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No Hunting: Finding a New F. Stop for the Bushmen

By

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Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town.

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DECLARATION

I, Siona O'Connell hereby declare that the work on which this mini-dissertation is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university.

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Abstract

This mini-dissertation is a personal, methodological, and scholarly study of a seven month visual art program at !Khwa ttu: San Culture and Education Centre. It centres on the fraught issue of the representation of the Bushmen, with a particular focus on the violence of representation through the photographic genre. Through this mini-dissertation I attempt to re-imagine the photograph in relation to the Bushmen; through an interrogation of the medium as one that has the potential for healing, dialogue and empowerment. The act of looking is discussed, and I raise questions of ethics and photographs as well as questions of ownership of photographs in relation to the Bushmen of southern Africa. Since this project was an opportunity to engage in rhetoric, particularly on the definition of Bushmen, a core element of this project is the participation and voice of the !Khwa ttu Reference Group. This participation was underscored by the group both engaging the past through historical imagery, and attempting to use the past as a springboard to re-imagine their future.

To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed. Just as the camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a sublimated murder – a soft murder, appropriated to a sad, frightened time. (Sontag, 2002:14-15)

Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present. (Bhabha, 1994: 63)

The San have been treated as objects of research...they have not been involved in the research agendas of the academics, and their own needs and aspirations have been ignored. (Mathambo, 1997. As cited by Chennels 2007: 9)

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POST CARD
POSKAART

Ref. No.
298 A

ARTHUR ENGLISH PRINTS
P.O. BOX 4733, ROOSEBULT BOYZ

CAPE TOWN

Left - part of sleeping European women - South African Museum

KAAPSTAD

Left - part of sleeping European women - South African Museum

© 1911 BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUM

SA 1911

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List of Acronyms

ABET: Adult Basic Education and Training.

CKGR: The Central Kalahari Game Reserve.

LLAREC: The Lucy Lloyd Archive Resource and Exhibition Centre.

TRC: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

UCT: The University of Cape Town.

WIMSA: The Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa.

F.STOP: Focal Stop

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Preface

Perched on a hill, about eighty kilometres outside of Cape Town on South Africa's west coast, is a growing tourist attraction, !Khwa ttu: The San Culture and Education Centre. The property is well signposted, and a few metres before its entrance stands a large notice that tempts the unsuspecting visitor to 'Visit us and experience the real world of the San'. Besides the Bushman diorama¹ that I had visited as a child, this was my first encounter since then of an "authentic Bushman experience". I use the terms Bushman and Bushmen as a result of discussions with the group at !Khwa ttu (which means 'watering hole'). The Khwa ttu Bushmen, who are former hunter-gatherers, call themselves by the names of their individual language groups – Ju|'hoansi, ||Ani, G|wi, for example – which in most cases mean 'first people', 'real people', or simply 'people'. (Ngakaeja, M.2007[Personal communication]) I asked the group what term they preferred, and all stated that although both San and Bushman are labels that have been constructed by others, they refer to themselves firstly as !Xun, Khwe, Khomani, etc. and, broadly, as Bushman. This issue of naming was to surface often, as !Khwa ttu refers to them as San; and I was admonished on numerous occasions by the management of the centre for using the term Bushman.

¹ The diorama at the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town is discussed in Chapter Five.

According to the webpage of !Khwatla, the centre was set up in 1992 as a project under the guidance of WIMSA (The Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa)³ and the Ubuntu Foundation, a Swiss philanthropic organisation. The webpage stresses the involvement of WIMSA in all decision-making processes, and is effusive about the centre's aims. These include 'providing training to San in life skills, entrepreneurship, tourism, health, community development and gender'. In addition the centre's proposes as its mission to 'promote the long-term sustainability of San development in Southern Africa'. (Daiber, Broma 2008 [Personal communication])

The centre is thousands of kilometres away from any Bushmen communities in Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe or Namibia. It is a grueling fifteen hour drive to the Kalahari and Platfontein in the Northern Cape to where a large number of Bushmen live in their home environments. To a large degree, therefore, this is a tourist enterprise, with but a few (about twenty-five men, women and children) Bushmen brought from regions of Southern Africa to live and work there.

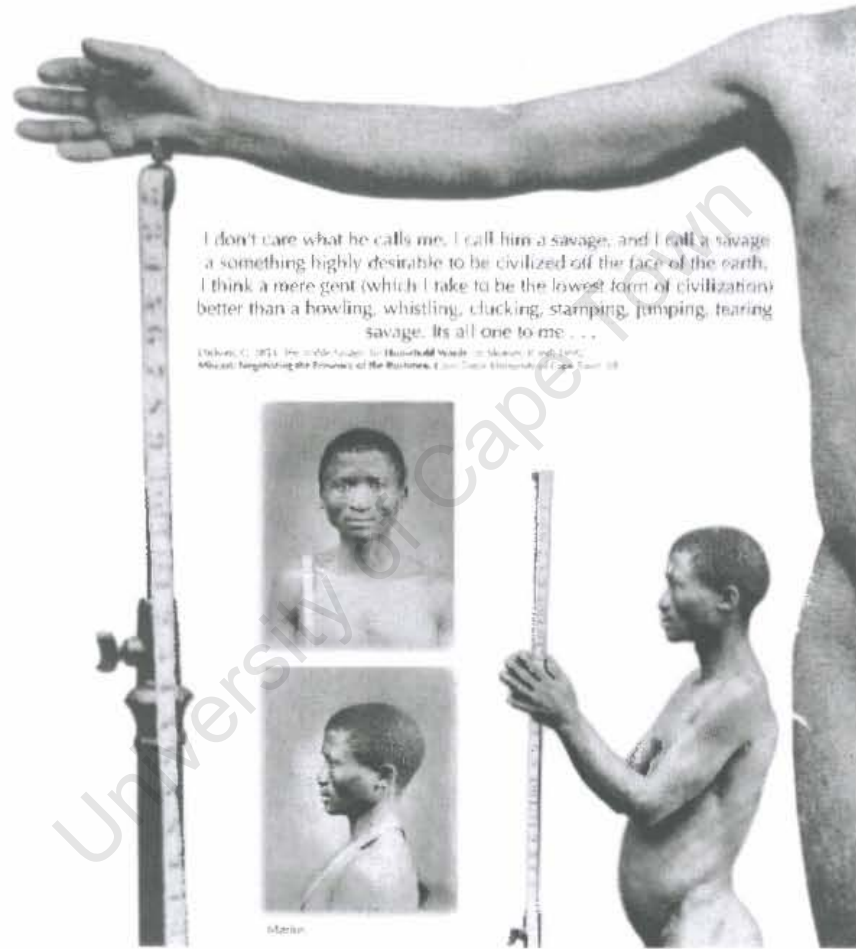
It was against this backdrop – the !Khwatla signpost to be exact – that I made my acquaintance with a diverse group of men, women and children. It was through this controlled, gated entrance that I began a seven month experience of mutual learning and growth, a rollercoaster of exhilarating highs and crippling lows. It was a journey that brought the magic of the camera and the photograph to a few people who could use it as another language. It was also a painful introduction to the world of development, and I completed the

² Many of the participants have been at the centre since its inception. According to Michael Daiber, this is a concern as the centre was meant to be a short term training venue before returning to their homes.

³ WIMSA was established in 1996 as a platform for Bushmen in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe to express their problems and concerns. See the webpage <http://www.san.org.za>.

project with mixed emotions, elated as always about the magic and possibilities of the arts and especially the camera, but deeply saddened that I left behind a group of people who to a large degree are caged – with all the attendant connotations of submission, unfreedom and loss – behind the fencing that guards the estate of !Khwa ttu. I felt truly disappointed that there were wasted opportunities and, more distressingly so, that I was able to get into my car and leave while there were others who did not have that luxury.

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I don't care what he calls me, I call him a savage, and I call a savage a something highly desirable to be civilized off the face of the earth. I think a mere gent (which I take to be the lowest form of civilization) better than a howling, whistling, clucking, stamping, jumping, tearing savage. Its all one to me . . .

Clouston, C. 1914. The Middle Classes for Household Work in Malaya, *Indo-China*.
Muzart, targeting the Promises of the Buxton, *East South African* 1914, page 28



Marin



Introduction

This mini-dissertation is both a personal and scholarly summary of a seven month project that I undertook at the !Khwa ttu: San Culture and Education Centre between June 2007 to January 2008. After my successful application for the position of curator for a funded exhibition,⁴ I agreed to embark on a process with a group of !Khwa ttu residents, which culminated in a visual art exhibition. My interest in the position was multiple: I live on the Cape west coast, have a lingering memory of the Bushman diorama at the museum (discussed later) and was intrigued at the chance to work with a group of people with whom I shared ancestry. I spent on average three days per week at !Khwa ttu, and most of my weekends were spent interacting with various !Khwa ttu residents in a shared personal space. These relationships have continued beyond the end of this project. In many ways, therefore, this mini-dissertation cannot accurately sum up the richness of the past seven months. It was a process that far exceeded the parameters of producing a visual art exhibition or a university mini-dissertation. I believe that I learnt a great deal more from these men and women, who were so willing to impart their knowledge, dreams, hopes, losses and regrets, through our interactions. Indeed, I felt the gulf between the academy from where I had come and the group themselves and struggled constantly with the dilemma that I am now in the academic arena, writing this paper for academic accreditation.

This project was an experience that tangibly exposed many heated and difficult issues. This paper focuses on those experiences of discomfort and tension and the issues that have spurred debate in various academic discourses, including concerns about

⁴ The bulk of the funding came from Norwegian Church Aid.

“development” and belonging (Chapters One and Six), visual art, photography and the Bushmen (Chapters Two and Three), the archive, memory, authorship and ownership (Chapter Four), violence and the Bushman body (Chapter Five). It raises key concerns about representation, an issue which enjoys much attention in many academic circles, but more importantly the palpable, painful reality of the violence of representation, which was demonstrated throughout the seven month process. The project was also one which raised the question of public scholarship and knowledge production as potentially multiple and equal, primarily using the medium of contemporary visual arts as one of knowledge production for the Bushman.

Methodologically and philosophically, in this mini-dissertation I refer to questions of photography, death and violence, as raised by Susan Sontag, Walter Benjamin, Patricia Hayes and Elizabeth Edwards. I have also been influenced profoundly by the writings of Frantz Fanon, and echoes of his brilliant thoughts reverberate throughout this paper. The progress made by Indigenous people in Australia, particularly through the work of Professor Martin Nakata, underscores many of my own protests in this paper.

As a photographer, I acknowledge the joy of the medium, yet I struggle that in the act of taking a photograph, the genre is fraught with issues of ownership, violence, and representation. This is a central feature of a personal dilemma, as I trained as a photographer during my undergraduate Fine Art degree. I have facilitated many photographic workshops with underprivileged youth and adults with great success and I too have exhibited in a gallery space. These processes entailed much ethical questioning, and are largely responsible for the fact that I am now unable to pick up my camera to take any photographs. Part of my ongoing research is a journey toward an ethical mode of taking and displaying photographs – an ethical photographic theory and practice. In this regard, I have chosen not to include any photographs of the process or the participants that form the subject of this dissertation. The only process

photographs included will be that of my body in the body casting segment (Chapter Six), and a photograph of the LLAREC (The Lucy Lloyd Archive Resource and Exhibition Centre) webpage (Chapter Four). As the exhibition is in a public space, the exhibition boards are included in this mini-dissertation (Chapter Seven). The exhibition pivots around a suspended spine of historical images on Perspex boards, and these images are inserted in a similar vein throughout this document.

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Source: SCHMIDT, *On Photography*, *Essays on Photography*, (1981), 141-142.



Chapter 1

The white cube

I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the “idea” that others have of me but of my own appearance. (Fanon, F. 1967:116)

In keeping with Cape West Coast architecture, the !Khwa ttu estate is a picturesque vision of white staff dwellings, a restaurant, a large home for the Chief Executive Officer, a craft shop, a photographic gallery; all in all, 850 hectares of land with an array of wildlife and a series of training facilities. The gallery space is especially impressive. It is a long rectangular room with an adjoining auditorium, and as a vestige of the revamped farm dwelling it was, it bears testimony to a complete and expensive overhaul.

It is difficult to get to !Khwa ttu if one does not have motor vehicle transport. Yet the opposite is true for the residents of !Khwa ttu. Without public transport, the residents are reliant on company transport if they need or want to venture beyond the estate. Since they work a six day week, (they do not work on Mondays) the lives of these men, women and children are largely defined by the visible and invisible parameters of the estate. To be fair, the younger children attend school in the nearby West Coast town of Darling.

Although this is largely a tourist-directed venture, with access available to those who are able to pay the R150.00 fee for the bush ride, or who can afford to eat in the equally impressive restaurant headed by a Swiss chef, for me there were immediate connotations

which spoke to the confines of the conventional gallery. It brought to mind Brian O'Doherty's set of three essays, which had an influential impact on the art world when it made its appearance in 1976.⁵

O'Doherty, known under the pseudonym of Patrick Ireland for his work as an artist, examines the complex, mediated sanctum of the gallery space, and invites commentary on the relationship between the art object to the space in which it is placed. O'Doherty goes a step further when he attests that the gallery eventually takes on a life of its own and, far from being a neutral area, the gallery takes over and eventually subsumes the art object (McEvelley 1986). The white space of the gallery, according to the O'Doherty, is anything but an impartial sphere. On the contrary, it is mediated with repercussions for all the various components of art and the reception and viewing thereof.

I wish to propose that echoes of O'Doherty's assertions may be heard reverberating off the walls at !Khwa ttu. Sealed off, in a sanitised and polished presentation, are 'Bushmen on show'. There are game-drives complete with khaki-clad guides, who show visitors to !Khwa ttu how Bushmen hunt, read spoor and make fires. Tourists, insulated from the cold under warm blankets, are told about the various language groups and the history. The tour guides are male and during my seven months there I did not get to see a single woman conduct a tour. The women are largely confined to cleaning the guest house and restaurant, waitressing or looking after the younger children.

⁵ Brian O'Doherty from Ireland is well qualified to spearhead this contentious arena; he is an internationally respected artist, art critic and writer showing versatility in his various fields. The artist has several international exhibitions to his credit as well as collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York, the National Museum of American Art in Washington, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

I wonder whether many tourists leave !Khwatla with the knowledge, contrary to that presented on tourist postcards and glossy books, that to define the image of Bushman is impossible. I acknowledge that yes, the group hunted, lived in a kind of harmony with nature, and wore skins; but ask whether any !Khwatla visitor will be jostled out of their reverie of the constructed idea of the Bushman: that of childlike, innocent and, dare I say it, “primitive”. How does the !Khwatla experience reconcile itself with the fact that many Bushmen today more than likely own a cellular telephone, wear Levi jeans knock-off’s, are glued to the soap operas of South African public television, and struggle with many of the same issues that plague most around the world, HIV Aids, poverty, global warming and education?

These are complex issues and I agree that the many intersections between development, good intentions, donor funding and eco-tourism are fraught with pitfalls, contradictions, and in-betweens. How, though, can !Khwatla as idea be framed in a way that is ethically justifiable? How can it remain a viable economic project without having to resort to a false notion or image of the Bushman (image Bushman) in order to attract tourists? This set of questions and challenges are inherently connected to the cultural rights of the Bushmen and the reproduction and sale of these rights. The rights of the Bushmen are equivalent to the rights to an unencumbered freedom and independence free of the spectres of colonial controls.

I use the term ‘image-Bushman’ as a reference to the construction of their image as illustrated in both historical and contemporary imagery and literature. I have coined the phrase following Roderick Neumann’s use of the term ‘image-Africa’, where he examines the West’s propensity for an image of a model, ahistorical African Eden. Why should the overwhelming image of the Bushman be that of loincloths, rock art, bows, arrows and speech “clicks”? This construction of ‘image-Bushman’ is indicated across the

photographic and literary continuum, ranging from the writings of nineteenth century travel writers to the 2007 television advertisements (discussed later) that travel the circuits of the media. The image of the Bushman as “primitive”, innocent, separate from global concerns, and needing to be rescued by others from their plight, rears its head in spheres from development, coffee table books to television adverts and Internet advertising. One of the aims of the process I followed in the construction of this mini-dissertation was to interrogate how Bushman is defined through the connection between historical imagery and modern reality.

What role should donor funding play in “development” of the Bushmen, and what is an ethical way of dealing with donor or development funding? If !Khwa ttu, according to its website, is a centre of learning and development for the Bushmen, what will it take to propel that training beyond cleaning, bush tours, and waitressing? I struggle with the terms “development” and “develop” as by implication the binary opposite – undeveloped – has negative connotations and suggests, by extension, that the Bushmen are undeveloped. The insight, the ability to think conceptually, coupled with an intense consideration for others, were all traits exhibited by the group. Why not let the group vigorously enter the arena of education, debate, and rhetoric? How may !Khwa ttu free themselves from the confines of those white buildings, with all the attendant meanings and values of the word “white” in post-apartheid South Africa? More cautiously, I think it is critical to ask whether this group may continue their struggle for dignity without that struggle being informed or, for that matter, led by a white and often foreign financial and conceptual framework.

I believe it impossible for me, as a South African Coloured woman, to ignore the issues of race in any sphere in post-apartheid South Africa. This is because I have lived through, been shaped and informed by, and been made subject to the restrictions and parameters imposed on me as a result of my skin tone. The issue of race was raised by the members of the group, quite early on, when we were

discussing the Angolan war conflict, and they expressed apprehension towards African blacks as well as whites. This discussion provided the framework for introducing the notion of the “other”. They commented that I ‘was one of them’, due to my Colouredness, and raised the derogatory label ‘Boesman’ which is often directed towards members of the Coloured community. I own the term “Coloured” with a capital “C”,⁶ which has been a bone of contention as many see it as pejorative. This ‘inbetweenness’, commented on by the group, being neither black nor white in South Africa is inherent, I want to suggest, in the Coloured community’s struggle to find a place in both colonialist, pre- and post-apartheid South Africa. Does this neither-white-nor-black status impinge on the position held by the Bushmen in post-apartheid South Africa?

In coining the phrase, *The White Cube*, O’Doherty draws parallels between the gallery space and places of worship, and writes that the galleries, – the ‘chamber of eternal display’(McEvelley 1986:8), are more akin to the chambers of religious worship as found in medieval churches and religious tombs (ibid). The similarities are startling, ranging from the design (Egyptian tombs were designed to eliminate awareness of the outside world) to the display of paintings and sculptures that held associations of eternal life. Like galleries, these tombs were difficult to access for the ordinary person. And like galleries, with their curators, owners and management, there is a hierarchical line of command that runs through the establishment. This is mirrored, I believe, at !Khwatla, which is structured along painfully similar lines.

⁶ See Mohammed Adhikari’s 2005 paper, ‘Contending Approaches to Coloured Identity and the History of Coloured People of South Africa.’

In spite of protests by the Chief Executive Officer, Michael Daiber, that all operations undertaken at the centre were done in a participatory spirit, time and again I was told and observed the contrary. The Bushmen at !Khwa ttu, whilst trying to improve their lot, do so under the control, and guidelines of the management. As attested to in the video recordings that I conducted, four women repeatedly stressed that they wanted to be educated and had voiced this to the CEO, to no avail. They stressed that they were paid very low wages.⁷ I had no reason not to believe them. For me, the hardship experienced by the community was tangibly illustrated by the simple fact that Andre Likia, an articulate and intelligent fourteen year old !Xun participant, was not enrolled in formal schooling, but was relegated to ABET⁸ training, and spent his days guarding the entrance, welcoming tourists, and recording their vehicle license plates.

!Khwa ttu is a strange mix of a constructed past and “authentic Bushman” tied up neatly in a Disneyland eco-tourist schema, which is complete with gemsbok donated by Jennifer Oppenheimer of the South African diamond dynasty. Presented as the ‘real world of the San’ it is easy to be lulled into the idea that this is indeed the real thing.

This was type of the backdrop that constituted my experience at !Khwa ttu. Throughout the seven months, as co-curator and facilitator I also battled with the confines imposed on by the fact that this was a foreign-funded donor project. Moreover, although I

⁷ I was told by one of the women, Lienkie Thys, a single mother of two, that she was paid R900.00 per month. From this amount she had to pay R300 per month for her room and shared kitchen and bathroom facilities.

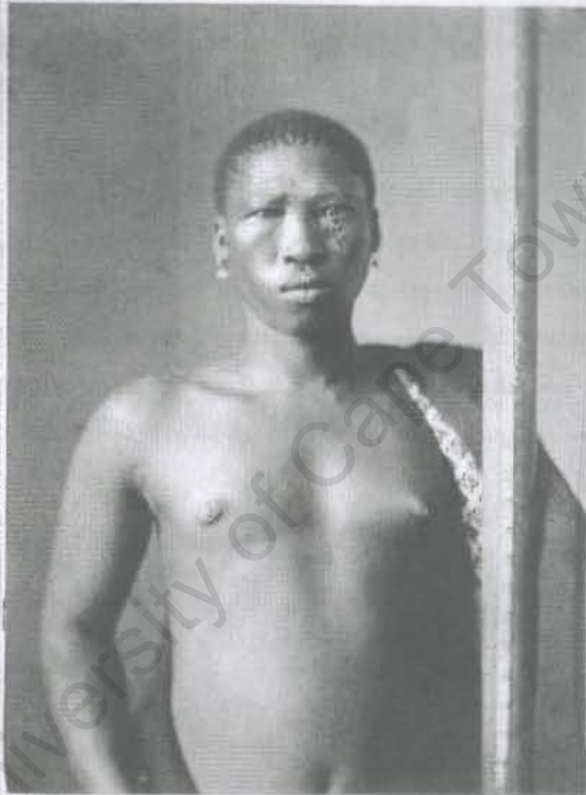
⁸ ABET: Adult Basic Education and Training.

stressed repeatedly that process was paramount to product, the end line was that an exhibition was to be staged that fee-paying tourists could understand and appreciate.

I have to concede, however, that I did not appreciate fully the aims and constraints of !Khwa ttu and as the heated meetings with the project management duo of Magdalena Broma, (a German !Khwa ttu educationalist, who has spent the last twenty years of her life and career working with the Bushmen of Southern Africa) and Michael Daiber attest, the seven month project was grueling. With hindsight, I should have been more empathetic to the fact that !Khwa ttu relies on tourism for funds, and that the management and development workers appear well-intentioned. I should also acknowledge that reading the visitors book at the exhibition, as well as engaging with the participants has given me renewed hope in the value of the project, despite its many flaws.

No. 42.

XIII.



William Bushman Cape Town

Chapter Two

It's the same as putting together a rifle

So, what does a photograph expose? It exposes, says Derrida, the relation to the law. What he means is that every photo poses itself as this question: Are we allowed to view what is being exposed? (Ronell, 1991:132)

Upon being appointed curator for the exhibition, I asked a colleague and friend Dale Washkansky, if he would come in as co-curator on the project. I met Washkansky as a first year student at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at UCT and our mutual passion for photography developed into a close relationship. We both enjoy the teasing apart of the nuances of the genre. I have an intense respect for Washkansky as a fledgling academic (he is completing his MA(FA)) and his humanity underpins his endeavors. An astute, compassionate, and intuitive South African photographer, Washkansky and I had worked together on several similar projects. His own photographic practice focuses largely on the Jewish body, particularly the construction of that body and space. We have different approaches and certainly different strengths, both essential to ensure that any collaborative process is not a one-sided affair. Dale's input in the design and layout process of the !Khwa ttu exhibition was therefore invaluable. More importantly though, was our shared commitment to process: the seven months had to be an interrogation by the group themselves, through the medium of photography, of what the notion of 'image-Bushman' entailed.

We were committed to using the genre of photography as the framework for the seven month process. There were many reasons for this choice, besides that we are both passionate photographers and passionate about photography. We believe in the magic of the camera, are aware of its pitfalls, and accept that the medium can be an excellent vehicle for those wanting to tell a story in a language other than the written word. This was an important set of assumptions as more than half the project participants are technically illiterate. We stressed, too, that part of the photographic component would be the exposure of the participants themselves to both historical and contemporary photographic practice.

Both Dale Washkansky and I knew that we had much to learn from the project and from the participants. Although we are artists and aspiring academics, we knew little of the Bushmen in general, let alone this group. In preparation for the project we referred to the writings of Paola Freire, as I believed that his approach to teaching and learning would benefit the entire project.

Re-imagining scholarship

Among other topics, Paolo Freire (1921-1997) was concerned primarily with questions of informal education, rhetoric, and dialogue. Born in Brazil, Freire is best known for his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), a book detailing his views and positions on education and liberation. For Freire, education and liberation are inextricably linked, and he regarded the relationship of the traditional teacher-student model as being narrative, with the teacher the narrating subject and listening students the passive object. As Finkelpearl contends:

Education thus becomes the act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor.
(Finkelpearl, 2000:281)

In contrast to more traditional notions of what constitutes education, where the teacher-student relationship is essentially hierarchical, Freire proposed an alternative approach based on the idea of an equal relationship between teacher and learner, with both teacher and learner in the unique position of being able to learn from one another. Freirean pedagogy, known in Latin America as 'popular education', arose from Freire's lived experience of working with groups denied access to resources and power. Freire contended that by challenging the traditional teacher-learner relationship, a critical consciousness would emerge, which would in turn have a positive impact on that society.

The teacher-pupil relationship immediately raises questions of power and control. Indeed, this binary is shot through with power relationships and, over the course of the !Khwatla project, Dale Washkansky and I knew that in challenging this relationship we were entering tenuous territory. Much was at stake; most notably, the position of the non-Bushman management, as well as the very conventional and hierarchical fine art arena of academics, artists and galleries. Our process would include questioning the ownership and authorship of artists, photographers, the archive and the academy itself. This realisation may well have threatened our own position as photographers and aspiring academics. As concerned as we were to implement Freirean ideas, we were somewhat taken aback when we were challenged by what appeared to be comments from the group that did not fit into our academic framework. I return to these comments in Chapter 5.

The !Khwatlu group attests to many of the social injustices of the Bushman, discussed by Freire in relation to the working classes of South America. They have among them experienced the trauma and violence of the past and present, critical issues of gender and equality simmer close to the surface,⁹ and many are or have been displaced. As co-curators, we stressed repeatedly that although we knew about photography and fine art, we knew little to nothing about their lives, challenges, and strengths. Thus, in articulating a Freirean pedagogical framework, the group began to see themselves as fellow teachers. This was evident in their desire to impart their knowledge by using Bushmen experiences as structures to explain photographic and conceptual art practices. They vigorously debated the Bushman body casts (discussed in Chapter 5), and vociferously asserted their stance on historical imagery of the Bushman.

We witnessed the partial emergence of a critical consciousness, particularly among the women, and although there were many flaws in this project, one of our many delights as co-curators was the observation of this growing awareness and interrogation of who they were, and what it meant to be a Bushman woman in both a local and global context. The men and women commented that our workshops did not have the structure of their conventional programmes, or any resonance of the previous photo gallery exhibition of which they had been a part. This entailed an impressive and expensive large format photographic exhibition, which depended heavily

⁹ I insisted that women were invited to be a part of the process in contrast to the core group suggested by the management. I was told that the women were shy and that previous attempts to involve them in projects did not show great response. I agree that the initial meetings were met with scepticism by a few of the women. This scepticism soon dissipated, and it is to their credit that they showed commitment and vigour, often using their new found skills in articulation to challenge the position and ideas of the men on the project. The women spoke to me about violence, often as a result of the use of alcohol, that happened frequently at !Khwatlu. This was confirmed by Michael Daiber, the Chief Executive Officer.

on images of rock art. It relied on the secluded white space of the gallery walls, and the autonomy and voice of the photographer who was there to 'educate' the viewer (with the best of intentions of course) about the Bushmen. Tension underscored this exhibition, as the photographer appeared to be less intent on asserting that his craft, photography, is inherently subjective, rather focusing on 'educating' the silenced viewer through impressive, expensive, large format glossy photographs of rock art, untouched landscapes and lyrical texts. This tension a result of the failure of the photographer in acknowledging parallel, preceding and proceeding moments.

This tension described above can be applied not only to education but to the arena of art as well, where parallels may be drawn between artists who often adopt the role of moral and intellectual teachers/subjects and the passive audience/object with the traditional gallery space aiding the formation of this relationship (O'Doherty 1976). This paradigm can be seen in particular public art projects where the artists enter the community with a preconceived idea as to what the outcome of the so-called collaborative artwork should be; and, after completion of the project leaves that community to do the same elsewhere. Miwon Kwon, criticises 'community art' endeavors and contends that interactive art can be manipulative with the non-artists amounting to little more than material to be used (Finkelpearl 2000).

Both Dale Washkansky and I were acutely aware of Kwon's assertion. We struggled with the battle that raged between getting a first class exhibition together (as demanded by the centre's management), and embarking on a mutual learning experience. We were also very cautious regarding the inescapable fact that we were fine artists, educated in the field at a reputable school of fine art. It would have been very easy for us to sketch out a plan and have the luxury of an unpaid labour force to ensure its completion; we were the

professionals, graduates from arguably the top university in South Africa. In this regard, the work of Freire and Kwon were a constant reminder to us of a simple position: to avoid the pitfalls of public art projects.

More overwhelming was our awareness of how acutely the camera had featured in the construction of 'image-Bushman', and the injury it had inflicted on the Bushman body. We hoped that the process of the project would include a process of healing for the group. By focusing on historical imagery, and referencing and teasing apart the past,¹⁰ our mutual intention was that the process would underpin a new discourse for their future. As co-curators, we hoped to facilitate the emergence of a discourse of ownership, of a forging of place and role for the Bushmen, not only in post-apartheid South Africa, but in the African and global arena as well. The project would have been compromised if it did not give as much weight to the future as well as the past of the Bushman. We believed that the photograph was the point of intersection between the past, present and future for the group, (but also for us).

The violence of representation

A photograph is more than a collection of pigments on light-sensitive paper. The photographic genre is a system of representation in and of itself. To represent, to produce meaning through language, discourse and the image, is an area that is fraught with difficulties, as Foucault (1977; 1980), Benjamin (1931), Barthes (1980), Saussure (1960) and others have well illustrated. I understand Foucault's reading of representation and discourse to be particularly relevant to any discussion of Bushmen imagery. His discursive approach to representation (discourse, knowledge, power and the question of the subject) is summed up in an important assertion:

¹⁰ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) initiated the process of healing in a traumatised post apartheid South Africa. The TRC was set up in terms of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995.

Here I believe one's point of reference should not be to the great model of language (langue) and signs, but to that of war and battle. The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of language: relations of power not relations of meaning. (Foucault 1980: 114-5)

Foucault's approach to knowledge production directs us to look at ways of learning for and about the Bushmen. It is through discourse I agree, that a different way of knowing may ensue. Without an inclusive discourse, the power inherent in knowledge production spoken of by Foucault, leads to a skewed version, presented as the 'truth' of the Bushman, with the Bushman body bearing the brunt of the asymmetrical power relations.

There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations. (Foucault 1977:27)

In her last book, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), Susan Sontag comments on the violence inherent in photography. Sontag's publication (which does not include any photographs) raises questions about being human, and our ambivalent response to photographs that show war, violence and the atrocities of war. We experienced first-hand her examination of the ethics of taking

photographs and in viewing them; we had an eager, if somewhat captive, audience keen to be snapped. Sontag interrogates violence and photography, not only in the physical act of shutter release, and asks the all important question: 'How can we look?'¹¹

Following Sontag, it is clear that there are several acts of violence in the process of taking and viewing photographs. Both the photographer and the viewer are instruments of violence, and the question needs to be asked: if, in viewing a photograph of violence, I proceed to do nothing, does my witnessing of that photograph degenerate into an act of complicity? If we enter truthfully into this debate, perhaps then we will begin to better understand that with the act of looking comes responsibility and accountability.

How, indeed, can we use the camera as other than an instrument of representation, death, violence and invasion? How can the camera begin a process of absolution where there is a need for one? We fine-tuned these questions with particular reference to the relationship between the Bushmen and the camera, where the photograph has figured centrally in the infliction of violence. Together with the group, we embarked on the process of exploring questions of belonging, representation, classification and othering. The overarching question that we continued to grapple with was how this group re-imagines, re-positions, and re-members itself both pre- and post 2008. If the associations of Bushmen are inextricably tied to primordial trances, rock art, the 'primitive', evolution, Darwin, classification and hunting, where does that leave this small group of people as they leave those associations behind, as a result of globalisation, creolisation, and mobility? How, then, does one define Bushman and, more disturbingly, should we in the twenty first century be fixing this group in a space and time? What is the point of maintaining the constructs Bushman, Boesman, San? Furthermore, as the Bushman body has been the recipient of violence on at least two levels – by the torture inflicted on the physical body, as well as that violence continuing by the pervasive nature of photographs – how can we reconcile the Bushman with the

¹¹ Walter Benjamin too in his *Classic Essays on Photography* raises the notion of violence in photography, connecting it to hunting.

camera? In the age of technology, is the Bushman body still being violated by the digitisation of these images in the name of “research” and “preservation”?

The majority of the historical and contemporary photographs of this heterogeneous group work to dehumanise the Bushmen, to make them a homogenous group, and to place them unequivocally as ‘Primitive Other’, importantly, against the so-called benchmark of civilization, the white European male. There is scant evidence of the particular make-up of the group which has been lumped together for convenience often under the rubric of the blanket term Khoisan. Today, ‘Bushman’ comprises numerous language groups with just as many different languages. Geographically, the Bushmen stretch across the southern region of the African continent from Angola to Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. ‘Image- Bushmen’ in reality comprises !Xun, Khwe, †Khomani Naro and Bugakhwe among other groups.¹² As Dale Washkansky and I experienced during the various workshops, there are many Bushmen who do not understand the other languages of Bushmen from different histories and geographies. Moreover, their physical characteristics span across the entire continuum. It was with this knowledge that the insidious nature of many of the historical Bushman gallery photographs was interrogated by the group. This knowledge was the very starting point for the entire process.

Photography in Africa

¹² See Roger Chennels’ report on the Hoodia case which documents the legal battles of the Bushmen with regard to traditional knowledge.

The invention of the device in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century resulted in a medium that rivaled painting in the depiction of “the real”. This scientific device, with the ability to capture the real using the effects of the optical, the mechanical, and chemistry, gave birth to a genre that encapsulates the realms of science and art, one that “fixes a moment in time” as it were. Prior to the invention of the camera, the ‘history of the European view of non-European peoples has always reflected European’s history of themselves’ (Landau 2002:2). The invention of Africa was due in part to armchair geographers, missionaries, and explorers ‘accumulating knowledge about the continent from a variety of ill-informed sources, such as rumours and reports’ (ibid). In this way the West developed ethnological comparisons, essentialised Africans, constructed the distance between “us” and “them”, and perpetuated the myth of African inferiority. This distance further resulted in a ‘chronological gulf: Africans lived in the past era, which had accidentally been mislaid in the present’ (Landau: 2002:4). Despite the increase in African scholarship and, perhaps more importantly, a critical discourse of Africa during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the power of the constructed image of Africa still abounds.

The camera and the photographic image have played a considerable role in imagining that ‘this is the way Africa should look’ (Neumann 1998:1), and residual traces of these dominant traits are still to found in contemporary images of Africa. The image of the continent is altogether burdened by snapshots of ‘witchdoctors and bones, steamy jungles, refugee camps, wildebeest and lions’ (Landau 2002: 5).

The introduction of the camera in Africa would lead to a further entrenchment of the practice of othering in colonial and post-colonial times, especially when it came to the Bushman body. As an object of nature and an object of study, Bushmen were measured,

prodded, cast and photographed with their corporeal being the main focus of any “knowledge” production. In 1969, Darwinian biologist, Thomas Henry Huxley initiated a project to produce a photographic record of the races of the British Empire. Edwards asserts that this project was underscored by “[i]deas of racial science and hierarchy and colonial powers that made Huxley’s ‘well-considered plan’ imaginable in the first place.”

The resultant image of Africa or image-Africa as Other corresponds, in interesting ways, to some of the fundamental tenets and precepts of Edward Said’s groundbreaking book, *Orientalism*’ (1978). *Orientalism* is a concrete study of a paradigm, in which the author discusses the Western propensity for a double representation – the construction of ‘The Other’– with reference to the Western view of the East. Said’s discussion of orientalist discourse in Western literature explores a concept that is ‘part of the vast control mechanism of colonialism, designed to justify and perpetuate European dominance’ (Said 1978:25-26). The ‘mysterious’, ‘exotic’ nineteenth century construct is still perpetuated in the post-modern world, as television and media reinforce and intensify the stereotype (Said 1978:26). As Harris contends:

[I]n the interaction between photographic images and colonial discourse, it was the colonized subject’s “body... rather than that of speech, law or history” that was the essential defining characteristic of “primitive” bodies. (Harris, 1998:21)

In part, the construct of image-Africa was due to the development of the visual media, which almost entirely overshadowed potential contributions from the African literary canon, which we should note stretches into the past centuries and to places like Sahelian, Sudanic and coastal East Africa (Landau 2002). Examples of these visual images include those exhibited in Pippa Skotnes’ *Miscast*,

colonial-era cinema, *Tintin* comic strips and natural history magazines, like *National Geographic*. (Landau 2002). More current examples of this construction, may I suggest, are still perpetuated today.

Contemporary reflections of historical photographic practices

Acclaimed South African photographer Pieter Hugo's photographic exhibition held at the Michael Stevenson Contemporary Gallery (February to March 2006) showcased several different series of images, including *Wild Honey Collectors*, *Techiman District, Ghana*, *The Hyena Men of Nigeria*. In addition, Hugo exhibited a series of white sangomas in trance-like states, and a large collection of portraits of Nigerian judges and barristers. Somewhat out of place were three photographs of apparently lower class white boys, reminiscent of Roger Ballen and David Goldblatt's interrogation of a similar theme.¹³ Utilising the conventional singular view of documentary photography, the size of the exhibition is initially impressive, yet repetitive.

'I got bored of taking pictures, I like making pictures', said Pieter Hugo on a walkabout of his new show, *Presence*, at the Michael Stevenson (Stupart 2006. [Online]). This fleeting statement, innocuous as it may seem, finds its way discursively into the pictures of the white sangomas. Perfectly composed and lit against a black backdrop in conventional portrait format, the viewer is somehow left

¹³ Lithuanian born Goldblatt in particular is a renowned South African photographer who documents the banal details of South African life. American-born Ballen is a well known documentary photographer based in South Africa.

with an uneasy nagging idea that they seem contrived and staged, and perhaps not even real sangomas; perhaps just friends of the artist dressing up and posing for a laugh.

Pieter Hugo, as the winner of the portraits section of the 2006 World Press Photo competition, may be seen as a documentary photographer and tackles his chosen landscape with a professionalism that is evident in his photographs, and which, to a large extent, displays an awareness and engagement of the technicalities of the genre. Apart from a few irritable compositional errors, where the eye is drawn to an area which could have been easily cropped out, the exhibition, *Presence*, was a polished and professional affair with huge expensive prints displaying saturated colour. There is no doubt that his photographs, in terms of use of lighting, colour, composition and form are aesthetically very successful and often pleasing to the eye.

It is not unreasonable to concede that this is a photographer who knows his craft. Yet, given this fact, it is difficult disaggregating an appreciation of the aesthetics when considering who the photographer is, and who and what he and his subjects represent. Hugo is a white South African male, traveling the world looking for interesting subjects to 'make his photographs' (Stupart 2006). A position such as this immediately raises a series of questions about the white gaze looking at and capturing his exotic subject; although as a twenty-first century viewer I would want to believe that as a well-traveled photographer Hugo has to be aware of this. However, is there a possibility that he is he blissfully (un)aware? Is he simply making a point about contentious post-apartheid issues (and if so, what is that point)? Does he want to do whatever it takes to get that award-winning photograph? Or is he simply playing a game with his audience? It would be interesting to uncover whether Hugo has had any further contact or interaction with the groups, or whether they served largely as props for his award winning set.

From the pages of the entertainment section of the local newspaper, I recently read an advertisement for Hugo's latest exhibition. The colour image showed a lower income bracket white middle-aged South African couple with a black toddler on the woman's knee. I gathered that this would be more of the same. I chose not to attend the exhibition held at the South African National Gallery.

In his book, *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics* (2003), David Levi-Strauss' tackles photography and politics, and discusses those grey areas of photography: morality, memory and grief. The chapters in Levi-Strauss's book, together with an astute introduction by John Berger, opens up a series of critiques of photography and propaganda, photographs and believing, the aesthetic and photography, and the dialogue that is formed when beauty is used to portray subject matter that may be abject or brutal. Levi-Strauss invites his reader to ponder the reality that a photograph, for example, taken by a world famous photographer of a stereotypical "poor, Aids-ridden African" will make more money than that person would ever earn in her life. (Chances are that the subject portrayed in that photograph was not afforded the courtesy of a photographic print.) Where do ethics fit into the frame? Is the exploitation of Africa, as in the days of colonialism, still being perpetuated? Has the master conveniently left his servant behind?

Africa is not immune to the effects of globalisation and technology, as newspapers and billboards showing photographs in advertisements for cellular telephone operators, international fast food outlets, and foreign cars are to be found across the continent. Photography is therefore an integral part of the construction of the image of contemporary Africa. For the Bushmen, their image is often used as comic relief in South African visual media, an issue that I discuss in Chapter 5.

With this in mind, it was a specific intention of ours to interrogate the relationship between the medium of photography and the Bushmen. Photography has been so often associated with capture, representation and control of the image of the Bushmen, and through our intervention we wanted to attempt to shift the paradigm through a process of re-imagining of its role so that a new cultural politics of representation is inserted ethically into the collage of Africa. We aimed to do this with particular reference to the group. Overall, we wanted to share our passion for the medium with a group, who, I should note, had never used Single Lens Reflex cameras before. (It was only the male tour guides who had had prior access to a digital, point-and-shoot camera).

A photograph is intrinsically a visual medium – to see a photograph one looks at a photograph. By association therefore, the gaze is linked powerfully to the snapshot. Through the process of looking, she who looks is lead down Alice's rabbit hole – to a den of othering, classification, difference and power. I am intrigued by Fanon's articulation of looking, desire, and racism, and feel compelled to look at a photograph differently with Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* in mind. How can a photograph unshackle itself from the confines of being looked at, and the intrusion on the body of another, of being a witness and perpetrator of violence on the body? As the direct gaze on the corporeal features of the other, what role can the camera play if we strive to re-imagine Africa – past, present and future – differently? In a sense, we wanted to begin a process of freeing the African body from the confines of the colonialist gaze – the shackles of the Black body, through which everything is articulated.

Re-figuring the photograph

As stated earlier, Washkansky and I wanted specifically to share with participants the magic of the camera, a reality to which any first time visitor to a darkroom will attest. The broad smiles that beamed across the quad at !Khwa ttu when participants tried out simple point-and-shoot-cameras for the first time was itself magical. French theorist, Roland Barthes, confirms this seemingly other-worldly quality of photography in his comment that ‘we keep in mind the magical character of the photographic image’ (Barthes: 1964: 42). In West Africa, photographers were long called ‘image magicians’ and, even today, photographic studio names such as Magic Photo Studio or Mr. Magic are common (Landau 2002:21). Magic, photography, death, and specters are thus kindred spirits in Africa. As Behrend and Wendl suggest:

In many African languages, the word for (photographic) “negative” is the same as for “ghost or dead spirit” and that photos have been in many places integrated into ancestor veneration. (Behrend and Wendl as cited by Landau, 2002:24)

It is therefore against this historical backdrop that the !Khwa ttu Reference Group began interrogating ‘image-Bushmen’, and it is true to say that the seven months was a journey that invoked emotions across the continuum. It was also a process of gathering information and sharing and producing knowledge. The group itself was mixed in terms of gender, language group, literacy and age, and for many of the participants the experience provided a new set of conceptual and rhetorical tools: group members were by the end of the process able to use a camera to convey their thoughts and engage with the language of representation. In this regard, the

process of doing photography became a process of empowerment, of shooting back. Indeed, photography was a tool that was able to bridge the many obstacles the group encountered in discussing the nature of their (historical) image.

The Bushmen of today are still battling to break away from the notion that Bushmen are prized rarities. The project allowed the group to tackle some of the many issues that they are currently dealing with, including the image of themselves and how their identity is formulated. Key questions that the group grappled with included: If I lose my connection to the land and its natural resources, am I still a Bushman? If I do not wear my traditional clothes, am I still a Bushman? If I lose the ability to speak my mother tongue, am I still a Bushman? If I carry out my beliefs as a religion and not myth am I still Bushman? Therefore what does it mean to be Bushman in a modern world? This project was more than the mastering of a craft. It was – and this agreed from the outset – an endeavor to encourage critical thought. In profound ways, this project and the accompanying exhibition was intended for the group to continue the debate about their image, both historically and in the present.

It was difficult at first to gain the confidence of the group. They were immediately skeptical when they were told we were photographers. They thought we would take photographs of them that would be published in a book they would never see. We were outsiders, did not speak their language, we struggled in Afrikaans (a few of the group understood Afrikaans),¹⁴ and they were not

¹⁴ This language struggle came to the fore when we held our first painting workshop. We had enlisted the help of Emmanuel Maseko a well known !Xun painter from the Northern Cape town of Platfontein as facilitator. It was clear that he did not speak Afrikaans, and only a small section of the group could understand his language. I raised this with Magdalena Broma, a trainer and part of the !Khwatla team and a major player in the execution of the project, in one of the many often heated meetings. She was

convinced that they would be able to use Single Lens Reflex (SLR) cameras. After a few getting-to-know-each other sessions, where we acknowledged that we had much to learn from each other, the ice was finally broken when I gave each of the participants point-and-shoot instant cameras. We informed them that they could take them home (they were about to leave for their annual leave), and to take pictures of whatever they liked. They were concerned that the cameras would be lost or stolen; they had never held a camera let alone taken one home for three weeks. However, after loading the film and batteries, the enthusiasm was infectious, and I had to caution the participants to leave some exposures free for the days and moments of their holiday.

I am fortunate that I have my own camera, a professional Nikon digital SLR, and I slipped the strap around Maria Karembe's neck and asked her to record the process. At the start of the project, Maria was painfully shy. A young single mother of four sons, with no other family, this young !Xun, woman, who spoke neither English nor Afrikaans, used the lens with an amazing confidence. As the digital camera displayed the captured moment immediately on the screen, Maria's face blossomed. She was given the responsibility of recording this important event, and handling expensive equipment. She was often bombarded by her peers to be the focus of her lens. I left !Khwa ttu somewhat encouraged by the thought that perhaps there was some progress being made in transforming, healing, refiguring the relationship between the Bushmen and the camera.

The photograph and the Bushmen have long had an unhealthy relationship. This assertion is demonstrated perhaps no more clearly than in photographs of the Bushmen in Pippa Skotnes' book and exhibition, *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*

sceptical of my assertion that he did not understand Afrikaans as it was the *lingua franca* of his area. He did not however show any recognition of the language despite her protestations.

There is another level, a more discreet one. It establishes a second representation that unites through similitude and eventually articulates distinctions and separations, thus classifying identities.[...] on the one hand, signs of an epistemological order which, silently but imperatively, indicates the processes of integrating and differentiating figures within the normative sameness; on the other hand, the excellence of an exotic picture that creates a cultural, distance thanks to an accumulation of accidental differences [...].(Mudimbe, 1988:9)

The powers of the *Miscast* photographs extend beyond the edges of the paper on which they are printed, and a negative image (same yet lacking) of the “Bushman” remains as the overarching theme. Through a viewing of these photographs, a number of disturbing realities emerge: the lives and stories of the Bushmen are taken out of context, they are viewed as elements from nature, and are seldom, if ever, given the courtesy of being named. In the *Miscast* catalogue, art historian Michael Godby describes how dehumanising these photographic practices were with reference to a series of procedural directions for photographs of the time:

[T]he subject was to be photographed naked in the four anthropometric poses, with a plainly marked measuring scale places in the same place. (Godby, 1996: 120)

The camera is given due credit, as Edward B. Tyler wrote in his review of Gustav Fritsch’s *Die Eingeborenen* (1872):

The closer appreciation of race types, which is now supplanting the vaguer generalities of twenty years ago, is in no small measure due to the introduction of photographic portraits .(Tyler, 1874:479 as cited by Godby, 1996: 121)

As Skotnes illustrates in *Miscast*, the camera as a tool was largely responsible for enacting a particular violence and invasion on the Bushman body. It is interesting to note, however, that the impressive *Miscast* exhibition catalogue does not include a single essay from a Bushman contributor. This pattern is repeated again in Skotnes' latest achievement, *Claim to the Country: The Archive of Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd* (2007). I understand and concede however that Skotnes is working in the academy and that texts and commentaries from Bushman in this regard may be scant or hard to find.

Wilhelm Bleek, brother-in-law of Lucy Lloyd, was responsible for organising the Bushman photographs of Breakwater Prison series for the 1869 British Colonial Office project. As Elizabeth Edwards writes of Bleek's role in the process:

[A]dding names, ages and measurements, as in the case of the Bushmen...the race is dying out and dwelling in regions which are generally inaccessible and hardly any photographs existing represent genuine Bushmen. (Edwards, 2001:140)

In an essay entitled, "Network Subjects or, The Ghost is the Message", Nicholas Mirzoeff argues that:

Photography reasserted discipline by racialising the body within space...this racialising of the camera transformed the device from a modest reaffirmation of the self in the panoptic gaze into a powerful expression of racial hierarchy...the white subject finds reassurance from within his panoptical that he is not black and has photographs to prove it. (Mirzoeff, 2006:340)

This is the discourse that has pervaded the construction of the “Bushmen”, and the photographs are I think as insidious and deplorable as the collections of their body parts displayed as so-called hunting trophies. I therefore concur with Landau that the camera was itself a hunting tool, and indeed this was eloquently hinted at in one of the photographic workshops.

The haunting scars of trauma

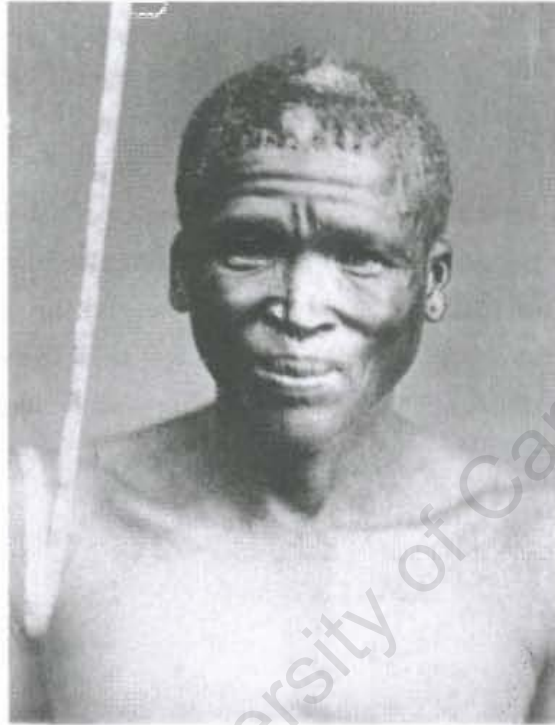
Dale Washkansky and I were having difficulty explaining to the group the various parts of the camera and the method of photographic production. This was partly due to language constraints (we had four different language groups and translations took up a considerable portion of the allocated time), and at a certain point everyone began to get frustrated. Roman Ndeja, an articulate and confident Khwe man, then commented that we proceed to treat the camera as a rifle, as ‘when they were in the war they were just shown how to dismantle and assemble a rifle’ (Ndeja,2007 [Personal communication]). This comment was in fact a poignant invocation of the camera as weapon, as well as a reminder of the Angolan-South African conflict, during which Bushmen were used (by both sides) as trackers. In this discussion, the terms aperture and shutter speed were replaced by ‘klein gat’, ‘groot gat¹⁵’ and ‘open or closed curtains’. Then, on a recent visit to !Khwatla I was pleasantly surprised when I heard Johan Vaalbooi speaking of the aperture he used when was asked to take a photograph of a tourist.

For the Bushmen, historically the camera captured, froze, and therefore defined their image as different and primitive, and to overcome this legacy is a struggle. The controversy around the *Miscast* exhibition is exemplary in this regard. Indeed, Skotnes herself

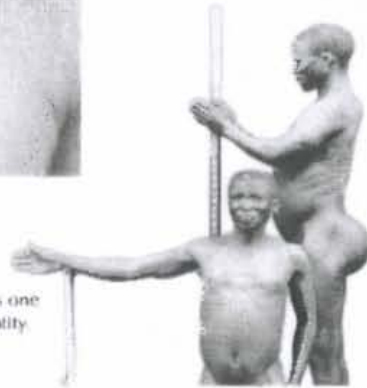
¹⁵ Translated from Afrikaans: ‘big hole, little hole’.

faced criticism when she was accused of imposing an externally derived identity of “Bushmen” – that of sensual object or victim (Landau 2002:20).

This concern was fore grounded in our project, as we knew that the landscape of Bushmen photography was littered with conceptual landmines. We knew that our endeavors would be haunted by the specters of *Miscast*, and agreed from the outset that it could not be avoided, and that we were entering territory that was fraught with difficulties. I agree that the exhibition we constructed does echo *Miscast* to a degree; but although it is at once similar it is also very different. The most striking difference to *Miscast* is that every step of the process was marked by the inclusion of the actual voices and ideas of the Bushman participants.



Photographs of Kabbo
By Lawrence and Selkirk
Cape Town 1875-1



The nightmarishly fascinating thing about race is that it is one
real and unreal, social fact and anthropological non-entity.

Robyn Maynard, *White Image: Race and the American Self*, Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 14.
Maynard, Robyn. *White Image: Race and the American Self*. Harvard University Press, 2009.
Robyn Maynard. *White Image: Race and the American Self*. Harvard University Press, 2009.

Chapter Three:

Let them make tapestries, you can't go wrong with black fabric

Lacking rigorous grounding in academic training also ensured that the artists work within “naïve” pictorial conventions that become a mark of authenticity within the art market...Many !Xun and Khwe prints and paintings depict quaint scenes of nature, a quality that accounts in part for their popularity in tourist and European art markets. (Stephenson, 2006: 20-23).

Dale Washkansky and I encountered a wall of skepticism when we suggested to the group that we wanted to use the medium of photography as the main component for the exhibition. The sense of uncertainty and hesitance was not restricted to those at !Khwa ttu. On the contrary, we approached Pippa Skotnes of the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town very early on in the process to ask about any ideas she may have had for our visual art workshops. It is difficult to think of art, representation, and the Bushmen without Skotnes's name and work in mind. Her suggestion was a cynical one: 'let them make tapestries, you can't go wrong with black fabric'. We reiterated our reasons for using photography as a primary methodology, and added that it would be the first time that a project such as ours would be attempted. Moreover, we stressed our commitment to process through which the lens of a camera would be the focal point, as it were, for the participants to be empowered conceptually as well as to learn a new skill. As much as black fabric with colourful inserts would have been aesthetically pleasing, we believed that more could be achieved in a

project of this length using photography. Importantly, we also wanted to avoid the notion that Bushmen could only produce a certain “type” of art, namely painting and craft so often found in curio shops on South Africa’s tourist circuits.

Photography beyond representation: The Freedom Box Project

As we had been involved in several similar projects, albeit mainly with youth who could speak either English or Afrikaans, we knew that the camera had enjoyed successes before. This has been illustrated in several projects around the world, including our work on The Freedom Boxes in South Africa and the US. *Fabricated Harmony* (2006) was a collaborative art piece featuring American artist Pat Ward Williams and South African artist, Sue Williamson. It took place at The Light Factory, a photographic gallery in Charlotte, North Carolina. In addition to a series of solo works, the show’s centre piece ‘Comfort Zones’ functioned to highlight society’s inability to embrace unity, equality, and change. As an extension of the main exhibition, the curator, education and outreach personnel were eager to explore the use of art as a mechanism for repair, and the idea of The Freedom Box was born. Charles Thomas, photographer and administrator of the Education Office at The Light Factory, conceptualised an outreach program as a response to Pat Ward Williams’ work, ‘*32 Hours in a Box and Still Counting*’ (1987). The Freedom Box project was an exploration of the movement from racial segregation to integration. The initial project had students from Charlotte High Schools (Olympic, Meyers Park, and Northwest School of the Arts) collaborating with their South African counterparts, Salt River High School and Rondebosch Boys High School, Cape Town. I co-ordinated the South African Freedom Box Project, and during my involvement in 2007 the project was extended to include Soweto youth at the Hector Pieterse Museum in Johannesburg. The process of the project

was one that indicated to us the value of photography beyond that of pure representation, Photography could be used for the purposes of empowerment and rhetoric.

Claiming photo albums

As a result of language barriers and a reticence among the !Kwena participants, the visual medium of painting was introduced as another language form. Groups were formed and, across different languages, shared experiences were depicted visually. Emmanuel Maseko, a !Xun man, was instrumental in this regard, and led the group to some success. Some participated more eagerly than others, yet the pace was very slow. On the whole, however, the results were paramount and worked well to convey the subject matter of the exhibition. War commentaries from Emmanuel Maseko (!Xun), and Carlos Munawgo (Kwena), were shared, despite the language differences. Maria Karemba's (!Xun) use of very dark colours and expressions of angst through her subject matter left the viewer with little doubt as to her loneliness and despair, which she would voice at a later stage in the process. These painting workshops provided the armature for the photographic follow-up, and gave us a renewed vigour in teaching the group about cameras, images and representation.

During one of our initial workshops, we asked the members of the group if any had photographs – of their family, themselves as children, or their homes. Besides Roman Ndeja, who was a senior guide, no one did. There was not a single snapshot of anyone or their extended families. There was no visual recording of where they were born, their parents (many deceased), or any of the

photographic snapshots that are taken for granted, such as weddings, school snapshots or parties. A camera was certainly not on the list of essentials for any of the participants with whom we engaged.

The starting point for our discussion on photography was that of historical imagery, and our research at various libraries and archives was to lead us down a path that brought us into conflict with the work being done by Pippa Skotnes. The group was not at all aware of the LLAREC project,¹⁶ had never met Skotnes, nor had any clue as to how to access the LLAREC website. Indeed, they had never even seen any of the original photographic negatives and positives of dead Bushmen to which Skotnes, her team, other students and I had unrestricted access.

It was here that I experienced the conflict and the gulf that existed between this institution (the University of Cape Town) and the Bushmen. Skotnes is an illustrious scholar, who has researched the history of the Bushman extensively. Indeed, her research provided the groundwork for this mini-dissertation. Her department was instrumental in providing us with access to photographs; they were digitised on a computer and made available instantly. It is with this in mind, this sense of the unrestricted nature of the archive, that I raise the question: At whom is all this research about the Bushman directed? Is it purely for the consumers and producers of the academy, and in this way distinct and separate from the Bushman men women and children, who are seemingly out of the picture? What connection (if any at all) exists between the glossy and impressive books that are produced by academics, photographers and

¹⁶ The Lucy Lloyd Archive Resource and Exhibition Centre (LLAREC) is a research centre located at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town and directed by Pippa Skotnes. It was established in 1996 initially to house the *Miscast* archive. See LLAREC available <http://www.lloydbleekcollection.uct.ac.za>.

and comment for themselves within an academic circle. If one were to adopt Freirean principles, such a meeting could have possibilities for mutual learning, where teacher and learner roles are fluid.

We hit the first of the major hurdles that would emerge over the course of the project very early on. In principle and action, we were committed to the *process* of the project, and envisioned this as a dynamic platform for learning, growth and critical interrogation. This was in conflict to a large degree with Michael Daiber, the CEO of !Khwa ttu, as well as Magdalena Broma. They were emphatic that we provide a clear layout of the final product at an early stage. It is understandable that they had their concerns, and to a degree, the comment made by Michael Daiber that 'he didn't want to be high to understand what the art exhibition was about' should not have been met with our incredulous stares. We reiterated to both Daiber and Broma that this was a project that required the full participation of all the participants, as we were to deal with sensitive and emotional issues, such as dislocation, death and violence. In addition, there were the practical components of the project, such as camera usage, which we expected the participants to come to grips with. The struggle between process and product was never fully resolved and it was here that Dale Washkansky and I realised the pitfalls of working to a pre-ordained, funded, tourist-g geared organisational format.

I think we had clearly misunderstood the focus of Daiber and his team. Where a first class, aesthetically pleasing, and highly textual exhibition was in their interest, ours was out of kilter. We saw the real progress being made in the small, intangible steps, such as the women becoming vocal and voicing their stories and their concerns or the youth speaking up about sexual health and drugs, or in the group addressing the violence on the !Khwa ttu estate or confronting the overwhelming mantle of regret among the women.

There was clearly no middle ground, between the !Khwa ttu management and ourselves, and it was our weakness that led us to concede on a number of issues. This is clearly evident in the exhibition itself, which relies heavily on text and is geared towards the tourist. Procedurally, Dale Washkansky and I had to research all areas and write the text, a considerable task in itself, which did not include the authorship of the participants. The compilation and editing of these texts were laborious and consuming, as what we proposed often was not approved by Daiber and Broma. Any negative comment about !Khwa ttu was suppressed, as well as our concerns about the time allocated for workshops and proposed field trips. The conflict came to a head when our suggestion for the group to do a workshop at Robben Island was refused. Michael Daiber 'couldn't see the point of going there'. We reiterated that the island was iconic in terms of the South African past, present, and future and perhaps represents a place of healing, of restitution, of return. Moreover, on several occasions we would arrive for a session, only to be told that the staff were working and therefore could not attend.

As most of the group were illiterate or did not speak English, only the three male guides were part of the editing process. We voiced our reservations about this, as we were always vigilant to get the input of the women. This however did not change the editing process. The three male guides and Magdalena Broma, approved the text.

We had committed ourselves to the layout of the exhibition at a very early stage, allowing for a series of large exhibition boards that each pivoted on a theme. These themes (discussed in Chapter 7) included Bushmen history, dislocation, violence on the Bushman body, field trips of the project, and Bushman successes and challenges. We eventually succumbed to the pressures of Daiber and Broma, yet we also agreed that we could not in good faith merely rubberstamp a tourist exhibition under the guise that it was "done

by Bushmen". In the months that followed we made at least some headway in asserting our position. This headway was actualised through the body cast making process, the central Perspex column of historical imagery, quotes, and many of the final images.

University of Cape Town

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A Grass Bunchman

Photographed at Light House in 1860

The black body has, of course, been demonized in Western culture: represented as ogerish, coarse, and highly, menacingly sexualized. But the black body has also been valorized, represented as darkly alluring—still highly menacing sexualized, but well, in a good way. And this, historically, is its ambiguous role in the Western imagination.

FLANNERY KUCZAJKA, 1997, THE DARK PLACE, IN *WHITENESS AND LOOKING AT A BLACK MAN*, NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 1997, 47

Chapter Four

Apertures and Archives

With the rise of digital culture and the internet, desire no longer tries to escape its interiority but celebrates and consumes it. (Mirzoeff, 2006: 342)

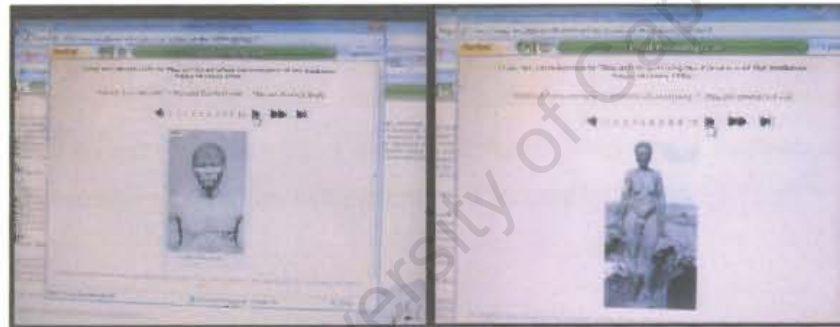


Figure 1. Hunting Bushmen. (2007) Colour Digital Image by author.¹⁹

¹⁹ I photographed these images from LLAREC website on 20 October 2007. This artwork was done in response to Skotnes's assertion that 'I could comment on these statements but the fact is that I have not yet systematically digitised the photographs, not yet applied for funding to do so and so not published them in cyberspace!! So the assertion is, at present, a little ungrounded in fact.

Our introduction to the group after their return from their annual holiday was an intense and emotional experience. We showed them hundreds of photographs that we had collected in the archives, as well as from LLAREC (the Lucy Lloyd Archive Resource and Exhibition Centre). For most of them this was the first time that they had seen these images. The auditorium was very quiet, but the physiological reactions and reflections on the faces of the group spoke of all emotions. Then they responded with sadness, anger and disbelief, both at the atrocities that had been committed against Bushmen, but also at the fact that they had not seen these pictures before. This was especially true of Maseko Emmanuel, an elderly !Xun man. He could not speak any English or Afrikaans, but through a translator was vehement that these photographs were a part of their past, present and future, which had to be available to and discussed by all Bushmen, especially the youth.

Death, memory and forgetting, power and injury are caught up in these performances in response to the archive. How is the photograph situated in relation to memory, an enigma in and of itself? They are, I contend, intrinsically connected; both are paradoxes, speaking at one of absence and presence, of forgetting and remembering.

(Skotnes. [Interview by email] October 2007). Skotnes comments further that ‘... these are merely part of the documentation of the Miscast project and do not form part of the digitising of the archive process at all. There are a very tiny part of my Llarec collection of photographs’.

It is noted from the website that ‘ individual images and documents included in this website may not be reproduced, downloaded, copied or re-used in any way without the permission of the copyright holders’. In photographing the webpage I did not ask permission, as this, I believe, supports my argument in this paper.

Aristotle insists that 'to remember the future is not possible ... nor is there memory of the present...But memory relates to the past' (Aristotle, 449b 10-15 as cited by Jonker, 2005:57). Following Aristotle, I would like to assert that the archived Bushman photographs should be situated in the context of a recognition, a refiguring of the past; they are in effect, then, tools of re-cognition. If we return to a viewing of the archived photographs Dale Washkansky and I showed, the group pointed out familial similarities, and its members were saddened at the measuring apparatus used in the various anthropological exercises. They voiced that these were photographs of the dead who could not defend their nakedness. They voiced an overwhelming sense of loss of dignity and rights. A sense of disquiet prevailed.

We were more than convinced of using the photographic medium after Dale Washkansky and I spent a considerable time in the University of Cape Town Manuscripts and Archives Department looking at the photographs of Bushmen. We were fortunate to gain access; I had a student card. However, there was a strict process to be followed to re-photograph any images, and we asked how an illiterate, non-English or Afrikaans speaking, non-computer literate Bushman from Angola, Namibia, or South Africa would be able gain a access the way we did. Once inside, I could gaze as much as I wanted, there was no one to chide me on culturally appropriate access or ascertain my intentions.

Every time the security buzzer allows me access to the University of Cape Town Manuscripts and Archives fortress, I am flooded with various emotions: somewhat relieved that I have been allowed to cross the threshold; not sure if my student card has enough credit; hesitant. It is such a restricted space, it reeks of controlled access, categorisation, order and control. I want to assert that it is

white space, with all the attendant concerns this brings with it in post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa. I always enter with the unshaken belief that somehow I do not belong there, that I am an intruder. As a Coloured woman, who grew up during apartheid, I witnessed the removal of my family from District Six, an iconic area in terms of forced removals. The ubiquitous apartheid sign, 'Whites Only', is indelibly etched in my memory.

Upon entering the archive, my feelings of intrusion and voyeurism are re-enforced as I slip on the white gloves and start rummaging through photographs. As a photography enthusiast, I am always intrigued by this medium. I enjoy the magic of the camera and the pleasure it gives me when it is used by someone who has never had the privilege to do so before. It is an expensive medium, and I am cognisant of this fact as a South African. The cost of printing thirty six exposures is the equivalent of a day's wages for many.²⁰ It is undoubtedly my passion too, and so I am plagued by the many conflicts that accompany shutter release.

This chapter investigates the archive, the photograph, and the Bushmen. In this chapter I am interested in the photographic medium as one that speaks of the dead, and therefore of death. But this chapter will also examine archiving and digitisation. My overall aim is to open up the space for renewed dialogue on ownership of Bushmen visual imagery in the archive. As the archive may be on a path to digitisation, this chapter's intention is to look at the cost of photographic digitisation to the Bushman body. My position in this chapter may be considered polemical or drastic, some may say extreme and impractical, as I directly challenge the University of Cape Town to examine its position on the material culture of Indigenous people in Southern Africa.

²⁰ As a result of my many photographic workshops that I have conducted throughout South Africa, I contend that for most underprivileged South Africans a camera is not on the list of essentials of transport, electricity and food.

I am aware that a photograph is a visual medium – one looks at a photograph – and with this in mind I know that there is no innocent gaze. I appreciate the delicate shading of blacks, whites and greys, am able to criticise the composition of an image, and marvel at the lighting. Yet, at the same time, I cannot ignore the indelible fact that in the archive I am looking at preserved proof of the violence of colonialism in Africa.

I noted with sadness that many of the subjects in the photographs in the archive are not named and are filed away in scrap notebooks, an overpowering indication of their place in the colonial world. How, then, can I come to terms with the archive? How can its contents be thought of to begin the act of reparation to the traces of the bodies it contains?

Dale Washkansky and I were overwhelmed by the fact that we were handling the tangible reminders of dead Bushmen (albeit with white gloves). We asked that if the photograph features so largely in the arena of death and memory, how any discourse on the continued archival and digitisation could occur outside of those to whom these dead are intrinsically connected? Who will pay the price if this question is ignored and thousands of Bushmen photographs are digitised and released into cyberspace, for the entire world to potentially own, prod and gaze at once again? If the white walls of the archive are extended into the unlimited space of the Internet, what will be the price that the Bushman once again will be expected to pay? How can an ethical medium be reached between preservation of these photographs, the archive, ownership and access?

Observing the performance at the archive

The roots of the archive in Africa are firmly entrenched in colonialism. The practice of collecting, by missionaries, travel writers and ethnologists, combined to produce a vast network of knowledge that today forms the basis of the state and other archives (Lalu 2007:36). This knowledge collection entrenched the power of the colonialist – he constructed knowledge within the realm of his cosmos and ambitions. I therefore concur with Lalu in his assertion that:

archives function very directly to define and sustain the relative intensities of power...It is important to bear this in mind when we proceed about the deliberations about the politics of digitizing African archival resources, especially given the competing configurations of power in discussions of archives (Lalu, 2007: 36).

The roots of the archive, French theorist Jacques Derrida asserts, lies in the etymology of the word archive. The word has a connection to the Greek work *arkheion* (meaning place, address) of the *archontes* (those who rule and command) (Bell, DF. 2004: 149). Bell astutely sums up Derrida's understanding of archives, power and control.

[I]n this space, set off from public place, rulers have the right not only to store official documents, but also to interpret them. The right to govern is always already a hermeneutic right, the right to assign meaning to and to make sense of the documents which, taken together, furnish the foundation and justification for the law (Bell, 2004: 149 – 150).

Yet the archive is also, according to post-colonial theorist Achille Mbembe, about death.

Archiving is a kind of interment, laying something in a coffin, if not to rest, then at least to consign elements of that life which could not be destroyed purely and simply. These elements, removed from time and from life, are perfectly recognisable because it is consecrated: the archives. Assigning them to this place makes it possible to establish an unquestionable authority over them and to tame the violence and cruelty of which the 'remains' are capable, especially when these are abandoned to their own devices (Mbembe, 2002:22).

And so the dance routine between death, black bodies, photographs, injury and ownership play out in the apparent safety of the archive. An archive has several routines, among them gathering, selecting, and preserving records. Within these activities, strategies of representation help to create and preserve the world within which these archives are placed. If the archive is about classification, echoing the ideals and interests of its owner, the institution, what then is its role in post-apartheid South Africa? I concur with Becker in his assertion 'that the power of the archive's classifications in shaping subsequent research: gaps appear that remain to be filled, and the archive's system of categorizing materials resists the conceptualization of new problems' (Becker, 1996:8).

An impressive collection is a jewel in the university's crown, and ideology, power, and prestige are the offspring of these collections. It is a self-referencing machine, unable or perhaps reluctant to relinquish control. The archivist chooses, selects, and categorises, under the conditions, and is 'charged with documenting and preserving that which is considered valuable, the museum (archive) has also become the institutionalized arbiter of value, determining what is worth collecting and saving for the future' (Becker, 1992:1).

This is certainly the case with photographs both in conventional and digital archives, as the archivist both selects, removes, and produces meaning in these images. The archive is the gatekeeper to the access of these images by both public and private institutions, generously permitting 'through their networks of power to underscore institutional goals' (Nye, 1985, Sekula 1984, Stange 1989; Tagg 1988 as cited by Becker 1992:4).

The aforementioned comment applies strongly to UCT. I am at a loss to explain how this institution, apparently committed to transformation, has not after fourteen years after the first democratic elections in South Africa opened up a debate on ownership, display, and access to contested images.

As the !Kwaa ttu project was indirectly concerned with the photographs of the Bushmen in various collections in the University of Cape Town's Manuscript and Archive department, Lalu's assertion is of particular significance. The Bushman body, as Skotnes went to great lengths to illustrate, has and continues to be the site of deplorable violence and invasion. To some extent this is illustrated by the collection of trophy heads, diorama body casts, and anthropometric photographs. More insidious and pervasive evidence of this violence can be seen today in the context of the !Kwaa ttu group, who struggle to find their place in post-apartheid society beyond that of the exotic, primitive, 'other'. Land dispossession, ownership struggles over indigenous knowledge, violence, extreme poverty, alcohol and other abuses are the day-to-day realities of this group. As a very diverse group struggling to articulate and find meaning in the homogenous label of Bushmen, I assert that very few !Xun, Khwe, †Khomani, Naro and Hai//om, to name a few, have had the privilege of access to photographs of their dead. This privilege is neatly, if unconsciously, kept aside for academics and artists, and the anointed few who feel free to photograph and re-photograph, prod, digitise and write about this group of people. I am indebted to

the group for their comments and insight on this topic. They commented that they are often photographed, asked for comments and yet are never given the courtesy of seeing these images or text. It has been all taking with very little giving back.

I agree that this is a contentious area as there is much to be gained from research and information dissemination. Can this be achieved within the ambit of respect and recognition for the subjects and their descendants though? I do not believe that one can simply hide behind the argument that “this is for the purposes of research” or “I am just a photographer”. Perhaps it is in considering a new space for learning, ethics and respect that a meeting place may be formed: a clearing that will allow for input, ownership and comment from all parties on the future of these photographs.

Restitution, ownership and reparation

Once again, this is territory littered with challenges, as it is a point of intersection for many difficult and complex issues, including copyright and Indigenous knowledge. These difficulties should not however preclude an inclusive investigation by all parties. Indeed, is there a positive space in which to view these photographs? Perhaps it is in rethinking display in gallery spaces and a concerted and joint effort to name those in the photographs that initial steps may be taken. The University of Cape Town would do well to refer to the strides made in Australia regarding protocols on Indigenous knowledge and cultural material. The progress made in respect of ownership and access to Indigenous material in Australia and Canada, to name just two countries, is just a click away on the

Internet.²¹ Available too is the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the World Archaeological Congress' Vermillion Accord on Human Remains which provides clarity and guidelines on the rights of Indigenous people to their cultural heritage. Steps taken in this regard, as Malik explains:

include the Hopi and Apache in America demanding control over cultural property of, and information about their respective tribes, including all images and text. In Australia, Aborigines have sought copyright law over all paintings and photographs of the Australian landscape that they believe is central to their spiritual life (Malik, 2007: 166/7).

At the heart of the debate is the question of who owns knowledge and history. The battle for ownership of not only photographs but other indigenous material culture and human remains is also the battle between knowledge as universal and knowledge as culturally constrained (Malik 2007). This is not easy territory, as repatriation, it may be argued, resurrects racial ways of thinking about "groups", "types" and particular orders and categories. Another challenge is that repatriation may ignore that humans are bounded entities and that cultures are rhizomatic and identities fluid. Sociologists Helen Watson-Verran and David Turnbull propose a way out of this dilemma when they write that:

²¹ I am indebted to Professor Martin Nakata, Chair of Australian Indigenous Education, and Director of Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia for his input on the afore mentioned concerns. At every request he was keen to share knowledge, and refer me to others who are in the same arena.

the ways of understanding the natural world that have been produced by different cultures and at different times should be compared as knowledge systems on an equal footing (Verran, Turnbull, 2005: 345/6).

How, then, a South African university is oblivious to the voice of the Bushmen and sanctions digitised images of naked Bushmen by Skotnes remains a mystery to me. It is a failure on my part that I did not address my concerns with Skotnes, UCT or the Manuscripts and Archives Department. I concede however that as an academic, Skotnes has contributed enormously to knowledge production of the Bushman, from which I too have benefited. She has furthermore, a fundamental right to her views and academic practice.

Further injury

The film photograph and its digital counterpart have much in common, not least their composition of numerous dots or pixels. This quality is illustrated in Henry Talbot's lace prints of 1845,²² and his assertion that photography is the art of fixing a shadow. He recognises that the medium is one that records the absence of light, and Barthes, referencing Talbot, contends therefore that photography is

a binary (and therefore numerical) system of representation involving the transmutation of luminous information into on/off tonal patterns made visible by light sensitive chemistry (Barthes, 1964 as by Batchen, 2006:28).

²² Henry Talbot's Lace Prints (1845) were a series of contact prints where lace was placed directly on photographic paper to register the play of light. Here binaries are accurately visually presented: absence, presence, black, white.

The construction of the image-Bushman body epitomises the binaries of othering: nature vs. culture, black vs. white, literate vs. illiterate. Digitisation and the release of Bushman images over the Internet will further re-inforce the practice of othering in terms of the binary code of computers. The exotic 'other' will be placed in cyberspace and represented in the form of electronic data where the circuit is either on or off, absent or present. Michael Christie puts the question of the body and knowledge production being reduced to digits quite succinctly:

It would be easy to assume that these digital objects actually contain knowledge, but in fact they are simply information: series of ones and zeros. The digital object is a re-presentation or an artifact of an earlier act of knowledge performance / production. (Christie, 2003:4 as cited by Richmond).

The digitisation of any archive in post-apartheid South Africa, I think, is an occasion for engaging in debate on the reconstitution of the archive. As Lalu explains:

In the attempts to stage such a shift, the status of the archive has emerged as a source of uncertainty. In some instances it is perceived as a site of retrieval and representation, in others as a site of power and in others it is viewed as a site where the production of history is already underway (Lalu 2007: 28 – 29).

It has to be noted that:

over the last decade, numerous foundations in the United States of America have provided unprecedented support for the revitalization of African universities and their libraries, especially through digitisation of African materials and the development of associated information technologies (Kagan, 2007: 4).

The digitisation of the Lucy Lloyd Archive was funded largely by the United States-based Mellon Foundation, and according to Skotnes (Skotnes, 2007. [Personal Communication]) is an ALUKA partner.²³ As noted in a personal e-mail from Pippa Skotnes to me, “The project was funded by the Mellon Foundation, De Beers and UCT, with funding in kind from Scan Shop. No stipulations other than from the Mellon Foundation that the material once digitised should be made available for scholarly and educational research”. Are initiatives like this contributing to the lamentable fact that Africa once again is the consumer of knowledge produced by the global north? Indeed, have we sold ourselves too cheaply in the quest for approval and research? To contemplate the digitalisation of imagery and texts outside the ambit of Indigenous peoples, their rights, and traditional knowledge, reduces the Indigenous body to little more than an object of knowledge, and ignores the enormous and complex historical and conceptual framework which underscores that image or text.

However, the archive in post-apartheid South Africa provides a unique opportunity to rethink Africa, perhaps to think Africa differently. The Bushmen photographs in the archive speak of loss, othering, death and the specters of a haunted past. In his book *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes records his attempts to recover memories through family photographs – he was looking for a

²³ Aluka is an collaborative initiative constructing an online digital African library of scholarly resources.

photograph of his mother who had just died in an attempt to 'bring her back' – and reflects that the photograph has the unique ability to capture in the present an event that happened in the past. Can the archive take the bold step in contemplating that perhaps their role should be re-imagined? Can the archive ethically reimagine itself in the spaces of remembering and forgetting? As Derrida reminds us, 'ghosts are not just the object of the gaze for they look at and summon us' (Derrida 1994: 7 as cited by Labanyi). It is to this summons that the University of Cape Town's archive on Bushmen could /might respond.

Perhaps the answer to this question lies in the notion that out of considering a new space for knowledge production a meeting place may be formed, between the archive and the Bushmen, between the old and new imperatives. It is a clearing that I envision will allow for input, ownership, and comment from all parties. This creation of this space calls for an unprecedented move, one that will force the University to venture beyond its comfort zones, and will be an effort that acknowledges that although the university was given the collection, it has to begin to address the fundamental question of ownership (of these photographs and accompanying texts), authorship, reparation, and dare I say it, repatriation. At the very least, it has to consider building relationships with the many different Bushmen groups and communities, and together to embark on a process. This process will include dialogue on culturally appropriate access and authorship. Anything less is an insult, to the Bushmen, to South Africa, and to Africa.

Moreover, the university has to consider the value and function of these photographs beyond notions of the photograph as record and a representation. The photograph is political in all possible senses. Perhaps a new approach in the archive will include an honest investigation by the university into death and black bodies, so poignantly illustrated by their approach to the Prestwich Street remains.

Sites for re-interrogating erased histories

For South Africans and particularly the residents of the oldest port city in South Africa, Cape Town, the many complex issues arising from the contestation of burial sites in the city present an opportunity to interrogate endings and beginnings, history and the present, and may instantiate a profound questioning of the past beyond the physical and metaphysical boundaries of the sites indicated. The early colonial burial site found near Prestwich Street, Green Point, is a case in point: an arena for South Africans living in a post-apartheid context to delve into their own past, and an opportunity to deal with neglected and denied aspects of Cape Town's history. The uncovering of the burial ground opens up the space for an engagement with questions of heritage, power, home, and memory, and also serves as an invitation for Capetonians and other South Africans to confront their own positions on the remnants and repercussions of a not-so-distant past as the new democracy is a scant fourteen years old.²⁴

The arrival of colonialism in the Cape in the mid-seventeenth century set in motion a pattern of contestation and battle on several fronts, the remnants of which are still felt today. As with other parts of Africa, slavery played a crucial role in the shaping of the heterogeneous make-up of the Cape Colony, and even though slavery at the Cape spanned a period of just under 200 years, a period almost five times as long as the period of state-sanctioned apartheid, this fact seems to bypass the day-to-day cosmos of this cosmopolitan city. 'In this city there never seems to be a willingness to take up [the issue of genocide and the] destruction of human communities that were brought from across the globe' (Unnamed respondent as cited by Shepherd 2006:7).

²⁴ The demise of Apartheid was marked by the first democratic elections held in 1994, and the adoption of The South African Constitution in 1996.

Derrida's question is thus resonant: 'But, first of all, is there a history of silence?'²⁵ Poet, writer and academic, Gabeba Baderoon, elaborates the point one step further when she writes that:

the dominant ways of determining the boundaries of the human under apartheid, which were inherited from the colonial era, did not recognize Black people as human, and therefore did not recognize their deaths as deaths. Control over the meanings of death is an indication of who is regarded as human. (Baderoon, 2004:182)

Baderoon comments that since the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, the country "has been faced with death - death long unrecognized, death denied –and its corollary, unburied bodies." (Baderoon, 2004: 184)²⁶ The unmarked gravesite near Prestwich Street is a contemporary reminder of the legacy of colonialism and its offspring, apartheid, and a reminder that erasing, or denying, the lives of human beings has a painful heritage in our haunted past.²⁷ Baderoon's poignant comment sums up my concerns

²⁵ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 35.

²⁶ Baderoon asserts that evidence of this can be seen in the return of the remains of Sarah Baartman from Paris to be reburied in the Eastern Cape.

²⁷ For a compelling read on the issue of the Prestwich Street remains, see Shepherd, "Archaeology Dreaming". In short, the Prestwich Street saga began in May 2003 when human skeletons were uncovered during initial excavations for an exclusive real estate development near Prestwich Street in Green Point. At present, the area is undergoing rapid gentrification (it is in close proximity to the much feted Victoria and Alfred Waterfront) with property prices (and attendant exclusion on the grounds of price) escalating steeply. It is interesting to note that forced removals of Black and Coloured residents in the 1960's and 1970's took place in this area as part of the Apartheid practice – one example being the relocation of Vista High School in Prestwich Street to the non-white area of Bo-Kaap. In colonial Cape Town, Green Point existed on the periphery of the town, and as Shepherd attests "for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it lay outside the formal boundaries of settlement, and a marginal zone which was the site of the gallows and place of torture [...] a site of a number of graveyards...of numerous undocumented, informal burials...made up of a

over the value and regard of black bodies, and is a powerful indication that even in death, they are seen as inferior or, even, nothing at all.

I believe that the Prestwich Street debate indicates the extent to which sectors and voices within UCT have not thought through the complexity of the historical denial and destruction of black bodies. As Shepherd writes:

For present purposes, we might note that the events around Prestwich Street leave open a number of questions concerning UCT's involvement as an institution. These include questions of accountability in the relation between an institution which styles itself as "a world-class African university" and the different publics that it serves, and in which, notionally at least, it is embedded (Shepherd, 2007:10).

Martin Legassick and Ciraj Rassool's *Skeletons in the Cupboard*, (2000) which discusses the trade between grave robbers and South African and European museums in the early twentieth century, has called upon South African museums to take stock of their collections of bones. Perhaps a similar call should be leveled at the UCT archive as well. I believe that the Prestwich Street debate indicates that the University's archaeological, scientific position on ownership, death and human remains needs attention. If this is so, then it is a condition which does not bode well for the Bushmen and their photographs in the archive. As Elizabeth Edwards comments:

cross section of the underclasses (of all races) of colonial Cape Town" (p. 4-5). The site, in spite of the division of races and othering by colonialists and subsequent apartheid legislation, was a significant one, in that it was a tangible illustration of the integration of different groups and races, albeit in death.

The mechanisms of photographs are complex. They are more ambiguously dynamic as they function in the real world, and within daily experience, not merely in some imagined or reified theoretical world. (Edwards, 2001:3)

The question of ownership of photographs is contentious, as Jane Anderson asserts:

[Photographs, sound recordings and films] hold an immediacy of representation, for instance, representations of place, of ceremony, of knowledge. That it is this material that raises quite intense questions of authorship and ownership is significant too because in the history of copyright law these have been the types of materials that have posed challenges for copyright law. For copyright law has struggled with determining creative endeavor, and hence justifying ownership of this material. A reflection upon these types of Indigenous cultural material should alert us to the often hidden histories of instability in narratives of the genesis of intellectual property law.” (Anderson, 2005:73)

Anderson’s assertion is of particular relevance to UCT, and I contend that an investigation, however difficult, into ownership, copyright and authorship is long overdue. Is there a positive space in which to view these photographs, we might ask ourselves again? This is a complex question, which underscores the genre of photography. These complexities should not however preclude an inclusive investigation by all parties.

Arjun Appadurai asserts that as scholars and interpreters of the everyday, the ordinary, the lifeways that constitute lived experience, we need to carefully track the objects – the ‘things – within which we invest meaning and value.

We have to follow things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in these forms, their uses, their trajectory. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things.
(Appadurai, 1986:5)

Appadurai’s assertion is particularly relevant and useful if we consider Bushmen photographs in the archive. If this material culture of the Bushman is owned and controlled by others, how can these photographs take their place and create meanings for this group? I assert that in retaining the status quo, the Bushmen will continue to be merely spectators of their past – a past which is then ultimately orchestrated, debated, and choreographed by others. As Edwards contends:

In this, the signifying properties are photographs in museum contexts in exhibitions are fully recognized...Yet in many ways photography seems to have been remarkably untouched, beyond debates of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ imaging, despite the centrality of visual anthropology in debates on representation...little has been done to displace them or explore other ways of using photographs’. (Edwards, 2001: 185).

I wish to argue that the quoted comment applies strongly to UCT. I am at a loss to explain how this institution, ostensibly committed to transformation, has not after fourteen years after the first democratic elections convened a debate on ownership, display, and access of these images.

It has been difficult to convey these thoughts as I am aware of the dangers of assuming the moral high ground. However, I remain committed and vociferous in my quest to open up dialogue on these photographs. Is there no meeting point along this continuum of archive and Bushman, one where they are not poles apart, one where Bushmen men, women and children are able to touch and view these photographs and allow them into a place/space that may constitute the beginnings of a healing process given their violent past? Walter Benjamin has an insight to offer in this regard. He writes:

Photographs give evidence of that long past minute where the future is nesting, even today, so eloquently that we looking back can discover it. (Benjamin, 1931: 202).

Elizabeth Edwards too considers spaces that challenge conventional viewing of ethnographic images (2001:194). She suggests, and I would agree, that perhaps it is in the blurring of the borders between ethnographic and other photographic art practices, the inclusion of Indigenous peoples that initial steps may be taken. She suggests that photography can be reconceptualised in such a way as to no longer figure as a genre of statement, but rather one of translation, of continuous dialogue between image and culture. As an artist, I appreciate the freedom that the fine art genre gives in debating issues of representation. As problematic as it is, to a large degree many artists attempt to find answers. Yet my position is that any attempts to do so should still fall within the ambit of respect, as well as through thoughtful facilitation that allows for input and comment from all parties.

I therefore question whether this potential for inclusive knowledge production lies within the sanctuary of the archive or within the digital space of the Internet. Is the UCT archive a space of respect for the dead, and one where contemporary Bushmen can

participate in dialogue on the construction of their image? The group was adamant that “their” place was not in the University’s archive where anyone with access could gaze at images of the Bushmen as they so wished. And they were particularly vehement on this point when it came to images of children and genitalia. Who owns these photographs, or trophy skulls, or skeletons?²⁸

I am therefore skeptical of the University’s position on unilaterally making decisions about this material. Perhaps it would be an interesting exercise for LLAREC travel to any Bushman areas, to secure funding and to implement a program (perhaps even consider mobile archives or museums), thus ensuring that the material is available to them. As yet there is not a single stipulation in the LLAREC webpage about access being made available to the Bushmen. In the midst of this project, are any funds being made available for a program to ensure this access? Thus, here is my main point: Before any photograph or segment of text is scanned, the archivist or institution needs to ask many questions before it embarks on the process, including: To whom does the material belong to? In whose interests does it serve to display the photograph, to quote the text? Who is the scriptwriter of the Bushman archive at UCT? Finally, which structures does it accept and which does it marginalise or exclude? As Christie writes:

Every digital object requires some metadata to render it searchable, and the process of writing metadata is a kind of naming. Giving something (a story, a video, a photo) a name makes it locatable materially and conceptually. The name provides a textual link to the object describing it to some extent but never exhausting its content. (It may for example

²⁸ I hope to continue my research (PhD) into establishing protocols for material culture of the Bushman archives. This will be done in part by looking at the position of First Peoples in Australia, USA as well as Canada.

identify a storyteller but not anyone else whose presence shaped the telling). The process of naming objects is the beginning of the structuring of knowledge (Christie, 2003:4).

Although the viewing of the photographs was a painful process, the group used it as a springboard for processing their image. They reiterated that that it was an essential component that underscored any interrogation of who they were and after this experience, were much more vocal and participative in the process. The pictures continued to have a ghostly presence throughout the six month process, and they informed much of the discussion around the various aspects of the exhibition, including questions of ownership, reparation and repatriation. The photographs, in effect, were the starting point that came to be the very skeleton of the exhibition.

Chapter Five:

Casts of Contusion²⁹

The presence of the bushmen in Cape Town afforded Bain the opportunity to take /Khanako and four members of her family to the South African Museum, where they participated in ‘an interesting scientific experiment.’ /Khanako and her family had been selected to pose in the Museum’s bushmen cast room, so that, as ‘living Bushmen,’ they could be compared with casts made earlier by the famous modeller, James Drury. This experiment was conducted amid claims in the press that the bushmen were not authentic. (Rassool, Hayes, 2002: 140 – 141).

Glass boxes, lighting, labels and silence are some of the images that resound as a result of the seemingly innocuous excursion of many eagerly awaited primary school visits, the museum. This indeed has been one of my experiences, as I was one of many pigtailed-and-pinafores pupils to be herded through the now Iziko South African Museum in Queen Victoria Street, Cape Town. What resulted that day was the indelible etching in my memory of the Bushman diorama, a dubious souvenir of that visit.

More than any other exhibit in the South African Museum that day, the body casts of the Bushmen in the diorama, as well as in the glass cabinets, resound in my memory today. (I could look at the scantily clad bodies and comment as much as I wanted and they

²⁹ Contusion. I borrowed this term from a group exhibition *Contusion* (2007) held at the Irma Stern Museum in Rondebosch, Cape Town. The mixed media works, commenting on violence and trauma by artists Dale Washkansky, Susanne Duncan and Natasha Norman.

would not, could not, object.) As a child, I was mesmerised by the deathly stillness of these figures, giving little thought to the process of making those sculptures. With this in mind, I find parity with Rassool and Hayes when they write that, “science” and “spectacle” are two sides of the same coin” (Rassool, Hayes, 2002:143). According to my teachers, two goals were being achieved from that visit: I was being educated and entertained at the same time.

A few decades later and the casts have again made their presence known to me; they have been jostled out of the cobwebs of my memory by Frantz Fanon’s work on violence and the black body. The casts speak of looking, desire, ownership and injury. This chapter investigates Fanon’s perspective on violence, with an added emphasis on the Bushman body. It will argue that the body casts of the Bushmen in the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town are collective, violent three-dimensional containers housing centuries of abuse and violence against the Bushman body.

My interest in the body casts stems directly from my interaction with the group at !Khwatla. As our broad focus was an interrogation of the construct image-Bushman, we held weekly workshops in addition to field trips. Our first (eagerly awaited) visit was to the Iziko South African National Museum in Cape Town, where the curators agreed to open the (now closed) Bushman diorama. It was an interesting day, as the !Khwatla van was filled with all the participants as well as four babies and toddlers (see Chapter Seven).

Just to the left of the museum’s entrance is an exhibit that features the Bushmen. A feature of this installation is a looped-video showing interviews with several Bushmen men and women. Many of the group were astounded to see themselves in this video as much of the footage had been shot with !Khwatla residents. Those who appeared on screen did not know that the interviews were

being done with this intention in mind. We were more astounded when we heard the breakout of laughter. On enquiring about the reason for the mirth, someone commented that Andre Liki is seen and heard in the video to be saying: 'What am I supposed to say?' To the viewer of this video this is not apparent, as all viewers would hear are the seemingly tell tale "clicks" that make this an "authentic" Bushmen commentary. Andre said that his comments made no sense at all on the video as it was just a short clip.

Before we got to the diorama, we saw many examples of Bushmen material culture. I asked them what they thought about the bows, loin cloths and other items sealed off behind the well-lit glass exhibit. They commented that it was difficult for them to reconcile these items in this environment to what role these objects played in their experiences. The group summed up the dilemma of museums. What role does this institution, built on the edifice of a colonial past – with all the surrounding issues of power and control inherent in that past – play in the globalised post-modern world of today? Where do museums position themselves as harbingers of cultural capital, as referred to by Sukhdev Sandhu in *London Calling* (2004: 183) in a world where borders are becoming blurred and the idea of citizenship and identity as fixed is in flux? How can this institution, defined historically as being one fundamentally interested in questions of classification, defend its position in non-Western countries, given that the concept of being the "other" in a glass display cabinet is considered reprehensible at best?

Our visit to the museum reminded me of a line from Michael Tournier's novel *La Goutte d'or* (*The Golden Dragon*):

[A]ll these objects, of unreal cleanliness, frozen in their eternal essences, intangible, mummified, had surrounded his childhood and adolescence. Less than forty eight hours before, he had eaten from that dish, watched his mother using that grinder (Tounier,1987: 67).

The Bushman as museum object was a fact starkly illustrated on our visit. There were several foreign tourists in the museum at the time, and at one point they came across to the group and asked 'if they were Bushmen'. They had seen the looped video and heard the Bushman clicks. They also saw and recognised Andre Likia. One commented that 'they could not believe their luck at seeing a real Bushman'. I believed then that the casts that the tourists were viewing forever condemn Bushmen to that diorama, a space that freezes Bushmen in the past.

As Lionnet asserts:

The museum and the anthropologist forever condemn the object and implies a denial of coevalness that situates the viewed and the living culture in another temporal framework: one than belies its status as contemporary, evolving and dynamic, and thus reinforces the Western viewer's false sense of superiority (Lionnet, 2001: 50-52).

Although these traits and their associated consequences of the museum are problematic in any context, the natural history museum in Africa faces unique challenges, as the continent houses these institutions which are concrete vestiges of the colonial past. As a continent still grappling with the past and trying to form coherent and cogent notions of heritage, identity and memory, the guardians of these traditions would do well to take heed of the work of Achille Mbembe. He writes:

Examining archives is to be interested in that which life has left behind, to be interested in debt...In this sense, both the historian and the archivist inhabit a sepulcher.(Mbembe, 2002:25)

It was against this background that we proceeded to the Bushman diorama, which as I mentioned was opened specially for our visit.

Dismemberment at the diorama

The visit to the museum and specifically the diorama provided the impetus for the interrogation of the body casts by the group. These casts in the Iziko South African Museum, I want to suggest, are a chimera, a fantasy, of the maker and of the museum, as the few sculptures in the diorama and the glass cabinets cannot in any way encapsulate everything (if anything) about this diverse group. A casts' only and dubious success is that it offers tangible evidence of a direct violation of and violence on the Bushman body. Each cast serves as a reminder of invasion; and each cast in its physicality bears an uneasy testimony to the following excerpt from a paper by R. Broom in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropology Institution of Great Britain and Ireland*:

For the last twenty years Peringuey has been industriously collecting the remains of the early native races, and he has now in the South African Museum a large collection of Bushmen and Hottentot skulls – possibly the largest which has yet been brought together. He has also had large numbers of casts made of the best living examples he could procure of these races...Dr Peringuey has recently had casts made by Mr. Drury, his expert modeler, of a large number of the bush natives

of South West Africa, and these will doubtless remain for all time as good examples of fairly pure Bushmen. (Broom, 1923: 134, 136)

These chilling words ring true, even today, as the tangible reminders of violated bodies are still being held at the Iziko South African Museum.

Indeed, Fanon's work, although rooted in an Algerian context, has particular resonance in thinking through the meanings of these pieces of plaster. Born in 1925 in the French colony of Martinique, psychiatrist and anti-colonial activist Frantz Fanon's groundbreaking work, *Black Skin White Masks* (1967) raises powerfully questions of race, corporeality, the gaze, and the epistemic violence of colonialism.

The white man wants the world; he wants it for himself alone. He finds himself predestined master of this world (Fanon, 1967: 128)

As colour is the most obvious outward manifestation of race it has been made the criterion by which men are judged, irrespective of their social or educational attainments...I have read it rightly. It was hate; I was hated, despised, detested, not by the neighbor across the street or my cousin on my mother's side, but by an entire race. (Fanon, 1967:118)

As a black man, whose life work and experiences underscored his being, Fanon articulates the invention of the human, and is preoccupied with the question of the black body not being human.

A feeling of inferiority? No a feeling of non-existence.

Sin is Negro as virtue is white (Fanon, 1967: 139).

His other feted work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1966) was written when Fanon's body was under siege (he was dying from leukemia), as well as being situated in Algeria, which was in the midst of active liberation and struggle. Fanon is therefore well versed in the language of violence, and raises the issue of violence in relation to colonialism and liberation. He stresses the violence of the practices of colonialism. Torture, as evident in the Algerian war of independence, is indicative of this violence perpetrated on the black body.

Fanon is preoccupied with the body, as there are significant visual and non-visual ways in which oppression marks the body. Identity, space, and the body in space are all articulated through the body itself. Before anything, blackness is seen and, after that first viewing, the black body is constructed as different, lacking in relation to the cornerstone of civilization and humanity, the white colonialist figure. Visual representation, asserts Fanon, is fore grounded because 'of the constitutive role of "the look" as a site of power knowledge, of the sexualisation of the gaze, and its fantasmatic fetishisation of the body and the skin as signifiers of racial difference' (Fanon, 1967 as cited by Hall 1996:20).

Fanon argues convincingly that power resides in the flesh, the corporeal, which then is translated into words, labels, and binaries. Body casting is an eloquent illustration of these binaries and bears a kinship with photography: the negative cast is a direct print of the original, much like a photographic contact print. The binary of absence/presence is captured in the absent-yet-present body in the spaces of the mould. Finally, the imprint of the black skin on the white plaster is a powerful visual image and sums up Fanon's assertion that:

Overnight, the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which to place himself [...] For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man (Fanon 1967:20).

As blackness is conveyed through the visual, visibility is paramount in Fanon's writing, and the practice of viewing, of looking then leads on into the inevitable den, a den of iniquity, and the den of othering, desire and power. Fanon's core assertions are illustrated in the Bushmen body casts. An epitome of the "primitive Other", with a deliberate dark patina, the exoticised Bushmen casts invite viewing and measuring. Unable to respond, these sculptures also epitomise the inequality of the gaze, and offer tangible proof of how strongly the gaze is linked to power and desire. Standing almost naked, the women are bare breasted, it is difficult not to conjure up associations of colonial desire. The casts offer a safe, sanitised, imprisoned, and silenced space for the colonial subject to be desired, prodded and violated, time and again.

To be fair to the Iziko South African National Museum, violence against the Bushmen body is not restricted only to the ground floor of the building. Postcards of bare-breasted Bushman women abound in one of South Africa's premier tourist attractions, the Victoria

and Alfred Waterfront. Although the South African movie *The Gods must be Crazy* was featured some years ago, little in popular visual media has changed. A much-aired advertisement of the South African cellular phone giant Vodacom is case in point. It was an advertisement that used the image of the Bushmen – in the advertisement represented as primordial, tribal, static desert-people so to speak – to develop their marketing strategy around the time of the rugby World Cup. Simply described, a rugby ball is thrown by some well-known national rugby players from an aeroplane and lands among a group of Bushmen, who are clad only on loincloths, who are, according to the !Khwatla group, making indecipherable and intelligible speech ‘clicks’. The advert shows the ‘primitive’ and ‘childlike’ Bushmen react to this ball as if it was sent by the heavens above and are mesmerized by this gift from the gods.

At a recent Absa Bank Currie Cup rugby match in Kimberley, which was broadcast live on national television, the entertainment was of a Bushman clad only in a loincloth (never mind the winter weather) running onto the field pushing a wire car (more evidence of “authentic” South African tourist art). This was done every time a conversion or penalty was kicked. The commentator made sure to inform the viewers that this was a “genuine” Bushman (as opposed to a “fake” Bushman?).

The South African Museum’s contribution to the continued othering of the Bushman comes with the blessing (or justification) that this is education in the name of science, and the preservation of cultural memory. This, I contend, is far more insidious than a cellular phone company attempting to entertain an unsuspecting public. The casts are a metaphor for a group of violated people, who exist in the constructed imagination of the West, all the while their controlled physical presence frozen in space and time.

For most of the members of the !Khwatla Art Project Group, the visit to the diorama at the Iziko South African National Museum was their first. Upon our arrival, we were met by Dr. Patricia Davison, who has written of the Bushmen dioramas at the museum,³⁰ and Dr. Gerald Klinghart. Kondino Samba (an articulate and intuitive !Xun man, who had been invited to attend a meeting at the Museum on the subject of the future of the diorama a few weeks earlier, asked adamantly: 'What is this diorama? It was the only word I kept hearing in the discussion, and I don't know what it means'. (Samba, 2007. [Personal communication]). The reaction of the members of the group to the cast figures was perhaps more poignant. Some commented on familial similarities, and were concerned that the diorama's "subjects" were nameless. Some asked if permission was sought prior to the casting, if the models had been paid, and who owned the casts. When the group heard that the same moulds were used to make several reproductions, their disapproval was evident. I sensed that the participants connected to these casts on more than a purely visual level: these casts were more than just a sculptural accomplishment. On the contrary, I want to propose that for the group the casts were especially significant as they contained skin, muscles and were figurative remnants of the dead.

In Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994), he discusses the notion of ghosts as the return of that which history has repressed – ghosts are the traces of those who were not allowed to leave a trace (Derrida 1994: 40-46) As Derrida suggests:

³⁰ See Patricia Davison's *Human subjects as museum objects : A project to make life-casts of "Bushmen" and "Hottentots"*.

Ghosts must be exorcised not in order to chase them away but in order 'this time to grant them the right' [. . .] to [...] a hospitable memory [. . .] out of a concern for justice. (Derrida, 1994: 175)

I think ghosts as Derrida describes them can be read as the victims of a history, who return in order to see that wrongs are rectified, that reparation is paid, and that their contribution and names are honoured. They demand and are entitled to this acknowledgement (Labanyi, J. 2002 [Online]). Derrida uses the term 'hauntology' to describe another sphere of being (or another realm of ontology) to explain this phenomenon, this space, 'the past as that which is not and yet is there – or rather, here, this 'virtual space of spectrality' (Derrida 1994: 11 as quoted by Labanyi, J 2002). It is to Derrida's summons, I want to suggest, that the Iziko South African should respond: the museum needs to allow for an inclusive discussion on these casts, these harbingers of violence and death. By doing so, by considering these casts as more than just a display, the museum will attempt to give these specters a tangible, if translucent space. In this way, the casts themselves will then perhaps be able to play a meaningful role in reconciling a fractured past with an interconnected future.

The visit to the museum also proved to be a pivotal point for the group in the context of our efforts to foster dialogue on Image-Bushman. The members of the group were intrigued by the process by which these casts were made, and to investigate the process themselves. All wanted to experience what exactly the process was about, but conceded that they could never replicate the process exactly as if they were willing participants in the casting process. In this way, they demonstrated their agency over choosing which body parts to cast, who would conduct the casting, what would happen to the moulds, and who would be allowed to watch. Only one participant, Lienke Thys, agreed to have her lower body cast under the condition that only women were allowed to enter the sealed-

off room. I was allowed to take photographs of the casting. Our understanding was that Lienke would accept or reject the photograph immediately on the camera's digital screen.

As it was always known by the group that a paper would be written about this project, I believed that I could not write about the violence and invasion of body casting unless I had experienced the process myself. I asked the group to do a torso plaster cast of me and asked Dale Washkansky to document the process. I know that the experience could not capture that of the Bushmen living in the early twentieth century because of the very fact that I had volunteered. It was nonetheless significant. The women all stated that they could only perform the moulding process on me, and were not comfortable that I would be naked in front of a male photographer. I explained that it was my choice as I wanted the process to be documented.

Mould making process of Siona O'Connell with Suzanne Duncan, Donika Dala, Maria Karembe and Lienkie Thys, photographed by Dale Washkansky.



Figure 2. Untitled, 2007. Dale Washkansky

The process of getting undressed is a daunting one. I am concerned about what my audience will think of my forty year-old body, my scars. Naked, I am in a vulnerable position, conscious of being unclothed in a room full of clothed people. Suzanne Duncan, a sculptor, marks out the area on my torso that will be cast. I apply body lotion as a release agent.



Figure 3. Untitled, 2007, Dale Washkansky



Figure 4. Untitled, Dale Washkansky

To ensure that a good contact print of my skin is made on the plaster, a thin layer of Plaster of Paris solution is applied with a brush. I am conscious of being marked, and of my brown skin appearing strange as a result of these white brush marks. There is a silence in the room and I am not sure if it is a result of the women being uncomfortable with placing their hands on my body. The silence is broken only by the invasion of the camera. I am mortified to think that all of this is being recorded.



Figure 5. Untitled. 2007. Dale Washkansky



Figure 6. Untitled. 2007. Dale Washkansky.

More layers of Plaster of Paris are applied, and all four women embark on this process hesitantly/enthusiastically/reticently. At this point, the tension in the room eases, and I attribute it to the fact that the women have started to embrace the project. Suzanne later comments that this evolved into a ritual of healing, as all the women had visited the diorama and were now aware of the casting process. I am no longer conscious of their hands on my breasts, but I am aware that my casting process does not emulate that of the casting of Drury's models. I have chosen to be here and can leave at any time.



Figure 7. Untitled. 2007. Dale Washkansky.



Figure 8. Untitled. 2007. Dale Washkansky.

The process of healing for the Bushmen women is continued throughout the application of gauze, which will strengthen the mould. The plaster is becoming progressively thicker, and I start to think of it as armour.



Figure 9. Untitled, 2007. Dale Washkansky.

As more layers of gauze and plaster are added, I am conscious of the weight of the cast. The chemical reaction between the plaster and water results in the plaster becoming hot on my body. I cannot scratch or remove it, and Suzanne tells me to stay still as the cast will break if I move. It is difficult to do so. My balance has been affected by the weight of the plaster.



Figure 10. Untitled. 2007. Dale Washkansky.



Figure 11. Untitled. 2007. Dale Washkansky.

The plaster dries and is very heavy. Then I feel it coming off my skin. Maria comments that it is like giving birth. The cast is released. I am intrigued by the imprint of my body, acutely aware that there are traces of my skin, and in fact, some hair embedded in

the plaster. I have a strange ownership over this lump of plaster, and cannot contemplate that I must relinquish ownership of it to someone else.³¹

A few days later, the group gathered to do some sanding of the exteriors of all the moulds. I randomly started to work on one, until one of the participants said that these pieces of plaster belonged to that particular person, and that they themselves should work on it. The men were vehement that they could not sandpaper my mould as it was my body. From these comments, as well as my own experience, I was convinced that the process had become an intensely personal one; that without permission, it is tantamount to an invasion of the body; that the imprints left by skin, breasts, hair, thighs are intimate and personal, and owned by the model.

It is in this light I believe that the casts in the Iziko South African Museum should be viewed: as sacred and as personal artifacts. The challenge, then, is up to the institution to attend to the contusions it has caused by revisiting its understandings of the body, of the past, of violence. To consider that there must be other ways of seeing and knowing.

Derrida asserts that other ways of seeing can be achieved by acknowledging that in any form of communication and discourse that

³¹ I am more than convinced of this having just undergone a mastectomy for breast cancer, and seeing these photographs of my body prior to surgery is deeply emotional and traumatic. My body cast is displayed in the exhibition and it is difficult for me every time I visit the gallery.

Understanding that the other is an unfathomable mystery, and that I too am such a mystery, even to myself, is the fundamental condition for an “ethical” exchange between us. The other is different...I must let the other be wholly other rather than seeking to reinvent him or her according to my own ideas (as cited by Wise 2003:133).

The visit and subsequent cast-making process provided the group with an opportunity to respond to Derrida’s challenge. In replicating the cast making process, the group members entered the debate of the diorama from position of personal, lived experience. With this in mind, the group, after much heated debate, agreed that the negative casts would form not a peripheral but an integral part of the exhibition. Two of the men wanted their moulds used to make into positive casts – a three dimensional replica using resin or latex.. The women however were passionate that this was not the intention of the cast-making process and that the negative cast, the empty spaces and the alabaster plaster, offered more powerful visual comment. At this consensus, we were encouraged as we believed that many of were interacting with these art works on a conceptual as well as a visual level. The group had indeed begun to show an astute understanding of the processes of art production.

We were confused at the some comments that the diorama should be restored at the museum. As earlier stated, a misguided interpretation of their position was a failure on our part. Despite weeks of interrogating the Bushman casts at the Iziko South African Museum, their own body casting, and discussions of looking and the gaze, the group were insistent that the casts be restored to their original position at the museum. We misinterpreted this contention as fledgling academics, perhaps too well versed in the work

Edward's Said.³² After all, we had discussed othering, the fluidity and multiplicity of Bushman identity, as well as the invasion of casting, and we therefore expected them to make the leap into our territory – that the casts were violent and invasive, that the idea and reality of a Bushman behind a glass and under the glare of lights was peculiar. We saw this as a strange reluctance on the part of the group to heal, to move on. What we failed to consider at the time that Freirean principles were at work. We had to try to understand their reluctance to move on, as we saw it. We had to learn that we simply did not know what it meant to be one person amongst a group of people whose survival and history was threatened. We failed to see that this space at the museum was, to many of the group, recognition of the very fact of being Bushman.

We struggled with this, and it came to be a painful conclusion that we were with a group who were battling to place themselves in the world. We ought to have been more receptive to listening to and learning about their position on the casts. It is perhaps a failure on our part, and regret on mine, that we did not take this further.

³² Said is discussed in Chapter Two.



The twins of David Mpanza (left) in Cape Town c. 1870,
photographed with Jan Krimhansel.



Photographs taken c. 1910-1911
by Dorothy Breek,
in the Peka area of the northern Cape.
Breek and Lloyd Collection, ICT Libraries

Remembering is never a quiet
act of introspection. It is a
painful re-membering, a
putting together of the
dismembered past to make
sense of the trauma of the
present. It is such a memory
of the history of race and
racism, colonialism and the
question of cultural identity

Ngũgĩ, J. M. (2004). The Hunger for Memory.
Eastleigh, East Africa: New Africa Press.

Chapter Six:

Obscuring the void

What the map cuts up, the story cuts across (de Certeau, 1984 :129).

As I indicated earlier, our group was made up of several of the different language groups. Due to budget constraints, we could not get more participants from the other southern African countries. Sad was the absence of any Angolan Bushmen; almost three decades of Angolan war landmines, inadequate funding, or simply lack of passports or identity documents made it impossible for anyone to attend. We stressed that although this group formed the core reference group, they could only speak for themselves. The exhibition would not and certainly could not make any attempt to be all encompassing, although the group would through the duration of the course be exposed to literature on the Bushmen and, where possible, imagery and text from other language groups (not present in the !Khwatla group) would be included.

At the outset, we were given an impressive language map of the Bushmen of Southern Africa, and through the course of the program, this map became a metaphor for much of what the group had experienced. This could be seen in the devastating effects that the implementation of international borders had had on members of the group, as a result of the physical demarcation between South Africa, Namibia and Botswana.

Lines of removal, separation, and dislocation ran clearly through all the lives of the participants. Many spoke of families physically separated by the border fence, with mother on one side and offspring with father on another. We discussed the concept of home and asked what home meant to them. Understandings of place and belonging became clear in our recorded interviews when two of the women referred to !Khwa ttu as their home. They could not conceive leaving it. This illustrated the quandary that !Khwa ttu as institution faces: it is a short term training programme. However, the adult residents display a reluctance to leave the nest, as leaving means sacrificing autonomy in an uncertain world for a space in the staff quarters at the centre.

In his book, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look*, on the subject of the experience of intimate spaces, Gaston Bachelard writes that a house constitutes a body of images that offers people proof (or the illusion) of stability. It is an instrument with which to confront the cosmos (Bachelard 1969). I agree with Bachelard that home is more than an architectural design and physical construction of bricks and cement; or simply any random kind of dwelling; rather, it exists as a physical container of memory, a mediator and protector between the individual and the outside world. It houses recollections and images that play a role in the placement of that individual in their cosmos. As a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, the home is invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships. (Blunt & Varley, 2004: 3)

The group exhibited a keen awareness of and respect for space in the photographic workshops. We noticed a reluctance on their part to zoom in on their subjects when taking photographs; most preferred to keep their focus less intrusive. The comment that ensued was that by manipulating the long lens they believed they were intruding on someone's personal space. This insight extended into many

of their compositions, and their choice of framing demonstrated inventive and delightful deviations from conventional centre placement.

In the *Finnish Architectural Review*, Finnish architect and theorist Juhani Pallasmaa promotes the idea that home is not an architectural notion, but a psychological, psychoanalytical and sociological notion (Pallasmaa 1994). The workshops on home with our group invited rich and diverse commentary of the notion of home and the impact thereof on its inhabitant(s). The troubling realities of the forced removals that many Bushmen have experienced, such as those in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR),³³ (see Figure 13 in Chapter Seven) bear testimony to Pallasmaa's assertion. In areas that have been subjected to forced removals, not only in South Africa, but globally, in places such as Israel and Spain, Pallasmaa's insight rings true.³⁴ The act of removing families from their homes in which their pasts, dreams, and memories are invested, has consequences that far outweigh the burden of simply changing a postal address. Communities are fractured often irreparably, identities fragmented, with little to no recourse for these families to return to (re)claim the ghosts and the pasts that lingered in these homes.

Writing on space and domestic violence, Paula Meth argues that:

³³Filmmaker and director Richard Wicksteed was instrumental in assisting us with regard to the CKGR. Wicksteed, who has spent considerable time in the CKGR regarding the displacement of Bushmen from the area has produced a documentary, *My Land is my Dignity* (2007), the story of a small group of Bushmen who refuse to move from their land to Botswana government resettlement camps.

³⁴ Displacement of people globally: Spain with Franco's occupation in 1939; Israel: the ongoing removal of the Palestinians which started in 1948.

ideas about home often remain implicit in research on domestic violence, and require further interrogation...Nuanced ideas about the home as differentiated, political, and marginalizing...need closer attention within the domestic violence literature and that the variable materiality of the home needs to be addressed more fully (Meth 2003: 326).

The group confirmed that this sentiment echoed in the communities of Bushmen in various Southern African settlements, where unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, and women and child abuse have reached phenomenal proportions. It was the thread of violence that ran throughout the lives of many of the participants, from the devastation of the Angolan conflict that spanned three decades,³⁵ to unrelenting alcohol abuse. Both Maseko Emmanuel and Carlos Munawgo were used as trackers in the Angolan war, and were relocated from Angola to Platfontein in the Northern Cape in 1989. Munawgo's sole remaining possession from this period is his army coat, which he photographed and which bears testimony to the violence and dislocation he has experienced (see Figure 17 in Chapter Seven).

As part of the process, we conducted recorded interviews with the participants. One of the interview questions was what "home" meant to them. Where was home? Could you be a Bushman in any place? Their replies were affective, and the inescapable reality of forced removals, of being homeless, cut through Donika Dala's reply for example. She stated, in her language, that !Khwa ttu was home. !Khwa ttu was a place that she felt safe. Dale Washkansky and I were saddened at her response, as by this time we had come to know !Khwa ttu as a tourist attraction. We then asked if her place in this home was any different from the ghostly, dusty spaces

³⁵The Angolan civil war lasted almost three decades and ended in 2002.

occupied by the body casts in the well-lit glass cabinets at the Iziko South African Museum. Her silence spoke of the weightiness of her predicament and the interment of dreams. This sums up the tragedy but also the consolation of the situation; that !Khwa ttu is the best refuge for these displaced Bushmen.

The process of the project, we hoped, would be result in the creation of a space that would allow the ghosts of the past, particularly the ghosts and specters of those violated Bushmen, those forcibly removed, to have their say, to return; for as Derrida reminds us, ghosts are not just the object of the gaze for they look at and summon us (Derrida 1994: 7). It is to this summons that I understood the !Khwa ttu participants to respond. In arresting but eloquent language they acknowledged that these ghosts were unable to make themselves heard and that they had therefore acted as voices on their behalf.

This profound engagement with the specters of the past is in tandem with the nature of photography itself, as photographs too function as images of a fragmentary, ghostly past. Photographs are palimpsest, with multiple layers and histories that are invisible but are nonetheless present. The group from !Khwa ttu highlighted for me the hidden, unspoken baggage that lingers long after being forced to move, and then that which emerges after not (ever) having a home. These sad projections by the group are evident in some of the photographs that are exhibited, such as Paula Armandus' suitcase (see Chapter Seven). The digital colour photograph shows a tartan suitcase floating against a neutral white background. The artist wanted to photograph the container that was the evidence of many the losses and journeys that she had encountered, many of which of course not self-motivated or initiated. The photograph attempts to give these lingering specters a tangible space, and the image serves as a metaphor for the opacity of the process of loss.

Loss, injury, and contusions linger in the spaces in the !Khwa ttu gallery. The relationship between the body casts, the Perspex column and the photographic spaces, articulates these injuries, which we addressed during the seven month process.

University of Cape Town



Thunier to Thunier

There are accordingly no savages on earth, whose physical existence is closer related to animals than the Bushmen's.

September 11, 1911. The Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert. Photographed by the German Colonial Expedition to the Namib and Kaoko Mountains. Photo: Heineke.



Figure 12. *!Khwa nuu Photo Gallery 2008*. Colour Digital Image by author.

Figure 13. *!Khwa nuu Photo Gallery 2008*. Colour Digital Image by author.

The photo gallery was a large narrow rectangular room with all the windows boarded closed resulting in a sheltered space with very little natural light. As a gallery space, it mirrored O'Doherty's (Chapter One) descriptions of the sealed chamber. As this was the space with which we were given to work we made some alterations, the most noticeable one being the use of the windows as many galleries do make use of windows and rely on artificial lighting. It was largely the group that decided on the content of the exhibition, although the centre's management included some space for the work of !Khwatla more broadly to be reflected.

There is a thread of violence which runs throughout the exhibition, whether in the moulds that are suspended eerily from the ceiling, to Kerson Jackson's account of his battle with alcohol, the forced removals as illustrated by the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, the Angolan war, and the Perspex sheets of historical imagery and texts. This was a curatorial decision by the group; the viewer had to leave the exhibition with a hint of the violence that continues to haunt the Bushmen.

Upon entering the gallery space it is evident that this is not an exhibition made up of works that resemble "typical" Bushman tourist art (see Chapter Two). It is contemporary and layered, and allows for multiple interpretations. It is also the signature of this group, who have proceeded from a humble beginning to take ownership of the space and its contents. They now speak of 'our pictures, our bodies and our words', a comment that illustrates the success of the exhibition beyond that of being aesthetically pleasing or fulfilling a didactic function.

The exhibition is made up of fifteen large colour boards, a collage of photographs, text and paintings. Suspended from the ceiling is a column of nine perspex boards, ending with the body casts hanging from the ceiling. These casts hover over a series of square plaster

reliefs (*Tracking Bushmen* 2008) of the feet of each of the participants. The editing of these boards and perspex sheets, which took eight weeks, was an exercise in democracy, as each photograph or painting was scrutinised by the group, and there were many heated discussions about the work. During this part of the process the women became very vocal in their assertions: in contrast to the men, they were not keen to promote the image of Bushmen as idyllic and peaceful. They insisted that social issues such as violence, the lack of education for the young and old, and alcohol abuse be at the forefront. They commented that there are now different battles that are being waged, where the Bushman body is forced to endure further injury and pain. It is these battles that are as, if not more, important than any historical battles.



"I am Kaggen,
I create the world by dreaming it."

The San people of Southern Africa lived with the !Kung in Namibia 20,000 years ago. They lived in the north-western part of the continent, and together they form the Khoekhoen. San languages are spoken in a large area of Southern Africa, from the Orange River in the west to the Indian Ocean in the east. San languages are spoken in the following countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.

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Source: Sankar's "An Introduction to the Khoisan Languages of the African Continent" (1997), page 4 where he says: "The Khoisan languages are all arranged in the **Clicks** Access to Developmental Categories (KAC) database in 1995, when the first Khoisan word list in the 'KAC' database was used to be published, as a way to present the Khoisan word list."

Use of the reading material was made possible by the following online



Word	Meaning
San	A San person (noun)
San	A San person (noun)
San	A San person (noun)
San	A San person (noun)
San	A San person (noun)



OVERVIEW OF THE SAN

Figure 14. Overview of the San. Digital Colour Image (135cm x 200cm)

The issue of naming emerged with particular reference to this board (Figure 14) as our lengthy instructions from San “experts” in Botswana, Canada and Namibia will attest. There were conflicting ideas about the spelling of the several language groups, and we commented that it was within the milieu of exclamation marks, double lines and capital letters, that the lives of these Bushman men and women carried on. I asked them what they thought about the issue of language and representation, and they commented that it had little, if any, real impact on their lives whether a cartographer in Canada used a capital letter or not. Interestingly, despite what we were told by the group, the management team instructed us not to use the term Bushman anywhere in the exhibition; in the exhibition they were to be referred to as San. The problem of naming is not a new one. As Shepherd and Robbins suggest:

words and the names that we give to things play an active and determining role in constructing social realities. Far from being a passive process whereby we specify what is already known, the act of naming something becomes part of the process of its constitution, and an active site of social contestation. This is especially true of societies in transition (and what society is not in transition?). To say and to name is to know – but always to know in particular ways (Shepherd, Robbins (2007: 1)

This dilemma, the gulf between the name ‘San’ and the various language groups, underscores, I believe, the mindset that refuses to acknowledge the fundamental rights of this *heterogeneous* group; including the right to name themselves, to produce knowledges that are recognised as valid, equal and contemporary.



Figure 16. *Cultural Practices 2*. Colour Digital Image. (135cm x 310 cm)



Figure 17. *Residue of War*. Colour Digital Image, (135cm x 210cm)

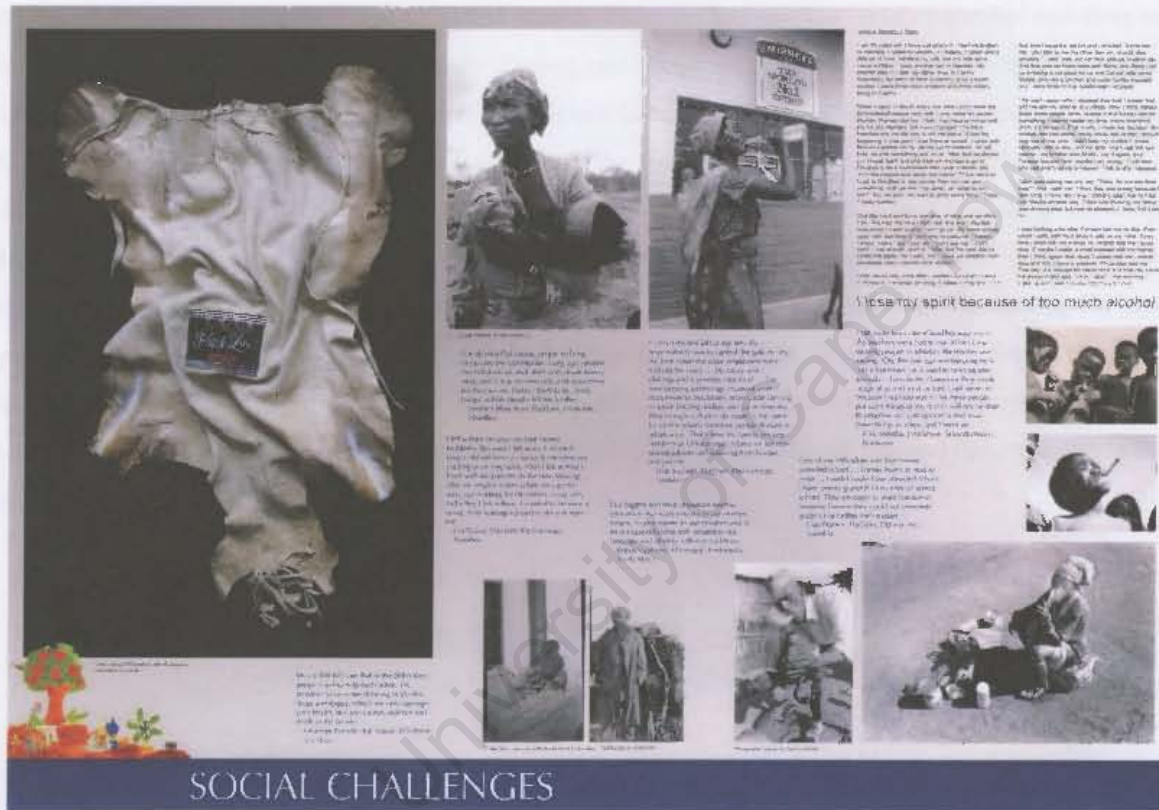


Figure 18. *Social Challenges*. Colour Digital Image. (135cm x 200cm)

This particular board (Figure 18) was the focus of heated debate. This was because the issue of alcohol and drug use was included in the exhibition as that of violence on the Bushman body. During one of our sessions, Roman Ndeja commented that we had to see the “trophies” in his room, which happened to be a collection of Black Label beer bottles. This set off a discussion of race, and raised the position of the neither-black-nor-white status of the Bushman in the “new” South Africa. Dale Washkansky and I then came up with the idea of the loincloth embroidered with the logo of Carling Black Label beer. We believed that the piece conjures up issues not only of alcohol, but of the tenuous position of the group in an overwhelmingly black South Africa. We believe it is a powerful and multi-layered artwork, which would spurn debate, particularly among the Bushmen themselves. The men in the group instructed us to remove the piece, as it was insulting, as no one wore loincloths with that design. They were vociferous in their protests, until the women responded with an astute summary of the conceptual value of the piece, that it was an artwork meant to simultaneously provoke and critique. The original work is now displayed in the main building at !Khwatya, and the group pride themselves on being able to engage in dialogue as artists.

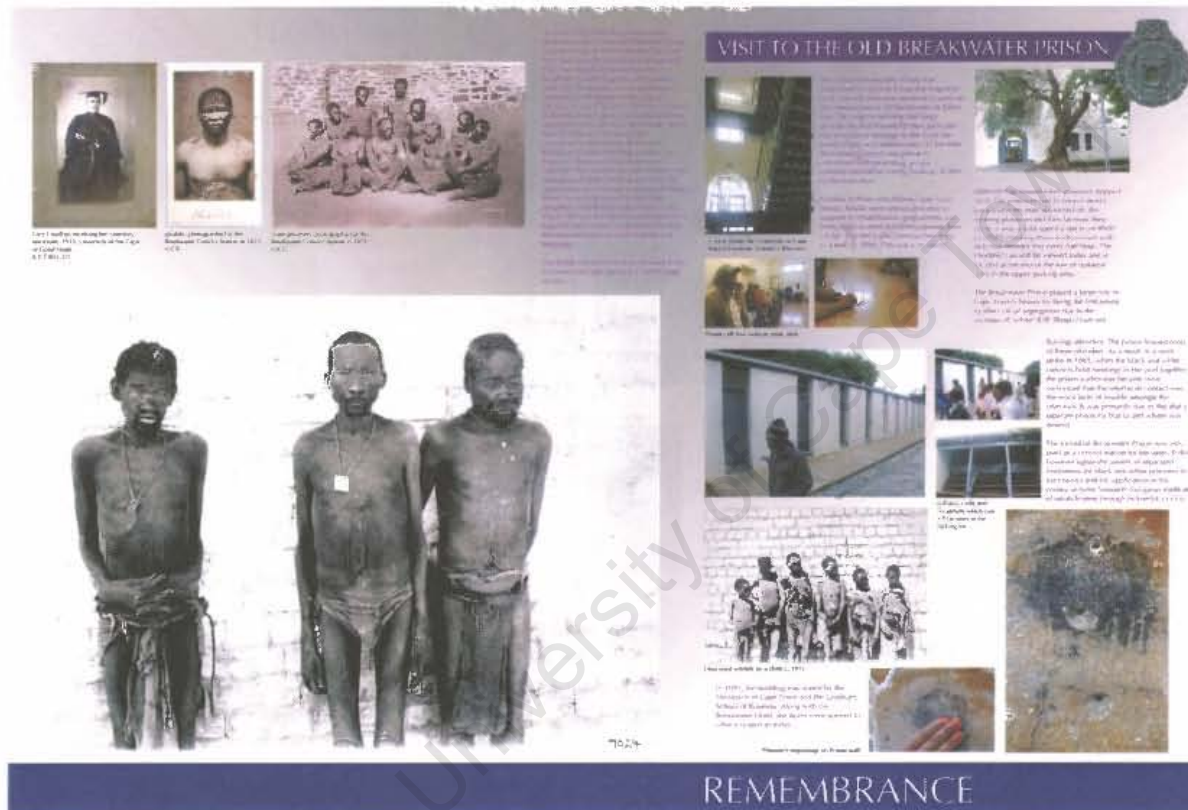


Figure 19. *Remembrance*. Colour Digital Image. (135cm x 200cm).



THE DIORAMA



...the diorama is a... the scene is... the people are... the animal is... the setting is... the diorama is a... the scene is... the people are... the animal is... the setting is...

...the diorama is a... the scene is... the people are... the animal is... the setting is... the diorama is a... the scene is... the people are... the animal is... the setting is...

...the diorama is a... the scene is... the people are... the animal is... the setting is... the diorama is a... the scene is... the people are... the animal is... the setting is...



MAKING CASTS

The first step in making a cast is to clean the skin... the person is... the material is... the cast is... the person is... the material is... the cast is...

The second step is to apply the material... the person is... the material is... the cast is... the person is... the material is... the cast is...

The third step is to finish the cast... the person is... the material is... the cast is... the person is... the material is... the cast is...

CONFRONTING THE PAST

Figure 21. *Confronting the Past*. Colour Digital Image (135cm x 205cm).

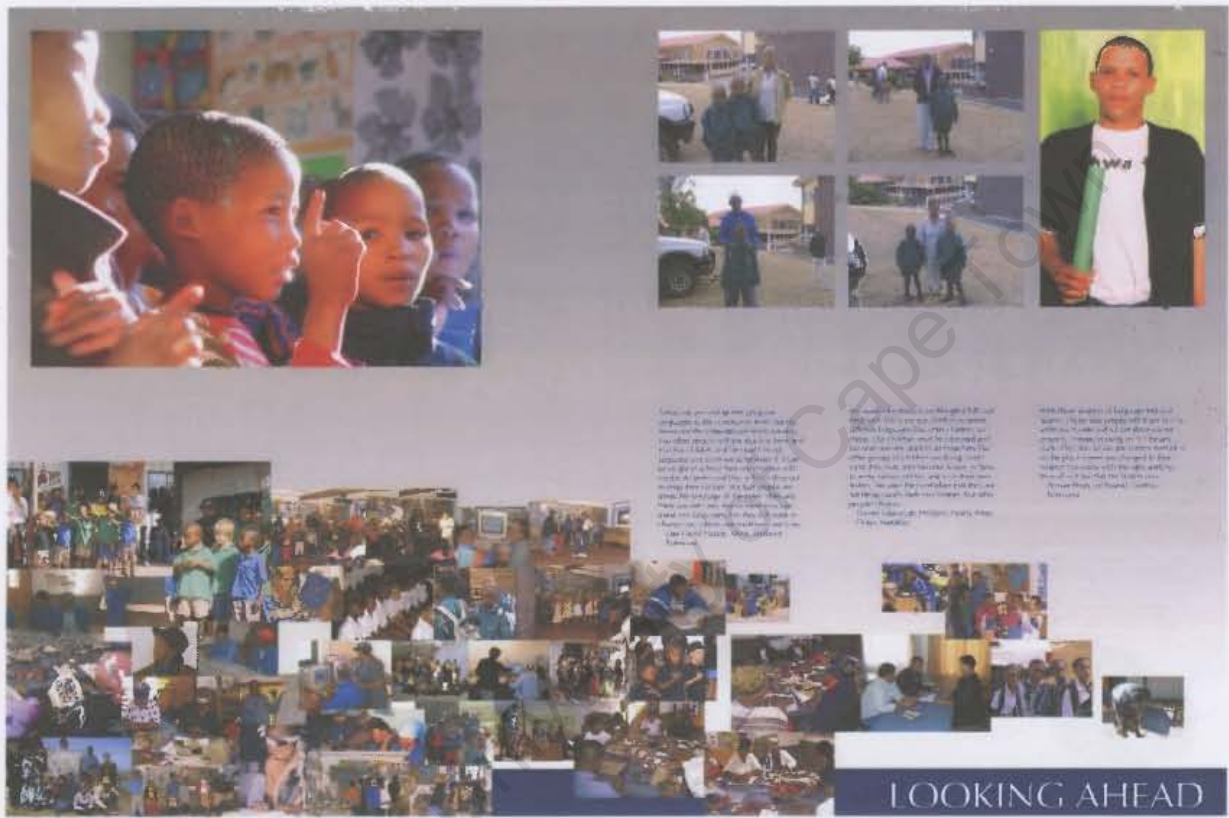


Figure 22. *Looking Ahead*. Colour Digital Image (135cm x 200cm).

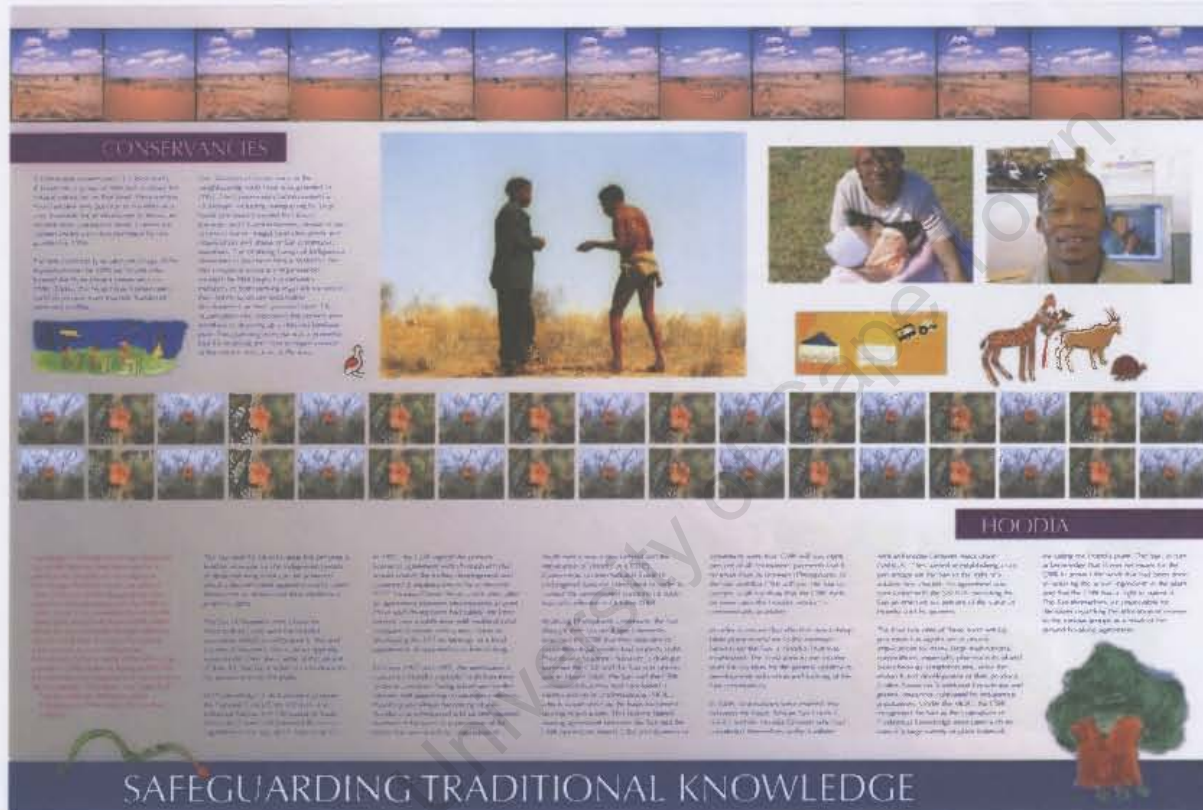


Figure 23. Safeguarding Traditional Knowledge .Colour Digital Image. (135cm x 200cm).



Figure 25. !Khwat tu Colour. Digital Image (135cm x 200cm).



Figure 26. *Exploring the Camera*. Colour Digital Image (135 cm x 100 cm)

This exhibition functions on more levels than just a visual collection. As the group took on many roles, such as storyteller, photographer and narrator, these were combined in the body of work. We believe that this group played a meaningful if small role in the construction of a history for a group of people who to a large degree, are still plagued by a fragmented and painful past. The viewer of the exhibition, then, must consider the group's role as historians. I say this with particular reference to the work of Walter Benjamin and his formulation of cultural history:

the historian should play the role of collector or bricoleur, rummaging around in the debris left by the past, and reassembling the fragments in a new 'constellation' that permits the articulation of that which has been left unvoiced (Benjamin 1997: 45-104; Frisby 1988: 187-265).

What we had hoped for was that the exhibition would present evidence of a fragmented past, and invite the viewer to articulate new meanings and form new relationships, particularly in respect of photography. The exhibition certainly made progress into the exploration for different forms of knowledge, and placed the photograph as a tool of healing in the spaces of memory – the always two-sided coin of remembering and forgetting.

To some degree, the !Khwa ttu exhibition attempts to blur the boundaries between different photographic practices. The large display is a collage of images across the photographic continuum, in unconventional placements, all without frames. Here Indigenous people have been given a space for knowledge production: they have interrogated ethnographic images which sit alongside text, sculptures, paintings and installations. By repositioning and re-imaging these colonial photographs, we attempted to dislocate cultural

assumptions and representations, and to invite the viewer to see the spaces between these photographs. We attempted to acknowledge that photography is subjective, and its great ability to “capture a moment in time” is perhaps its greatest downfall, its inherent failure that denies what came before, and what is still to come.

What can be learnt from the !Khwa ttu photographic project? ? Can it provide a platform for a critique of photography beyond the photograph itself? Is this project successful in that it emerged as a creolisation of space, material and activity, and provided an avenue for dialogue and repair? Is it a manifestation of the hybridity of the continent, in that it has taken what was originally a Western tool of othering, and worked its magic to result in a colorful fusion? I want to conclude that in spite of the many flaws and limitations of the project as outlined in this paper, the project’s success lies in the agency expressed by a group of people, who had previously struggled to articulate their world. Through the project and accompanying exhibition the members of the group learned a new language and became equipped with a tool. They discovered connections as photographers and artists, with other photographers and artists across the globe. The experience replenished my faith in the magic of this piece of equipment; a piece of equipment whose magic is its ability to play with light.



The four individuals were 'caught' in the Karoo

Wild, 200 individuals were 'caught' in the Karoo and adjacent regions during the first half of the nineteenth century. The individuals were usually children because the adults were shot on sight, and they invariably ended up as domestics, shepherds or labourers on colonial farms.

Read more about the history of the Karoo and the individuals who were 'caught' in the Karoo.



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Images

Historical images in the exhibition courtesy of University of Cape Town Manuscripts and Archives Department and LLAREC.

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Postcard of Bushman cast found in flea-market by Jane Alexander.