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Andrew, David

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THE ANOTHER ROADMAP AFRICA CLUSTER (ARAC) UN/CHRONO/LOGICAL TIMELINE OF HISTORIES OF ARTS EDUCATION: FROM THE WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION TO DOCUMENTA 15, KASSEL, GERMANY

DAVID ANDREW
DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS,
SCHOOL OF ARTS,
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
DAVID.ANDREW@WITS.AC.ZA



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This paper explores the development and evolution of the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education initiated by the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster (ARAC) Histories of Arts Education Research Project. The timeline, consisting of multiple iterations, challenges the traditional notions of history and engages with personal narratives, language, and multimodal elements. The research project aims to map and understand the diverse models of arts education, emphasising local perspectives and resistance to imported models. Drawing inspiration from the Medu Art Ensemble, the research framework employs intergenerational collaboration, dialogue, decentralisation, and a focus on language and ideology. The paper highlights the significance of the timeline in reimagining and practicing arts education.

Introduction

I begin this paper with an extract from a text prepared by Puleng Plessie, a fellow researcher in the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster (Johannesburg Working Group) for the Fridskul, Documenta 15, in Kassel, Germany (18 June to 25 September 2022).

> The timeline aims to place Histories of Arts Education, including the routing of personal narratives, firstly, from an African context and abroad. As the Johannesburg Working Group (JWG) we often struggle with the term History. In IsiZulu there is no HIStory, no masculine, or feminine but rather *Umlando*, a word used to define a stem of a plant or a story. This stem-story represents time, the beginning or essence of the story. This timeline, in its un/chrono/logical nature, speaks to *Umlando* beyond the written, but the imagined, vocal, sonic and visual. Each iteration has different interactions calling for a response and in some instances, observation and intergenerational engagement.

Retrospectively, from 2022 it seems appropriate to emphasise the unchronological, almost agitated quality of the timeline that is the focus of this paper. Plessie's text cites some of the key features of the un/chrono/logical timeline that have evolved since its inception: the inviting of personal narratives from multiple sites; the problematising of the term, HIStory; the introducing of words from languages (e.g. *Umlando* from IsiZulu) to challenge assumed meanings and understandings; the multimodal qualities invoked and evoked, and the intergenerational dialogues generated. The list below, also from Plessie's text, charts the existence of the un/chrono/logical timeline of the histories of arts education as an ongoing series of iterations:

1. **Wits School of Education:** Engagement from the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster (ARAC) and staff and students from the Witwatersrand School of Education (WSOE) (April 2017).
2. **The Point of Order:** Engagement from ARAC with third-year fine art students from WSOA, (April 2017).
3. **Wits School of Arts (WSOA):** Learners from New Model Private College place adhesive tape on the timeline as a means of preserving the text (May 2017).
4. **Arts and Culture Trust University of Johannesburg Conference:** David Andrew activates the timeline in the forecourt area adjacent to the conference venue. Delegates and participants observed and contributed to the timeline (July 2017).
5. **University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg AMIC Dec:** The Johannesburg Working Group (JWG) in collaboration with students from the University of the Witwatersrand and Metropolitan College worked on the timeline with the introduction of sonic elements and poetry (September 2017).
6. **Koni Benson and the JWG at the WSOA:** Discussion focused on possible extensions to the un/chrono/logical timeline and engagement with similar timeline research (October 2017).
7. **Alone time:** Rangoato Hlasane has one-on-one time with the timeline. Puleng Plessie also has alone time with the timeline (2017).
8. **Intertwining Hi/stories Festival, Vienna, Austria:** This iteration included performative engagements with the timeline with Rangoato Hlasane reading letters from Fees Must Fall activists and poetic interventions from audience members (2018).
9. **Ba re e ne re Literature Festival, Maseru, Lesotho:** ARAC and Intertwining Histories members, artists, poets and audiences continued to work on and with the un/chrono/logical timeline at the festival (2018).

10. **Lephephe Print Gatherings 3 Festival:** The festival included a writing workshop with Lineo Segoete and Puleng Plessie (Keleketla! Library, Johannesburg) (2018).
11. **Rorke's Drift, Histories and Pedagogies – Stories told and yet not told Symposium** at the Bag Factory in Johannesburg, South Africa (5–6 April 2019). David Andrew convened this symposium with participants interacting with and contributing to the timeline.
12. **Wits School of Arts:** The JWG activated the un/chrono/logical timeline in the parking area in front of the WSOA building as part of Africa Month celebrations with sonic experiments by third-year students, Riley Grant and Adrian Fortuin (May 2019).
13. **Javett Art Centre, University of Pretoria:** Digital documentation of the un/chrono/logical timeline by Lerato Kuzwayo (2020).
14. **Documenta 15, Fridskul, Kassel, Germany** – The second version of the un/chrono/logical histories of arts education timeline is initiated (June-September 2022).



The first iteration of the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education with The Visual Century timeline photocopied pages, Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa (6 April 2017)

The Another Roadmap Africa Cluster (ARAC) Histories of Arts Education Research Project

Located in the wider Another Roadmap School project conceived of as a critique of and supplement to the UNESCO Roadmap for Arts Education (2006) and the subsequent Seoul Agenda (2010), the Another Road Map Africa Cluster research group has been involved in a project for the last seven years that considers how ideas about arts education are imported, how they travel and how and why they are accommodated and mutate. In April 2017 at a public event at the Wits School of Education, as part of an Another Roadmap Africa Cluster symposium, a thirty-metre long un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education was initiated. This has been an ongoing project and has now seen its fourteenth iteration. Following on from Plessie's earlier framing statement of the un/chrono/logical timeline for Documenta 15, the research located in and around the un/chrono/logical timeline seeks to identify what might be termed "local" models of "arts education." The intention has been physically to map, in as detailed a fashion as possible, all these models, to try and understand the evolving of arts education as a surface of jostling, overlapping, superimposed, receding, and dominating moments and processes. These have existed with varying degrees of proximity, in their contestatory, contradictory and, at times, complementary states. In doing this, the ARAC Johannesburg Working Group has sought to establish a series of counter and complementary narratives to those regarded as central to an understanding of "arts education" in southern Africa. As much as the "mapping" seeks to identify models, it includes moments, events, individuals and collectives to reveal legacies critical to an understanding of how "arts education" might be re-imagined and practised. Key points of resistance to imported and migrated models are critical to the research project.

The Medu Art Ensemble

In drawing on these points of resistance, the Johannesburg Working Group has developed a generative research framework inspired by the working methodologies of the Medu Art Ensemble. These methodologies are in turn rooted in the work done by Rangoato Hlasane and his co-director, Malose Malahlela, as part of

the Keleketla! Library collective project and also Hlasane's teaching at the Wits School of Arts. The following points give some idea of these methodologies:

- Intergenerationality of research teams, debates, information gathering and decisions. This extends to the collective, ensemble-like methodologies present for the research;
- Dialogues/talks/conversations and re-enactment sessions;
- Decentralisation of learning sites;
- The potential for a "festival" format that authorises itself, has broader appeal and crosses disciplines;
- The centrality of grappling with language and ideology.

The Medu Art Ensemble was a group of cultural workers from townships in South Africa. In 1978 they went into exile in Gaborone, Botswana, in defiance of the increasingly oppressive apartheid regime. Here they established the cultural organisation named Medu Art Ensemble (Medu is a SePedi word meaning roots), with units specialising in a range of disciplines across the visual and performing arts and writing. The Medu Art Ensemble based their work on the following principles and questions:

- Education as a tool for building society and culture;
- They asked: how can we create an education system which will enable us to build a better society?
- Communities working together, collectively; who hear each other and speak to each other; who challenge existing realities and create new ones;
- An education that teaches to question and to change the world around us;
- Learners actively testing boundaries;
- A focus on the ongoing intertwining of practice-theory-practice. (Seidman 2010, 239–254)

The Un/Chrono/Logical Timeline of Histories of Arts Education: April 2017

The initial entries for the timeline were taken from the publication *Visual Century: South African Art in Context 1907–2007* (2011), a project overseen and edited by Mario Pissarra, founder and director of the Africa South Art Initiative (ASAI). The publication spans four volumes addressing different epochs in the period 1907–2007. Timelines are included in the volumes as a way of contextualising South African art history in relation to South African history, world art history and world history. In a recent informal conversation, Pissarra commented on the contestations involved in arriving at entries for the timeline, what was included, and what was part of the conversation but in the end excluded. Such contestations, although absent from what was eventually published, are important to thinking through what an un/chrono/logical history of arts education timeline might entail.

In their linearity and implicit injunctions towards progress, timelines are often associated with Western conceptions of time. Here I acknowledge Koni Benson, Thuli Gamedze, Tamsyn Stewart (Stewart 2018) and others who have worked with timelines in different contexts in local spaces, such as with Ruth Sacks in the University of Johannesburg History of Art department, whose second-year course invites students to grapple with the notion of timelines in ways that deepen understandings of time and history.

On 6 April 2017 the ARAC group worked on the first iteration of the un/chrono/logical timeline, engaging histories of arts education from the vantage points of participants from the Cairo, Harare, Johannesburg, Kampala, Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Maseru, and Nyanza research groups. This first iteration took place at the Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, as part of an ARAC Symposium. Students and colleagues from the Wits School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, were invited to participate.

I don't recall how the decision to use the *Visual Century* timeline was arrived at – perhaps it was my idea to have something in place, on the timeline, that offered a point of departure or something to respond to. The imaginations brought to the initial, exploratory un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education were diverse and varied, in keeping with the purpose of the exercise. Certainly, its quality as a durational process that was pedagogical, research-based and located in a collective creative and intellectual endeavour was not mapped out explicitly in advance.

During the day, the timeline accrued many entries, some pre-planned, some spontaneous, some in response to others, and some intensely personal. Some stayed within the broader chronologies introduced by the *Visual Century* outline. At the same time, it became clear that, in the spirit and urgency of the injunction to think un/chrono/logically, the timeline would be driven by instincts that were unruly, disobedient and filled with large doses of healthy scepticism. George Shire, the Zimbabwean academic and writer, who was present for the public event at the Wits School of Education, suggested that conventional timelines registered "the bad side of history," suggesting that what we were doing was a "remix" of the *Visual Century* timeline. The use of sonic language and the sonic accompaniment to forthcoming iterations of the un/chrono/logical timeline have made this a salient feature of the project up to the present (see further comment later in the paper). Central to the working method adopted for the un/chrono/logical timeline was the ambition to move in ways contrary to the traditional ordering of time and space shared by the ARAC working groups. During the subsequent days of the ARAC symposium, the timeline was also activated at The Point of Order project space and Keleketla! Library.



The Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education, Wits School of Education, Johannesburg, South Africa (6 April 2017)

The Un/Chrono/Logical Timeline of Histories of Arts Education: Beyond April 2017

Between April 2017 and the present, the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education accumulated a tactile density as hundreds of people contributed to its creation. These contributions range from hand-written entries, either prepared or written in the moment, photocopies, to original and found material. Apart from noting its colossal thirty-metre-long presence, it is important to consider what is happening on its surface in a more detailed way and assess the import of this often "coherent chaos" (Achari 2021).

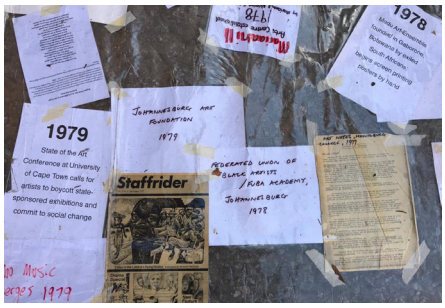
The project of a metre-by-metre exposition of the un/chrono/logical timeline is still to be undertaken. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on two small areas of the surface. The first includes contributions that introduce the following: a reference to the *State of the Art* Conference held at the University of Cape Town in 1979; an acknowledgement of the Johannesburg Art Foundation being founded in the same year; a copy of an issue of the *Staffrider* cultural magazine; a reference to the Marianhill Art Centre being established in 1978 by the Marianhill Mission School; a reference to the establishment of the Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA); a reference to the Medu Art Ensemble's founding in Gaborone, Botswana, in 1978, and a copy of South African white secondary school Art subject notes from 1979 with the title *Practical Art Activities* and the sub-title *The Art Problem*.

The second area brings together the cover of the *John Coltrane: Africa + India* tribute album from 1985; a reference to South African short story writer, Can Themba; a reference to the University of Durban-Westville; an entry noting the Cairo-based office of the African Liberation Movements from 1960–1975, and the name of one of the JWG collaborators, Tracy Murinik, and a year date.



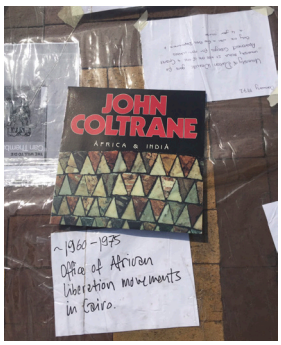
The Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education, AMIC Deck, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa (September 2017)

Some of these entries are seemingly immediate factual presences, others provide textual expansion. There is no guiding system present beyond the possible presence of the *Visual Century* timeline. Over the different iterations, these entries or fragments have been accumulating, becoming more layered, and some earlier fragments have been partially or completely obscured. So, for instance, it is quite possible that none of the *Visual Century* photocopies are visible in the current iteration. What the viewer-participant encounters is a multiplicity of juxtapositions, superimpositions, and inversions, some of which invite ready connection, while others tend to jolt and jar. The un/chrono/logical timeline has generated a pedagogical vibrancy that reverberates. It does not illustrate this vibrancy so much as embody it, as bodily movements being a repetitive technique (Spatz 2017) ignite an emotional and creative temperature (Bagchi 2021). It suggests an entirely different conception of how histories might be generated and recuperated. The depth of this iterative performance is as significant as the surface itself.



Detail from the Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education (May 2019)

The un/chrono/logical timeline thus operates on multiple levels. First, it is a collective effort to bring together the experiences, memories and desires of arts education, some from a so-called formal context, some from so-called informal contexts, others from deeply personal histories, and yet others simply from a desire to be included in these histories. It is in this confounding, often perplexing, profusion and material-textual agitation that striking juxtapositions warranting further deliberation are to be found (e.g. the proximity of the Medu Art Ensemble initiated *Culture and Resistance* conference of 1982 in Gaborone and the *State of the Art* conference hosted by the University of Cape Town in 1979). Secondly, as noted above, its constitutive presence galvanises an actant quality in the encounter between imported models of arts education and those that have emerged in more localised spaces. The constitutive presence of the un/chrono/logical timeline also allows for a series of delinking actions (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014).



Detail from the Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education (September 2017)

The ARAC Johannesburg Working group reiterates how the themes and aims of the Another Roadmap School international cluster project, Intertwining HIStories, has resonated with their research processes over the last six years. These are understood as modes of inhabiting histories, history as a resource, disturbing hegemonic narratives of history and animating and activating counter-hegemonic narratives. The map/timeline conflation does several things: it deconstructs the idea of progress; it disrupts the idea of a calendar/rhythm; it articulates questions of social justice, and visualises the passage of time differently.

What is the significance of the un/chrono/logical timeline as an object of sorts, a durational process, a pedagogical presence and an example of artistic research?

During the January 2020 ARAC Symposium, convened in several different venues in and around Johannesburg (including The Point of Order project space), Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, a member of the Another Roadmap School and Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, gave a keynote address focused on his controversial paper published in the 2013 *Harvard Educational Review* special edition on arts education, titled *Why the Arts Don't Do Anything: Toward a New Vision for Cultural Production in Education*. The fact that there is ongoing dialogue between Gaztambide-Fernández and the ARAC research group suggests that it is the alternative rhetoric of cultural production that he foregrounds in the article that the un/chrono/logical timeline demands and manifests.

The un/chrono/logical timeline, in its layered juxtapositions, its spilling over and into, its excess, its unruliness and refusal to adhere to linearity, invites the expanded vision of symbolic creativity. This, in turn, demands a reorientation and recalibration as we engage the extended premises of the relational, the collective, and still-to-be-imagined practices that we accommodate in the pedagogies and artistic research of the arts school and beyond.



Detail from the Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education (September 2017)

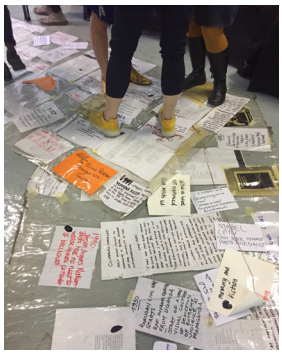
The second version of the un/chrono/logical timeline was initiated at Documenta 15, Kassel, by the ARAC research group. There is something emergent about the documentation of the initial stages of the second version, even tentative – but perhaps this was present in April 2017, too. The hundreds of participants who have contributed to both versions of the timeline have been helped to situate individual and collective practices in broader histories and thereby accessed possibilities for expanded notions of symbolic creativity and how they manifest in our pedagogical and research imaginations. Given the extraordinary tensions, "hostility, racism and censorship" (Lumbung Community Letter, September 2022) experienced by many of the artists at Documenta 15, perhaps the un/chrono/logical timeline offers something of the space of critical openness and inclusivity imagined by the Lumbung group.

But what of the un/chrono/logical timeline itself, as a material, physical presence? Recently I read a post on the ArtPedagogy Instagram site referencing Hew Locke's installation (this descriptor does no justice to the work) titled The Procession at Tate Britain (ArtPedagogy 2022). The writer wrote the following of Locke's work: "I wish it could parade through every school as a marching, marauding, disruptive curriculum. The whole timetable could be trampled over. Art, textiles, craft, design, drama, history, politics, sociology, geography … it's all there." This, in turn, reminded me of the writing by Cameron McCarthy and the late Greg Dimitriadis on the carnivalesque as a pedagogical galvanisation:

> Postcolonial artists, however, give us no such easy referents. They evoke complex polyglot worlds of negotiation that cannot be easily contained. These words of negotiation are best captured, we argue, in the concept of the 'carnivalesque,' or the unpredictable patterns of association, inversions of hierarchies of powers, and the playful, uncontrollable, rhizomatic, flourishing of multiplicity that has taken over the modern city and metropolis. (2004)

There is something about this curriculum that marches, marauds and disrupts, that tramples the timetable (and other structural impediments), that reminds me of the un/chrono/logical timeline and its presence as an irregular constant across times and space. The timeline is path-like or even road-like in its thirty-metre extent. It has been walked on, talked upon, it has been seen and has seen, it has listened to myriad conversations and sounds, it has occupied spaces and confounded time. In its layered complexity and profusion, it asserts the multiplicity, contradictions and collectivity that timelines deny in their attempts to order. Yes, more conventional timelines serve a purpose, but the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education has evolved into a counterpoint to the palatable, exclusionary decision-making that governs timelines and, in so doing, affords us an affective experience of what lies between, in addition to, and beyond the entries expected in a timeline. This experience is consonant with histories from the ground up and a more communal, intergenerational mode of practice. At the same time, the affective qualities seemingly wrench a participant or viewer into a more intimate form of knowledge and understanding that, as RAQS Media Collective member Jeebesh Baghchi observes, "changes the emotional temperature in your body" (2021).

Not a Conclusion



The Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education at The Bag Factory, Fordsburg, Johannesburg (May 2019)

Timelines have been mobilised as signifiers of a linear progression of history for narrative understandings located in Western notions of time. Elsewhere in the conference proceedings, I have drawn on the work on time published in the *Parse Journal*. Descriptions of time as "reversible, intermittent, episodic, various and variable, pluriform, relative, relational, and, importantly, finite" (Beech et al. 2016, 8) are equally apt for the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education. The recognition that artists "have the advantage of shuffling, overcoming, undermining, fictionalising time" (Beech et al. 2016, 11) is also germane to the import of the un/chrono/logical timeline. "Shuffling" and "reversible" immediately connect with the work of Hlasane, a member of the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster JWG and director of the Keleketla!Library collective. As an artist, DJ, lecturer and scholar, he understands sonic modes as primary in his own practice and cultural production (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014). In turn, his references to the un/chrono/logical timeline are often located in the language of the DJ. He describes his associations with the surfaces and totality of the un/chronological timeline as being about remixing, playing, pausing, rewinding, splicing, cutting, stretching, breaking and so on. It is no coincidence that the iterations of the un/chrono/logical timeline have been accompanied by sonic interventions such as, for example, Abdullah Ibrahim's *Mannenberg*. To encounter the un/chrono/logical timeline is also to confront a giant score of sorts that is playing and waiting for improvisations from its participants and interlocutors. The celebratory qualities of the carnivalesque recognised by McCarthy and Dimitriadis are not dissimilar from those witnessed in relation to the un/chrono/logical timeline. Indeed, one of the itinerant rituals conducted during many of the iterations of the un/chrono/logical timeline is the "People Who Think Together Dance Together" practice, where the surface of the timeline becomes akin to a dance floor.



Detail of the Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education at Keleketla!Library, Johannesburg (February 2020)

As much as I am interested in the carnivalesque possibilities of the timeline, the iterations that involve more contemplative, intimate engagements should not be ignored. The un/chrono/logical form of the timeline, is an example of the proximities and confrontations brought to artistic research by practitioners and publics from the Global South and Majority World. Is the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education an example of artistic research? At its inception it was never intended to be this, strictly speaking. Nevertheless, as asserted in the stem-story and temporal presences invoked by Plessie earlier in this paper, it has evolved as an example of collective and cumulative making over seven years that warrants consideration for exactly this and more. Rather than offering a conclusion here, I extend an invitation to readers collectively to engage with the generative possibilities of further iterations and versions of the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education.

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