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A tale of two cities? an examination of the re-imagining of gold mining history at Gold Reef City and in Johannesburg's Main Street precinct

Van Straaten, Philippa Sarah

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Abstract

This research report attempts to examine how the story of gold, and gold mining, is told, and is being retold, at both the Victorian- themed Gold Reef City theme park and in within the Main Street mining precinct in the Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD). The report will therefore look at how imbued ideologies have resulted in a particular formation of the mining heritage shown in both themed spaces. Works by de Certeau (1988) and Eco (1990), for example, form a framework for academic discourse around practiced space within the 'city', and the nature of hyperreality. Overall, and including results from participant observation at the theme park, and sample surveys undertaken in the Main Street precinct, one is able to better attempt an understanding of how the story of gold at both sites has been created by certain ideologies, and examine them in light Johannesburg's changing persona in light of global influences.

Keywords: theme park, 'city', ideology, agency, 'world-class African city', urban renewal/regeneration, hyperreality, visuality, mining.