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Rethinking home in KwaSwayimane: Homescaping as an act of refusal.

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

A homescape is a space that is laboured for, similar to the labour of the women that inspired this research in the practices that they have employed. In this research, I will engage with the practice of homescaping in KwaSwayimane by women who employ this practice as an act of refusal. Thinking through the legacies of the devastating 1913 Native Land Act and other restrictive laws that sought to restrict Black people from occupying land in South Africa. I ask: What is a space for displaced women? What is a home for a displaced woman? How do displaced women create spaces for themselves? I examine the manner in which aesthetics may be presented to embody notions of homescaping as well South African visual artists Lerato Shadi and Dineo Bopape who tackle the question of land in their works. I look to scholars in South Africa and the Global South when meditating on themes of re-memory, Black women's geographies and homes.

Keywords: Homescaping, KwaSwayimane, South African land ownership, South African Black feminist acts of refusal, Black South African women's geographies, Lerato Shadi, Dineo Bopape

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INTRODUCTION

This is the story of one of my homes. A space that many people have lived in. As a child, I used to be fascinated by home as a site. The smells of my grandmother's house, the taste of the food that she fed us, sometimes forcibly. The taste of the jelly lemon squares covered with light yellow parchment paper that lived in an old silver biscuit tin. The smell of the different series of encyclopaedias on her bookshelves. The smell of a mutton stew being cooked over a gas stove meets you at every corner of the house. The effervescence of the sound of uMalume[1] (my maternal uncle) and uMamncane[2] (my maternal aunt) arguing, sometimes laughing, maybe even giggling in the background. In this place, I am home; I am not at home but in one of my homes. For me, homes have always been gendered spaces, even if these spaces existed before I had the language to write or decode them. The homes belonged to the parents, although the women in my family ran the household. They made them beautiful; they made them smell good, and they silently cleaned before and after ceremonies. They prepped, they made them comfortable, they made us comfortable, and they made these spaces home. This is a silent service exchange. There are rules and roles in this exchange. How to belong, how to make and how to remake? The labour of a home is carried not only in bearing children but in breathing life into a space, sustaining life and stewardship. Labour that is not just in cleaning or decorating but the many tasks we perform at home. These are the images that flash in my mind when I think of home and think of values that change a space into a home space.

The question of place or space is one that is hotly contested. The word 'place' in the context of this research brings to mind two major concepts: land and home. South Africa's history has many issues that call these two concepts into question, with most recently the debate of how land reforms - often referred to as land redistribution - and the different ways that the South African government will address it (or has failed to do so). This redistribution is a necessary consequence of the devastating Native Land Act of 1913, which sought to dispossess Black people of the land and put the control of land ownership in the hands of the oppressive colonial administration government. The Native Land Act was compounded by the apartheid government's Group Areas Act in 1950, a law that allowed the government to designate

[1] An isiZulu word for 'maternal uncle'.

[2] An isiZulu word for your mother's younger sister or the wife of your father's brother.

geographic areas according to racial groups. In his book *Land Matters: South Africa's Failed land Reforms and the Road Ahead* (2021), South African advocate and legal scholar Tembeka Ngcukaitobi investigates the history of land, homeownership and the legacy of land reform in South Africa and explains that,

> The South African development. Trust, a government body, was responsible for purchasing land in 'released areas' for black settlement. These laws were consolidated by the Groups Areas Act of 1950, which established group areas and imposed restrictions over land purchases in certain areas (Ngcukaitobi, 2021:23).

This removal included removals from farms and homelands of more than three million Black South Africans in the period of 1966 and 1976. These laws wreaked havoc in the lives of South Africans, which would later cause many to call into question what redress would look like in a democratic South Africa.

The impact of both of these acts on South Africa today is immeasurable, with the democratic government endeavouring to redistribute land. 'Redistribution' is a term that relates to the distribution and changing of access to residential and agricultural land to people in need. These redistribution initiatives include the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)[3] initiative and the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR)[4], which was run by the South African Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the Department of Human Settlements, respectively. However, even with these policies in place, there are still discrepancies with the accessibility of land for South Africans, i.e., one which is focused on the distinct needs of women. In *Women and Land Tenure Rights in Southern Africa: A Human Rights-Based Approach* (2004), anthropologist Grace Mutangadura critiques the relationship between land tenure and women in Southern Africa. Mutangadura (2004:8) notes that women in Southern Africa are still disadvantaged and often experience prejudice when it comes to obtaining and purchasing land, despite their role in the farmlands. Women in these regions gain

[3]Asghar Adelzadeh and Vishnu Padayachee (1996:66) state that the "Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was successful in articulating the main aspiration of the movement for post-apartheid South Africa that is growth and development, and it argued for a living wage as a pre-requisite for achieving the required level of economic growth".

[4] Darma Mahadea (1998:447) states that "GEAR is essentially an economic reform programme directed towards a competitive and fast-growing economy, that would create sufficient jobs for all jobseekers, a redistribution of income and opportunities in favour of poor, a society capable of ensuring that sound health, education and other services are available to all, and an environment in which homes are safe and places of work productive".

access to land by marriage or through their fathers. This discrimination may be a consequence of many things and not being seen as important members of communities.

In a previous writing *Reimaging Home* (Mtshali, 2022), I looked at the different ways artist Ncumisa Mcitwa and myself create works that deal with the theme of home. I found a gap in respect to research on Black women's place in rural spaces, in particular, women who are unable to own homes but find ways to negotiate various obstacles to become homeowners. Black feminist theorist of visual and contemporary art Tina Campt (2019:120), in her article 'Black Visuality and the Practice of Refusal' (2019), posits an "emergent black visuality that constitutes a practice of refusal". In this work, Campt (2019:1) states that "the practice of refusal is constituted by creating radical modalities of witnessing the refusal of authoritative forms of visuality that function to refuse blackness itself". Laws are often applied to restrain women from purchasing or owning land, and my point of interest in this subject is the manner in which these laws are applied with respect to South African customary laws, and the influence that this has on the lives of Black South African women's agency in terms of home-making and home-owning, through acts of refusing such laws.

For the purpose of this research, I will use the terms 'homescaping' and 'homescapes'. The former relates to the act of agential ways of 'making a home' and the latter being a 'made' place. These terms borrow from bell hooks's notion of 'homeplace'. hooks (1990:386), in her book *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (1990), she defines the home place as a "site of support and resistance". hooks assert that, despite the systems of oppression and subjugation, Black people have found a way to make place and be made whole. "Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist". hooks (1990:365) continues: "Black women resisted by making homes where black people could strive to be subjects but not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts". Thus, for me, a homescape is a site of support and resistance but it is also a space that is laboured for. In this quote, hooks explore the concept of homes having the ability to recuperate people, with this recuperation happening as people are able to exercise their own agency.

In this research, I look at how homescaping is used as a vehicle to overcome the complexities created by the dichotomy between cultural practices and the law of the land, providing a moral battleground for a woman. I mean to examine my own practical body of work entitled *Homescapes: Spaces between Home and eKhaya* (2024), which was produced as part of this

Master of Arts in Fine Arts degree. It is my intention to read *Homescapes: Spaces between Home and eKhaya* (as a consideration of the negotiation of homescapes as different types of homes, which is illustrated by the use of different words in isiZulu. Exploring writing as studio practice is an integral component of my art-making process as it is a constant contemplation on the use of words and how words influence the way we learn to look" (hooks, 1990:386). I will examine the artworks of South African visual artists Dineo Seshee Bopape and Lerato Shadi, who both use the medium of installation to reinterpret homescaping and themes of land and home.

Chapter 1 will explore the question of home and how femme-centric, agential, counter-practices can reinterpret homescaping/homemaking. How is homescaping used to overcome, and how does it become the mid-point between legal and cultural practices? I will be discussing the main points from hooks' book *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (1995), Kholeka Shange's PhD thesis in anthropology *Ngiphathel' uGubhu Lwam' Ekhaya Lapha, Mnawami! UMntwana uMagogo and the Photographic Image* (2020), and Tembeka Ngcukaitobi's *Land Matters: South Africa's Failed land Reforms and the Road Ahead* (2021), which investigates the history of land and the failures of land reform in South Africa.

Chapter 2 will facilitate the discussion of my own body of work produced for my Master of Arts in Fine Art exhibition *Homescapes: Spaces between Home and eKhaya* and the practice of homescaping. I will examine the manner in which aesthetics may be presented to embody notions of homescaping. This chapter discusses the practical works that were made for the exhibition, as well as the themes that inform the works, the experiences with the ideation and the creation of the works. I will be discussing these points in conversation with Sara Ahmed's *Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology* (2006) and Stephanie Springgay's 'Knitting as an Aesthetic of Civic Engagement: Re-conceptualising Feminist Pedagogy through Touch' (2010) to work through the crucial points of this chapter to propose and compare notions of homescaping. This chapter answers the question of how I, as an artist, reinterpret the notion of homescaping.

Chapter 3 will focus on the discussion of the central ideas of Lerato Shadi's video and installation works entitled *Matsogo* (2013) and *Noka Ya Bokamoso* (2016), as well as Dineo Seshee Bopape's *Ile aye, moya, là, ndokh…harmonic conversions…mm* (2021). This discussion unfolds in terms of Shadi and Bopape's exploration of cultural memory and narrative, their provocations of history and human geographies within democratic South Africa,

and the way they probe memory and history in South African contexts, through the content they address as well as the materiality of their works

CHAPTER ONE

How do we write, think, and visualise home? In what ways do we engage with, theorise and perform aspects of home? This chapter explores the question of home in terms of how femme-centric, agential counter-practices reinterpret homescaping/homemaking, as well as how homescaping is used to overcome the complexities created by the dichotomy between legal and cultural practices. Concepts of 'home' and 'being at home' will be interrogated, as well as displacement from spaces and the contributing factors that pull people disproportionately towards one area. This research also examines the roles that social attributes such as gender, race, class, ability, religion, or sexual orientation play in shaping Black women's experiences of home. Moreover, doilies as a decorative mat that has traversed through memories of home from generation to generation will be explored. I will be using Sara Ahmed's 'Home and Away Narratives of Migration and Estrangement' (1999) to discuss the main points of this chapter.

Engaging with the politics of home is never easy. With thoughtful attention to home and being at home, one has to consider what the meaning of home in itself means in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, whether it is dealing with the problem of historical dispossession caused by the legacy of the Native Land Act of 1913, urban migration and industrialisation. There is always a factor that pulls people disproportionately towards different areas. This issue is compounded by social attributes such as gender, race, class, ability, religion, sexual orientation, and economic standing. Depending on what social attributes you have, you will face more discrimination based on those attributes in what African American legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw coined as 'intersectionality'. Crenshaw (1989:149) states that "Intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking". In this text, Crenshaw uses the term intersectionality to highlight how Black women are disproportionally affected by inequalities as a result of systemic racism. Through the passing years, since the end of Apartheid and the beginning of democratic rule in South Africa, there have been attempts to tackle the issue of land. The question of land, and particularly homeownership, is intersected by various factors, including gender, identity, geography, and economic status. This research focuses on rural spaces and one of the contributing factors is that Black women, especially in the application of customary laws, are often at a disadvantage. These factors are important to remember when

reflecting on the individual histories of people and socio-economic and historical factors that contribute to why people leave and seek home.

South African legal scholars Christa Rautenbach and Willemien du Plessis (2012:749): note that the South African legal system is made up of two legal systems, namely, the Roman-Dutch law and indigenous/ customary laws. Research by Rautenbach and du Plessis (2012) and Zamambo Mkhize (2021:67) notes that customary law is a legal framework that is rooted in traditional cultural practices of certain tribes and communities.

One needs to draw a distinction between customary law and customary practices. Customary practices are practices and social rites that often are undocumented and are passed from generation to generation through family and social structures. African communities have historically not formally recorded inheritance practices. These customs were affected after colonisation of Africa. According to South African historian Phemelo Hellemann (2025), in their article 'The Legal and Social Context of Urban Movement, Housing, and Coping Mechanisms through Inheritance Practices amongst Women from Phokeng, Gugulethu, and Fingo Village', traditional structures such as customary practices prescribe gender roles, in particular rules of engagement in spaces. These practices and belief systems put men or boys higher up on the social hierarchy and place women and girls as subordinates under the leadership of men.

In contrast, customary law is a colonial attempt to enforce documentation of practices, which is often static or rigid. Hellemann (2025:6) states that "the imported land law cemented a patriarchal system that only conferred the land title and inheritance rights to male family members". The Dutch were the first to introduce a registered patrilineal inheritance system in South Africa during land and territory disputes in the eighteenth century." This recording of these customs later would see the rise of male children being the inheritors of property and family estates. This transition would further disadvantage women who were already not considered in colonial South Africa. Hellemann also states that:

> The Dutch inheritance system prescribed male primogeniture to land inheritance rights. As a result, South African society came to accept and embrace first born sons as rightful heirs of a deceased father's property and the accompanying social status as the head of the house. This approach interfered with African land use, making land and gender relations synonymous (Hellemann, 2025:9).

I am intrigued by how this documentation by scholars such as Hellemann on how women negotiate challenges to become homeowners. Scholar Gladys Mutangadura (2004:5) notes the suppression of women's land and home ownership rights and highlights that discussions about the topic are especially caused by the lack of representation of women within community organisation structures.

These factors create a pattern of estrangement in rural areas. This estrangement means alienation from one's surroundings. For feminist theorist Sara Ahmed, estrangement is not merely an individual experience but a social one rooted in historical and political dynamics. Estrangement can be a productive feeling and can lead to change or resistance to normative systems. Ahmed states that,

> A consideration of the historical determination of patterns of estrangement in which the living and yet mediated relation between being, home and world is partially reconfigured from the perspective of those who have left home. This reconfiguration does not involve the heroic act of an individual but takes place through the forming of communities that create multiple identifications through collective acts of remembering in the absence of shared knowledge or a familiar terrain (Ahmed,1999:331).

This is important when considering people's histories, the communities they find themselves in, the roles that they play within them and how communities are formed, whether as organic formation communities or as a result of a needs-based formation. This latter type of community is particularly notable for how it is formed despite customary law and systemic oppression that hinder women's homeownership. In some instances, homeownership remedies migration. Ahmed reflects on migration as being:

> Employed as a metaphor within contemporary critical theory for movement and dislocation and the crossing of borders and boundaries. Such a generalisation of the meaning of migration allows it to become celebrated as a transgressive and liberating departure from living as usual in which identity (the subject as and at home) is rendered impossible (Ahmed, 1999:332).

This notion of migration is tethered to dislocation, the loss of location and the boundaries created by laws. Ahmed (2006:9) notes that "Migration could be described as a process of disorientation and reorientation as bodies 'move away' as well as 'arrive,' as they reinhabit spaces". The concept of met-aphorising migration is a point of interest because it gives an entry

to understanding migration not only as something that can be forced onto a person but also as an action one can undertake to feel at home and, as such, the action of migration itself can be an act of refusal. Further, this migratory seeking of home and "feeling at home" is one that needs to be explored more as an act of refusal as the feeling of dislocation then becomes an act of recuperation after the fact. Campt frames acts of refusal as,

> a rejection of the status quo as liveable and the creation of possibility in the face of negation, i.e. a refusal to recognize a system that renders you fundamentally illegible and unintelligible; the decision to reject the terms of diminished subjecthood with which one is presented, using negation as a generative and creative source of disorderly power to embrace the possibility of living otherwise (Campt, 2019:1).

It is important to note and name diverse types of homes and the ways these types of spaces are related to my questioning about what 'homescaping' can be.

Thinking and Writing through isiZulu Concepts

The first most common word for home in isiZulu is the word 'indlu'[5]. 'Indlu' is a word often translated from isiZulu to English as a 'home', although this translation is often wrong. In her PhD thesis *Ngiphathel' uGubhu Lwam' Ekhaya Lapha, Mnawami! UMntwana uMagogo and the Photographic Image* (2020), South African scholar Kholeka Shange provides an analysis of the documentation of Princess Magogo[6] throughout her life. Shange reflects on the separate ways home is viewed in the Zulu culture and isiZulu, the language. Shange states,

> I identify this space as umuzi instead of ikhaya because the former is commonly understood to refer to the home that a married woman occupies or builds with her husband who is then called umyeni; while the latter constitutes the place where a person grows up with their kin, albeit it is not always the case that one is raised by their kin (Shange, 2020:159).

In this citation, Shange looks at umuzi as a space that is framed by masculinity or by the presence/authority of a male figure through marriage. In reflecting on the use of the word

[5]An isiZulu term that is translated as 'house' or 'home'.

[6] Princess Magogo kaDinizulu is a historical figure. Princess Magogo was the daughter of 'King Dinuzulu', the mother of 'Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi' and an amazing musician, imbongi, instrumentalist, composer, performer and custodian of 'Zulu culture'.

‘indlu’, I found that it did not reflect the kind of spaces that I wanted to research. This is because isiZulu has many examples of ‘phallogocentric’ words. When reflecting on language and how it is translated, African American sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000:34) notes that this is “a term which illustrates the phallogocentric structure of language to refer to the privileging of masculine in construction of meaning throughout the patriarchal history”. These types of languages are part of a mechanism that enforces practices sustained and regulated by various social means. American feminist philosopher Judith Butler affirms that,

> The power regimes of heterosexism and phallogocentrism seek to augment themselves through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysic, and their neutralised ontologies does not imply that repletion itself ought to be stopped as if it could be. If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities, then the crucial question emerges: What kind of subversive repletion might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself? (Butler, 1990:32).

It should be noted that isiZulu is not necessarily a phallogocentric language in its entirety. However, there are phallogocentric words in the isiZulu language. It is important to subvert the way we write about home by rather using words within isiZulu that align more with feminism and which centre women. Ultimately, when engaging with words in isiZulu, it becomes important to pay attention to words that not only revolve around the male figure but also have roots in colonial ideas of what a Zulu homeland is. I want to reflect on the word ‘umuzi’. Although, according to Shange, ‘indlu’ and ‘umuzi’ are words that relate to marital homes, umuzi is also used to refer to marital homes in rural spaces - a space that historically maintained a sense of segregation, especially for Black women. This is because of the history of the kraalhead and homeland leaders in the role of land and homeownership in rural KwaZulu-Natal.

South African lawyer and legal scholar Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, in *Land Matters: South Africa’s Failed land Reforms and the Road Ahead*, reflects on the legacies of the Natal Code of Bantu Law. The code was a piece of legislature used to regulate the relationships of Zulu people in 1891 and was repealed in 1979. Ngcukaitobi (2021:160) explains that “The centrepiece of the code was the idea of a kraalhead. The kraalhead was expected to be a man of high integrity, protecting the interests of everyone in his homestead”. This notes the contentious relationship between Black women in rural spaces and the male figures who ‘govern’ them. This idea is

important because it illustrates the legacies of rural land rights and how this has not changed. Ngcukaitobi continues:

> Under colonialism, Black women were subjected to white male power. This continued under Apartheid while also being amplified by Black male power. Legal reforms after the new Constitution intended to improve the positions of women. But this has not been so. Law, culture, and economic power continue to preserve patriarchy. Yet formal patriarchy is also being upended every day by women's independent actions (Ngcukaitobi, 2021:160).

This quote illustrates the pattern of estrangement that was established in colonialism, which flowed into apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, and that continues to form the boundaries that women are circumventing every day. It is these everyday acts of women's independence that are key to unpacking and thinking about the 'homeplace' or homescapes. hooks (1990:42) notes the importance of home as a sacred space where Black people become subjects instead of objects, especially for oppressed people:

> Historically, Black women have resisted white supremacist domination by working to establish a homeplace. It does not matter that sexism assigned them this role. It is more important that they took this conventional role and expanded it to include caring for one another, children, and Black men in ways that elevated our spirits, kept us from despair, and taught some of us to be revolutionaries able to struggle for freedom (hooks, 1990:44).

Although hooks is framing the homeplace in the African American context, and due to the salience of her assertions, it is important to contextualise these ideas within my own Zulu context. I started reflecting on the use of terms that I have experienced in my language and that related more to home in my understanding and to my daily life, thereby forming a language that would reflect my lived experiences, the landscape, and homescaping. When reflecting on the use of the word 'ekhaya' and how it is translated from isiZulu to English, Shange states that:

> Moreover, Rycroft's translation of the term "ekhaya" to "house" is contentious because "house" refers to a habitat, a space, or a building that an individual might not necessarily have a relationship with. According to the Scholar's Zulu Dictionary, the term "khaya" refers to a home (2009: 388). A home symbolises a place of belonging or a place in which one has built a life. The isiZulu equivalent of Rycroft's translation is "indlu" not "ikhaya." In the Scholar's Zulu Dictionary, the term "Indlu" is translated as "house; hut; room;

> dwelling place" (Dent and Nyembezi, 2009: 422). In the context of this thesis, uMntwana uMagogo's reference to home invokes intimacy and a sense of familiarity with the place she identifies as ekhaya. For me, this line captures a private and personal moment that is communally experienced by women who have formed a sisterly bond beyond biological constraints (Shange, 2020:34).

The above extended quotation reflects on the complexities of translating isiZulu to English, especially the term 'ekhaya' to 'house.' This issue arises because the term 'ekhaya' is a term defined by one's relationship and familiarity. 'iKhaya' or 'ekhaya' relates more to the lived experience of a person and how they relate to that specific space and the people who live within that space. Growing up in Durban, a more urban landscape, my family was spread out in many areas: eMtwalumbe, KwaSwayimane and Dundee. The distance between these areas created a complexity that contributed to the ways that we related to the various places in which we were raised. In colloquial isiZulu, there are the terms 'kini' and 'kwakho'.

Ekhaya lakini - your family's home

Ekhayalakho - your home, your place

When we were kids and would misbehave, uMa, my mother, would remark: "Oh ikwakho lana?" (Is this your house now?). This remark and statement made sense as a misbehaved child but reflecting on it, I see what she meant.

Ikwakho lana, ikwakho la?

I want to frame these two terms. When I am 'kithi', I am a descendant, a child and a steward of my home and steward of my ancestor's home. There are unspoken rules. For instance, on certain occasions, I will not wear pants, make too much noise, and cook certain foods. When I am 'kwami/kwakho' in my tiny flat, I am free to wear pants, sleep late and do as I please. There are rules, spoken and unspoken. Within these rules and roles, there is my service and the service that the women in our families exchange to maintain their space. This service is an act not rooted in servitude but in agency. Homescaping is therefore an act of agential service grounded in a sense of ownership and authority. These are homes that were maintained by 'uGogo'[7],

[7] An isiZulu word for 'grandmother'.

‘uKhokho[8]’, ‘uMa’[9], ‘uMalumekazi’[10] and ‘uSisi[11]’ - this ownership might not have been recognised in law but rather informally through the practice of homemaking or homescaping. As previously stated, homescaping is a separate way of 'making a home' an act of refusal, and often, one that is laboured for. Likewise, a homescape is a site of both support and resistance, but it goes further in that it is a site that is crafted that should not be there but exists. A homescape is a space that is laboured for, similar to the labour of the women who inspired this research in the practices that they have employed. These refusals go beyond understanding and redefining words but there are specific actions that can be viewed as homescaping from a historical lens.

An inquiry into the stories of Black homeownership and the laws that have historically restricted it can reveal examples of homescaping, stories of homes that were (and could have been) as a result of The Group Areas Act, which was an apartheid law implemented to keep separate the residents according to race in places like Cato Manor in Durban, Sophiatown in Johannesburg and District Six in Cape Town (among others). Phil Eidelberg (1997) notes that the restrictions on the urban movements of Black people embodied the social and political challenges at the time.

Economic historian Faeeza Ballim argues that the Group Areas Act was a mechanism to cut down the business of Indian traders from having thriving hubs in urban areas and be replaced by Afrikaner traders. When reflecting on Afrikaner traders’ frustrations with Indian traders, Ballim states that “a decade before, Jewish traders had borne the brunt of this hostility, Indian traders’ perceived dominance of the retail sector fell under the spotlight in the post-war period. The Group Areas Act of 1950 institutionalised this sentiment in its policies on the resettlement of Indian traders” (Ballim, 2017:569). A core aspect of the Group Areas Act was the racialised distribution of wealth to the white population through the use of (socially hierarchical) segregationist policies. This changing of policies displaced Black people who migrated to urban areas in search of financial stability. Hellemann reflects on South Africa’s urban history in colonial-era policies and how these policies impacted urban migration. Hellemann (2025:1) states that, “Ongoing land expropriations and a declining farming economy amongst African landowners and tenants in the 1900s changed rural life, making migration inevitable. By the

[8] An isiZulu word for ‘great-grandmother’.
[9] An isiZulu word for ‘mother’.
[10] An isiZulu word for your maternal uncle’s wife.
[11] An isiZulu word for ‘sister’.

1920s, many African families had financial difficulties in rural areas". With this migration of Black people into urban areas and Indian people already in these areas, the Afrikaner National Party devised policies for racial segregation which maintained white economic dominance. Hellemann (2025:2) states about these new apartheid policies such as the Group Areas Act of 1950, which extended colonial dispossession of African natives and created distinct racially separate spaces: "Its implementation saw the dissolution of Africans as freehold title holders in urban areas and implemented forced removals". One such example that demonstrates the emergence and subsequent racial tensions of the Group Areas Act is that of Cato Manor in Durban, but which I want to discuss in terms of homescaping.

Cato Manor, also known as Mkhumbane, is an area situated five kilometres west of Durban's central business district. The township was renowned for having a strong political and cultural legacy. Race has always been a complex and tenuous issue in South Africa. This issue was compounded by laws that caused the forced removal and moving around of oppressed people. According to Mphumelelo Ngidi (2020), the territory around Cato Manor had been home to several small-scale chiefdoms since the 1650s.The Nqondo clan was one of them, and in 1730, the Ntuli clan took their position. George Christopher Cato, the first mayor of Durban, took land that would eventually become Cato Manor in 1843, in exchange for another piece of land that had been used for military operations (Edwards, 1994). In addition, it was meant to serve as a prize for his years of selfless community work and election as Durban's first mayor in 1865. George Cato partitioned the farm into several smallholdings in 1914, and he later sold these to well-known white locals who built country estates. Plots were leased and sold by the landowners to Indian market gardeners, who included former British Indian indentured labourers[12] and their descendants. In South African sociologist Fatima Meer's work *Portrait of Indian South Africans*, she (1969:7) writes, "The majority of Indian South Africans are the descendants of indentured workers brought to Natal between 1860 and 1911 to develop the country's sugar belt. White colonists despaired of exploiting the colony's agricultural resources, due to the scarcity of labour".

[12] Nienieke Boer (2016:21) notes that following the abolition of the slave trade within the British Empire in the nineteenth century, more than 1.3 million Indian subjects of the British migrated to other parts of the world under indenture contracts, with 152,184 indentured labourers travelling to the South African colony of Natal between 1860 and 1909. This wave of imperially regulated migrations to South Africa was followed by a second, smaller group of Indian free traders known as "passenger Indians".

Tension between the Black and Indian residents of Cato Manor, who were living close to one another by 1949, had increased despite the apartheid government's desire to restrict the movement of Black People into urban spaces. In 1948, the National Party came into power and began the reinforcement of the Native (Urban Areas) Act. Importantly, Fatima Meer cites that the South African fight for liberation put race at the forefront, leaving the challenges experienced by women as a secondary issue. Meer (1985:25) notes that although women's organisations and activism were prolific, these did not necessarily give space for women to voice their concerns. Furthermore, in 'Cato Manor: Cruel Past, Pivotal Future' (1994), Iain Edwards, who investigates the women's protests of Cato Manor against discriminatory regulations, cites this resistance as a result of a struggle for housing in urban areas, in particular Cato Manor. Edwards (1994:416) notes acts of defiance led by the African National Congress (ANC)[13] and the Natal Indian Congress (N.I.C)[14] against the discriminatory legislation, which were passed as a form of urban segregation given an influx of needed labour into urban areas. Additionally, Hellemann states that:

> Moreover, the problem was that the white capitalist economy needed African labourers. It became imperative for the state to create areas in the inner cities for African people to occupy while working in urban areas. By 1923, the government had established a system allowing Black people's occupation of urban locations, without being permitted to own land in these areas (Hellemann, 2021:74,75).

Following a racial altercation in Grey Street on 13 January 1949, there were violent anti-Indian attacks that continued to Cato Manor. Black women in Cato manor participated in the economy by producing umqombothi (traditional beer). However, the Natal Native Beer Act of 1908[15] restricted how much umqombothi could be produced and kept by Black people in Natal. South African historian Mphumeleli Ngidi, whose research focuses on the history of Durban, and in particular the history of Cato Manor/Mkhumbane, comments on apartheid's impact on oppressed people. In Ngidi's doctoral thesis *Memories of Everyday Life and Forced Removals in South Africa: A Case Study of Cato Manor, Durban (1930-1960)* (2020), she does an investigation into the historical geography and development of

[13]The African National Congress is a political organisation.

[14]The Natal Indian Congress was a political organisation.

[15] South African historian Debbie Whelan (2015:75) notes that the Natal Beer Act was "a structured way in which municipalities in the Natal supplied uTshwala or sorghum beer to inner city African residents, whilst at the same time controlling the procurement of its ingredients, its manufacture and sale".

Cato Manor. In this thesis, Ngidi notes that the apartheid state imposed numerous structural constraints on people's lives, "chances and options, but within those structural barriers, ordinary Africans, especially women, found ways to exercise agency to carve a niche in the urban economy" (Ngidi, 2020:18). Aside from the Cato Manor riots in 1949, another riot broke out caused by the persistent police raids targeting those who sold beer. According to Mkhize (2006), these raids, in essence, stopped people from making their beer, rather promoting manufactured beer produced by the Durban Municipality, an action that not only infringed on people's freedom but also their culture. The riots demonstrated the role of Black women in the making of traditional beer and changed the dynamics of society in Cato Manor/Mkhumbane.

Mkhize (2006) notes that in addition to being 'chefs' at home, women demonstrated that they were also the makers of traditional spirits and active members of the political community whose decisions would have a significant impact. Massive crowds were drawn to Cato Manor/Mkhumbane, which was boosted by an estimated 80,000 people, with the potential to increase to between 90,000 and 100,000 on weekends. Cato Manor/Mkhumbane women started what became known as the Beer Riots in the winter of 1959 after several complaints were made to the authorities. It is important to consider the Beer Riots as part of the history of Cato Manor and to centrally position the women of Cato Manor in that history, because of their ability to have agency despite being oppressed by the brutal apartheid regime. The Beer Riots took place nine years after the beginning of the Group Areas Act of 1950. The Group Areas Act was a law which stated that the apartheid government could section geographic areas for the use of a specific race only, in effect zoning spaces according to race. Ngcukaitobi (2021:34) states that the "Group Areas had devastating effects on those impacted by forced removals, which affected many Black South Africans. Once the government deemed that people should move, there was little that they could do". The forced removals of people during the era of the Group Areas Act were devastating because of how people's lives were flattened in the name of oppressive social planning, a type of planning that could be used to further control subjugated people. The Group Areas Act and Native (Urban Areas) Bill[16] were measures that dictated where the oppressed could live but also diminished Black women's ability to own homes in urban areas. Helleman discusses the gendered effect of such laws:

[16]Edwards (1994:425) states that through the institution of the Group Areas Act of 1950, 'Black' or 'African', 'people were denied the right to own land in the city and forcibly moved to townships which were racially segregated.

> These laws prevented African women from entering or building homes and trading in urban areas without a male guardian, husband, or father. By this stage, African women's social status had suffered an even worse economic blow. The dominant belief was that African women could only function as housewives and mothers; as a result, the government did not allow them to take up any other roles in urban areas. The state did not regard African women as qualified persons who could inhabit urban areas independently, unlike African men (Hellemann, 2021:76).

These laws did not allowAfrican women from acting as individuals and were ultimately a further denial of the agency they had tried hard to hold onto in an oppressive regime.

Upjeet Chandan (2004) deals with the issues of families and households in the constructed environments of colonial and apartheid South Africa, particularly the influence of these environments on identity. Chandan identifies the types of groupings of people and families during the apartheid era as problematic, stating:

> This critical focus on families and houses emphasizes their mutual constructed-ness and suggests that houses are coded and layered with meaning, history, sentimentality, and class aspirations through the everyday negotiations of its members, shaping identities of self and concepts of family in the process (Chandan, 2004:178).

As previously stated, Black ownership of land in urban areas was forbidden. In the case of Cato Manor, the Black women who were residents transgressed the task-oriented residence units that they were placed in by creating an economic and cultural hub through the making of umqombothi. When reflecting on the effects of the Group Areas Act, Ngidi (2020) notes the various laws were meant to control all aspects of Black women's lives, including attempting to institute passbooks that were linked to control where people were permitted to reside:

> Cato Manor was famous for its shebeens and shebeen queens, and the women of the area understood that abandoning this trade meant economic ruin. Their very survival and livelihood depended on their being in the city; hence, their defiant resistance to laws banning beer brewing affected their mobility (Ngidi, 2020:106).

The destruction of the beer production hub and the access to housing is one that hindered Black women's livelihoods. These policies disempowered women economically and socially, and this is why they were fought by Black women. This makes the riots that would follow an act of refusal of the denial of their agency and ownership of land, a case for thinking about

homescaping. The Beer Riots are an important moment in the history of homescaping in South Africa because of the refusal of the oppressive laws of the apartheid government. This is further cemented by the fact that the women who took part in the Beer Riots resisted all laws that disempowered them and were designed to ruin their economic and social agency. During the riots, Black women changed themselves from being objects to subjects in the face of the apartheid government. Their acts of resistance are an act of homescaping. In this instance, Black women in Cato Manor are a relevant example, where women were not just constructing individual homes, but their homescaping took place from the very foundation of community building. Their homescaping took form through the making of Cato Manor/Mkhumbane into a site of resistance, and through fighting to keep their space as an oppressed people.

The clash between the class aspirations of Black women who were making a life for themselves in the face of subjugation, and the ideological order envisioned by apartheid's spatial planning is evident. When reflecting on Black women's geographies, Canadian sociologist Katherine McKittrick (2006:xv) states that "prevailing geographic distributions and interactions are racially, sexually, and economically hierarchical, these hierarchies are naturalised by repetitively spatializing 'difference.' That is, 'plac[ing] the world within an ideological order' unevenly".

In the colonial and the apartheid eras of South Africa, the ideological hierarchy was unevenly skewed for Black people, especially for Black women, a factor that remains fairly unchanged in South Africa's democratic era. When reflecting on issues of land reform in Southern Africa, Mutangandura (2014:1) argues that "Despite the importance of land to women in the sub-region, their land rights are still largely discriminated against. A combination of statutory and customary laws favouring male ownership of property disadvantages women's rights to own land". The more traditionally accepted form of property inheritance is primarily given to the son, granting him leadership power in a family. This patriarchal view of inheritance excludes widows, women married into the family and girl children, leaving them at an economic disadvantage. These women face further disadvantages and often experience property repossessions due to them being seen as not having a husband or a male representative (Mkhize, 2006:34). However, Fingo Village gives us an entry point into an alternative legal history, which sees women inheriting homes during the colonial era and apartheid.

Fingo Village is a suburb in Makhanda (formerly named Grahamstown) in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Fingo is a place of interest because it has a unique history of having homes that

are not only headed by women but have been passed down and inherited from woman to woman. In the PhD thesis *Umuzi ka Mama: Family Property Transfer and the Historical Significance of Title Deeds to African Female Heads of Households in Fingo Village: A Participatory Theatre Approach* (2021), Hellemann focuses on women-headed households in Makhanda. Hellemann (2021:1) states that the "survey revealed that about 40% of the households in Fingo Village were female-headed. However, it is not clear how many out of the 40% were title deed holders". We must acknowledge that due to the discriminatory nature of the Group Area Act during this time, a lot of documentation may have been lost that may never be recovered. Hellemann (2021:2) continues that, "To date, Fingo Village title deed records remain incomplete". The recovery of those documents - like title deeds - is another hindrance to Black women's access to owning homes. According to Hellemann (2021), there are many untold stories of Black women's property and homeownership as a consequence of colonialism, apartheid, and customary practices. She affirms what McKittrick (2006:xiv) says, "Black geographies and Black women's geographies, then, signal alternative patterns that work alongside and across traditional geographies". In this text, McKittrick questions how we can write about these geographies, whether physical or imagined, and how Black people deal with the idea of belonging. McKittrick (2006:xiii) notes that "if there is a push to forge a conceptual connection between material or concrete spaces, language, and subjectivity, openings are made possible for envisioning an interpretive alterable world, rather than a transparent and knowable world".

When reflecting on the management and inheritance of property and what criteria qualified one to be the inheritor of these properties, Hellemann says that:

> because women had become more active in the economy and running their own homes, they became suitable candidates for 'keepers' of the family property. The custodianship practice has undoubtedly opened doors for women's land rights discussions in the 21st century (Hellemann, 2021:96).

The term 'inheritance' refers to the process of transferring objects and assets from one person to another (often relatives) as a type of transfer from generation to generation as a result of death, although many societies in pre-colonial South Africa did not formalise or legalise this process. In *Women and Inheritance in Sub-Saharan Africa: What Can Change?* (2012), South African anthropologist Elizabeth Cooper (2012:641) notes that, "Inheritance is a critical mode of property transfer in many sub-Saharan African countries" and this process changed with the

effect of colonisation and later apartheid. The colonisation of Africa impacted these practices. The Dutch introduced a system of registering inheritance within South Africa as a practice they imported.

This practice is important as it countered the massively restrictive laws regarding women's homeownership. Custodianship is a measure in which family members can entrust each other with the custody of the family home, a responsibility that is often not entrusted to women, especially married women. South African Anthropologist Nigel Crawhall (2015:120) defines custodianship as "the belief that an individual or network of humans has feelings in relation to a particular territory, seascape or landscape, which lead her/him/them to conserve, protect and/or sustainably use the territory". Custodianship, in this case, becomes a measure that remedies that inequality. Crawhall (2015:121) affirms that custodianship is an option in a family system in which alternative practices strengthen women's tenure opportunities. Similarly, Hellemann (2021:96) notes that custodianship is a legal system used by women in Fingo Village to transfer home ownership from one family member to another. Fingo village became an area of interest because the women in this village were able to inherit the land. This is due to the Inheritance Act of South Africa. The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998 and the Administration Act of 1986 are two crucial laws that determine how land is inherited in protected areas in South Africa. Hellemann (2021:46) states that, "Women in traditional leadership roles challenged gender discrimination in customary practices by amending the 1998 Customary Marriages Act to include women's rights to status, property and decision making within the family unit".

Historical examples such as Cato Manor and Fingo Village not only give us a look into the past, but they also are examples of past homescaping practices, which can be quite instrumental in understanding women's landownership now. Further discourse also highlights in part how some aspects of land reform and access to homeownership in post-Apartheid South Africa have been, and can be, achieved. Ngcukaitobi (2020) and Mutangadura (2019), through their research, indicate that an evaluation of customary law is needed to include women in the traditional decision-making structures in rural communities.

In the next chapter, I will be discussing the practical works that were made for the exhibition, as well as the themes that inform the works, giving insight into how I, as an artist, interpret the notion of homescaping.

CHAPTER TWO

The house was never quiet. Each Sunday, when we arrived, we were greeted by uGogo. She would be crocheting the latest addition to her unyielding collection of crocheted doilies. She always sat under the shade of the towering mango tree with a half-drunk cup of tea. From above, the birds serenaded us as they peered into the over-ripe mango that hung like boozy Christmas garlands in the powder blue after the glaze of the summer sky. Beneath our feet lay the loamy terracotta soil, unreal and unmatched by any fine paint that occasionally bursts out an earthy musk. This soil is what our ancestors walked on, and we walk on it together in crocheted steps. Home is not necessarily a place … This is a story of our homes.

This chapter discusses my body of work produced as part of the exhibition *Homescapes: Spaces between Home and eKhaya* (2024) in partial fulfilment of the Master of Arts in Fine Arts degree, which explores the practice of homescaping visually. Here, I examine how the aesthetics I presented could embody notions of homescaping, discussing the visual material I produced for the exhibition, as well as the thematic frameworks of the artwork. To propose and compare notions of homescaping, I consider this analysis of my works in conversation with Sara Ahmed's *Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology* (2006) and Stephanie Springgay's 'Knitting as an Aesthetic of Civic Engagement: Re-conceptualising Feminist Pedagogy through Touch' (2010).

The notion of homescaping in the context of my visual practice and this paper is unambiguous. In this chapter, I use the terms 'homemaking', 'place-making' and 'homescaping'; however, these terms are not interchangeable. Placemaking is related to the urban and regional planning and the design considerations of urban policy. The design assumes a central role in urban renewal programs, indicating the potential for greater urban spatial justice. In their seminal text, "Place-making or Place-masking? In the Everyday Political Economy of "Making a Place" (2016) by Ruth Fincher, Maree Pardy and Kate Shaw, the scholars critique the role of government and the private sector in community development and examine the contemporary discourses around place-making. Fincher, Pardy and Shaw state that:

> Professional place-makers have a credible history of facilitating community participation in the creation of new visions for urban space. The knowledge base, tools

> and principles developed by place makers demonstrate the possibilities of socially equitable urban projects (Fincher, Pardy and Shaw, 2016:519).

Place-making is a discourse that is more about the public sphere than the private sphere. A discourse that is more concerned with the private sphere is homemaking. Homemaking is envisioned for an established community, while placemaking envisions an imagined community.

In 'Victorian Women's Role and the Concept of Home as Expressed Through Aesthetics' (1988), American historian Marilyn Casto (1988:38) notes that homemaking has its roots in the colonial era, specifically the Victorian era. In the Victorian era, homemaking, as a practice, would spread to the colonies as a way of spreading the standards of empire and the colonial standards or status quo. One such colonial standard was the use of ornaments like the doily, which were placed on furniture in homes as décor. These ornaments have found their way into the post-colonial environment, recalling the copious decoration of homemaking ubiquitous in the Victorian era. Crocheted doilies, in particular, are a common ornament that has carried on through time. These decorative mats are usually made of cloth or paper, while the better-quality ones are made of cotton or linen thread generally used for knitting and crocheting. When reflecting on Victorian homes, Casto (1988:40) states that, "It was in the parlour that most home-crafted items were displayed. As the only item likely to be seen by all visitors, the impression created was vital … It was certainly the showcase for the female's homemaking abilities". I found the similarity that Victorian homes have in relation to the homes that I had been in when I was younger fascinating.

I am fascinated with doilies and the way that their presence has traversed the memories of home from generation to generation. When I think of my grandmother's home, I consider how she decorated it with crochet doilies in various shades of white. She had table runners in deep blues and reds. The doilies in my grandmother's house were made by hand. My grandmother painstakingly crocheted them in her free time when she was not working or at church. In her house, the doilies were precious, and as children, we were to never move or touch the doilies. The doilies in my mother's house were not handmade. My mother bought them from MamKhi, a woman who would come into the neighbourhood every Sunday to sell her crocheted creations. MamKhi would move from gate to gate, patiently waiting for the kids to answer and summon the mothers to appear; she was often invited to sit for a cup of tea while the mothers perused her extensive collection of doilies. MamKhi sold doilies and other knitted items made

by her and other women from her hometown. MamKhi was from Zimbabwe, and the doilies she sold travelled from her hometown through the borders of South Africa to find their final home in Durban.

Decorative doilies and their varied textures have a long history which varies from country to country. A doily is not only a decorative object but also a cultural one. In South Africa, its presence in the home helps to construct and affirm a home's identity and personal expression. I chose to recontextualise the doily as a crucial touchpoint of the home beyond its decorative nature. In looking back at the doily I often considered it ugly and sometimes useless, so much so that I habitually requested permission from my mother to throw it away. The doily resonated with me as an ornament that could fully encompass and evoke the homes I had lived in.

Significantly, doily-making should be considered as a feminist art or artmaking process. Although it is not a physical scoping, it is a pseudo-mapping. It denotes the passing down of knowledge and the results of that knowledge. Needlework, especially, conveys the everyday experiences of some women within the domestic sphere as reflected in the soft furnishings around the home but also as a 'countercultural production' (Emery 2019:113)[17] that operates outside of the male gaze. In 'Subversive Stitches: Needlework as Activism in Australian Feminist Art of the 1970s', Elizabeth Emery explores crocheting as a feminist art-making tool, she says that:

> The exploration of the domestic in feminist art gave representational form to the feminist ethos of 'the personal is political' by making visible the connection between the personal, lived experience and the political sphere. Through making the domestic visible in visual art, feminist art of the 1970s transformed the abject domestic space into a wholly political space; it politicised the domestic sphere as a signifier of women's lived experience (Emery, 2019:105).

That is to say, doilies reflect women's lived experiences, especially within the homescape, which is a politicised space. It is important to consider the process of decoration as a type of refusal in itself, a type of self-affirmation in a space that is both personal and political.[18]

[17]Elizabeth Emery (2019: 113) notes that for "feminist textile artists, needlework was considered a form of countercultural production that was free from the association of the commercial, male-dominated art world".
[18] This idea comes from Carol Hanisch's 1970 essay on "The Personal is Political" (1970).

Art historians Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock question why there seem to be no 'great' women artists. Parker and Pollock argue that:

> Moreover, the very concept of genius, of greatness, was itself gendered masculine. Having accepted these problems, feminism could then extend its critique of all forms of social exclusion and challenge the discipline of Art History itself at its ideological core, contesting the ideal of the autonomous, self-determining artist as genius and the notion of the autonomy of art free from all social and historical determinations (Parker and Pollock, 2013:xviii).

There is, consequently, the assumption that works that deal with, or utilise, crochet and needlework are either 'domestic' or 'feminine'. There is a delineation in the visual arts that has historically relegated certain types of artmaking as 'women's work'. This is either to disregard this work intentionally or unintentionally and, therefore, has either been ignored or left out of the conversation when defining what 'fine art' is. Emery states:

> that needlework was positioned as a source of women's creativity and knowledge produced within the oppressive conditions of the domestic. Historically associated with submissiveness, repetition and unoriginality, needlework signified the denigration of women's work by male-centred culture (Emery, 2019:106).

These definitions are rather suited to the patriarchal definition of art. In contrast, many feminist artists have used textiles as art forms as a means of thinking through new ideologies, as a form of recontextualising needlework.

Needlework as a creative dialectic is not only storytelling but is an apt choice when considered as a point of departure in counter-cultural production. For instance, one can use doilies to theorise migrancy. 'Migration' and 'migrancy' are interlinked terms but not necessarily the same things. Sara Ahmed (1999) argues that migrancy is a prolonged migration or a migration from place to place, which is often linked to socio-political themes. Migrancy, as opposed to migration, is involuntary and is forced upon people. Ahmed says that:

> Migration becomes a metaphor for the very process of dislocation: this act of metaphorizing migration, in some sense, repeats the very process of migration, which involves a dislocation from a place. In this sense, to use migration as a metaphor is to migrate from migration, such that it becomes an impossible metaphor that no longer

> refers to the dislocation from a place but dislocation as such (though already dislocated) (Ahmed, 1999:332).

Crocheting practice and its cultural influences in South Africa can be considered as a migrancy practice. I observe crochet as possessing a larger role as a cultural and/or empirical object in Africa and the African Diaspora. In 'African Women's Entrepreneurship and Cultural Production: The Case of Crocheters and Knitters in Southern Africa' (2006), Mary J. Osirim's (2006) research amongst crocheters and knitters in Southern Africa shows that women have ventured into the informal sector especially in Zimbabwe, where the majority of knitting and crocheting businesses are owned and operated by women. Thus, women's needlework can be regarded as a transcultural practice across the African continent and the African diaspora, signified by the widespread creation and usage of the crochet doily within numerous groups of the diaspora. This could also be seen as what Paul Gilroy defines as the 'Black Atlantic' as "a culture that is not specifically African, American, Caribbean, or British, but all of these at once" (Gilroy, 1993:34).

In this exchange within Africa and the African diaspora, the doily takes the form of a cultural object that recurs in different regions. Batik fabrics are also similarly found across the diaspora as an object of cultural tendency. Luda Lemi (2024:2) states that "The history of African textiles dates back to the pre-colonial era. The academic literature in this area indicates that the contemporary African textiles are the result of the European imitation of the original Javanese Batik fabrics developed as early as the sixteenth century". These fabrics were initially a colonial invention but have been re-conceptualised in the post-colonial period. South Africa and Zimbabwe are postcolonial nation-states that demonstrate a continuous and thriving exchange. The movement and sale of crochet fabrics is one of the indicated points of trade or movement, not just between the two countries but certainly across the rest of southern Africa. In 'Trading Places: Cross-Border Traders and the South African Informal Sector' (1998), Jonathan Crush and Sally Pederby reflect on informal trading systems between South Africa and Zimbabwe and that the "Traders in Harare and key informants said that women traders also bring 'traditional dresses'" to South Africa.

The Role of Memory in Homescaping

While it is important to consider the social practices that render value to works created by women, it is paramount to also consider needlework as an art form that is deeply embodied and

carries a significant emotional register. When I think back on the women in my family who knitted while laughing or talking, those memories are imbued for me into the fabric of the objects they created. That object is, in a sense, a marker of that moment, of that memory. In *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (1999), Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer discuss memory and the role of memory in the art-making process. Bal, Crewe, and Spitzer state that:

> Memories do not allow the distinction between private and public. What is at stake here is cultural memory as an alternative to traditional history on the one hand and as an alternative to private subjectivism and uncontrollable self-indulgence on the other. Memory is a function of subjectivity. Cultural memory is collective, yet, by definition, subjective (Bal, Crewe and Spitzer, 1999:180).

More importantly, this memory is a collaboration between the personal and social history of their placement and the politics of home.

In Chapter 1 I reflected on phallogocentric terms for 'home' within the isiZulu language. I noted the terms that centre on male figures and have roots in colonial ideas of what a Zulu 'homeland' ought to be. Unlike the phallogocentric words that intertwined South African and colonial ideologies at the time, here I look at re-institution (reconstruction) as a decolonial option offered by French philosopher Jacques Derrida. The term 'deconstruction' is a theory that has extended beyond philosophy into art theory and film. Derrida's works explore and critique grammatology, writing, speech and phenomena. His theory is a critique of the oeuvre of Western philosophy, which needs deconstruction and reconstruction to be properly interpreted. This deconstruction subverts and seeks to destroy "violent hierarchies" (Derrida et al, 2017:lxxvii) and structures of dominance that manifest themselves in language and logocentric languages. Derrida (1992:24) states that, "A decision that did not go through the ordeal of the undecidable would not be a free decision, it would only be the programmable application or unfolding of a calculable process".

It is this idea of space giving life that is the practical work for this research. It is important to note that these works were not only made during my Masters degree research, but as experiments and performances that took place in conferences, exhibitions or during my participation in artist programmes. I staged my final exhibition, *Homescapes: Spaces between Home and eKhaya*, at Wits University's Department of Fine Art project space, The Point of Order Project Space (TPO), in March 2024. There were three major zones of the exhibition,

which were representative of the three types of homes I have been meditating on for this research. These three zones are my mother's home, my ancestral home (i.e., my dad's family home) and my maternal grandmother's home. They are respectively zoned as spaces one, two and three in the image below (Fig 1).

Storytelling Sessions

At the beginning of my research journey, I considered the role narrative would play in my research, whether it be storytelling sessions or listening to the stories of the women in my family. This allowed me to pose questions I had not previously had the opportunity to ask. These sessions opened up a generative conversation, especially after I heard segments of the respective stories of the women in my family. I was now able to finally piece those stories together for my aunt and grandmother, who had both passed away before I began this research.

The storytelling sessions were held in Durban and in Pietermaritzburg. I initially wanted to do video recordings for these sessions, but during the sessions, we mutually agreed to only record audio. Snippets of these recordings are included in the audio of one of the installations in the exhibition. I asked the question: *Could you share with me the story of how you built your home?* The responses to this question were illuminating but resulted in a few supplementary questions and insights. I was not prepared for the kinds of emotions and deeper secrets that this question carried. The weight of these emotions resulted in only snippets being used as an attempt to preserve privacy. In the brief for the storytelling sessions, I proposed that we crochet together during the sessions. We ended up conducting the sessions while running errands and doing household tasks. These errands and tasks were distractions from time to time but, in some instances, worked as interludes and a brief breather; instead of making needlework pieces together, I was given a few crochet and lace pieces by different family participants that I used as part of the main lace runner in the exhibition. Even though we didn't practice it, the idea of 'crocheting together' in this instance created a Black feminist space, which was the kind of feeling and intention I wanted to encapsulate in my exhibition.

Some of the ideas that came up during the session were about the women's memories in relation to their home area, their experience homescaping and how their relationship with family is now that they have built homes in this space. In one of the sessions I asked one of the participants the following questions:

L: Why did you chose to build a home in kwaSwayimane?

P: I wanted to build a home where my ancestors are. The soil here has carried four generations of our family. From here I can see where I played with my cousins and where my aunt had umembeso[19]. uMa used to say, 'a home is what you teach your daughters inside and what you sons do outside'.

L: Now that you have finished building and making a home, what would you say if your daughters wanted to build homes here as well?

P: I do not think so. They say rural life is peaceful, but it can be dangerous. We are here because we were pushed out elsewhere. I would tell them the truth about this place when they can understand.

I chose not to make these voices overly explicit (and allowed participants to remain anonymous), but instead allowed them to emerge through creative expression. While the voice is important in research, creativity gives us the ability to create and claim spaces where voices are not always clearly heard but rather creatively expressed. This does not diminish or take away from the value of the research but rather offers points of departure where the voice can emerge without needing to quote people in specific ways. These discussions and the voices that surface in more subtle or unclear forms reflect a kind of subversion, similar to how women often speak in shared, intimate spaces.

Decolonial scholars Mtisunge Isabel Kamlongera, Mkotama Katenga-Kaunda and Alinane Kamlongera Katenga-Kaunda examine the different methodology of working with communities in research. In the article 'De(coloniality) and Voice in Research From/In the 'South': Reflections from Field Experiences Using a Participant-centered Methodology (2024), they discuss research in communities in Malawi, reflecting on the decolonisation of knowledge creation noting that scholarship in Africa should "refrain from portraying Africa in terms of deficiency by showcasing the continent's complexities" (Kamlongera, Katenga-Kauda and Katenga-Kaunda, 2024:42), which I believe art-making allows.

The Exhibition: *Homescapes: Spaces between Home and eKhaya*

[19] A traditional Zulu wedding gift ceremony.

My artist statement for my final exhibition read as follows:

> *What worlds can words make?* Homescapes: Spaces between Home and eKhaya *considers this question and the intricate and time-honoured art of homemaking. This work explores the beauty and fragility of home and family life and the laws that restrict it. Through a combination of visual and auditory elements, I capture the essence of these ideas and convey their emotional or even cultural significance. This work intertwines concepts that have been central to the human experience for centuries. I aim to create a dreamlike atmosphere as an invitation to contemplate home and daily life, to find meaning and beauty in the practices of homemaking, to appreciate the value of traditions and practices, and to question what makes a home.*
>
> *What words do sounds make? The auditory experience is a massive part of the home space and the Homescape by excavation, in the construction of the home or just the evidence and the feeling of labour. What sounds tap into the feelings of home, and how do we experience it from a very sensory perspective as opposed to the actual making of a home?*

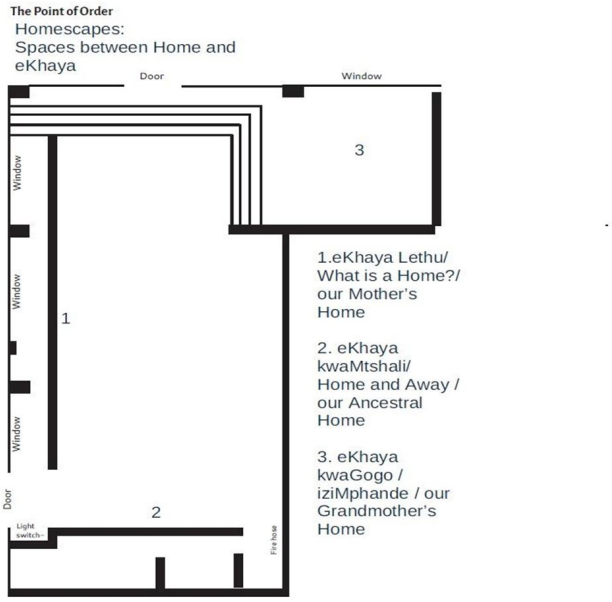


Fig 1: Londiwe Mtshali, *Homescapes Map* (2024)

I examined desire and the role of desire in belonging and feeling at home in the works I presented for my exhibition. I also wanted to ponder on the feeling of in-betweenness and the haziness evoked by the feeling of not quite arriving at home. The installation was meant to play

on this feeling of haziness and liminality. It was, therefore, important to have an immersive display that projected warmth through colour alongside tangible and intangible objects. The installation consisted of a five-metre-long fabric composed of a patchwork of crocheted tablecloths and lace table runners with a video artwork that plays on repeat. All the video works needed to match the colour of the clay installed throughout the exhibition. In one of the videos, a piece of clay on a wooden surface is continuously struck with a hammer until it breaks into smaller pieces. The rhythm of the hammering is projected via the audio accompanying the video.



Fig 2: Londiwe Mtshali, *Homescapes Spaces between Home and eKhaya* (2024)

An initial staging of the installation occurred in 2023 at the University of the Witwatersrand Department of Fine Arts seminar space in the Es' kia Mphahlele Building postgraduate seminar space (EMB-7). The installation was presented as a maze-like shape that encouraged the audience to walk into it, with the maze headed towards the audio and the video of the hammered clay. EMB-7 is a much smaller space compared to TPO, which is three to four times larger. Considering the size difference between the EMB-7 space and TPO, it was important to continue the sense of intimacy I had created with the maze in the first staging of the project. I intended for the installation to be an immersive exhibition so as to carry through a sense of

intimacy that is present and can be sensed in the home space and as part of the practice of homescaping.

I tapped into the feelings of home and how it is experienced sensorially as opposed to the physical making of a home, like furnishing or homemaking. In my opinion, an important aspect of my practice and, by extension, the exhibition was the work's ability to create moments of recognition. These moments of familiarity with the objects are major symbols of home, specifically the doilies as ubiquitous signifiers in the homes I lived in or visited when I was younger. I chose lace as a medium because it's related to fabric-making and needlework - doilies themselves are a type of needlework, and they cover various surfaces in the home. The lace started as a tool for play, as a way to ruminate on the kind of memories I have of the home. The softness is present in both its furnishings and as an object used in homes for covering, shrouding and privacy. Lace became a medium I could mould into different forms, and I could utilise its softness to drape and sculpt in soft textures. It is the obstruction and shrouding use of this material that interested me as a visual motif. This play between shrouding and obscuring is inherent in its utility. This practice of privacy is interesting as it is a type of curtain (commercial net curtains would, in later years, become a replacement for crocheted/knitted curtains due to the evolution of textiles in South Africa and is a reflection of the effect of socio-economic changes that occurred in the post-colony, thus, influencing how homes were/are furnished). This was a point of interest because the moniker 'nets' is used to describe the fabric used as a sheer curtain.

The central lace work, which dominated and obstructed the windows of the TPO exhibition, was about ten metres long and made up of a patchwork of lace and table runners from different homes belonging to my family. Patched together, they created a map. The mapping project is ongoing, and at the time of the exhibition, it consisted of nine different pieces. Thinking through the materiality of net curtains or fabric presented a challenge - I had to choose the lace and the crocheted works that were important. Some of the fabrics were found objects, and others were store-bought. It had to be apparent that the doily works were not made for this exhibition but specifically sourced as part of my research methodology. My objects were not really 'found' but rather borrowed. The term 'found objects' that I use in this research differs from Western anthropological connotations and its relative use in the fine arts. Art historian Margaret Iversen (2014:48) states that, "The found object shares with the readymade. A lack of obvious aesthetic quality and little intervention on the part of the artist beyond putting the

object in circulation, but in almost every other respect, it is dissimilar"[20]. This kind of borrowing is endemic to the interactions in families and communities and is, sometimes, a cultural practice. Some families prepare the home for the brides as they are about to move into their marital homes. The items in these homes might be brand new, or they have been handed down from generation to generation, making this new home and its matriarch a custodian of said objects.

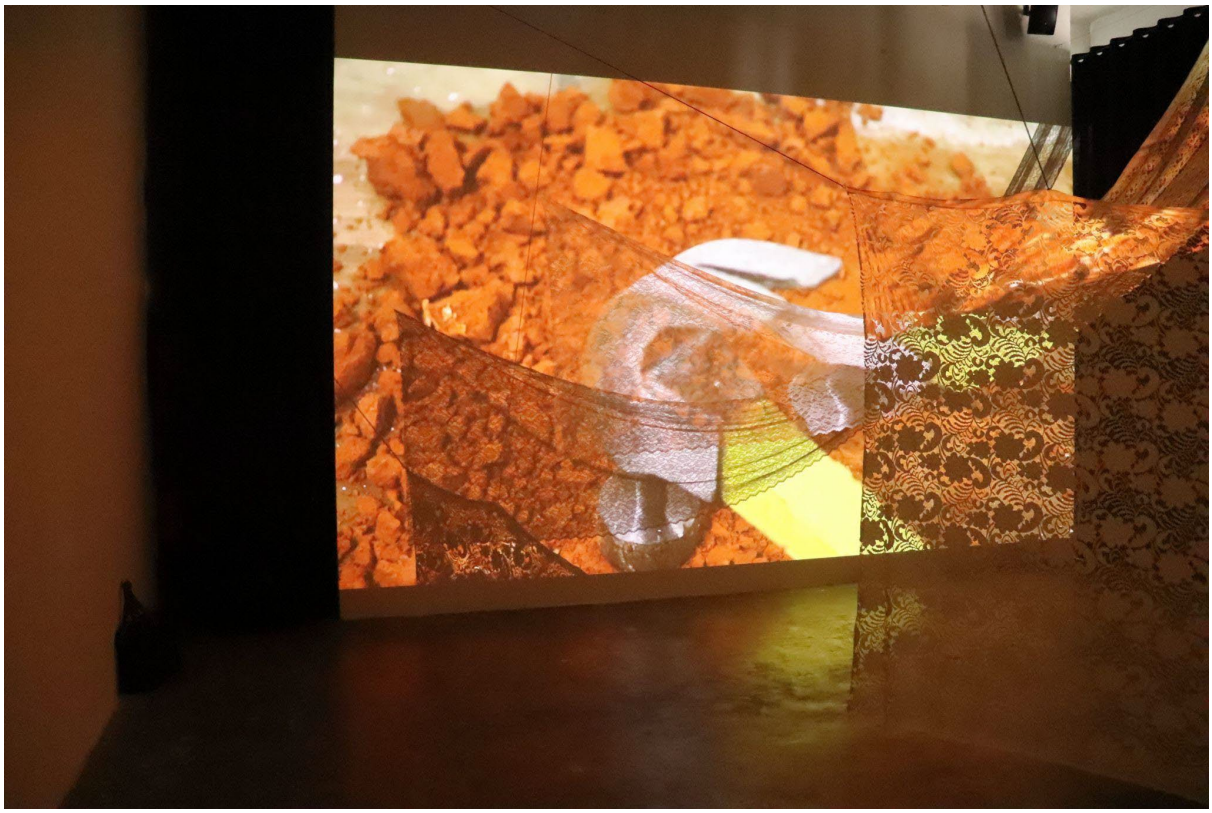


Fig 3: Londiwe Mtshali, *Homescapes Spaces between Home and eKhaya* (2024)

The reorientation of the fabrics in my practice was crucial to framing TPO and creating three definitive zones, thereby using the lace as more than a curtain but as a marker of division. The lace draping runs from one side of the building to the other but is still visible from all areas. It also asks that the audience find their orientation in this space according to how they navigate objects. Ahmed questions our orientation to objects, engaging with the discourse of object ontology. She states that,

[20] The term 'readymade' was coined by Micheal Duchamp, who created work using manufactured objects and re-interpreting and modifying them in art. Steven Goldsmith (1983:197) notes that "the readymade held their status as artworks, usually categorised as sculpture and since have become the central hurdle over which any attempt to define art must leap".

> Orientations involve different ways of registering the proximity of objects and others. Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space but also how we apprehend this world of shared inheritance, as well as "why" or "what" we direct our energy and attention toward. A queer phenomenology, perhaps, might start by redirecting our attention towards different objects, those that are "less proximate" or even those that deviate or are deviant (Ahmed, 2006:3).

Ahmed (2006:27) also states, "We are turned toward things. Such things make an impression on us. We perceive them as things as far as they are near to us, as far as we share a residence with them". So, we turn towards doilies as objects, objects that shape how we see our spaces or the spaces of those around us. Considering the initial function of doilies as a protective covering, the doilies have moved from generation to generation as a skill but also as heirlooms and cultural objects. For example, a crocheted blanket that has been handed down from a grandmother to her granddaughter finds its place as a table runner in a new home.

It is because of this redirection of our attention that I constructed a space where the sounds and the videos come together to be representative of the labour involved in the construction of home spaces. These videos and images of the home as a residential place and as a site of memory act as obstructions to access. However, this does not mean that by obstructions, I wanted them to be actual visual things that take away the ability to see; rather, I wanted to enhance the gaze of the viewer's perspective using the doilies as a lens through which to peer.

Ahmed (2006) makes the argument that familiarity is shaped by the feeling of a space and how this space:

> Impresses upon our bodies. This familiarity is not 'in' the world in the same way that it is given to us. Familiarity is a result of inheritance; we are made familiar by the actions imbued in objects within our grasp. The act of inhabiting space requires the negotiation between the familiar and the unfamiliar to create new impressions depending on which way we turn. This affects what is within reach. Familiarity denotes a known experience or object; it alludes to a kind of intimate knowledge inherent in homes (Ahmed 2006:7).

I wanted to explore the kinds of intimate knowledge and familiarity that are offered by objects within the home, while considering the home as a familiar space, using familiar objects in a manner that reorientates and evokes the memory of homescapes. The materiality of lace helps ground the work in the act of looking through the familiar. The labour of women itself is

prevalent within the detailed lacework, and this is achieved through the way a room feels or how it is imprinted on bodies, thereby shaping familiarity. Therefore, this familiarity is not present in the world as something that is presumptive but is made present. There is value to the way the presence of the lace and the video work alter a space constructed by the labour of women that many of us take for granted in our homescape. Ultimately, I wanted the *Homescapes* exhibition to project intimacy. To do this, I included as much white lace and warm, earthy light as possible from the videos. This counteracted the coldness of the white walls and concrete features that make up TPO's white cube exhibition space.



Fig 4: Londiwe Mtshali, *Homescapes Spaces between Home and eKhaya* (2024)

Homescaping Spaces between Home and eKhaya

In Zulu culture, the home belongs to either the wife or children. The home is seen as built for a family and one's father as opposed to belonging to oneself. In isiZulu, the phrase "Wakha umuzi kaNkosikazi wakho" ("build a house for your wife") refers to the women in the family as custodians of the house and the traditions and customs in it. Sanni Abba Aliyu, a Nigerian scholar who explores African languages and literature, reflects on the role of women in the passing down of knowledge. Aliyu states that:

> African women are the guardians of traditional knowledge and leaders in resistance struggles. Women's art of traditional teaching through storytelling, riddles, proverbs, and idioms is as ancient as the people themselves. Most African societies acknowledge the fact that oral traditional teachings facilitate the inculcation of socially desirable values such as hard work, honesty, thrift, and wisdom (Aliyu, 1997:134).

Through storytelling, women pass on the wisdom of African cultures and knowledge systems generationally. There are people I know who have done homescaping and who are notable homescapers in my family, so it was important to have conversations with them about their experiences. In my research, the works I made have a dominant theme of memory but also focus on individual experiences in this place called 'home'. In the installation of *Homescapes*, I tried to link those kinds of homes and map between the kinds of experiences and symbols endemic to those memories. The exhibition was saturated with stories, and I made sure to have storytelling sessions with a few of my family members, as well as my exhibition collaborators. The sessions were held with:

MamGugu, 59, who is an older woman relative

MamVuna, 53, who is my aunt

MamJuku, 48, who is my woman neighbour

For this research, I wanted to focus on more embodied ways of thinking and consider the relationship between touch and knowledge. In my first intervention at the Wits School of Arts (WSOA) Student-Led Conference in 2022, I performed *What is A Home?* (2022). In the performance, I asked the audience a few questions that were designed to interrogate the definitions of certain words and themes of home - for example, I asked the following questions:

What is your favourite colour?

What does it taste like?

What does it sound like?

What is a home?

What colour is home?

What does home taste like?

In this performance, I wanted to strip down the understanding of certain words and their meanings, to meditate on the ways we contextualise the embodied knowledge in language. Embodied knowledge is a school of thought that has its origins in philosophy as an offshoot of phenomenology. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work on phenomenology, ontology perception and embodiment frames embodied pieces of knowledge as knowledge that is based on one perception. "I observe external objects with my body, I handle them, examine them, walk around them, but my body itself is a thing which I do not observe to be able to do so, I should need the use of a second body which itself would be unobservable" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945:104). Merleau-Ponty highlights the fundamental difference between body-as-subject and body-as-object, which suggests that body-as-subject can be experienced as opposed to being experienced as an object. This relates to how South Africans have come to the various definitions of home. In everyday colloquial speech in South Africa, there is a distinction between 'home' and 'home-home'. This doubling up of language signifies an ancestral/original home that might be distinctive from where you live every day.

As stated previously, there are different understandings of the term 'home' in isiZulu. In the performance *What is A Home?* the members of the audience rely on their conceptions of home by tapping into their memories as opposed to relying on the definitions of words. This is prompted by the presence of one word projected on a dark screen so that the audience is allowed to focus on their own memories and sensory responses. Stephanie Springgay's 'Knitting as an Aesthetic of Civic Engagement: Re-conceptualising Feminist Pedagogy through Touch' (2010) notes the difference between knowledge and embodied knowledge, stating that:

> The differences between the following two turns of phrase signify how Western thought has constructed knowledge as separate from and in opposition to the body. "I see" has commonly connoted knowing or understanding, while "I feel" is often associated with intuitive knowing, which has historically been condemned as ridiculous and dismissed as trivial (Springgay, 2010:119).

Above, Springgay notes that the separation between subject and object is a result of the autonomous subject, where touch becomes the contact sensor for the provision of access to an object. That is how conscious awareness of the senses alters how we perceive an object. It is these relational feelings that are key to the question of what a home is. One of the successful moments of the exhibition was the way I managed to fill up a large space, which resulted in a disorientating experience that aimed to break this subject-object dichotomy. From the feedback

I received during the exhibition, it was a bonding experience to have those different spaces represented by things that we are not always aware of. Towards the end of the installation of the exhibition, people aiding me with the installation, as well as the people whom I was talking through my ideas with, responded emotively to the material I had produced. These responses were illuminating revelations, introspections and thoughts, adding to the kinds of conversations that were raised while the work was being formulated and enriching the dialogue about the work. While I was steadfast about providing a space for people to meditate on homescaping and consider the themes of the work, I avoided being didactic as I wanted to draw attention to homescaping without over-explaining and over-illustrating my perspective on home ownership and belonging. So, it was incredible to witness and engage in conversations with people on the public opening night of the exhibition. The responses from people were aligned with what the work spoke to, and they also resonated with the crochet. The audience reminisced about their memories of the homes that they grew up in, and they were able to acknowledge the homescapers in their families.



Fig 5: Londiwe Mtshali, *Homescapes: Spaces between Home and eKhaya* (2024)

Of particular interest were the conversations about how the clay had been broken down in the main video. This part reminded one audience member of the way paint is made, and it also reminded another audience member of how firewood is broken down. People also remarked on

the familiarities that home brings. Of particular interest for me were conversations with people younger than me, who resonated with the draping they were seeing in *Homescapes. It* reminded them of their grandmother's homes or of homes they had lived in throughout their childhoods. Those conversations felt like the success of what I had envisioned for *Homescapes: Spaces between Home and eKhaya*. Even the trivial meandering in the space along the main line of the installation showed how it became a space facilitating these conversations.

eKhaya kwaMtshali / Home and Away/ Our Ancestral Home was presented in Space 2. When you walk into the exhibition, you are met first with the sound of striking and hammering sounds, gradually rising to a crescendo in a deafening banging sound. Two adjoining large lace works hover between the high ceiling and the floor. The larger lace work extends until it touches the wall that houses the main projection you first encounter when you walk in. This projection is a video of a hammer that floats over a ball of clay - this hammer strikes the clay until it is powder with the audio of this striking sound. On the right is a projection of a more abstract video of sand and clay moving as if from the perspective of someone walking. This video contains the sounds from the storytelling sessions with the women's voices fading in and out from time to time - occasionally, a voice is heard posing the question, "What is a home?" On the left is a still image of crochet work covered in clay on top of icansi[21], which is accompanied by audio of my mother and my aunt speaking. On the floor is a circular crocheted work made up of multiple small doilies of wool splayed out on the ground and the audio is emitted from the centre doily. In this work I wanted to relate deeply to the process of construction and deconstruction. The work was a meditation on the process of making, with an emphasis on the process of breaking to create something different, as well as how destruction is a necessary part of meditation. It was necessary to make sure that the video work had a tempo that matched the work that was being replicated, a gnawing sound of distant construction works. The sound is present and constant, a humming noise that gets louder and louder with each break. Towards the end of the video, the surface begins to shake.

The *eKhaya* video opened and ended with a shot of the clay as a powder. The reason for the open-end looped video is to link back to the word 'eKhaya', which links back to so many others. Therefore, the work lends itself more to the theme of construction and deconstruction as opposed to the theme of deconstruction and reconstruction. Another crucial departure is the sound; notably without any voice or story but just the sound of the hammer striking the clay,

[21] In isiZulu, it is the name for a grass mat made from reed, often with decorative weaving.

relying on the echo of the strikes and the tempo to perform the aspect of construction and deconstruction.

In my practical work, I wanted to create a link between the installation works and building materials such as soil, materials that are almost synonymous with house and building. The colour sienna is a reddish-brown pigment that is derived from the earth. Sienna gets its reddish-brown hue from the naturally occurring iron oxide and manganese oxide. The pigment takes its name from the city where it was produced during the Renaissance. Sienna is a type of clay, a material that is taken through the industrial process and becomes paint or oxides, which are art materials.

In the next chapter, I will focus on the discussion of cultural memory and narrative in the artworks of Lerato Shadi, *Matsogo* (2013) and *Noka Ya Bokamoso* (2016), as well as Dineo Seshee Bopape's *Ile aye, moya, là, ndokh…harmonic conversions…mm* (2021), as their provocations move between the personal and the political.

CHAPTER THREE

Where is home? On the one hand, 'home'.
is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination.
In the sense that it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit.
the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'.
On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality.
Avtar Brah (1996:192)

In the opening sentence of the text *The Visual Frequency of Black Life* (2019), Tina Campt (2019:25) poses the question, "How do we think, practice, visualise, engage, theorise, story, or enact a practice of refusal?" Within the visual arts, there are a few examples of how themes of land and home are explored. This exploration is often intertwined with themes of identity, memory and the complexities of personal and collective history. Importantly, negotiating a sense of home in the public is not simply a matter of place attachment. It also has to do with appropriation, claiming visibility, recognition, and participation, if not ownership, over space. These stances do not necessarily result in progressive or inclusive agendas. In this chapter, I explore the use of allegory, which became an interesting concept when considering how Black (African) women artists incorporate this type of allegory within their work or, in a way, create an aesthetic language that speaks to the claiming of space or even homescaping.

Lerato Shadi is a South African artist who uses installation and video art to think through themes of culture, language, and memory. In this chapter, I will consider two of Shadi's works, *Matsogo* (2013) and *Noka Ya Bokamoso* (2016). Shadi's artistic interventions are a critical rereading and recontextualisation of cultural practices and family histories, challenging the audience to engage in an altered perspective. As an illustration of this, consider the following example. In *Matsogo*, a five-minute long video work, a pair of hands crumble a piece of cake onto a piece of newspaper. The video begins with a black background with the title *Matsogo* (meaning 'hands' or 'assistance' in Setswana) written in white. As the title and background begin to fade, you begin to hear a woman singing in Setswana. The woman sings for a moment as the image slowly fades in, revealing an indistinct background that slightly fades into a caramel brown, with a faint black stippling reminiscent of a newspaper or faded wallpaper. The image begins to sharpen and reveals a piece of chocolate cake that sits centrally on top of the

newspaper. Once the newspaper is visible the camera's focus sharpens and reveals the financial segment of the newspaper.

The newspaper and how it moves from blurriness to legibility lends itself to the blurred line that economic exploitation in South Africa is not always made clear or, in this instance, not fully legible. For Shadi, the cake is an unassuming object that represents something pleasurable that rests on the framework of economic exploitation in the form of paper. The representation of the cake within the theme of economics is reminiscent of Marie Antoinette's statement 'Let them eat cake' as a response to the poverty of the French population. Another point to consider is how newspapers are constructed as products of mass production and are often single-use products. Newspapers are, however, used as low-cost wallpaper or, more generally, used for decorative purposes in some South African homes, often as a replacement for vinyl or linoleum flooring. The decorative use of newspapers and the general repurposing of single-use objects is reflected upon by historian Sophie Feyder when she engages the work and portraiture of South African photographer Ronald Ngilima's[22]. Feyder (2012:21) reflects on Ngilima's photography of township lounges and interiors, stating that, "Old newspapers were also used to make Christmas garlands or as a cheaper substitute for wallpaper. Bare brick walls would be partly covered by free picture calendars bearing the name of local shops". In a panel discussion about creative theorisation, South African black feminist Betty Govinden echoes the sentiments reflected in Ngilima's work and recalls something similar within the South African Indian communities. Govinden recalls instances where she and her father used newspapers for decorative purposes, "We had a wood and iron home, and the kitchen had just shelves where you put all your enamel wear. And he [my dad, emphasis in the original quote] had a knack of folding the newspaper and cutting out dolls" (Khan, 2018:6).

Shadi's work deals with the theme of reconstruction. *Matsogo* takes the theme of reconstruction beyond the physical manipulation of the cake, which is represented by the cake being crushed in the video. This feat was achieved using two Setswana folktales, which are recited in song form. The sound in *Matsogo* is comprised of the Setswana folktales *Tselane* le *Dimo* and *Sananapo*, which oscillate at different intervals, creating a tapestry of narratives. These folktales are cautionary tales mainly taught to children. Tselane is the name of the protagonist who is eaten by a jackal after the jackal eats a hot stone to smoothen out its voice so that it sounds like Tselane's mother. *Sananapo* is a Setswana folktale about a princess who leaves her

[22] Ronald Ngilima was a prolific Black South African photographer from 1950-1978 known for capturing the lives of Black South Africans in the Township.

home to follow adventure but is never heard from again. The sound is a prologue that details stories of love, betrayal, trust, and despair. The use of these Setswana folktales and continued use of the language in the title suggests a type of closing point of understanding for non-Setswana speakers. Shadi's use of Setswana, without providing a translation, can be seen not only as an act of refusal but also as a kind of cryptic storytelling, which relates to how these folktales are often told.

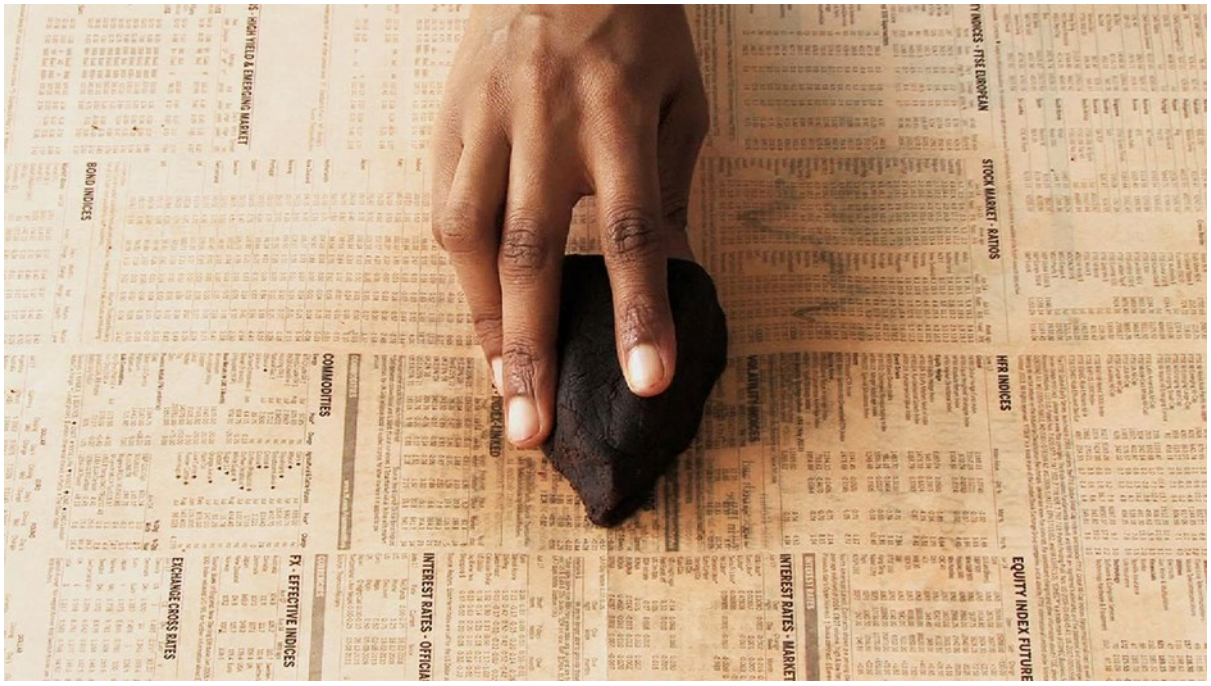


Fig 6: Lerato Shadi, *Matsogo* (2013)

Although the folktales in the video are in Setswana, there are alternate versions of *Tselane le Dimo* and *Sananapo* in other South African languages, but the character's names may vary. The use of folktales within *Matsogo* can be considered as a type of warning or cautionary tale. Prior research conducted by Christian Themba Msimang (1991) and Ncamsile Makhambeni (1986) cites cautionary tales as stories or allegories that are shared by a select group of people. This type of storytelling incorporates oral traditions. Additionally, in the book *Theatre in Botswana: A Study of Traditional and Modern Forms*, literary scholar Thulaganayo Mogobe (1995:38) examines mainane[23] (Setswana folktales) in Botswana. Mogobe also cites traditional

[23] A Setswana term for 'folktales'.

oral narration in Setswana as a method to educate children and instill cultural and moral values. In these cautionary tales, the protagonists can escape their circumstances if they are obedient.

While considering the use of cautionary tales and folktales and their role in society, we need to consider the role of a subject in relation to that of disobedience in society. In her book *Wilful Subjects* (2014), Sara Ahmed uses the Grimm brothers' story of the *Wilful Child* to illustrate how wilfulness is an act of persistence. In this story, a child is disobedient and refuses to heed her mother's warnings. The mother beats the child's arm with a rod until her death, but even in death, the arm continues to reach up, "Wilfulness is thus compromising; it compromises the capacity of a subject to survive, let alone flourish" (Ahmed, 2012:2). Ahmed views 'wilfulness' as an act of disobedience or refusal towards authority.

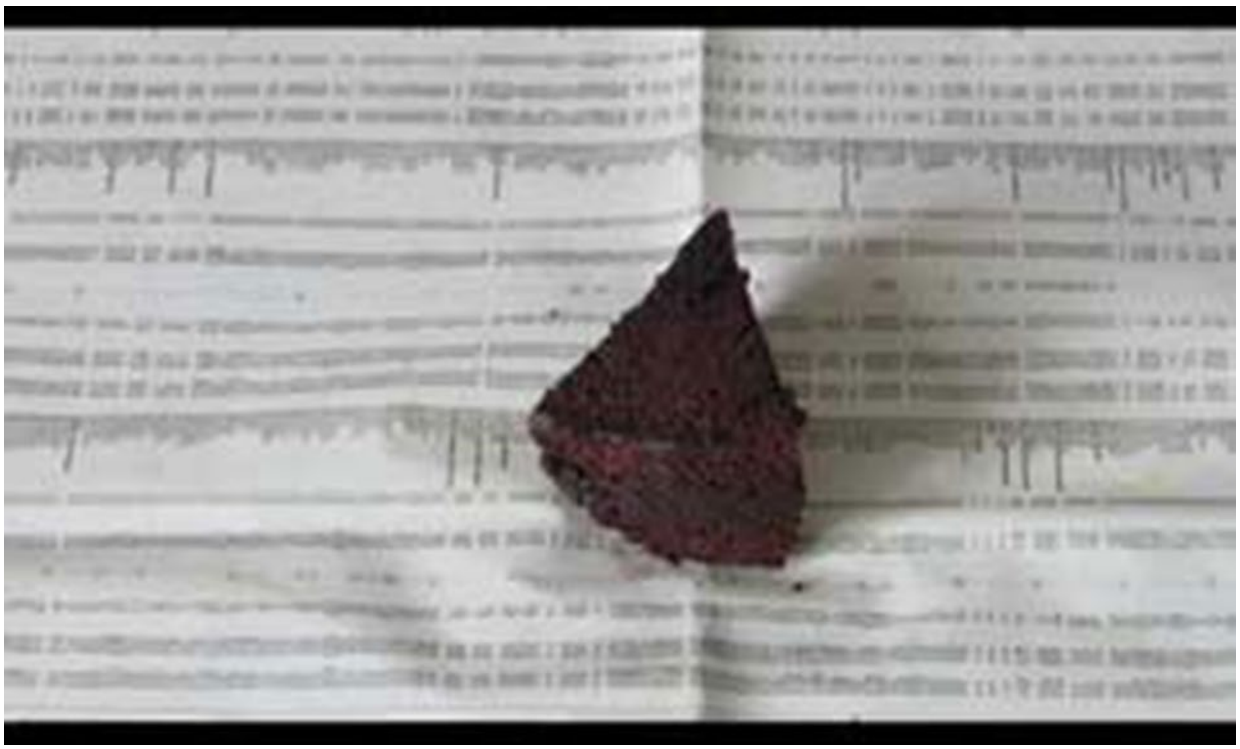


Fig 7: Lerato Shadi, *Matsogo* (2013)

In Shadi's *Matsogo*, the cake can be read as the arm of the wilful child in the *Wilful Child*. Crucially, *Matsogo* introduces the thought of what happens if the cake is not harmed but is moulded back into its original shape and is, thus, made whole. This is an option to be wilful as opposed to being the 'obedient subject'. In *Matsogo*, when the cake is reformed, the sound in the video offers different distortions of the stories, giving multiple versions of escape stories.

This distortion is a form of recuperation, a comfort offered to the audience and a feminist method of bringing the stories of Black women forward.

One may not immediately think of this as home-scaping; however, thinking of it as homescaping allows us to consider it as a type of affective worldmaking. Gender scholars Silvia Schultermandl, Jana Aresin, Si Sophie Pages Whybrew and Dijana Simić (2022:17) say that "Our notion of affective worldmaking attends to how particular affects become tangible in narratives in different media". This worldmaking is done within the literary tradition of folktales, yet the departure points from oral narration are in the form of digital manifestations and even physical spaces that offer further subversive possibilities to the oral tradition languaging. South African novelist and political activist Nadine Gordimer (1974:5) affirms the importance of telling African stories, stating that, "African writing is writing done in any language by Africans themselves and by others of whatever skin colour who share with Africans the experience of having been shaped, mentally and spiritually, by Africa rather than anywhere else in the world". Additionally, Indian feminist writer and English scholar Sharmila Sreekumar (2017:50) views feminist storytelling as the act of re-telling stories or narratives that help compound values. This type of storytelling can be shared between women relatives within a family or even between generations and across cultures. I considered whether there were other aspects of Shadi's work that could be part of a feminist visual language that reinterprets homescaping.

Being able to relate to folktales in any form that one remembers them is the evocation of the memory of the storytelling. There is an element of distortion in the evocation and performance of the memory in Shadi's works, especially the works covered in this dissertation. The narratives that are conveyed by the initial folktales are reconceptualised and manifest as multiple narratives, thus, a new memory is formed while the initial memory still exists. The evocation of the memories of *Tselane le Dimo* and *Sananapo* could be described as what African American novelist Toni Morrison calls '(re)memory'. Morrison coined the term '(re)memory' as the act of remembering that looks at time as a layered non-linear construct. In Morrison's novel *Beloved* (2007), there is a conversation between two Black women, namely Sethe (mother) and Denver (her daughter). Denver asks what Sethe is thinking, and the mother responds:

> I was talking about time. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my memory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But

> it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my (re)memory, but out there in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head (Morrison, 2007:43).

In the foregoing quote, Morrison characterises (re)memory as an act that is linked to the body and soul, and as such, memories remain to be remembered. The memory of gendered knowledge is not only linked to her but when recited and relived by Shadi, the audience witnesses an alternate version to *Tselane le Dimo* and *Sananapo*. I believe the deeper memories Shadi wants us to remember are the wounds of colonialism and our fragility and uncertainty as Africans.

In the video, the hands leave imprints on a perishable substance, the cake, while the voice creates a soundtrack of melodies that bridge traditional legacy with current significance. The newspaper's international index mistakenly discloses proof of trust, betrayals and manufactured gullibility. The kneading fingers and singing voice summon a body in sacrifice, erasure, rebellion and agency. In an interview, Shadi was asked about the importance of economics in her work, and she responded:

> I was looking at how, in 1886, the cutting up of Africa, the whole colonial structure, the control of the economics and the resources being taken away and you are given back something that is completely useless. It has a form that resembles the first one, but it is not even really the same (Shadi, 2016).

In this quote, Shadi notes the importance of considering colonial legacies in shaping post-colonial or decolonial identities. This critique of the economic and cultural structures imposed on African countries as a result of colonisation is a separation between the impact of coloniality on the economic and legal structures of a country as opposed to cultural identities in countries that are former colonies. Cameroonian historian and political theorist Achille Mbembe's *Postcolony* (2000), has a focus on post-coloniality in African societies and Black aesthetics and affirms that:

> …there persists the false dichotomy between the objectivity of structures and the subjectivity of representations—a distinction allowing all that is cultural and symbolic to be put on one side, all that is economic and material to be put on the other. The rejection of philosophical perspective is such that any basic thinking about African societies and their history is deprived of all legitimacy (Mbembe, 2000:6).

Shadi highlights the economic structures by way of the newspapers but interweaves them with the cultural folktales. Shadi's practice involves the use of different materials that convey multiple symbolic and cultural references. In *Matsogo* Shadi subverts this symbolism, creating moments of destruction and reconstruction - this is not only in the moments when the cake is crushed but also when the material is wholly altered but never completely consumed. The crumbling and remoulding of the cake creates a motif that is pieced together by the imagination of the viewers, as our minds create a rhythm between when the cake is consumable and when it is viewed as not. The chocolate cake is a material that is mutable, and together with the Setswana folk tales, the work explores the idea of transformation and the impact of society on our character.

The cake in the video and its reconstruction can be read as a metaphor for married women. In some Nguni cultures, married women are often expected to change or remould themselves when they marry; for example, within Zulu, Xhosa and Ndebele cultures, it is common practice to rename a bride as part of welcoming her into her marital family. Scholars of Xhosa culture and anthropologists Evangeline Zungu and Nomvula Maphini reflect on this practice of renaming:

> Renaming marks a new stage and changes in the bride's life. It symbolises being welcomed into the family. The renaming of brides in Xhosa societies does not mean the old name vanishes. The new name is used in cultural ceremonies and within the community, however, the old name remains in all official documents. The use of the new name, therefore, is symbolic of the mutual respect between the bride and her in-laws (Zungu and Maphini, 2020:67).

Shadi also employs (re)memory to think through other artworks. *Mosako Wa Nako* (2016) is a performance work by Shadi that was originally performed during the 2016 National Art Festival in Makhanda, South Africa, as part of Shadi's *Noka Ya Bokamoso* (2016). *Noka Ya Bokomoso* is a solo exhibition that was made up of two performative installations, *Makhuba* (2016) and *Mosako Wa Nako*. The performance of *Makhuba* heightens the feeling of isolation as Shadi is seated on a lonely plinth, leaning on a wall, and on either side of the plinth, there is a large ball of red wool. Shadi is seated, crocheting a river of rolling red crochet down the centre of the room. There are drawings that take the form of circles on the left and right walls parallel to the red crochet river, which appear to have had text erased from them. These drawings are concentric words that traverse from line to line, moving from words that are

legible to lines that meander, with some of the drawings being red lines that hold your attention even through one's peripheral vision. Below each circle, the dust and shavings from the drawings lay neatly with the pencil that created the drawing. Shadi remains seated on the plinth for six hours of the performance over a period of eleven days. This performance is an interrogation into the assumptions of Black women's bodies and how they have been consumed and erased. When asked about her work concerning the male gaze, Shadi stated that:

> So, what starts to happen is that we, as women, pursue women through the male gaze, and we are forced to sexualise and objectify ourselves through the way that we are forced to view movies. Part of me thinks that there is a part where we just consume movies without questioning, but if you're a woman, you know something is wrong. It doesn't become a space where you are easily comfortable, you understand that you might not have the tools or the language to deconstruct what is wrong with it (Shadi, 2021).

Noka Ya Bokamoso, as a performance, is not only a work that Shadi thinks through the effect of the male gaze on Black women's bodies, but it also subverts the gaze. The presence of Shadi crocheting silently in the white cube space is a refusal to engage with the audience and to just continue occupying the space for herself. Shadi's crocheting is a meditative practice of keeping time and a moment of contemplation that is held over time. The river of crochet that flows through the performance is a metaphor for time. The crochet, which is a result of the type of meditation that is done throughout the eleven-day performance, stands as a record and evidence of the performance. When asked about the time spent on her performances, Shadi (2021) states, "I could almost track time or count time; it allowed me to work with durational performances. I was also interested in breath, meditation, and in the seemingly mundane nuances that make life what it is".

I want to focus on the crocheting element of Shadi's performance. Thinking through the image of women crocheting or knitting as a way to pass the time is an image that is relatable to most people. This relatable imagery is subverted when done as artwork in a gallery space because needlework is often seen as either 'domestic' or 'feminine'.

In their book *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, Grizelda Pollock and Rozika Parker (1981:xix) say that "the feminine stereotype, which attributed essential qualities to all women, and used this negative essentialism to disqualify women from being considered artists. The stereotype worked by treating artists who were women as the followers or pupils

of men-artists". This definition is rather suited to the patriarchal conception of art. In *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (1984), Parker unpacks the relationship between women and needlework and the complexities women artmakers face. Parker (1984:215) states, "Limited to practising a needle and thread, women have nevertheless sewn a sub stitch-managed to make meanings of their own in the very intended to inculcate self-ate self-effacement". In contrast, many feminist artists have used this particular art form as a means of thinking through new ideologies as a form of reclamation or individual resistance.



Fig 8: Lerato Shadi, *Mosako Wa Nako* (2016)

This is especially true when thinking through issues of material that further refuse the male gaze as well as exercising one's own agency as an artist and as a woman, especially in spaces that seek to deny that agency. Shadi (2021), delves into installation and performance to engage with notions of black women and space, using time and stillness to 'create oneself'. In this performance, Shadi's presence is not only a refusal of the aesthetics of traditional male-centric white cube gallery spaces, it is also an intervention that disorders the experience of the space. African American performance studies and cultural theorist Fred Moten, whose work focuses

on critical race theory and Black studies, proposes the concept of Black Fugitivity that disorders colonialism, racism and systemic violence. Similar to Moten (2008), hooks (1990) and Ahmed (1999) engage with the politics of belonging but with a focus on the ways that Black people have been historically subjugated, misplaced and forced to create spaces and communities that they are able to safe in, however in his case of refusal Moten is the physical destruction of oppressive structure. Morten states that:

This disordering applies not only to the gallery but also to Shadi's experience as a Black subject, which is what Fred Moten (2008) defines as "Black fugitivity". In his essay *The Case of Blackness* (2008), Moten defines black fugitivity as the disordering of the lived experience of Black people, explaining that "…the lived experience of black people is to consider what it is to be the dangerous. What is it to be an irreducibly disordering, deformational force while at the same time being absolutely indispensable to normative order, normative form? (Moten, 2008:179)



Fig 9: Lerato Shadi, *Mosako Wa Nako* (2016)

In this definition, Moten positions Black fugitivity as an act of transgression, an action taken by Black people to break away from the expected norms. 'Fugitivity' or 'fugitive' presents a

moment of fleeing from an implied danger, perhaps from the dangers that are presented by the lived experience of Black people. Moten (2008:188) further asks, "Does Black life, in its irreducible and impossible sociality and precisely in what might be understood as its refusal of the status of social life that is refused it, constitute a fundamental danger?". In this exhibition, Shadi is practising refusal by creating a form of Black visuality which subverts how Blackness is viewed and consumed. In Chapter 2, I discussed Tina Campt's (2019:2) acts of refusal as something enacted by Black contemporary artists that, "create radical modalities of witnessing that refuse authoritative forms of visuality which function to refuse Blackness itself". The absence of the female body in these artists' works as Black subjects challenges the expectations of activism on them in terms of stillness and, in absence, in what Tina Campt calls stasis. Campt argues that Black bodies are subjects that, through oppression, slavery, migration and other historical and political violence, are seen as constantly in movement – thus, stasis offers a quiet refusal where Black subjects can resist in their stillness. In Campt's reading of South African photographer Santu Mofokeng's portraiture and the staging of home and quiet refusal in stasis, Campt (2019:65) states that, "Their refusals are defined in and through deliberate practices of colonial dwelling. They are practices of homemaking that function as a kind of "horne-a-stasis"-an active and balancing of multiple flows that produce motion *even* in stillness".

Reclaiming Memory

Below, I consider the valuable role of memory, histories and theories of personal identities in homescaping. I ask the question: how can the personal archive be used as a form of homescaping?

Charles Merewether (2006:10) identifies the archive as a repository or collection of records, documents, and verbal and written histories. In the book *Critical Addresses: The Archive-in-Practice* (2016), anthropologists Leora Farber and Claire Jorgensen note that many artists and cultural practitioners examine the archive in the African context, as well as its implication and significance. They state that:

> Given the significance of political and personal forms of archiving practices in post-apartheid South Africa, and the possibilities that re-examinations of these archives hold for social transformation and the realisation of justice, the volume is focused on South

> African and African archives, and ways in which South African artists and authors are engaging with these (Farber and Jorgensen, 2016:iv).

These objects capture memories of specific moments and speak to our personal or collective histories. Dineo Seshee Bopape is a South African contemporary visual artist who is known for creating intricate and elaborate installations. *Ile aye, moya, là, ndokh…harmonic conversions…mm* (2021) is a body of work where Bopape interrogates how materials can convey violent histories. The title is made up of the words "Ile aye" and "Moya la ndokh". "Ile aye" is the Yoruba word for earth. "Moya" is the Nguni, Sepedi and Sesotho word for wind. "La" is the Ga word for fire. "Ndokh" is the Wolof word for water. Bopape states that, "This exhibition pays homage to those who were taken, those who struggled, those who fled, and those who still seek sanctuary in the liminal spaces between captivity and an illegal freedom" (Institute for Contemporary Art, 2021).



Fig 10: Dineo Seshee Bopape, *Ile aye, moya, là, ndokh…harmonic conversions…*mm (2021)

Bopape's installations are complex and are often a result of the intersection of several conceptual tensions. In this exhibition, Bopape considers the land as a deeply entangled subject

that is linked deeply to one's spirituality and human experience. Bopape intertwines history, memory and human geographies. Her work is an examination of the materials that are symbolic of aspects of African spirituality and the embodied experience. This is important as aspects of Bopape's works harness a type of otherworldliness that is heightened by the spiritual symbolism but grounded by the immersiveness of the installation. This link between the immersive and African spirituality is key because of the relationship between land, an immersive physical aesthetic experience, and unseen spirituality in South Africa, "The aesthetics are in complete relation with the politics of how something is seen and not seen concerning objects, concerning people, concerning time, memory over time, and things that are re-presentable in memory and things that are not" (Bopape, 2016). Even though Bopape's works do not address ecological or economic imperatives, entanglement provides a solid framework for understanding how Bopape interacts with land in her soil installations. Bopape layers significance in the way she chooses to present her titles visually and in the materials she uses. For example, she makes it clear that she works with soil, not dirt. Bopape employs storytelling in her artworks, with the use of sand and sound, particularly concerning issues of women and land in post-apartheid South Africa. She uses sand as a material that was denied to Black people, and, in particular to Black women during colonial, apartheid, and democratic South Africa as a vehicle of disfranchisement (as discussed in earlier chapters).

The exhibition is filled with brown construction bricks, and some bricks are stacked onto each other as large and medium-sized rectangular structures. The closest large rectangle is covered with unfired sausage-shaped pieces of clay. Ahead is a rectangular brick structure with a heap of powdered charcoal. On the left side of the exhibition is a short square brick structure surrounded by singular bricks scattered around in irregular patterns and clay forms on top of them. The walls of the exhibition are adorned with drawings made with red clay that fade into the top of the wall and intensify towards the bottom of the wall. The installation incorporates found objects such as unfired clay bricks, various clays, pine wood plaques, portable vinyl turntables, vinyl records, gold leaf, charcoal, soil, sand, calcium carbonate, and mineral oxides. These objects signify the importance of ports, cities, and rivers in the role of the enslavement of people. Bopape collected and displayed samples of soil from Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, Louisana, and Virginia as part of the artmaking. Bopape draws attention to the material and historical connections between the shared thread of being regions that played a part in the enslavement of people. Bopape creates harmonic dialogues with futures, presences, and ancestral pasts. This navigation is one that takes into consideration colonial legacies. It is clear

that *Ile aye, moya, la, ndokh…harmonic conversions...mmm* presents a critical integration of not just history but also the relationship forged by the slave trade that pervaded the continent. Human history may have had different impacts overall, but they are similar - natural elements like earth, fire, and wind may be used to heal colonial wounds as an act of homescaping.



Fig 11: Dineo Seshee Bopape, *Ile aye, moya, là, ndokh…harmonic conversions…*mm (2021)

In this work, *Ile aye, moya, la, ndokh…harmonic conversions...mmm* juxtaposes Shadi's use of cake with the use of the human body as Bopape's medium that alludes to the complexities of our relationship with nature, the objects we make and how we relate to them. This needs to be restated. In *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (2018), American philosopher Graham Harman (2018:51-52) suggests that an object is not just something that exists in the world but has its own independence to existence without human perception and interaction. Harman (2018:52) states, "There is no direct access to the world that could permanently establish the existence of these objects, or even much simpler variants of them, for the simple reason that there is no direct knowledge of anything". Notably, Harman's assertion only applies to natural kinds; natural kinds are natural because they are mind-independent, and trees, for example, would exist even if human beings did not exist to perceive them. Additionally, in *The Democracy of Objects*, Levi Bryant (2011:136) cites object

ontologies as having individualised objecthood and being able to withdraw from self-othering at the same time. Bryant views objects as autonomous and have ontological priorities over their relationship.

Bopape employs storytelling in her artworks, with the use of sand and sound, particularly concerning issues of women and land in post-Apartheid South Africa. She uses sand as a material that was denied to Black people and, in particular, to Black women during colonial, Apartheid, and democratic South Africa as a vehicle of disfranchisement (as discussed in earlier chapters). We can focus on the gaps that are created linguistically by the title. These gaps represent the words and languages that are spoken in the specific regions of Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, Louisiana, and Virginia. The regions mentioned allow one to consider human history with an emphasis on the trade of slaves between Africa, India, Malaysia and the United States of America. Virginia was a state that formed part of the mid-Atlantic regions of the United States and was a secondary route of the Atlantic slave trade. This route was responsible for moving slaves from the United States to the Caribbean. American historian Susan Westbury (1985:232), whose work focuses on slavery and abolition, reflects on the slave trade between the West Indies and Virginia, which she says was significant for Virginia's economic history. Louisiana is a state in the southern part of the United States and was the hub for cotton cultivation and production. New Orleans, the capital of Louisana, was the first port of entry during the slave trade. Senegal, a West African nation, was one of the hotspots where people were held captive and shipped off to the United States. South Africa, a nation in the southern part of Africa, obtained slave labour from Indian and Malay people. South African Black feminist scholar Pumla Dineo Gqola (2018:6) states that, "…slavery was practised in the Cape between 1658 and 1838. The Dutch, and later the English, transported slaves from South-East Asia, East African islands (such as Mauritius and Madagascar) as well as the East African and Southern African hinterland". Ghana was a West African nation that was a main supplier to the Atlantic slave trade. Benjamin Kankpeyeng, a Ghanaian anthropologist, interrogates the role of Ghana in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and Ghana's deeper history with slavery and servitude. In *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana: Landmarks, Legacies and Connections*, Kankpeyeng (2009:209) states that, "Slavery was practised in Ghana both before and after 1807, but attention has focused almost entirely on the transatlantic slave trade, and on the many European trading posts built to facilitate the Atlantic trade in both gold and slaves".

A significant departure I took when drawing inspiration from Bopape's *Ile Aye, moya, là, ndokh…harmonic conversions…mm* is that in the overall exhibition, there is a focus on the

effect that slavery has on Black people's geographies. In *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (2006), Kathrine McKittrick focuses on the places negotiated by Black women during and after the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and Black people's cartographies. McKittrick defines human geographies as:

> Black geographies and Black women's geographies, then, signal alternative patterns that work alongside and cross traditional geographies… The displacement of difference, geographic domination, transatlantic slavery, and the Black Atlantic Ocean differently contribute to mapping out the real and imaginative geographies of Black women; they are understood here as social processes that *make* geography a racial-sexual terrain (McKittrick 2006:xiv).

Bopape's works are imbued with a stillness that feels and looks like the result of a ritual of reclamation, by her of the spaces that her installations are in while. This takes into consideration firstly the relationship between museums and galleries and the contentious relationship between Black (especially African) people and museum as institutions.

Antoinette Burton (2005:2) identifies the archive as, "a site of knowledge production, an arbiter of truth, and a mechanism for shaping the narratives of history". Archives are frequently associated with traditional recollection because they consist of, "traces of the past collected either consciously or accidentally as 'evidence'" (Burton, 2005:3). I consider Bopape's installations as memories by the performer and a reenactment of writing, making and speaking back to the past. Boccagni (2021:589) states that, "Homing practices range from single, task-oriented acts to prolonged, potentially lifelong efforts. They may be oriented toward short- or long-term futures, as well as (re)establishing. Connections with the past".

I consider this a type of border thinking. Border thinking is a process of analysing borders as not just a geographical classification but as a political and ideological one. It is a decolonial process that is based on the experiences of those who are subjugated and the epistemological acts of violence they face because of it. Argentine semiotician and decolonial scholar Walter Mignolo (2011:206) cites border thinking as a response to the violence of, "empirical/territorial epistemology and the rhetoric of modernity (and globalisation)", which perpetuates the presumption and redemption of the 'Other'. In her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldua regards borderlands as embodied knowledge from being on the 'periphery' and Western knowledge being at the centre, "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural"

(Anzaldua, 1987:3). In the text 'The Acoustic Abject' (2019), German anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Veit Erlmann (2019:158) says, "But acoustic boundary violations are not confined to the association with real or threatened physical violence. Less traumatic (albeit by no means any less morally debilitating) is the way more aestheticised manifestations of the sonic abject invade, stretch". An acoustic boundary can be a physical or figurative boundary. I consider Bopape's use of sound as a method of border thinking. The sonic element in these works of Bopape lays out an acoustic boundary in her installation, further disrupting the space similar to what Erlmann (2018:159) calls an "aestheticised manifestation of the sonic abject invade". It is this manifestation of the sonic that is not a result of the threat of physical violence, but a processing of the historical violence already imposed. Bopape uses the sonic to sound back at the colonial legacies of these borders.

eKhaya in conversation with other artists

eKhaya kwaMtshali / Home and Away / Our Ancestral Home which is labelled as 'Space 2' was an artwork I created to relate deeply to the process of construction and deconstruction. The space was a meditation on the process of making, with an emphasis on the process of breaking to create something different as well as how destruction is a necessary part of meditation. This work was heavily inspired by the works of Lerato Shadi, in particular her work *Matsogo*. As a creative I found the visible process of moving from deconstruction and reconstruction intriguing, as Shadi takes a piece of cake that is, in essence, a consumable item that is manipulated to become unrecognisable and then further manipulated to resemble the object that it came from with a similar function. *Matsogo* takes the deconstruction and reconstruction beyond the physical manipulation of the cake in the video into the video's audio. The sound of the video is sourced from three folktales in Setswana and the way that the sound is mixed creates a confusing glitch of multiple stories and monologues. The sound is an ongoing prologue that details stories of love, betrayal, trust and despair. Unlike *Matsogo*, *eKhaya kwaMtshali / Home and Away / Our Ancestral Home* makes a departure from the root of reconstruction so as to leave the work more open-ended with the final shot being the clay left as a powder. The reason for the open-ended video is to link back to eKhaya being a word that denotes so many other spaces. A crucial departure in my work is the sound, notably without any voice or story but just the sound of the hammer striking the clay, relying on the echo of the

strikes and the tempo to perform the aspect of construction as well the sound of something being broken down like the molding hands in *Matsogo*.

In the video works I reflect on sand and clay as a symbolism for land in a similar vein to Bopape's collection of soil from different sites and their repositioning in exhibitions. The repositioning is a moment where the soil is estranged from its origin, and creates a moment of tension. I wanted to create a similar moment of tension not just in the displacement of the clay but in the striking of the clay with the hammer. In a sense I wanted to have clay as something that is a metaphor for land akin to Bopape's soil and bricks, while having the clay being broken to the point that it can not be molded again. In my work I use lace as a flu-id border (topographically) as opposed to *Ile aye, moya, là, ndokh…harmonic conversions…mm*'s use of solid bricks as borders.

The Language of Homescaping

Additionally, in *Ghosts of Archive: Deconstructive Intersectionality and Praxis* (2021), South African archivist Verne Harris interrogates discourses of deconstruction and intersectionality praxis. In this text, Harris offers deconstruction as a method to transcend the stuck-ness and uncertainty in the modern discourse of archive discourse. Harris suggests that through reinterpretation of the archive, it can be liberated from the hegemonic archival power. This deconstruction is crucial as archives may work as a device to reinforce problematic discourses and canonise them. Thus, an analysis of an archive, as it relates to art, women's land and homeownership and, more importantly, the deconstruction of archival power, is evident in the emergence of a Black feminist visual language of homescaping.

To understand the importance of this language, I will first tackle the relationship between language and power. Language is encoded by cultural values and norms and can shape people's perceptions. In the book *The Feminist Critique of Language,* linguistic anthropologist Deborah Cameron (1999:12) critiques the relationship between language, gender and feminist ideas of language. Cameron (1999:12) states that, "linguistic representations both give a clue to the place of women in the culture and constitute one means whereby we are kept in our place". In the previous chapter, I explained Patricia Hill Collins' discussion of phallogocentric words within languages as mechanisms that enforce patriarchy. Importantly, in the book *Art as Experience,* philosopher John Dewey (1934:106) notes that "objects of art are expressive, they

are languages. For each art its medium and that medium is especially fitted for one kind of communication". With Dewey's definition in mind, communication is the way these mediums become a form of homescaping. With these words and linguistic boundaries in mind, I consider the aspects of some Black women's artistic practices as the start of a Black feminist homescaping language. This language has the function of subverting the male gaze but also introducing a feminine-centric conception of art by taking a "feminine" medium like crochet, reconceptualising and reinterpreting it as art.[24]

This language is still emerging within a South African context, with examples of artists being Philiswa Lila, Bulumko Mbete and Alka Dass. Bulumko Mbete's works engage with archival materials through creative storytelling and exploring geographic connections. Alka Dass uses found objects, textiles and archival family photography to queer the history and culture of Desi South Africans, and to connect memories of place. Philiswa Lila and Ivukuvuku (Chumani Mantanga) are an artist duo that reflects on anxieties that women experience within home environments. Lila's practice also explores intimate objects, such as family photographs and the role they play in the construction of family life. Significantly these artists present a way of deconstructing an archive that alienates the assumed structures of family life or home and queers them. The ability to view oneself and even one's history as a whole, as a subject and as an act of transgression, is the key to this language. This language is an act of Black women's subjectivity. The notion of languaging, in this sense, is the consideration of personal memories and collective histories in the process of making meaning. In summary, the exploration of deconstruction, whether it is by employing allegories or contemplating the socio-economic landscape and cultural narratives, is the beginning of the construction of a language that holds contemporary realities into question. With time and with the transformation of policies and the social climate, the languaging of homescaping should continue evolving.

[24] According to Parker and Pollock (1981:xix), the term 'art' privileges male figures. They (1981:xix) state that "the terms 'art' and 'artist', seemingly neutral terms register, without having to advertise it openly, a privileging of masculinity as synonymous with creativity because to indicate that an artist is a woman, the neutral term artist must be qualified by an adjective".

CONCLUSION

To our homes and of the homes we will make in future and those left in the past, to the memories and stories housed in it, the ordinary is sacred and is the nourishment of our souls. The warmth felt not only in the kitchen but also in the secrets you hold, the laughter, and the stories that are embedded in the walls like a sheath of smoke. Tales of resilience are told through the gasps of silence and shared histories. Tears shed, and lessons learned while traversing traitorous roads or a stolen laugh in the corridor. So allow me to travel down the corridor one last time to hear the creaks of the wooden floors echoing from the suspended floors. In each room, the site of a story worth telling, a landmark on the road to becoming. From the kitchen that not only provides nourishment for the body but also warmth for the soul to the lounge, a room greater than any amphitheatre, shelter of stories and home of that room-diver that is older than you and all your siblings. A bedroom that serves as a retreat or a sanctuary. To eMsamo, our sacred ground, a room where our ancestors inhabit spiritually, although we cannot see them. All rooms are cherished. As I close this door, physically leaving the house but not my home, as a part of my journey and a rite of passage, I leave, but I will be back home.

As a young woman researcher living in a world that is leaning more towards the right wing as the years pass, writing about women's right to place has never been more important. As a Black woman in South Africa, born in the same year as our country's democracy, I have borne witness to the lingering disparities in freedoms. The disparities in land tenure rights, particularly for women in rural areas due to the application of customary law and cultural practices, have been elucidated. It is important to highlight the need to address these entrenched gender-based discriminatory practices and ensure equitable access to land and homeownership for women. With homeownership in mind, I return to the question of place in terms of the primary focus of this study, which is to make known alternative homing and placemaking practices in a future project. I would like to explore the greater networks of placemaking.

In this research, I have tried to question the notion of 'place' in the broader South African context and the laws laid out during South Africa's colonial era and apartheid regime that restricted land ownership for Black people. In Chapter 1, I asked the question of how femme-centric, agential counter-practices reinterpret homescaping/homemaking, as well as how homescaping is used to overcome the complexities created by the dichotomy between legal and

cultural practices. I have discussed some governmental programs and incentives to address land redistribution and reinstitution as a means to address the massive disparity caused by land ownership restrictions.

It is important to tell stories that challenge the ways that things are. Oppositional stories, in this case, highlight a history of homescapes and homescaping that recontextualise our history as South Africans. The telling of stories of Black spaces became a form of special justice. Black storytelling, aside from allegory and cautionary tales, is a practice of communing. Scholar of anticolonial spaces and curriculum Fikile Nxumalo (2020:38) states that "(re)storying work as a provocation to think of how imaginaries are necessary parts of refiguring Black life". Critical race scholar Richard Delgado argues that:

> The oppositional nature of the story how challenges and rebuffs the stock story, thus causing her or him to oscillate between poles. It is insinuative: At times, the reader is seduced by the story and its logical coherence—it is a plausible counterview of what happened; it has a degree of explanatory power. Yet the story places the majority-race reader (Delgado, 2013:96).

Oppositional storytelling then becomes a way to bring forth the stories of homescapers, as well as the stories of Black people, to create understanding.

Gender-Based Violence, Dispossession of Property and Rural Homes

On reflection, I realised that my study makes little mention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as a result, and even a factor, of homescaping; however, due to recent instances in South Africa and the international community, the following must be noted. Ugandan Olympian marathon runner Rebecca Cheptegei was brutally murdered and was set alight in her house in 2024 because of a land dispute with her former boyfriend. In an article about Cheptegei's tragic death, Laura Copley (2024) notes that they had been arguing over land that Cheptegei had purchased, as well as a house she had built on it. Cheptegei was murdered in her home after attending church with her children. "Local administrators said the two had been in conflict about the small piece of land where Ms Cheptegei lived, with the case awaiting resolution" (Karoney, 2024). Cheptegei's fate is one that other women have dealt with.

This problem extends to how we view the rights of women in all aspects of life. Reduced marriage rates in rural and urban regions have led to increased aggregation, as establishing a

home is often expected after marriage. In ‘Mobility, Marriage Decline, and the Ceremonial Economy: Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Farming in South Africa and Implications for Land Reform’, Donna Hornby and Elizabeth Hull state that,

> Historically, ‘married couples’ and their children tended to live within their extended family homesteads before they established their own homes, resulting in large homesteads containing multiple households. According to stereotypical customary law, new households would be formed when a man and his wife applied to the chief for land to establish his own homestead (Hornby and Hull, 2022:2545).

Until marriage, you stay part of the wider family and are socially obligated to work for its well-being. Siblings from urban areas collaborate to elevate the prestige of their family homesteads. Urban migrants and immigrants may prefer to create a home due to instability in the employment market. In an uncertain world, rural locations offer a sense of belonging to family, culture, and traditions, but as the Cheptegei issue demonstrates, it can be dangerous for women.

It should be acknowledged that the question of land and home ownership is an ever-changing landscape. As of 21 August 2024, the Deputy Director of the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development outlined plans and government grants aimed at helping marginalised people acquire land. According to the Commission for Gender Equality (2024), the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development has also offered 2,000 young women land for economic opportunities; however, this is land for agricultural purposes and is reflective of interventions made only in the Eastern Cape, North West and Limpopo. According to the report compiled by the Commission on Gender Equality, 163,000 female-headed households who have received land through the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR) are mostly situated in rural communities in South Africa. Those that have received land are female-headed households and are in rural areas. This number, however, is stagnant and has not changed since December 2021, as there is currently land reform and a rural development audit still underway.

Female-headed households may have a greater chance of being discriminated against on account of their race, their gender and their socio-economic position. In a speech, then Minister of Finance Trevor Manuel (2007:2) notes that as a result of centuries of discrimination, Black women in rural areas are often the poorest in the world with decreased access to markets, credit, land, education, health and education. A report on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region by Claire Davis-Reddy and Katharine Vincent (2017:40,59), as well as research by Kelly Austin, Mark Noble and Virginia Kuulei Berndt (2021:320) notes

that while Africa suffers devastation from civil wars and conflicts, corruption, floods and droughts, deforestation, climate change and malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, which affect both men and women, women are more vulnerable to absolute poverty and food insecurity than men. With this in mind, I think it would be interesting to investigate how women are able to circumvent food insecurity through homeownership, women who have been able to secure land and enact their agency. Thus, women's subsistence farming can be seen as an act of refusal, as subsistence farming can be a means of safeguarding one's family against hunger and disenfranchisement.

Research by Tina Campt (2014), Damien Sojoyner (2017) and Audra Simpson (2016) notes that Black fugitivity is an act that refuses subjugation and disenfranchisement. In *Black Feminist Futures and the Practice of Fugitivity*, a lecture by Campt (2014) notes, "the concept of fugitivity highlights the tension between the acts or flights of escape and creative practices of refusal, nimble and strategic practices that undermine the category of the dominant". Black fugitivity offers a point of escape for Black people who may not have agency or power in the oppressive systems they find themselves in. Furthermore, Sojoyner says,

> Black fugitivity is contemporarily used as a social orientation toward Black liberation. Faced with anti-Blackness in spaces steeped in white supremacy, Black fugitives use a politics of refusal of reform and respectability to disengage from dominant structures and create homeplaces, sites where they can be their whole, expansive selves (Sojoyner, 2017).

The reform is critical in the greater context of South Africa, not just for South Africans but also for foreign nationals within our country who are further subjugated due to xenophobia. There is scope to investigate acts of homescaping by foreign nationals within South Africa, especially for women who arrive as refugees or asylum seekers. An analysis of dislocation necessitates an examination of the position and the impact of these acts on the communities in which they were enacted.

The Land Question in South Africa

In 2024 the African National Congress (ANC) lost their parliamentary majority since coming into power in the first democratic election in 1994. South Africa is currently governed by a Government of National Unity (GNU), a coalition government made of the political parties

African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA), Inkatha Freedom Party (IPF), Patriotic Alliance (PA), GOOD party, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), Freedom Front Plus (FF+), United Democratic Movement (UDM), Rise Mzansi and Al Jamah.

In Parliament the ANC proposed the amendment of South Africa's constitution for land expropriation without compensation called the Expropriation Bill, which was published in October 2020 and later gazetted and introduced to the National Assembly.[25] In January 2025 president Cyril Ramaphosa signed the bill into law. While the bill allows the state to acquire property for public interest without mandating compensation, the signing of the bill was controversial as it left many questions unanswered, especially land access to women and underrepresented groups in South Africa. The GNU's stance remains murky - the ANC remains in favour of expropriation while the DA remains in opposition to the Bill and have filed papers in the High Court to challenge it. The DA party statement states that,

> While the DA recognises that the Constitution allows for acts of redress and restitution, including land reform, we have serious reservations about the procedure as well as important substantive aspects of the Bill. We are in discussions with our legal team to formulate our case (Democratic Alliance, 2025).

The IFP's President Velenkosini Hlabisa in a statement on the bill voiced their opposition highlighting that there should be more consultation on the bill, as well as noting that it infringes on certain land conservation. In an interview with journalist Thobeka Ngema, Hlabisa states that, "This Bill is on a collision course with Ingonyama Trust, and this reality hardens our opposition to the Bill" (Ngema, 2025). The FF+ has rejected the Bill and has subsequently promised to challenge the Bill in the Constitutional Court. Notably, the PAC, Al Jamah, Rise Mzansi have welcomed the signing of the Bill and the GOOD party remains as the only party to not take an official stance. Aside from the Expropriation Bill, the GNU to date have not addressed other types of land reform or redress.

As a country, it would seem that South Africa has found itself in an impasse - while there is work being done in terms of land reform more needs to be done for people's access to homes. On reflection, the recent call for review of Cape Town's housing and rental market prices, the announcement of new cities developments,[26] the signing of the 2025 Expropriation Bill and

[25] The National Assembly is the elected house of Parliament of South Africa.

[26] New city developments are planned for Shongweni, KwaZulu-Natal and Nkosi City in Mpumalanga for example.

South Africa's ailing economy has bleak consequences for homeowning opportunities. While the creation of new cities may create new homes and apartments for those who can afford it, a large proportion of (previously disadvantaged) people are without options. This movement of people will most likely create new forms of homescaping in urban and peri-urban areas in South Africa. In a discussion on city development in highly concentrated metros by urban planning activist Marie Huchzermeyer (2014:65), they note that "Informal settlements and other forms of unauthorised low income dwellings in South African cities, and the struggles that are fought in their defence, are evidence of deep rooted exclusions that signal urgent attention to the realisation of city rights.".

Memory and Practice

The above questions of home ownership and 'making home' is afforded nuance in my own creative practice. I created a link between my installation works and the materials that are synonymous with building and home décor, so that home is not just a physical space but also an identity. Through the investigation of the role of memory in homescaping, I thought through the use of crocheted doilies as a cultural object and their role as a metaphor for homescaping. Using Ahmed's notion of familiarity to shape spaces, I discussed the major ideas that went into my final exhibition, the different spaces within the exhibition that were influenced by different houses, and the memory of the women in my family who are homescapers.

In terms of the storytelling sessions that I held with women members of my family, these sessions changed from what was initially proposed, which was a storytelling and crocheting session in which we would speak into the doilies, and they would speak back during the exhibition. The sessions did, however, produce a sound piece that ended up being in the exhibition, and doilies gifted to me were added to the central lace feature.

Within my artistic practice, there is significant scope for me to experiment with the incorporated language and black fugitivity. This connection is made in consideration of cultural, political, and personal history. In future works, there will be clearer intentions on installations that establish the connection between ownership and the landscape, viewing the landscape as not just a place but also the environment that allows the problem to grow. South African visual artist Avi Sooful considers the importance of land in her work, stating that "Landscape is about time and place. It is about history and ownership. I believe they are also about the historical reflection" (Peter, 2013:41). In this instance I want to consider my journey

as a renter within urban spaces and the negotiation between being born in an urban space, spending my adolescence in a rural space and the movement between the two as an adult. Another point of this landscape I will consider is that my research weighting focuses more on the rural spaces, not just subsistence farming but also the very real impacts of dispossession of place.

Black Women's Agency

A foundational question in this work has centred around Black women's agency when they are often positioned at the bottom of social hierarchies. The women who protested in Mkhumbane and Cato Manor were able to enact their agency even in the face of subjugation and they are an example of how Black women's participation in urban spaces was impactful even when they were oppressed. They were homescapers not just in the act of making home but in the act of establishing communities and making Cato Manor / Mkhumbane a site of resistance. The women of Fingo Village's system of the inheritance of property and custodianship highlights a crucial question of the role of women in the passing down of generational assets, not just in instances where women are dispossessed when they are widowed but as rightful custodians of homes. While the application of laws and policies, such as The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998 and the Administration Act of 1986, may assist women in becoming homeowners, there is still much work to be done in land reform so more women can benefit from these policies.

While placemaking and homescaping may differ, both are discourses that involve the envisioning or making of Black feminist communities and communing. The storytelling session, as part of my creative process, was a generative moment to engage and bare witness to heartfelt stories. I view the exhibition as space for homescaping of voices, as space to speak back and to speak in spaces of intimacy and agency.

The exploration of deconstruction, whether it is by employing allegories or contemplating cultural narratives, is the beginning of the construction of a language. This deconstruction takes place in the recognition of phallogocentric languages and words that we imbue meaning to. Languaging, therefore, as a decolonial feminist intervention by women artists through the excavation of one's memory and personal archive is a crucial step of homescaping as an artistic practice.

In summary, there are many kinds of intimate knowledge and familiarity that are offered by a home that is both learned and embodied. Homescaping, as a feminist ideal, is the right to equity, not in a general sense, but homeowning equity, without fear of dispossession. Homescaping is not solely dependent on having a home but can be the act of making a place in the face of subjugation. It is a system that takes into consideration the lack of acknowledgement by some traditional figures and family members that one is the rightful owner of a place or home, and through homescaping, one is able to acknowledge oneself as the owner.

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