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Coloured Black: the life & works of South African photographers: Ernest Cole & Cedric Nunn

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2020
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/30718

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Abstract

This thesis reads the life and works of South African photographers, Ernest Cole (1940-1990) and Cedric Nunn (1957-). Both photographers are differently classified 'coloured': Ernest Cole was born Ernest Kole and had himself racially reassigned and Cedric Nunn is a fourth generation descendant of John Dunn, the White Zulu Chief who married forty-nine Zulu wives. Both photographers self-identified as Black during the apartheid period as visual activists. Cole produced the *House of Bondage* (1967) and Nunn was a founding member of Afrapix, the anti-apartheid photography collective influenced by Cole. *Coloured Black* suggests that Cole and Nunn deployed coloured as photographic practice in order to visualise racial critique. Apartheid is the ground upon which a genealogical method reads the politics of family in Nunn and Cole's social documentary. Nunn's family photography use his blood relations or 'coloured family' of Mangete, KwaZulu-Natal to domesticate racism and racial life. Cole photographed domestic workers in suburban Johannesburg during the 1960s, a time in South Africa during which apartheid was at its most visibly domesticated. Black freedom was then hiding in plain sight. The visual life of the family in apartheid terms is worked through Cole's contact sheets. Apartheid is visualised in Nunn's family photographs that remember the tension between the biographical and the genealogical within Black South African identity. The photographic medium will be examined as a means of exposing Black intramural surfaces, specifically the critically overlooked relation of difficulty within Black community between 'the coloured' and 'the bantu'. *Coloured Black* narrates the vulnerabilities bound up in Nunn and Cole's lives in both personal and archival terms. coloured is viewed through the lens of the photographic archives. How can 'coloured identities' be understood in Black terms? What can be made of struggles for appearance?

Coloured Black revisits the terms of race and photographic history in the afterlife of apartheid.