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Research article

FACILITATING THE EXPANSION OF UNIVERSITY CURRICULA THROUGH THE AMAZWI SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUM OF LITERATURE: A TWO-PART CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the confluence of progressive, even transgressive, pedagogical methodologies sought by centres of higher education on the one hand, and the curatorial practices of South African museums on the other. The article suggests that such pedagogical and curatorial goals, undertaken in pursuit of the development of critical and creative thinking in students and visitors alike, might intersect constructively in the public programmes offered by the Amazwi South African Museum of Literature in this instance, and perhaps within a broader selection of South African cultural museums in the future. The paper further proposes that the museum space offers a uniquely creative and critical engagement platform for the trial of such educational initiatives. This broad hypothesis is investigated on a modest scale, through the explication of a two-part case study comprising the Amazwi-based museum educational programmes, which ran through 2018 and 2019. Findings suggest that the inherent nature of the contemporary museum as a centre of learning has the potential to offer higher education students an alternative pedagogical space outside formal structures against which educators are developing museum education in South Africa.

Keywords: Literature; Public museum displays; Curatorial practice; Heritage discourse; Higher education pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

It seems that two things are happening across the higher education and museum sectors respectively: compilers of university curricula are increasingly seeking to equip their students for a fast-changing economic environment in which traditional modes of lifelong employment are rare and graduates must be more flexible and variously skilled than ever. Simultaneously, modern museums, while having always implicitly considered themselves to be in the business of public education, in the nineteenth-century sense of contributing to the public 'good' (Bennett 1995), are becoming more and more explicitly involved in educational initiatives.

As such, the raison d'etre of a museum is now seldom focused solely on the conservation of collections but needs to include a strong public programming element to fulfil its social responsibilities. This is contested ground, both on museological and pedagogical sides, as the works of Hein (2012), Rassool (2000) and Weil (1999) show. However, it can safely be asserted that the social responsibilities of museums, and the imperative for educational pedagogies to move beyond the confines of standardised testing have been routinely flagged in the relevant literatures of the last twenty years (Hein 2012; Weil 1999). There is a fruitful area of overlap here, where formal educators recognise the potential for museums to diversify their traditional pedagogies and learning environments, and curators at national or inner-city museums find themselves increasingly equipped with the skills to facilitate and deliver such experiences.

This confluence becomes evident in the instance of two Rhodes Universitiy in the Eastern Cape learning programmes that have been facilitated by the Amazwi South African Museum of Literature over the last two years: one offered to second-year journalism students as part of a media history course, and one offered to English literature honours students, as an assignment elective in their 'Imaginings of Place' course on South African literature. The formal work on museum educational practice from Hein (2012) and Lotz-Sisitka, Wals, Kronlid and McGarry (2015), will be interwoven with thoughts on a South African (or international, in Weil's case) heritage and historiography framework by Green (1999), Weil (1999) and Rassool (2000). Threads from this formal framework might then be pulled through with some informal insights made by the course conveners in each instance, to explore emerging areas of learning co-production between universities and museums, expanding and challenging both the Rhodes University course design principles, and Amazwi museum practice simultaneously. What follows is a narrow case study of Amazwi's experience in facilitating critical and creative thinking in university students using museum collections and exhibitions.

A FRAMEWORK

Amazwi, formerly the National English Literature Museum, has been fortunate to have been granted, for the first time in its thirty-year history, a bespoke building of its own, built to contemporary international museum standards. Additionally, the Museum has been mandated with expanding its collecting ambit beyond South African literatures written in English, to begin including literatures in other indigenous languages. Since isiXhosa displays a rich literary history due to the length of its history as a written language, and since Amazwi is based in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown) in the Eastern Cape, it had been decided, at the time of writing, that the pilot project for this development will be to begin collecting literature written in isiXhosa, the dominant local indigenous home language.

The recent injection of funding to upgrade its facilities, its position as a national museum, and its geographical proximity to a leading university all ensure that Amazwi is well-positioned to offer collaborative services in a higher education context. It is important to note that the South African museums' sector is also populated with many smaller museums for whom the suggestions noted here would be impractical. This paper thus directs its energies to South Africa's national or inner-city museums.

Alongside the recent move to its premises, a new permanent exhibition was developed between 2014 and 2016, ready for installation with the move to the new building in 2016. At the time of developing the exhibition, Amazwi had not yet received an updated collections policy directive, and so the curators were working on a new permanent exhibition in anticipation of the change of mandate, but not knowing if or when it would come. Despite this lack of clarity, or perhaps because of it, the exhibition has been curated according to what Hein might call a 'progressive' ideology (Hein 2012:9), in that it supports the democratic social justice objectives of historic redress. It aims to represent a truly diverse range of South African historic and contemporary writers, with attention paid to those voices which had been silenced under the country's colonial and apartheid past. Such an objective deserves close critical attention, however, nearly 30 years on from South Africa's change of government, from within both literary and museological frameworks.

For a start, there is South African literature's shifting visibility in the global literary landscape. This shift is made visible with the publication of two high profile reference texts on South African literary history, *The Columbia Guide to South African Literature in English* (Cornwell, Klopper & Mackenzie 2010), and *The Cambridge History of South African Literature* (Attwell & Attridge 2012). In a review article considering the significance of these two works, Bethlehem (2014) demonstrates how persistently South African English literary history has been considered deficient, even internally, until the work of revisionists such as Kirkwood (1967, 1987), Chapman (1981), and Gray (1979) in the 1970s and 1980s, and Chapman's later work in the new era with the publication of *Southern African Literatures* (Chapman 1996).

It is the publication of *The Columbia Guide* (Cornwell et al. 2010) and *The Cambridge History* (Attwell & Attridge 2012) that Bethlehem takes as evidence, finally, that "… South African literary historiography, whatever its local overdetermination, must also be considered as fact and artefact of the global literary marketplace" (Bethlehem 2014:4). This means that a literary exhibition mounted even ten to fifteen years ago might still have had as its primary objective the salvaging of South African literature from global ignominy or public disgrace. A contemporary exhibition needs to work within a broader and more textured framework. The heritage landscape in which Amazwi finds itself is also shaped according to post-apartheid trends. The main exhibition at Amazwi both adheres to, and simultaneously aims to expand what Rassool calls the "… dominant discourse on cultural 'diversity' " (2000:8) that emerged as South Africa's primary heritage framework in the post-apartheid years. The emphasis on 'many voices' in the Amazwi exhibition is certainly foremost: the title of the main exhibition is 'Voices of the Land', translated also into isiXhosa – *'Amazwi Elizwe'* – and Afrikaans – *'Landskrif'*.

Amazwi, the new name selected for the Museum amidst its rebranding, translates literally as 'voices' in isiXhosa, solidifying the museum's commitment to a 'many voices' approach to both literary historiography and curation practice. Yet, there has also been a persistent effort made, on the part of Amazwi, to locate South Africa's literary landscape as part of a global historical nexus, demonstrating English literature's enmeshment with other cultural narratives, languages, times and places, in line with Bethlehem's assertion that South African literature has taken its place in the 'global literary marketplace' (Bethlehem 2014:4).

Such a move seeks to complicate the "cultural 'diversity' " narrative, which, Rasool warns, positions culture as "… seamlessly constituted by a traceable purity or demonstrable authenticity" (2000:8). Such cultural 'purity' and 'authenticity' narratives connote colonial and apartheid-era curation practices. Historically, indigenous cultures were often designated under the purview of natural science collections and exhibits, within either a racially motivated progression of civilisation, or in a static 'noble savage' narrative which Rassool shows is often replicated under the new order in the form of 'cultural villages' (Rassool 2000:5-6).

The main focus of the Amazwi exhibition is an explication of South African history as drawn out through seminal literary moments and movements. Tom Jeffery, one of the curators of the *'Voices of the Land'* exhibition, comments that: we also paid special attention to the landscape, as a cultural landscape. Amazwi is progressive in including 'natural' themes in our cultural work, and thus disrupting the human-nature binary of traditional dualist museum practice (Jeffery 2020).

This goes to show that the curation practice that has emerged from the museum's move and rebrand is far from being straightforwardly recuperative. In other words, rather than seeking to elevate what has historically been considered a 'deficient' literary historiography (Bethlehem 2014:2), or seeking to recover lost cultural literary artefacts, the museum's main exhibition narrative is seeking a critically aware and self-reflexive position within the dominant "cultural 'diversity' " heritage framework identified by Rassool (2000:8).

Historian Michael Green (1999) is particularly useful in illuminating the essentially political nature of this kind of historical project. The contemporary social history museum is, by default, engaged in the democratic project of building a just society, because the project of representing history intersects so directly with a citizen's sense of nationhood. Indeed, the South African National Heritage Resources Act (Department of Arts and Culture 1999) acknowledges that "... heritage resources can promote reconciliation, understanding and respect, and contribute to the development of a unifying South African identity" (Green 1999:16). This understanding of historical work as implicitly nation-building is especially true immediately post-interregnum when the Act was drafted. Green reminds the reader:

> [T]he new South Africa is nothing if not its own new story, in whatever way one story may be said to hold together the many and often conflicting stories making up a nation in the wake of the forced imposition of the state (Green 1999:122).

This brings together the concerns of historiography and literary engagements with such historiography – Green (1999), after all, describes the immediate post-apartheid period of history-in-the-making as the creation of a 'story'. This is a useful angle for curators of literary history such as those at Amazwi, who, in exhibiting the history of South Africa through its collected literatures, work with layers of narrative functionality, creating an exhibition story out of the many fictional stories that have emerged from South Africa's history. All this must be done while simultaneously maintaining awareness that the presented information will be used by visitors in the construction of their own 'story' about the contemporary moment. Indeed, curatorial practice is the nexus at which these many-storied forms of representation meet in the museum context.

This process of writing South African nationhood and history in the post-apartheid period, 'naked in its constructedness,' as Green points out (1999:122), creates a pervasive suspicion of meta-narratives and singular, authoritative views on history. However, the reactive pluralism which Green sees developing in South African historiography in response, also bears critical investigation. As such, the following questions might be posed to the contemporary literary historical exhibit:

> Can it manage to keep alive the validity of the different perspectives without collapsing into mundane pluralism; can it balance contemporary critique against a lived sense of the moment of confrontation; and, most crucially, can it make history out of its subject without appropriating that subject entirely into that history? (Green 1999:128).

Thus, Green (1999) lays down the challenge for the contemporary historical project, a challenge echoed and developed by museologists as well. What Green labels 'mundane pluralism' (1999:128) is termed the "... dominant discourse on cultural 'diversity' " by Rassool (2000:8). Rassool unpacks how such a discourse came to be foremost amidst the heyday of Rainbow Nation optimism in the 1990s and early 2000s in South Africa. He problematises such uncritical pluralism as presenting "... a kaleidoscope of frozen ethnic stereotypes" (Rassool 2000:6).

Crucially, when heritage tourism seeks to recuperate and represent 'primordial' cultural subsets, the result is that "... continuities of identity with a pre-colonial past are asserted and culture becomes a set of characteristics frozen in time" (Rassool 2000:8). Rassool proposes, in response, "... a sociology of historical production in the academy as well as the public domain and an enquiry into the categories, codes and conventions of history-making in each location and in all its variability" (Rassool 2000:5). Rassool echoes Weil's well-known contention from the turn of the millennium that museums begin to grapple with the ramifications of their transformation, "... [f]rom being *about* something to being *for* somebody" (Weil 1999:229).

Weil tracks the American museum's journey from its post-war roots in the 'salvage and warehouse business' (Franco quoted in Weil 1999:229), to a more recent focus on "... providing a variety of primarily educational services to the public" such that "... the collection might no longer serve as the museum's *raison d'être* but merely one of its resources" (Weil 1999:229-230). Through a broad-spectrum view on the history of the American museum, Weil observes changes that have international application. Over the last three decades of the twentieth century, Weil notes, the transformation escalates significantly:

> ... what the museum might be envisioned as offering to the public has grown from mere refreshment (the museum as carbonated beverage) to education (the museum as a site for informal learning) to nothing short of communal empowerment (the museum as an instrument for social change) (Weil 1999:236).

Weil's recognition of the profound transformation of American museums just about coincides with South Africa's turning point between rainbow nation optimism and a maturing of

the contemporary post-apartheid moment. Arguably, this is echoed in the current emphasis in social history museums on enacting social responsibility beyond the 'mundane pluralism' of the 1990s (Green 1999:128). While the "… dominant discourse [of] cultural 'diversity' " is certainly still in evidence, today's buzzword in publicly funded cultural spheres is 'social cohesion,' rather than the 'unity in diversity' of the 1990s and early 2000s – a perhaps less optimistically phrased reiteration of the same project.

While Weil tracks a progression from the museum as an educational platform to the museum as an instrument for social justice (Weil 1999), Hein challenges museums to bond the two objectives (Hein 2012), and to recognise the rallying cause of social justice as a specific educational imperative. Arinze, speaking in 1999 at the National Museum in Georgetown, Guyana – the same year in which Weil published his oft-cited paper – suggests that "… a properly articulated museum education programme will become an essential component in the overall educational system of society" (Arinze 1999:2). Twenty years later, certain factions within the museum community are seeking to expand and critically investigate this neat social-educational imperative by turning self-reflexively to the history and status of the museum itself. Sandahl (2018) reports that one of the goals of ICOM's renewed museum definition project is to work harder at:

> … historicizing and contextualising [the museum], on de-naturalising and de-colonizing it, and on anchoring the discussion of museums and the future of museums in a larger framework of general societal trends and issues of the 21st century (Sandahl 2018:5).

Of course, the rejection of the definition that resulted from Sandahl's proposal, and the controversy that continues to dog the writing of the new definition, indicates that transformation is neither linear nor uniform across the sector.

Nevertheless, it is safe to suggest that, in the present climate, it is not enough for a museum to simply present reflexive, diverse and polyvocal exhibitions and passively await the arrival of visitors who seek to be 'educated'. Rather, museums must recognise their implicit social purpose, and additionally, think critically about what a museum-facilitated education is for. Hein (2012) thus proceeds to ask 'big-ticket' questions about the social goals of any educational methodology. He muses:

> Is its goal to achieve premier scholastic ranking in the world, to achieve economic dominance? Or, is its aim to develop critical thinkers who will challenge the status quo? Do we wish to produce innovative and creative people who can work collaboratively, or do we want to focus on training students to compete successfully at the expense of their neighbours? (Hein 2012:19).

Baker, picking up from Hein's work (2012) within a South African paradigm, suggests that the development of critical thinking skills, or the ability to engage with information creatively, must be one of the primary goals of a modern museum educational programme (Baker 2013). She posits, following Falke, Dierking and Adams (2006), that, "… the knowledge economy is founded on ideas, and … the rapidly evolving amount of new ideas requires learning skills in order to keep up, and, further … learning is not only becoming a way of life, but a necessity" (Baker 2013:107).

For progressive, socially just museum education to work, Hein (2012) and Baker (2013) emphasise that ways of measuring outcomes that do not rely on the strictures of standardised testing need to be trialled. Such an injunction is particularly hard to apply within the confines of formal higher education programmes. One of the observations Weil (1999) makes about transformations in the museums' landscape is that museum programmes, too, are now subject to outcomes measurement structures, bringing Non-Profit Organisations such as museums more in line with the commercial sector. Thus Weil (1999) points out that, envisioned in this way:

> [T]he social enterprise can be seen as at least partially parallel to the commercial enterprise – like it in having the achievement of a bottom line as its ultimate operational objective, yet nevertheless wholly different from it because of the way in which that bottom line is defined (Weil 1999:240).

Weil is writing in the late 1990s here, but it seems that this frustration with outcomes measurement is still keenly felt across the South African social services even today. Weil cautions:

> [M]useums must take care to assure that the need to assess the effectiveness of their public programs does not distort or dumb down the contents of those programs to include only what may have a verifiable or demonstrable outcome and exclude everything else. The problem is parallel to that faced by the nation's school systems with respect to nationally standardized tests. For all its promise, outcome-based evaluation – like any system – requires a wise and moderate application (Weil 1999:243).

Nearly fifteen years after the publication of Weil's paper, South African environmental education researchers Lotz-Sisitka et al. (2015) call for nothing less than broadscale disruption and transgression of the existing outcomes-based order to transform higher education pedagogy. In its South African iteration, within the context of global climate change, this would mean that:

> … people everywhere will need to learn how to cross disciplinary boundaries, transgress stubborn research

> and education routines and hegemonic powers, and transcend mono-cultural practices in order to create new forms of human activity and new social systems that are more sustainable and socially just (Lotz-Sisitka et al. 2015:4).

Such is the leaping-off point for this paper's consideration of the effectiveness and pitfalls of two museum-facilitated university programmes run at Amazwi through 2018 and 2019.

PROJECT GOALS

The course designers of the Journalism 2 and English Honours courses at Rhodes University certainly seem far more interested in the experiential opportunities for learning presented by working with Amazwi, than in grade improvements. Boshoff and Isaacs De Vega (2019) explain that, in the context of a South African media history course, the use of the Amazwi exhibitions presents an exciting opportunity for pushing students to consider the interpretive role of historical representation. They insist:

> History is not just about dates … it's about what meanings you give to those things. … The Amazwi display, to me, is such a good example of a place in which a range of materials has been very carefully chosen to say a very specific thing … It shows the shifts over time and place, of what it means to be writing in Africa over history (Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019).

Boshoff's co-lecturer, Isaacs De Vega, explains that the conversation in media history teaching in South Africa has in the past primarily focussed on a narrow range of white, middle class, English and Afrikaans print newspaper histories. Subsequently, it has turned into what is called a 'conversation of domination' (Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019). In other words, it focuses on the ways black voices were persistently stamped out of the mainstream media throughout the twentieth century. Although this is accurate, it maintains a content focus on the media sources that became dominant. For this reason, the 'many voiced' aspects of the Amazwi exhibition (or, the straightforwardly recuperative aspect) are appreciated and the authors further wish to use it as a springboard for a more diverse conversation around South African media history (Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019). From Amazwi's side, exhibition designer Tom Jeffery is unequivocal when he recalls the motivation for the collaboration:

> [T]hese kinds of programmes are a means to, firstly, shift the perception of 'the museum' from that of a storehouse of old things and outdated narratives; secondly, to enable the museum to connect with new audiences; and thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, to enable the museum to participate in and even generate conversations on issues that are current and urgent (Jeffery 2021).

Zongezile Matshoba, Manager of the Education and Public Programmes Department, remembers the primary goal was to open up student expectations of where their degrees could lead them and to "… expose these students to museum practice, exhibitions, spaces [and] to expose them to Amazwi as a unique museum focusing on literary heritage" (Matshoba 2021).

While Boshoff, Isaacs De Vega (2019), Jeffery (2021) and Matshoba (2021) all share the abstract, conceptual goals for the project in terms of developing student thinking, the latter two outline a more specific agenda for Amazwi which includes exposure and audience development.

Prof. Dirk Klopper, Acting Head of the Department of Literary Studies in English at the University of Rhodes in 2019, is the creator of the 'Imaginings of Place' course on the honours curriculum, which focuses on how South African literary texts represent places and spaces. Klopper (2019) has been trying to initiate an essay project as part of that course that uses Amazwi archival collections as its source material since 2018. He echoes Hein (2012), Baker (2013) and Lotz-Sisitka et al. (2015) on the purpose of pushing students to try new academic and intellectual methodologies. Klopper wants his students:

> … just to think more creatively full stop. To be better human beings! But also, just kind of reading the landscape, and it's a global landscape, I think the kinds of work … available [for graduating students], and the kind of mindset and skills required, has changed. [It] requires people to be far more entrepreneurial. In other words, [we wish to equip students] to think creatively, and not look for an opportunity that already exists, but to create an opportunity (Klopper 2019).

Marike Beyers, an Amazwi curator, remembers that the fact of the collaboration with the Rhodes Literary Department was sufficient motivation for the project; "… what we tried to achieve had to do with cooperation with Rhodes, a kind of working together …, and also [we wanted] to think around the way manuscripts can be used at student level" (Beyers 2021). The use of Amazwi's collections to generate more creative responses to a literary syllabus is therefore responding to a pressing concern for Klopper, about the purpose of higher education in the humanities. Klopper is thinking in line with Hein's injunction, and indeed a broader academic pedagogical impetus, that we ask ourselves what higher education is for. Klopper states that:

> … it's always worried me a bit that the way in which we train our students … through the pedagogy and forms of writing [we] require, what [we] are training them to be is academics. But most of them are not going into [academia]. So one has to think more laterally about what they're going to do with their degrees (Klopper 2019).

This kind of thinking, on the part of the course designers, echoes Matshoba's desires for the Journalism programme. It is worth noting that the stated goals of both projects are not necessarily looking for narrowly measurable outcomes that would reflect in standardised testing or reporting indicators. While the museum's project agenda is defined slightly more narrowly than that of the academics, both the museum staff and the Rhodes lecturers are thinking more broadly about the kinds of experiences and skills they would like students to acquire. In this, the Amazwi curators and the Rhodes lecturers are of one mind, as Jeffery emphasises:

> … the potential for diverse conversations is to me perhaps the most important potential that may be generated through such programmes around museum exhibitions: a diversity of people talking about a diversity of issues, outside the structural and thematic parameters of the lecture hall and course themes (Jeffery 2021).

This kind of thinking is echoed by South African education lecturer McCarthy, based at the University of Johannesburg, who writes evocatively on the "… 'split consciousness' required to teach poetry to student teachers in a South African metropolitan university" (McCarthy 2020:205). McCarthy suggests that an education lecturer's consciousness must be 'split' between the immediate needs of the students in her lecture hall (2020:205) and the needs of the prospective children who will eventually be taught by these teachers-in-training. She further suggests that the tools offered by a close reading technique, brought to bear on poetry in the lecture theatre, will equip students with the kind of creative and critical thinking that will enable them to engage effectively with their future students in turn (McCarthy 2020:205).

Crucially though, such teaching must be transgressive – of the kind for which Lotz-Sisitka et al. (2015) advocate – using a nurturing and enabling teaching technique to embolden students when it comes to seemingly impenetrable poetry and helping them to recognize that they might begin by "… valuing … what they already have" (McCarthy 2020:217). By taking both lecturers and students out of the lecture hall, to the museum environment, and by encouraging students to engage intuitively with sources and materials not usually consulted, this kind of 'split consciousness' might be developed so that students and lectures both begin to think beyond the end point of the degree itself (McCarthy 2020:205).

CHALLENGES

The English Honours students' response to the archival essay opportunity was, in Klopper's words, "… disappointing and then more disappointing the second time" (Klopper 2019). In 2018, the archival project was a compulsory assignment running through the fourth term. Klopper says, "… the first time around … I just felt that they hadn't really tried to extend themselves, beyond just doing the basic requirement for [the project]" (Klopper 2019). He accepts that he needs to be 'realistic' about what can be expected of students at the time of year in which the course is set.

Occurring in the fourth term, as it does, students are tired from a long year of deadlines, and are embarking on a final push towards exams: "… they're submitting long essays every two weeks; to do a decent job of that takes time" (Klopper 2019). He describes work that takes place in the final stretch of the year as a 'production line' (Klopper 2019). This is exactly the kind of linear, traditional pedagogy of which Hein and others are wary, but for reasons of comfort and confidence, come to the end of the year, students are actively choosing "… traditional lecture and text" over "… experiential methods" (Hein 2012:14). In 2019, the six Honours students on the 'Imaginings of Place' course were offered the archival essay project as an exam alternative. None of them chose to attempt it. Klopper explains:

> This kind of project, it requires patience and it requires time. … it's going to be sitting there for a long time going through material that may or may not be relevant. In a sense, the academic essay is easier for them. I think that is why the second time around it was even more disappointing, because they all just chose what was easier for them (Klopper 2019).

The challenges on the Journalism 2 course were also had to do with course planning, although they were seemingly more easily resolvable teething problems. Boshoff and Isaacs De Vega (2019) indicate that it is important to distinguish between "… a second-year student's writing ability and their experience of the exhibition. Most had positive experiences. Not all could write about it in the way that is expected of them". Although the standard of essay writing needed to be worked on, Isaacs De Vega and Boshoff did not seem unduly worried about student performance. Boshoff notes in Boshoff and Isaacs De Vega (2019) that:

> … maybe [it] is quite hard to articulate in writing, but the important thing is that they've had a chance to view, or to scan, how African voices have been foregrounded or backgrounded at different periods of history (Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019).

Even though the students did not fully grasp how to apply these experiences to the "… specific kind of writing which is journalism," they still treat the experience of the museum assignment visit as generating 'a transferrable insight'(Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019). Nonetheless, problems with the journalism project are still presenting themselves. In 2018, the students were asked to write an interpretive piece on the exhibitions based on visits to the museum in their own time. The responses were vague, and not especially focused or engaged.

As a remedy, in 2019, a guided tour was put together with a few curators speaking to aspects of the exhibitions, drawing particular attention to the process of interpretation and selection that goes into creating an exhibition.

However, "… the idea of having curators talk to them made them not look at the exhibition" so that, this year, many students simply reproduced the information fed to them by the curators, and strong critical engagement with the material was still proving elusive (Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019). Jeffery attributes this challenge to a lack of true collaboration between the university and the museum, combined with the strictures of museum reporting systems. He points out that:

> … the tendency is for the museum people to coordinate the visit with the lecturers, and of course to participate in the event itself, and then for the lecturers and students to carry on after the visit with little interaction with the museologists. The interaction could be developed and extended beyond the preparation for the visit and the visit itself. I don't have a sense of the outcomes of this particular interaction, a sense of how the interaction with the museum may have influenced the thinking and actions of the students. This is important, and perhaps falls away at least in part because of the quantitative nature of museum reporting. There is no requirement for us to evaluate, analyse and report on actual qualitative impact (Jeffrey 2021).

OUTCOMES

Despite the problems, all of the lecturers seemed committed to continuing the Amazwi-hosted programmes in 2020 (global Covid-19 pandemic notwithstanding). By the end of 2019, Klopper (2019) had already begun planning how to build the archival essay into the course in a more integrated way, so that the project does not feel so foreign and therefore daunting to students. The future of the course is, as always, subject to practicalities:

> [I]t's going to depend on the curriculum discussions we're having now which are quite fractious to say the least. What I'd like to do is … to make this an alternative [for] the second semester as a whole, or to build it into the pedagogy. So that all the students are looking at fewer texts, texts chosen with [Amazwi] in mind, and the [Amazwi collections], and the issues that they could glean from those materials (Klopper 2019).

Beyers, like Jeffery, thinks the project would work better if better collaboration with the museum is built into the course *after* the assignment has been submitted. She wonders if "… such research projects linking back to Amazwi can or should be brought up, [for example], something like if we have a web page, and they produce papers using our material or from these workshops, that it gets published/posted there" (Beyers 2021).

Boshoff and Isaacs De Vega (2019) were excited about discussing ways to make the Journalism 2 project more 'student-led'. This would perhaps mean students, "… first … going in, looking [at the exhibitions], having an experience, and then doing a Q & A [with curators], because they will have had their own experience of the exhibition" (Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019).

Jeffery agrees that "[t]here is certainly scope to develop the 'after the programme' elements and involve the museum more closely in monitoring and even shaping the outcomes" (2021). Some of the Journalism 2 student responses, quoted from their essays, show the inherently affective, emotive nature of historical engagement. According to Isaacs De Vega (2019), one student wrote:

> [W]hy does one of the only exhibitions which really speak[s] to women, why is that their movable exhibition? And [she] poses the gender question. So you see Sarah Baartman who is a caricature, you see Charlotte Maxeke who's been historically silenced. I dunno, was Ruth First there? And then Noni Jabavu who is moveable, so what does that mean? (Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019).

A real effort was made to be representative of notable South African women writers in the main exhibition: Ruth First is there, and sustained attention is also paid to Miriam Tlali, Bessie Head, Sindiwe Magona, as well as Olive Schreiner and Nadine Gordimer, and this is not an exhaustive list. That the Noni Jabavu exhibition is 'moveable' means that it is a travelling display with a wider footprint than the fixed display (Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019), although the students appear to have read its impermanence as a signal of diminished significance. Jeffery takes issue with this response:

> I think the idea of a 'moveable' or rather travelling exhibition is perhaps being misinterpreted here. The idea is that this exhibition can go out into the world and that the story of Noni can be shared with people who are not able to come to the museum itself. The fact that it is portable does not detract from its significance or its status as the exhibition of a national museum. Furthermore, women are well represented in the main exhibition. The curation team was actually mostly women, who made every effort to ensure that the exhibition 'speaks to women' (Jeffrey 2021).

What is notable is not so much whether or not the content of the exhibitions foregrounds the gender question (in other words, whether the curators of the exhibition would agree with this student's conclusion, which they would not), but rather

that the exhibitions have the ability to spark engagement on issues important and topical to the students, in this case, gender representation and equality. It seems unproductive to simply conclude that the student in question read the exhibition 'incorrectly,' but since there was no space for further conversation around the issue, this observation became a dead-end rather than a jumping-off point for thinking about the representation of women in history.

Reportedly, the temporary Jabavu exhibition struck a note with many black women students. "A lot of our students are dealing with dual identity issues" (Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019). The conversation enacted in this paper between Jeffery, one of the Journalism students, and Isaacs De Vega might have been more fruitful had it been given a platform as part of the course design. Perhaps a Q&A with curators after students have made their initial observations might flesh out their engagement with the material in a more generative fashion.

CONCLUSION

The future success of Amazwi-facilitated student projects seems to ride on a balance being struck. On the one hand, there is a need for the course designers to make Hein's 'progressive education' ideals pragmatic and practicable (Hein 2012:10). This would mean fitting the course into a working timetable, and structuring the assignments more transparently – in other words, bowing in part to all of the mundane, confining aspects against which contemporary education theorists rail. On the other hand, it is important not to lose the spark of opportunity here, to not let pragmatism drown out the ideals for which these explorative pedagogies are being attempted.

Given the suspension of traditional museum activities and face-to-face teaching at the university since early 2020, both museum-facilitated courses have been abandoned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is perhaps not so much because it was impossible to migrate online, but because the transgressive opportunities presented by museum-hosted learning were seen as 'nice to have' rather than as an essential component of the curriculum in the context of hurriedly transposing the syllabus into a digital format under emergency conditions. The museum, similarly, was grappling with a steep digital learning curve and was working to try to keep its core services available in the context of a national shutdown. That the course was allowed to fall away shows, perhaps better than anything else, that a truly collaborative working partnership was never cemented.

There is a reason for hope, and room for learning. In a collection of museum education theoretical research pieces, Anderson, De Cosson and McIntosh (2015), dedicate a third of the volume to the research theme of 'reflective praxis'. Introducing the collection in the journal *MuseumEdu*, the same authors confirm "… the power of reflecting on practice" (Anderson 2016:236). He points to Kate Petrusa, based at the British Colombia Farm Museum, which recounts "… her experience of trying to bring together two divergent views of the exhibits' potential" (2016:235). Anderson (2016) draws attention to "… the processes needed to find points of commonality between the two differing agendas". In other words, he emphasises how museum educators can use reflection to deepen their understanding of their practice.

If nothing else, forced shutdown gifted the Amazwi curators time to reflect. It is noteworthy that the Amazwi staff's reflection on the university courses, coming at two years' removal in 2021, offers strong ideas for recasting the collaborations in the future. The purpose for which the courses were run in the first place still holds value. These students represent South Africa's next cohort of teachers, writers, activists, and journalists. It is immeasurably important that conversations are had about what it means to look at history now and about perspective and historical practice. The researcher points to the following as a useful note on which to end:

> Why do we need to know this now? Across the board, these are difficult texts…that we have to deal with. What the exhibition did was present an opportunity for them to engage differently. That's why there were so many people who said 'I went with these expectations and came out with a different understanding (Boshoff & Isaacs De Vega 2019).

Museums in South Africa might successfully offer university students new platforms for creative and critical engagement. Indeed, the inherent nature of the contemporary museum as a centre of learning, a pedagogical space outside of the formal structures against which educators are rallying, makes this a ripe area for development. However, as these Amazwi-facilitated case studies illustrate, if the museum space is to prove itself a truly useful springboard for challenging students' understandings of history, museum practitioners would do well to keep working creatively and flexibly in response to their working challenges, such as those presented by these initial attempts at such engagements.

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Research article

TOWARDS EPISTEMIC REPATRIATION: RE/MEMBERING AS THE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MUSEUMS

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ABSTRACT

The idea of a modern museum originated from exploration, science, art and western curiosities. Museums in Europe and former colonies, from modern to postmodern times are still to a greater extent grounded on the colonial logic. What is the highest moral responsibility of museums towards the decolonisation project? Is it to the work of 'universally' acquiring, collecting, and cataloguing works of art? Or merely to gather works of art without considering the spiritual and historical relevance, with no reference to the cultural experiences of their creators? Such questions are linked to Euro-Western's idea of progress as justified by many global museums and their claims of 'universality'. This paper interrogates the proclamations advanced by the philosopher, Hegel's notions of universalism and examines critical arguments of the moral responsibility of the Afrocentric museum. Afrocentric museums refer to those that are epistemically located in the African paradigm of thought and culture and within a specific Afrocentric context, art, people and culture co-exist as one unit. Thus, the spirit of artworks remains with the people who create them. However, it is further argued that the looting of African art by imperial collectors 'dismembered' the objects from their spirituality. Thus, the dismembering of spiritual elements and sometimes rituals from the objects are to be understood to have resulted in epistemicide. This destruction, annihilation, silencing or devaluing of knowledge is brought about by dislocating African art from its original cultural environment. The article proposes the concept of 'epistemic repatriation' as one of the empirical interventions towards the advancement of re/remembering as a moral responsibility of South African Museums and that of the wider art and cultural heritage sector.

Keywords: Afrocentricity; Repatriation; Epistemide; African Art; Spirit; Re/membering.

CONFRONTING IMPERIALISM: AN INTRODUCTION

The article is informed by my presentation as a contributor to the discussion panel under the theme: unpacking decolonisation – theoretical perspectives from an online webinar titled, 'Decolonising as a verb' - reinterpreting collections and collecting, organised by COMCOL which is an International Sub-Committee of ICOM, from 25 to 26 November 2020. The webinar was chaired by Ciraj Rassool, Senior Professor of History from the University of the Western Cape, South Africa; Jesmael Mataga, Head of the School of Humanities from Sol Plaatje University, South Africa and Bruno Brulon Soares, Professor of Museology from the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO) in Brazil.

Commencing on the premise that the notion of a museum as we know it today is deeply rooted in colonialism, many examples of museums and colonialism were presented. The more profound question asked is, can an African curator (as the subject of colonial conquest and as an epistemic acquisition of the Empire) be truly considered a legitimate curator of a museum that is still operating under the Euro-Western modernity?

The collecting of African art emerged around the end of the 19th Century when the idea of a modern museum materialised in Europe. Curators, scientists and soldiers looted, plundered and purchased what appeared to be the most valuable African treasures as part of their conquest. As a by-product, the collection of African art was a constitutive act that saw Europe being heralded as the epicentre of modern art. However, the thinking and interpretation of African people and art became centred around the perspectives of the Euro-Western philosophy.

In the Euro-Western postmodern world of 'multi-locality transnational connections' (Forcier 1999:41), it might be generally assumed that advancing theories of rootedness is being regressive. However, the multi-locality transnational connections remain dormant when it comes to museums in Africa. Therefore, a call for the decolonisation of museums remains critically relevant in the 21st Century. The project of decolonisation is topical, especially amongst scholars working within decoloniality (Grosfoguel 2011; Maldonado-Torres 2011; Mbembe 2016; Mignolo 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi 2016; Oelofsen 2015).

It is well-accepted that most African museums "... were traditionally founded during the colonial and imperial ages" (Hoffmann 2019:20). On the African continent, during imperial conquest, artworks were looted from the former African colonies and entire collections were relocated to European museums. Despite critical interventions that have been put in place to motivate for repatriation of artworks back to Africa, very limited success has been achieved thus far.

In this article, the word repatriation refers to the process of reclaiming artefacts, cultural objects and human remains from museums and other collections abroad. The scope of cultural objects that are under discussion in this article is not limited to only artworks. The scope is inclusive of all cultural object such as artefacts, artworks, ritual and functional objects, including human remains. Based on evidence by other researchers (Abungu 2001:16; Arinze 1998:31-32), Hoffmann (2019:20) shares that "... many museums have remained largely unchanged, emphasising Western stereotypes which are in contradiction with modern African nations and thus irrelevant to the needs of current society". While it is the responsibility of the modern African nations to change the canons of the colonial period, it is argued that the neo-colonial dependency on the Euro-Western paradigm of thought has been one of the stumbling blocks against such change. Hence, the dilemma calls for active debates on repatriation to be given serious attention by museum curators, notably from the African continent.

Moreover, the impasse calls for African scholars and curators, to theorise on critical interventions that could be applied to facilitate the return of many 'stolen' artworks. The French art historian, Bénédicte Savoy is hailed as one of the most important voices on the subject of looted African artworks. Savoy (2021) in a DW News statement makes a stand that:

> [I]t is obvious that museum directors tried to put off having to take action before, they retired and simply passed the problem on to the next generation, which is us now it's clear that we cannot and must not burden the next generation with this we have to act now.

Thus, it is argued that agitating towards the repatriation of 'stolen' (as a result of colonial conquest) artworks is the highest moral responsibility of museums and curators, especially from Africa directed towards Europe, perhaps the United States and other western worlds.

DISMEMBERMENT AND EPISTEMICIDE

Museums, as they are today, were informed by the notion of colonialism. As imperial creations, most modern museums still curate the heritage of the British Empire or European collections. Taking the above into account, this article questions the following: How can western museums justify themselves within the decoloniality paradigm?

During colonisation in Africa, imperial powers looted artworks from African colonies to Europe and elsewhere under the western rule. In the process of colonisation, artworks were removed from their places of origin and placed in museums in Europe and many other western collections. This paper opinionates that this relocation dismembered the artworks and 'black bodies' from their spiritual value and knowledge systems.

The notions in this paper of dismembering and re-membering are influenced by the writings of the seminal work by the Kenyan writer, leading novelist and academic, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2009). His first chapter in the book, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* (2009) talks about dismembering practices, planting European memory in Africa. Chapter two continues about re-membering visions and reading from his book one is moved by the magnitude of the British colonialist ritual of dismemberment as part of dispossessing not only artefacts but also of black bodies (i.e. human remains) of their spirit. The practices of dismemberment were unleashed mostly to those bodies who resisted colonialism. Wa Thiong'o (2009) recalls a Kenyan story about:

> ... Waiyaki wa Hinga, sometimes called simply Waiyaki, as one of the most important figures in Agĩkũyũ anticolonial resistance lore. One of the leaders of the nineteenth century resistance against the British military occupation, he harassed British forces time and again. In particular, he attacked Fort Smith in Dagoretti after the British broke the peace treaty and he had agreed to talk with the British colonial agent, Captain Lugard. When they finally captured him, the British removed Waiyaki from his region, the base of his power, and, on the way to the Kenya Coast, buried him alive at Kibwezi, head facing the bowels of the earth—in opposition to the Gĩkũyũ burial rites' requirement that the body faces Mount Kenya, the dwelling place of the Supreme Deity (wa Thiong'o 2009:3).

The gruesome, yet true story engages with the level of violence that the British colonisers were willing to unleash on anyone that attempted to resist the superimposition of the Western canon. Another story that wa Thiong'o (2009) mentions is that of King Hintsa of the Xhosa people, in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. According to the story "... the British captured King Hintsa of the Xhosa resistance and decapitated him, taking his head to the British Museum in the United Kingdom, just as they had done with the decapitated head of the Maori King of New Zealand" (wa Thiong'o 2009:3-4).

This article argues that the ritual of dismembering the (thinking) head from its body was an act of 'zombification'. It was a violent act of taking the head to the British Museum while leaving the docile body in Africa and therefore is characterised as epistemicide (de Sousa Santos 2014). It is pointed out that such dismemberment resulted in epistemicide.

The term epistemicide, as a global social theory was coined by a Professor of Sociology of the University of Coimbra in Portugal, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) in his seminal book titled, *Epistemologies of the South.* According to de Sousa Santos, epistemicide simply means 'the murder of knowledge' (2014:92). De Sousa Santos goes a step further and says:

> Unequal exchanges among cultures have always implied the death of the knowledge of the subordinated culture, hence the death of the social groups that possessed it. In the most extreme cases, such as that of European expansion, epistemicide was one of the conditions of genocide. The loss of epistemological confidence that currently afflicts modern science has facilitated the identification of the scope and gravity of the epistemicides perpetrated by hegemonic Eurocentric modernity (de Sousa Santos 2014:92).

Following de Sousa Santos (2014), this paper argues and points out that epistemicide was brought about by the disconnection between the artworks and their inherent knowledge systems. In this article, it is further claimed that when artworks were exhibited in Europe and were placed under western museums, they lost their true purpose and meaning. The new ways of interpretation and new methodologies of understanding their purpose and meaning then evolved and became based on the Eurocentric paradigm of thought. From the Eurocentric paradigm of thought, philosophers experienced the artworks as symbolic, thus having no soul or connection to African history.

AFRICAN ART WITHOUT A SOUL

In great measure, "… the fashioning and cultural dissemination of an 'image of Africa' by a Western literary aesthetic" was widely ventilated by the German philosopher Hegel (Korang 2011:2). Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel's (1770-1831) philosophy of art was profoundly influenced by the ideas of Kant, Schiller and Schelling, especially in the fields of idealism, aesthetics and human existence. Hegel was a prominent 19th Century German philosopher who had a prolific impact on the trajectory of western philosophy and the outlook of modern Europe. This is why his ideas are important in the analysis of art that was looted from Africa during the age of Imperialism. It was Hegel in his work titled, the *Phenomenology of Spirit (*1807) and through his Lectures on Aesthetics who declared that art expresses the spirit of particular cultures, as well as that of individual artists and the general human spirit.

As expressed by Kuykendall (1993:572) Hegel's perspectives of Africa was based on his study of African art in European museums and he declared that "… Africa is said to be unhistorical; undeveloped spirit – still involved in the conditions of mere nature; devoid of morality, religions and political constitution" and thus African art had no spirit. As a European philosopher Hegel proclaimed that "… the peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that about it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all our [European] ideas – the category of Universality" (Hegel 1978:93).

Hegel's submissions and theories on Africa has been disputed by many African researchers (Diop 1974; Kuykendal 1993; Mbiti 1970). For example, Cheikh Anta Diop (1923-1986), a Senegalese historian dedicated his entire life to producing work that was "… addressing more popular prejudices and stereotypes, and formed an essential part of the négritude movement that contributed self-esteem to many in Africa, especially former French colonial Africa; he wrote of 'racial self-retrieval' (Derricourt 2011:112). Amongst his works, "… the wider influence of Diop's ideas came with the first English language translation of his work, *The African Origin of Civilization: myth or reality,* published in 1974 derived from two of the French volumes" (Derricourt 2011:113).

Though not widely accepted at the time, Diop's works contributed immensely in countering Hegel's perceptions on Africa by "… complementing the influence of (black) Egyptian culture on the origins of Greek civilisation with an influence from (black) Phoenician culture" (Derricourt 2011:113). Diop and other Afrocentric scholars saw Hegel's understanding of Africa as influenced by ideas of Eurocentric superiority and imperialism. Kuykendal (1993:580) attest that "Hegel's *Philosophy of History* is a philosophical treatise that disrespects Africa's contribution to civilization".

In the words of Kuykendal (1993:580) Hegel deduced "… that the cultural characteristics of African people could only reach a significant level by contact with the outside world, namely, Europe". On the contrary, it is argued that from Hegel's European context perhaps there are valuable points still to be considered. Such considerations are informed by an understanding that when African art was removed from their original environment and from their knowledge systems which informed practices and rituals around them, they lost their spiritual value. In Hegelian terms, "… soul is that level at which spirits sleeps, active only within itself, at one with the environment" (Kuykendall 1993:573).

The change of the original environment from Africa to museums in Europe dismembered the looted art and they were forced to exist as mere symbolic objects without a spirit. The artworks, therefore, had been separated from their spirit. The spirit was left with the people who created them. When exiled to European museums, the looted artworks became inadequate to carry their ideas. Thus, upon analysis of these objects by some of the European researchers such as Hegel, they experienced the looted artworks as existing without consciousness, with no history, no culture and no rootedness in any known knowledge systems. It then makes sense for anthropologists such as Hegel to conclude that the African art that they encountered in European museums had no spiritual value. They were existing in a state of death.

It is argued that European researchers produced knowledge and interpreted data about the looted artworks based on their Eurocentric paradigm of thought. Such knowledge systems were produced away from the place of their origin and without the input from their creators. Meanwhile, in Africa, the absence of original artworks from the pre-colonial era left a vacuum in the production of culture and the continuation of knowledge systems. Hence the producers of artworks still have no reference point. Most of what they produce is based on oral tradition history, old sketches and photographs taken by early travellers that have seen the original artworks from the museums in Europe. This dilemma continues and thus attests to the injustices of colonialism and intensifies the active need for the repatriation of African art back to Africa.

REPATRIATION DEBATES, CONFRONTATIONS AND DILEMMAS

The arguments for the repatriation of African cultural artefacts rest on three main pillars: justice and moral rights of ownership; social and cultural significance and value; and economic values. In the first case, some argue that the only way forward is the unconditional legal and physical return of the object. However, as the case studies and review of international laws and practices have shown, unconditional, or even legal return is very seldomly achieved and can delay any kind of agreement for decades (Snowball & Collins 2020).

Following from the recent 2020 arguments by Snowball and Collins (2020) as stated above, many who follow the debates on matters of repatriation of African art from museums in Europe, seem to think that Europe is being condescending about it. This is mainly because of the many failed attempts by African kings and political leaders to have the artworks returned to Africa. Artworks were looted from many countries throughout the whole of the African continent. However, the famous West African Benin bronzes have become synonymous with the subject matter of art looted from Africa. The main points of argument are thus informed by the numerous public media and international debates over their restitution as published online (Steffes-Halmer 2021).

This debate has gone on for decades and recently the voices have gained momentum in Europe. European museums are seen to always shift the goalposts. Instead of repatriation, museums in Europe were gravitating towards an option of permanent loans. However, the recent turn of events has to be acknowledged and appreciated. In Germany for example, the Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas has called for African art to be returned. Another fine repatriation example is from France. Recently, President Emmanuel Macron commissioned a report from two academics namely Felwine Sarr (a Senegalese scholar) and the French art historian Benedicte Savoy. The academic duo was mandated "... to draw up proposals for the restitution of pieces of African cultural heritage" (Nayeri 2018). Sarr and Savory published a 252-page research report "... arguing that it was time for France to reconsider its position on objects taken from sub-Saharan Africa and held in national museums" (Brown 2019). Macron accepted the findings of the report he had commissioned, he declared that the museum in Paris "... would return 26 objects, looted by French colonial forces in 1892, to Benin" (Nayeri 2018).

Some culture ministers in Europe have called for a conference aimed at resolving the issues of repatriation. Some commentators have questioned this turning point and they refer to what is happening as something sensational. According to Benedicte Savoy, the "Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation which currently holds [more than 440 Benin's] bronzes does not want to give up the idea..." of keeping these artworks (Steffes-Halmer 2021).

The Bronzes are so important especially to the Africans because of their uniqueness and complex aesthetic qualities. Besides their cultural value, they are also a shred of physical evidence that demonstrate the thriving pre-colonial technological advancement by Africans. It can also be argued that the Benin bronzes are a valuable treasure trove for new research. The research might advance competing for claims to disapprove the widely accepted Eurocentric concepts of eugenics and African primitivism. Bronzes might finally confirm that the people of Africa were an advanced Iron Age society way before colonial invasions by the Europeans. The foundation is "... completely optimistic that the original objects can still be displayed in their museum and some could be returned, and some could remain there" (Parzinger in Steffes-Halmer 2021). They have gone further and suggested that some could be on the continual exchange or loan. No matter which of the debates one takes, "... it has always been clear that the context in which they were acquired was the context of injustice" (Parzinger in Steffes-Halmer 2021).

History points out that in 1897 in the Kingdom of Benin British colonial forces looted 4000 bronze sculptures in a raid. Germany bought 1100 of the stolen goods. One commentator professes that "... there's blood on these objects" (Steffes-Halmer 2021). So, the moral question is, "... do trophies from the colonial era really belong in an exhibition in the heart of Berlin?" The obvious answer is no, "[T]he Benin bronzes are of course are part of the cultural history of Nigeria and Benin, but they've also become global..." (Parzinger in Steffes-Halmer 2021).

Yusuf Tuggar who is the current Nigerian Ambassador to Germany weighs in on the debate and found it is "... totally unacceptable at the Nigerian side" (Tuggar in Steffes-Halmer 2021). Tuggar finds the international order, which condones the status-quo, as the legacy of colonial conquest. French art historian, Benedicte Savoy's research has revealed that for decades, museums have deliberately covered up the true provenance of their African collections and have, as a result, hindered many investigations about the origins of some collections (Sarr & Savoy 2021).

In Africa, the issue of repatriation looted art remains a painful reminder of the imperial conquest and dismembered. The dismemberment brought about the disruption of life and culture. However, there is still a glimpse of hope that the spirit of the artworks is still roaming around the continent of Africa, waiting for the return of these great works of art. Speaking to the daunting process of restitution, the Culture Minister of the Republic of Benin said "... he didn't think there would ever be any restitutions and if it did happen it would be as important as the fall of the Berlin Wall" (Tuggar in Steffes-Halmer 2021).

WHAT DOES THE DEBATE MEAN TO SOUTH AFRICA?

It is argued that South African art is a critical part of African culture and history. The history of Africa is acceptably conceived under three epochs, precolonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa. Colonisation being the predominant logic between all three ages has "... had a major impact on Africa's culture and history, including contemporary African art" (Clemens 2017). In turn, African art has been immensely influenced by the culture of the European countries that colonised Africa (Clemens 2017). The distinct separation of South African art from African art by art institutions points to an epistemic gap between the two formations.

An article by Federico Freschi (2009) titled *The Wits Art Museum: The continent's foremost collection of African and southern African art* can be sighted as a good example to support this argument. The rationalisation of South African art is offered from the global North and while the philosophical framework of understanding African art is anchored in the global South. Moreover, South Africa is thought of as a country that, for many centuries, has defined itself as not of Africa, but as an outpost of European imperialism in the Dark Continent (Mbembe 2015). Therefore, it is argued that though geographically situated in South Africa, South African universities are still epistemically located in the West. In terms of epistemic repatriation (Niadelman 2015), I explore the brief history of the Wits African art collection, with a specific focus on the Burton collection. The Burton Collection is an ethnographic collection of masks, cultural objects and artefacts from the Congo region of West equatorial or central Africa.

According to the *Mail & Guardian* Journalist, Matthew Partridge, Reverend WFP Burton, documented the material culture and lives of the Luba people (of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in central Africa) during the 1920s and 1930s. However, in that jaded turn of colonial history, part of Burton's purview, while spreading the word of God, was to confiscate objects of idolatry. Not being able to bring himself to destroy them, he donated them to the social anthropology department at Wits, which sent the unexposed film in exchange (Partridge 2012).

Specific artworks from the Wits African art collection are not discussed. However, the epistemologies that informed practices around the acquisition of artworks constitute the main focus of exploration. While the ground-breaking developments that were achieved by the Wits African art collection are traced and highlighted, the notion of academic anthropology concerning the Wits African art collection is questioned. In the wake of post-coloniality, Afrocentric perceptions recognise the challenge for the 20th Century African as to ascertain the accuracy of what has been presented as the African experience (Onyenuru 2014). Which is, why, the acquisition processes and interpretations of the Burton Collection are examined as part of artworks looted from Africa. African art reflects the practices, values and experiences of its people (Clemens 2017). Simply put, in the simplest terms, cultural property be regarded as the property of its culture (Appiah 2006). And for this reason, issues of reparation of artworks especially from the former Belgian colony of the Congo is tested (Clemens 2017).

The unsettling experience about collections such as the Burton Collection emanates from an argument that similar to that of the looted artworks in European museums, they were acquired under the dark cloud of colonialism and imperialism. University art collections possess invaluable objects of cultural importance and artworks. However, it has to be acknowledged that, some of them have made their way to these institutions through unjust means (Matthes 2017). Harmonious with this thinking, it has been accepted that museums have a moral obligation to repatriate questionably acquired objects from their collections (Matthes 2017). Notably, for this reason, the considerable intuitive appeal is put forward for the repatriation in the case of the Burton Collection. The Burton Collection was acquired from the Luba people in the southeast of Zaire (Belgian Congo) now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Burton acquired the artworks when he was stationed there in pursuit of his missionary work.

When there was an engagement with one of the curators of the Wits Art Museum, Fiona Rankin-Smith (Rankin-Smith 2018), she indicated that the works have contributed immensely towards the development of the seminal curriculum on African art that is taught at Wits. Moreover, two "... former WAM curators, Anitra Nettleton (1992) and Nooter Roberts (1996) acknowledge that Burton's collections of Luba material culture and ethnographic photographs now held at Wits, South Africa, and *Le Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale* (MRAC) in Tervuren, Belgium, have played a crucial role" at Wits (Maxwell 2008:326; Mkhonza 2019:72).

Notably, at the time of their acquisition by Burton, Zaire was a colony of Belgium, so, "... even though the acquisition register reveals that the collection was ethically obtained, the power relations that existed between Burton, a colonial and religious authority, and the Congolese artists were unlevelled" (Mkhonza 2019:73). Thus, this appeal brings to our consideration to the sensitive and controversial issue of repatriation of those items to their country of origin. Matthes (2017) views issues around

repatriation as facing a series of philosophical challenges, even if justified, is often portrayed as contrary to the aims and values of museums.

Accordingly, it can be argued that in the case of the Burton Collection, the debates towards repatriation should be examined, specifically of artworks that were acquired from Congo in the Katanga region. In addition, I argue that the repatriation of artworks and cultural objects need not be necessarily traditional, hence I put forward the term 'epistemic repatriation' as an intervention. In the case of the Burton Collection, the notion of epistemic reparation is offered not as a solution but as a decolonial intervention towards cultural justice.

EPISTEMIC REPATRIATION: RE/MEMBERING OF THE SPIRIT WITH OBJECTS

'Remembering' in its broadest meaning refers to "... recall to the mind by an act or effort of memory; think of again". However, I adapted the term and employed it to denote the process of putting together or joining different parts of an object. In this case, it is joining together different parts of African artworks that were looted: hence re-joining the objects with their spirit. Tetteh (2013:34) explains that "African's perception of Aesthetics is not just about the appreciation of beauty or nature of a work of art or nature but the moral and spiritual aspects as well".

The concept of re/membering is borrowed from the writings of wa Thiong'o (2009:33) in chapter two of his book, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance.* In this chapter, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o narrates "... the oldest and best-known story of dismemberment and remembering from African myth is the Egyptian story of Osiris, Isis, and Horus, the original trinity of father, mother, and only begotten son" (wa Thiong'o 2009:33). The story says: According to Plutarch, Osiris is killed by his evil brother, Set, who throws the coffin into the River Nile. Isis recovers the box and hides it. Set, who stumbles upon the recovered box, is angry and cuts Osiris's body into fourteen pieces, which he scatters all over Egypt. The indefatigable Isis, in an act of love and devotion, travels throughout Egypt and recovers fragments, erecting a tomb to Osiris wherever she finds a piece. With the help of the deity Thoth, she re-members the fragments and restores Osiris to life. Out of the fragments and the observance of proper mourning rites comes the wholeness of a body re-membered with itself and with its spirit (wa Thiong'o 2009:35).

On the other side, the phrase epistemic repatriation is employed as a decolonial intervention towards repatriation. Epistemic refers to the knowledge systems that are necessary as part of the repatriation process. This section discusses different strategies and interventions that are encouraged to support the process of repartition. This position is informed by the thinking that the knowledge systems relating to the artworks that were looted were disrupted. Therefore, the process of returning the artworks to Africa should involve the epistemic resonance and decolonial methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith 2012).

Recently, there have been loud calls for disrupting Western epistemic hegemony in South African Universities (Heleta 2016; Mbembe 2015). What does this mean epistemically about the museums in Africa? Emerging voices seem to agree that these problems began with the looting of cultural objects by the colonialists. Moreover, in the case of the University of the Witwatersrand African collection, the circumstances under which the Burton Collection was started from the region Congo in the 1920s, is another contributor to this argument. The case shows that university museums were not exempted from the Western epistemic location that has an anthropological relationship with the indigenous peoples in Africa.

For example, the Burton Collection was started in the 1920s, and was formalised by the anthropologists Winifred Hoernlé and Audrey Richards (Freschi 2009). According to (Mbembe 2015:4) "... a museum properly understood, is not a place where we recycle history's waste, it is first and foremost an epistemic space." Presented with this evidence, it can be strongly argued that the repatriation of artworks back to Congo is not an option. However, repatriation processes have serious challenges.

One major objection could emanate from that the museum has no obligation to repatriate at all, especially given countervailing considerations concerning their institutional mission (Willén 2011). Therefore, this section puts forward a case for epistemic repatriation as a decolonial intervention. The first intervention proposed in the article is the sharing of museum archives using online digital platforms. For example, a museum in Germany can allow online free access to cultural institutions and schools in Ghana. The proposed free access could open up thousands of images and articles. Such access could facilitate and enable research projects, curation and artists' collaboration between the two countries. When the time finally comes for the artworks to be physically repatriated, the people of Africa would have re-connected and re/membered the objects with their spirit.

Another proposed intervention of epistemic repatriation was to some extent inspired by the Ghanaian American philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, (2006) ideas from his book titled *Cosmopolitanism*: *Ethics in a World of Strangers.* According to Appiah, rather than focusing on returning stolen art and putting a lot of money and effort into it, it may serve the interest of those whose artefacts were stolen better to be exposed to a decent collection of art from around the world, like people everywhere else.

Even though, it is argued that Appiah's (2006) universalist humanist paradigm towards repatriation also has its limitations. For example, from decolonial perspectives,

universalism is notably linked to the very same Eurocentric paradigm of thought. Secondly, the colonial matrix of power that dominated the people of Africa resulting in their artworks being taken away from them was not only aimed at killing their philosophy of life; it sought to dehumanise them. To this end, is clear that the collecting of African art by museums in Europe and some universities in South Africa had its roots in colonialism. And very little has changed in decolonising such curatorial practices from contemporary forms of imperialism.

Therefore, the proposed interventions in the article are an attempt to find ways of dismantling years of epistemic violence. So, the stronger option would therefore be shifting the geography of reason (Gordon 2011) on how such African art is categorised, researched, documented and taught. Gordon (2011) points out that,

> … subjects of dehumanizing social institutions suffer paradoxical melancholia. They live a haunted precolonial past, a critical relation to the colonial world from which they are born, and a desire for a future in which, if they can enter, they are yoked to the past (Gordon 2011:100).

This means that the philosophical framework for the rationalisation of such artefacts should be first and foremost be Afrocentric. The objective is a shift towards epistemic reasoning which pursue the repatriation models that are supported by indigenous people. Shifting the geography of reason when dealing with such artefacts should form part of the transformation towards decoloniality. The question of who is in charge of the collection is also paramount to the process of epistemic repatriation. Thus far, only European scholars and curators are recorded in the history of working directly with the collections of artworks that were looted.

The concept of epistemic repatriation borrows from the UNESCO (2016) resolution in that it extends an invitation to indigenous peoples to work in close collaboration with the institutions such as European museums in producing research and in the interpretation of the artworks. The invitation will facilitate collaborations while giving the people of Africa direct access to their heritage.

The involvement of the Indigenous leaders, scholars and students from Africa could also serve as a re-introduction of these heritage objects to the people of their origin. Consequently, it is envisaged that in time, the research produced will share light and create a conducive environment for the responsible physical relocation of these sacred objects back where they belong on the African continent.

CONCLUSION

The article commences by asking a profound question about the moral responsibility of museums. Although this article cannot claim to be exhaustive in its analysis of the issues about the repatriation of the African art that was looted to Europe, it does raise some critical issues that illuminate the ongoing discourse on museums in Africa. The article achieves this by particularly considering strategies and interventions that can be employed in line with other conversations on repatriation. The two proposed interventions demonstrate how repatriation processes could benefit from opening up avenues to knowledge systems that were disrupted by Imperialism and Colonisation. In the article, it was argued that the looting of artworks separated them from their spirit. It was brought about by the artworks' inability to carry meaningful knowledge systems while kept away from Africa. It was demonstrated how the re/membering and shifting the geography of reason could serve as part of epistemic repatriation.

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Research article

MUSEUMS IN AFRICA: REFLECTIONS ON RECENT HISTORIES, EMERGENT PRACTICES AND DECOLONIAL POSSIBILITIES

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ABSTRACT

Across the African continent, museums still matter. For local communities and indigenous groups, museums are regarded as platforms through which to reassert or validate various claims. Therefore, museums remain closely bound to a sense of community and identities; hence the fervent calls for change, transformation and decolonisation. However, as calls for (re)defining or changing museums increase, aspects that still need to be addressed critically include discussions on how the projects of changing or decolonising museums should look on the ground. More importantly, is the question of how the unravelling of museums can avoid the pitfalls of reproducing that which they seek to undo. Further, is the need to look at contemporary museum developments in Africa to ascertain what these developments mean for the challenge of changing museum practices on the continent. Drawing from a brief desktop survey of contemporary museum projects in Africa, the paper shows that, notwithstanding the desire for, and progress towards change, there has been limited success in the building of what is described as critical museology on the African continent. This paper further suggests that monitoring and analysing contemporary museum developments in Africa enable the continent to contribute to ongoing global discussions on the changing role of museums within an increasingly diverse society, and contribute to the ongoing debates on redefining museums, repatriation and decolonisation.

Keywords: African museums; Decolonisation; Local communities; Museum activism; !Khwa ttu.

INTRODUCTION

In colonial Africa, museums served narrow interests and catered for specific, mainly white sections of society. In the postcolonial era, African museums endeavour to foster new engagements with the larger and more diverse sections of the community. Due to their colonial origins, museums in Africa should constantly look at their role and relevance within contemporary and diverse societies.

In Africa, as elsewhere in the world, decolonising museums entails a continual process of challenging and undoing the institutional practices derived from and entrenched by former colonialism. Given their colonial origins, museums should reflect on their practices and forge new ways of engaging with communities around them. For this unravelling to happen, museums on the continent need to self-reflect, form new relationships or partnerships, open new types of interactions, and genuinely open up to non-experts within local communities and other interested groups. By non-experts, reference is made to members of local communities who are not trained in museology and/or curation or any other museum-related disciplines. Communities hold the knowledge that has a bearing on museum collections and is stakeholders in the materials and activities of a museum. These include, inter alia traditional community leaders, spiritual mediums and other knowledge holders broadly defined within communities.

Museums in previously colonised societies have been legitimately criticised as handmaidens to imperialism and as bastions of colonialism and complicit (Frost 2019; Giblin, Ramos & Grout 2019; Minott 2019). Because of this history and association, most museums still occupy a tenuous position, as colonial sepulchres inserted within a society that yearns for change. Part of this change is encapsulated in the requests for decolonising museum practices globally and within Africa. Recent commentary demonstrates that there is a shifting museum landscape in Africa, where national museums are being rediscovered as important sites of engagement and negotiation. They are also seen as central to the contemporary debates on the restitution and repatriation of African objects (Hicks 2020; Laely, Meyer & Schwere 2018; Mbembe 2021; Silverman, Abungu & Probst 2021; Thondhlana, Munjeri & Mataga 2022).

While there is still an emphasis on national museums, it is at the margins of these state-sponsored museums, where the classificatory modes and forms of representation inherited from the colonial era can be changed, rendering museums meaningful for the contemporary and local context. By doing this, museums "... become place[s] of unsettlement and destabilization where ... meanings are suspended and become relativized as well as interrogated in favour of acclaiming openness to the plurality of human wisdom, ingenuity and intellect" (Shelton 2018:xvi). These new modes of engagement

should challenge the very nature of the museum, and "... move towards local epistemes...conversations with local theories of history, ontologies, regimes of care; and accepting the instability implied in being-in those conversations" (Haber 2012:62).

While calls for decolonisation have legitimately targeted museums in Europe and other western parts of the world, questions on how decolonisation of museums should unravel in Africa still need to be addressed (L'Internationale Online 2015; Mignolo 2011). Museums on the African continent are still considered centres or on in the peripheries, working to reproduce coloniality at a local level. There are many museums on the continent that participated in unethical knowledge production and collection practices and continue to do so, uncontestedly.

These museums, which are mostly located in urban areas, still hold and display materials collected from Black rural communities. The communities remain detached from this rich archive. Therefore, effecting change in museums in Africa should include paying attention to how local museums can create new and inclusive curation and alternative ways of working with local communities. A short biography of a museum project in the Western Cape, covered in the last section of this paper, suggests possible practical ways of making this change at a local level.

MUSEUMS: INHERITED LEGACIES AND THE PURSUIT OF CHANGE

Effecting change within the museum field in Africa must start with an acknowledgement of the chequered history of museum development on the continent. In Africa, the development of museums coincided with the spread of colonialism and imperialism, and became part of a system that validated and justified oppression, dispossession and racial prejudice, where the study, collection and presentation of local cultures was seen as a key aspect of exerting power and control over locals (Dubow 1995, 2006; Lord 2006).

It has been argued that a museum is part of institutions that perpetuated coloniality and emerged as a primary site of the capitalistic imperial order, and hierarchical and stratified relations of knowledge (Rassool 2015). The history and genealogy of museums in colonial Africa show how they framed the ethnographic other, and demarcated local cultures (bodies and people) as collectable but 'unknowable' curiosities, and resultantly denied humanity to indigenous communities, as well as delegitimised their practices as forms of knowledge (Rassool 2015). Changing this dynamic will require openness and genuine self-reflection and the undoing of engrained systems and structures entrenched over many centuries.

While a radical solution would be to completely do away with the 'Western' model of museum as we have it today, (there are many critics who argue for this in extensive literature not discussed here), the reality is that the institution in its current format (or versions of it) is still deeply embedded in societies' aspirations, and is therefore deemed redeemable by many. Hence, at the end of colonialism and apartheid, rather than being dismantled, museums in most of southern Africa were placed at the centre for reimagining the postcolonial order.

However, their role in this anticipated change remained relatively elusive, so much that museums in Africa have been characterised as facing a challenge of change. In many postcolonial states, museums continue to face difficulties in reinventing themselves and in escaping the trap of pandering to state patronage, where they are still seen as a means for celebrating and forging post-colonial nationalism. Thus, in a sense, the postcolonial museum occupies an increasingly ambivalent space. The museum is partly perceived as 'uninherited' (Grydehøj 2010:77) and also perceived as 'heritage that hurts' (Uzzell & Ballantyne 2008:1). Yet the museum, and its various forms, continues to be preserved for its anticipated contribution to local community development.

Amid increasing calls for the repatriation of African objects from European museums, there is a growing shift in rethinking about how museums can be redefined changed or decolonised (ICOM 2019; Mairesse 2019; Mbembe 2021; Sandahl 2019). However, the attention and critique have not been even. For instance, while there is agreement on the coloniality embedded within 'Western' museums, relatively less attention has been paid to how museums in previously colonised societies continue to reproduce the colonial taxonomies of representation and marginalisation.

Coloniality remains deeply embedded within museums in the urban metropoles of the world, but it is equally replicated in the sub-metropoles - in postcolonial countries where museums modelled along the Eurocentric model perpetuate and reproduce coloniality. Thus, in Africa and other previously colonised continents, there are two centres in museum practices. One is the European centre, where African objects and bodies were relocated, and the other is the local centre- in museums established on the continent during the colonial era. The implication of this reproduction of a double form of alienation is that any efforts at decolonising museum practice should aim at both centres, with particular attention paid to the local, for it is here that there is potential to work with communities differently.

Calls to change, transform or decolonise museums have gained momentum in the last few decades, amid growing demands by indigenous communities to be involved in the way their cultures are represented and to have objects and bodies in museums to be repatriated (Abungu 2006; Chipangura & Mataga 2021; Corsane 2004; Munjeri 1990; Rassool 2015). Currently, there are increasing calls for human remains, sacred objects and other cultural properties to be repatriated to communities

from where they were removed (Hicks 2020; Mbembe 2019). Parallel to these calls is the growth of museums, independent heritage centres and places established by indigenous communities who seek to gain control of the interpretive processes (Candlin 2016; Thondhlana et al. 2022).

Within these calls, the concept of decolonisation has been flagged as an appropriate strategy for unravelling the coloniality of museums. Deployed by researchers, academics, museum professionals and communities seeking to transform institutional spaces and to foster diversity in knowledge production, decolonisation is proposed as a methodology for undoing the harm caused by museums in the past (Frost 2019; Giblin et al. 2019; Mignolo 2011; Minott 2019; Rassool 2015, 2018; Vawda 2019; Wajid & Minott 2019). Notwithstanding the complexities implied in the current debates on decolonisation, its value lies in how it challenges the dominance and universalisation of 'Western' forms of knowledge. Applied to museum practices, decolonisation calls for museums to confront their past and change their inherited structures and practices. Thus, the value of decolonisation lies in how it provokes museums to rethink, challenge and change the way the world and practice of how museums have been ordered.

This is a world where Euro-American and Western norms and worldviews have been universalised through the violence of slavery, colonialism and subjugation. Decolonisation invites one to review museums and their inherited practices, including legacies of racism, prejudice, misrepresentation and marginalisation. In my professional view, beyond the intellectual debates and discourse related to the concept of decolonisation, the best way to see the value is to look at practical cases, where there are movements towards change, however small or insignificant.

Mignolo (2011) proffers an attractive framework to deploy when talking about decolonising museums. While on the one hand, he acknowledges that museums in the modern/ colonial world had, and still have, a particular role to play in the colonisation of knowledge and being, he also challenges museums to think about practical strategies to decolonise the museum. Mignolo (2011) suggests that curatorial projects within museums should acknowledge and challenge the institution's positionality, using the difficult collections that are held in the storerooms, directed at marginalised histories. This can be achieved by exploring new models of categorisation and displaying that challenge the fraught ideologies, knowledge production and lopsided power relations (between exports and communities), inscribed in the fabric of museums.

MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

So what has been happening on the continent about museum development and what do we make out of these contemporary developments? Across Africa, historical and ongoing debates around museums include questions of repatriation, collaborative knowledge production and re-imagining of the inclusive role of museums within society (Abungu 2001, 2002, 2006, 2019; Ardouin & Arinze 1995; Corsane 2004). Part of contemporary continent-wide discussions includes debates on museums and human ancestral remains, repatriation and reparations, rehumanisation as well as the future of museums. The Goethe-Institut in Johannesburg has an ongoing *'Museum conversations'* programme – which is typical of the envisioned future for museums and society in Africa (Goethe-Institut 2021). Goethe's initiative brings together researchers, practitioners and artists in a series of discussions about the post-colonial museum in Africa, raising conceptual questions about museum work in Africa and discussing future visions of the museum as a social institution.

While the success of such efforts has not yet been concretely established, such activities encapsulate the ongoing quest for change on the museum scene in Africa - through conversations and shared experiences. Historically, there have been several internationally coordinated initiatives to improve the role and operation of museums in Africa. For instance, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has, since the 1960s, put up projects and programmes to support the specific museological development of museums in Africa.

Since the mid-1980s, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) facilitated museum conservation programmes across Africa (Rassool 2018). For example, Preventive Conservation in Museums of Africa (PREMA) was a programme developed by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) for African museums south of the Sahara. It aimed to establish before the year 2000, a network of African professionals capable of taking charge of the conservation of collections and the training of colleagues, thereby giving Sub-Saharan African museums tools for long-lasting development. PREMA led to the training of hundreds of museum professionals from more than forty African countries and ultimately to the creation of the first permanent African conservation organizations: *Ecole du Patrimoine African* (EPA) in Benin and the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA) in Kenya.

The ICOM initiatives include an initiative by Alpha Oumar Konaré (the former President of Mali) on the theme 'What Museums for Africa? Heritage in the Future' (ICOM 1992). The series of meetings held in Benin, Ghana, Togo, in 1991 and 1992, raised key issues such as the financial and legal autonomy of museums in Africa. These engagements arguably remain the most comprehensive continent-wide collective efforts oriented towards looking at developments in African museums so far (Negri 1995). Other programmes include the Swedish-African Museum Programme (SAMP), and the West African Museums Programme (WAMP) (Ardouin & Arinze 1995).

However, some of the most significant initiatives have been the Centre for Heritage Development (CHDA) and the *Ecole du Patrimoine African,* also known as the School for African Heritage (EPA), both of which had their origins in efforts by ICCROM (Abungu 2005). Perhaps the most important continental museum development project was expected to come through the work of the International Council of African Museums (AFRICOM), established in 1999 as an autonomous, Pan-African NGO that sought to build social, professional and intellectual resources for African museums (Amwinda 2012).

These regional cross-boundary cooperation initiatives were inspired by a desire to see African museums transform into dynamic cultural centres that address pertinent social, cultural and economic issues – especially in the face of dwindling government funding. Though most of these initiatives have gained limited success, mostly owing to financial sustainability challenges, the continent needs to think more creatively about how this aspect can be tackled going forward. A good starting point may lie in collectively finding strategies and local models for long-term sustainability.

Some relative successes of platforms such as the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF), in creating suitable platforms for engagement continent-wide, have been well documented (Kiriama 2014; UNESCO 2015). Currently, the museum fraternity on the continent is relatively fragmented to be effective. This relative lack of cohesion is partly reflected in the less-than-impressive successes of the International Council of African Museums (AFRICOM) - non-governmental, autonomous and Pan-African organisation of museums (NGO) created in 1999 to contribute to cooperation on museum development on the continent, but which has become dysfunctional owing to lack of funding and other challenges.

Notwithstanding the challenges highlighted above, there have been notable developments on the African continent. Of particular interest is the issue of repatriation and the rethinking of the traditional museum through 'recalling communities' back into museums. Several projects emerged that demonstrate a desire to change, encapsulated in moves towards creating museums that are linked to audiences who were marginalised during the colonial and apartheid eras (Rassool 2015; Rassool & Prosalendis 2001). While state-supported museums are still envisaged as sites of collective nationalism, new ideas about museums have emerged. Such models range from local museums, regional museums, community museums or living museums, cultural villages and heritage centres. These new museums are locally based and emphasise inclusive participatory models, and self-representation, while addressing local economic and social development (Boonzaaier 2018; Chipangura & Chipangura 2020; Comaroff & Comaroff 2009; Ndlovu 2018; Thondhlana et al. 2022).

Thus, in southern Africa, the trajectory of museum making has focussed on attempts at opening up to new audiences, entrenching new narratives, and engendering restorative justice and community participation. Such attempts include the imperative of transforming museums in the post-apartheid context, which led to the construction of several new museums in post-1994 South Africa. In countries like Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia, parallel to old colonial museums, relative attention has been paid to projects on culture houses, community museums, regional museums and living museums, with varied successes. Understood by some as the museums capital of Africa, the museum scene in South Africa is relatively more developed and has a professionalised museums system, with varied players; state, corporate, private and community-based.

Parallel to older (mostly national) museums constructed during the colonial and apartheid eras are new museums that have been formed after 1994 to reshape the apartheid narratives and articulate a new form of representation in the new multiracial society (Coombes 2003; Corsane 2004; Dubin 2006; Murray & Witz 2014).

Rather than dismantling the old and the colonial, in many countries on the continent, this old order is still intact, coexisting with new and other promising museums. This juxtapositioning of the old and the new is prevalent and parallel to the inherited museums, new memory projects are worth noting. On one hand are state-sponsored national museum projects, which represent a noble but fraught agenda for change in how museums operate with local and indigenous communities. On another hand, are emerging attempts at re-centering local communities and indigenous people. In Countries like Botswana, community-based outreach programmes such as its mobile museum known as 'Zebra on Wheels' have received acclaim in the way they unsettle colonial taxonomies, and open up new effective ways of working with marginalised, rural communities (Rammapudi 2006). Commendable, is also the work around climate change, HIV/AIDS or the focus on museums and urban challenges in countries like Zambia, Malawi, Swaziland and others (Mudenda 2002). There is also a notable shift towards paying attention to intangible cultural heritage in the museums in Africa as well. (Chipangura & Chipangura 2020; Maluwa 2006; Montsho 2020).

In Botswana, parallel to the National Museum and Art Gallery-(the biggest state-supported museum in the country), is a network of regional museums across the country's districts. In Zimbabwe, though a couple of community museums have been constructed, the main museums within the National Museums and Monuments (NMMZ) are inherited from the country's colonial period. In South Africa, the reframing of the museum sector after 1994 saw the construction of new museums, and later on, changes to the management structures for museums.

Museum making in postcolonial Namibia shows that, while state museums inherited from the German colonial period are still relatively well preserved, there have been interesting developments. The work of the Museums Association of Namibia (MAN) - an umbrella organisation that is organised as an association- representing Namibian museums, has been notable in creating capacities for regional museums run by regional cities, communities or private organisations. The concept of 'living museums' in rural Namibia initiated and supported by a non-profit organisation, The Living Culture Foundation Namibia (LCFN), is also worth noting, if only for the way it works with marginalised communities, using the concept museums, engendering a level of (self)representation and local community development (Werner 2015).

Steeped in development cooperation work, an NGO helps the locally run museums. However, rather than accurately representing the full diversity and dynamism of Namibian cultural heritage, The Living Culture Foundation Namibia has been criticised for fostering an ethnographic gaze, reproducing the ethnicisation of indigenous communities and representing them as static, timeless and primitive. Yet, one asks, whether the state has not reneged or renounced on its role to foster the development of historically marginalised communities who continue to live at the margins of a modernising Namibia.

The Living Culture Foundation Namibia is seemingly taking this space. Notwithstanding the fraught nature of the model of living museums, the development may also point to the desire for a different type of a museum - one that exists outside of the metropole, and one that facilitates self-representation and allows local communities to benefit from the commodification of their cultures, objects and narratives.

Developments in museums in East Africa, a region in Africa that has experienced incessant political and military conflict, are quite notable. What has been happening to museums here points to how museums can effectively use their position towards solving local problems and challenges (Coombes, Hughes & Munene 2014). The National Museum of Uganda, a state-funded museum built during British colonial rule has embarked on social ceremonies and exhibition projects as ways of healing for trauma from civil and military strife and violence, managing conflicts and rebuilding post-conflict societies, using museum objects to express reconciliation (Abiti 2018).

In Kenya, the National Museums of Kenya has also focused on peacemaking and conflict resolution, integrating Indigenous methods in peace and conflict resolution within societies affected by war and destabilisation (Tindi 2012). Thus, in parts of East Africa, museums have become safe spaces for dialogue on difficult subjects, bringing together diverse stakeholders, and contributing to community healing and cohesion in conflict situations (Abiti 2018; Abungu 2018). Working in such projects demands different methods of engaging and working with local communities. Here, exhibitions are created with the communities through collaborative programmes, where objects and exhibitions integrating rituals, stories, performances are co-curated with the community, rather than solely by museum experts (Chipangura & Mataga 2021; Tindi 2012).

MAKING NEW MUSEUMS IN AFRICA

There is a growing expectation that museums on the continent can look beyond their tainted histories and transform into public forums that intervene in addressing local socio-economic issues. Across Africa, the construction of new museums continues, notably opening up of new museums and galleries that are state-supported, private and/or community-based institutions. There has been a relative museum/gallery-construction boom in sub-Saharan Africa, some of which is to house contemporary African art, but much of which is being built with a focus on historical and cultural collections. Some of the most notable projects include the yet to be opened Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), which will be the largest archaeological museum in the world, the Javett Art Centre in Pretoria – a contemporary art gallery that opened in 2019 and the Museum of Black Civilisations in Dakar, Senegal that opened in 2018 as well as the Museum of Namibian Music opened in 2021.

Other planned museums on the continent include the Museum of African Liberation in Zimbabwe, the Museum of National History - Democratic Republic of Congo, the Benin Royal Museum (BRM) - Benin City, the Ngaren Museum of Humankind-Kenya, the National Museum and Art Gallery in Lesotho and the Edo Museum of West African Art (EMOWAA) in Benin City. Supported by their governments and opened at a time when pressure is mounting for European museums to return artefacts plundered during the colonial era, these new museums partly point to a unique development in African museums. There is a desire to establish institutions that compete with museums of the West in providing for adequate conservation of the returned materials. This is envisaged to oppose the argument that Africa does not have appropriate museum infrastructure to take care of its returned artefacts hence - building new, world-class, state-of-the-art museums on the continent.

Of these numerous museum projects on the continent, perhaps the two most notable developments are the Museum of Black Civilizations (MCN) in Senegal, and the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) in Cape Town - one a private contemporary art museum, and the other, a state-supported cultural history museum. Both projects claim to recentre the African experience in the world. The Senegalese-based museum, with its Pan-African approach, remarks that "… for so long the artistic history of an entire continent has largely been told by others or stowed away in faraway museums" (Brown 2018). In Cape Town, MOCAA, a non-profit

making institution, is dedicated to researching, collecting, and exhibiting art from Africa and the African Diaspora. With one of the largest exhibition spaces, in a large refurbished building, and located at the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront in Cape Town, one of the most affluent places on the continent; the museum is considered Africa's largest contemporary Art Museum.

On one hand, the story of the Senegalese and other state-supported museums highlighted here point to the persistent ways in which large museums are still seen as central to instilling cohesion, and in representing cultural nationalisms, as envisaged by the political elites. On the other hand, institutions such as MOCAA in Cape Town and the Javett Art Centre in Pretoria, are bankrolled by private capital, individuals, supported in part by research institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), or community groups, which seek independence from state control. These museums, essentially art galleries point to the desire to articulate a different kind of 'museum' - one that is independent of the state, and whose intellectual commitments are to the communities, education and development, rather than knowing the stately narratives of national cohesion (Candlin 2016; Thondhlana et al. 2022). Parallel to this, many state-funded national museums and other privately funded museums continue to struggle with financial sustainability, further worsening their positions to be effective in their missions.

LOCAL MUSEUMS, COMMUNITIES AND ACTIVISM

Parallel to the large museum projects on the continent are smaller, community-based projects that seek a meaningful contribution to the social and economic lives of local communities- making museums arenas for activism, diversity, and working with communities to address social issues such as inequality, injustice and environmental challenges (Chipangura & Mataga 2021; Golding & Walklate 2018; Janes & Sandell 2019). Such is the small project in the Western Cape Province- !Khwa ttu – the San Culture and Education Centre, talks to emerging efforts at working with communities to proffer new forms of representation for a community which for centuries has been marginalised, misrepresented and subjected to scientific racism (!Khwa ttu Heritage Centre 2021; Davison 2001, 2005; Dubow 2006; Legassick & Rassool 2000; Rassool 2015).

Unlike state-supported museums, this community-run museum's development, modes of working and engagement with the local San community demonstrates desirable changes in museum-community relations on the continent. The origins of the centre involved the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) - the San's regional lobbying and advocacy NGO is the !Khwa ttu Heritage Centre, run by a non-profit company and is jointly directed by the Swiss-based *Ubuntu Foundation* and the local San community, represented by WIMSA (!Khwa ttu Heritage Centre 2021).

The heritage centre composed of the purposefully environmentally immersive building exhibits San life in the Kalahari region, highlighting knowledge and skills. Its strategies for engaging and working with local communities entail three interlinked elements – the San Heritage Centre, community satellites, and a digital archive, co-curated by Khoi and San communities. The Heritage Centre exhibits and tells stories of San histories and experiences. The community satellites centres are meant to empower the San in various local communities, while the digital archive collates stories, narratives and experiences of the communities, controlled and accessible to local communities, rather than centralised in museums, universities or other research entities. This is crucial given that the San communities are dispersed across various geographic regions in southern Africa, and that they are one of the most 'researched' communities, but with very limited benefits from this kind of attention. In a way, this project seeks to accord some control of how knowledge about the community is constructed and represented.

A central feature of the activities !Khwa ttu is economic and environmental sustainability, using local resources. The economic benefaction dimension is a central tenet of engagement, thus making the !Khwa ttu Centre an independent (from state financial support) and a relatively sustainable project which brings income to support itself, provides training opportunities for local Khoi and San youth, while also playing a role in sustainable environmental conservation.

Thus, the project is rooted in the needs for socio-economic development of this largely rural; minority group, living on the fringes of the economy; the Khoi and San communities continue to suffer from poverty, discrimination and marginalisation (!Khwa ttu Heritage Centre 2021).

Given that the San people are some of the most over-researched communities, the way stories are told about them must be sensitive to and exonerate the community from reproducing another gaze. The curatorial approaches and exhibitions at the heritage centre attempt, relatively well, to overturn the ethnographic gaze by placing the communities as central to the narrative. Emphasis is on stories from the community and their connections to land, the environment and spirituality. There are three purpose-built galleries. The first gallery is entitled *First People, Encounters and Way of The San.* Here, rather than the accentuated ethnographic difference subjected to an external curious gaze, it is the historical, cultural, and contemporary self (San) that is foregrounded. There are narratives on land, ownership and storytelling and encounters with the wider and external world, all of which are told from the experience of the San community, rather than from experts' knowledge. Here, the Khoi and San are presented, not in their primordial past, but as a celebration, acknowledgement of a rich past, accentuated by the present – every day of the living.

The Centre deploys storytelling, a main tenet of San life and cosmology, as a tool for re-telling and showcasing history, experiences, and connections. The stories as told by the San communities take central stage. Narrated in the present and portraying San cultures, traditions and knowledge as a living culture, these narratives connect the experiences of the diverse Khoi and San communities across borders. Thus, in some respects, !Khwa ttu with its vision for satellite centres, a regional 'San digital Archive', and its Khoi and San youth empowerment training programme –are commendable efforts to turn the gaze, allowing the San community to take control of, and tell their own stories; while sharing them with the world (!Khwa ttu Heritage Centre 2021).

Though its impact and success are still yet to be seen, the !Khwa ttu demonstrates an element of what the museum world is currently celebrating (!Khwa ttu Heritage Centre 2021). The idea of a museum as a space for advocacy and activism, and the seeing of museums as civic resources that address local, social and economic concerns, such as inequalities, injustice and environmental challenges (Janes & Sandell 2019; Murray & Witz 2014). !Kwha ttu partly answers the question of what can be seen when we look away from the old, encyclopaedic museums? Located away from the large, urban-based museums, these new projects exist at the periphery of old state-supported museums yet engage with more diverse communities.

Described by others as 'micro-museums' (Candlin 2016), these institutions are relatively small, independent and are bankrolled and supported by non-state players or local communities and organisations (Thondhlana et al. 2022). These are independent of state financial support and therefore, they must be creative around sustainability and work with communities to keep themselves operational and self-sustaining. Though such projects partly draw from normative museum models, their exhibition, engagement and outreach strategies seek new ways of curating local stories and experiences, thereby charting new ways of working with local communities. Moving away from the scientific European model, they re-centre stories and locally curated narratives, emphasising non-experts, while taking an advocacy role, by also attending to local social-economic issues related to land, environment, community rights, or education. Perhaps herein lies the future of the museum in Africa? While changing the museum field requires large policy shifts, perhaps the success of changing museums lies in cases such as the !Khwa ttu case above - small places, working with local communities in ways that empower and validate their histories, narratives and authority (!Khwa ttu Heritage Centre 2021).

CONCLUSION

A tension exists in the museum sectors in Africa. This tension is between museums as remnants of colonialism, against the aspirations and worldviews of indigenous people and communities. How museums confront, deal with, and unsettle this tension embedded in their past and contemporary practices, will determine how they can imagine a decolonial future. The cases studies in this paper show that, notwithstanding state-sponsored museums projects, there are continuing legacies that hamper the full transformation of museums on the continent, especially with regards to opening up museums to diverse and marginalised audiences.

Nonetheless, projects such as the !Khwa ttu shows that perhaps, the future of museums in Africa lies in moving away from big, state-sponsored encyclopaedic museums to museums or heritage sites steeped in the local communities' ideas of themselves; and in combining this self-representation with paying attention to local communities' social and economic aspirations. In this way, museums can confront their past, be more inclusive and forge new ways of working with local communities for example through collaborative engagements, co-curation and repatriating objects. It is paying attention to such practical developments that will help museums to heed Valley's (2019) caution that 'decolonisation should not just be a metaphor' or current calls against what Moosavi (2020:332) characterises as the "... decolonial bandwagon and the dangers of intellectual decolonisation."

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Research article

FROM THE COLONIAL TO THE DECOLONIAL: THE COMPLEX INTERSECTION OF MUSEUM POLICY AND PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Worldwide museums are birthed from the colonial endeavor. Museums hold a distinctive positionality of power, social trust, and deep colonial legacy, but had deeply impacted Black, Indigenous and Communities of Color, commonly referred to in its abbreviated form as BIPOC. Museums are everlasting monuments that replicate colonial erasure and violence through their policies, exhibitions, and through their curatorial, stewardship and collecting practices. Using reflection and thinking about these nuanced paradigms, it is essential to critically interrogate if and how museums can shift their colonial paradigm to responsibly move forward towards a decolonial future. Can a museum decolonise? This article will look at how the Museum of Us located in San Diago in the United States has developed a decolonial framework and begun the journey to decolonising its practices. This new change is viewed through the lens of the Cultural Management Resource Policy, highlighting three focal areas 1) stewardship, 2) community-care and self-care, and 3) cultural-based protocols. In 2018, the Museum developed the Colonial Pathways Policy, a transformative policy accepting the Museum's colonial legacy and a way forward for repatriation. Other tangible examples around curatorial practices and decolonial policies will be discussed to illustrate the nuanced paradigm shift with the Museum's decolonial praxis.

Keywords: Museums; Decolonial praxis; BIPOC; Colonialism; Decolonisation.

INTRODUCTION

Collectively as a society, we are situated in a transformative era where global conversations elevate and centre the need for museums to redress colonial harm and prioritise decolonising practices. While one engages in this transformative work, we must continue to critically reflect on what is decolonisation and what do decolonial practices look like? From the museum context, decolonisation is a conscious paradigm shift, one that addresses the oppressive colonial patterns that are deeply embedded within society and in organisational policy, language, and culture. When engaging in decolonial work we must realise that it is a multifarious process; one that demands critical reflection, personal and professional accountability, actionable transparency, a commitment to the disruption of the colonial discourse through intentional anti-colonial language, and decolonial restitution and repatriation.

The decolonial process is one that is fluid, flexible, non-linear. It is a practice that takes time, and must be adaptive and malleable to meet the needs of the diverse populations who have been harmed and disenfranchised by colonialism and the museum field. Decolonial processes have the potential to create transformative impact when we work individually and when we work collectively.

Macdonald (in press b) discussed how decolonisation is a transformative practice – a practice, intentional action, that is a collective endeavour where each person has power and plays a pivotal role in moving colonial mountains. Macdonald says:

> When I think about the transformative effect of decolonisation, I think about it in relationship to water. Water is malleable. Water adapts to its surroundings and meets the needs of its environment. Over time, water can change the entire ecology of a place. Water carves valleys, moves mountains, and brings back life. Water connects us to our ancestors and to future generations. Even single drops of water that consistently hit the surface will eventually break through rock, create an opening, and grow into a passage. Like water, one person working towards decolonising in the field can make a difference, can create a passageway for present and future generations. Similarly, when we work collectively, we move mountains and change the ecology of the museum field. We are water and together we can effect transformative decolonial change.

To honour the power and tenacity of the individual, while also thinking about how the impact that one can make individually is made greater by collectively working, honouring the

land and the knowledge gifted and its peoples, colleagues, and ancestors. In recognition of all of this, we begin by first positioning ourselves and the ancestors about the land and how it relates to the decolonial work within the museum field. After these statements, the paper briefly discusses the colonial and predatory attributes of the museum. The decolonial framework is discussed as it was developed by the department of Decolonising Initiatives at the Museum of Us which sets fluid parameters to help guide museum work. The Museum's decolonial praxis is highlighted and showcases the Museum's policy and practice to present tangible examples of how the guiding principles manifest within decolonial work. Finally, we will conclude with the implications for future work, and a brief conclusion that centres on some of the decolonial questions.

LOCATING OURSELVES

Kovach (2009) discussed the importance of being honest about why and how we know things based upon where we are situated in the world. We also build upon this statement and add that accountability around our identity, ancestors, and how we are connected to colonialism is imperative. In recognition of this complexity, we open by honouring the land where we reside and the Indigenous peoples who are its relatives.

The land referenced in this article on is the unceded ancestral Indigenous homeland of the Kumeyaay Nation (the original inhabitants of the San Diego County). The Kumeyaay peoples have stewarded this land for over a millennia and continue to maintain their tribal sovereignty, cultural traditions, and ancestral connection to the land to this day. Furthermore, we must recognise that we are all on Indigenous lands. Indigenous peoples globally are resilient and continue to navigate colonialism to maintain their connection to their ancestral lands. It is because of global Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour's (BIPOC) tenacity, sacrifices, emotional and physical labour, and their ongoing expressions of radical love that have paved the way to be able to talk about decolonisation in museums today.

We would also be remiss if we did not recognise that this article is being written in the English language. This is both a reinforcement of the dominant English linguistic hegemony that is a byproduct of the colonial impact of cultural genocide within many of our ancestral communities and is a barrier in articulating thought and feelings that are outside the English languages colonial parameters (wa Thiong'o 1992).

Brandy MacDonald's approach to this work is as an able-body, cis-gender, queer, Indigenous woman living and working in the complex colonial world of academia and museums. I am a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, with ancestral ties to both the Choctaw Nation and Scottish Highlands. The Chickasaw Nation and the Choctaw Nation are federally recognised sovereign Indigenous nations residing within the settler-colonial imperial borders of the United States of America.

I hold a position of power and privilege professionally in the museum field, as the Director of Decolonising Initiatives at the Museum of Us. I benefit from the structural colonial systems and the various manifestations of the colonial endeavor, that I am concurrently working to disrupt. I am a person who is grappling with the tension of being transplanted in a land that is not my Indigenous homeland, and as a queer Indigenous woman navigating the hostile racist and colonial fields of academia and museums – engulfed in a nuanced dichotomy of being both the coloniser and the colonised.

Additionally, I must be accountable for the privilege that I hold because of my skins' phenotype. My lighter skin colour offers me the ability to blend into spaces and provides a protective shield of racial anonymity, making me more palatable to the colonial gaze. I recognise that many times this racial shield opens doors, spaces, and ears that are not accessible to my colleagues, friends, and relatives with darker skin. I am an educator, pracademic (a practitioner and academic), an aunty, and the next generation of elders. I am grounded in my Indigenous community's values of generosity, accountability, integrity, love, and perseverance. These values guide my path forward.

Kara Vetter is of Mixed/Black, cis-gender woman, mother, sister, daughter, and wife. I am a descendant of European colonizers and the African Diaspora, with Euro ancestry to Ireland, Scotland, and England through historic records which document names and places back into the early 1600s. Due to the impact of colonialism and white supremacy, I have no idea where the homeland is for my African ancestors. The intersection of these states of being - those I accept willingly and those imposed upon me due to hetero-normative White Supremacy standards - directly informs how I seek to engage with the process of decolonising the museum field. Furthermore, I recognise that the lightness of my skin provides me privileges not allowed those with phenotypically dark skin and that this status permits me to take up positions within spaces where my 'Blackness' is seen as non-threatening to the engine of colonial endeavour.

Professionally, I have attained a position of seniority at the Museum of Us, as the Director of Cultural Resources. This position has allowed me the unprecedented opportunity to ensure that BIPOC communities, especially Indigenous communities, are being actively brought into open and collaborative conversations about the betterment of stewardship practices and repatriation. And yet, I continue to work within a colonial system that is a physical representation of the colonial endeavor. Consequentially, I am, in some respects, complicit in perpetuating colonial harm by participating in an industry that was created to be the outspoken public relations firm for Imperialism, Settler Colonialism, Genocide, and White Supremacy.

The core of my experience and who I am as a person has been an incessant northing compass point towards hope. This is reflected in the resiliency of my enslaved ancestors who survived the Middle Passage genocide, the plantation death camps, and countless other inhumanities that did not break their collective spirit. "We are a harvest of survivors." (Butler 1993:295). I closely identify with Butler's (1993) words because we are those who continue to grow back no matter how often we are murdered, diminished, or assimilated into (and by) the dominant hetero-normative White culture.

COLONIAL LEGACY

"Museums were birthed from the colonial endeavor" (Macdonald in press a). The concept of museums developed from the European cabinets of curiosity (Bennett 1995). The objects inside these collections were trophies of conquest, property of the 'civilised,' that were physical markers to justify racial superiority, power, and the inherent right to colonize. These collections seeded the growth of museums. "Empire building and museums building went hand in hand… as missions of exploration returned with exotica they filled enlightenment cabinets of curiosities, [these] collections became so vast that museums rose to house them" (Aldrich 2009:138).

These collectors, and in turn the museums, claimed ownership over the objects and their interpretation. Ancestor remains were unearthed and objects were stolen from their homes, both were detached from their BIPOC communities, culturally and contextually. BIPOC people's expertise concerning their belongings, traditional knowledge, histories, and practices were belittled and devalued to be replaced by the interpretation of the colonial curator (Lonetree 2012; Macdonald in press a; Pagani 2017).

Museums became monuments to the colonial endeavor and messengers for colonial thought. Museums demonstrated the power and communicated the dominance of empire through their outward-facing exhibitions, the material culture on display and in collections, and the internal operational policies and practices. We see examples of this through the objects and ancestors that are housed in the collections, displayed and interpreted in exhibitions through the collection management policies, and in the language used in the archives. The items were used as mediums to legitimise racial exploitation, justify genocide, and instil colonial nationalism (Lonetree 2012; Macdonald in press a; MacLeod 1998).

The hereditary connection that museums have to colonialism and how they perpetuate this ethos is not a thing of the past. Colonialism within museums continues to manifest and be perpetuated today (Lonetree 2012; Macdonald 2021; Maranda & Soares 2017). As such, can an inherently colonial structure be anything but colonial, or better yet, can it be decolonial? The unknown is grappled with as one frequently sits in a space of, "… we hope so, and so let's try." Additionally, many museums feel the same and are committing to disrupt the colonial endeavor, redress the harm caused by their colonial legacy, and make decolonial practices a priority. One of the challenges that face museums is that decolonial processes are not a one-size-fits-all (linear) model (Macdonald, Vetter, & Trujillo 2020).

Decolonial work is complex and non-linear. BIPOC communities have and continue to be impacted differently by colonisation, museums, and researchers. The wants and needs of communities change depending upon social pressures, time, and current priorities. Museums embarking on and engaging in decolonial practices must work with BIPOC peoples (Macdonald & Parzen 2020; Tuhiwai Smith 2005; Vawda 2019). We assert that it is essential that they also be led by BIPOC people. This work takes time, resources, and a commitment. Decolonisation is a process, an action, a verb. It is more than a grant deliverable or a goal that you aim to reach by the end of your fiscal year. It is a paradigm shift, that "… is a collective endeavour – one that must have fluidity built into its ethos" (Macdonald in press a).

MUSEUM OF US DECOLONIAL FRAMEWORK

The Museum of Us (formerly the San Diego Museum of Man, renamed in 2020) was built for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. From the point of its' inception, the Museum has always been an anthropology museum. The Museum and the exposition's exhibitions displayed objects of exotica, discussed racial stratification, and had 'living exhibits' where Indigenous peoples were dehumanised and put on display. Furthermore, the building that houses the museum is a historic site that has nine European colonisers depicted on the façade draping the entrance of the museum. A century's worth of colonial legacy is inscribed on the exoskeleton of the museum, in its exhibitions, and within its collecting and stewardship practices (Decolonising Initiatives Department 2019).

This history laid the foundation for how the Museum's decolonial process manifests. To illustrate what is meant by this, envision a Museum that holds over 75,000 cultural resources and close to 7,400 ancestral human remains from communities around the world. Of these ancestors and cultural resources, the vast majority are affiliated with Indigenous populations internationally. Because of the level of Indigenous representation, the Museum's decolonising framework is focused on redressing colonial harm and prioritising Indigenous peoples' requests, oral and traditional knowledge, sovereignty, and rights to self-determination (Garcia, Macdonald & Kahanu 2021; Macdonald et al. 2020).

The museum quickly saw the need to find a way to build a framework that would help guide their decolonial work for decades, and would also honour and respect that their responsibility was to redress the colonial harm caused to the Indigenous peoples represented in their collection.

Furthermore, Indigenous peoples are not a monolith and so the Museum made a concerted effort to build fluidity in their decolonial framework. This framework has four guiding principles that set malleable parameters for how the work can manifest throughout the organisation (Decolonising Initiatives Department 2019; Macdonald et al. 2020).

The principles are as follows: 1) the museum will redress their colonial harm, be accountable to its colonial legacy and the ways it has profited off of Indigenous peoples, and will actively commit to truth-telling about colonialism, 2) honour and uphold Indigenous ownership and intellection property rights – by way of the repatriation of the ancestors and tangible/ intangible property, 3) recognise Indigenous authority and take actionable steps to integrate Indigenous representation and leadership at all levels of decision making, and 4) ensure sustainable systemic change through new policies, practices, and philanthropic endeavours (Decolonising Initiatives Department 2019). In the following paragraphs, two examples of how these principles translate into praxis, with a specific focus for this article being collections/cultural resources will be demonstrated.

DECOLONIAL PRAXIS

Words have power and can replicate colonial harm in ways that resonate for generations. The language that the museum previously had embedded within its organisational vernacular was identified early on by Indigenous consultants as ways that the Museum perpetrated colonial harm.

Through this guidance and honouring Indigenous peoples' requests, the museum took action to change. Below are a few examples of the shift in language.

- Collections Department ➡ Cultural Resources Department
- Specimen ➡ ancestor, ancestral human remains, ancestral/Indigenous relatives
- Artifact/Artefact ➡ object, item, material culture, ancestral belonging
- Mummy ➡ mummified human remains, mummified ancestor
- Lab ➡ storage room

Following the change in language, the department embarked on an auditing process of the Cultural Resources Management Policy (CRMP) and how the department's practices have perpetrated colonial harm and trauma against Indigenous peoples for decades (Garcia, Hyberger, Macdonald, & Roessel 2019; Macdonald et al. 2020). This led to an intensive overhaul of the document and a decolonial paradigm shift within the department. The extent of the change within the policy is vast, as such we will be highlighting three areas 1) stewardship, 2) community-care and self-care, and 3) cultural-based protocols. The following data around the three areas are taken from the Museum's Cultural Resource Management Policy.

Stewardship

This practice manifests in several different ways depending upon the descendant community's directive received through consultations. If the Museum has not had the opportunity to engage in consultations, they apply a base level of general practices toward object stewardship. Each item is to be treated as more than an inanimate object. The Museum recognises that for many Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, these items hold a significant cultural and spiritual connection to their lifeways, ancestors, resiliency, and generational growth.

The policies also include how the concept of personhood can and should be attributed to cultural resources whenever appropriately deemed so by the descendant Indigenous community. Inserts within the policy also recognise the inherent nature of cross-cultural work by stating how the stewardship concepts may be different from a staff's culture-based perception of an item (i.e. ethnocentric bias, epistemology, and/or ontology), that the cultural stewardship practice indicated above are the organisational policy and department ethos – being an essential and required practice, to respect and honour the communities connection while working with each item.

Through the guidance of Indigenous consultants internationally, the department also practices 'minimal disturbance.' This practice is that each team member works to minimize the ways, and the number of times, the cultural resources are disturbed. This doesn't mean we do not care for the items or do routine inventory checks. The goal here is to recognise the ongoing connection that many of the items continue to have to their ancestral community, and for the Museum's team to be as respectful as possible and to mediate the potential ways we may cause harm unintentionally. The team moves with intentionality, respect, and cultural care.

Community-Care and Self-care

This section of the policy recognises that a person's epistemological, ontological and auxological practices differ cross-culturally. As such how people interact and are affected by their ancestors and objects vary. The policy includes the understanding that cultural stewardship practices can be taxing on the body, mind, and spirit of the staff, volunteers, interns, and community consultants who may interact with the objects and ancestors. If a person is uncomfortable, becomes ill, or needs to stop work working with an item(s) or ancestor(s) they will not be required to continue or have their interactions fetishized. The team as a whole work together to see how they can support the work either to continue or to follow the indicated cultural protocol to care for both the item(s)/ ancestor(s) and the person who was caring for the item(s)/ ancestor(s).

Culture-Based Protocols

Additional coding around the protocols for handling and access is also a key aspect of the stewardship paradigm shift. This includes labelling that indicates whether an item has cultural-based protocols for handling, display, or care. For example, Indigenous consultants have identified specific items that should not be handled by menstruating people or individuals that may be pregnant. The reasoning behind these types of protocols are not due to sexist, patriarchal, or paternalistic reasons, but is because of the innate power, and potential spiritual connection, that the specific item holds. These protocols have been put in place by the Indigenous community to honour their ancestors and to protect the people(s) who may interact with the item – so both the item and all persons can be safe and healthy.

Labels and signs indicating cultural protocols are placed on the boxes, tags, in the database, and the general area where the item is stored. Additionally, transparency is essential, and the museum discloses all culture-based protocols that have been indicated within the archives to consultants and staff before beginning work. Other illustrations around culture-based protocols that the museum has in place range from restrictions around seasonal handling, an individual's age, or the tribal affiliation of the person who is interacting with the items. One challenge is that these decolonial practices may extend the timeline of a project unexpectedly, especially with a department that is predominantly staffed by a specific gender, individuals who are menstruating, or by a person who is from a restricted tribal affiliation.

Unfortunately, for a great many museums, time is the ever-looming beast that sneaks up on us towards the end of a grants cycle which typically funds the decolonial work. The museum has embraced this challenge and potential rift created by decolonial praxis. Transparency is key and flexibility is key. This challenge is recognised within the policy as part of the aspect of the work and is leveraged not as a barrier to the work but as a way to remind the team that speed is not the goal and that this work is more than a grant deliverable – it is a responsibility and our commitment to the community.

Furthermore, transparency is integrated into the grant reporting where the reports acknowledge that due to cultural-based protocols and honouring the stewardship practices outlined by the descendant community the outlined grant deliverables were placed either on paused for another time or switched to something different per the direction of the Indigenous consultants (Macdonald et al. 2020).

COLONIAL PATHWAYS POLICY AND REPATRIATION PRACTICE

In 2018, the Museum developed its' Colonial Pathways Policy, which was unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees. This is a transformative policy for the Museum. The policy was developed by an internal working group that included staff, the board of trustees, and community members. The team leveraged the Museum's previous workaround repatriation and consultations, to collectively create a policy that holds the museum accountable to its colonial legacy and its commitment to redressing colonial harm, repatriation and decolonial restitution.

The Colonial Pathways Policy states that all cultural resources within the museums' holdings that came into the museum through a colonial pathway (as they define colonial pathway in the policy) must be repatriated. The policy outlines that a colonial pathway is instances where (Decolonising Initiatives Department 2018:13):

- A cultural resource was acquired via an inequitable trade with a collector, trader and/or trading post, or institution. This may include but is not limited to any belonging(s) that were obtained from a member of the Indigenous community during economic hardship, period of community unrest, armed conflict, or any period when cultural practices were under heavy persecution and colonization.
- A cultural resource was removed from Indigenous communities without consultation with, or consent of, community members.
- A cultural resource was removed during military activities, whether taken or purchased by the combatant.
- A cultural resource has a known provenance of having been acquired during periods of expedition, exploration, or exploitation of Indigenous communities.

Additionally, if the descendant community does not want the cultural resource returned or would prefer the museum to hold the cultural resource for any reason or time before repatriation, the stewardship practice of the item will honour the direction and requests made by the descendant community (Decolonising Initiatives Department 2018).

What is notable about this policy is that repatriation is not dependent upon geographical regions, periods, ethnic groups, or type of cultural resource - unlike that of the U.S federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) policy. While NAGPRA is a federally mandated law within the United States, legally mandated repatriation is only applicable for certain groups of Indigenous peoples and certain categories of cultural resources and ancestors. In contrast, the Colonial Pathways policy's deciding factor that prompts repatriation is 1) how the objects and ancestors came into the museum, 2) what the descendant community wants, and 3) how the Museum has continuously benefited from the colonial endeavour through the objects and ancestral remains acquisition (Catlin-Legutko, Macdonald, Yeppa-Pappan, & Carlson 2020; Garcia et al. 2021).

In 2020, the Museum finalised the policy's repatriation procedures that were also unanimously approved by the board. Following the approval, the Museum repatriated its first cultural resource under the Colonial Pathways Policy to an Indigenous community located in the United States. Restitution through repatriation, transparency, consultation, and stewardship is a top priority of the Museum and in turn the Cultural Resources Department. As such, the Museum has recently added a position to their team, called the Colonial Pathways Repatriation Manager, that specifically managed repatriation efforts under this policy (Decolonising Initiatives Department 2021; Garcia et al. 2021).

THE PATH FORWARD: IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

The implementation of the Colonial Pathways project will be one of the goals of the Museum that will take the next several decades. There are several layers of complexity that range from sorting through incomplete and colonial archival information, completing the inventory, ensuring budget sustainability, identifying consultants and engaging in consultations with international representatives.

The Museum doesn't currently hold all the answers around the minute details of how consultation and repatriation will manifest for all the communities and their cultural resources where the Colonial Pathways policy is applicable. The Museum is confident about its organisational commitment to ensuring that this policy is met with decolonial action and resources – just like the drops of water, each decolonial action has the potential to shift the colonial ecology of the museum field.

Likewise, the Museum's Cultural Resource Management Plan will continue to grow and adapt to the changing needs of Indigenous communities and the additional knowledge shared through community consultations. The ongoing decolonial process and community consultations facilitated at the Museum set the stage for building stronger and trusting relationships with communities. Stewardship practices will be enhanced through the consultation efforts which will benefit the health of the object, the organisation, the community, and future generations. Undoing colonialism and (re)building BIPOC trust take time. The time that is well spent, when BIPOC trust is earned.

After hearing about the decolonial policies and repatriation efforts, many people ask the Museum if their ultimate goal is to be an empty building one day. We say no. Granted many cultural resources and ancestors will probably return to their homeland or their descendant communities. We celebrate this and continue to remind ourselves that many of these items and ancestors were stolen and unearthed unethically from their homelands to be in the museums' control today. Additionally, not all communities want their items and ancestors back – and that is also okay. The goal is to steward the cultural resources and ancestors in ways that are reflective of the Museums decolonial principles and continue to repatriate to all communities who would like reunification.

CONCLUSION: PAUSING TO REFLECT

Baldwin said that "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced" (Baldwin 2015:103). This statement resonates in the context of working towards decoloniality in the museum field. Decolonial change is possible, through patience and collaborative work brought to bear through critical examination. Through the cultivation of frequent dialogue that leans into the discomfort of facing how we are products, benefactors, or complacent with colonialism– how we may be both the colonised and the coloniser. Simultaneously through recognise that we can simultaneously hold space and become the catalyst for transformative positive change that will support the next generation of BIPOC museum leaders.

Transformative decolonial change is a process that requires stamina, humility, patience, and the practice of radical love. Jolivétte (2015:8) defines radical love as:

> Radical love is about being vulnerable. It is about being unafraid to speak out about issues that may not have a direct impact on us on a daily basis. Radical love is about caring enough to admit when we are wrong and to admit to mistakes. Radical love should ask how the work in which we are engaged helps to build respectful relationships between ourselves and others involved in social justice movements. Radical love asks if we are each being responsible for fulfilling our individual roles and obligations to the other participants in the struggle for social justice and human rights. Finally, radical love in critical mixed race studies, means asking ourselves if what we are contributing is giving back to the community and if it is strengthening the relationship of all of those involved in the process. Is what is being shared adding to the growth of the community and is this sharing reciprocal? Is what we are working toward leading to a more peaceful and equitable society?

The work is more than making a performative statement on our social media, in our public presentations, or a fundable addition to receive grant funding for the current fiscal year. The work is asking ourselves questions like: "now that we know better how can we do better?" and "how are we replicating colonial harm by saying that these are the industry best practices?" "who defines what best practices are, and how is that rooted in colonialism?" For us, this work and the answers to these questions embody the ethos of radical love.

The enormity of decolonial work can feel like a title wave and debilitating. We hear you and have felt the same way at some point within our professional and personal decolonial journey. We believe it is important to hold on to the concepts of radical

love, an honour that we are water and hold just as much transformative power, and to lean into the discomfort to look at face coloniality in an effort towards decolonial change.

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Non-Credit Bearing
Webinar Report

DECOLONISING AS A VERB: REINTERPRETING COLLECTIONS AN COLLECTING

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INTRODUCTION

The South African Museums Association (SAMA), and two committees of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), namely the South African National Committee of ICOM (ICOM-SA) and the International Committee for Collecting (COMCOL) held a joint webinar on the theme: Decolonising as a verb: Reinterpreting collections and collecting from 25-26 November 2020. Originally planned to take place in Cape Town South Africa, the event took place as a webinar due to the restrictions on movement and meetings in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

COMCOL is the ICOM Committee that engages with issues related to collecting and de-accessioning policies, contemporary collecting, restitution of cultural property and respectful practices that affect the role of collections now and in the future, from all types of museums and all parts of the world. Therefore, this webinar, in addition to focusing on the theory and practice of decolonisation in museums in general with a strong emphasis on the South African perspective, special emphasis was given to what collections and collecting encompass and how different perspectives could alter policies and practices in our ambition to create future proof institutions. This special edition of SAMAB consists of reports of proceedings and papers read and discussed at the webinar. Please note that the full proceedings are not published here. The links to the webinar recordings can be found on the COMCOL website: http://comcol.mini.icom.museum/special-projects/decolonising-as-a-verb/.

In recent years, museums across the globe have been tackling the challenges of decolonising in their institutions. They did this in response to a growing demand from the society that museums should face their historical selves and their inherited practices Museums are challenged to acknowledge their past, understand how the past shaped the present and act on it today for a different future.

Looking at the different approaches to decolonisation worldwide, the term appears to be subject to different interpretations. Some define it as a process that institutions undergo to expand the perspectives to include those beyond that of the dominant cultural group, particularly white colonizers. Others define decolonisation as "at a minimum creating procedures for sharing authority on documentation and interpretation."

From a South African perspective, the interpretation of the concept of decolonisation and how it plays out in practice is an ongoing debate. This debate is multifaceted. It is an epistemological debate – a debate that requires a person to reflect and understand what his/her underlying assumptions are about how the world works, a political debate dealing with access to and use of power as well as an emotional debate about belonging.

Museums have for a long time claimed that they are one of the most reliable and trusted sources of information - a claim steeped in its colonial roots. The South African museum sector is no different. The debate around museum practice is more than dealing with the collections collected by missionaries and European travellers that are the founding collections of many if not all the older South African Museums.

The South African debate is an emotive one. The experience of apartheid is recent, and South Africans are still struggling with the legacy of the system. Debate tends to range between heated confrontation on the one hand and avoiding conflict by talking around issues on the other. Museums, in general, tend towards the latter. SAMA's involvement in this webinar is an acknowledgement that this has to change.

While speaking about decolonising globally, the discussions in South Africa show the complexities in this discourse. Moreover, it shows nuances in the locality that we should not overlook. The legacies of the colonial are ingrained in the social fabric of today's society, similar but also different, stored in our bodily archives. Therefore, decolonisation is not simply a matter of representation or repatriation. It concerns the language we speak, the archives and the repertoire we use and how to deal with the trauma that is connected to our past.

SAMA and ICOM-SA acknowledge that there have not been enough discussions on decolonisation in South Africa, especially not in the public domain. It is noted that museums dealt with the topic in their own confined spaces, i.e. amongst immediate colleagues and scholars. Furthermore, the reactionary responses towards demands for change from the public, for example, institutional reactions to the programme and demands of the Rhodes Must Fall movement is a matter of concern.

The situation in the South African museum sector is complicated by the fragmented policy and regulation environment. In South Africa, museums report to three spheres of government depending on their funding source and that hampers communication between role players. There is a lack of communication between government bodies at the national, provincial as well as local government level to find common ground to discuss decolonisation. This conversation should not only take place amongst museums themselves, but also the communities and between museums and the communities they serve. For this to happen, there is a need to create platforms for public discussion and dialogue.

The many online conferences, workshops and masterclasses focusing on decolonisation over the last year indicates that dealing with decolonisation is a global concern. These events dealt with decolonisation in diverse sectors including education, science, human rights policies, archives and museums.

Decolonisation was also a topic of discussion at the 2019 ICOM General Assembly held in Kyoto, Japan. The goal of ICOM was to widen the museum community's perspective on this matter and to encourage colleagues to work together in finding solutions and taking this matter forward. The webinar aimed to explore what decolonisation means within the museum sector what do we mean by decolonising the museum and its collection? What are the theoretical frameworks we need to unlearn, undo, revisit, rephrase? And how to translate theory into practice. The legacies of the colonial are ingrained in the social fabric of today's society, they are stored in our bodily archives. Therefore, decolonisation is not simply a matter of representation or repatriation. It concerns the language we speak, the archives and the repertoire we use and how to deal with the trauma that is connected to our past. How do and can we take care of this process?

THE COMCOL WEBINAR: PRESENTATIONS

The webinar was presented in five sessions. In the first session, Alexandria Bounia interviewed the renowned decolonising scholar, Prof Achille Mbembe. The report published in the edition of SAMAB reflects their conversation on museums and the Anthropocene – their discussion that museums should 're-member', that they should 're-assemble' a system that acknowledges that the human and non-human are interlinked and, the need for a plurality of epistemologies.

The second session focused on decolonisation as theory focused on questions such as: How is decolonisation researched? What is considered knowledge? The locality of terminology that we should be aware of when talking on a global level about the colonial. Do we see the colonial as disruption in our timelines or corruption? See also articles of Bongani Mkhonza, University of South Africa and Jesmael Mataga, University of Sol Plaatjie, South Africa.

In the third session, Art and the Bodily Archive, a panel of artists talked about how they express decolonisation through their art. They all critically engage with how existing museum collections reflect the world either by using them as an inspiration to tell new stories or creating collections reflecting world views that challenge the dominant views expressed by existing collections. These new collections also challenge the stories told by existing collections. Barby Asante draws inspiration from her personal history as a descendant of a Ghanaian immigrant. She creates stories, for example through the re-enactment of news events or memories to create stories focusing on self-determination and agency by black women, thereby inspiring women to critically engage with their social, political and cultural environment.

Clementine Deliss focuses on collections with an emphasis on access to collections and restitution of collections. She discussed the notion of Rapid Response Restitution, the project she worked on together with Azu Nwagbogu as part of LagosPhoto 2020. The main focus of her talk was about this photographic project with a participatory approach to current discussions on the return of Africa's cultural heritage back to the continent. The "Home Museum", was an inclusive digital exhibition project, co-created with citizens of Nigeria. They were invited to produce material of their personal and family cultural heritage. Patricia Kaersenhout referred to silent stories. Art can be used to fill the silence, but also to reflect contemporary narrations. In her research, she uses notions like that of Edwards Saïd's and his view on the "postcolonial gaze". Her work investigates the erasure of black female bodies. One example is to reclaim space by erasing existing stories from literature (cutting it out) while replacing them with stories told through prose or poetry. Another project included physically engaging with written text telling stories of suppression.

The panel raised issues around:

- How do we deal with the body in the museum – the body of the visitor.
- How do we expect them to move, to be supported – go beyond the concept of the visitor as a consumer.
- How to acknowledge and work with different bodies feeling affect differently.

The session was concluded with the statement that *verbing* requires a full-body engagement.

While the fourth session consists of breakaway groups, the fifth and final session focused on decolonisation as museum practice. All the speakers asserted that decolonisation requires radical changes. One cannot tweak existing museum practice. You have to critically engage with what you do, how you engage with communities, what is the purpose of your museum. See also the article of Brandie McDonald of the Museum of Us, San Diego, USA. The webinar was well attended with just under 600 registrations received from across the world. Some experiences seemed to be shared throughout the world. The main highlights that were shared are:

- Decolonisation cannot be attempted half-heartedly. It requires honest self-reflection, commitment and persistence.
- Decolonisation is a painful process. Nevertheless, it is a necessary route that, with unlocking new perspectives could shape the shared futures that we aspire to.

Finally, we would like to emphasise that each situation is different with different key players, different stakeholders, different histories and different experiences. While museums can share ideas and solutions, no museum's path will be the same. Yet, listening to the experiences from other parts of the world helped to look at your situation with new eyes opening new ideas and solutions.

SAMAB GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

AIMS AND SCOPE OF *SAMAB*

The *South African Museums Association Bulletin (SAMAB)* provides a forum for the publication of peer-reviewed articles that promote the discussion, debate and the dissemination and exchange of information on aspects of museology, with particular but not exclusive reference to South Africa. *SAMAB* also enables the communication of current issues, practices and policies affecting museums and their collections management such as redress, repatriation and restitution. Including critical curatorial discourse, issues of decolonisation, new areas of research and post-colonial museum theory, interpretation of exhibitions, community studies, social justice, community engagement, education, conservation and other topics relevant to the museum and heritage sector. *SAMAB* promotes rapid communication amongst academics, practitioners and other persons who are interested in contributing to the discourse of disciplines resorting within museology. Only contributions focusing on theoretical, empirical or methodological issues relating to museology, or those which address current heritage, cultural and/or intellectual topics of the disciplines within museology will be considered.

SAMAB is an accredited journal approved by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and is published annually by the South African Museums Association (SAMA). Paid-up individual and institutional members receive free access to the SAMA and SABINET sites, where they can access the articles through the use of a username and password. *SAMAB* accepts original, well-authenticated research articles or other contributions. All contributions will be submitted to appropriate referees in a double-blind peer-review process. Anonymous critiques of articles will be forwarded to the author with recommendations for revision, if any, or with a notice of rejection. The editors' decision whether or not to accept an article for publication is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Copyright of the articles accepted for publication will vest with *SAMAB*. The opinions expressed by the published contributions are those of the author/s and are not necessarily endorsed by the Editors, the Editorial Team, the South African Museums Association or any sponsor of a relevant edition. It is regretted that no payment is made for contributions.

PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF AN ARTICLE

Before preparing your submission, please refer to the guidelines given in this document. Articles must be prepared in MS Word (Microsoft Word 2010) and saved as a doc. file type (not a *.docx file). Only the English (UK) language setting will be accepted (not US spelling), and formatted throughout the text as follows: Times New Roman 12pt, one-and-a-half line spacing, justified aligned, auto spacing before and after paragraphs, and add spacing between paragraphs of the same style. Articles must be language-edited, stylistically polished and carefully proofread before submission. Standard page margins of 2.45cm apply.

The title of the article must be in bold capitals (14 font size), and the headings in bold (12 font size), with sub-headings in normal Times New Roman font (12 font size). Further sub-division is not recommended. Avoid embedded fonts, special formatting, footnotes and endnotes are not permitted. Avoid indentations. Abbreviations and acronyms should be written out in full when used for the first time with the abbreviation or acronym in brackets. No formatted or auto-formatting of the references will be permitted.

Title page

Provide each submission with a title page that includes:

- The title, name/s, institutional affiliation/s and email address/es of the author/s.
- The names and email addresses of four potential reviewers, not from the same author's affiliation.
- A declaration that the original research has not been published elsewhere nor is it under review elsewhere. This declaration is to be signed by the author/s. Articles submitted without such a signed declaration will not be considered for review.

Type of article and word count

Research articles should contain a coherent research argument (the guideline for word count is a lower limit of 3000 and an upper limit of 6000 words). A short abstract (Minimum 150 and maximum word count of 250) and a set of 6 keywords (capitalise each keyword) must be submitted. The reference list does not contribute to the word count.

WRITING CONVENTIONS

All submissions should be concise and should focus on communicating your perspective or research. Please avoid jargon and technical terms must be kept to the minimum and be clearly defined. Papers should not be descriptive or casual and must be entrenched with a research question, theoretical perspective backed-up with comprehensives reference to strengthen scholarly arguments. Text should be reader-friendly, make proper reference to the relevant literature and ideally include a literature review and theoretical perspective to ground their article into museological discourse. Please avoid undue repetition of facts or methods already in the public record and engagement with post-modern theory is encouraged. Submissions must avoid the use of sexist or

other derogatory languages. Such inclusions will only be entertained IF they form part of the rationale of the article. It is of the utmost importance that authors acknowledge all their sources in the discussion. Plagiarism is viewed as a serious infringement within the research and academic community.

Spacing and punctuation: there should be one space (not two) between sentences; one space before unit terms (e.g. 5 kg, 5 g, 5 cm, 5 km, 5 days); no space before % or ° (e.g. 5%, 23°C, 26°10'S). When used in a sentence format, per cent is to be spelt out and when used in brackets the symbol may be used (5%). Do not use page breaks. Please do not use the Word function that creates embedded footnotes or automatically formatted footnotes or auto-format of references as this inhibits the final formatting process.

Dates, italics, bold: dates are written in the following style: 13 July 2009. Book and journal titles, as well as words within the text that are not English, must be italicised (e.g. *malapa*.). Bold is used for emphasis. Use capital letters for titles (the Secretary-General) or institutions (the Organisation of African Unity). Please do not use capital letters in the references. The term 'Indigenous' is to be capitalise henceforth.

Inverted commas: double inverted commas are used for all direct citations. Direct quotations or block quotes of longer than 40 words must be indented on both sides by 0.5cm. In such instances, no quotations marks are required. Direct citations must be referenced with a page number thus, (Brown 1999:45).

Single inverted commas are employed when a word is used in a specific manner that may be different to its standard dictionary definition and/or in a manner not accepted by the author, for example, “In San folklore 'traditional hunting' refers only to...“ or “The Apartheid government's conception of 'black' prehistory was...“ When quoting text and only a portion of the original text is used, the author must make use of an elipses. The version “... which they called for“ was not accepted (Black 2021:35).

REFERENCES

All references and citations are listed alphabetically and should not be capitalised throughout at the end of the manuscript. Please follow the author-date style using the APA System. Please do not make use of the automated referencing system available on most computers. See the reference guide provided for further examples.

BOOKS WITH/WITHOUT EDITIONS

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CONTRIBUTION IN A COLLECTION (WITH OR WITHOUT AN EDITOR)

It is very important that when referencing an author in a contribution with an editor, the author is entered as the reference and not the editor.

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BOOKS AND JOURNAL TITLES IN TEXT

Book and journal titles that have been published should be written in full, in title case and placed in italics. References and citations in the text should be thus, 'Brown (1997:12) stated that....' or 'It has been demonstrated (Brown 1997; Green 2005; Jones 2000, 2004, 2009; Smith 1998; Wright 2008) that...'. Multiple authors are mentioned first time as Baloyi, Khumar, Jensen and Max 2015 or (Baloyi, Kumar, Jensen & Max 2015), and thereafter, as Baloyi et al. (2015) or (Baloyi et al. 2015). Personal communications/interviews should be incorporated in the text thus, (Brown 2007). The reference list will reflect this as personal communication/interview. Brown, B. 2007. Curator, Hluhluwe museum, Hluhluwe. Personal interview, 25 January.

THE REVIEW AND EDITORIAL PROCESS

SAMAB makes use of a double-blind peer-review system, where both the referees and the author remain anonymous throughout the process. Submissions are screened by the Editor and the sub-Editor. The initial screening is to determine whether the article falls within the stated vision (scope) of the journal; whether the contribution is sufficiently original; and whether the article is without serious conceptual and/ or methodological errors/flaws. Finally, the editors consider the quality of the writing. Only those submissions which the editors deem suitable for peer review will be sent to two expert reviewers for input.

Referees are afforded 3 weeks for review. Authors will receive communication to this effect. Articles submitted for peer review are not necessarily accepted for publication. This step indicates a provisional acceptance, provided changes/ alterations as suggested by the peer reviewers have been made to the satisfaction of the Editor.

Authors will receive their submission containing either one consolidated review report or the two separate reports from the reviewers. The required amendments are to be made and returned to the Editor within 4 weeks to avoid delays in publication. The editors reserve the right to make alterations (even substantial alterations) to the text to comply with current standards of language usage and journal conventions. Manuscripts are normally published in the order in which they are accepted and finalised or alphabetically. Concerning the submissions, peer reviewers are asked, broadly, the following questions (reviewers' quantitative and qualitative checklists have been prepared):

- Does the title fully capture the essence of the submission?
- Do you understand the article?
- Is the submission relevant?
- Are the research question/s and methods clear?
- Are the important questions being asked or are the important issues being probed?
- Is the article balanced in that more than one side of an argument is explored?
- Does the submission deal with the subject in a novel and/or creative manner?
- Are opinions separated from the evidence provided?
- Does the submission add to the existing body of knowledge in a specific subject area?
- Is the writing and how information/data is presented clearly?
- Are references scholarly and sufficient?
- Are the conclusions drawn relevant/justified by the data provided?
- Does the submission provide insights that contribute to extending and deepening the issue/s under discussion?
- Does the submission add to an understanding and/or engagement with museology within the southern African context?

Strict adherence to these guidelines and conformity to the house style of SAMAB streamlines the processing of submissions and expedites publication. Those whose contributions are not provisionally accepted for peer review are notified in writing and their submissions are returned.

Only papers that adhere strictly to the SAMAB Author Guidelines will be considered. Proposed papers can be emailed to the Editor-in-Chief at E-mail: **bensobc@unisa.ac.za.**

ERRATUM NOTICE

The Editors were informed by Elsevier, that the ISSN number currently in use by the SAMAB is incorrect. After an inquiry into the matter, it appears that the ISSN 0-370-8314 (currently in use by the SAMAB) was replaced in 2004 by ISSN 0258-5249. It is not clear who initiated the change nor why. Therefore, the Editors have the publishing responsibility to inform the readership of this unintentional error. This Erratum notice serves to advise that all SAMAB journals published in hardcopy between 2004 and 2020 have the incorrect ISSN of 0-370-8314. To correct where possible, the Editors have had the ISSN now corrected in the following electronic versions:

- SAMAB 38 – 2016
- SAMAB 39 – 2017
- SAMAB 40 – 2018
- SAMAB 41 – 2019
- SAMAB 42 – 2020

These online versions have been sent to SABINET to replace the editions with the incorrect ISSN number. The correct ISSN number will also be reflected on the SAMA website. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) as well as the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAF) will be informed of this matter and the Editorial Board have ensured all corrective measures to correct this oversight.