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A fragile archive: Refiguring | Rethinking | Reimagining | Re-presenting Gladys Mgudlandlu

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the exhibition archive of Gladys Mgudlandlu in order to understand how archives contribute to the writing of artists' biographies. This is done through two integral methods. The first method is the theoretical research and writing, and the second is curating as another form of critical research. Both these methods elaborate on how archives function as a conduit to understanding the way in which an artist's biography has been written. Structured in four chapters, the thesis explores how Mgudlandlu's exhibition archive within the broader historical context is reflective of a specific social, cultural and political space within the arts. Examining this exhibition archive enabled ways of exploring and understanding limitations and complexities surrounding this artist's biography. To this end, the archive provided ways to study, analyse and frame Mgudlandlu's contribution within South African art practices and discourses in a more critical way.