Burning Museum, Tazneem Wentzel:** No, we never had a formal, typed-out, black-and-white constitution with a code of conduct and this is your role, et cetera.

**Justin Davy:** We were not formal to the degree that we had a constitution or rules written down, but I think we did try and create certain precedents for ourselves in a way, as we progressed. So, we would take notes, take minutes of our meetings and share them and reflect. So, there was a reflection process from which I think we learnt about ourselves. So, there were not necessarily rules, but there were lessons that we learned that we would stick by to some degree, so we won't work with this type of person again, or if someone asks us for an exhibition, these are the things we need to put in place first, or this is our artist fee, et cetera.

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** It has never really come up. I certainly walked away from the project and I think the other two have as well – basically to the detriment of our friendship, for a number of different reasons. So all the works and sculptures we made are still at Blank Projects, as none of us are invested enough to do anything about it. It's never been an issue. From a market point of view our sales died the moment we stopped doing stuff, so that was not really an issue either. So not really, no agreement.

**iQhiya, Thuli Gamedze**: With us, because we started out as a network there has never been a necessity to create a collective manifesto.

**Gugulective, Dathini Mzayiya:** We had verbal agreements – it was informal. There was formality when we were interacting with other spaces, amongst us it was more not to restrict the flow, we did not really formalise.

**Raqs Media Collective, Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** In the very beginning of our practice we had a partnership deed, which had an open-ended nature. We did not have a manifesto. We did not define ourselves by saying this is who we are, these are our goals, and this is what our ethical commitments are. We have looked at the partnership deed from time to time and it is useful because it is worded

very carefully in terms of letting the content develop and change. There has always been a baseline agreement that all the writing, all the artistic works that we do within the sphere of contemporary art more or less has a common authorship – the author is the Raqs Media Collective.

**Ubulungiswa/Justice and Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** With *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure*, differently to all the other collectives we drafted a legal contract to outline some of the shared copyright, ownership, revenue and decision-making processes. We did initially consult with legal art copyright specialist Toby Orford but, not being able to afford legal fees, we ended up using a template document found online for free and adapting it for our needs. The contract ended up being more of an agreement than a legal contract. Each member of the collective had the opportunity to comment on and either agree with or change the agreement. As the two projects were not functioning as one entity producing work on a continuous basis, the contract only bound us to the nature of the work we made together.

The terms of this agreement set out the copyright and intellectual property rights of all the participating artists who collaborated to produce the work of Ubulungiswa/Justice.

Copyright, Trademarks and Other Proprietary Rights.
(a) The parties agree that upon completion of each party's contribution, such contributions shall be merged into a joint work with a jointly owned copyright.
(b) It is further agreed that trademarks, rights in characters, titles, and similar ongoing rights (collectively referred to as 'Proprietary Rights') shall be owned jointly and equally by all parties.
(c) Proprietary Rights extend to all footage, raw and edited, photographic images and sound recorded during the production, post-production and exhibition of Ubulungiswa/Justice collaboration.

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Overall, it became apparent that the collectives generally did not feel a necessity to formalise their agreements. Most of the collectives were happy to operate with each other under the premise that they agreed on what they were trying to achieve together; be this through a manifesto, founding document or partnership agreement that outlined the basic ideological framework under which they agreed to work.

The only evidence of an agreement put in place is by *Karoo Disclosure* and *Ubulungiswa/Justice* Collaboration. This may have been because these collectives had a large membership and were project based, meaning the project had more specificity in terms of outcomes, roles and time frames. Some of the collectives chose not to have any formal agreements in place at all, not for purposes of collective practice or for managing the copyright or intellectual property of the work.

With Gugulective, the founding documents became the actual source of most of the conflict; compared to Raqs Media Collective, who found that the open-ended nature of their agreement allowed them flexibility to grow and change as contexts required. This may simply be an ideological difference between the two collectives and does not take into consideration the difference in the number of members.

The most important tenets of collective practice seem to be the foundational premise that all artistic works produced by the collectives have a common and shared authorship, and an agreement that shared authorship means functioning under an umbrella entity that takes primary position as the artistic identity.

Livingston (2011) suggests that if two or more persons author a work or an utterance jointly, additional conditions must be satisfied. Joint authorship (or co-authorship) is an uncoerced cooperative activity that requires shared intentions (as well as compatible sub intentions) that are the object of mutual belief among those parties making the work.

**Question 7:**

***How do you manage your copyright and intellectual property?***

Managing the copyright and intellectual property of a work under shared authorship is an interesting and complex aspect of authoring artwork as a collective. The areas of greatest risk around copyright and intellectual property seem to arise from images and representation, by which is meant the documentation of artwork and the ownership of the photographic representation of the work. The shared copyright of the work itself did not arise as an area of concern for any of the collectives.

iQhiya had a legal agreement drawn up for the photographers documenting their work, which they said was necessary after an incident with a photographer claiming ownership of the images. Burning Museum ran into copyright infringement issues with their use of archival images and encountered further complexity with the crediting of their work in public space.

*Ubulungiswa/Justice* encountered conflict around the use of their on-shoot images without agreement. Gugulective's greatest concern was around members talking on behalf of the collective in international forums without consent. None of the collectives seemed to have any issues around written content or misappropriation of actual artworks.

A considerable amount of work produced by the collectives is performative and ephemeral, and the afterlife of the work lives in the photographic or video record. Legal copyright of images in South Africa requires the photographer or videographer to agree to sign over the rights to the images in order for the collective to own the rights to their own work.

Both Avant Car Guard and Gugulective have consigned work to a gallery. Even though they are no longer producing work together, Gugulective is still selling prints and Avant Car Guard is still getting requests to show work. Members of both collectives are still actively engaging in interviews about the collectives without requesting permission or having processes in place for this between members.

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> **Tazneem Wentzel:** A lot of our work is based on archival images and we ran into issues with the District Six Museum and luckily raised criticism and dialogue with the museum and are in contact with them. In terms of the work that we do, our work is photocopies and it goes onto the street. I think that is also one of the questions of the work, is that you put out this work in the public on the street, so it does not belong to you, it does not belong to the archive anymore. It can be used in a photograph, which we have had before, people doing photoshoots in front one of the works, for example. It's a tricky area, because, I mean, at least a reference to where it comes from, but also people started to associate the aesthetic with Burning Museum. So, it's like meme culture, it doesn't really belong to you. But it can be replicated through images taken in front of it or distributed in that way.

***Are you ever asked to give images of your work in situ?***

> **Tazneem Wentzel:** We have used it in presentations, but not as an artwork, no. You can't buy it so, if we put a piece in a gallery it is stuck directly on the wall. The only way you are going to get the work off the wall is to destroy it.
>
> **Justin Davy:** There was the cover-version show, when we had tangible pieces of art, recycled board and the photocopies, so there was one instance. But 99% of our work, you cannot see it in physical form anymore.

***Was that a very self-conscious decision? As an artistic strategy you made early on, that you wanted to work in this ephemeral way.***

**Justin Davy:** I think that was a deliberate choice, but like Tazneem said it was also forced upon us because of economics and the cheapest thing to do. But that being said I think we made it our own, we ran with it and we owned the work for what it was. And we owned our decisions and the repercussions of the decisions that we would not have something physical to keep on.

**Michael MacGarry:** We spoke briefly about setting up a Pty Ltd because we made a number of works we were worried about getting sued about and we did have a lawyer for a while. There were two works we did not end up making because they were potentially quite damaging from a legal point of view. I think we were a bit overly serious about how serious the artworld actually is, that said, some of the works we made might have elevated us as Avant Car Guard, but damaged us as individuals potentially.

***Managing your legacy, do you have any agreements or discussion, or did you just cut ties?***

**Michael MacGarry:** I cut ties completely. I have not spoken to Zander for three years and like I said, Jan-Henri has been dealing with personal stuff, which makes him difficult to deal with. It still exists because it ACG existed and marks a very particular time and place in history and there are several collectors who invested heavily in us. Understanding the temporal nature of the thing is more interesting to me, as it marks a specific moment in time. It does not exist anymore. There was a request by Standard Bank last year, where they asked to show our work, and I said yes and I hope the others don't mind, and I didn't ask them. When you put things into the digital realm that digital tattoo lasts forever. It's the worst as an artist, as stupid shit you said five years ago is still there. I don't think any of us really care.

**IQhiya, Thuli Gamedze**: With copyright and photography we definitely had to learn about that. We have a form for our photographers if we ask someone to photograph a performance. Often we get someone's partner to take photos for us and he allows us to have the images. Then in other cases we pay photographers and we want to own the image and we will credit the photographer, but the image is owned by us. Buhle has a lawyer who is her uncle and he helped us make a contract for that.

**Gugulective, Dathini Mzayiya:** We had different members responsible for writing, documenting and communicating with media. Responsibilities were also passed on if one person was not available and we also had sight of what was being published. But some people were dodging and would publish things that were not agreed upon. It is a habit that is there. We had people going to speak at conferences overseas speaking about the collective without consulting, things like that.

**Raqs Media Collective, Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** We each have individual lives and practices which are outside contemporary art, there we do stake claims of authorship. I might have a practice as a writer and commentator, whereas my role as that person is recognised. But when we work within contemporary art it is not me, Shuddah, speaking, it is the Raqs Media Collective. So even if I am giving you this interview it is based on a common understanding. So, it's not me speaking as such, it is Raqs speaking through me.

**Ubulungiswa/Justice and Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** We did have an issue with one of the members exhibiting images from a work, for sale, on an exhibition without notifying any of the collective members. When this came to light it caused a great deal of conflict in the group and the member consequently decided to leave the collective and give up any future rights to remuneration from the project revenue. In our agreement we stipulated that a member could leave the collective and still maintain copyright for perpetuity, but not rights to decision-making and revenue.

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The majority of the collectives seemed happy to manage copyright and intellectual property of the artwork and projects in a haphazard way or on a case-by-case basis, having little by way of formal processes in place. The management of copyright and intellectual property did not arise as an area

for potential conflict that could not be amicable resolved within the group. Shared authorship and shared rights to intellectual property and copyright appeared to have been a foundational understanding in the development of collective practice.

The main area of learning comes in the use of, management of and rights to the images produced by the collective. We see this becoming a serious impediment to *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and also mentioned by iQhiya in needing legal contract drawn up for photographers that document the work. Given that the majority of collectives choose to work in installation, performance, video and other ephemeral practices, the documentation of these moments become the afterlife of the work and therefore the primary copyright needs to be owned by the collective and not the photographer who took the image.

In order to sustain the collective intent it appears that a financial model that is socialised and shared is the most common and effective structure. With sharing authorship comes the sharing of the management of the copyright and intellectual property of the collectives' archive of images, which in most cases is where the afterlife of the collective work exists. In the interview data it showed that the collectives longevity was impacted by the ability of its members to be able to sufficiently sustain themselves financially from funds outside of the collectives' revenue streams and still participate meaningfully in collaborative projects.

**QUESTION 8:**

***How do you distribute and manage your finances?***

All the collectives used a shared revenue model. Even after the collectives ceased to function as an active entity there appeared to be no disagreements about how to allocate, distribute or share revenue.

This indicates that the shared revenue model is robust enough to function in the commercial and non-commercial art sectors. For managing revenue with non-active collectives, it did not seem to be a source of conflict for Gugulective, Avant Car Guard or Burning Museum. This suggests that if an artist's engagement in a collective dwindles that they become an inactive member, their expectations of receiving revenue reduce accordingly.

I have no evidence other than, possibly, the Guerilla Girls' conflict to argue against this conclusion. None of the three collectives mentioned made a substantial amount of money, so when conflict does arise as in the case of the Guerilla Girls, it may be due to higher stakes of larger income generation and/or reputation gain.

As in any relationship, business or otherwise, sharing resources, responsibilities and remuneration comes with both risk and reward. The aspect of the collective that enable artists to overcome issues in these areas is the degree of trust and communication in the working relationship. As Raqs stated, 'I am sure it can work based on a robust degree of trust and reciprocity and caring for each other's needs.' I think this is also impacted by the intention of the collective and what they set out to achieve through their collective practice.

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> **Burning Museum, Justin Davy:** In many ways we were subversive without even trying. Subverting the solo artist model, because they could not even sell our work afterwards, so they really had to invest in us as individuals. So, things like artist fee for five people, how do you work that out? We started getting invitations to go overseas to Europe, visa costs, all of the travel costs, accommodation.

We learned some lessons along the way and then put our foot down and said, this is what we need and then it is still not met properly. It is always a problem, and that's the way that we work.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** As artists working without big budgets your decisions are also based on function. For us it was more functional to be operating in the cheapest medium possible because we were investing in the artworks ourselves. We would split the costs of printing, et cetera, making glue, and that's why we just stuck with that medium, because it worked for us and it represented exactly what we wanted to be doing as Burning Museum. A museum with no archive, it has no structure. What actually is it in the end?

**Justin Davy:** Looking back at it, if we wanted to make money it is not the right way to go. Definitely in the beginning we were trying to rebel and not make work that is easily commodifiable. You cannot even buy this work, but it is not about buying the work.

At the moment we have taken a bit of a break. All of us are trying to find financial sustainability. It is difficult with a collective. We had a studio for three years so most of our income, artist fees and production fees, is divided, and a lot of the time is going straight to rent, so a lot of the time you are not earning an income and you need other alternatives. This is always going to be our challenge, as we make work that is not easily framed and sold. The option is to look for funding, and it is not always the option we want to follow, as there are conditions with funding. We are on hiatus at the moment. We had an intense four years and now we are reflecting on the lessons we have been talking about and letting things sink in.

**Tasneem Wentzel:** Things were happening very quickly. We put up work and from then on in a month or two, things were happening. It was very intense.

**Justin Davy:** I don't think it is coincidence that we are taking a break, and we need to take a break from the collective and working at that pace. It is what is needed now in order to recharge our batteries, in order to start again in the future. I think the research that you are doing is great, but it needs to be more tangible info about sustaining art practice. It is a big question in South Africa. I see a lot of artists getting taken advantage of and getting exploited. We have had our problems and I am sure iQhiya has had their problems in dealing with the art world. I think we need something more; a lot of people are saying the same thing.

**Avant Car Guard, Michael MacGarry:** From a business side it was a little more complicated because I was the only person with a full-time job. In the beginning we didn't make any money and about a third of the way through we started making money. We sold an awful lot at the 2010 or 2011 Joburg Art Fair and then after that we were represented at What If The World in a more serious way and the shows started making money. It became easier and flying to Cape Town was not such an issue and we bought a camera and that kind of thing. It was difficult for about a year and then it got easier.

It certainly was not massive income and was probably the hardest money anyone had ever made. It was excruciating. Within a year it did not cost us any money and within a year and a half it was making money. It was not a lot of money, about 50K a year each, something like that. And then we ploughed that back into making new books and new paintings. And if that had not happened very early on I don't think we would have lasted two years, because that becomes a real pain. There is also a sense of; we all work within the commercial gallery system. I don't think there is any other system in South Africa, which is a major problem as there aren't any real museums. Basically anybody young and coming out of Wits or Michaelis unfortunately has to deal with Goodman or Stevenson, or not, as the case may be or, increasingly have to deal with Zeitz MOCAA. Good luck to them. In that sense we were already primed to work in that way, so it was not too strange that we made money.

### *Was most of the revenue through sales of artworks?*

**Michael MacGarry:** Yes, through sales of artworks: paintings, sculptures, editioned photographs… so everything was for sale. 80% of the sale was through the gallery, so What If The World, and then after we left What If The World through Blank, and very occasionally we would sell work directly.

**iQhiya, Thuli Gamedze:** We have a collective bank account where everything goes. When we need stuff for a collective work then we use that money. I think we are slowly getting better and knowing what is going to work and what is not. We are doing a project later in the year which we agreed to do and no one wants to do anymore. We are slowly becoming a bit more strategic and not saying yes too quickly, and we want to be responsible in making the most of our project. So there is an inherited not being sure of ourselves, but we are slowly needing to acknowledge that we do have something to offer.

One person has the bank card and there are two names in the signing of it, and we always talk about the future when we will have money. No one gets paid from the collective or gets money and money gets used for the projects or reimbursement.

**Gugulective, Dathini Mzayiya:** We had a formal bank account. When we opened the account the idea is that we all chipped in money, for some us we could sell paintings and donate. We also had a house for our meetings. Two members were staying there but that is where we held our meetings and it was our base. It ended up being in a situation that the ones who were staying in the place ended up paying, but we took it as a way of donating so we had a space. We were living right next door to Mlami Place in Gugulethu.

When there was enough money we paid artist's fees, but the kind of work we were doing was not really money generating, until later when we did the show with Goodman Gallery and we did the prints (*Debt Don't Rot*). There we had editioned prints and today there are still people buying that work. What ended up happening was this money went to compensating the members who donated more, also relief for others that they are able to work.

**Raqs Media Collective, Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** We had certain basic arrangements. Whatever was earned was placed in a common kitty and we would take from it deciding collectively what the needs were. We were three so I am not sure if this can be sustained if there is a very large group of people. Four or five close-knit friends, I am sure it can work based on a robust degree of trust and reciprocity and caring for each other's needs.

**Ubulungiswa/Justice and Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** *Ubulungiswa/Justice* has its own bank account with three signatories. Monies had been earned and saved for future exhibitions and artists were remunerated based on a shared revenue model. *Ubulungiswa/Justice* received sponsorship support and in-kind support from various sources to produce the project, including sponsorship of video equipment, photographic printing and printing of catalogues. The photographic prints were for sale at the Michealis School of Fine Arts Graduate exhibitions. Over R40 000 in revenue was made from sales of the prints. After a percentage of the income was taken by the art school, the remaining revenue was used to show the exhibition at the AVA and pay venue fees to the gallery. Given the number of artists involved in this project, shared revenue was very little. A few of the artists from the YIP projects received a small cash pay-out from this revenue.

*Karoo Disclosure* applied to the NAC for project funding to produce the work and received a R25 000 grant. The exhibition of the work at the Iziko National History Museum was supported by the museum, with additional support grant funding from the Nedbank Arts and Culture Trust. The work was not for sale on this exhibition. We received sponsorship of video equipment and printing for the project. The small amounts of funding allowed the project to produce and exhibit the work but did not provide any income or compensation for the artists, who had to install the work, provide educational workshops and walkabouts, as well as put together a conference on the topic of fracking for the exhibition opening. None of this time was compensated by the institution and funding grants did not allow for compensation for artists fees. The funding grants were administratively onerous to acquire, manage, and required considerable reporting.

The exhibition of the project at Oliewenhuis Museum was supported by the museum with travel and accommodation funded for four of the collaborators to travel to Bloemfontein to install the work and provide sound workshops. Again, no funding was allocated for artists' fees. We did apply for Nedbank Arts and Culture funding but our application was unsuccessful. Despite the publicity the show received and the audience numbers that saw the exhibition, no work was sold.

The project has not earned any revenue for the artists yet and still owes some of the artists funds.

*Karoo Disclosure* has been managed in a much more haphazard way than *Ubulungiswa/Justice*, possibly because there are fewer people involved and less possibility of any issues arising around finances due to the project not being a commercially driven work. Issues that have arisen have been to additional collaborators joining the project and wanting to allocate funds to one member and not the collective.

Our agreement clauses on finances stipulate:
Division of Income and Expenses. Income and expenses generated by or on behalf of the Work shall be divided as follows: (a) *Division of Expenses*. Net Income (Profit), defined as gross income as reduced by project expenses and amounts owing, shall be divided equally between the parties and paid directly to each party by Artist 1 with assistance from Artist 2 and Artist 3 (or deferred to parties as outlined in clause 11(a) and (b). If either party receives income payable to the other party, the receiving party shall make immediate payment to the other party of such amounts as due.

(b) *Division of Expenses*. Each party shall provide written proof of expenses and maintain a proper accounting of such expenses and corresponding payments. Any project expenses will need written approval by Artist 1 with assistance from Artist 2 and Artist 3. Expenses will be reimbursed from the project income as defined in 6(a) and on available project income available at the time of claim.

Assignment
Either Party may assign monies owing to him or her under this Agreement to a third party with notice to the other Parties.

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All the collectives used a shared revenue model. Even after the collectives ceased to function as an active entity there seemed to be no disagreements about how to allocate, distribute or share revenue. None of the collectives entered into collaborative practice with the intention of making money and all seemed satisfied that their financial priority was to invest revenue back into the production of work or shared studio expenses. This does seem to suggest that the shared revenue model is robust enough to sustain collective practice.

Most of the revenue earned by the collectives through sales and artist's fees was invested back into the collective, either to make new work, pay studio rent or in some other form. Even Raqs Media Collective indicated they did individual work outside the collectives and sometimes worked together on commercial projects that were not Raqs related. Income mentioned by the collectives included sales and artist's fees, and Raqs Media Collective and *Karoo Disclosure* made use of a funding model. The majority of the members indicated having to find income sources outside of the collective.

I have not included members' age as a factor for financial sustainability, we can see in Avant Car Guard, Burning Museum, Gugulective and iQhiya that they were started when the individual artists were students, or shortly after graduating from an art institution. They would have been in their twenties and possibly without the burden of great financial responsibility. The longevity of the collectives that started out with younger students seems to be influenced by factors that include needing to pursue individual careers and individual needs growing apart.

*Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure* are comprised of members of different ages and backgrounds, most of whom had individual careers outside of the collective prior to becoming a member. Not being financially dependent on the collective for income meant that the collective needed to accommodate individuals' other commitments, and because of the large membership base could still draw on enough shared resources to continue to produce work together. Members were not able to give equally at all times and their availability and involvement differed according to their outside commitments. As collective projects were established and developed around varying commitments and availability they were able to sustain momentum over a few year from inception, *Karoo Disclosure* and *Ubulungiswa/Justice* still exhibiting work after four years into 2018.

The two projects acquired sponsorship, institutional support, government funding and generated revenue through sales to support the development and exhibition of the project work. These revenue streams were still insufficient to enable the collective practice to sustain individual livelihoods through the creation of collaborative work. As the work was made on a project by project basis, the collectives were not able to develop an entity that could apply for more substantive funding support.

In the example of Raqs Media Collective, the ability of the collective members to take on a multiplicity of roles that includes curatorial practice has also allowed them to sustain their practice together and diversify their income streams. Income generated from curating at international biennales, or producing commercial film work together is more sustainable then relying on artist's fees or commissions. In Raqs' example their curatorial work allows them to maintain artistic integrity and still function within artworld structures, not having to compromise on their artistic intent.

As can be seen, areas of revenue generation include: self-funding, funding grants, institutional support or gallery representation and individuals supporting themselves through other revenue streams. This indicates that there much more work is needed for artists and collectives to better understand how to access and obtain long-term arts funding grants and diversify income streams, run fundraising initiatives and employ alternative financing strategies.

Part of the challenge may lie in the ideological intention for choosing to engage in collaborative and social practice, lie in an ideological opposition to the commodity-driven capitalist art market.

In South Africa, national state funding for projects is difficult to acquire and manage and projects need to align with national government strategic goals of transformation, nation building, capacity building, with priority given to certain provinces, which severely limits the opportunity for experimental work. Seeking grant support from foundations and trusts like the British Council or Prohelvetia are usually limited to travel and cross-cultural collaboration and funding grants are limited. Even corporate governed grant funding like the Nedbank Arts and Culture Trust contain restrictions and limitations in what the grant will cover (in most cases, artists' fees are excluded).

Besides my own projects, none of the South African collectives indicated efforts to acquire government or trust funding grants or sponsorship from commercial private investors nor looked at the potential of crowd funding platforms or business partnerships to raise funds. Justin Davy, 'this is always going to be our challenge as we make work that is not easily framed and sold, the option is to look for funding and it is not always the option we want to follow as there is conditions with funding'. No fundraising or business training efforts were mentioned but workshops and education were considered possible income streams, which indicates this is an area that needs further research and development .

## CONCLUSION

Through this research I aimed to unpack and reflect on different artistic strategies and methodologies employed by collectives to raise fundamental questions about art: 'Art as a problem

of cultural form, its use-values, individual authorship and autonomy and thus the very basis of art's relationship to democracy, the artworld and capitalist relations of production' (Wright & Roberts 2004: 532).

The research set out to interrogate collaborative practice, in relation to individual practice. Roberts (2004: 557) writes that 'collaboration in art is fundamentally a question of cultural form, meaning that the decision to work with other artists and/or with non-artists directly involves shaping the ways in which art finds its sensuous and intellectual place in the world.'

The idea of problematising individual authorship is the central tenet around which all collective practice revolves. As shown in both chapters one and two, collectives use the decentralization of authorship as an artistic strategy to shift paradigms of thinking in relation to power structures, be they institutional, political or ideological.

The first chapter looks at contemporary art collectives in South Africa who have produced work in the last two decades: Galerie Puta (2003), Avant Car Guard (2004), Doing it for Daddy (2006), Gugulective (2006), Centre for Historical Enactments (2010), Burning Museum (2013) and iQhiya (2015).

The chapter interrogated the factors that motivated artists to work collectively under an umbrella name in a group and looked at how race and gender affected the way these collectives produced contemporary art and the artistic strategies they employed. It became apparent through the research that the forming of these collectives required identification with an external factor as a group with a shared sense of identity (race and gender) and this external factor differentiated and influenced the collective's authoring.

These collectives employing strategies such as hypervisibility or hyperbole of racial and gender stereotyping to draw attention to how identify politics is informing art production. Other strategies such as reconstruction, recreation and invocation of the past are used to deal with collective historical trauma.

The collectives also used collaboration as an artistic strategy to address concerns around visibility and access opportunities, some of collectives successfully leveraged the collectives' visibility to launch their own individual careers; whether this has been an impediment to the collective should be considered in relation to the collectives' original intent.

The research outlined similarities in artistic strategies of the selected groups, including motivations; modus operandi, performativity; and naming devices. All the discussed collectives used the strategy of the collective authorial voice, as a strategic artistic practice in contemporary art, to enable artists to speak back to power and force reappraisals of artistic production.

In chapter one all the collectives spoke of their power in numbers, and of the benefit of the collective voice being able to speak back to power, or address concerns that the individual cannot address alone. The collectives needed to have a barrier to access, or perceived locus of power outside their individual control, in order for them to have cause to collectivise.

It emerged through the interviews, that a compelling individual struggle or issue catalysed the coming together of members in their search for a way to address or surmount such challenges. The members felt compelled to work collectively, as a means of bargaining around shared concerns that they were not able to address individually, and the desire to change a set of circumstances that created some barrier to access, or to address a social issue. The interviews showed that members of the collectives came to find themselves working together through a combination of mutual interest, proximity and shared experiences. Finding these factors at play (commonality of cause and interest and working in similar fields) was sufficient to bring about the conditions for collective practice to occur.

Working collectively became a desirable and viable approach to solving some of these concerns due to the ability of a collective voice to articulate difficult or sensitive issues without responsibility falling to one person. When addressing structures of power – political, social or institutional – collaborative membership reduces individual risk and responsibility through shared ownership and anonymity.

It is far easier to silence an individual through reputational damage or punitive means than it is to dismantle the efforts of shared discontent. This was inherent to all the collectives in this study, whether they addressed access, race and gender representation, historical traumas, social injustice or imbalances within institutions or structures. The collective voice has proved the most strategic vehicle with which to address such concerns directly, without risking the isolation or silencing of an individual.

This strategic approach of tackling political and social injustices by means of mass protest, is visible throughout history in the form of political activism. The recent Fees Must Fall (2015-2017) movement is a local example of a collective voice using shared authorship and collaborative action to diffuse individual responsibility and culpability – thereby protecting the leadership from being identified and imprisoned, and thereby unable to meet their objectives for institutional reform. The African National Congress (ANC) also used the strategies of shared authorship, anonymity and collective action under the banner of The Struggle and The Movement to dismantle apartheid.

Chapter two used international case studies to look at the history of art collaboration in the context of the sociopolitical conditions of their art production. It looks at how collectives use collaboration to confront and reimagine historical, spatial or systemic violence. The chapter further explored some of the ways in which the three contemporary art collectives, Guerrilla Girls, Laboratoire Agit'Art and Raqs Media Collective, have used collaboration to confront the role of the artist and artistic production.

This is demonstrated in Guerrilla Girls' rise out of the feminist movement in the United States, Laboratoire Agit'Art as a reaction to the philosophy of Negritude and state ownership of arts and culture and in Raqs Media Collective emergence in the late 1990s in post-colonial India, when the far right-wing government in power inducted nuclear tests.

Each collective offered particular insights into its discursive field of practice and influences, from feminism to Negritude and post-colonial and post-structuralist theory. They have all used collective practice, multi-disciplinarity, shared authorship and ephemerality as strategies for institutional critique deeply rooted in political and social ideologies, providing the art world and institutions with opportunities to re-evaluate and reappraise the conditions of production (Enwezor 2007). Guerrilla Girls, Laboratoire Agit'Art and Raqs Media Collective provide us with the evidence of 'how collective's art practices emerge and flourish under specific art-historical circumstances' and how the collective body can provide a vehicle for institutional and ideological re-appraisal. (Livingston 2011: 221).

The last two chapters look into the mechanics and methodologies of collectives: the structures, agreements, processes, decision-making, roles, finances and copyright. Interviews are with iQhiya (Thuli Gamedze), Burning Museum (Justin Davy and Tazneem Wentzel), Avant Car Guard (Michael MacGarry), Raqs Media Collective (Shuddhabrata Sengupta) and Gugulective (Dathini Mzayiya), *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure* (Deborah Weber).

These chapters touch on the success or failure of these collectives over time, considering questions such as: why do collectives dissipate? How do they work or not work (the effects of interpersonal dynamics and power)? What are the implications of the cessation of the collective and what becomes of the afterlife of the work and authorship? These chapters interrogate the different working practices of each collective, seeking similarities and differences to interrogate what makes

a collective sustainable as an artistic practice.

The interviews in chapter three indicate that in order for a collaboration to flourish, certain intentional agreements must be in place. The basic principle of collective practice requires democratic decision making processes and shared value. Through the interviews we evidence of the collectives' practice of the sharing of skills, resources, finances, labour and copyright in a manner that is overlapping and unhierarchical based on skills and capacity, through joint decision-making processes.

All the collectives discussed in this thesis use performance, installation and video in their creative processes. Given that collaborative models of working are not generally taught in studio-based practice, it does not seem unusual that the visual artist would seek collaborators from other artistic fields that allow for more collective methods of working, be they performance, video, music, multimedia, or other forms that lend themselves to collaborative, less object-based forms of production. The paradigm of art-school pedagogical training at most art institutions is built on a curriculum and studio practice, that grooms the individual artist to participate in product-based art market structures; structures built on individualism and commodity trading for investment value.

This thesis outlines how collaboration can provide an artistic strategy for interference, intervention and agitation. The case studied show how collaboration stands against notions of structure, allowing for fluidity, transition and adaptation, working in responsiveness and democratic consensus and is often based on intentional agreements not bound by formal processes and procedures. Roberts (2004: 557) identified that in 'collaboration the individual artist's identity is dissolved into the collective artist, and, perhaps more pertinently, into the collective identity of the non-artist, just as the identity of the non-artist collaborator is subsumed under the identity of the artist collective.'

Through the dialogical study we ascertain that collaboration is a messy, organic approach to art making based on moral precepts of trust, friendship and ideological understandings of shared value and democratic decision making. Collaboration is mostly un-hierarchical and ephemeral. It is often about the not making of art and the un-becoming of the individual artist. As Raqs points out, in collaboration the artist works as 'an *interlocutor* in the realm of the imagination, rather than as a static individual identity and producer of time- and place-bound objects' (Raqs 2017). The collective becomes a part of something greater than the self, a greater body of knowledge production that invokes the articulation of unspoken truths and unwanted visibilities, forcing reappraisals of the conditions of art making.

It is also evident in the dialogical study that conflict is 'endemic and very foundational' (Raqs 2017). The research also suggests that individual career aspirations impact the length of time the collective will stay together. Internal conflict between members, if not resolved, can impede the health of the collective – more so in smaller memberships, where a quarrel between two members can mean the end of all collaborative engagement, pointing to the possibility that the bigger the collective the less risk of individuals impacting the collective's ability to persevere over a longer trajectory of time. Shuddhabrata Sengupta of Raqs Media (2017) touches on some of the thinking about sustaining collaborative practice:

> Correspondingly, artists may be seen as 'joining forces' with others; this stance seemingly requires one to either commend his cooperation or condemn his refusal to go forth bravely alone. This requires us to think of acts of collaboration along somewhat different temporal axes: not as sporadic or even episodic instances of people joining hands to finish or start a project, but as the traces of longue-durée processes of the unfolding of an ensemble of desires. As the meander of decades of conversations that do not (or even cannot) get minuted.
>
> Seen this way, collaboration is not something that one switches in and out of, depending on the season or on inclination. It persists as a decision to build a life of

> practice along with others. It acquires a sense of creative companionship and intellectual camaraderie built not only on the foundations of projects that succeed, or on consensual agreement, but arrived at along paths that do not necessarily end anywhere. Paths that often lead into unknown territory, or occasionally even fork into disagreements that are as generous to the creative process as are moments of consensus.

Throughout the research it emerged that intentionality seems to be the lasting and foundational tenet of collective practice: the intent to commit to the principle of shared authorship and authorial renunciation as the collective aim, each artist acting as an agent for the collective, which then takes ownership as the artistic identity, replacing the I with WE. As Livingston (2010: 24) says, 'artists who genuinely collaborate in the making of a work need art-making intentions and corresponding intentional actions that are coordinated and recognized in the right sort of way.' The impact of individual aspirations for career advancement in many instances in the research proved to be an impediment to sustained practice or longevity.

In order to sustain the collective intent it appears that a financial model that is socialised and shared is the most common and effective structure. With sharing authorship comes the sharing of the management of the copyright and intellectual property of the collectives' archive of images, which in most cases is where the afterlife of the collective work exists. In the interview data it showed that the collectives longevity was impacted by the ability of its members to be able to sufficiently sustain themselves financially from funds outside of the collectives' revenue streams and still participate meaningfully in collaborative projects.

Wright (2004: 545) suggests that 'in order to avoid the performative pitfalls of art conventions on the one hand, and of co-optation by capital on the other, and to bring about conditions that will make collaboration fruitful and necessary, we need an almost pre-modern understanding of art, breaking with the institutionalised trinity of author–work–public. We need an understanding that grasps art in terms of its specific means and not its specific ends.'

It is in the context of the art market and capitalist economic structures that we find collective practice such a powerful antidote; with co-authorship, decentralization, dissolution of autonomy, models of teamwork that require overlapping skills and based on the concept of equitable sharing of resources and revenue not contingent upon perceived market value or skills demand.

The reality of shared authorship and collective practice is underpinned by the practical and ideological functions of shared value; shared labour, resources, roles, revenue, accolades and responsibility.

Collaborative and collective social practice has an important and increasingly significant role to play in pushing the boundaries of art production and social engagement - especially in a country like South Africa which has a very small portion of the population that attends, supports and benefits from contemporary art. Collaborative practice has less barriers to entry; it does not require art school education or gallery representation to be engaged in cultural and social dialogue, and, in my experience, collaboration can provide the opportunity for artists and audiences from diverse and vastly different backgrounds and experiences to benefit from shared intellectual and cultural knowledge.

Collaborative practice has the potential to provide an opportunity to address historical injustices, prejudices and economic disparity. In South Africa, a country with enormous disparity in income and access to opportunities based on historical racial prejudice, collaboration has the potential to provide a transformative and regenerative opportunities for equitable sharing of resources and skills.

For example; in the *Ubulungiswa/Justice* project, a group of twenty-two artists worked together to create a body of work on social justice. The participants in the project came from vastly different educational, economic and cultural backgrounds. Some of the members had master's degrees from University, some of them trained at technical collages and others did not have a matric education and had experienced incarceration. The vehicle of a collaborative project enabled the participants to work with artists they would never have otherwise met and engage in difficult conversations around race, land, privilege and violence. Working as a collective allowed Avant Car Guard to move across galleries and spaces with no restrictions and gallery exclusivity. They showed at galleries where some individuals members were represented and not others and showed as spaces with no affiliation to the individual artist without issue.

*Ubulungiswa/Justice* also required the institution in which it was developed, UCT, to re-evaluate its conditions of appraisal i.e. to allow unregistered members with no tertiary education to participate in a public exhibition showcasing the work of their students, as well of acceptance of collective authoring the work, although only one member of the collective was registered at the University. The project pushed the participating artists and institutions to imagine new ways of engaging with art practice and made apparent the structural and institutional privileges (educational and geographic apartheid legacies) that prevents access and opportunities to cultural platforms and engagement.

As Dhathini Mzayiya (2017) says, 'The entire practice of art needs rehab..for artists who maybe have forgotten what the role of art and activism is in society, we need full time rehabilitation for us to come back to our senses again and to be collectively responsible for our social environment and to think again, there is much that needs to be done. The collective is the medicine, you cannot do it alone, you get trapped and overwhelmed, the last time you remembered you were critical and now you cannot remember or you being critical is just a line now that entertains the very people you think you are critical too. I think there is so much work that needs to be done before it is too late, it is already late.'

# FURTHER STUDY

In order for collective practice to flourish and sustain itself within the art market, the existing pedagogic system based on individual authorship and autonomy and object-based production requires re-evaluation. This is an area that is beyond the scope of this dissertation but merits further inquiry. The inability of South African collectives in this study to successfully sustain collaborative practice necessitates further examination, additional broader research into existing international collectives that have sustained practice would be beneficial. Finally, the lack of inclusion of collective and social arts practice in existing art pedagogy at institutional level needs urgent reappraisal.

Lacking among all the South African collectives was an intentionality to pursue finance models to provide long term sustainability, this probably stemming from the foundational and ideological tenants on which collaborative practice is built, are in strong ideological oppositional positions to existing capitalist means if economic production and individual success. The socialised and shared model that is non-hierarchical and unstructured, seems to impede the potential of the collectives to put in place sustainable finances structures that could support them. Among the South African collectives interviewed, the lack of intention to access grant funds, private investment and crowd funding revenue sources is striking and further research in this area would be beneficial.

For collective and social practice to sustain itself over time, the members need to be able to draw revenue from participation and involvement. Justin Davy reiterates in his interview, ‘I think the research that you are doing is great but it needs to be more tangible, info about sustaining art practice, it is a big question in South Africa. I see a lot of artists getting taken advantage of and getting exploited, we have had our problems, and I am sure iQhiya has had their problems in dealing with the art world. I think we need something more; a lot of people are saying the same thing. I do not know how to get there.’

New ways of thinking about and accessing art and project financing and diversification of revenue streams that could align with the ideological tenants of collaborative practice is needed. Inclusion and collaboration with members who have different skills in fundraising and finance could be beneficial, along with better support from existing institutional and national funding frameworks to support the development of and sustainability of this area of practice. Possible partnerships with existing foundations, cultural organisations, funders or social enterprise organisations may also be beneficial. A crowd funding model also appears like a good ideological financial fit for collective practice, but one that has not yet been explored to its full potentiality.

ENDS

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ENDS

# ANNEXURE:

# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

## INTERVIEW ONE
## BY DEBORAH WEBER WITH MICHAEL MCGARRY FOR AVANT CAR GUARD

**Deborah Weber: How did you come to be a collective, and what were the influences that shaped your formation?**

***Michael McGarry:*** I met Zander Blom the Avant Car Guard, through Jan Henri Booysen and I met Jan Henry, because he lived next door to me in Durban and we studied at the same Technical in Natal – he was in first year and I was in third year and then we did a site specific project for New Bethesda. We became good friends. I then met Zander through Henri and we sort of hung out as friends for a while, that formalised itself into wanting to articulate a lot of the things that we felt were not being articulated within contemporary art making practice at the time, there was no reflexivity and it was born out of frustration with, and I am still sensitive and aware of these things now, that there is a preponderance of – as a function of post-apartheid society, micro-narratives in terms of identity and a number of those things, within a context that had a complete vacuum and complete dirth of those post- 1994.

I understand why they mushroomed, ballooned and come to the fore, post that moment, at the same time we felt frustrated that there was a lack of humour, and reflexivity and a lot of very serious art making with a capital ART, and lots of the white males making very bad art, like Kendell Geers – so it was born out of that.

**Deborah Weber: How long did you work together and what did you do in the early days?**
***Michael McGarry:*** If memory serves me correctly, we started about July/ August 2008 and we focused on producing what was called *Volume 1.* It was a limited edition publication and we published about 200 of them. They went into a cardboard slip case that was roughly the size of an LP and we wanted to RIF on the idea of being a band, being a collective at the time. It has become something more of a bit of a norm now, but at the time there were very few people working that way. At the time it was also strategic, as three voices allowed us to say things that we could never say in our individual capacity. It's diluted responsibility in a sense, made a bit of a mob so you could not necessarily tag it onto one thing. Quite organically and strategically the fact that three white males came together was a way articulating our own problematic identity, our own problematic presence and almost blowing it out of proportion, making a caricature of it by having three of us. I am not Afrikaans, I am Irish by heritage, but I did kind of engage with the idea it was caricaturing ourselves by making not one but three of me and two were Afrikaans. Making it was hyperbole in a sense.

We were active from 2008, -we launched that book in May 2009 at Bell-Roberts in Cape Town and we produced another four books over the course of about five years. Our last project was at Blank Projects in 2013 and altogether, we had about five solo shows and produced about four books, we worked in quite an intensive way making editioned digitally printed large scale photographs as well as sculptures, paintings and did some performances.

We would work with anyone who would host us. Part of the logic was because we did so many exhibitions and books, the idea is that if we were constantly busy and constantly doing things, it would be impossible to ignore us, if we did one show a year it would be very easy to ignore us and marginalise our practice so we were very busy all the time and in your face and impossible to ignore, but at the same time the project burnt out faster than it would if we had just worked in a normal way. We basically ran out of ideas and learnt to dislike each other.

**Deborah Weber: How do you make decisions in your collective (artistic and business decisions)?**

**Michael McGarry:** The way ACG worked from the very beginning, was two-thirds majority. So we would come up with endless ideas and if two people liked it, it would pass. If only one person liked it then we would pass and not do the idea. It was a very robust democracy, one of the rare things about it, in a three-person collaboration is that there is always tension. You cannot get a stale mate, there is either consensus or there isn't. In that sense it kept the momentum going and at one stage we were talking about making the circle bigger but part of the strength of it was the triangle – everything either gets agreed upon or not, very quickly In that sense, ideas were processed quickly. All our shows would be written as a word document, as one liners, that you would find in a single cell political cartoon. So it was a line that would say we are going to RIF on Bernie Searle and we are going to go to the Joburg Zoo, we would then take a photograph of us interviewing a brown seal and we would say Avant Car Guard interviews Bernie Seal and then we would go to the zoo and shoot that.

**Business**
Michael McGarry: So, in a sense, it wasn't terribly complicated to action things from a decision-making process, that was the rule and that was a rule we were all invested in, so it was easy. From a business side it was a little more complicated. Because I was the only person with a full-time job at the time, in the beginning, it did not make any money and only about a third of the way through we started making money. We sold an awful lot at the 2010 or 2011 Joburg Art Fair I cannot remember….and then after that, we were represented at What if The World in a more serious way and the shows started making money. It became easier and flying to Cape Town was not such an issue. We bought a camera and those kind of things. It was difficult for about a year and then it got easier. Then it would principally be a case of usually Zander and I, assigning what would get done in terms of camera work as Jan Henri does not have a background in photography per say, but he does have in video and digital. In the beginning we used a lot of Zanders' camera equipment and then we invested in lights. Overtime, it was relatively easy, basically because we instituted the two thirds rule from the very beginning. If we had not done that it would have been excruciating.

**Deborah Weber: Do you have any agreement(s) in place and if not, how do you manage your copyright and IP?**

**Michael McGarry:** It has never really come up, I certainly walked away from the project and I think the other two have as well, basically to the detriment of our friendship for a number of different reasons. All the works and sculptures we made are still at Blank Project as none of us are invested enough to do anything about it. It's never been an issue. From a market point of view, our sales died the moment we stopped doing stuff, so that was not really an issue either. So not really, there was no agreement, we spoke briefly about setting up a PTY LTD. Because we made a number of works and were worried about getting sued, we did have a lawyer for a while. There were two works we

did not end up making, because they were potentially quite damaging from a legal point of view and I think we were a bit overly serious about how serious the artworld actually is – that said, some of the works we made might have elevated us at Avant Car Guard but damaged us as individuals potentially.

**Deborah Weber: what led up to the end of or leaving the project ?**
**Michael McGarry:** I cannot speak for the others, for me, we did the show at Blank in 2013, which was the last solo show we did. It opened in January and the process of making it was complicated in that we did not have a lot of time together. I had moved to Cape Town, Zander was in Johannesburg and Jan Henri in Pretoria, that also threw a serious spanner in our works. So it was a combination of a gradual growing apart, also because I was living in Cape Town and the nature of the project, it stopped being interesting for me, it had fulfilled its purpose and had a very limited life span. When it first started ,we thought it would have a very limited life span, it fulfilled a very specific purpose, collectives like that (and I know from other working relationship I have had) either make it through the five year thing and last forever, or they don't and they burn out at the four year/ three year mark. More or less from the beginning, we were at the five-year mark for a five-year marriage collectively – it never had that longevity – it is complicated by a number of other things.

I think when you are quite a lot younger, your differences are not that important and as you grow older, your differences become more obvious as artists and in the space of five years as an artist you can change enormously. So it stopped being interesting and on an intrapersonal level, basically Zander became one of the artists we used to make fun of and Jan Henri had huge personal issues, so it basically blew itself apart, coupled by the fact that I did not want to be in the same room as them anymore, which makes it impossible and I kind of still don't.

**Deborah Weber: So was it just a breakdown of the relationships?**
**Michael McGarry:** Yah sort of and also a structural conceptual breakdown, in that I don't think Zander and I looked at the world the same way anymore, so that made it impossible and we were self-editing as our individual careers became more and more prominent and it just became lame, which is why it died and which is perfectly normal given a project like that. Would be kind of weird if we carried on.

**Deborah Weber: Did you establish the collective to work on your own individual careers?**
**Michael McGarry:** It was a very conscious thing, we did Avant Car Guard to promote ourselves and it allowed us, like I said, to say things we could not say in our individual capacity – certainly for me. So in basically collectively dissing artists, whose work we did not like or who were directly competing with us, we were able to usurp them and supersede them, we might have used humour but it certainly was not a benevolent act, we did not invest a huge amount of time just to occupy our weekend or to create art – it was done on purpose.

**Deborah Weber: So the ending of the collaboration, coincided at the rise of individual successes.**
**Michael McGarry:** Relative successes, our persona's with Avant Car Guard was at a disjuncture with personal persona's – Zander was with Stevenson, I was with Stevenson, Jan Henri was working increasingly with Blank Project, it did not fit right, we couldn't diss an artist in the Stevenson stable and then see them at openings, it was just weird. It ended up, we had to self-edit, it started off as a childlike kind of punk exercise and to still be doing that five years later was weird . Weird when if you own work is quite measured, serious and responsible, you ended up subverting your own work. If it carried on, we would have done that, I wish we had never done that last show at Blank, it was a terrible exhibition and it ended on a down point. It ended on the dumbest of the dumb point , we became one of the shit artists we dissed!

**Deborah Weber: Is there anything else you want to share about the ending process?**
**Michael McGarry:** Not really, we did not break up in a formal way, it just kind of fizzled and in a completely unrelated way, we had a personal thing that was completely unrelated to Avant Car Guard, that ended our friendship and effectively ended Avant Car Guard at the same time and like I said Jan Henri had some personal shit.

**Deborah Weber: How do you distribute and manage your finances?**
**Michael McGarry:** We just used the same two thirds majority – they were always project based – who ever spent money and kept a recon of what they spent, would be paid back and we would split the profits between the three and that was fine, we never had an issue with it. Also, quite rapidly the galleries paid for our production, so that took a lot of admin out of the equation and in the beginning, I was just paid back for whatever I or Zander spent and that is how we resolved it.

**Deborah Weber: Speak to us about your financial sustainability**
**Michael McGarry:** It certainly was not massive income and was probably the hardest money anyone had ever made, it was excruciating. Within a year, it did not cost us any money and within a year and a half, it was making money, it was not a lot of money, about 50K a year each, something like that and then we ploughed that back into making new books and new paintings and if that had not happened very early on, I do not think we would have lasted two years because that becomes a real pain. There is also a sense of  we all work within the commercial gallery system. I do not think there is any other system in South Africa which is a major problem, as there aren't any real museums, basically anybody young and coming out of Wits or Michaelis, unfortunately has to deal with Goodman or Stevenson, or not as the case may be, or increasingly, have to deal with Zeits MOCCA – good luck to them. In that sense we were already primed to work in that way, so it was not too strange that we made money.

**Deborah Weber: Was most of the revenue through sales of artworks?**
**Michael McGarry:** Yes, through sales of artworks, paintings, sculptures and editioned photographs, so everything was for sale – 80% of the sale was through the gallery so What if The World and then after we left What  if The World through Blank and very occasionally, we would sell work directly.

**Deborah Weber: Was there a reason for the move from WITW to Blank?**
**Michael McGarry:** I can't actually remember, I think there was a lack of energy from WITW for Avant Car Guard and they rightly saw the end before we did. We left WITF and went to Blank and it ended a month later but there was not any animosity with WITW, they were cool.

**Deborah Weber: How do you resolve disagreements?**
**Michael McGarry:** There must of been an awful lot, our work was focused on undermining established artists who were seen as competition in our age group or our contemporaries and sometimes there would be an issue when we would come up with a really good joke and one of us, was either friends with the person or aligned with the person through a gallery. There would be an argument about some kind of neutrality, we would have to diss everyone or it is not going to work, so even though there was an internal two third majority, when it came to subject matter, everything had to be available, there could not be any sacred cows, there could not be any kit gloves with anyone and there were a lot of arguments over that. Which made our lives as we continued in the industry quite awkward with a lot of people, at the same time people have an incredibly short memory and there is also an understanding that there are three of you, that blame is genuinely diluted – I don't know how those were resolved, if it was the mechanism of the two thirds majority.

**Deborah Weber: How did you manage your roles within the collective?**
**Michael McGarry:** The overarching methodology, was one of wanting to undermine a lot of the institutional seriousness, what we thought was a lack of rigor both in contemporary art and recent historical, and by rigor I mean a lack of critical thinking and a lack of reflectivity. Then there was this over-arching thing called the contemporary gallery system, which sucked, as it's a business and has nothing to do with art, they can be selling bathroom taps honestly. All of it was angry with that –

rather than being angry in the context of South Africa, that was already very angry and filled with SA Male as a uniquely unsubtle species – we wanted to bring a very low level, very accessible, basic, open sense of humour. The early works are structured around photographs that are operationalised in quite a binary way – a picture followed by a title that competed in your head and made sense in a way a political caricature would, or as a satirical cartoon would. So, they were very cartooning, simple to understand visually and conceptually. So from a skills point of view Zander and Jan Henri are both painters, Zander was very into photography at the time and had subsequently stopped it, I think it undermines his painting market.

Jan Henri remained a painter, he does have a background in digital filmmaking and editing and did a lot of that, some of our early forays into video were run by Jan Henri and then I trained as a sculpture and continue to work as a graphic designer. Zander studied graphic design, a lot of the skills overlapped, I don't paint, I never painted. The way that we painted was in a rather very dumb way, basically we would find stuff on the internet and crop it together in photoshop and make an overhead transparency of it and project it onto the canvas and colour it in, so our paintings were the funnier but the least successful artistic things that we did. I certainly did not add much to that process at all.

From a conceptual side, it was born out of spending a lot of time together, Avant Car Guard was born not as strategically as I talked about. It was born out of getting drunk together, very often, for six months, maybe several times a week. Out of that, it just morphed into - if we are going to spend so much time together, we may as well just formalise it in a way that is productive and not so damaging, our relative roles were pretty overlapped.

**Deborah Weber: What was your favourite work you created together and why?**
**Michael McGarry:** The work I like the most, was at a solo show, at a gallery called the Project Space in New York and we produced a work called *Die Verlore Kind*, which was us. We had a tomb stone day in Boksburg, bearing a tombstone of Kendell Geers out of black granite and we drove it out in Zanders bakkie to Boksburg or somewhere in the East Rand where Kendell originally comes from, the photograph that came out of it and the sculpture which was the tomb stone collectively, were one of the better things we did on a conceptual level, a fun level and on a material level. It was one of the few sculptures we made that I think is successful, I think Avant Car Guard should have ended with that particular work, it would have been the right point to end it. We basically buried or killed our father, did the oedipal thing in ending Kendell's legacy which was one of the key reasons we started the whole process form the beginning. I like those works that came out of that particular exhibit.

**Deborah Weber: Did your romantic relationship affect the collective?**
**Michael McGarry:** One of the reasons that Avant Car Guard was able to happen was that Lucy my wife now, was at that time working at David Krut, had to work on Saturdays and I ended up kind of working and doing Avant Car Guard on a Saturday as I was working full time then, otherwise we would have just been getting drunk a lot together. We worked a six day week, the relationship made allowance for that.

**Deborah Weber: If you were working full time, how did you manage (first two years) to do all the installation work required?**
**Michael McGarry:** Saturday, Sunday and then the evenings, closer towards a show, we would work the whole weekend. Tuesday and Wednesday, I would work on my own practice, if we had a show I would take leave, it does not take up that much time, I do it now and have a full time job. And with three of you, you can do a hell of a lot.

It's one of the appeals of a collective, the shows we did together were the easiest of my life, after working together for four years, you work very much as one person. It's very much an organic thing, assuming that there are not scheming politics behind the scene the whole time. The project of being in a collective is not United Nations, you are the whole time scheming and back stabbing to making

sure your ideas get passed, it is like survivor, but if you are managing the process and care about it, you spent a lot of time making sure your ideas are past and someone's ideas you don't like are not passed. Also the reason why the two thirds majority works so well in a three way engagement, is that you can politic quite hard and quite easily, you can gang up easily and be ganged up on easily. The politics is probably the most time consuming and exhausting thing and everything else is quite easy.

I think there is also, as groups rise above a certain point, there are people who don't do anything more than four, three works really well, anything more than five is a complete disaster, because it takes so much time to get consensus, talk to everyone, the thing becomes an endless meeting, it does not become proactive exercise. I don't think Avant Car Guard ever had a meeting. Size is hugely important and the interpersonal politics are everything. I don't think people work well together naturally, people in general, when people get into groups and committees, very little happens, there is an assumption that someone else is going to do it it's almost as they create a consensus that someone has to lead. A three person always has a resistance and a tension, part of the reason collectives don't really work, is because of the pragmatics of how they are constructed.

**Deborah Weber: Can you speak to me about ant relationships that had an influence on the collective?**
**Michael McGarry:** Zander's girlfriend was always there (Yoko Ono) – she was part of the problem, let's put it that way, she just sat there and smoked, we were not ok with that. Relationships should never be anywhere near the collective because they are by divisive and by their nature another collective, so they compete in a sense for politics, time, need and expectations.

**Deborah Weber: What were the learnings or issues in the collective's dealing with curators or institutions?**
**Michael McGarry:** We did two shows in New York, never had any issues with that, we showed at David Krut and moved to David Brodie Stevenson and I was with the gallery and the others weren't, it was the same when we showed at What If The World and Blank, when some of us were with a gallery and the others weren't, that was a little complicated, but not in a major way, just in how things were channelled or authored.

**Deborah Weber: How do you manage your legacy and existing works, do you have agreements or discussion or you just cut ties.?**
**Michael McGarry:** I cut ties completely. I have not spoken to Zander for three years and like I said, Jan Henri has been dealing with personal stuff which makes him difficult to deal with. It still exists because it existed and marks a very particular time and place in history and there are several collectors who invested heavily in us – understanding the temporal nature of the thing which is more interesting to me as it marks a specific moment in time. It does not exist anymore. There was a request by Standard Bank last year, where they asked to show our work and I said yes and I hope the others do not mind as I did not ask them. When you put things into the digital realm that digital tattoo lasts forever. It's the worst as an artist as stupid shit you said five years ago, is still there. I don't think any of us really care.

**Trajectory**
2008: Solo at Bell Roberts, Volume 1 and performance element for each show
2009: JHB Art Fair, performances
2010\ 2011: Performances at WITF and Brodie Stevenson and New York twice and Museum Africa
2011: Mid of 2011 it was over with WITW
2012: Blank Projects, collective ended 2012
2017: Project has been dead for five years everything is listed on Blog spot.

**Deborah Weber: Ephemerally and performance, was that a conceptual and strategic way you chose to work?**

**Michael McGarry:** We all more or less hated performance art and one of the ways to confront our bias and confront our own physicality and problematic identity, was to make ourselves the centre of what we are talking about. Ephemeral towards the end, in the beginning it was very formalised, it became ephemeral as we ran out of steam as we were working together, in the beginning it was over determined. I make a lot of short films now, which is a very collaborative process and is a very healthy natural way of working, very productive, not a need to formalise it and give it a name, structure and identity I think it is counterproductive, working collectively is fantastic, it is inherently collaborative working in film. I work in a combination of both paid and sometimes not.

## INTERVIEW TWO:
## DEBORAH WEBER WITH JUSTIN AND TASNEEM FOR BURNING MUSEUM

**Deborah Weber: How do you make decisions in your collective (artistic and business decisions)?**
**Justin Davy:** We tried for as long as we have been around to make decisions collectively as far as possible - because that is the point of us being together, but in practice, it does not always work obviously, sometimes maybe two of us will have enough time and energy to put into making a decision, so maybe only two of us and sometimes it is left to one person, so I guess there is a level of trust that we have to have with each other. Even if we do not necessarily agree with the decision that is made, we need to go with it and trust that decision. Also, I should mention that we started with five members and now we are down to three members, so maybe that helps the decision process, because less opinions to deal with.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** I think it has also been a process from when we started working together, it was first trying how to figure out how we can work together, because we come from different disciplines and backgrounds and once we got a feel for that and for each other, when we were five, we would sit in the studio and talk and at some point in the process of talking about whatever (it could be random) there were moments when we would all settle on – yeah that's the idea, that's what we are going with. It changes with time, so as people have gone their own ways the process has also changed. Like Justin says now with three people it is easier to make the decision in a way, whereas before it would be a much more intensive process with many disagreements, conflicting ideas and uncomfortabilities. Then there is the other part which is the administration etc. etc.

**Justin Davy:** It took us a long time to realise that we have different strengths, some of us are better at answering emails for example or some of us are better at starting a creative process, so we would delegate decisions that way also. Like, decisions about what to respond to a person who is asking us for something or delegate the workload in terms of creating a new body of work for an upcoming exhibition, would be delegated to whoever was stronger in that specific field.

**Deborah Weber: Did you ever put in place a formal agreement?**
**Justin Davy:** Like a constitution, no
**Tazneem Wentzel**: No, we never had a formal typed out black and white constitution, with a code of conduct and this is your role etc.

At different points in time , Justin or Scott were fully employed – so things would have to be flexible to accommodate your life also. I think we had a mutual understanding of kind of who does what and, in that way, there were a lot of organic moments where we figured out after. So, these were the roles we assumed. So, for example I would do admin for one project and Justin for another, depending on what we were doing at the time.

**Justin Davy:** We were not formal to the degree where we had a constitution or rules written down, but I think we did try and create certain precedents for ourselves in a way as we progressed. So we would take notes, take minutes of our meetings and share them and reflect, so there was a reflection process from which I think we learnt about ourselves so there was not necessarily rules, but there were lessons that we learnt that we would stick by to some degree, so we won't work with this type of person again or if someone asks us for an exhibition – these are the things we need to put in place first or this is our artist fee etc.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** Because we did not necessarily know about these things when we started, we did not know that you can actually say when we engage, that these are the kinds of things that we expect and vice versa. For example, when we wanted to establish some kind of formal entity component of Burning Museum, we could all use for possible employment, like a business entity, the issue with that, was that we might be losing out on our essence which we are essentially a different kind of collective, we are a street art collective in one of the ex-members minds, we all have different ideas of what Burning Museum is to each of us individually. Sometimes those would not necessarily mesh with each other, I think that is a strength too – that we don't have the same idea and it brings different elements to the party

**Justin Davy:** It is about respecting those differences, if we all had the same idea (I think we do have as there is a lot of overlap) in the area where we overlap and that it where we work, but there are also parts where we don't overlap and that's what makes it spicy and interesting, that is what gives the flavor to the work.

**Deborah Weber: How did you come to be a collective and what were the influences that shaped your formation?**
**Tazneem Wentzel:** Scott and Grant, they had an urgency to make work and they were passing through District Six Museum, where I was working and then Scott knew Jared from Greatmore. I studied with Justin at Stellenbosch many years before, so we had kind of seen each other around but we were not necessarily friends. I was most familiar with Justin and then connected with Scott and Justin at the museum, so we were floating around nearby each other, but I think it was Scott and Grant, they wanted to have a conversation with people, who were interested in making work, from there that's kind of how we were all intrigued by the idea of just creating work, figuring out a way to work together.

**Deborah Weber: As It is not the way we are trained to work with other artists, is it your natural inclination as artists to want to work together and what do you get from working with other artists that you do not get from working on your own?**
**Justin Davy:** For me, to be honest, it was not my natural inclination actually to want to work with other people, if I am brutally honest and look back at it. I went to art school and my training was to be an individual artist. I think part of the reason, was an appeal to be together because in some way we were all trying to be individual artists and in the landscape, we were in the Cape Town art world, it was not easy and it is still not easy, especially as artists of colour, I think it made sense then to think of other ways because I think we were all trying to be solo artists and collaboration was another option available to us and I think it's good that Scott and Grant put that on the table at that time for all of us.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** For me, I like to work collaboratively in terms of creative, trying to think beyond. As I was coming from a history anthropology background I was always interested in special interventions and how people occupy public spaces in groups, so it caught my imagination then and

I really enjoyed working with other people from different backgrounds. Whether it was Fine Arts, so when I met Grant, he was really excited about doing work in Elsie's and had an exhibition in the Elsie's Library, so I thought it was pretty cool, that these two guys were going to do what they wanted to do and if they wanted to have an exhibition in Elsie's, that was going to make it happen.

I like that tenacity about people, when it does not matter what, you have an idea and you want to make it real, so I like working with people like that. I am the opposite to him, I enjoy working with people collaboratively, I have a natural inclination to work with people in certain types of work and in other types of work not.

**Deborah Weber: What about your practice as individual artists?**
**Justin Davy:** I was doing performance and video stuff mostly before I met everyone, and we started working together.

**Deborah Weber: How do you manage Copyright/IP/ ownership of work?**
**Tazneem Wentzel:** A lot of our work is based on archival images and we ran into issues with the District Six Museum and luckily raised criticism and dialogue with the Museum and are in contact with them, but in terms of the work that we do our work is photocopies and it goes onto the street.
**Justin Davy**: It goes onto the street so it is ephemeral, our work comes from the archive but it is not archival, if that makes sense, it can't be archived in a museum, well sometimes we have worked in museums but it comes straight off, it cannot be stored as the work has a shelf life .
**Tasneem Wentzel**: Depending on the weather.

**Justin Davy:** In many ways, that aspect of copyright and or ownership/authorship of the work is solved in a way, because we just put the work up and it disappears over time, it's not like a photograph that is framed in a gallery that gets put into a storeroom forever.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** But I think that is also one of the questions of the work is that you put out this work in the public on the street, so it does not belong to you, it does not belong to the archive anymore, so it can be used in a photograph which we have had before, people doing photoshoots in front of one of the works for example. It's a tricky area because, I mean at least a reference to where it comes from but also people started to associate the aesthetic with Burning Museum, so it's like meme culture, it does not really belong to you. But it can be replicated through images taken in front of it or distributed in that way.

**Deborah Weber: Are you ever asked to give images of your work in situ?**
**Justin Davy:** You mean documentation?
**Tazneem Wentzel:** We have used it in presentations but not as an artwork, no.
**Justin Davy:** There was the cover version show, when we had tangible pieces of art – recycled board and the photocopies, so there was one instance but 99% of our work you cannot see it in physical form anymore.
**Tasneem Wentzel:** You can't buy it ,so like, if we put a piece in a gallery, it is stuck directly on the wall, the only way you are going to get the work off the wall is to destroy it.
**Justin Davy:** Destroy it to take off.
**Tazneem Wentze**l: So, you can't actually own it.

**Deborah Weber: Was that a self-conscious decision as an artistic strategy you made early on, that you wanted to work in this ephemeral way?**
**Tazneem Wentzel:** I think why we moved to that medium, your decisions are also based on function, for us it was more functional to be operating in the cheapest medium possible because we were investing in the artworks ourselves, we would split the costs of printing etc., making glue and that is why we just stuck with that medium because it worked for us, it represented exactly what we wanted to be doing as Burning Museum. A museum with no archive, it has got no structure, what actually is it in the end ?

**Justin Davy:** looking back at it, if we wanted to make money, it is not the right way to go. Definitely in the beginning, we were trying to rebel and not make work that is easily commodifiable. It was like f*£^& you, you cannot even buy this work, it is not about buying the work .

**Tazneem Wentzel:** We were looking at images that really just struck us, we wanted other people to see it, that is also where that function comes from, we wanted people to see parts of their history that you don't normally get access too. Which is where the f*£^& you came from.

**Justin Davy:** At least our initial audience, because later on we were going to gallery spaces, but our initial audience were people who had access to the street, so if you were driving in your car you could maybe see it, but definitely if you walked down the streets in Woodstock you would see our work and those are the people most affected by forced removals of the past and kind of forced removals of the present, then of course we put it online so that opened up a different audience. The immediate audience first was quite specific to people who walk on the streets, which is different to today's middle-class culture, where people are mostly in their cars to work and their cars back. So, I think that was a deliberate choice, but like Tasneem said it was also forced upon us because of economics and the cheapest thing to do. But that being said, I think we made it our own, we ran with it and we owned the work for what it was and we owned our decisions and the repercussions of the decisions that we would not have something physical to keep on.

**Deborah Weber: As a group, were you influenced by street art in the broader scene and what was the transition like for you, moving into the gallery and museum space, how were you treated and how did you deal with finances?**
**Tazneem Wentzel:** One of the members Grant, he was a street artist and he was a very strong character in bringing that element to the collective. That is our connection to street art and he introduced us to a lot of new ways of thinking in that regard.

**Deborah Weber: How was the journey and transition into the gallery space? Maybe some of the stories, the relationships and how you were treated and the financial aspects?**
**Tazneem Wentzel:** The first gallery exhibition that we did was at the Centre for African Studies, so there were a lot of things that we did not factor in, for example, that was the first time that we had to think, shit, we have to take the work off the walls – because that had never been part of our cavalry, why would we take it off? So, when the gallerist brought up this conversation about, you have to take it down, it was a bit foreign for us and also the implications of the damage done to the walls. This is a very funny story about Grant, in a very serious meeting, I don't know how Grant had calculated the amount of paint we used to repaint the walls but somewhere in his mind he had calculated R96 000, just to see the curators face, when he told him R96 000, in all seriousness! Justin and I were in tears for the rest of the meeting, it was too hilarious, but she was just horrified. That was a very nice entrance into thinking about things we had never considered like what happens to the work afterwards.

**Justin Davy:** The more formal spaces that that we have entered are not always the same, so the CAS (Centre for African Studies) gallery at UCT is different to a commercial gallery, which is different from a museum. There are different museums which have different ethos, you know ways of working. The District Six Museum is a good example of, I would say, a decolonial museum. I think what the formal spaces for me, allowed different ways for installing our work, the street gave us mostly a wall. In the gallery spaces, there were also walls but also opportunities to hang sculptural objects and play, we also had more time, not just two minutes to put something up on the street. You have time to consider things and the weather is not a factor. That enriched our engagement with the work and gave us different entry points into the content we were engaging with. Gave us more time to sit with it, it's terms of the back and forth with the gallery – that has been the source of our most frustration over the years. People do not always know how to accommodate collectives.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** They are also not sure how to accommodate collectives that work in the medium that we work in either.

**Justin Davy:** In many ways we were subversive without even trying. Subverting the solo artist model because they could not even sell our work afterwards, so they really had to invest in us as individuals. So, things like artist fee for five people, how do you work that out, production budgets. We started getting invitations to go overseas to Europe, Visa costs, all of the travel costs, accommodation. We learnt some lessons along the way and then put our foot down and said, this is what we need and then it is still not met properly. It is always a problem, and the way that we work, we can work really quickly and under pressure and sometimes we were given two weeks' notice to be part of a project and come up with a body of work and we would do it.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** It was really like madness.

**Justin Davy:** I think that became our default mode in a way, for example, the exhibition we did in Germany. I think the Germans were expecting to have our body of work ready to go when we arrived. But we were there to interact with an archive, so we made the work there, which was very difficult for them, their nerves were shattered.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** We needed to explain to them what kind of work we were making, weird stuff like that. A big difference with our work that I realise with the galleries, is that we install our own work we don't expect other people to install our work, which is different to another artist. For example, Dresden, the exhibitions team - they were suspicious of the fact that we were putting up our own work (East Germany).They couldn't understand why we were doing what we were doing.

**Justin Davy:** They had no idea of our process; they had seen our work, the end product but didn't know how exactly we got to that.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** So, we were in the gallery space stitching A4 pages together to make a huge poster and they were 'are you damaging the floor?' yes, yes, we are!

**Justin Davy:** We are not gallery artists; our work is not made for the gallery in the classical sense.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** Its very invasive,

**Justin Davy:** Yes, we are trying to invade when we are invited to a gallery, trying to disrupt somehow.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** Just by production when we are assembling a 2m x 2m piece it takes up a lot of space, that's just the way it is.

**Deborah Weber: Have you done any other street art in other cities?**

**Justin Davy:** Yes

**Deborah Weber: Have you had disagreements and how have these been resolved?**

**Tazneem Wentzel:** Of course, we have had disagreements. I think our process is when there is a disagreement, the easier way to solve it is to bring everybody together and talk about what the disagreement is about, a lot of the times it has nothing to do with you, maybe someone is going through a personal whatever. Maybe to talk about whatever is bothering them – that was our approach, to have a meeting and to talk about what is the issue.

**Justin Davy:** Your first questions about people leaving people are free to do what they want there is nothing keeping them, no contract binding them to Burning Museum.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** It is totally understandable if at some point you have other things you need to pursue. Even though you are not a part of doing the exhibitions you will always be a part of Burning Museum, you will always be in my mind at least, Grant and Scott will always be part of Burning Museum even if they are not members anymore because they played an important part and we respect their decisions to pursue their won paths, that is also fine, that is also part of what we wanted, it was one of our ideas to open up new avenues for members.

**Justin Davy:** Burning Museum is not the be all and end all of our artistic careers. Like Tasneem said, we came together to open up opportunities for us collectively and individually and that's what has happened and there are no grudges

**Tazneem Wentzel:** We would work with individual members whenever, it's not as if the relationship has changed between us as individuals. It is also difficult as a collective, as it takes a lot of time and you also need to get some sense of financial security.

**Justin Davy:** The ongoing conversation would evolve over time and at certain points people have taken a step back and not left completely, for some people, it became more permanent and they cannot commit the time and energy needed for the collective and they stepped back permanently.

**Deborah Weber: What about bringing in new members?**
**Tazneem Wentzel:** It has been discussed, for me personally it would be a bit harder to operate under the name of Burning Museum which I will always associate with certain people. There are people that we collaborate with but they are not necessarily members and there is a certain kind of dynamic between us. In a way, you would be trying to fill certain gaps and that would be too hard, better to start something else rather than trying to replace someone.

**Justin Davy:** For our specific collective, introducing new people, especially after the first year of being together was not possible anymore. We formed such a chemistry and also familiarity, knowing each other's strengths, weaknesses and quirks. We became a family, are still a family, there was one time, when Grant tried to introduce somebody and it was awkward, we have shared so much already and you can't just put someone new in the space. But there are also other collectives, where the beginning premise of why they come together is more open and freer and is a lot looser and fluid of people coming in and out. For us it was quite important to be closed for a certain amount of time and consolidate something together, our trust was with each other and was hard to include other people.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** Like we said earlier, when another person made a decision you had complete trust in the decision they were making, we were very open to collaborate with other people and collaborated with a lot of people but the unit itself that was the boundary of that, is very closed. Future Nostalgia was a music collective, it started the same time as us and had very similar ways of thinking, so it was very easy to work with them and very nice to work with them.

**Justin Davy:** Grant was in both collectives so there was a bridge.
**Tasneem Wentzel**: It was nice to have visuals and sound, together at events.
**Justin Davy**: That was some of our best work, those collaborations with them, like the poets, like Jethro. We have worked with groups of five people in other collectives as well.

**Deborah Weber: What has been your best work so far in your trajectory for you and that you felt inspired by?**
**Justin Davy:** For me it was the work we did in Germany, it ended up being quite personal, we went to this missionary archive outside Dresden, we went there because Tasneem and I both have links to this missionary history. There is a church in South Africa called the Moravian Church and our families are both linked to this church, so I expected to find something there about my family and I did. I found my grandfather and great grandfather and ended up making work which we found in this archive and made a performance which was a proper "Fuck You". It was called the mission and the

message, the sermon was about the missionary position, the performance took the form of a funeral service and we were mourning the death of colonialism (can view on blog). We all presented a piece of the order of service, as members of the church that were all subversive. I did a prayer and Tasneem a eulogy. There was a vote of thanks and we sang songs from the Moravian church tradition. For me a lot of things culminated together in one thing.

**Deborah Weber: Who was the audience for that?**
**Tazneem Wentzel:** Germans, we were very frustrated by that entire process and the constant need to substantiate, people asking us all the time, what are your references and have you read this book about our own history and we were like, are you serious? By the end of it I think it was cathartic for us at some point and we had to do it for our own sanity.

**Justin Davy:** In many ways it felt like we were being told how to interrogate our own history. Because our history is locked up in archives across Europe, especially Missionary history and colonial history there are objects, pictures that belong to us also, we came there trying to unlock this for ourselves and we were being told how to do this. You know you must have citations for all your things and we were like, fuck you, we want to do it how we want to do it. This belongs to us, these are pictures of my family here, even though you took the picture. So, it was like we were going to do it our own way.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** Maybe their dynamics of an invite are very different to our dynamics of an invite and by the end of the trip, that is what we came to realise, that there are maybe cultural dynamics that we do not understand about the invite.

**Justin Davy:** Yes, there were a lot of cultural misfiring's. Also, the invite is to be there for a month, but the stipend only gets paid in the second week that we were there.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** This is at a time when the Euro was at its strongest to the Rand.
**Justin Davy**: We were like three struggling artists, eating bread and kebabs, waiting to get paid and expected to make work that is academically excitable. Going into the formal spaces there is always a sense of rebellion, as our first home is the street where we don't have to answer those questions and we can do what we want, so there is always going to be a built in resistance to the formal spaces and authorities I guess.

**Deborah Weber: Have you ever run into the authorities in terms of the street work?**
**Tazneem Wentzel:** The City of Cape Town started following us on Facebook and wanted to co-opt us into beautifying the City. That was not going to happen.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** My favorite experience, it was an intense process, we did so much work and we had to put up all this work and the process of walking around the train lines at the early hours of the morning, that was for me the most fun and scary.

**Deborah Webe**r : **Did they consider what you were doing illegal, the city?**
**Tasneem Wentzel**: Yes, it was illegal.

**Deborah Weber: did they ever stop you or did they let you do your thing?**
**Tazneem Wentzel:** No – yes.

**Deborah Weber: Going back to the Germany show – was it the curators?**
**Tazneem Wentzel and Justin:** Curators and Administrators.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** There is a historical awkwardness between Europe and Africa to begin with and lot of the times I don't think they are aware of the way they are treating artists from Africa, it is very

reminiscent of things you have read about, just the entitlement of telling you how to interpret your own history. Those kinds of things.

**Deborah Weber: Were you able to have a conversation with them?**
**Justin Davy:** We did, but I don't think we said everything we wanted to say.
**Tasneem Wentzel**: It is difficult to have an honest conversation with these people because they are very different, these particular people who we were working with, it was so awkward to have a conversation with them in the first place.

**Justin Davy:** It was multiple things, the money, not getting paid, multiple frustrations, which ones do you talk about first.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** When we arrived, they came with a basket of fruit and vegetables and I thought this is very nice, but something is wrong here, you should get your envelope when you arrive.

**Justin Davy:** You should get your stipend.
**Tasneem Wentzel**: When you have to bring up the conversation with them about the money, it is very humiliating, why am I having to ask for something we have already agreed on, it could be a very simple conversation but became awkward.

**Deborah Weber: How do you manage your legacy and afterlife of the work?**
**Justin Davy**: I think it is important that we have created an archive, physically and an archive of the mind of ephemeral works that are no longer, an archive of the mind in the public imagination. I think that is important because we got together to combat the challenges we faced regularly, to make it somehow easier for those who come after us and for me that starts to have an archive to build upon. Of course we have also had archives to build upon, others artists who look like us, other artist of colour and I guess we are building on that, the legacy then is to enrich that archive so that there are references for people coming after us, dealing with their own history, the history of black people in the city, in the country, dealing with the colonial archives – going across to Europe as we have been sharing with you now, of dealing with Museums and all their bureaucracy, those experiences, those lessons I would like to leave as a legacy. I do not know if we are doing that, we have not written down much about our lessons that we have learnt, but hopefully that would be my ideal legacy – a suppository of lessons.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** Another thing we have done is workshops with young people, to teach the methodology so young people can learn that they do not necessarily need a canvas and expensive material to re-imagine their history, you can use whatever, showing young people the process of blowing up an A4 work and the experience of cutting and pasting it is very important. The thing with the archive is that there are gaps, there are things that you will never be able to find, so teaching them to work within in the gap with whatever is available, to stitch back into it, even if it is just momentarily in the public imagination.

**Justin Davy:** The metaphor that Tasneem used about stitching, that is quite central to our work, because it is about stitching together parts, it closing up gaps, imagine new parts and stitching into what's already there, that is exactly how we make our work we stitch, that is the ultimate method of what we do.

**Deborah Weber: Please tell me about your sustainability?**
**Justin Davy**: At the moment we have taken a bit of a break all of us are trying to find financial sustainability. It is difficult with a collective, it is difficult, last year we had a studio for three years so most of our income artist fee and production fees are divided and a lot of time is going straight to rent so a lot of the time you are not earning an income and you need other alternatives.

**Justin Davy:** This is always going to be our challenge as we make work that is not easily framed and sold, the option is to look for funding and it is not always the option we want to follow as there are conditions with funding.

**Justin Davy:** We are on hiatus at the moment, we had an intense four years and now we are reflecting on the lessons we have been talking about and letting things sink in.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** Things were happening very quickly, we put up work and from then on in a month or two things were happening, it was very intense

**Justin Davy:** I do not think it is coincidence that we are taking a break and we need to take a break from the collective and working at that pace, it is what is needed now, in order to recharge our batteries in order to start again in the future.

**Justin Davy:** I think the research that you are doing is great but it needs to be more tangible, info about sustaining art practice, it is a big question in South Africa. I see a lot of artists getting taken advantage of and getting exploited, we have had our problems and I am sure iQhiya has had their problems in dealing with the art world. I think we need something more; a lot of people are saying the same thing. I do not know how to get there.

**Tazneem Wentzel:** Where do you go when you have a problem with a curator, we don't have anywhere to turn. At the same time, you have to worry about the fact if you say anything out loud, what impact that is going to have on your future career? There is no accountability for curators and galleries who treat artists badly and the end of the day the artist has a lot more power than we realise, but it comes with a lot of implications.

**Justin Davy:** That is part of why we formed a collective was to gain some power as together we had more power, bargaining power or whatever power than we did individually. In the beginning it was about visibility and getting yourself out there and as artists of colour it's not easy as a black artist, maybe it is becoming easy? How to formalise and create structures that help people like us?

## INTERVIEW THREE
## BY DEBORAH WEBER WITH DATHINI MZAYIYA FOR GUGLECTIVE

**Deborah Weber: How did you come to be a collective, and what were the influences that shaped your formation?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** Few of us started off having small meetings, most of us were already practicing artists. Mostly painting and animation, we started we were about four at the meetings – the interest was to involve other people – so the idea of the collective was born out of I guess the interest of self-reliance and self-management and doing our own things, and of course from experiences from some of us who were already practicing as artists in the field. Part of it was that we felt too much rejection with so called professional art spaces where artists get to showcase, with that kind of struggle we thought if we came as group and formed our own thing we can do justice for to ourselves and we were passionate about sharing other things, so we imagined a kind of centre that would offer these create practice and experiences, then looking at all the forms of arts that exited in our communities we thought of something diverse and dynamic, music hip hop poetry theatre play writing dance visual arts, film, animation (we were ambition in the sense) our first meeting when we were trying to form the collective was about 30 people

The first four people was myself, Lenwabo, Kemang, Unathi and Themba Tsosti, we were kind of introduced to each other then, the person I knew was Lenwabo and Kemang and Kemang at that time was at AMAC and we used to go to AMAC and offer studio practice and Kemang was one of the students. So, after he graduated there, he visited us at our studio. Ideas then developed around

that, also Unathi I got to meet him through Kemang and Themba. Then we met other guys, Khanyi, Zipho, Athi Jo Jo also came in later, he was a Ruth Prowse before and then started at Stellenbosch University. As time went the number reduced from that thirty, I guess some were not that passionate and of course maybe the vision was near clear enough, so we ended up being eight people. That formed then the core known member of the collective, but we still we involved other guys especially on the first show we did and featured the very guys we wanted to be members, one group now is well known a local group called Driemans Skaap, a hip hop group and many other guys performance also live music and DJ's, (all the guys were then on the first show) but of course again the challenges I guess were how are we going to work and how do we become one group but be diverse in terms of the material we produce? For example, music with hip hop and the fine arts practice, it was challenging to imagine, with us we would sit and come up with concepts and each member knows where he or she feels strong and can contribute accordingly or even suggest what other members can come in.

Especially in the performative work which for most for us was the first time to do in a collective. So, to come up with how we do it, required a deeper thinking and experimentation. We wanted to contribute to knowledge production and awareness in the communities we were living in about the conditions in the communities, so most of the works were themed around what we wanted to inspire in the communities where we function, for example us functioning at the shebeen. Given the history of how townships are designed and how such spaces also later became post 1994, whereas before 1994 the shebeen was the very spaces that artists, musicians and intellectuals came from, but now the shebeens have become spaces of substance abuse where we drink, not necessarily engaging with the problems we have in our surrounding, not together but every man for himself. So lifestyle that promote individualism rather than co-existence, the consciousness was not like before where activism was at the centre of being and living so people have stopped being sensitive for example to where the shebeens are situated and now shebeens are situated next to schools and things like that. So we decided to change the environment a little bit and intervene in a way that the very spaces can become a space of learning and knowledge production while participating in the culture that exists and of course bring to the fore things that people may be shy or scared or lazy to talk about if you like, such as the design of the township itself and such information people do not have. So we started doing research around that, especially architectural drawing in an area like Gugulethu and how the houses were designed and how much that interferes with your traditional practice or cultural practices or if you like rituals that people are doing; for example if you were to slaughter a cow, you do not have the space to do that, so those kind of challenges, the design and how the area is planned plays against what people are used to doing. So in the second show it was highlighted in one of the works, specifically the concept was championed by Themba, who was a playwright. It was about the kraal when there is a traditional ceremony, the kraal is traditionally for men and then the architectural design how do you build it in such a space – so these were topics.

The kraal is built out of tree branches so usually when you are bringing tree branches in a certain house it is already a sign of a traditional ceremony that will take place so people respond. But when they came it was only an artwork – the work was so successful that it got us engaged with the locals challenging the purpose and of course the sensitivities around it and using it – with of course all the stereotypes – it became clear after all and people thinking about these types of challenges and the meanings.

So I would say the collectivism itself as a form of practice and where it is easier than when you are doing something individually and the processes and of course when one has to work with others especially working in the art industry, artists are used to working as individuals rather than a collective, this has become a sort of medicine, also gaining as an individual while you are contributing in a collaborative process. Where you learn to be and forget about the self a little bit, as we know that in the art scene there has not been that much promotion of collaborative work and collective works because they have always been challenging and this is what we experienced as a collective, where our ideas did not matter that much more than the gallery who wants to represent you. The gallery wants to be recognised first, and the culture of signing artists, can you really sign a

collective? Can the collective belong to a gallery and be in some sort of contract? So, a lot of things became clear and of course individuals from the collective became part of galleries which is fine. I guess it goes with the individual again, for myself I am keeping with the ethos of the collective, I am not signed, still.

I enjoy my freedom and being able to create what I feel without all the censoring, which I felt developed later, with the interest around our collective. The fears of empowered artists or by the establishment or the scene of giving the artists the entire freedom or trusting the artists' in what he/she is doing without thinking about the audience and who will be consuming after, this became the issues especially with the content that we were talking about. So I would say there has always been a culture of censoring art, (to maybe be more explicit) the content we were engaging was informed by existing politics and politics of practice, the intention was that of total freedom of artists, we could partner and work with spaces but because we are engaging politics which not everyone has the appetite to really listen to. Until today the problems are still the same with such interventions like our collective.

I will be honest to say that we were becoming more exhibitionist in the gallery spaces than the work that we wanted to do, we were not against showcasing a bit of what we do in other spaces but then we got consumed. And we forgot the work that we were supposed to do on the ground which was to spread the idea of collectivism in the areas we spoke about so the relevance was lost in those spaces, so then we felt ourselves having to justify ourselves as the things we were talking about were far from these people. The topics of violence and things that take place on the others side (in the townships) and having to prepare a very formal way of presenting it on white walls of galleries, so it became a little but cheesy, to customise and trim the work to look presentable, there was a lot that was being compromised. The idea of using the shebeen as a space was to set up an example of what could be possible of such spaces, that they could be cultural spaces and later we ran lectures in the shebeen like Mlami's space which totally changed the space from a negative space to a space where people were coming with their kids for art workshops, whereas before it was a space that everyone avoided and walked far away from.

In this sense the collective practice, as this point now, when we speak of the collective we speak of a temporal thing, a small project. I cannot wait to finish working and then I am back to my safe space again, so it's not as committed. If you look at yourself as an artist that had a social responsibility and you are also engaging in your work such topics it is easy to engage with the side you are representing, There is an essential part in my practice, being introduced to what has been left behind by the TRC process and see how much damage has been done, it explains a lot why in the very areas (townships) there is still distortion and life is distorted and violence is on another level. Going out and coming in, using public transport and trains and listening to people you get a sense of the anxiety and fears and those are not new things. At the core Gugulective wanted to intervene in the betterment of these communities with the idea of grooming young people to start doing things in the arts, culture and creative sector, our idea of creating a center that would inspire was not supported by the very people who were saying they were agents of arts and culture who we worked with up to this day and instead we became those artists that just exhibit a piece of work. In a culture in the arts where we are making super stars. this is where we ended, it is a very materialistic state and it does not take us anywhere but a short term celebration of your name and if you got damaged in the process, then you are forgotten as they make another super star.

**Deborah Weber: How do you make decisions in your collective? (artistic and business decisions)**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** From concept, ideas around the works, member would contribute ideas they had been having for ages and never tried or had difficulty approaching them individually. We would have a string of such ideas and we would decide with what was on the table, remembering we were keeping the style of the collective, we had an idea for how we wanted the idea to come out and how we wanted to represent ourselves and that had to reflect on the work itself and the processes of testing out the artwork the material we would be using. We would experiment and put together ideas

and work in groups or two's, depending. There will always be a person you feel more comfortable sharing with, and if it needed some sort of research, maybe not a library research or an environment that we wanted to check out we made notes and came back to feed into the work. There was a process of experimentation and testing out and then finalising and others would write about the work, we had two specific guys who were more writers, it was Themba and Unathi.
I would say we had mostly organic processes and experimentation so it could happen at a lunch at one of the members house, that something could come up because we aware on the same page about what we wanted to achieve, then some of decisions would be made by two or three people who would decide that is where we would stop and tighten up – it was very democratic. Up to a point when we would send two members of the collective even one to represent the collective overseas, it got to that point. We trusted each other and the creative impulses. If someone wanted to change something because they were challenged by a set up then it was fine.
We spent a lot of time together, we did go on outings to different places together, when there was negative energy (which happens when you work together) for everyone to loosen up.
We had verbal agreements, it was informal, there was formality when we were interacting with other spaces amongst us is was more not to restrict the flow, we did not really formalise.
We had younger guys who had never practiced professionally as artists and so it was the idea for the experienced artist were in the background and the younger members were the face of the collective and communication so we were promoting the younger people.

**Deborah Weber: Do you have an agreement(s) in place, and if not how do you manage your copyright and IP?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** We had different members responsible for writing, documenting, communicating with media. Responsibilities were also passed on if one person was not available and we also had sight of what was being published, but some people were dodging and would publish things that were not agreed upon – it is a habit that is there, we had people going to speak at conferences overseas speaking about the collective without consulting – things like that.

**Deborah Weber: How do you manage roles within the collective?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** At first the idea of introducing fresh talent and also becoming the face, having experienced artists working with younger artists who had no experience. Most of us who could talk would do interviews, but for that responsibility for talking to media we had members who were writers. We had four people in the collective who used to write and depending on what needed to be expressed consulting with others in articulating on how we as the collective wanted to be seen.
In decision making, it was the role of the entire collective, also depending on availability of members and who was closer. Most of us were doing different projects in different spaces and some of us were in different countries; so we used to trust that two or three people could make a decision on behalf of the collective.

**Deborah Weber: did you put any structures in place to help you communicate?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** Meetings were a part, especially when there was a query of disagreement between collective members, we would go through a voting process, it is a very hard one and usually meeting could become very long. For instance if we were to get a show outside the country and we were invited to go and participate, we could not take the entire collective to be there. The first choice would be the ones who put more work in the piece that we felt strong about, it was also important that the people who participated the most would also be considered first, that would result in maybe two or three members would go, and we would vote on that. Depending on if it was performative or installation would also influence who would attend, when we would write about one piece we would have diff members writing about the piece we would either chose the strongest or maybe combine the two pieces. There is always a challenge in reaching a point where everyone agreed and this can usually drag and become intense. Sometimes we would take a break on it and rethink and come back through via emails, phone calls, SMS and so on.

**Deborah Weber: did you find the voting process was an easy way to make a decision? How did you deal with conflict?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** There was always feelings (of not being heard, or not consulted or acknowledged) how did you deal with this? There was always that kind of feeling, in a collective it is also a learning process, learning to work together, we did not really nail it. We get along as friends and also we got along in the process of collective work, sometimes we don't get along and piss each other off due to not being consulted but we had a way of resolving it. We were always questioning the role for the individual in a collective, must the self always be forgotten so that you give space to the collective thinking? Leading the projects in an intense debate in the producing of an artwork, these are fights, some people would not come back after meetings, key members would then need to intervene, talk and bring peace so that we could work again.

The ideology of the collective or the movement. We decided we wanted to be a black only collective as we felt this was something we wanted to highlight, later that reality was challenged by a lot of things in the art scene itself, some people wanted to join but we could not let that happen. These were things we were always debating; to stick on the idea of the collective, there we were not apologetic to the fact that we wanted this dimension of the collective, also functioning mostly in the township, sometimes depending on the hype of things if the majority decide they don't mind to participate on a different idea of what the collective tried to promise itself to do, you flow, as much as you can, maybe you are not fully in. You could chose to not participate in a certain project. The better terms we were amongst ourselves the better we were when participating in something external.

The problems with leadership, was also another challenge we had to tackle. One learns this like in the music industry when you start to get recognition and start to get to self-centred, sometimes you cannot help these kind of situation and sometimes the collective cannot do anything about it. Sometimes you have to let it be or to confront it or you are not part of the collective thinking but we would not chase someone out of the collective. People left and came back by themselves, you may go and deal with your pain and come back or members would peruse you to come back, we have had those kinds of situations, we have not really had a situation where we have asked someone to leave.

**Dathini Mzayiya:** For example, as a critical collective first we used critical collective thinking and looking in the collective and outside the collective, as ideas of how we participate and why we participate, those kinds of questions will come up. Maybe we get an invite for example or discussion to be part of a show. What is the idea of the collective is always scrutinised so that it informs us. Why we should or should not be part of it, so of course the founding documents speaks strongly about why the collective, later it will always be challenged and there will be compromises because it may mean we do not participate in projects or get the attention we want – so conflicts on participating on a project or exhibition had to would be really mostly affected by the idea of the collective. We would have members that would be naturally interested and willing to compromise a little a bit, so we had conflicts around us not keeping to the founding document, so we would resolve it by participating in an interesting way so that we would not be neglecting the ideas in the founding document – why the collective and how we would like to be. So those kinds of conflicts we really brushed them off in a way – because we did not want to lose each other because we believed we had bigger plans and big ideas. Our collective did not really have formal funding so we were financing most of our projects, conflicts around those kind of things came up. who was putting in what and we always had to find a way, either sometimes by participating in a show to get money to finance us. Which made sense but we still wanted to come out bold and original without sacrificing. Some other conflicts were natural, that we would disagree about most things, with debating it would depend on whether you could take the debate or not, everyone had to contribute or support.

**Deborah Weber: How do you distribute and manage your finances?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** We had a formal bank account. When we opened the account the idea is that we all chipped in money, for some us we could sell paintings and donate, we also had a house for our meetings, two members were staying there but that is where we held our meetings and it was our base. It ended up being in a situation that the ones who were staying in the place ended up paying but we took it as a way of donating so we had a space, we were living right next door to Mlami Place in Gugulethu.

When there was enough money we paid artists fees but the kind of work we were doing was not really money generating, until later when we did the show with Goodman Gallery and we did the prints (*Debt don't Rot*) There we had editioned prints and today there are still people buying that work. What ended up happening was this money went to recompensating the members who donated more – also relief for others that they are able to work. So now as a collective we are not functioning. I would not say we are not there, we come and go, maybe there might be one day a consciousness that comes back to say let's do it again and most for us are still friends but people are busy with our individual projects which I think is good. But it has compromised the idea of the collective and its kind and the work that was never achieved – what good it had done – was for those were practicing for the first time, it was a platform for them, today they are practicing recognised artist and are successful. Even the first-time curators and writers were noticed.
It opened up networks, introduced members to people they would not have met as an individuals, – the collective was interesting, there was a good response and met interesting people who we are still in touch with to this day. The writers in the collective are still contributing text on behalf of the collective, some articles are coming out in publications in Europe and USA recently. But in practice people are in recess….(laughs). Unathi…Unathi was one of the anchors of the collective and true believer, he had a lot of faith in all of us and in the collective, he was intelligent, at times he played the role of being coordinator of project we were doing, finding solutions to problems in the collective.

He was a good friend and very generous with his time his put into the collective. He was a thinker and a good organiser and brilliant artist who was not selfish, that was the beauty in him, made him more generous to think in a group and debate ideas. Beautiful heart.

**Deborah Weber: did something change in the collective when he passed?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** A lot; at the time before his death the collective was not doing well as he was not doing well, we had personal stresses vs the collective project and surviving in the everyday which is always a challenge. Keeping up with your personal life and work and then sharing with your collective members, at this time there was a kind of split, he felt that people were neglecting the collective was one of the stresses. I was very close to him and we would talk a lot about the collective.

At this time, the collective project was very fragile and he went through a kind of depression and through the depression he started engaging with other people he knew, spending most of his time with them, surrounding himself with people who were jealous - who come unsuspectingly asking for help but became some sort of unsuspecting enemy. I noticed these kind of characters he was hanging around with were wasting his time and crowding his space, with stress he started drinking a lot and experimenting, so his passing was created by that kind of surrounding. Before this a number of us had spoken and were concerned about the fragility of the collective – we had our last meeting with him in Gugs it was the 16th of December that year on a Sunday, he stayed in Obs I stayed in Woodstock, after the meeting everyone felt refreshed and tried to do away with whatever disagreements we had. But there were these people who were always there, they wanted to part of this kind of project but were not as focused as we would have liked, not disciplined, so we came back from this meeting on 16th Dec and went out for a drink. We ended up going home around 3am in the morning. He went to his flat in Observatory and on the Monday I received a call from his sister in Gugs to say they are trying to get hold of him, so I tried calling the guys to see if anyone had heard anything from Unathi, then I started to try and look for him, his phone was on voicemail. We were getting worried and on the 25th we found him dead in his flat with his throat cut and they tried

to make it look like a suicide. When I heard that I did not buy that story knowing his flat I could not believe, rumours started spreading that two of the guys that were always around him killed him but the police and the forensic investigation says he hanged himself, so I do not think they did their work, there was not proper investigation into that case. The suspects are people we know and are still around us and this is very sensitive information. In my personal belief he never showed such signs so it was impossible and hearing from other people the kind of fights he had with the very same guys it was as if he knew they were going to kill him. It is unbelievable and of course it affected the collective and it was also at a time there was a cracking in the collective project, so since then we have not done anything together, the only thing that was organised were his drawings and paintings that were exhibited, he still has plenty of works.

I know these guys and they know, I know the rumours and you see signs when someone feels guilty and there is something you have not told us properly. He once confronted us to say we were the ones spreading the rumours but it was other people. For something like this I cannot take revenge for Unathi because I would not be doing justice for me or Unathi – this is life, let nature take its course.

**Deborah Weber: who are still the loose member of the collective?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** We are scattered, I am sure one day we will come together and work on a project it is Athi Jo Jo, Myself, Kemang, Zipho, Khanisile , Lonwabo and Themba.

**Deborah Weber: what is your vision of the future?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** One would be the importance of the collective work and us who are members for us to work together again, sometime what gets to artists in a very commercialized art field is that we are being taught to be individuals and to be these individual super stars, so these are mostly the aspirations and these are signs you see everywhere in Cape Town, Johannesburg and the fight to recognised as being this individual that makes you successful or better than others.

The medicine is still the collective, you cannot be on your own forever you need the collective to rehabilitate and deal with the ups and downs. As we know, history has shown us in this field that you go and you fall, so the smartest way is not to create enemies as you go, as when you fall you at least fall in safer hands with people who will rehabilitate or assist you in your rehabilitation of some sort which I feel is something really needed. We can still embrace our individuality but there is a collective responsibility, in South Africa to be specific. We know things are not happening properly in our society, currently we are scattered based on opportunities. You get preferred because you are not going to bring trouble or you get money because you are not too critical, how you enter into the scene is almost you are selling one side of yourself, sometime you do not always have a choice but we do. Culturally we are still poor and not united, we have very good artists and thinkers and at the moment we are all doing it for money and have not contributed to our immediate surrounding and what needs to be done, hence we see there is even more crime and more homelessness, coming again from the ethos of our collective and our vision was us making our surrounding better and contributing intellectually and in many other ways in our communities as culture workers and artist, engaging issues without compromising. We do not have time for this because we are employed and doing work outside of your immediate surrounding and are wanting to be relevant, individuality has been implanted, we are all selfish and not working together, so now friendship is also about what kind of connections you have and so on, to be in that circle, a lot of pretence and friendships based on how deep your pocket is. It became dangerous for an individual because you always have to prove you are successful and everything is going well. Artists are caught up as workers for a cultural space that is for people who are already converted - at least the work should be seen by the very people you are talking about and your subject matter, so your work becomes displaced as you are putting it in a space where it will lose its context/content and is in the wrong hands, but of course you are going to get money of it gets sold but the life of it becomes something else.

It is very interesting times, looking at how art is also used to gentrify places, the example is the very area we are in now Woodstock. How artists do not see themselves as contributing, we are

becoming a very part of that which would displace us once they get tired of us, it's happening. Everyone seems to be trying to keep our heads above water while our bodies are under. That is the challenge and I wish artists would wake up, why should we be taken seriously if we can contribute to galleries that displace people in Woodstock, I think artists need to come to their senses, the collective is the medicine, you cannot do it alone, you get trapped and overwhelmed, the last time you remembered you were critical and now you cannot remember or you being critical is just a line now that entertains the very people you think you are critical too. I think there is so much work that needs to be done before it is too late, it is already late.

**Deborah Weber: what do we need to do?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** Self-reflection which we are scared to do, looking at yourself from a stranger's eyes and your success being determined through this external eye not from within, we are not committed and they are realities here.

**Deborah Weber: what does that commitment look like?**
**Dathini Mzayiya:** We want to see ourselves as a community first, doing good first for yourself and for the next person, not to bypass problems or make excuses like we do not have time. The things that occupy us every day tells us how much we are participating or not. Self-reflection and honesty and recognising the need can put us together, we are not centred ourselves. The homelessness that is happening in Woodstock and Cape Town and you are not diagnosing the problem, we do not want to invest time into that problem because we have our own problems or we are busy. The entire practice of art it needs rehab, we started a concept of rehab sessions for artists who maybe have forgotten what is the role of art and activism in society – we need full time rehabilitation for us to come back to our senses again and to be collectively responsible for our social environment and to think again – there is much that needs to be done – not only for recognition bit for your own spiritual good. I hope it will get us back to fresh thinking and work.

## INTERVIEW FOUR
## BY DEBORAH WEBER WITH THULI GAMEDZE FOR IQHIYA

**Deborah Weber: you were talking about – broadly what happens when the collective become absorbed into the institution?**
**Thuli Gamedze:** So, what I was getting started with, was whether or not the art museums or the art institutions wants to put its value on art collectives as some of the spaces don't. We were talking about how working collaboratively and in a collective goes against the inherintness of the art institutions, and is something I also struggle with as a writer, is to try to use art to talk about current politics and injustice in South Africa as opposed to the other way around, I am not interested in the art really.

I feel as soon as the art institutions stops someone doing something subversive or that clashes with their philosophies of individualism, then they try and map/nab that thing and make it apart of itself.

So, for instance, with our collective this is this kind of dancing with the institution and then we did Documenta which is THE institution you know. I don't know what I think should happen to the art institution but I think that it is in many ways problematic because it has the power to make something that could exist to change real social and economic and political structures, it absorbs it into the institutions where we can now have detailed conversations about dismantling structures. It could be incredible revolutionary but it is happening within the institution. I do have a certain pessimism about what can happen but then again, I am writing a thesis as well and part of what I am trying to say it that maybe working inside a place can do something – I am not sure.

**Deborah Weber: How do collectives work in these structures?**
**Thuli Gamedze:** I suppose what's important with our collective is that we need to acknowledge that we did not set out trying to make a collective, the first thing that we wanted to do was make an exhibition together of all of our individual works so of course there is some aspects of collectivising there, but we were first not as a collective of black womxn but as individuals who practice art.
So then after some issues with Michaelis, I don't know if you know this story but this is one of the things that spurred us on the most. We would like the Michaelis Gallery, because we are all from Michaelis obviously, to have an exhibition of black womxn so were going to do that, so we put in a proposal and they accepted it and then they went quiet and then we saw an open call online for the time slot that they have given us for exhibition proposals – so they fucked us over.
So, we had obviously been meeting about this exhibition and what is the statement we are trying to make and then this happened at Michaelis which got us talking even more about our experiences, and so we still wanted to have an exhibition obviously. We got some support from the Centre of Humanities at UCT Upper Campus and they helped us with some funds and we considered then having it at Centre for African Studies at the upper campus gallery and then we were advised against it and we decided to move away from University of Cape Town. The important thing was the conversation that it spurred, and around then we decided that we were going to conceptualise as a network of artists as a support structure for all of this kind of bullshit and then before that exhibition happened there was a booth at the Art Africa Fair and then there was the first performance of the Portrait at Greatmore, and that was the first collective piece and I think after that people just started calling us a collective and we also realised that in many ways we sort of were because we started making work together and making work that was about how the art institution has been treating us as individuals and now also as a whole group.

So then after our first exhibition at the AVA we started getting a bunch of opportunities and interviews and we were like – what! And it's kind of varies between art institution-ish stuff and a lot of the work we were making was trying to sit outside of that. So like *The Commute* at Iziko, no it was before the AVA so I guess it was *The Portrait* and *The Commute* that people started thinking about us as a collective because we were working like that and we were performing so there was not really an object and *The Commute* was very relational and participatory it did not really operate like an institutionalised art object.

And then it was all about us making an exhibition and it was going to be Michaelis and then it moved to AVA – which is important because it was an NGO. One thing is that different from the Gugulective who were never trying to be in the institution, I think we wanted to pursue that, most of us were practicing within the art institution in some way already, so it was not about being anti but occupying the space, now we have done Documenta, and I think the danger is that we would start to put on stuff that has to do with an art institution, even within South Africa to be doing stuff with Galleries and we felt quite antagonistic about the Goodman show that we did – that is when we did the vinyl that says '*we are not a performance collective'* because they asked for a performance and we were like…aaah not again, there are only three performance artists in our whole collectives.

We want to make sure we make our own exhibitions and own interventions so we are doing an exhibition in July at KZNSA Gallery as we want to go within South Africa. KZNSA Gallery as an art institution the impression I get is that it is a commercial space like Stevenson but connected to the University. Four or Five people are going up for that to run some workshops, it's an exhibition and its definitely within an institution but this venue is the kind of choice we would make, to do stuff within the country and go to Durban for instance, like a smaller city, there is a sense that we would like to visible as black womxn making art, more importantly, so that can we carry on, it really felt that there we were not seeing enough black womxn working in the institutions.

I imagine a lot of collectives just end up starting and do not necessarily plan it, some do, but I get the impression that often there is probably a series of event that puts people into a situation where they realise they have to address together, with us because we started out as a network there has never been a necessity to create a collective manifesto for instance, so within the group so many

people think so many different things about art, what art can do, what art is – across the board it is very difficult to make a claim that we believe this and this. We all agree that black womxn and black queer people and black trans people have been largely been written out and dismissed and when they are not, are objectified within the artworld, we all agree about that, and we work collaboratively in relation to that or in relation to something that someone proposes to the group. But beyond that core of understanding and recognising ….that affects us incredibly differently, in that sense things might have changed, but everyone has always been thinking their own thing, definitely the collective has gotten some people like Bronwyn a lot of recognition, for me the recognition changes people approaches and how much time they have and what they want from the space.

It is just so different with every person, ego is a huge demobilising factor of the institution. UCT did the very same to activists in RMF, they individualised people in the court interdicts and a movement that was nonpartisan and collective now becomes fragmented and simultaneously those who are called out for it becomes heroes as well but also become more victimised by the institution. I don't think individualism ever really helps anyone, personally, within a collective.

I am an artist and writer but my reason for being in a collective aren't actually not connected to my individual practice, they might be connected to the things that I am writing about but I am personally not that interested in working with institutions and galleries. No one is going to say no to Documenta obviously, Gugulective might have said no to Documenta, but the Documenta opportunity was interesting and relevant to us. My interest is more in working collaboratively and not necessarily doing that for an audience or viewer but just as a participant, the audience and being looked at are not appealing to me personally, its more the process.

**Deborah Weber: How do you make decisions in your collective? (artistic and business decisions)**
**Thuli Gamedze:** Its really difficult, everyone is opinionated I suppose, there is a lot of conflict, there is also more quieter personalities. We were discussing this in Kassel a bit, that we need to open up our internal languages of communicating, because people who have a confrontational style end up being the ones who voice their frustrations and those whose style of communicating is more quiet and demand gentle approaches and not reactionary dialogue often get lost. Our decision-making process is meetings, our group is divided into committees. I am in the writing committee and there is treasury and marketing, there is temporary ones sometime – for example if people are doing a lot of admin for a project. Stuff will be delegated, banking and invoicing goes to Treasury. Emails, each person is responsible for responding to emails for a week, we get a week on emails and it runs alphabetically, which is a dodgy system, with your names, if you are too busy then you say sorry you cannot do it. We also have a what's app group.

**Deborah Weber: How do you manage roles within the collective?**
**Thuli Gamedze:** We are also discussing reshuffling peoples roles, to see if we can do it more efficiently, it all blends into one another. When we make collaborative work, it is always an open call, if anyone has an idea they want to put forward they can do that, we are democratic every person in the group has to be happy, that can be very complicated. We all agree on an idea and workshop it for a while, it changes a bit. We meet, usually there are people who cannot come. Often there will be at least one person skyping in, we have what's app meetings at certain times, we usually try and meet if it is for an artwork and discussing a work, then it is important to meet in person – that kind of the process – that anyone can put forward an idea – there is a lot of stuff within our group that we are quite bad at, I think in terms of admin and delegation, but our strength I would say is making collaborative work – everyone has a different artistic practice, and we have people from all over so when we make a work together that is what we do best. That seems to work.

**Thuli Gamedze:** There is a respect for people individuals careers, there is supposed be an agreement that I am not able to do emails or I am not able to do anything iQhiya related for the next month (than that's fine) there usually is an even work load but there is eleven people sometime it

can be frustrating at times. People think that someone is going to do it. Slightly off the record, talk about it loosely, there is a few of us who put a lot more in, in short, so it's difficult.

This is probably difficult with all collectives, in the beginning, I did not know exactly where things were going and I was not super involved, we had the conflict resolution meeting. We all had to (quite hectic) basically talk about one another and what we felt people should work on how we could be constituted better, but ended up being very helpful, I thought it was very intense. I do not think it was the best way but that is what happened. From there I felt a bit more sure of myself in the space, we weren't all friends with another, because of course we just wanted to make an exhibition together, then once we were in a collective together there were a lot of things we would discuss about interpersonal relationship and work structures, but some of us do a lot and some people don't do enough – that's how its working out – there is a bit of variance sometimes but there are people who are slightly more consistent.

When we actually make a work or do a performance – that often reaffirms everything that were doing, we have only made one object based collective work. Bonolo actually made the object which was based on an excerpt from a sound piece and it was called a Manifesto, that is what is what called, but it was not actually a Manifesto, we all just said what we thought the group was and we used the words we thought were the most useful. Bonolo made the object which was the words on polystyrene, for that she made the physical work, with the Commute, all these smalls things (what are we wearing, whose dealing with the driver, who is buying Kentucky Fried Chicken, communicating with gallery about budget, invoicing for performance fee, sound equipment, who is doing the write up for the Facebook event), usually the different pieces do come from lots of different places. I suppose it's just different depending on what you are doing or making.

For instance with Documenta we had curatorial assistant in Kassel and Athens, so communicating on a collective email with a different person every week is just ridiculous, so it depends on the project, so it just it a lot of admin and different things to think about at the same time and everyone does contribute in whatever way – it's tricky – admin is tricky – we fantasise about having a secretary, about having someone to do the admin but they would have to be a member. Usually with these projects there is the main person doing the communicating.

We are doing something next year in Dublin. Everything has only gotten busier in everyone lives with their own and the collective's stuff so it feels like there is a bit of stress at the moment. I think we are slowly getting better and knowing what is going to work and what is not, we are doing a project later in the year which we agreed to do and no one wants to do anymore. We are slowly becoming a bit more strategic and not saying yes too quickly and we want to be responsible in making most of our project, so there is an inherited not being sure of ourselves but we are slowly needing to acknowledge that we do have something to offer.

**Deborah Weber: Do you have an agreement(s) in place, and if not how do you manage your copyright?**
**Thuli Gamedze:** With copyright and photography we definitely had to learn about that, we have a form for our photographers if we ask someone to photograph a performance, often we get someone's partner to take photo's for us and he allows us to have the images, then in other cases we pay photographers and we want to own the image and we will credit the photographer but the image is owned by us, Buhle has a lawyer who is her uncle and he helped us make a contract for that.

We have been fucked over quite badly by the AVA , they still owe us a lot of money from the Johannesburg Art Fair because we sold the work *That Collective Manifesto* and it was paid for and we have still not received the money and bunch of our work was damaged, they were not moved properly. We kind realised we had no ground to deal with these things, people were given money

into their accounts and it was just flights and we still needed to travel around Johannesburg, we were invited to participate in some fancy Art Fair in Paris and we said no we can't, we do not want to work with people who do not respect us. There has been a couple of learning curves, even the Documenta Athens trip, was a bit of a nightmare, accommodation wise they were very disorganised, they dropped us off at three different Airbnb's and they left us for hours on the streets of Athens.

The one Airbnb was ok but there was four people there and three beds, the rest of us were in a hotel for a night and then they moved us the next day to a disgusting hotel due to budget, the shower did not work, wifi did not work, cockroaches, blankets were like dogs blankets, they made us feel like Diva's when we said we cannot stay there and we were there busy preparing for *The Portrait* which is one of the hardest performance and we were in this disgusting place. The whole tone from the curatorial assistant, it was blamed on us that there was so many of us 'because you are a collective you are not people who need to eat and sleep and shower' and it was very stressful.

Eventually they did move us but the ending tone and vibes with curatorial Director were really bad. So our impression of Documenta, was this is Documenta, neo-colonialism treatment of African artists, this is how you are going to treat the eleven young black womxn from South Africa, but then we had Kassel where we did have an amazing curatorial assistant who proved that it was not hard to be organised.

Maybe I am talking about this a lot as it feels relevant to the conversation about dealing with an institution and how do you protect yourself, you are so vulnerable, if you are on your own it must be worse, as a group there are so many micro aggressions, calling us 'girls' from someone who is not much older than us. Infantilism, so typical of how people treat black womxn, like the 'garden boy' and everything turned on us. Like we were being demanding and everything we were asking for was made to seem to hard even though it was her job to look after us and make sure the work was a good as it could be, so that was in some way a learning to protect yourself and being explicit about what you need in order to produce a work for something.

**Deborah Weber: What was your favourite work and why?**
**Thuli Gamedze:** That is my favourite work, the Kassel installation, I cannot recall whose idea it was first, it went through many changes, the first idea was to burn it down. It did always have the Sarafina in the background, the students being sick of learning about European history. the video and sound piece is them chanting 'Burn, Burn, Burn'

We showed in the old underground and it's an amazing space, a dark space underground. Viewers were allowed to walk amongst us, the performance was our individual responses to what the curriculum could mean, we spent eight hours working in the space on these school desks. I am reluctant to call it a performance and rather would call it a moving installation, people are working on things, so you are just watching someone working at their desk. People feel like they are a bit in the way. We talked amongst ourselves at times, in Xhosa so people could not understand, one person tried to talk to us. We agreed we could talk among ourselves but not talking to anyone else. I think the dynamic was interesting because it was awkward, everyone wore school uniforms, either directly from their high school something that they would have worn at school.

The collective played with constructing and deconstructing their work desks and curriculum in different ways in the space with 'Burn, Burn, Burn' playing in the background.

**Deborah Weber: How do you distribute and manage your finances?**
**Thuli Gamedze:** We have a collective bank account where everything goes, any monies, when we need stuff for a collective work then we use that money. One person has the bank card and there are two names in the signing of it and we always talk about the future when we will have money, no one gets paid from the collective or gets money and money gets used for the projects or reimbursement.

**Deborah Weber: How do you resolve disagreements?**
**Thuli Gamedze:** There are always many disagreements and people are very fiery. I do not like getting involved in stuff personally unless I feel strongly that someone is being unfair, like I said earlier there are people with more confrontational approaches. I like peace and do not like fighting about things and I would rather have a conversation, but there are personalities within the group that clash quite a lot. We have been discussing now in Kassel that we need to make sure that everyone is heard and not just those who are forthcoming about things, when that style of disagreements happens certain people never say what they feel. There are lots of disagreements and we will often have a meeting to discuss, there is also things that come up in the what's app group and people get upset and go and discuss it among themselves and come back, people fight about anything, people have very different styles. I got really angry recently around a document for a conference that was not done properly, because they were criticising me that we were late but it was the other person fault, so feeling like they are not getting enough support and working hard can cause disagreements. It's really hard and tough and I think disagreements and fights would probably be the things that would break us up if that ever happens, we are aware that basically what we need is just time to hang out and discuss things we want to do and not working, not always just producing would really help the dynamic, we don't have time at the moment.

We have always wanted to be a collective that made room for black womxn and so we have not had anyone else on board because we have been coming to terms with how difficult it is to do this work. But what we basically agreed on is that we have eleven of us that started this thing but within ten years we want the collective to continue but it won't necessarily be us involved, we just want the space to exist, we are discussing the healthiest way for us the collective to move forward is in relation to what us want as individuals. Also the fact as we all finish or most of us finish University and gone into the world there will be more black womxn that have to practice, at the moment it's unclear, people are super busy and overcommitted but we want it to exist as a space and for it not to be about the eleven of us specifically. So I think they what is probably going to happen is that people who move away etc. they will probably be replaced by someone, with the understanding that it is not as the collective falling apart – but carry on living – it is a discussion right now so I am reluctant to say. And I think fluid, more of a case of as people want to leave or have ideas of someone they want to invite, we are aware of how random the group is, it was all the black womxn at Michaelis.

## INTERVIEW FIVE
## BY DEBORAH WEBER WITH SHUDDHABRATA SENGUPTA FOR RAQS MEDIA

**Deborah Weber: Background, how did you meet, what was the founding thinking that brought you together and what were the kinds of things you have done?**
**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** Well we have known each other for more than 26/27 years, we met; Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula and I (Shuddhabrata Sengupta) in a media and communications school that we were all studying for our MA degrees in Delhi. It was called then the Mass Communications Research centre in Jamia Millia Islamia University and this was between 1989 and 91 that we were studying there and once we graduated in 91 and founded the collective in 92. We built our practice of working together both on a friendship and also on the fact that in a communications and film school you often work in groups and teams. We enjoyed working together very much and, in the time, that we were not working together we were often seeing things together; seeing films, reading books, discussing things, talking to each other learning from each other, on that basis of conversation we began our collective practice.

So around 1998 and 2000 in those two years we were beginning to chaff a little at the limits placed on how we would make things by the format of television and so on and we wanted to expand the definition of what we were doing and we wanted to interact with other forms of practice, knowledge

and activity. It was strange time, a time when the earlier incarnation of the present (then far right wing government was in power and had just inducted nuclear tests and there was a series of protests in New Delhi - which was silent protest) and it was a coming together of many communities who discovered each other for the very first time. That experience gave us an indication that the City had a possibility, that we could work with, that there were people interested in coming together to formulate a kind of new practice about what it meant to be living in a contemporary world. These experiences together with conversations we were having with two friends who were both academic theorists. One was a new media theorist called Ravi Sundaram and the other was a film historian called Ravi Vasudevan and they were both located at a research institute called the Centre for Study of Developing Societies led us to work on a proposal for creating cross media collaborative practice and research space – which we then christened as Sarai, named after the tradition of public houses and inns and travellers way stations that Delhi historically had.

So, Sarai was founded in 2000 and we ourselves were associated quite closely with it for more than a decade to 2012 when we had to curtail its range of activities because we ran into a series of funding roadblocks. But Sarai was in a sense the next step in our practice and provided a launching pad if you like not just for what we were doing but for a whole generation in India who were working in different media. Who were working in the beginnings of what would be today robust contemporary practices in the arts but also in journalism and literature, computing and so on. It was a very exciting and heady time and we were very much in the thick of it. During this time, we also created a media lab at Sarai where we could take our own practice further. This coincided with our first invitation into the contemporary art context that would begin with a small exhibition in Delhi that looked at new media art and then would go on to be invited to Documenta which was curated by Okwui Enwezor and also to exhibitions in Brazil and elsewhere and it was since around that time in 2000 that we found our anchorage within the global practices of contemporary art. So that is the short end of a long story.

**Deborah Weber: Could you speak a little more about the experience of moving as a new media collective at that time in Delhi? What was that experience like? Was it very new in terms of the kind of practice and work people were doing and how was your work received in Delhi compared to the international contemporary art scene? What that move to working in contemporary art was like for you as younger practicing artists?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** It was an intense transformational time and a lot of things were changing in the social and material fabric of the city, the city itself was undergoing an enormous upheaval and our early work registers that process as it looks at questions of habitation and how peoples claims on space and claims on communication get intertwined. We were looking at law and how the law was defining or trying to restrict claims on space, so there was a sense of being closely in contact with a sense of a changing and transforming city.

The practices that we were entering into were not at that time considered to be part of the vocabulary of the fine arts, let's say in India or Delhi, even though we were invited to important international exhibitions like Documenta, there was an initial scepticism and suspicion about whether or not we were even appropriately aesthetic, whether we were authentic and whether what we were doing was art and whether it would qualify as such.

But I must say these were not questions that we were asking as we were not into these practices with self-consciousness at that time of being contemporary artists, we were just doing what we were doing, there was a scepticism from a generation of artists who were schooled in the mores of modernism who thought this new-fangled fashion would not last.

But there was a widespread acceptance of the kind of way in which we were working from people from outside these communities, from people working in social spaces, from people working in the Universities in research, so we never felt isolated because we had our own communities. It took time and I think Sarai was an important factor in establishing a whole new range of practices

ranging from performance to more personal work with video to work with archives to work with all manner of the dissection of social communication practices technologies, software, for all of these things to get their recognition as artistic practice. I feel we played a part in making that room happen, making that room available to an entirely new generation of practitioners. Today this is unquestioned, today we are recognised as contemporary artist in India and so are many other practitioners younger than us who were able to find themselves in their practice in the kind of milieu Sarai generated. So, it is a very different time now to what it was then.

**Deborah Weber: So, in that sense I understand that it was very ground-breaking?**
**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** But not self-consciously so, we did not know that we were breaking ground.

**Deborah Weber: So this transition to the International Art scene, for a lot of young collectives who are just doing what they are doing for passion or they enjoy working together and then they receive a certain amount of notoriety of recognition – that process for you please describe a little more about what that experience was like for you and how you managed the transformation you talked about?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** A couple of things help you negotiate these processes, one is a certain degree of openness to who you are and who you want to be. I must state that in the very beginning of our practice we had a partnership deed which had an open ended nature, we did not have a Manifesto, we did not define ourselves by saying this is who we are, these are our goals and this is what our ethical commitments are. That flexibility allowed us to undertake the transformations that were according naturally without any corrosive-self-doubt, when younger people come to talk to us about the process of forming collectives one caveat or caution or suggestion we offer is to not restrict themselves with a boiler plate of a manifesto, because then when you change inevitably you think, somebody thinks or all of you think that change itself is a betrayal from founding principles or original commitments rather than allow oneself to go in the direction of the change that the times are asking you to undertake, so that helped us, certainly. As far as the scepticism or suspicion from prevailing art critical establishment was concerned we were not that bothered by it partly because we did not come up the art school wanting to be artists itinerary, we came from a different formation, we came from film and media school and the opinions of these people did not fundamentally matter to us, so I think that helped. There was a degree of distance and aloofness to being called not artists, it did not matter frankly.

**Deborah Weber: Some of the other questions speaking to this line of conversation – is to talk a little more about the challenges, either failures and successes of the process of working together and specifically the things that have enabled you to continue to work together for such a long period of time? One of the things we see often in South Africa is that an incredible energy in the beginning and then a series of conflicts or either personal differences or either people wanting to pursue individual careers causes the collective practice to dissipate.**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** There are some very foundational things, in our collective there is a clear understanding that the artist is the collective, we individually are not the artists. So we are in some senses agents and sources for the practice, that enables us to work with rather than against conflict which inevitably occurs, in some levity we say have been having the same disagreements for 25/26 years. That is not a wreck that is in fact the engine for what the practice is, it is the continuous process of conversation of disagreement that moves the ideas and concepts, images forward rather than bog it down within a quagmire from which you cannot escape. But that can happen only if you admit to yourselves that you are not the artist, the artist is what happens, the art and artistic mode of practice is what emerges between the three of us, so many collectives approach the task of being collective as the accumulation of three or four or five artists, we have never thought that way. It is not three artists came together to form a collective, three people came together to form and artist. That has helped us along quite a bit.

Obviously, there are things that we have set out to do that we have not being able to do, but there are things we have done that we thought we would never be able to do and did not set out to do. So, on balance the things that we have been surprised by that we have been able to do far outweighs the things we thought we would do and were not able to do. On that front, in our mid to late twenties, there were periods of intense frustration and failure when several projects we wanted to undertake did not happen. I remember we called it the year of thirteen refusals. Where we would get a refusal every month and plus one so it was a year of writing thirteen proposals and having each one of them rejected. But that did not weaken our resolve, we always maintained other forms of supporting each other and did other work, we did other work together as a unit of assistance so there was a modest and solid economic basis of our being together which was not eroded by the fact that our ideas were not finding realisation. At that time, the late 90's of New Delhi in India there wasn't a sense that we were going to be what would be called successful artists so the pressures of not succeeding in the short term were not as debilitating as I see them nowadays for younger artist. If they can't do something within three months, they feel that the world has come crashing down, we never thought that things would happen to such a great extent so if they did not happen, we could wear that failure lightly.

**Deborah Weber: Just a little bit more about the financial model which has allowed you to work together sustainably for this period of time, you mentioned briefly that you did other commercial work as filmmakers?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** We were assistants, let's say.

**Deborah Weber: that is a huge struggle that collectives often face and is another cause of their dissipation is how to create a robust financial sustainable model, whether they choose to do other work or they manage to sustain their practice collectively – then who and how then contributes to their production and living costs.**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** We had certain basic arrangements, whatever was earned was placed in a common kitty and we would take from it deciding collectively what the needs were, we were three so I am not sure if this can be sustained if there is a very large group of people, four or five close nit friends, I am sure it can work based on a robust degree of trust and reciprocity and caring for each other's needs. Secondly the other thing that was important for us is we were not working on what would be called projects, we didn't meet only or work together only when there was project at hand. Initially there were few projects and much more fallow time but we sustained a practice of meeting and being in each other's presence and talking to each other even during the time when there were no projects. I think this is important as we see a lot of collectives impelled by the idea of the project of the moment or the project that they are undertaking in the future so that when the project exists they exist and when the project does not exist the collective has no basis. This again was not thought through a conscious strategy it just happened and this is what the habit of being and working together we developed, retrospectively I can see that it had a function as is was part of the design but it emerged organically.

**Deborah Weber: Can you speak a little bit more about the decision making processes? You have spoken about being together, discussions and conflict but when it comes to things around decision making around roles and managing certain parts of a project how do you go about agreeing or not-agreeing.**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** We have written a little about this so I will rapfreeze that – the central idea (disagreements are endemic and very foundational) is that if I have an idea and if Monica says no to that idea by response would not be 'how could you say no, my response would be alright if you are saying no tell me what your idea is. If she proposed an idea I have the freedom to say no then along with the no comes the corresponding obligation to suggest something else, so in that sense the no or negation of the idea of proposal is bound up with the possibility of an offering. So

the ideas move in the cascading serial way, sometimes there are no disagreements because of the habit of working together and spending time with each other we do often spontaneously agree on things. But when we don't agree, the disagreement itself becomes the mode in which new ground can be reached. It is important to understand that and important to have personalities that are strong enough to weather refusal and criticism, knowing that the refusal and criticism comes not because someone wants to put you down but because they care for the work they we are doing together, that is the basic principle.

**Deborah Weber: Do you have any other processes for dealing with conflict over decision-making or roles?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** Sometimes deferral post moment is a very good strategy, that if something is very very difficult then we will not take an immediate decision we will put it on hold and let it do its own work and on coming back to a proposition after a couple of months, maybe a couple of years does help, this is also got to do with the idea that now we have a collective future and history, when you have 25 years behind you, you are not so scared of letting things be occasionally be undecided for a few months or even a year.

**Deborah Weber: Co-authorship, ownership and agreements, you mentioned you had an initial deed? Have you over the years looked at new agreements and gone back and refined this original agreement?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** We have looked at it from time to time and we have found it useful because it is worded very carefully in terms letting the content develop and change, there has always been a baseline agreement that all the writing, all the artistic works that we do within the sphere of contemporary art more or less has a common authorship, the author is the Raqs Media Collective. We each have individual lives and practices which are outside contemporary art, there we do stake claims of authorship. I might have a practice as a writer and commentator whereas my role as that person is recognised. But when we work within contemporary art it is not me Shuddah speaking it is the Raqs Media Collective. So even if I am giving you this interview it is based on a common understanding, so it's not me speaking as such it is Raqs speaking through me.

**Deborah Weber: A little but more about your individual lives, you talk about yourself as a writer, the others, do they have separate practices?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** They may not be separate, for instance, Yubesh is very involved with a workers newspaper and works a lot on that and Monica is quite involved in working with younger artists as a mentor, so each or these three emphases' place us in different trajectories in different directions. We have different personal lives and personal networks, some of which overlap and some do not. Everyone who knows us quickly realised we are very different individuals and that helps a great deal actually.

**Deborah Weber: Going to the discussion around institutional critique and engaging with institutions such as museums and biennales, could you speak about your thinking around institutional critique and if that is a self-conscious critical strategy and then how you have gone about dealing with European institutions and some of the strategies that you have used?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** Let's start with the foundational premise, we do not think that artists allow themselves the luxury of thinking that they are innocent of the realities of the contemporary world. Artists are not outsiders, we are clear in our understanding of this, there is no outside. Let's say If there is capitalism, there is no outside to capitalism we are all implicated in it in various ways as workers, as people in positions of differential power and decision making, so institutional critique for whatever it is worth in our view cannot afford to give itself the moral luxury of an ethical higher

ground from which to criticise institutions. It has to see itself as engaged in and entangled in the messiness sometimes of institutional life, that is one basic principle.

Secondly there is also we believe quite strongly no position of priory innocence visa vie the networks of power that have arisen through the networks of colonialism merely because we live in a country like India or South Africa or China wherever. We cannot afford to see ourselves as the objects of history, we do not believe that one can continue to perceive ourselves as the objects molded by the forces that have come out of the histories of European Colonialism alone. We and our societies have participated in these networks so it is not a position where we can continuously claim as artists from the global south some position of innocent victimhood. These two being clear then we can undertake certain moves or manoeuvres that try and expand as much as possible the spaces or the democratic critical open sensibility within global contemporary art spaces. The recipients of these addresses are no longer only the narrow bandwidth of transatlantic continuum that stretches from the East Coast of the United States and to Britain or France and Germany.

We have worked in many different situations with institutions in museums in South America, in China, in Southern Europe and Asia so we are alert to the fact that power exerts itself in many different ways in different parts of the world. So, there isn't one power that we are confronting that is centred in Europe or America and elsewhere is the powerless. We understand power as being a striated living reality in different parts of the world and has to be engaged with depending on very specific circumstances. So, we have engaged with biennales and museums as artists but also as curators; we curated the European Contemporary Art Biennale Manifesta in 2008, we curated recently the Shanghai Biennale, we have curated international shows in India and we will be curating a museum show in Barcelona next year. We see the role of artists as being fully involved in the creation of new realities and new thinking within, outside and between institutions.

**Deborah Weber: You were talking about your curatorial practice, being recognised as a curatorial collective being ground-breaking, how did you come to be in the role of curators and how that now influences or informs your practice if at all?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** It came about with the same serendipity as our recognition of ourselves and the world's recognition of ourselves as artists, we began being invited to curate before we set to call ourselves curators. The experience, I must say, of thinking through and living the reality that was Sarai was a kind of formational curatorial education because we had decisions of creating points of emphasis in what we could communicate, we had to work with a whole generation of artists, writers and thinkers and create network of affect and meaning. So the day to day function of Sarai was a kind of curatorial education even though we did not know it as such. When we were invited to curate we could take forward the principles that we had practiced and developed in Saria which had often to do with open ended networks, often to do with engagement with cities and living spaces where the boundaries of the museum or the biennale could achieve a certain degree of porosity visa vi its context. These were important modes for us and when we were invited to curate we always had a commitment to introducing practices that were not considered within contemporary art in the time and also a commitment to always laying the foundations and groundwork in discovering new voices. We have always sought to curate on the model of let's see what curating this time can do to change our view and our definition of what is artistic practice.

**Deborah Weber: speak a bit more about the projects or curatorial work, work that has been your most effective or enjoyable and why it has been so profound for you?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** I can take a few works spread across the trajectory of our development; so a very early work was called *The Coordinates of Everyday Life*, which was an examination of living in a city like Delhi on an open and large-scale. Perhaps stems most closely to our formation as documentary film makers it was a cycle of images and texts and legal documents that presented a reality of contending with the way in which the law restricts or enables habitation practices and creates a commons of urban living. That had a very different mode, it had a much more

documentary sensibility of you like, then I could move on to a work called *The KD VYAS Correspondence Vol 1,* with which we enter a more speculative register where we try to propose a correspondence if you like with a mythical being, KD VYAS the reactor of Sanskrit epic, sort of like having a conversation with Homer. It took the place of 18 screens it also functions as a metaphor for the way communication is networked over the internet so it became a metaphor for the internet through the mode of telling stories through video, so it proposed a very different aesthetic register. I could talk about the video diptych called the *Capital of Accumulation* which was based on a long exploration and investigation in the company of Rosa Luxemburg's' *Accumulation of Capital* which was a book which we had been thinking with for a very long time. It spread itself across different realities across the cities of Berlin, Warsaw, Bombay and Delhi. Was partly a detective story, partly a reflective of the political economy, partly if you like a séance, partly a way of telling stories that involved also looking at other life forms like beings, plants, animals and married politics, philosophy and looking at life in a very different way. Two other works that we are doing as part of an exhibition we are doing right now in Manchester are called *Twilight Language* and thinks a lot about codes and encoding and the decipherment of messages to a suit of sculptures called *Coronation Park* where we de-center and reposition the aesthetic of Imperial statuary to make a point of the ephemerality of power itself. These are all very different kinds of work that range from video, film to textural work to work with computers to work with objects and images, we have also undertaken a series of reading performances. There is one called the *Necessity of Infinity* where we rewrite a correspondence between two 10th Century Persian Polenauts to think about the nature of the universe itself. These are very different registered of artistic practice. Curatorially we have moved from *Manifesta* in which we did an exhibition called *The Rest of Now*, which we looked at residues as industrial by-products, the residue as forms of life's and modes of regeneration, to the Shanghai Biennale where we were asked the question why not ask again?, a basic philosophical attitude to rethinking everything that is of significance to the world, partially refracted through a reading of Chinese science fiction and Indian film sources. So, our artistic practice as well as our curatorial modes always seem to rest and leverage the power of questions. Different questions take us in different directions. All the artistic writing and curatorial work can be seen as way stations in the journeys for these questions.

**Deborah Weber: could you paint a picture for me of the process of creation all the way through from conception of an idea all the way through to the implementation of an idea? Map out the differences between a studio based individual process to a collective process?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** Every work begins with the kernel of something, that kernel can be a hunch, a question, a found image, an experience, a conversation, a fragment of something we have read, we bring these kernels to the collective's attention when we meet. We have a studio in Delhi where we meet every day and we are in Delhi five days a week and the kernels are given the attention and irrigation of our triangulated consciousness and they tend to develop in different directions. Some kernels would require us to go to visit a site and spend a long time with the natural surrounding or with some people and have conversations. Some kernels will require us to spend a long time in an archive, some kernels would require us to learn a new mode of making something. We recently started doing a lot of work with 3D scanning, it has never really a part of our practice but it was in particular object, in fact it was the desiccated residue of a biscuit from the Paris Volume that we came about in a Manchester Museum that set us on a journey to thinking about 3D scanning. Different kernels will impel moves in different direction and we have to go with what those moves require of us, some will require collection of facts and data and finding patterns in different forms of reality, some of it will require active stories, some of it will require dreaming up an image and because there is three of us and all types of very different temperaments, I think the different temperaments morph into what the different processes require of us. Then we come to a certain common understanding about the tone of the work which is very important because it is not just the mix of all the facts and fragments of narrative that go into a work but we need to have an agreement about tone. When we have reached that agreement about tone which is both what we say and what we don't say to each other then we have a way of dealing with what comes up, we have a way of treating what arises and a lot of shooting and making happens and then there is finally a process of

editing and letting the material fall through a sieve where what is most pertinent remains and what is in excess we put away sometimes to be used in a separate project or work. That is the broad contour of our works come to be made.

**Deborah Weber: the last question around power and institutional critique, speaking as a South African with a fraught colonial history and on top of that we have an apartheid history and ingrained racial tension and still very much in a process of enormous struggle individually and collectively in our country. So going back to your thinking around power and participation and this idea of victimhood, that is a very imp conversation to open up a bit particularly for South African collectives working here. If you could maybe speak to me about the thinking around that and how it functions in Delhi being a little further down the trajectory of post-colonial history and colonial independence?**

**Shuddhabrata Sengupta:** Thank you for the question, much of what you describe of South Africa maps onto India of course every history has its specificities, we never had the violence of apartheid but have had to deal with the violence of cast for instance in India and continue to deal with that, so do the Indian communities in South Africa. So, all the parameters of this network of oppression, violence and subjection exists within, between and across our societies, the position of an artist is one of immense privilege. If you are recognised as an artist there seems to be at least a theoretical recognition of the fact that you have something of significance to say. If that be the case then I think artists can do better than to place themselves as the nominated victims of social processes, because they have something that people who are subjected do not have or are denied, which is articulative capacity or at least a notion of public. With that recognition comes some amount of responsibility not to have the entitlement to speak on behalf of other people, you can be a transmitter, you can be a radio station, you can be a mode through which signals of different kinds get processed, magnified or amplified. I do not think anything gives us as artist the moral or ethical authority to say what we are saying is enough in terms of what needs to be said on behalf of other people.

A careful political understanding of power requires us also to have a careful political understanding of the power of artistic practice. Both positively in that the sense that it builds capacities of speaking and also not positively as seeing the fact that it should then come with a certain amount of reticence in claiming the position of the victim, this means I think that we carefully examine histories ongoing processes of oppression and see through and with these things without the automatic presumption of innocence, if we are living in a world where we clearly understand that science does not automatically give the scientist the position of innocence. I think we should be sophisticated enough to understand that art is also a part of the means of maintaining order in the world, artist are equally not innocent as scientists and other kinds of people.

## INTERVIEW SIX
## BY DEBORAH WEBER FOR *KAROO DISCLOSURE* AND *UBULUNGISWA/JUSTICE*

**How did you come to be a collective, and what were the influences that shaped your formation?**

**Ubulungiswa/Justice & Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** All the artists knew each other through either studying or working together and having close friendships. New members were brought into the group because of their skills and their interest in being a part of the project. They usually knew someone involved in the collective through some form of relationship. I initiated *Karoo Disclosure* through my art network after receiving funding from the NAC to produce the project. Most of the artists in *Karoo Disclosure* were selected based on their skills and after the project was completed, wanted to be a part of the next collaborative project *Ubulungiswa/Justice* collaboration (besides the musicians), but many new people joined for this project, so it grew from eight to twenty-two members.

I initiated *Ubulungiswa/Justice* during a Post Graduate Diploma at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts as part of further research into collaboration. The initial effort to form a collective failed due to not having a conceptual structure or concept from which the members could start working, this was an experiment to see if people could collectivise without a common cause or knowing each other. After this failure I tried a different approach and put together a conceptual framework from which to work and shortly after this we ended working with the members of YIP (Young in Prison) through Clinton Osbourn who was a social worker and friend of mine. Clinton was working at the NGO running an art project for previous offenders at the time and the concept around social justice, the fees must fall movement coinciding during this period made the project appealing to the participants in the programme. None of the existing collective members or YIP participants knew each other prior to working on this project.

*Ubulungiswa/Justice* members include: Anwar McWhite, Clinton Osbourn, Damien Schumann, Damien Morrison, Deborah Weber, Elgin Rust, Eric Menyo, Gina Waldman, Jolene Cartmill, Kwanele Dyasi, Loyiso Botha, Lazola Sikhutshwa, Luntu Vumazonke, Luvo Mjayezi, Maileshi Setti, Mandisile Keva, Margaret Stone, Michelle Liao, Nikki Froneman, Roxanne Dalton, Vuyolwethu Adams, Vuyokazi Magobiyane, Xolisa Pezisa.
*Karoo Disclosure* members include: Deborah Weber, Damien Schumann, Elgin Rust, Hendrik Dudumashe, Gina Waldman, Jeannette Unite, Margaret Stone, Maxim Starcke, Michelle Liao, Lisa Bauer, Tom Glenn, Peet van Heerden, Paula Kingwill.

**Ubulungiswa/Justice & Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** We again collectivised around a network of familiarity, field of arts practice (we were friends or knew each other through a common person), common interest around an issue – in our case fracking and social justice – and an aggravation – impending fracking in the Karoo region, the Fees Must Fall movement and mob justice taking place in the townships.

**How do you make decisions in your collective? (artistic and business decisions)**
**Ubulungiswa/Justice & Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** In *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure* our agreements around artistic decision-making grew organically, through meetings, workshops, discussions, emails, social media groups and experimentation. In the development of the work there was no one way used to determine how the work would be made or how it would look and it mostly developed out of the groups skills and interests.

In the decision-making around other aspects like finances, copyright and business decisions we drafted a memorandum of understanding which outlined our agreements around these decision-making processes. In the example of *Ubulungiswa/Justice* we agreed in a meeting that we would need nine of the twenty-two members to agree on any decision to proceed with a decision. In the instance of a disagreement or conflict we assigned a group of three people to make a final decision on finances, artistic decisions and business decisions (three different members for each) to make the process more democratic. We agreed that to insure a smoother decision-making and conflict-resolution process, breaking up the decision-making into smaller groups was a more efficient way of operating.

Our agreement includes the below clauses:
Each party agrees to cooperate with the other parties as joint authors of the Work, to share equally in all tasks and responsibilities as may be necessary to complete the Work, and to do what is necessary to secure its exhibition and screening. This could include social media, design, writing, media, exhibition logistics, formatting and promotion.

Artistic Decisions: The parties agree to reasonably consult over the Artistic control of the entire Work and agree not to unreasonably withhold such consent to any decisions or agreements. In the event that the parties cannot mutually agree, the ultimate decision will be made by Artist 1, Artist 2 and Artist 3 or deferred to parties as outlined in clauses 11 (a) and (b)

Business Decisions: The Parties agree that they shall mutually control the exploitation of the intellectual property rights in the Collaborative Work. The parties agree to reasonably consult with each other on such matters, and agree not to unreasonably withhold such consent to any decisions or agreements. In the event that the parties cannot mutually agree, and no majority vote is found. The party liable for the legal fees shall be the party in disagreement with the collaboration. Each party agrees that any important communication affecting the Work by the public, media, galleries, institutions or businesses must be promptly communicated to the other parties.

**How do you manage roles within the collective?**
**Ubulungiswa/Justice and Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** All the artists were offered the opportunity to choose the roles they wanted to take: during the process of creation through to the administration and production management. This did, however, result in artists choosing to work only on the aspects of the projects they enjoyed and leaving the administration and project managements to a few members of the collective who were performing these roles due to a need and their skills. As I was the initiator of the projects, a large part of the administration, agreements, funding and financial management became my responsibility - with support from a few members like Elgin Rust and Clinton Osbourn. It really did not result in an ideal, equal distribution of workload, even though we did address this issue in meetings. Individuals' work lives and other commitments, and sometimes lack of access, meant that only a few individuals would carry the weight of the logistical and administrative load.

The roles are really left open-ended and allow for any member to contribute more or less as they are able to and have capacity for. We also allowed members to give their roles to someone else. For example, in our shooting of *Ubulungiswa/Justice* one member fell sick and another member took his place and performed the role in the film.

**How do you manage membership in the collective? Do you have a process in place if a member wants to leave or join?**
**Ubulungiswa/Justice & Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** We agreed that our membership rights and termination on the basic premise that we (the collective) could not remove a member out of the collective. But if a member wanted to leave they needed to follow procedure and be aware that they would forgo their rights to any remuneration that may be acquired in the life of the collective's work, but they would always retain their copyright and rights to be credited as a member. We did have one member leave and it was not a good ending. The member did something that we found questionable and used the collective work without permission from the collective.

Assignment

a) Either Party may assign monies owing to him or her under this Agreement to a third party with notice to the other Parties.

b) A Party must have consent of the other Parties to assign any of his or her rights or roles in the Collaborative Work under this Agreement to a third party. Decision Making rights and roles should go to one of the designated collaborators and not a third party.

Termination. The parties agree to follow the following procedures, if necessary, to terminate this Agreement:

(b) This Agreement shall be valid for the duration of the Collaborative Work.

(g) If any party withdraws from the collaboration before the Work is fully completed and accepted for screening or exhibition, then the rights to benefit from remuneration of any income generated from the work will be terminated. And all original copyright material will be given over to the collaboration.

(h) If any party withdraws from the collaboration once the work is complete, they will be required to return any material pertaining to the project IP and copyright (including image files, sound files, video files, documents or costume installation elements) to the collaboration.

(i) If any party withdraws from the collaboration all rights to exploitation of the copyright and intellectual property and any decision-making rights will be terminated.

(j) If any party withdraws from the collaboration it needs to be in written notice (See clause 21 on Notice).

(k) If any party withdraws from the collaboration, they will remain entitled to authorship credits for any exploitation of the work but will not be entitled to any financial remuneration from revenue generated through exploitation of

the work.

**How do you resolve disagreements?**

See agreements terms below:

**Do you have an agreement(s) in place, and if not how do you manage your copyright and IP?**
**Ubulungiswa/Justice and Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** With *Ubulungiswa/Justice* and *Karoo Disclosure*, differently to all the other collectives we drafted a legal contract to outline some of the shared copyright, ownership, revenue and decision-making processes. We did initially consult with legal art copyright specialist Toby Orford but, not being able to afford legal fees, we ended up using a template document found online for free and adapting it for our needs. The contract ended up being more of an agreement than a legal contract. Each member of the collective had the opportunity to comment on and either agree with or change the agreement. As the two projects were not functioning as one entity producing work on a continuous basis, the contract only bound us to the nature of the work we made together.

The terms of this agreement set out the copyright and intellectual property rights of all the participating artists who collaborated to produce the work of *Ubulungiswa/Justice*.

Copyright, Trademarks and Other Proprietary Rights.
(a) The parties agree that upon completion of each party's contribution, such contributions shall be merged into a joint work with a jointly owned copyright.
(b) It is further agreed that trademarks, rights in characters, titles, and similar ongoing rights (collectively referred to as 'Proprietary Rights') shall be owned jointly and equally by all parties.
(c) Proprietary Rights extend to all footage, raw and edited, photographic images and sound recorded during the production, post-production and exhibition of Ubulungiswa/Justice collaboration.

**How do you manage your copyright and intellectual property?**
**Ubulungiswa/Justice and Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** We did have an issue with one of the members exhibiting images from a work, for sale, on an exhibition without notifying any of the collective members. When this came to light it caused a great deal of conflict in the group and the member consequently decided to leave the collective and give up any future rights to remuneration from the project revenue. In our agreement we stipulated that a member could leave the collective and still maintain copyright for perpetuity, but not rights to decision-making and revenue.

**How do you distribute and manage your finances?**
**Ubulungiswa/Justice and Karoo Disclosure, Deborah Weber:** *Ubulungiswa/Justice* has its own bank account with three signatories. Monies have been earned and saved for future exhibitions and artists have and will be remunerated based on a shared revenue model. *Ubulungiswa/Justice* received sponsorship support and in-kind support from various sources to produce the project including; sponsorship of video equipment, photographic printing and printing of catalogues. The photographic prints were for sale at the Michealis School of Fine Arts Graduate exhibition. Over R40 000 in revenue was made from sales of the prints. After a percentage of the income was taken by the art school, the remaining revenue was used to show the exhibition at the AVA and pay venue fees to the gallery. Given the number of artists involved in this project, shared revenue was very little. A few of the artists from the YIP projects received a small cash pay-out from this revenue.

*Karoo Disclosure* applied to the NAC for project funding to produce the work and received a R25 000 grant. Exhibition of the work at the Iziko National History Museum was supported by the museum, with additional support grant funding from the Arts and Culture Trust. The work was not for

sale on this exhibition. We received sponsorship of video equipment and printing for the project. The small amounts of funding allowed the project to produce and exhibit the work but did not provide any income or compensation for the artists, who had to install the work and provide educational workshops and walkabouts, as well as put together a conference on the topic of fracking for the exhibition opening. None of this time was compensated by the institution and funding grants did not allow for compensation for artists fees. The funding grants were administratively onerous to acquire, manage, and required considerable reporting.

The exhibition of the project at Oliewenhuis Museum was supported by the museum with travel and accommodation funded for four of the collaborators to travel to Bloemfontein to install the work and provide sound workshops. Again, no funding was allocated for artists' fees. We did apply for Nedbank Arts and Culture funding but our application was unsuccessful. Despite the publicity the show received and the audience numbers that saw the exhibition, no work was sold.

The project has not earned any revenue for the artists yet and still owes some of the artists funds. *Karoo Disclosure* has been managed in a much more haphazard way than *Ubulungiswa/Justice* – possibly because there are fewer people involved and less possibility of any issues arising around finances due to the project not being a commercially driven work. Issues that have arisen have been to additional collaborators joining the project and wanting to allocate funds to one member and not the collective.

Our agreement clauses on finances stipulate:
Division of Income and Expenses. Income and expenses generated by or on behalf of the Work shall be divided as follows: (a) *Division of Expenses*. Net Income (Profit), defined as gross income as reduced by project expenses and amounts owing, shall be divided equally between the parties and paid directly to each party by Artist 1 with assistance from Artist 2 and Artist 3 (or deferred to parties as outlined in clause 11(a) and (b). If either party receives income payable to the other party, the receiving party shall make immediate payment to the other party of such amounts as due.

(b) *Division of Expenses*. Each party shall provide written proof of expenses and maintain a proper accounting of such expenses and corresponding payments. Any project expenses will need written approval by Artist 1 with assistance from Artist 2 and Artist 3. Expenses will be reimbursed from the project income as defined in 6(a) and on available project income available at the time of claim.

Assignment
Either Party may assign monies owing to him or her under this Agreement to a third party with notice to the other Parties.

ENDS