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Materiality, mythology & tactical traces: a study of the Johannesburg Art Gallery and Joubert Park's trajectory through creative research

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Materiality, Mythology & Tactical Traces: A Study of the Johannesburg Art Gallery and Joubert Park's Trajectory through Creative Research

Aerial views of the Johannesburg Art Gallery & Joubert Park

(Images courtesy Jay Caboz)

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Degree: Masters history of art coursework and research report (part-time)

Declaration:

This research report is submitted as a partial requirement for the degree of masters history of art, coursework and research report. I hereby declare that this research report is my own work and I am aware of the university's plagiarism policy. All sources have been credited accordingly and this work has not been submitted in part or whole for any other degree or professional qualification other than the one stipulated above.

Date:

Place:

Signed:

"By 'vitality' I mean the capacity of things… not only to impede or block the will and design of humans but also to act as quasi-agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own"

– Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter. A political ecology of things*. 2010.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Stacey Vorster, for her support, Jay Caboz for his early Sunday morning photographic adventures, and the creatives who have and continue to contribute to the JAG for making time in their busy schedules for me.

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Abstract

The Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) and Joubert Park are spaces that have accumulated and attracted various forms of mythologies and tangible and intangible traces throughout the course of their long histories. Both the gallery and the park are situated in a complex and multi-layered social, economic, historical and cultural environment in Johannesburg, and were founded on colonial principles of cultural programming by the dominant British society at the time of their establishment in what was then a new city, upon which powerful groups and individuals were stamping their authority.

Through the process of research and an accompanying creative component, I identify six different traces (*The Darling Postcard*, *The Old Fence*, *The Play by Taub*, *The Exhibition by Hobbs*, *The Panel Discussion* and *The Lutyens Plans*) connected in various ways to both Joubert Park and the JAG. I aim to show how each of these traces can be viewed as registers of many different impositions, interrogations and interactions of these spaces by different groups and individuals throughout their histories. I map out how these traces interrogate, maintain or destabilise the

"mythologies of place", as Anita Bakshi has called them, that are inscribed into the fabric of both the park and the gallery, acting, in certain cases, as what Michel de Certeau would identify as "tactics" or "strategies". I draw on an understanding of Jane Bennett's "vital materiality", and the ways that both tangible and intangible traces can and do influence and nuance the negotiation of a space.

Through what Hazel Smith and Roger Dean have identified as practice-led research and research-led practice, as applied to the study of the six traces, I have attempted to map a trajectory of both the gallery and the park from their inceptions through to the contemporary moment I have done this in order to further interrogate the role of heritage, historical and public spaces in Johannesburg and possibly also South Africa at large. I argue that it is through this intersectional form of research that public and private efforts at urban planning, preservation and conservation can best be approached.

Legend

1	*The Play by Taub*
2	*The Old Fence*
3	*The Exhibition by Hobbs*
4	*The Darling Postcard*
5	*The Panel Discussion*
6	*The Lutyens Plans*
- - - - - - -	Roads
	First phase connections (surfaced as research process)
///////	Fences
	Research report chapters
	Structure



Historical connections (material record)

Personal movement (my navigations)



Trace connections (incidental, surfaced as research process)



Academic connections (surfaced as writing process)



The Darling Postcard **(Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa)**



The Old Fence **(Image author's own)**



The Play by Taub **(Image courtesy Market Theatre**

08/09/19

Transcript: Public Lecture, Museology and the accountability of a museum to its public

Auto and General Theatre, Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton

KG: Khwezi Gule

GCH: Gus Casely-Hayford

MM: Molemo Moiloa (moderator)

KG: ...called 'quote un-quote' a renewal of the Johannesburg art gallery (sic).

The main reason being that in 1910, which is when the first collection [at JAG] was established, Johannesburg was about twenty years old. The City of Johannesburg was about twenty years old. And if you... the image I always have in my mind is some frontier town in America in the Wild West and the Gold Rush and all of that. This kind of wilderness and debauchery and they needed some kind of culture. So they built this institution. Now actually we are in a situation where we aren't exactly in the Wild West, but the city has changed quite drastically in a way that some of the people who had always felt attached to the JAG [Johannesburg Art Gallery] - and some of them still do, somehow see the area that the Johannesburg Art Gallery is in as the Wild South (Laughter). And it's filled with people they don't recognise. And sounds have changed so much that there is a different kind of inclination. So it requires us to start thinking differently about how we constitute our 'quote on quote' audience. And I'll tell you why I say 'quote on quote' audience. Because the idea of 'audience', for me is leading us down the wrong path. But anyway I'll explain that to you later. So we are at a kind of process of change. Both the building itself, but also what happens inside the building and outside the building is in the process of flux, and I think that the greatest challenge and greatest opportunity that we face is being able to ride the wave of that change.

GCH: That's fascinating. It's interesting your museum beginning in 1910, in a period of incredible change globally, as well as in terms of what was happening locally and

1

The Panel Discussion **(Screenshot of transcript)**



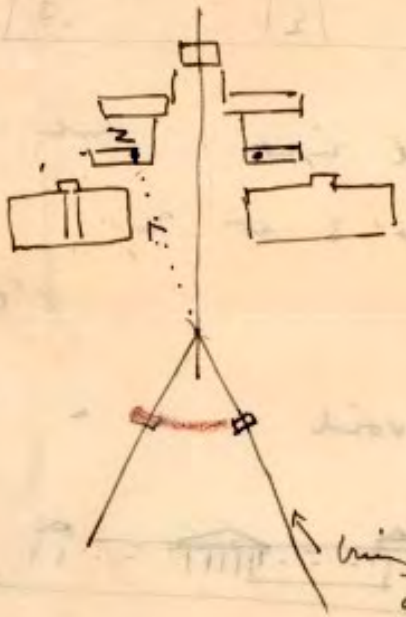
The Exhibition by Hobbs **(Image courtesy Stephen Hobbs)**

From Mr. E. L. LUTYENS, A.R.A.

Telephone No. 95 Gerrard.
Telegraphic Address:
"Aedificavi, Vic, London."

17, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.

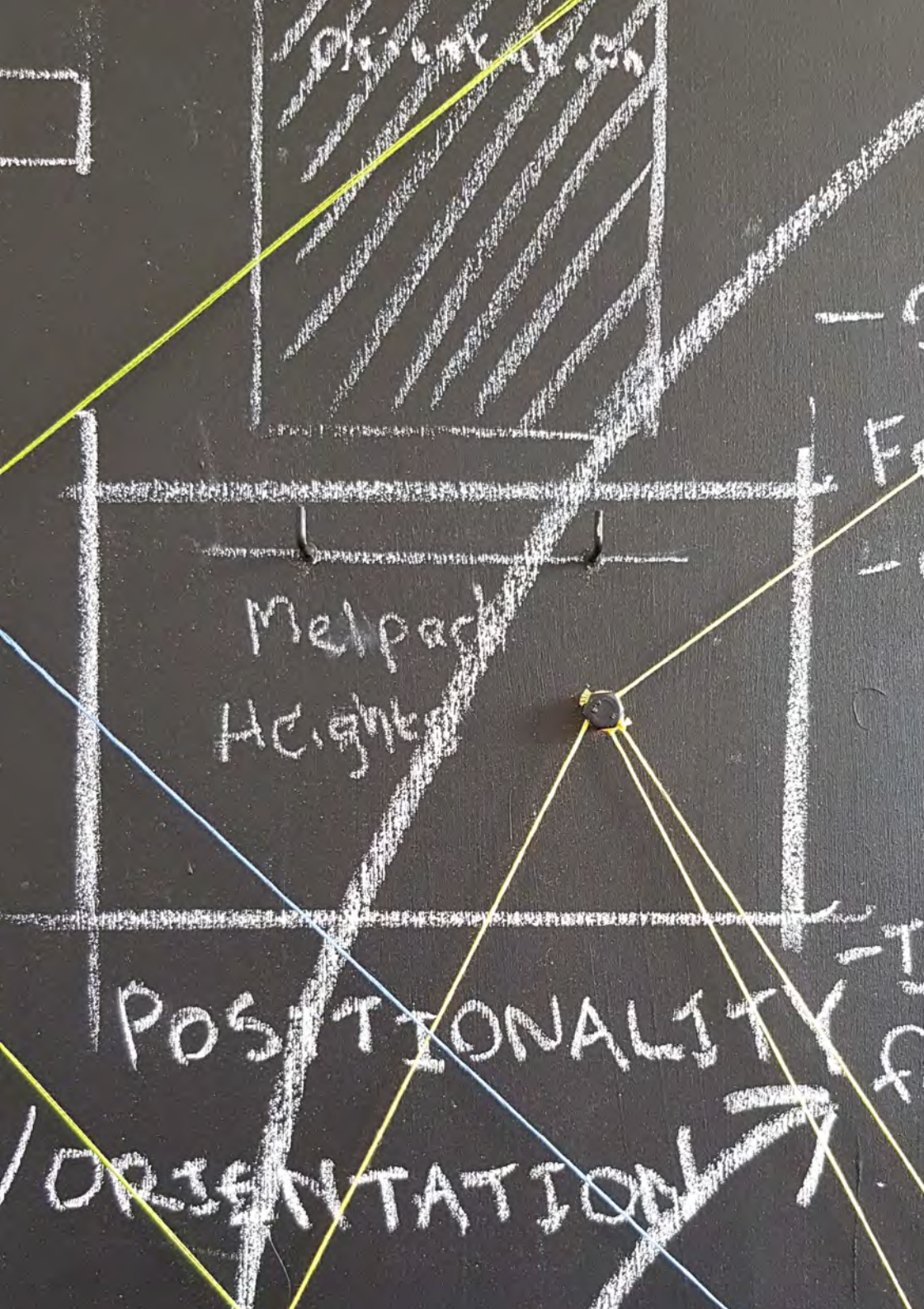
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The Lutyens Plans (Image courtesy Museum Africa)

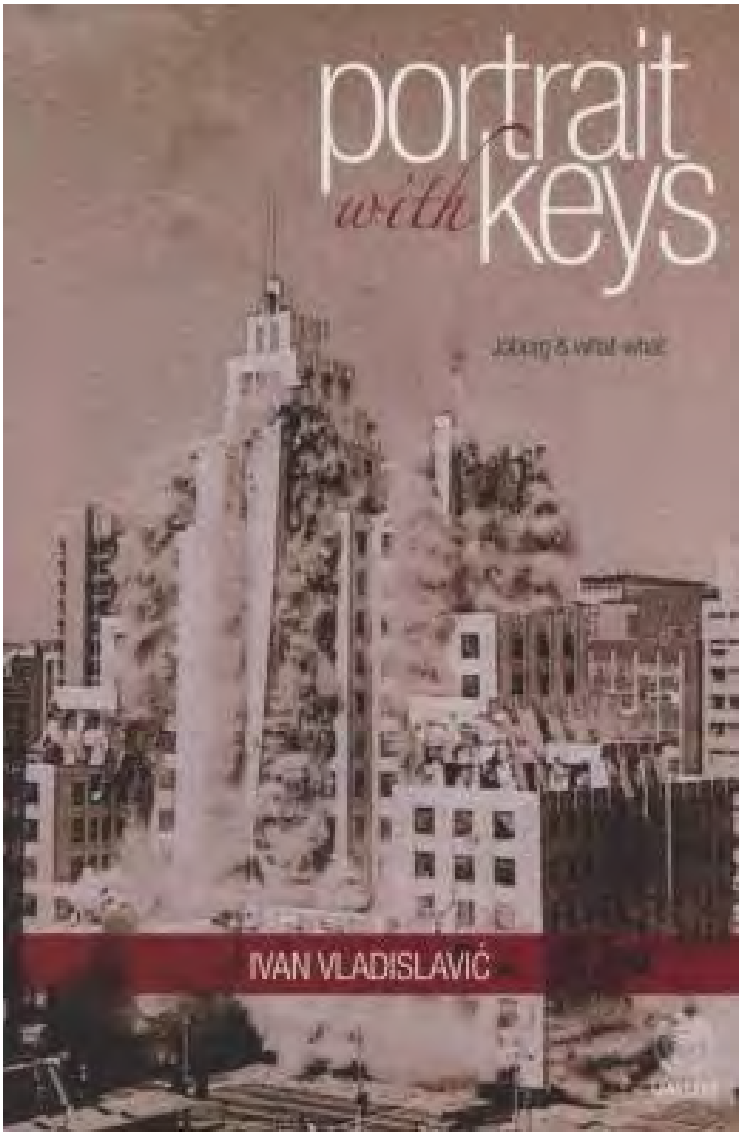
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Orientation and Positionality


Melpac
Height
POSITIONALITY
/ORIENTATION

In late 2012, I came upon South African author Ivan Vladislavich's Portrait with Keys. Joburg & what-what *(2006), an intimate and textural exploration of the city of Johannesburg, Vladislavich's home, told in deeply personal chapters that explore the relevance of the city to the author through experience and individual narrative. It was in this book that I first came across the term thomasson, meant in the book to denote an object in the cityscape around which the environment had irrevocably changed, thus rendering the original purpose of the object moot.*[1] *Vladislavich writes that the thomasson proliferates within the built environment of the city, where environments are constantly changing and being remade and repurposed, sometimes leaving traces behind in their wake, removed and decontextualized from their original purpose and setting.*

[1] Vladislavich draws from Japanese conceptual artist Akasegawa Genpei's 1985 title *Hyperart Thomasson* to define this particular form of art. Genpei's work defined the thomasson as the most pure form of art in that no artist could create it. A thomasson can only be identified by an outside observer, and is an object or structure that no longer serves a purpose, but is nonetheless still preserved and maintained within its environment.


portrait
with keys
IVAN VLADISLAVIĆ

It was this moment that revealed a concept that had always held an interest for me.

The materiality of lived spaces, and how this materiality can speak to lived experiences.

Almost eight years later in 2018, I discovered three weathered postcards hidden away inside an old switchboard box in a 1930s flat that I had rented in Melville. The postcards were addressed to the occupant of the flat in 1952, and contained personal communications that, while intimate, were also mundane and covered everyday concerns such as participating in the local tennis club. It fascinated me that these small, personal and fragile documents had found their way into my hands, and I was allowed a small view into another world through these yellowed and faded pieces of card. A different Johannesburg than the one I currently occupied.



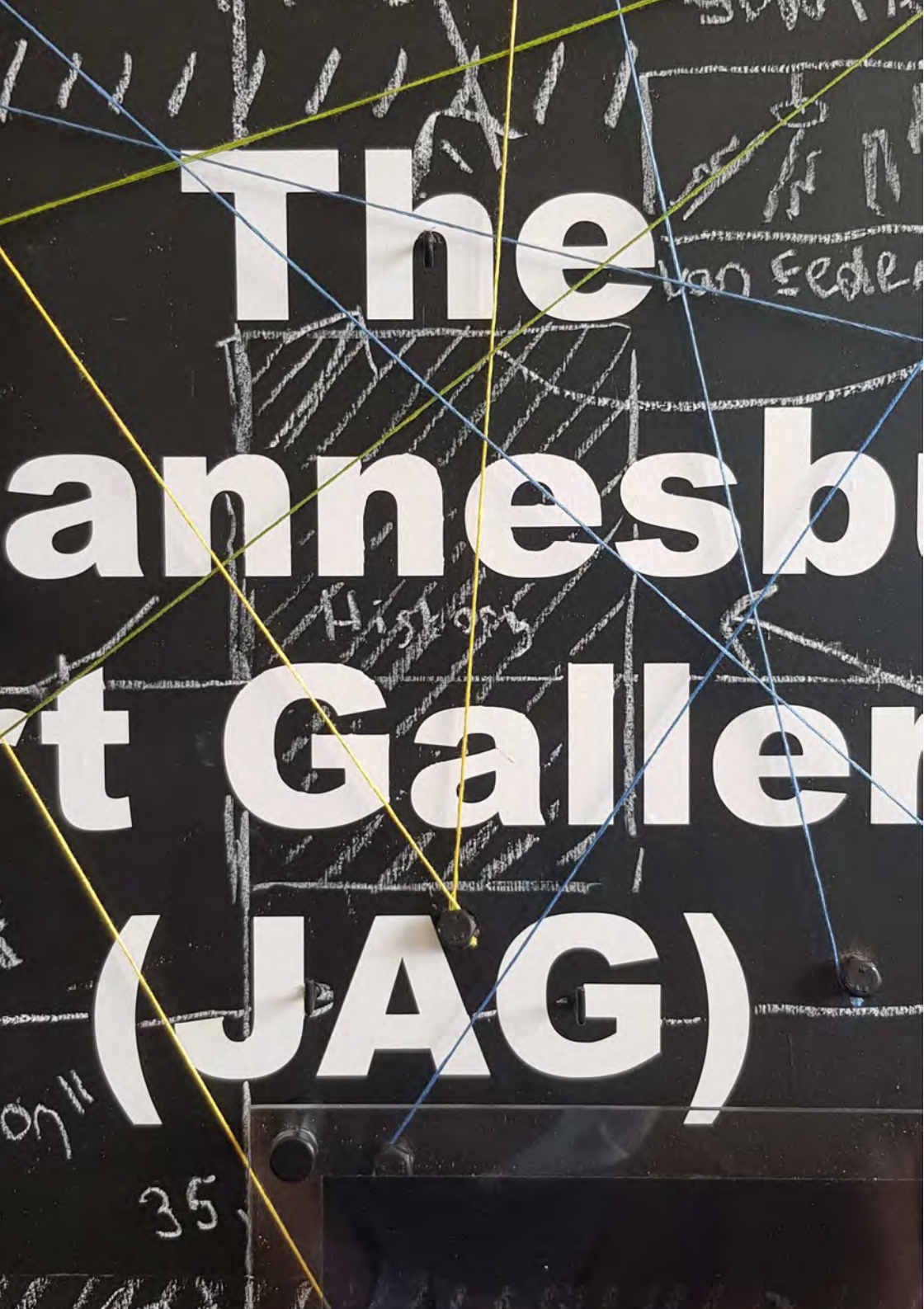
Old postcards (Image author's own)

My myriad thoughts on the Johannesburg Art Gallery and Joubert Park in relation to this paper were still being consolidated, but this little brush with history firmed up the interest that had initially been sparked by Vladislavich's text. The JAG, Joubert Park and their place in contemporary Johannesburg loomed large and infinitely relevant to the contemporary moment, and I realised that perhaps smaller, constituent parts of each space could reveal more about their trajectories through history up to the current moment, a cultural, social, historical and political environment that is asking us to probe existing narratives, the way that archives are compiled, who does the compiling, and why.

The process of selecting these traces through creative research, reading and interviews with stakeholders has been intensely personal and speaks directly to my aim of surfacing small and sometimes overlooked engagements as a way of linking to larger concepts and concerns. My voice and approach as a writer surfaces recurrently within this text and has been included as written notes as a preface to some of the chapters. I have also given each of the traces a personalised name and have italicised them as an indicator of this intervention, which stands in as a sign of my

personal engagement and negotiation of the traces themselves. This accessing of the spaces of the gallery and the park through my own personal reading of the city via textural engagement is similar to Vladislavich's use of prose as a tool of inquisition in his book Portrait with Keys. Joburg & what-what.

Some History and an Introduction


The
annesb
t Galler
(JAG)



The construction of the JAG, image undated (Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa)

High iron fences tower above the pedestrians passing to and fro on their way to work in the bright early morning highveld sunlight. Glimpsed in fragments between the hustle and bustle of the informal street vendors setting out their wares for the day's trade, through the acrid smoke of brazier fires, the soft green of lawns can be viewed through the narrow gaps of disjointed space between the uprights of palisade fencing whose violent tips pierce the blue sky. Beyond the pave and the street, an island of brick paving stones with a mountain of sandstone, russet terracotta roofing tiles and copper barrel vaults looms large. Shouted greetings from the street beyond the island echo off Tuscan columns and open empty parking spaces.

Joubert Park and the JAG alongside it, officially opened in 1906 and 1915 respectively, were founded and designed to represent an imported notion of upper middle-class Victorian and Edwardian respectability and wealth in the new South African city of Johannesburg, as Louis Grundlingh has argued (2015: 38). The JAG was built to house a fine art collection assembled by Florence Phillips, the wife of Randlord Lionel Phillips, and British curator Hugh Lane (Murdoch 2015: 9). Florence Phillips was born in Cape Town, but travelled frequently between London and South Africa at the turn of the century, where she gained an appreciation for the arts and crafts movement and the ways that it could augment culture in South Africa (Carman 2006: 83). Phillips' original vision for the gallery was that it would be a centre of civilised creativity in a new frontier city (Carman 2003: 56). She wanted the gallery to be a civic focal point, in a similar way to galleries abroad at the time[2] which would form part of a stable infrastructure for the population of Johannesburg that serviced the nearby mines. Thus, the development of the JAG was specifically focused on

[2] Tony Bennett (1988) details the civilising function of exhibitionary spaces, museums and art galleries in Europe at the turn of the 20th century. I expand on this conceptual framework in my chapter on *The Panel Discussion*.

reflecting similar pedagogic gallery models abroad (Carman 2006: 81), with Florence Phillips drawing extensively from the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, for example. This focus on an educational aspect to the gallery and its founding was, as art historian Jillian Carman (Carman 2006: 89) argues, "part of a cultural-environment plan to direct the leisure time of the working classes".

Joubert Park was modelled on a classic Victorian pleasure garden, aimed at providing a select group of Johannesburg's citizens— upper to middle class, white and English speaking—with a calm and serene space to relax at the end of the day, and as a focal point for organised community activities such as concerts, picnics and promenading (Grundlingh 2015: 36, 37, 38). Both the gallery and the park were designed as part of a leisure precinct, following the model of Euro-British cities at the time (ibid). Alfred Milner, High Commissioner for South Africa after the defeat of the Afrikaner government by the British at the end of the South

African War,[3] attempted to rebuild Johannesburg[4] into a city that would be attractive to British settlers (Carman 2006: 49). Carman, who has written extensively on the JAG, posits that it was this agenda that laid the foundations for the institution; a "patronising and unquestioning belief that the British way was, in fact, best for the people" (ibid). Both Lionel and Florence Phillips were proponents of this scheme, and were heavily involved in many projects in and around the city at the time,[5] with the establishment of the Parktown house Villa Arcadia as the primary residence of the Phillips' in South Africa coinciding with Florence's first ideas for the JAG (Carman 2006: 55).

[3] Now known as the South African War, this event is referred to in some texts as the Anglo Boer War, which occurred from 1899 to 1902. Andrew Porter (2000: 640) writes that the former has come to be widely used and accepted as an accurate name for a conflict that included many different South African territories and racial and ethnic groups, beyond the British and the Boers.

[4] Milner was governor of the Cape and Transvaal between 1897 and 1905. Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (1979: 50-80) have argued that it was Milner's ambition to secure the Transvaal territory for the British Empire through a complex and intricate political scheme that saw the defeat of the Afrikaner government under Paul Kruger, thus ensuring the wealth of the newly-discovered gold reefs in Johannesburg fell under British control.

[5] The construction of the Rand Regiment's Memorial, currently situated at Zoo Lake but originally intended for placement within the JAG complex, is one such project.

The foundation of the JAG must be seen, argues Carman (2006: 56), in the context of this rebuilding of Johannesburg by Milner in a British image, as the city moved under British governance from Zuid-Afrikaanse Republic (ZAR) rule after the second South African War. With the financial support of the wealthy randlords, and in an effort to make what was at that stage a small, predominantly mining-focused colonial outpost more comfortable for this elite group, the intention was to build a community in Johannesburg that would in turn serve the mines on which the randlords, and their wealth, were dependent (ibid). Jeremy Foster (2011: 144-145) has argued that it was these sorts of projects that aimed to create permanence and symbolic substance in an urban environment that had only recently been annexed by the British, and was previously a temporary mining camp filled with uitlanders, or foreigners. Louis Grundlingh, who has written several articles on the history of public parks in Johannesburg and abroad,[6] positions Joubert Park as a material manifestation of upper to middle class British

[6] See *"Parks in the Veld" The Johannesburg Town Council's efforts to create leisure parks, 1900s-1920s* (2012), *"The Great Outdoor Living Room of the City" A survey essay on the thoughts and aims of urban park development in the late 19th and early 20th century in Europe and the United States of America* (2017).

values in the city under Lord Milner's government (2015: 36). Joubert Park was at that stage, he suggests (2015: 37), a statement by the wealthy classes that testified to their ability to make dirty and chaotic Johannesburg an "ordered place" (ibid). Joubert Park and its amenities were not meant for everyone, and the paths, trees, shrubs and herbaceous borders acted as walls and boundaries to access based on class and skin colour (Grundlingh 2015: 38). The elaborate wrought iron fences that encircled the park and the large iron gate were designed to physically separate the park from its busy surroundings, and acted as signifiers of civic control and authority, including and excluding select groups of people from the ordered and green space within (Grundlingh 2015: 39).



Clearing the ground for the JAG, 1913 (Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa)

As I have outlined, the establishment of the JAG and Joubert Park at the turn of the 20th century was part of a larger colonial project, or what Beverley Butler (2007: 38) has termed "benevolent colonialism", where the "civilising" colonial project is brought about through the tools of the state, such as texts, monuments, spectacle and new memories and archives that seek to displace local, indigenous memory discourses by imposing themselves on the population. Mervyn Miller (2002: 164) has written on British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens'[7] underlying architectural and urban principles that guided the design and layout of the JAG, arguing that his attendance at The Royal Institute of British Architects Conference[8] in October of 1910 greatly inspired his plans for the gallery, focused as it was on "... the power of the Grand Plan" for urban and civic design and layout. The Victorian pleasure garden aesthetic that formed the foundation of Joubert Park is also an example of a tool of physical colonial imposition,

[7] Lutyens was commissioned by the Johannesburg City Council in 1910 to design the JAG.

[8] William Whyte (2012) claims that Luytens had a great investment in the outcomes of the conference, as he sat on the organizing committee. Whyte, in the same article (2012: 159), argues that the conference aimed to put forward a specifically British set of urban and town planning ideals as the way forward for international urban design.

specifically designed to afford legitimacy to an imported system of colonial rule, and thus links to what Butler has termed the "memory work" (2007: 33) of the new archive.

Butler argues that this work occurs on multiple levels, and is most evident in the larger colonial project, such as the French invasion of Algiers in 1870 (2007: 38). She demonstrates how the performativity of colonising forces (the physical occupation of a foreign territory), the introduction of new technology, the formation of cultural institutions in the western-European model, and even the writing and distribution of texts form part of this displacing project (ibid). Butler (2007: 40) directly implicates museums and public spaces in the memory work of the colonial project, writing that the display, contextualisation, romanticisation and mythology that is constructed around objects in museums "...serves to 'authenticate' artifacts 'reposessed' in the colonial territories, displaying these for public consumption" (ibid). Same Mdluli (2017: 79) has written on how these fragments of the colonial project still linger and haunt both our cultural discourses and the places that house them. Mdluli's text focuses on the decolonial programme in South Africa which was given new impetus

by the 2015 #rhodesmustfall movement that, she claims, called attention to "... an uneasy discourse around the myths of the 'rainbow nation'..." and the ways that reminders of a troubled colonial past still cling to legitimacy in the public sphere.[9] She claims that museums and other cultural institutions continue to create theoretical and methodological criteria that, under the premise of diversity, ultimately work to cement limited and limiting definitions of culture and identity (2017: 80). Mdluli (2017: 81) expands her argument by stating that museums can and do influence the construction of a narrative and archive by omitting and/or including texts and objects that carry certain associations of power. As I have written here, Florence Phillips' drawing from European museum models and the arts and crafts movement for the foundation of the JAG model can be viewed as both a method of colonial memory work in addition to linking the museum to a mythology of British imperial cultural power.

[9] See Gqola, P.D. on the rainbow nation *Defining people: Analysing power, language and representation in metaphors of the New South Africa* (2001). See Nyamnjoh F.B. on the #rhodesmustfall movement #*RhodesMustFall Nibbling at Resilient Colonialism in South Africa* (2016).

In this research report, I argue that these values, mythologies, motivations, histories and contexts are irrevocably inscribed into the sand, stone, brick, mortar and soil of Joubert Park and the JAG. That they still haunt and linger in both spaces over one hundred years later. I demonstrate how these histories and ideologies manifest, and subtly, overtly or covertly influence the ways that certain individuals have navigated the JAG and Joubert Park and what this navigation has produced. The aim of this study and the accompanying mapping project is to attempt tracing of a kind of selected history of these spaces through an intense exploration and study of six personally selected tangible and intangible traces connected to Joubert Park and the JAG, all of which to some degree register specific ways that the art museum and the park have been interfaced with by those that have encountered them. These traces have been surfaced through a process of research-led practice and practice-led research. I have been guided by the materiality and mythology inherent in these traces, and have allowed these facets to guide my research into how the traces disrupt or reinforce the materiality and mythology of the JAG and Joubert Park, thus also highlighting the levels of individual engagement with both the park and the museum. Both the

JAG and Joubert Park have been the focus of many different public and private interventions, which could be viewed as evidence of an enduring interest in both spaces.[10] The Joubert Park Public Art Project in 2001, Stephen Hobbs' *JAG/SNAG* exhibition in 2014/2015, the publication of *Constructure* in 2015 and a recent play by playwright Myer Taub, titled *Florence* and performed at the Market Theatre in 2018, are only a few such interactions in the recent history of the gallery and the park.

All of these interactions with the JAG and Joubert Park occur in an environment that is arguably very different to the one in which both spaces were formed and founded. Dorothee Kreutzveldt and Bettina Malcomess (2013: 134-136) have outlined how the city of Johannesburg, and the various suburbs that make up its central business district, have undergone massive, seismic shifts from the city's inception in the late 19th and early 20th century, when the

[10] See Tomlinson, R. *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the Post-Apartheid City* (2003), Kurgan, T & Ractliffe, J. *Johannesburg Circa Now. Photography and the City*. Johannesburg: Terry Kurgan & Jo Ractliffe (2005), Carman, J. *Uplifting the Colonial Philistine. Florence Phillips and the making of the Johannesburg Art Gallery* (2006).

JAG and Joubert Park were founded, through to the contemporary moment.

Kreutzveldt and Malcomess (2013: 135) attribute the amalgamation of building styles, crumbling infrastructure in certain areas, and urban density issues to a general lack of oversight and planning, combined with a change in the demographics and population size that occurred in the late 1980s as largely white business and residents fled the urban centre of the city for the suburbs and rental agencies took advantage of vacant buildings.

Two recent pieces of research into the JAG and Joubert Park have examined these spaces through a socio-cultural lens. Sizwe Cecil Radebe (2015) has written in detail on current perceptions of the JAG by people using Joubert Park through a series of interviews with park-goers as part of his Masters research. Radebe's interactions with the photographers that ply their trade in the park, couples spending private moments on the lawns, those passing through on their way to work and even a few policewomen on duty at the JAG's West entrance illustrate the ways that the gallery is perceived by the public that live and work in the area. Radebe's interviews have an anecdotal flavour, and

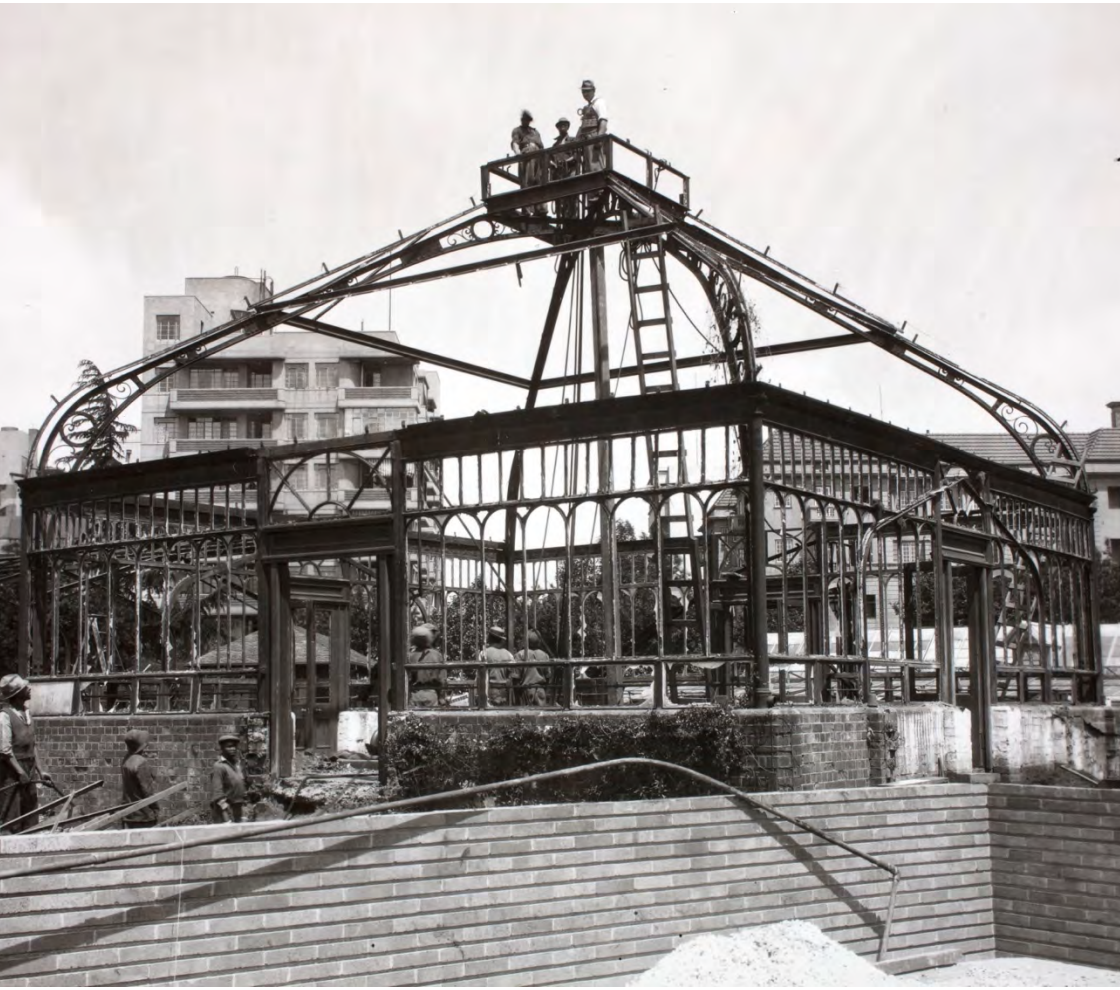
reveal how impressions of the gallery in the minds of those not familiar with its actual usage range from the building being a government office of sorts (2015: 13), to a shop where art is for sale to be bought by "... rich white people with lots of money..."(2015: 14).

Timothy Johnson (2010), as part of a Masters dissertation in architecture, has also expanded on the contemporary context of the JAG and Joubert Park by observing some of the complex, lived relationships between communities in and around Joubert Park and the JAG, and how these relationships intersect, supersede, override or rewrite the existing architectural layouts and planning of the city. His study, whilst limited in its criticality, positionality and view of art history, is informative in that it plots out the ways that current communities have subverted older and new state infrastructure and the existing urban fabric, most specifically in the areas of informal trade in and around the park (2010: 37-38). Interactions such as these and ones by Hobbs and Taub produce pieces of trace material which stand in to represent and embody a certain set of cultural, political, economic and historical values as they relate to the JAG and Joubert Park within a specific period. In this paper,

I will introduce theoretical frameworks that go some way towards demonstrating how these interactions manifest these values, and apply them to my selected traces in an exploratory attempt to trace an historical trajectory of the gallery and the park via the six traces.

In relation to traces and tactical interactions with physical environments and materialities that seek to overtly or subtly include and exclude, Rory Bester (2005: 15) has drawn on Michel de Certeau's (1984) theory of walking as a tactic which aims to undermine the dominant hegemonic structures of a built environment as a way of re-negotiating a space, and applies it to Johannesburg's apartheid spatial planning. Walking in this instance could be viewed as a trace that reveals an interaction by users of a space with a certain set of dynamics specific to time, place and environment. Similarly, Anita Bakshi (2013: 192) explores concepts introduced by Paul Ricoeur (2004) to argue for how the lived experiences and tactical interaction of an urban space by those that inhabit it can counter dominant mythologies of power that are inscribed into the spaces themselves. Importantly, and similarly to the foundations of the JAG and Joubert Park as I have outlined, Bakshi (2003:

197) writes that "mythologies of place" can be inscribed into physical structures by governments and other powerful groupings in order to legitimise messages of proscribed, official national narrative, but that these messages can be circumnavigated by those that inhabit those spaces through traces such as maps and photographs. These pieces of materiality act as traces that register personal memories and interactions that sometimes undermine the nationalistic narratives embodied within the built environment (ibid).



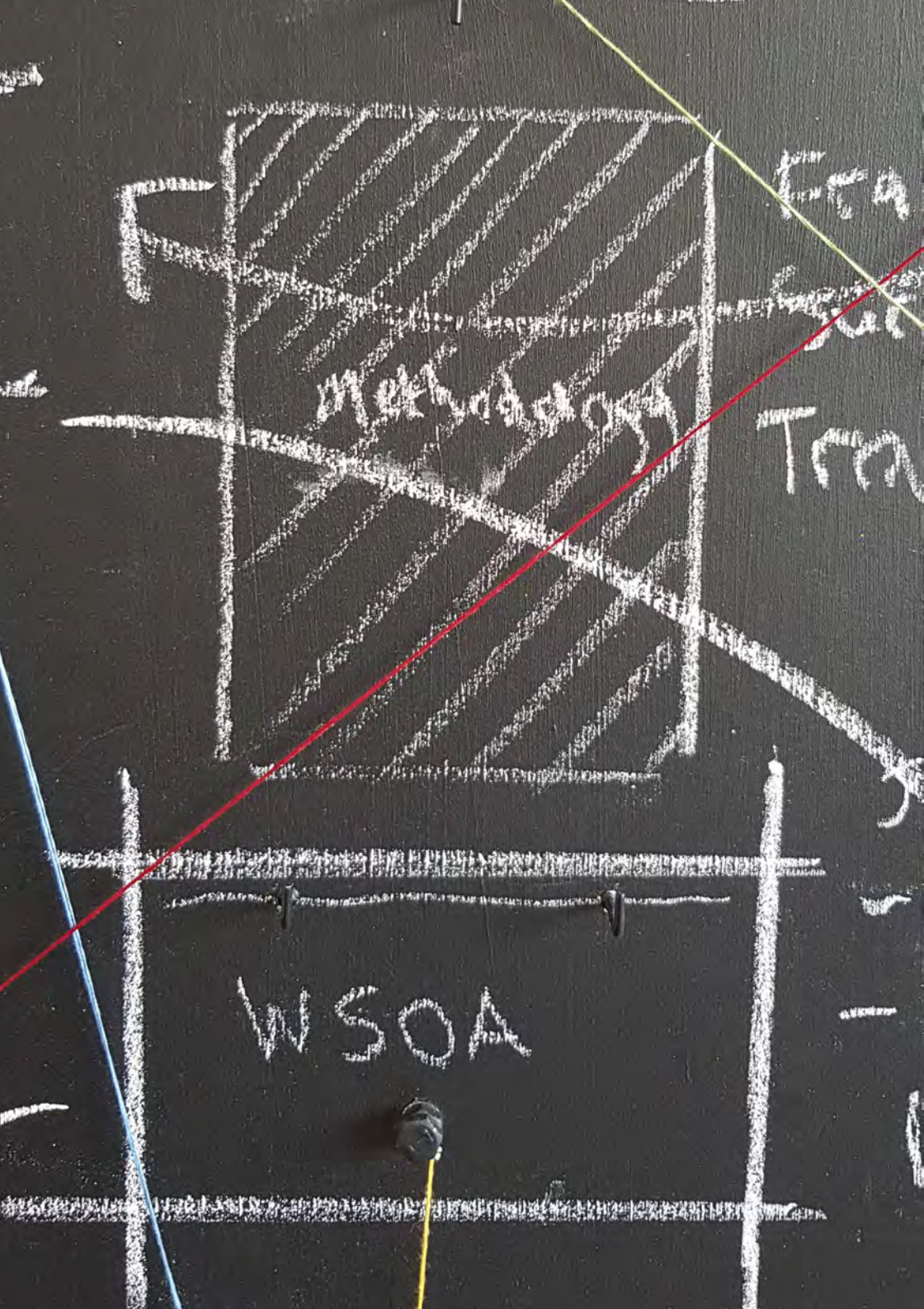
Building the greenhouse in Joubert Park, image undated (Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa)

In this research report, I argue that these forms of interactions and their manifestations, connected as they are to the historical, political, economic and cultural environment of both spaces and in relation to the JAG and Joubert Park, can be viewed with a degree of clarity through the six traces that I have selected. I will demonstrate, using sound theoretical frameworks, how these interactions have happened, in the hope that extricating some of the motivations that inform these interactions will assist in negotiating the complexity of heritage spaces within the South African context. My study differs to the academic work that has already been done on Joubert Park and the JAG in that it has been guided by the six traces I have selected to study. The traces themselves are the lenses through which I have engaged with the park and the museum.

This report is structured in such a way as to outline and elaborate upon the various theoretical frameworks and methodologies I use to analyse my traces, moving on subsequently to six chapters which in turn demonstrate how these frameworks and methodologies are applied to each trace. I end the report with an argument for why this work

is important in our current socio economic, political and historical environment.

Methodology, Creative Research and Producing New Knowledge


WSOA

I have selected six traces related to both the JAG and Joubert Park, some of which are material (*The Old Fence*, *The Postcard*) while others are intangible (*The Play by Taub*, *The Panel Discussion*) manifestations of interactions with the two spaces. I view these traces as points of reference that highlight the materialities and mythologies that are themselves reflective of varying social, political and economic influences and investments in the JAG and Joubert Park. It is my contention that the traces are manifestations of these influences and investments, some of which operate along the lines of official state narratives, while others move and act below these hegemonic structures. Françoise Verges (2013: 37-44) writes that the movements of people beneath formal social, political, economic and geographical map lines, form alternative social geographies of spaces, highlighting and surfacing sometimes invisible patterns of movement.

The sites of the JAG and Joubert Park are not in the state of stasis that would allow for a myopic study. Through Verges, it can be observed that spaces can, at any point in time, present a myriad different and layered contexts depending on the lens through which they are viewed, and it is this

perspective that has guided my methodology. The aim of this research is to engage with the past, present and possibly also the future existence of the JAG and Joubert Park through the lenses of the six traces that I have selected. In a similar vein to Verges, Paula Saukko (2003) has written on the advantage of the field of cultural studies for dislodging and surfacing "... previously silenced knowledges and cultures" (2003: 14) through three primary research approaches: Dialogic, deconstructive and contextual. Saukko (2003: 19-22) demonstrates how these research approaches are designed to impart a degree of validity to research through self-reflexivity and polyvocality, unearthing the social, political and economic constructions that dictate our thought processes, and through being aware that all research is located in an existing cultural and social framework that holds its own binaries of power.

Through the consideration and application of these research methodologies to my six traces, I have expanded the frameworks through which the traces can be viewed, seeing them in relation to the broader social, historical and political discourses that have formed around the gallery and the park, how they are connected to realms of thought and

study that exist beyond these spaces, and how my own connection to them affects my study. Thus, a few pages of notebook paper from the desk of Edwin Lutyens, depicting the planned layout of a state building in a colonised country can represent a larger discourse on the politics and ideologies of public space in colonised nations. A theatre production depicting a fictionalised Florence Phillips is not only a study of a playwright's personal interpretation of a British woman's idealised notions of art and culture in a new mining city dominated by men, but is also a case study of theatre conventions upended in order to disrupt the mythology that surrounds the JAG founder.

As Saukko has suggested through her definitions of new research methodologies in cultural studies, and as I have outlined here, it can be argued that knowledge is not an objectifiable or stable construct. Smith and Dean (2009) link to this idea by claiming that research needs to reflect this notion of knowledge by utilising strategies that facilitate a wider engagement with research tools and subjects. The authors (2009: 6) identify and define such a research strategy as practice-led research, meaning that a creative work, the handling of materials involved in that work, and the

thinking processes that are an intimate part of the act of creation, can lead to original and important research outcomes and knowledge generation. However, they hold (2009: 7) that the opposite approach, research-led practice (the act of engagement with academic theories which then leads to complementary practical work), can also contribute to the generation of new knowledge.

I have followed a multifaceted research approach that combines both of those outlined by Smith and Dean. My creative work, through practice, has allowed me to engage my selected traces and their academic and material connections with each other, their larger socio-political, historic and economic environments, and myself. I have also, through research-led practice, expanded and nuanced these connections via engaging with academics in the fields such as social development, museology, theatre, architecture, heritage and curatorial practice. The creative aspect of my research is embodied not only through the larger creative component which incorporates my writing and research, but also through the smaller pieces of creative writing that form the introductions to a selection of chapters. These creative writing exercises have helped me to

explore my positionality in relation to each of my traces, and to flesh out some of my thinking around the larger theoretical frameworks that inform the traces themselves, such as materiality and mythology.

Verges (2013: 39), in her argument for the validity and importance of excavating unseen and buried histories, claims that oral narratives play an important part in this process as they reveal "...material traces (that) are gone but which have remained alive in... sayings and stories". Three of the traces connected to the JAG and Joubert Park that I have studied (Myer Taub's 2018 play *Florence*, Stephen Hobbs' 2014/2015 *JAG/SNAG* exhibition, and the incumbent JAG Director Khwezi Gule's contribution to a panel discussion at the 2018 FNB Joburg Art Fair) required gathering information from participants in these manifestations through what Lynn Abrams (2010: 3) has termed "oral history". Abrams describes this as the process of conducting interviews, and then transcribing, interpreting and applying the content (ibid). In the context of my research, this related to interviews with creative workers that have been involved in both spaces.

These interviews have allowed me as a researcher to obtain important insights from these creative workers, both in terms of new and updated thinking with regard to projects in the past, and of gathering crucial information as to the theoretical and academic backgrounds that formed the foundation of these projects and that might not have found their way into official records of the projects themselves. In an interview with Hobbs, for example, a much greater concern for the larger social, urban and economic setting of the JAG became evident, compared to what was documented in an official catalogue of the JAG/SNAG exhibition. I submit that my interviews with stakeholders, and the subjectivity of their content (Abrams 2010: 22), offers a richness and variety of material that contributes qualitatively to an understanding of the JAG and Joubert Park through the traces of *The Play by Taub*, *The Exhibition by Hobbs* and *The Panel Discussion*. However, as Abrams cautions (2010: 5), oral histories can potentially be influenced by the subjectivity of memory, and this should be kept in mind when their content is applied to larger research. During my interview with Myer Taub, for example, it became clear that, as time had passed between the writing and presentation of the play, he gained the

perspective that allowed him to connect the work both to much earlier iterations exploring similar themes, and to work that he was in the process of conceptualising at the time of my interview with him.

Smith and Dean's definitions of research-led practice and practice-led research have allowed me to position myself as a researcher in relation to a study of the JAG and Joubert Park via the traces that I have selected, the larger academic theoretical frameworks I draw on in the course of my study, and my application and utilisation each of these elements in the written and creative components of my research report, which inform each other practically and theoretically. The creative component was accomplished in dialogue with my written research as a critical part of research-led practice and practice-led research, each component informing the other as part of the creative and writing process. Gaston Bachelard (1994) writes of the ability to apprehend an item of creativity through intuition; with the emphasis on the "phenomenological determination" (1994: xviii) of the article of creativity. The "trans subjectivity of the image" (ibid: xix), he claims, can only be properly and accurately understood through the very personal, physical and

emotional interaction that an individual has with that specific piece of creativity, such as a painting or poem. A subjective interaction between the creator and the viewer is an integral part of the process of creation and interpretation.

The creative component of my report takes the form of a mapping experiment that explores the connections between each of the traces, their relation to me as researcher, and their links to the spaces they are associated with. This is in the form of a surface on which I have sketched out the spaces and the above-mentioned connections at different levels, some more tangential and subliminal than others. The map face acts as a register upon which my interactions with all six of the traces is made visible and connected with the layered history of the JAG and Joubert Park in the larger context of Johannesburg. The creative component of my work attempts to surface how all of these levels (my interactions, the traces, the larger histories of the gallery and the park and various other stakeholder interactions and interventions) overlap, interplay and interact with each other, which in turn influenced my writing process.

Throughout their book *Not No Place* (2013), Bettina Malcomess and Dorothee Kreutzfeldt similarly makes use

of different connections as a navigational tactic and informational device. While the author's intermingling of personal anecdotes, writing, selections of material and methodology of connection speak to the city of Johannesburg at large and their personal experiences and interactions within the space of the city, in my creative approach these elements are used as a way of navigating the historicity of two specific sites in the city; the JAG and Joubert Park. Through Malcomess and Kreutzveldt's work, a new kind of knowledge is produced via the connections between material traces, the writer's own personal insertions, and the city as a disparate entity; a methodology of practice that is similar to my own.

I have also drawn from the practical methodologies, visual treatments and conceptual experimentation of three contemporary South African visual artists who work with materiality, traces, tactical interrogation of strategies of power and the process of forming connections. Alexander Opper's work *Negotiation* (2010) makes use of elements of materiality (soil and turf) connected to the JAG and Joubert Park to question official, normalised definitions of museums

in South Africa.[11] The work was part of a group exhibition installed in and around the JAG and Joubert Park, entitled *Time's Arrow*, from February to April 2010. As Opper (2010) writes, *Negotiation* was part of an ongoing project that sought to interrogate and analyse the nature and definition of the JAG and the park as sites, literally transplanting them into each other. Pieces of park lawn and museum courtyard soil, spelling out 'Museum' and 'Park' respectively, were excised and transplanted into the spaces left behind after the excavation of the letters making up the words. A process of undoing and transmutation occurs as the museum soil is overgrown by the park turf, while the park turf grows and becomes unrecognisable within the confines of the gallery courtyard.

Roelof Petrus van Wyk's body of work entitled *I NDEX:XY* (2018), installed at the Origins Centre at WITS, involved a methodology of mapping and personal connection to deconstruct characteristics of the apartheid state in 1980s South Africa (Elizabeth: 2018). Van Wyk studied the unexpected convergences between race, gender and

[11] For more reading on Opper's approach to materiality (specifically architectural forms) as a methodology for tactical interrogations of spaces, see *Undoing Architecture* (2010).

sexuality using a mapping exercise that incorporated elements of materiality such as photographs, articles in back issues of Scope magazine, text and colours. While van Wyk's work investigates subversive sexuality and its relationship to the apartheid state, his engagements are always through the lens of his own experience, and it is this personal and individualised interaction with archival material and his subjective treatment of the construction and assembly of this material for the exhibition that has influenced my own treatment of my creative component.

Visual artist and urban developer Stephen Hobbs used various forms of mapping, collage of archival materials and diagrams for the thinking behind his collaborative body of work for the *JAG/SNAG* exhibition at the JAG in 2014/2015. His schematic representation of the problems faced by the JAG were given form through this visual approach, which he also used as a way of reflecting his own thought processes in relation to the exhibition. I have used a similar creative methodology in my own approach to visually represent the six traces, their connections to one another and their surroundings, and how the work of various academics can assist in their study and their relation to me as a

researcher. The form of 'work-in-progress' as visual practice has inspired my creative component.









Clockwise from top left: Photograph of Roelof Petrus van Wyk's *INDEX:XY*, 2018. Diagram by Thuresh Govender, part of Stephen Hobbs' *JAG/SNAG* exhibition, 2014/2015. Alex Opper, *Negotiation*, 2010. *INDEX:XY*, 2018. *Negotiation*, 2010. Artist and urban developer Stephen Hobbs (Images courtesy Stephen Hobbs, Roelof Petrus van Wyk, timesarrowatjag.blogspot.com)





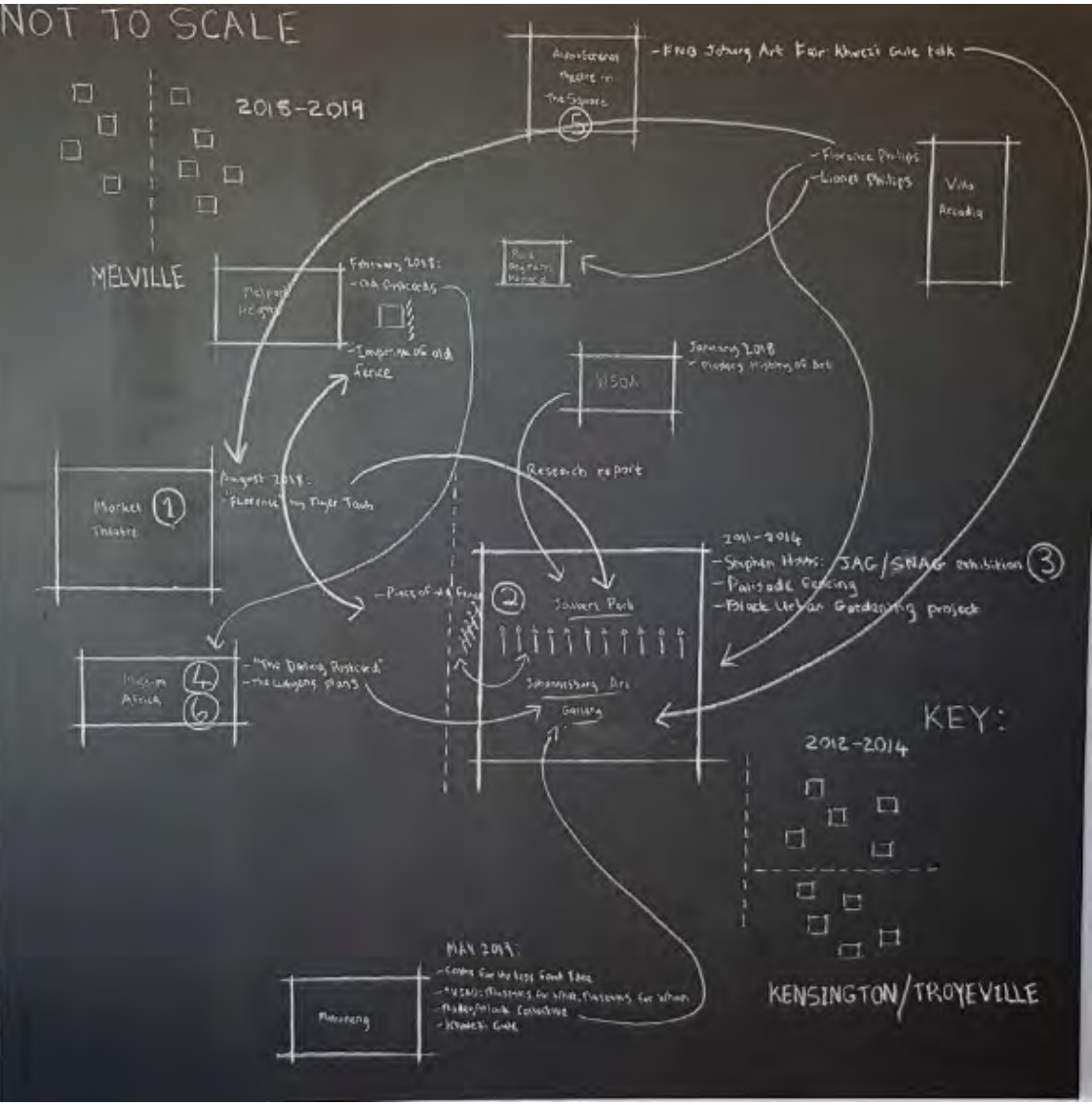
Verges (2013: 39-41) demonstrates, through colonial maps from the 19th century, how non-European territories were subdivided and dissected into containable, convenient and easy to reference cartographies that swept any indigenous, personalised markers violently aside. She argues (2013: 41) that these violences have persisted into the 21st Century with the maps that we still use, and that "A map of invisible lives recognises the ephemeral nature of economic maps. It does not ignore the constraints imposed by national and imperial maps ... but suggests that these are not the only territories of living things" (2013: 38). For this reason, I avoid using an existing map as a surface, but rather use the various layers and intersections with which I am working to build up a register of space, context and interactions that move below those that form part of the 'officiality' of the map. It is this subliminal, alternative materiality that interests me, and connects to my larger work in this paper on tangible and intangible traces and how they can be seen as evidence of interactions with both spaces through each of their histories.

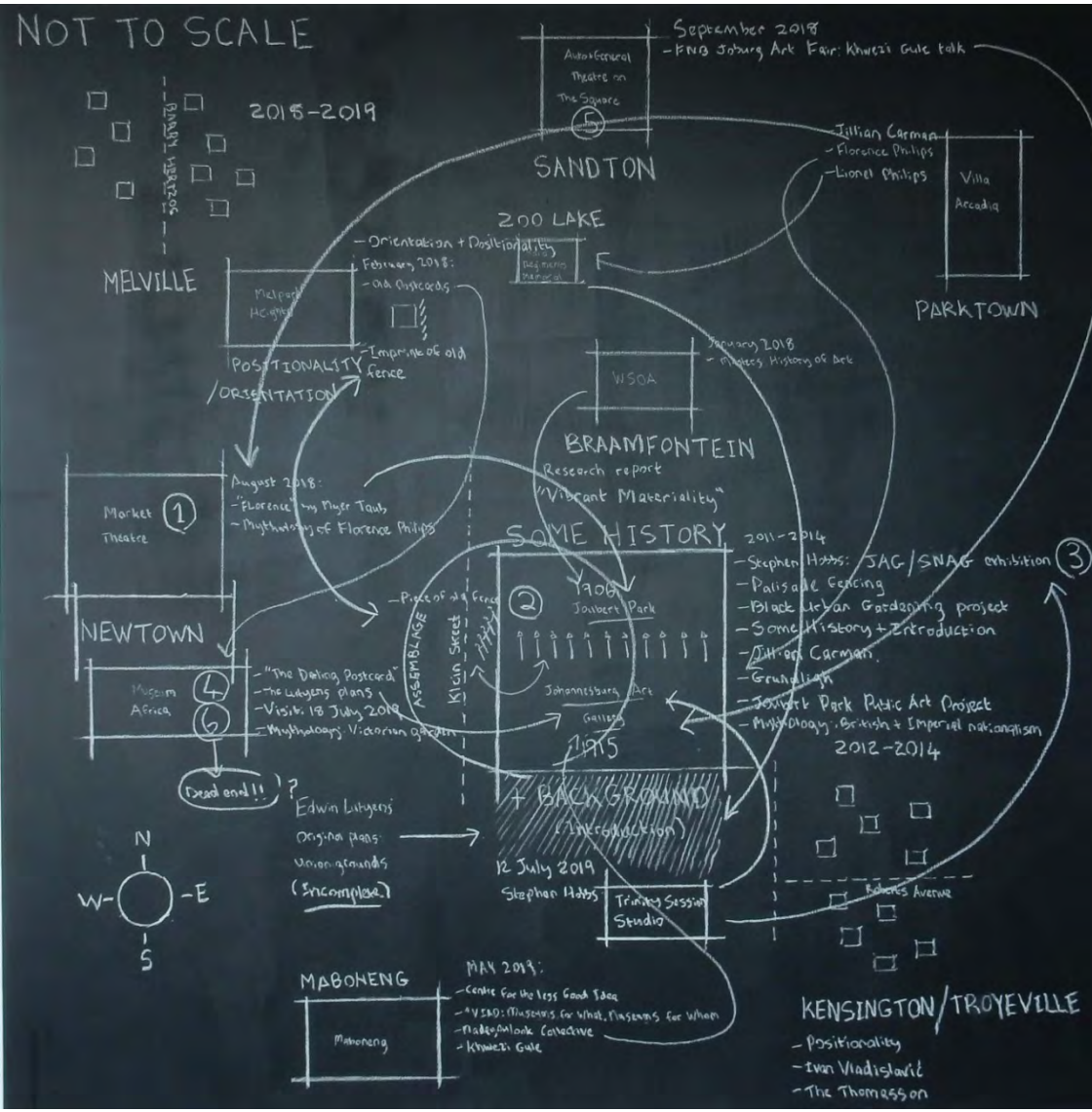
My creative research, whilst expanding my understanding of the JAG and Joubert Park, also seeks to connect both spaces to a larger socio-political and cultural environment

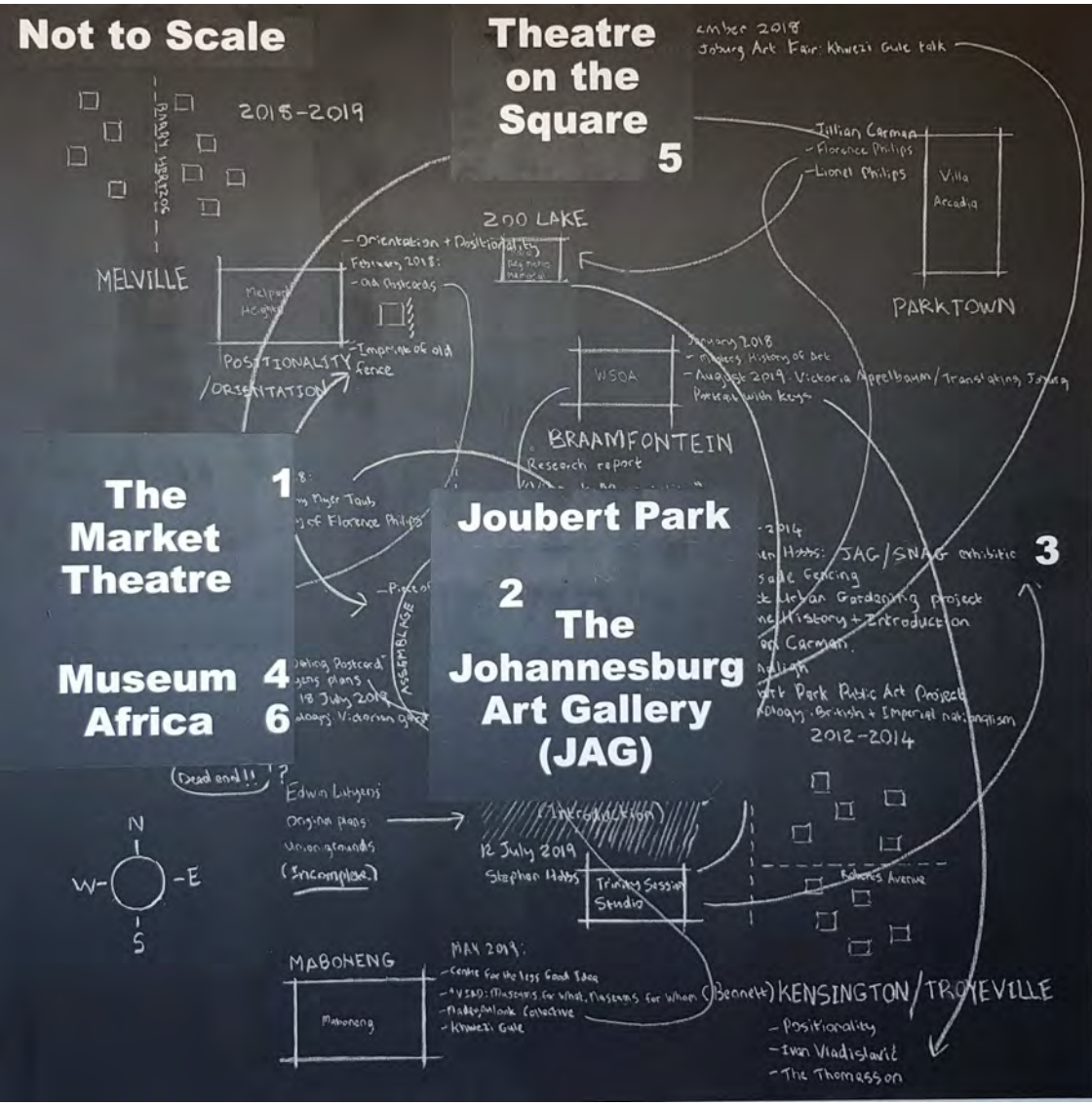
in Johannesburg. The trajectory of both spaces is expanded beyond the walls and fences that confine them, to Sandton, Villa Arcadia, the Market Theatre and Melville, my home. These trajectories serve as added layers of cultural and historical meaning that activate both the gallery and the park beyond the current moment and into the past and future. The links themselves also speak to current discourses around themes such as public spaces, memory and the purpose of museums. I also attempt to expand upon these connections through the structuring of this research report. In the course of my research and interaction with the selected traces, I observed various theoretical and practical overlaps and connections between traces, and have constructed my chapters in such a way as to surface these connections. The motif of the green palisade fence that surrounds the JAG, for example, is a strong visual element used literally and metaphorically in *The Play by Taub*. The concept of security and the psychological effect of enclosure are also evident in my chapter on *The Old Fence*. Curatorial strategies, museology and the purpose of museums as institutions in South Africa are a theme in *The Panel Discussion*, whilst *The Exhibition by Hobbs* asks similar

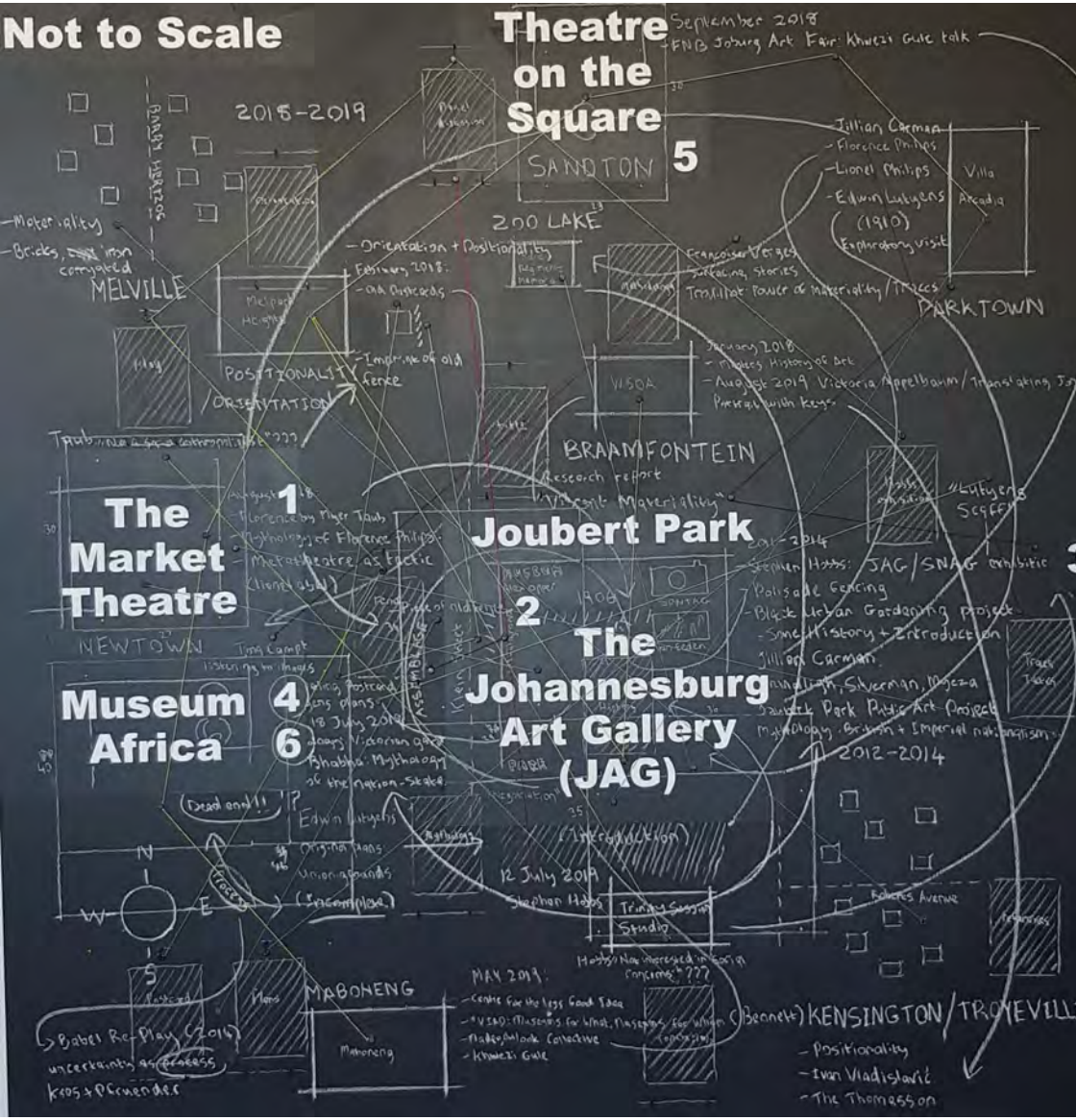
questions of the JAG through the model of his exhibition at the institution.

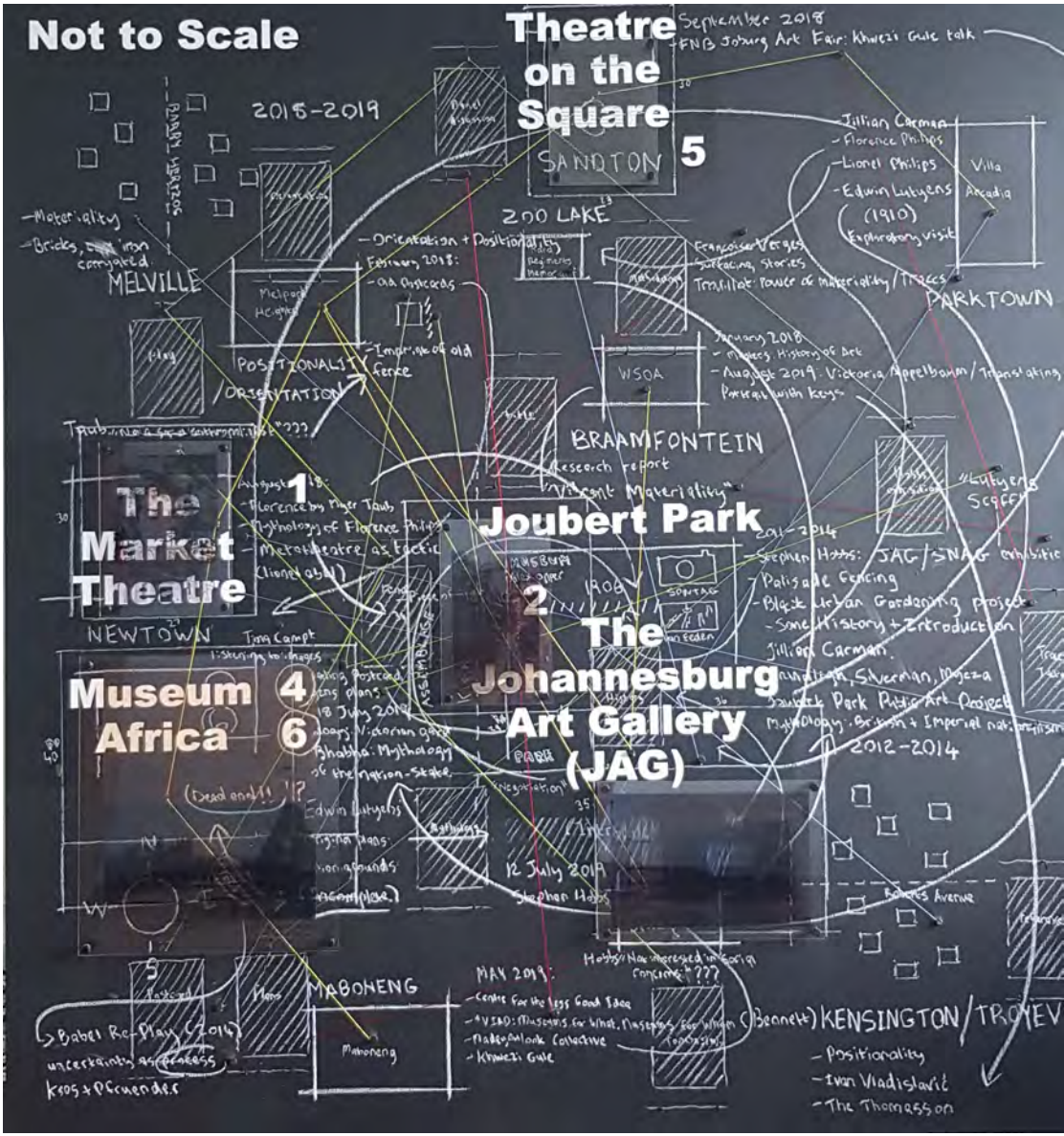
Creative project: Research-led practice and practice-led research




NOT TO SCALE
2015-2019
BARRY HERTZOG
MELVILLE
Melpark Heights
POSITIONALITY /ORIENTATION
Orientation + Positionality
February 2018:
- Old Postcards
- Imprint of old fence
Autobiographical Theatre on The Square
5
SANDTON
200 LAKE
Pieter Wenning Memorial
September 2018
- FNB Joburg Art Fair: Khwezi Gule talk
Jillian Carman
- Florence Phillips
- Lionel Phillips
Villa Arcadia
PARKTOWN
WSOA
January 2018
- Progress History of Art
BRAAMFONTEIN
Research report
"Vibrant Materiality"
Market Theatre
1
August 2018:
- "Florence" by Myer Taub
- Mythology of Florence Phillips
NEWTOWN
Museum Africa
4
6
- "The Darling Postcard"
- The Ludwigs plans
- Visit: 18 July 2019
- Mythology: Victorian garden
Dead end!!
?
Edwin Lutyens
Original plans:
Union grounds
(Incomplete)
N
W
E
S
SOME HISTORY
2011-2014
- Stephen Hobbs: JAG/SNAG exhibition
- Palisade Fencing
- Black Urban Gardening project
- Some History + Introduction
- Jill of Carman
- Granville
- Joubert Park Public Art Project
- Mythology: British + Imperial nationalism
2012-2014
Piece of old fence
2
Joubert Park
Johannesburg Art Gallery
1915
ASSEMBLAGE
Klein Street
3
+ BACKGROUND
(Introduction)
12 July 2019
Stephen Hobbs
Trinity Session Studio
Roberts Avenue
MABONENG
Maboneng
MAY 2019:
- Centre for the less Good Idea
- #VISTA: Museums for what, Museums for whom
- Radical Black Collective
- Khwezi Gule
KENSINGTON/TROYEVILLE
- Positionality
- Ivan Vladislavić
- The Thomasson


Not to Scale
Theatre on the Square 5
2015-2019
MELVILLE
200 LAKE
Orientation + Positionality
February 2018:
- Old Postcards
- Imprints of old fence
POSITIONALITY /ORIENTATION
Jillian Carman
- Florence Phillips
- Lionel Phillips
Villa Arcadia
PARKTOWN
WSOA
January 2018
- Pioneers History of Art
- August 2019: Victoria Appelbaum / Translating Johannesburg
Portrait with keys
BRAAMFONTEIN
Research report
The Market Theatre 1
Museum Africa 4 6
Joubert Park 2
The Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG)
3
JAG/SNAG exhibition
Fencing
Gardening project
Introduction
Carman
Park Public Art Project
2012-2014
Dead end!!
Edwin Lutyens
Original plans
Introduction
12 July 2019
Stephen Hobbs
Trinity Session Studio
Fisher's Avenue
N
W
E
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MABONENG
MAY 2019:
- Centre for the Less Good Idea
- MABONENG
- Khwezi Gule
KENSINGTON/TROYEVILLE
(Bennett)
- Positionality
- Ivan Vladislavić
- The Thomasson


Not to Scale
Theatre on the Square
SANDTON
5
The Market Theatre
1
Joubert Park
2
The Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG)
Museum Africa
4
6
MELVILLE
NEWTOWN
BRAAMFONTEIN
PARKTOWN
KENSINGTON / TROYEVILLE
MABONENG
200 LAKE
2015-2019
September 2018
FNB Joburg Art Fair: Khwezi Gule talk
Jillian Carman
Florence Phillips
Lionel Phillips
Villa Arcadia
Edwin Lutyens
(1910)
Exploratory visit
Orientation + Positionality
February 2018:
Art Outcrops
Impression of old fence
Positionality / Orientation
Francoise Vergès
Decolonial Stories
Troubling the Power of Materiality / Traces
January 2018
Masters History of Art
August 2019 Victoria Appelbaum / Translating
Portrait with keys
Materiality
Bricks, concrete, iron
Research report
Visceral Materiality
Florence by Myer Taub
Mythology of Florence Phillips
Market Theatre as Exotic
Lutyens Scaff
2012-2014
Stephen Hobbs: JAG/SNAG exhibition
Palisade Fencing
Black Urban Gardening Project
Some History + Introduction
Jillian Carman
Silverman, Mpeza
Joubert Park Public Art Project
Mythology, British + Imperial nationalism
2012-2014
Postcards
Plans
18 July 2018
Doors, Victorian age
Bhabha: Mythology of the nation-state
Dead end!!
Edwin Lutyens
Original plans
Union grounds
(Transmigration)
12 July 2019
Stephan Hobbs
Trinity Session
Studio
Hobbs' Not impressed in Berlin concrete ???
Fences Avenue
MAY 2019:
Centre for the Less Good Idea
MUSEUMS: Museums for what, Museums for whom
Makgotlaole Collective
Khwezi Gule
Babel Re-Play (2018)
uncertainty as process
Kros + Pfeuffer
Mabonena
(Bennett)
Positionality
Ivan Vladislavić
The Thomasson


Not to Scale
Theatre on the Square
SANDTON
5
September 2018
FNB Joburg Art Fair: Khwezi Gule talk
2015-2019
BARRY HERTZOG
Materiality
Bricks, iron corrugated
MELVILLE
Orientation + Positionality
February 2018:
Old Postcards
Impression of old fence
POSITIONALITY / ORIENTATION
ZOO LAKE
Françoise Vergès
Surfacing Stories
Translate: Power of Materiality / Traces
Jillian Carman
Florence Phillips
Lionel Phillips
Edwin Lutyens
(1910)
Villa Arcadia
PARKTOWN
January 2018
Images, History of Art
August 2019: Victoria Appelbaum / Translating Portrait with keys
WSOA
BRAAMFONTEIN
Research report
Immanent Materiality
The Market Theatre
1
Joubert Park
2
The Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG)
Lutyens Scaffe
2011-2014
Stephen Hobbs: SAG / SNAG exhibition
Paliside Fencing
Black Urban Gardening Project
Some History + Introduction
Jillian Carman
Nomvuyo Ngcuka, Sivuyile Mbeza
Joubert Park Public Art Project
Mythology: British + Imperial nationalism
2012-2014
NEWTOWN
Museum Africa
4
6
Edwin Lutyens
12 July 2019
Stephan Hobbs
Nelson Mandela Avenue
MAY 2019:
Centre for the less Good Idea
AVIAD: Museums for what, Museums for whom
Khwezi Gule
MABONENG
Babel Re-Play (2014)
uncertainty, openness
KENSINGTON / TROYEV
Positionality
Ivan Vladislavić
The Thomasson

In examining how my chosen traces can expand upon and inform the existing field of knowledge around the JAG and Joubert Park, it is critical to acknowledge that the unique forms of knowledge and the meanings that have accumulated and continue to accumulate on the surface of these traces and the spaces they inhabit can contribute to new forms of knowledge through personal interpretation. Even though this personal interpretation can and must be informed by existing frameworks of knowledge (for example, in the case of a photographic postcard of Joubert Park that I reference later in this paper, by theories related to the practice and intention of photography), there is the possibility of creating and contributing to new knowledge through what Graeme Sullivan (2009: 48) terms the "serendipity and intuition" that forms part of my selection process of traces.

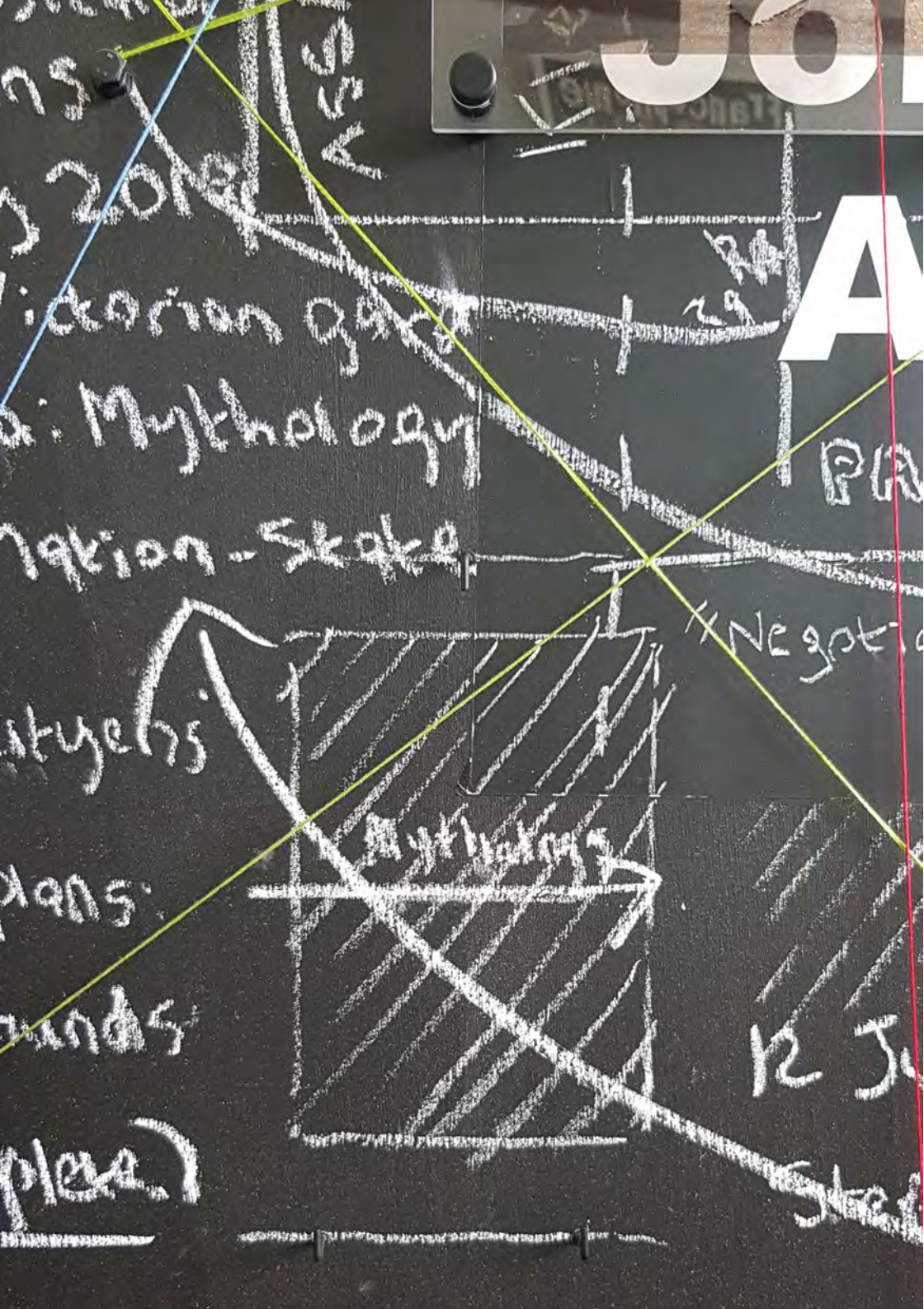
Similarly to the work of Verges, Saukko and Smith and Dean, Michel-Rolf Trouillot claims that accepted archival forms of historical narrative are constructs that can be viewed as either positivist or constructivist; the former defined as a claim to empirical truth and the latter acknowledging that historical narrative is a fictional

construct that enjoys no essential truth or claim to power (1995: 6). Trouillot further argues (1995: 19-20) that these historical narratives have been compiled and maintained for specific reasons by many different stakeholders with their own investments during certain historical periods. He suggests, through various examples (1995: 31-69), that the historical silences and omissions that form part of these narratives can be explored and given voice through physical, material traces left behind in the landscape. Trouillot recognises the importance of materiality as a tool of power, or as having the ability to produce alternative knowledges that might otherwise remain buried. "The materiality of the socio-historical process sets the stage for future historical narratives" (1995: 29).

It is through interacting with the textured materiality of each of my selected traces and their contexts that I am able to contribute to, expand upon and nuance the current political, social, economic and cultural dialogues around both the JAG and Joubert Park. Through my position as researcher and a methodology of connecting the traces to each other, the spaces they speak to and their position within the larger discourse of the history of Johannesburg, I

can go some way towards excavating new ideas, narratives and links. These ideas have a contribution to make to an environment where the roles of museums, art galleries and other historical and cultural public and private institutions and spaces are being analysed and subjected to new scrutiny. Their contributions to our histories are being questioned and it is therefore surely constructive to examine our institutions through the lens of fresh inquiry.

Mythology and Materiality


Mythology

The Philips Gallery, named in honour of the JAG's founder Florence Philips, forms part of the original Johannesburg Art Gallery building, one of a few parts that still matches Edwin Lutyens' original grand plans for an art gallery in the centre of the newly-minted City of Gold: An experiment for the architect before heading off to New Delhi. High, vaulted ceilings feature ornate plasterwork and layers of accumulated paint that peel and flake, falling to the dark, varnished parquet floor below. Outside of the JAG, I sneak a few snapshots of where the east and west wings click onto the main gallery building like lego blocks, a visual and textural reminder of the growth of the gallery from its birth in 1915 to the moment I stand in front of it in the parking lot on the south side. A security camera peers down at me with its single eye over the edge of the eaves. Should Lutyens have gotten his way, all I'd need to do is turn around towards the train tracks behind me, and I'd see an expansive platform extending across the railway cutting, the union grounds that Lutyens envisioned as part of a grand complex, of which the JAG was to be the focal point.

I almost stumble over a large, iron peg driven between the honeycomb bricks that cover the parking lot. The peg holds down a vast, sedan-style tent covering the wing in front of me, the only thing keeping the rain from seeping through the aged, deteriorating terracotta roof tiles.







From top: Ceiling of the Phillips Gallery. The connection between The Phillips Gallery and the West extension. A light fitting on the ceiling of the Phillips Gallery. An iron tent peg in the parking lot at the JAG (Images author's own)

The concepts of mythology and materiality, and how they are surfaced through my six selected traces, form part of the backbone of this research report. In order to gain a complex and nuanced understanding of how mythologies are inscribed into the materiality of both the JAG and Joubert Park, I have engaged in wide reading of local and international academics and authors who have written on the insidious power of mythologies and their ability to be inscribed materially and intangibly onto and into spaces, places and objects. My reading has helped me better understand how this process has occurred in relation to *The Darling Postcard*, *The Old Fence*, *The Play by Taub*, *The Panel Discussion* and *The Lutyens Plans*.

Roland Barthes (1957) traces the origin of mythologies, partly through Ferdinand Saussure's understanding of systems of semiotics, to the historically and culturally contingent relationship between texts and their meanings. Barthes (1957: 113-114) investigates how myths and mythologies undermine the chain of connections between what is the signifier and what is signified and the sign in order to overwrite and influence the inferences that can be drawn from them for specific purposes. On the power of

myth as constituted by signs, Barthes states that "… myth has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us "(1957: 115).

Yuval Noah Harari (2011) suggests that mythologies (in the sense of shared concepts of national identity, religion, culture and politics) is what drove the formation and maintenance of complex human social structures, once the base needs of food and shelter had been secured.[12] Harari (2011: 127) specifically references the narratives of the ancient kingdom of Babylonia and the American declaration of independence as material signifiers of social, cultural and historical mythologies, created to unify many diverse individuals in those societies through one singular myth. He argues that these codes of behaviour (as in the American declaration of independence) and belief systems (the ancient mythologies of Babylonia that dictate social hierarchies) are "embedded in the material world" (ibid) through the organs

[12] Harari is a professor in the Department of History at the University of Jerusalem. His book *Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind*, although a popularised text, is instructive in that his overview of the human species and its recent developmental history sheds light on how cultural mythologies are created and propagated for social and political purposes.

and institutions of the state such as museums and institutions of learning, whose purpose is to further pedagogic programmes to ensure the continuity of the mythologies.

Through his observation of the purposes of state institutions, Harari demonstrates how diverse, complex and multi-layered social, political, cultural and economic mythologies are imposed by dominant, hegemonic bodies into and onto the physical urban landscape. Daniel Herwitz (2015: 37-49) argues that mythologies of heritage, which he defines as a process of selectively refiguring and recasting the past in order to create a shared set of idealized values and principles under which to unite a population (2015: 37), are engaged in by both colonial and post-colonial powers.[13] He further claims (2015: 42) that heritage myths can be a tool of power to recast the prevailing governing body as a symbol of a glorious new age, in comparison to what came before. Herwitz (2015: 39) uses the Johannesburg's

[13] Herwitz (2015: 37) claims that the post-colonial state cannot help but emulate this model of heritage making as part and parcel of the structure of the state as inherited from colonial powers; with the difference being that this new heritage is used as a model for reparation.

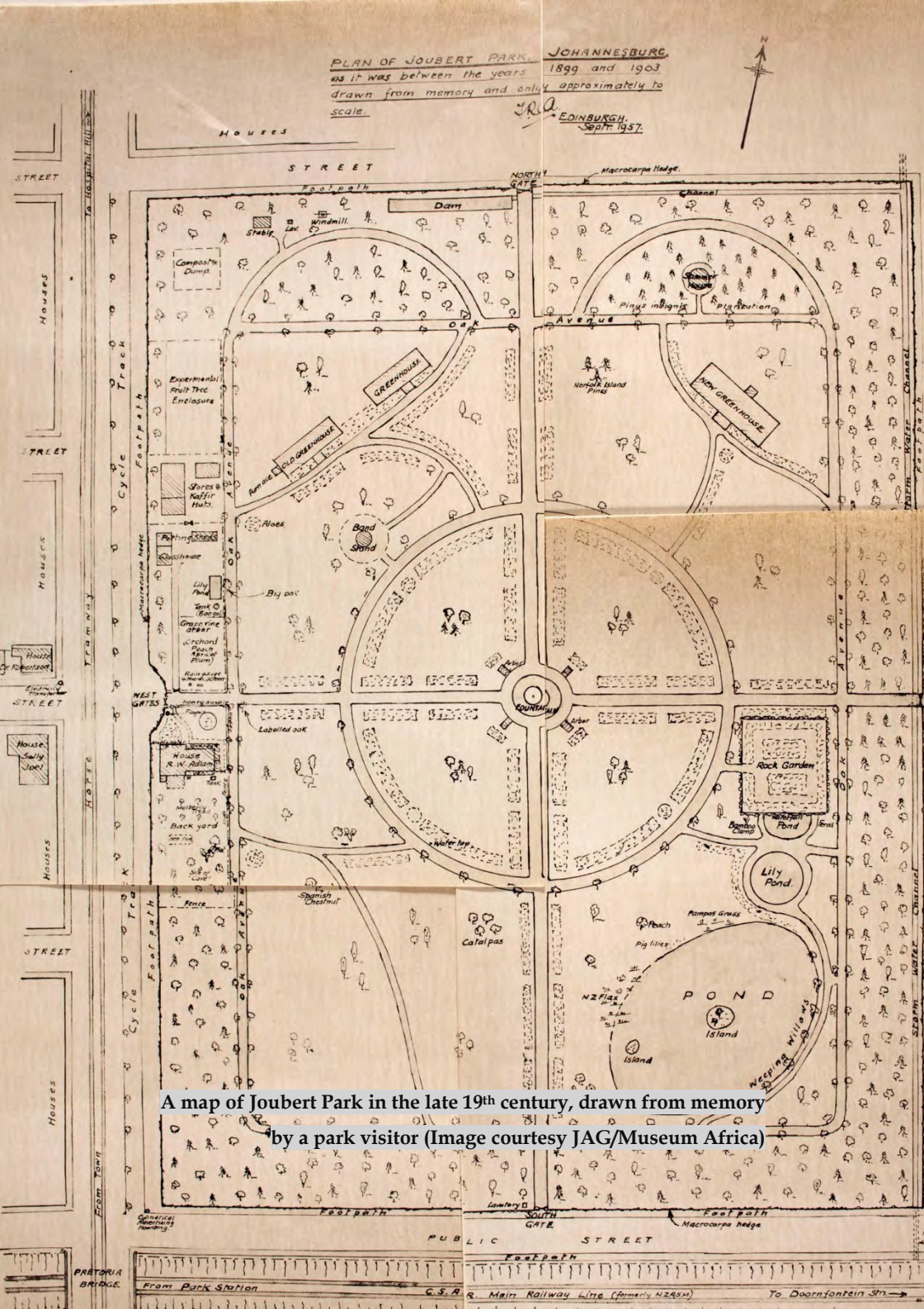
Constitutional Court building, built on the site of the Old Fort prison and used to house political prisoners during South Africa's apartheid years, as an example of how strategic heritage management is engaged by the post-apartheid government through the manipulation of materiality and mythology. Parts of the old fort are preserved (2015: 39) as material signifiers of the site's troubled history, but the building's associations are extended and nuanced through its inclusion in the larger structure of the Constitutional Court, whose purpose is ostensibly to serve the legal dispensation of the new government.

Similarly, in a contribution to the *Journal of Urban Design* (2013), Anita Bakshi analyses how memory and narrative are concretised and manipulated in cities such as Nicosia in Cyprus. Bakshi's argument (2013: 190) centres on the idea that cities are by nature complex organisms whose physicality and permanence belie the fact that they are intricate environments upon which different groups and individuals impress their experiences in a material way. Bakshi nuances her observation by explaining how "mythologies of place" (2013: 197) are structured by

powerful groups in order to evoke a certain timeframe or national identity in an effort to legitimise a specific national narrative. She uses the continual demolition of Palestinian homes and places of worship by the Israeli government to demonstrate how mythologies can play out in a material way; with governing groups attempting to literally eradicate any physical reminder of a sublimated group's claim to a space.

In line with the British, colonial motivations behind the foundation of the JAG and Joubert Park, Bakshi outlines what she terms the "intentional cultivation of memory" (2013: 191), whereby the narrative of an historical discourse is modulated by a powerful group and finds expression in the ways that monuments or spaces are constructed or removed. Referencing the writing of Ricoeur (2013: 191), she argues that this mediation differs from writing or language in that the experience of the city dweller is more immediate: The city imposes itself on its inhabitants through the physical, material interactions between its residents and the urban environment. She argues (2013: 192) that the city and the sites and buildings of which it is composed carry these messages and mythologies; not only through their

materiality, but sometimes also through its absence. Thus, in my study, an old piece of rusted cast-iron fence on the edge of Joubert Park can signal the colonial foundations of the space, even though its intended purpose is no longer being served: The Victorian pleasure garden beyond is no longer there, but its memory lingers through the trace of the fence itself.



A map of Joubert Park in the late 19th century, drawn from memory by a park visitor (Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa)

One of the key points (2013: 193) in Bakshi's argument—and a concept that directly informs the exploration of my selected traces and their connections to Joubert Park and the JAG—is the ability of interaction by bodies and groups to mould, form and influence the materiality of the built environment, especially in places that are sites of conflict and friction. Lutyens' architectural plans, for example, can be seen as exhibiting a direct intention to impose a British mythology of colonial dominance on a colonized territory through the materiality of British conventions of architecture.

In the South African context, Annie Coombes (2003: 19-42) has written on the intricate and layered ways in which various mythologies of Afrikaner nationalism are inscribed into and onto monuments that act as signifiers of a mythic notion of national identity. Coombes' conceptualisation of how these mythologies of national identity are given material form in the initial stage of their construction, and are subsequently redressed and reinterpreted over time, is particularly relevant to my study of the JAG and Joubert Park. Although Coombes' study focuses on the specificities of Afrikaner nationalist mythology, as opposed to the

British (specifically Victorian and Edwardian) nationalism embodied by the JAG and Joubert Park, her detailed analysis of the material form that mythologies can inhabit through monuments and other communication devices used by the state is a useful reference in the context of my study of materiality and mythology, and I will expand on the material forms that mythologies can inhabit in more detail in the next chapter.

Coombes also discusses the District Six Museum in Cape Town (2003: 116-137) and the process of commemoration and memorialisation undertaken by the curators, detailing how various aspects of materiality connected to the original site of District Six are used within the museum to evoke a specific state-sanctioned mythology of the trauma of forced removals by the Afrikaner national government. The predominantly coloured residential and commercial area was demolished by apartheid government city planners in the 1960s, and the museum's display cases contain reclaimed rubble from the site and old road maps to "… recall the ghosts of the past" (2003: 133), as Coombes puts it. The physical materiality of traces is used to reconstruct a fictionalised narrative of life in the area before the forced

removals and the displacement of the suburb's inhabitants. Coombes demonstrates how the museum makes use of the rich tactility of physicality and materiality not only to evoke a constructed version of memory but also to record a state-sanctioned version of the lived experiences of the inhabitants of District Six within the confines of the institution of the museum.

Similarly to Harari's study of the mythic conceptions of cultural narratives and codes of conduct in ancient Babylonia and the United States, cultural theorist Timothy Brennan (1990: 44-69) has written on what he terms the "myths of the nation"; the various ways in which nation states form and enforce an identity through a fabricated connection to validating traditions, or "... the way that various governments invent traditions to give permanence and solidity to a transient political form" (1990: 47). Brennan identifies the novel as a form of trace that can be used by a nation state to build a national identity through the written word as a tool of myth-making. He argues (1990: 49) that the rise of the epic novel has historically always mirrored the rise of the nation state by creating a mythology of sameness and similarity of identity through its content and form.

I have drawn from the work of French philosopher Gaston Bachelard and philosopher and political theorist Jane Bennett to expand on my understanding of the power of materiality in relation to mythology. Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space* (1994: 15-17), describes how places of intimacy (he specifically refers to houses) exist in the finest of detail in the memories of those who have used and navigated them, and how these impressions sometimes transcend the physicality of those spaces in real time. Similarly to Bakshi, Bachelard (1994: 17) claims that these impressions or memories can outlive the physical spaces in which they were originally formed, or "... become(s) imbued with dream values which remain after the house is gone". By sketching out how emotion, imagination and impression mould the memories of the intimate spaces that we once occupied, Bachelard details how personal mythologies affect and influence physical spaces through the power of the people that use them.[14] His argument (1994: 36) rests

[14] Although not within the scope of this paper, Bachelard is particularly interested in what he terms "the phenomenology of the daydream" (1994: 26) and how the intricacies of the mind are reflected in the physical spaces that we inhabit on a daily basis. Thus, he argues (1994: 38), rooms and spaces are themselves capable of being read as texts.

primarily on the elaborative power of imagination and its ability to create a space anew by building details and fleshing out its materiality so that the physicality of the space becomes something at once familiar, yet also foreign and new.

Important to my research and selected traces connected to the park and the JAG, is Bachelard's (1994: 48) emphasis on the ability of physical spaces, and the minute details that constitute them, to speak to the emotive and tactile experience of humanity and daily life. This emphasis on evocative materiality expands our ability to decipher and decode material objects and the specific, detailed ways in which they can speak to lived experiences, becoming in a sense a voice and a narrative that broadens the scope of a discussion of and around the space that the objects occupy.

Jane Bennett has also contributed to the discussion on materiality and the agency of the inanimate object and its relationship to human experience, which she refers to as "thing power" (2010: 3). She elaborates on how this agency and materiality acts in concert with human thought and action, thus expanding the significance attributed to them. Bennett's arguments claim grounds for a nuanced and

lateral interpretation and definition of objects and their materiality, specifically in reference to the sphere of human action. This has relevance for the study of my six traces in that it allows for a broadening of the significations that can be attributed to them. It is here that we are encouraged to look closely at things, their constituent parts, the textures, shapes, shades and angles that make them, and perhaps most especially to understand how these textures and details can affect their readers intimately and evoke an emotional response. A postcard depicting Joubert Park at the turn of the 20th century, according to Bennett's notion of thing power, signifies an agency and emotive capability beyond the image printed on its surface.

Bennett (2010: 24) extends her argument in an effort to further the understanding that vital materiality, or materiality that has in a very real sense a life of its own, is made up of constituent parts (tangible, intangible, human and non-human) that all act together within the structure of an assemblage, thus producing a certain result at a particular point in time. Bennett's thoughts can be applied specifically to my tangible and intangible traces which, through my selection and each one's relation to the gallery,

the park and my own research, form an assemblage of sorts. Bennett writes that "An assemblage owes its agentic capacity to the vitality of the materialities that constitute it" (2010: 34). Hence, there is a strong argument for all my tangible and intangible traces, seen together as an agentic assemblage, being indicators of the social, political, economic and historical context of the JAG and Joubert Park through time.

Bennett's ideas about materiality are a useful reference in that they expand the scope of what materiality can mean in all its constituent parts, and how those parts can act upon one another and their surroundings in complex and layered ways. I propose that contemporary heritage studies and civic developmental work can be enriched through the identification of the relationships between what might on the surface appear to be disparate elements, and the ways in which they are linked to one other, the environments from which they originate, and where they are located in the contemporary moment. For example, what is the relationship of what I have termed *The Darling Postcard* with Museum Africa, where it is currently housed? How is *The Play by Taub* connected to The Market Theatre where it was

performed, and how is its conceptual connection to the JAG and Joubert Park maintained, disrupted or enforced even as it came to an end?

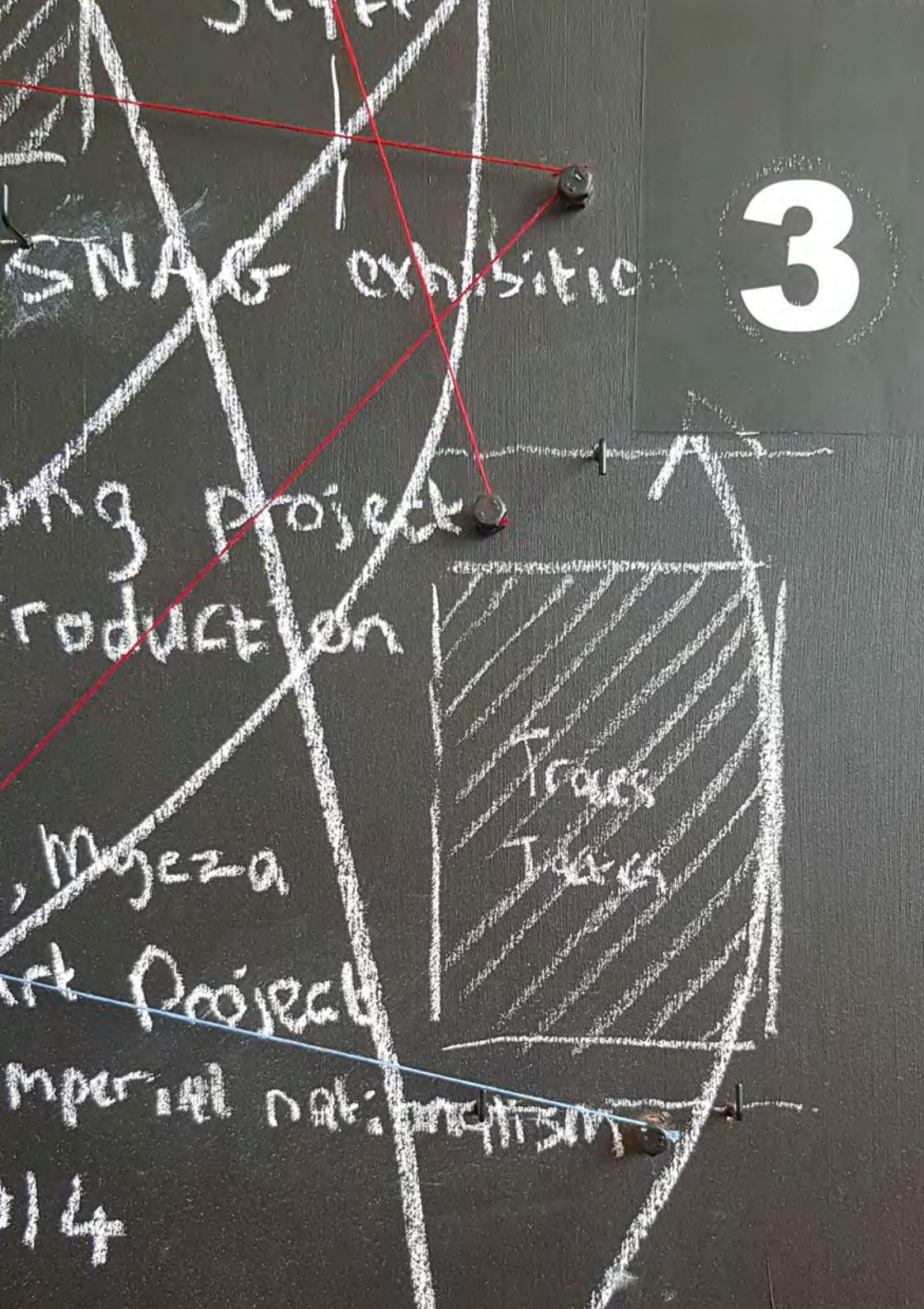
Throughout this study, I have also been aware of the possible transference of a set of values, ideologies or impressions onto my traces through my reading of them, or of claiming a degree of legitimacy or authenticity through my reading. I have attempted to retain a degree of awareness of my positionality in relation to my study of the traces, while at the same time understanding that this transference of personal impressions is an unavoidable part of the research process. Several authors[15] have written on the process of visually reading objects, and how it is inevitably coloured by the contexts of both the reader and the objects, and by larger historical constructs with their own biases.

Harari, Bakshi, Coombes and Brennan's arguments, which centre on the power of mythology and its material and intangible manifestations, give weight and substance to my argument for viewing my selected traces as outputs of

[15] See Elkins (2002), Mitchell (2009), Gell (1996).

culture at specific times in the history of Joubert Park and the JAG. Collectively, these author's research points to the consideration and study of material and immaterial traces of culture and society as being registers of changing power dynamics through time and place — an idea that is central to my argument in this paper. The work of Bachelard and Bennett encourages a closer and more detailed view of the innate power of materiality, the importance of the contexts of this materiality and human engagements with both of these factors as being central to an understanding of the social, historical and economic conditions that produce mythologies and materialities.

Spaces, Traces and Tactics


SNAG exhibitio
3
Trees
Trees

Johannesburg is a multi-layered, complex arrangement of architecture and built environment that acts, in a material sense, as a register of the city and its origins. As I navigate through the city on a daily basis, to and from work, shopping and the myriad other daily tasks that occupy my time, I am constantly aware of the changing network of the styles of architecture that dot the urban landscape outside my car window. The red brick and tinned roof civil servant's houses - standard two rooms in the front and two at the back, still dominate the older areas of the city. In the inner-city areas, these properties are subdivided to accomodate more than one family. Towards the outer edges of the older neighbourhoods, plots of land accomodate larger houses made from quintessential building materials such as the tired orange brick of the 1960's and 1970's, creating a visual identity that sets this domestic architecture apart and clearly marks it as symbolic of the more recent past of the city, when there was more space for the ruling white classes of the time to spread out and claim a new part of the landscape as their own

From the third floor of my Melville flat, just across the road I can spot a house that was probably constructed around the time that the suburb was starting to expand. From my birds eye perch, I can see the wall that seperates this property from the one next door. the wall is rough. Quick workmanship done with cement and brick. What catches my eye is the unmistakeable imprint of the ridges of corrugated iron on the plaster surface that faces my building.

Corrugated iron: this most ubiquitous and quotidian material, used historically in the first residential and commercial properties that started to sprout from the soil of new Johannesburg at the turn of the century, and also one of the main components of construction in the many informal settlement dwellings that populate the areas around the city, is instantly recognisable, even just from the ghost of its presence left behind on this wall. Two presences, the past and the contemporary, intersect at this easily overlooked and non-descript point, each leaving a mark behind: the newer wall built up right against the metal one, which was then removed to leave a trace of its presence behind.

Drawing primarily on the work of Michel de Certeau (1984) and Jacques Derrida (1976), and expanding on their concepts through reference to more recent academic writing in the field of semiotics and oppositional tactics formed in response to dominant strategies, this chapter aims to flesh out the second yet equally important component of my research report: the definitions of strategies, tactics and traces.

De Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) outlines how what he terms "stratagems" (1984: 18) and "tactics" (1984: 29) are used by both bodies of power and sublimated bodies in order to create new spaces for discourse in a given society. He distinguishes between two different levels of practice within a society: those that are normative and visible, instituted by mechanisms of power, and those that are driven by what he terms the consumer, and that are sometimes invisible and subtle (1984: 49). De Certeau's distinction between "cultural products" and the "systems of production" (1984: 31) from which they originate allows for seemingly mundane objects and traces to be studied in more detail, and beyond what may appear on the surface.

Similarly, Derrida's "opening of the fundamental ontology" (1976: 22) expands the arbitrariness of signification by arguing that the link between the signifier and the signified is entirely a construct that is dependent on historical, social, cultural and political contexts and environments, themselves forever in flux and movement. Thus we can see that objects as seemingly innocuous as a postcard, a fence or a roughly sketched architectural plan can stand in for much broader ideologies, or that the critical analysis of how essential meanings and definitions are attached to objects through a process of signification in language (both verbal and written), allows for more complex readings of the essential materiality, what Bennett refers to as the vibrancy of an object.

There is much work that is conceptually linked to de Certeau's and Derrida's principle arguments. Roland Barthes (1957: 110-136) has written on the connections between texts and their meanings and how they are culturally and historically contingent. In particular, he investigates the forms of mythologies that arise from these attachments and their effect on culture. Bill Brown has adopted Arjun Appadurai's term "the social life of things"

(2001: 6) in an attempt to apprehend the liminal, slippery space that objects occupy between their materiality and the ideas and concepts that can be and are attached to them.

In the South African context, Njabulo Ndebele's *Rediscovery of the Ordinary* (1991), a body of essays based on a public talk originally presented in 1986, poses serious questions to consider in terms of how quotidian tactics can be used to subvert and question ideologies and the vast social, political and economic structures formed by groups or individuals that hold power over others. Ndebele argues that the strategies employed by powerful groups intentionally frustrate a nuanced reading of the detailed "social processes" (1991: 23) that underlie tactics and their impact on a wider society. He calls for recognition of the seemingly mundane in all its explicit detail as a necessary way of critically interacting with a social, political and cultural environment (1991: 46-47). While it is important to note that Ndebele's argument in his book is a call for political change

in a newly democratic South Africa,[16] he also argues that it is through the ostensibly ordinary details that real, lasting social change occurs.

Ndebele hints at the school of thought developed by de Certeau when he writes about the insidious ways in which the apartheid government, similarly to other oppressive power structures, created complex hegemonic systems of power (what de Certeau refers to as strategies) in order to control and sublimate populations (1991: 68). Some of my selected traces act as "tactics", drawing from de Certeau's understanding of the term, in that they can be seen as interrogating and fundamentally questioning the strategies of the mythologies and materialities inherent in the social and historical structures of the JAG. Myer Taub's play *Florence* and Stephen Hobbs' exhibition *JAG/SNAG* are examples of this.

[16] Ndebele scrutinises pieces of literature that he claims are too easily dismissed as whimsy precisely because they pertain to the daily, lived experiences of individuals and not what he terms the "spectacle" (1991: 55) of political protest. Ndebele's body of texts essentially acts as a call-to-arms for writers, and is a manifesto on the various ways that cultural workers, particularly writers, can and need to take up arms against the state.

In *Johannesburg Circa Now. Photography and the City* (2005: 10-15), Rory Bester elaborates on de Certeau's reference to tactics through the example of how cities are reconfigured and re-negotiated by their inhabitants. He outlines how what he terms "texts" (2005: 10) can enable or frustrate readings of the city by its users, drawing on de Certeau's theory of walking as a tactic; a quotidian action that through its action reframes the strategies of existing, enforced urban fabrics. Bester views the practice of walking as a tactical act of defiance and a reinterpretation of a space that has been over-regulated and strategically closed down by groups with legislative control. His case study, the city of Johannesburg, is referenced as an example of how the materiality of cities were and are used to manufacture and maintain invented social differences (2005: 15) or mythologies, which is particularly pertinent in colonial and apartheid South Africa and to my study of the JAG and Joubert park. This connects to Bakshi's work on the tactical interrogation of a city by its inhabitants. Bakshi (2013: 192) references Michael Herzveld's (1991) study of the Cretan town of Rethemnos, to demonstrate how governmental strategies dictating the use and development of suburban

spaces can be tactically undermined by the residents of those spaces.

Herzveld's observations in Rethemnos reveal a complex material layering of state-sanctioned construction deemed to be in line with the constructed heritage mythology of the area, and smaller, less conspicuous and personal home renovations reflecting the needs and desires of those who occupy those domestic spaces, and built in opposition to the state heritage mythology. Critical to the study of my traces is Bester's (2005: 13) argument that one of the ways in which a space can be given definition and meaning as a tactical response to the regulated and official networks designed by authorities is how the users of an urban environment (like Johannesburg and Rethemnos) interrogate and destabilize those networks.

Studies by Bettina Malcomess and Obvious Katsaura in *Routes and Rites to the City: Mobility, Diversity and Religious Space in Johannesburg* (2016) examine the ways that urban mobility and the materiality of spaces within Johannesburg are influenced by religion and religious rites. Their work, which I reference in detail in the chapter on *The Old Fence*, suggests that these practices, their outputs, and the ways

that they are used to circumvent the imposed apartheid-era spatial restrictions of the city can be viewed as a form of tactical subversion. Matthew Wilhelm-Solomon argues (2016: 19-20) for a nuanced understanding of how de Certeau's tactics (in this case, religion and religious practices) reconfigure the materiality of the city itself.

As I have demonstrated here, tactics can be employed in opposition to strategies in order to offer up new readings of spaces; to counter a material mythology. This transgressive nature of tactics is dealt with by Coombes (2003: 39-40), referred to in the previous chapter, in her analysis of a magazine editorial in the Afrikaans language publication *Loslyf* in 1995. A topless model, Dina, is pictured as part of the indigenous landscape in front of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, an imposing building sited, constructed and designed to "... be a focal point for the celebration of Afrikaner nationalism...", as John Peffer (2005: 51) puts it. As Coombes argues, the contemporary portrayal of Afrikaner identity and femininity in *Loslyf* that is in direct opposition to the original Calvinist mythology represented materially by the monument "… break(s) down the mythic conception of the Afrikaners as a homogenous mass

completely in thrall to the doctrines of apartheid and their Calvinist origins."(2003: 43).

Like Bakshi, Bester and Coombes, Ross Chambers develops and extends de Certeau's original reading of strategies and the tactics that are developed in response to them by arguing that tactics are implicitly dependent upon the systems of power that give rise to them, and sometimes even strengthening them (1991: 7). This is because, as Chambers claims, they are both part of the same network and rely upon each other to function. This duality, argues Chambers, is further mirrored by the form that the tactics take, in that their degree of visibility and ability to undermine or negotiate depends entirely on the degree of power enjoyed by the strategies that are in place in any given society (ibid: 8-9). He claims (1991: 10-11) that tactics do not necessarily seek to overtly and completely undermine a system of power, sometimes rather making use of the system's levers and pulleys to subvert. In this way, Chambers links to Derrida's notion that powers of opposition and tactics of deconstruction can operate not only by completely destroying and eradicating existing structures but by inhabiting and occupying them and in so doing creating a

critical discourse that calls attention to the inherent instabilities and problematics of those strategies (Derrida 1976: 24). Thus, an exhibition like that by Stephen Hobbs can inhabit the institution of the JAG and through this occupancy and material interaction subtly call attention to the problems inherent in the institution.

Throughout this paper, I use the descriptor 'trace' to denote the pieces of tangible and intangible culture connected to both the gallery and the park, and suggest that they act as registers of the complex ways that the two environments have been interacted with by the publics that move through them. Derrida's definition of the trace and how it materially registers both its origin and effacement has allowed me to more fully understand how each of my six selected traces acts in this way. Derrida refers to the "immotivation of the trace" (1976: 51) to signpost the original trace and its destabilisation not by removal but by a process of over-writing. It is the path and tracking of this destabilisation—that is to say, the registration of the original trace and its subsequent partial effacement (1976: 61) — that is so crucial to Derrida and my own research. It is this registration and material marking that I study in this research report.

Through this materiality of the trace, Derrida claims that "… it should be recognized that it is in the specific zone of this imprint and this trace, in the *temporalisation of a lived experience* (my emphasis) … that differences appear among the elements…" (1976: 65). These differences, Derrida argues, "constitute the texts,[17] the chains, and the systems of traces" (ibid). Derrida's claim points to the richness of the trace insofar as it acts as a register and as a surface upon which actions can be and are imprinted. Through this conceptual framework, a trace such as Edwin Lutyens' architectural sketch by can be seen as registering an original imprint of colonial dominance in a foreign country, and at the same time as being in the context of the South African post-colonial political environment. It is imbued with the original intentions of the architect's vision for a city plan based on the British model, while at the same time being a symbol of foreign domination and colonial suppression.

Brenda Schmahmann's (2013: 42-53) study of the physical movement of Henry Alfred Pegram's bust of Cecil John Rhodes across the Rhodes University campus can be viewed as an example of a trace as the material register of a

[17] Bester uses the description of text in a very similar way to Derrida.

changing socio-historical and political environment. Her detailed genealogy of the Rhodes bust outlines how the university gained credence and funding though a fictitious association with and a mythology about the British imperialist when the bust was commissioned in 1907. She further examines how the movement of the bust from its placement in the old Drostdy building in 1907, to one of the residences on campus in the late 1930s, and finally to an old walk-in cupboard in 2001 mirrored the changing nature of identity politics in South Africa as various chancellors grappled with the awkwardness of the bust within the political environment of the university and in light of the #Rhodesmustfall[18] movement (2013: 53).[19] The bust of Rhodes in this example is a trace that carries a strategic

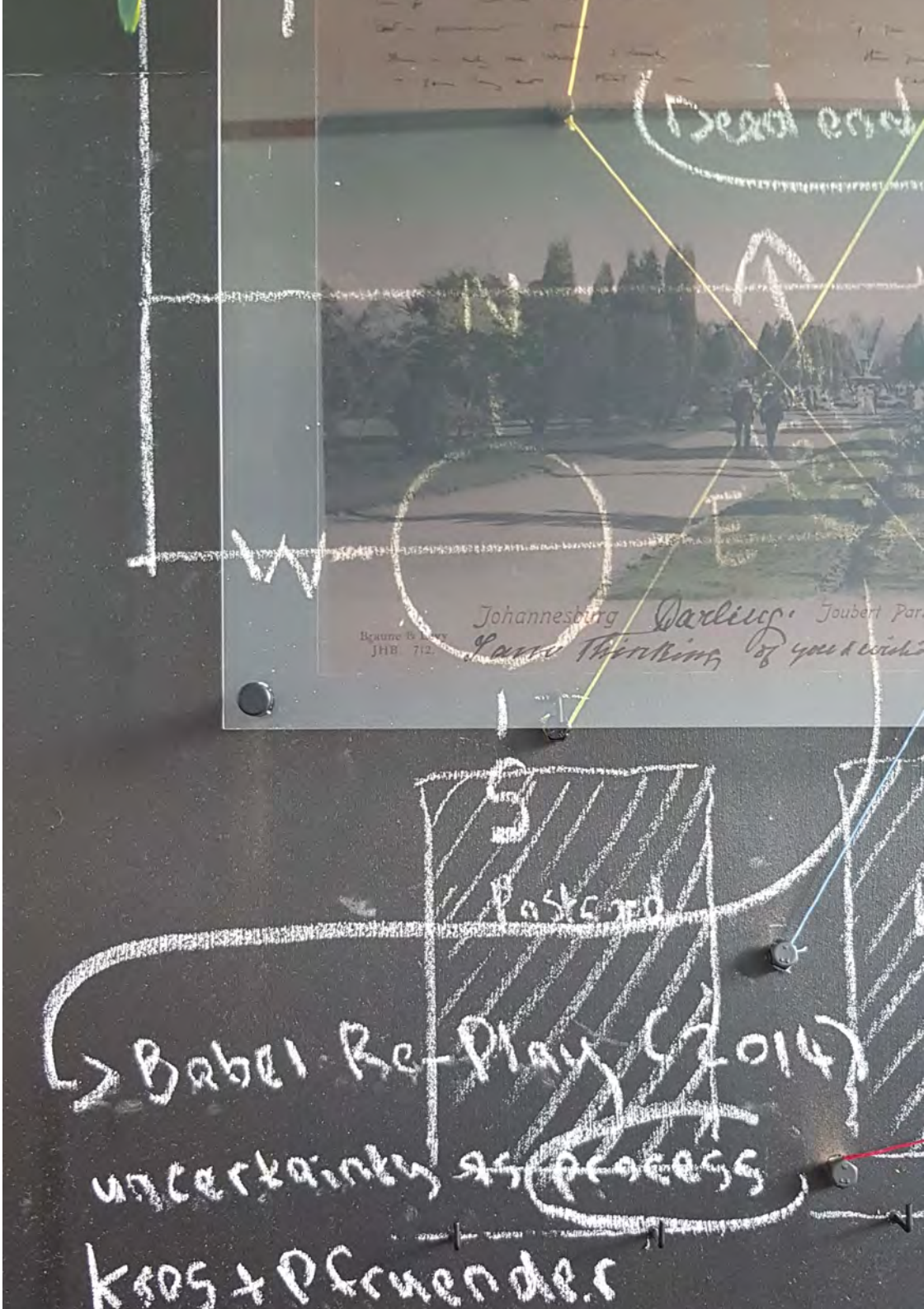
[18] Danai S. Mupotsa (2018) details the origins and wider socio-political implications of this movement, started in March 2015 when University of Cape Town student Chumani Maxwele hurled a bucket of human faeces at a statue of Cecil John Rhodes. Mupotsa details how the movement became a call-to-arms for transformation and inclusion at all South African universities.

[19] Schmahmann's *Picturing Change. Curating Visual Culture at Post-Apartheid Universities* is a larger study of the iconography of visual cultural objects, including traditional art objects and extending to the symbolism of coats-of-arms, at South African universities that have inherited bodies of problematic political works of art, and how these visual iconographies are negotiated in a post-democratic South Africa.

mythology that is ingrained materially onto its surface, and the movement of the bust by university authorities is a tactical intervention into that mythology.

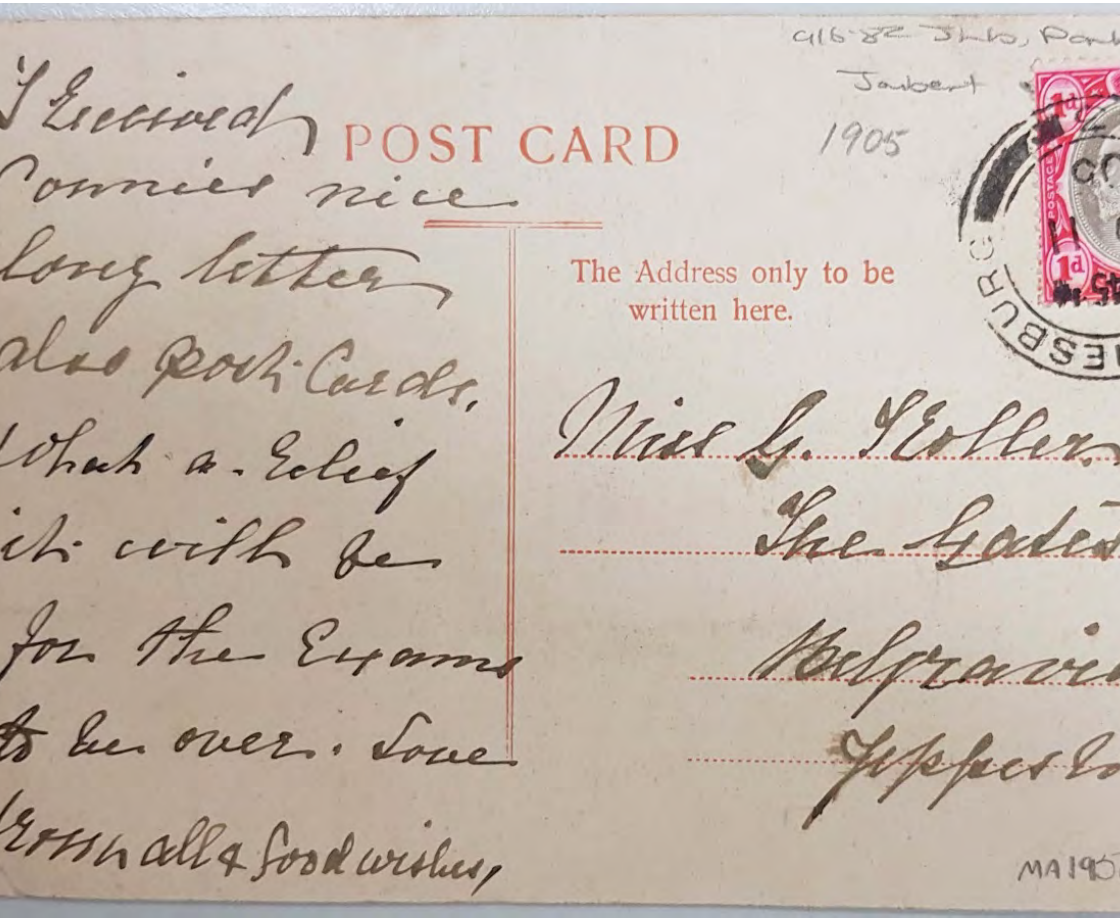
The ways in which materiality, mythology, trace, tactics and strategies can be used as indicators, registers and interrogations of changing social, political, historical and cultural conditions is what is at the heart of this research report. The following chapters examine how these concepts can be applied to six selected traces relating directly or indirectly to the JAG and Joubert Park. I utilise these traces as case studies which alternately indicate strategies and/or tactics, and how those that have navigated and continue to navigate the space of the JAG and the park have interacted with (enforced or undermined) the mythologies and materialities inherent in those spaces.

The Darling Postcard


Dead end
Johannesburg
Darling,
Love Thinking of you
Joubert Par
Bourne & Ltd
JHB 712
Postcard
Babel Re-Play (2014)
uncertainty as process
kros + Pfruender



The Darling Postcard - **Front (Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa)**



The Darling Postcard - **Back (Image by author)**

The archive department's collections manager slides the cheap plastic flip file sleeve to me across the table. I ask for gloves to handle the flimsy, fragile piece of card that is stored inside the sleeve, but am told that there are none available. I can look, but I cannot touch. The bright, impersonal fluorescent lights in the room show up every detail on the postcard, even through the plastic coating of the sleeve: the impression of a ballpoint pen pressed into the surface of the card, places where the top layer of paper has been worn away with use as this piece has travelled from its original recipient to a sterile manager's office in Massachusetts. The postcard is spotted with age and frayed in places. A message to a loved one is scrawled across the bottom: "Darling, this is just 4 o clock. I am thinking of you & wishing you success." The writer's name is illegible, scribbled at the end of the text almost as an afterthought. The intimate address, the word "Darling" immediately jumps out at me. The word hints at a contradiction between my imaginings of a softly-lit writing nook, the scent of furniture polish, the sweep of a hoop skirt as this postcard was written over

one hundred years ago, and it's place now.
one of many archived and catalogued
documents stored out of sight, away from
view on a dusty shelf.

The intention of this chapter and the ones that follow is to surface the ways that my selected traces can speak to the materiality and mythology of the JAG and Joubert Park. Through a process of reading and research, I study how these traces can act as strategies or tactics that alternately enforce or undermine those materialities and mythologies. Here, I outline how a postcard depicting Joubert Park at the turn of the 20th century strategically reinforces the hegemonies and power dynamics that formed part of the historical foundation of Joubert Park.

The image on the front of the card is of Joubert Park, Johannesburg. The date, 1905, is written on the reverse side on the top right hand corner as part of the accession information. The collections manager in the archives department at Museum Africa, Kenneth Hlungwane, tells me that there are no records relating to the postcard and no information as to how it found its way into the museum. In the image, two men amble down a neat dirt path, seemingly deep in conversation and on their way to what I imagine to be a social occasion visible in the distance. The orderly rows of flowerbeds and the Victorian fountain in the background could be anywhere in Europe and yet the viewer is given

several clues as to the location and the context of the site. Johannesburg. Joubert Park.

> Darling, this is just 4 o clock. I am thinking of you & wishing you success (illegible). I received Connie's nice long letter. Also postcards. What a relief it will be for the exams to be over. Love (illegible) all & good wishes.
>
> Miss G. (illegible)
>
> The (illegible)
>
> Jeppestown

How can this postcard be viewed as a piece of material that speaks to how Joubert Park as a public space was designed, constructed and subsequently used, how this public space was negotiated by the message writer and how this negotiation was conveyed through the card itself? Through the photograph that has been captured on the postcard's surface and the personal message written on the reverse side, I suggest that, through what is contained in the image and the personal message included, this piece of material culture exists as a document of proof, a registration of place and person, that speaks to the specifically British strategies

of landscape politics at play in Johannesburg in 1905. There is a friction embodied by this trace; a friction between the intimacy of the message that initially lured me in and inspired my naming of the postcard, and how this is layered with the strong constructions and framing of a mythology connected to a Victorian and Edwardian representation of landscape and public space.

Jonathan Conlin (2013) has traced the origin of the public pleasure garden aesthetic from its origins in Europe in the 17th Century through to the 20th Century. Conlin (2013: 2) has linked the rise of public urban gardens to the social, cultural, political and economic development of modernity, and the accompanying growth in the upper and middle-class. This class enjoyed the facilities available in such gardens, and Conlin claims that the popularity of these spaces was a direct result of the "commodification of culture" (2013: 11) whereby genteel arts such as music and landscape appreciation could be enjoyed publically by people of the same class in order to be observed by others. From this it can be inferred that the documentation of such a space, and more importantly the recording of one's own participation in such a space and the activities associated

with it, carries a degree of performativity of class, status and privilege.

This photograph of Joubert Park, the materiality of the postcard itself and the personal message signify these larger political, cultural and economic frameworks, which can be surfaced through tactically deciphering the image to see what lies beneath. Tina Campt argues for the importance of dissecting the archive of seemingly mundane items, what she terms "… the quiet and the quotidian" (2017: 4), as a way of excavating articles of visual culture and the motivations behind their construction in order to surface the intentions that inform photographic images in particular. While it is important to note that Campt's work relates to the way that coloured bodies are represented in state-sanctioned identification photography in the diaspora, her methodology of closely looking and "listening" (2013: 7) to images is particularly pertinent to my writing on *The Darling Postcard* in that it facilitates an interaction with photographs to surface the ways in which they can speak to power dynamics in a strategic way.

In order to do this, it is important to gain an understanding of the ways in which photography is used to frame the mythology of the British park and public garden aesthetic through the strategies of lighting, composition, cropping and editing in the case of *The Darling Postcard*. These strategies are arguably so powerful that they played a role in the message writer's decision in 1905 to align herself with these mythologies through her purchase of the postcard and her personalised inscription. Susan Sontag (1973) has written on the potential of photography to orientate an individual in an unfamiliar place through a photograph that locates, frames and affirms a constructed version of an environment. Sontag writes that "The photograph is a thin slice of space as well as time" (1973: 17). Thus, through the lens of the camera, Joubert Park is cropped and edited to represent and image a specific trope of landscape at a specific point in the history of the city of Johannesburg.

The dusty and newly-established Joubert Park in 1905, at the centre of what was then a small mining town rapidly on its way to becoming a cosmopolitan city, is ordered and civilized through the medium of the photograph and the postcard. As outlined in this paper, in 1905 the park was a

statement by the wealthy classes that was designed to be testimony to their ability to make the dirty city an "ordered place" (Grundlingh 2015: 37). In the photograph on the front of *The Darling Postcard*, pine trees dot the horizon which is blue and vacant. There is no hint that this is an urban environment and even less that this is a location in South Africa. All clues as to the specificity of the location are edited out of the frame. Similar postcards from the same era also exhibit this paucity of indigenous detail. My sense is that the backgrounds serve as canvases for the social activities being depicted and that the people in the distance, although not very clear, are dressed similarly and are therefore likely to be of the same social class and status.



Johannesburg, In Joubert Park

No. 3230 Published by R. O. Füsslein, P. O. B. 2262, Johannesburg.



Postcards from the JAG archives (Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa)

As Sontag (1973: 5) explains, photography in the early 20th Century was the purview of the rich and fortunate. Large, bulky and expensive equipment was difficult to transport and required skill to operate. Furthermore, Louis Grundlingh (2015: 38) has argued that Joubert Park was not intended to be enjoyed by all the citizens of Johannesburg, and was only accessible to "… neat, well-behaved men, women and children" (ibid). Thus, various layers of privilege can be inferred from *The Darling Postcard* as it was expensive to produce and perhaps also to own, conferring a degree of status on the giver and receiver. The park was exclusive enough to warrant documentation, the purchaser was wealthy enough to spend money on such a luxury, and the addressee was privileged enough to be the recipient of such a document. In light of the above, *The Darling Postcard* can be viewed as a material manifestation of the exclusivity of Joubert Park in 1905.

Jeanne van Eeden (2011) has written on the power of postcards as a tool, linked to a tourism agenda initiated in the early part of the 20th Century, for the appropriation of landscapes by white people in South Africa. Travel to the country was becoming more popular from the 1940s

through to the 1970s, and van Eeden's research focuses on a selection of six postcards and photographs published by the South African Railways Publicity and Travel Department (SARPTD) during this period. In *The Darling Postcard*, the path leading to a fountain in the distance where, through the eyes of an unknown observer, other park-goers enjoy a day in the sun, the ordered beds of shrubs and the vast blue vista all speak to what van Eeden refers to as "... the leisured gaze of white subjectivities... " (2011: 603). She also calls attention to the way in which landscapes as mediated by images (in this case, the photograph on the postcard) act as mnemonic devices to conjure notions of national identity through the exclusion of certain groups from the image (2011: 605). As a form of representation, *The Darling Postcard* constructs a mythology of Joubert Park as a replica of a European city park, familiar and safe, one in which the new white inhabitants of the city could easily imagine themselves established in a city that was quickly transforming from a temporary mining camp to an economic powerhouse, as I have written in the historical introduction to this report. Linking to this, Jeremy Foster (2008: 45) claims that the imaging and framing of oneself in a carefully controlled landscape is an important

part of the tactics of nation-building and the consolidation of a national identity, which would have been an important consideration for the British government during Milner's reconstruction of Johannesburg in the British image, discussed in the introduction to this report.

The postcard as a piece of material is a trace that relies on an understanding of these strategies of photography—the literal commodification of a privileged culture and imposition of British national identity—through the tool of photography, and what they are mobilised to convey. Michael Warner (2002: 415) argues that pieces of material culture (like *The Darling Postcard* in this case) only exist through an understanding and decoding of these strategies by the public that is enabled to read these visual cues. He claims (2002: 420) that the understanding of strategies, in this case the medium of postcards and the exclusivity of public parks in British-governed Johannesburg in 1905, requires a familiarity with the forms of culture involved and what they are meant to signify. However, Warner (2002: 421) adds that these readings are not stable or in stasis but are constantly accruing new and different meanings depending on who interacts with them.

In the contemporary moment, photography in Joubert Park is still used as a tool of mythology in a strategic way, as demonstrated by Melinda Silverman and Msizi Myeza (2005: 46), who document how several informal photographers have over recent years taken up positions in Joubert Park and laid claim to certain areas where they offer their services to park users who pass through on a daily basis. Msizi and Silverman compare two different images of Joubert Park: A postcard similar in date to my selected one, and photographs of park users in the contemporary moment, such as working mothers, schoolchildren and new arrivals in Johannesburg. These people can make use of the opportunity to have a portrait taken in front of a leafy backdrop of trees or the central fountain, the photograph presenting a picturesque setting and a construction of time and space very similarly to that of *The Darling Postcard*. This documentation can then be shared with friends and family as a validation of identity, location and social status, in a way similar to and yet completely different from that of *The Darling Postcard* when it was originally produced and sold. New inhabitants of the city, over one hundred years later, utilise the medium of photography and the location of the

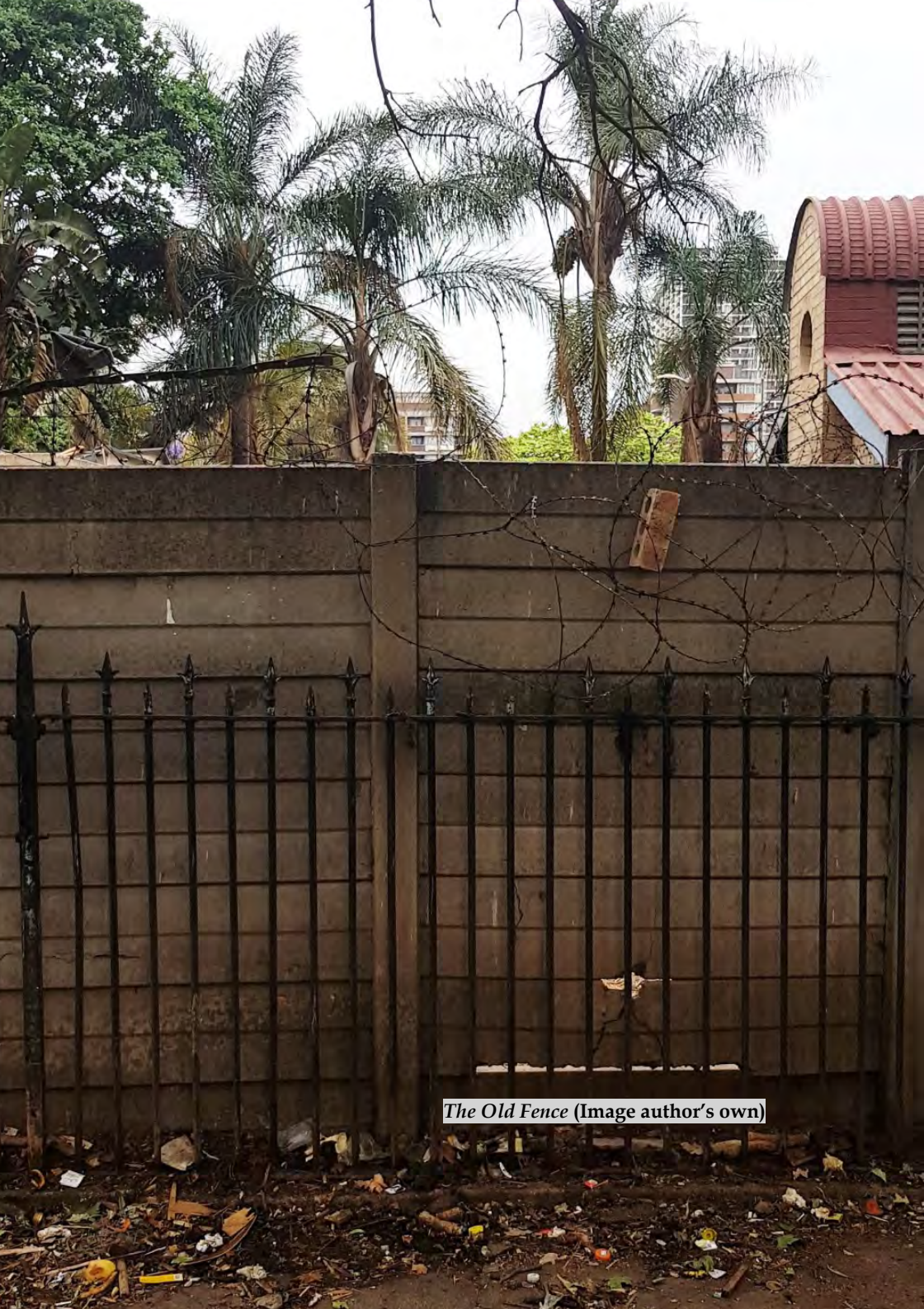
park in the same way as the writer of *The Darling Postcard*, even though they are separated by the passage of time.

The Darling Postcard is a material trace of the reinforcement of British colonial strategies of power, privilege, landscape, leisure and nation during the early part of Johannesburg's history. Through the intimate and personal message it contains, it is also a record of the power of these strategies over those who enjoyed and understood their nuanced language.

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The Old Fence


Joub
2
Johan
Art



The Old Fence **(Image author's own)**

It's a Sunday morning. Relatively early, about 9.30. Jowett Park and the wide, paved side walk surrounding it are sites of frenetic activity as hawkers, church goers and people who live and work in the area chat, yell at one another, cast aside empty takeaway containers and scrub their trestle tables in anticipation of a busy day ahead. I imagine that I cast a conspicuous figure amongst the hubbub of morning activity, moving along the edge of the park, headed for a spot that has fascinated me for almost two years as I've glimpsed it through my car window on my many trips ~~as I~~ to and from the JAC: The old iron railings of Jowett Park erected, I imagine, sometime near the parks opening in 1906, stand sandwiched between a layer of concrete paving slabs and the newer additions of cast cement, prefabricated walls, the incongruous meeting of the five materials and styles speaks to me of how the changing nature of the nearby art spaces, Jowett Park and the city that surrounds these sites has been mirrored in the way that those that have navigated these sites for over one hundred years have been subsequently kept in and out of these spaces.

Here and there, the older, cast iron uprights have been removed, perhaps rusted and fallen away or taken for scrap metal. On top of the functional, undecorated cast concrete wall rising up behind the ornate, iron railings, strands of barbed wire ferociously hold a strike suspended in mid air. At ground level, layers of urban detritus have accumulated, cast up against the base of the fence as the city inhales and exhales around it, like flotsam on a beach.

This chapter describes how a piece of old border fencing on the edge of Joubert Park on Klein Street signifies three interconnected concepts: *The Old Fence* is a material manifestation of the changing social dynamics of the Joubert Park/JAG precinct and also representative of a larger discourse related to the relationship between the JAG, Joubert Park and their urban surroundings. Additionally, it is a signifier of the psychological effect of barriers and boundaries on those who navigate those spaces. This chapter is linked to the previous one in that the fence, like the postcard, is representative of the mythology inherent in the establishment of Joubert Park as a material manifestation of the reconstruction of Johannesburg in a British image through power and privilege, as previously outlined. *The Old Fence* is a tangible trace of the political, economic, social, psychological and historical shifts within and outside both spaces.

It is clear that there is an enduring fascination with boundaries and fencing around Joubert Park and the JAG through the writing of numerous authors (Taub 2011, Carman 2015, Grundlingh 2015, Chhiba 2015, Seejarim 2015), some of whom I will reference here in order to

illustrate how fencing and boundaries affect both spaces physically and psychologically.[20] Grundlingh (2015: 39) makes note of the original, elaborately wrought iron fences that bordered the paths and herbaceous borders in the park and of the large iron gates which he argues were intentionally designed to separate the park from its busy city surroundings. These gates and fences, he states, acted as reminders of the civic control and authority that allowed certain groups of people entry to the park, and excluded others. Could this piece of fencing be a trace left behind from the foundation of the park, one that lingers on the periphery as a material reminder of Milner's civilising project for British residents in early Johannesburg?

Constructure: 100 years of the JAG building and its evolution of space and meaning includes contributions by both Jillian Carman (2015: 29) and Reshma Chhiba (2015: 158-159 on the politics of space and placement of the JAG and its proximity to Joubert Park and the psychological effect of enclosures. According to Carman's analysis of the history of the JAG, the erection of the green palisade fencing on the northern

[20] In an interview with Stephen Hobbs in 2019, the artist mentioned to me that further academic work is currently being done on the enclosures in and around the JAG (pers. comm. 2019).

side effectively acted as a final statement of separation between the gallery and the park. Chhiba (2015: 158) highlights the challenges associated with the location of the JAG in the city centre and argues that while it made sense when it was opened in 1915, the museum is now at odds with the urban composition of the surrounding area and the people who use it, pointing to a geographic and historical dislocation between the gallery and its surroundings.

Usha Seejarim (2015: 154-155) has also written on the green palisade security fencing referenced by Carman, arguing that it is a tangible manifestation of the separation of the gallery from its surroundings, and which is permeable at certain times. Seejarim references her own work in and around the gallery and the park and the 2000 Joubert Park Public Art Project[21] as examples of times when this permeability surfaces. She narrates her experience of working with local youth on a mural at the border of the

[21] This project, also called The Joubert Park Project, ran from 2000 to 2004 and involved various public and private organisations as well as individuals who lived and worked in the larger Joubert Park precinct at the time. According to Jo Ractliffe and Dorothee Kreutzveldt (2015: 148), the purpose of the project was to initiate a series of engagements that would "… generate an intensive momentum of 'creative' activities, exchanges and explorations in the Park and Gallery".

gallery in 1995, how these young people had perceived the gallery as "a police station or some other inaccessible governmental structure" (2015: 154), and how the barrier presented by the fencing made them feel uncomfortable about entering it. Through the materiality of its form and function, *The Old Fence* exhibits a very similar friction between the denial and granting of entry and permeability as the green palisade fence. While it is solid, the aggressiveness of the spikes that run along the top is tempered by decorative details and passers-by would have been able to view the space behind it before the more modern concrete wall was installed.



The green palisade fencing on the northern side of the JAG, separating the museum from Joubert Park (Image author's own).

The materiality of these layers of access control and security measures around the park and the JAG such as *The Old Fence*, the concrete wall behind it and the barbed wire on top, speaks directly to the strategic reaction of bodies of power that determine the formalised, bureaucratic relationship between the gallery and the park to the changing social dynamics of the area in which the two public spaces are situated. Melinda Silverman and Msizi Myeza offer an understanding of how these spaces have gradually changed since their creation in the early 20th Century. They write (2005: 45) how, in the 1980s, inner-city white residents and established white-owned and operated businesses moved to the suburbs in response to an influx of new black and coloured residents that were previously relegated to outlying townships and settlements by the apartheid government at the time. The result of this move, they claim (ibid), was a sense of alienation from the commercial hub of the inner city among its previous (white and middle-class) occupants.

This psychological effect of alienation and the establishment and maintenance of a binary opposition between "inside" and "outside", as in the case of *The Old Fence*, can be

materially imprinted on the urban landscape. Karina Landman (2006: 133-146), for example, has explored the psychological and physical impact of gates, fences and boundaries in the South African urban context, arguing that these boundaries and limits to access in towns and cities enforce and strengthen the underlying racially-based urban planning strategies that have been built into the South African urban landscape. She maintains that, despite many government efforts in the 1990s to address the apartheid-era legacy of unequal urban development[22], racially determined urban planning and distribution of public facilities are ingrained and continue to be prevalent in many towns and cities in South Africa (2006: 136). Landman's study is useful in that it highlights the use of strategies of boundaries and fencing to control and limit access to public space. She argues (2006: 141) that the inevitable outcome of the "privatisation" of and "exclusion" from public spaces is conflict and a sense of psychological and physical separation that affects those on both sides of the boundaries.

[22] Landman specifically refers to the 2001 White Paper on Spatial Planning and Land Use Development. Her study focuses on the prevalence of gated security communities in post-apartheid South Africa and their psychological and physical impact on the communities that inhabit and surround them.

The impact of this material and psychological inclusion or exclusion seems to surface in Sizwe Cecil Radebe's (2015: 13, 14) interviews with park-goers in 2015. Many of the people interviewed by Radebe revealed that, although they used the park and its surrounds on a daily basis, the purpose of the gallery at the centre of the space was not clear to them and, to some, gave the impression of unapproachability. This is echoed by Seejarim's (2015) observations in her work with the individuals in the Joubert Park area.

Lindsay Bremner (2004: 455-468) has explored these psychological binaries and how they are materially realised in urban, social, political and economic discourses and structures in South Africa that are founded on the mythologies of the country's colonial era and that haunt our built environment even now, very much like *The Old Fence*. She states that "Through the re-establishment of the boundary and the deployment of defensive technologies, the world is restructured into an us and them, an inside and outside, good and evil, black and white" (2004: 464). An overlap between Bremner's identification of the racialisation of public and private space in South Africa through strategies of material boundaries and America's

current racial urban challenges can be observed in Setha Low's (2004: 35-47) identification of the race-based composition of certain suburbs and living areas in the U.S. Low claims (2004: 43) that these differences, embedded through the materiality of private and public construction, "reinforce racial prejudice and discrimination".[23]

A photograph in the Museum Africa archives that I came across during my research which is undated but was taken in the early history of Joubert Park, makes this racialisation of space though the materiality of boundaries explicitly clear. The image is of a group of young white boys enjoying the amenities of the park while behind them a group of black men stand on the street on the other side of an iron fence. The photograph is evocative in that it speaks to the material and mental segregation that was prevalent in Johannesburg at the time when the image was captured. It also directly references Grundlingh's (2015) observations on Milner's intentions and motivations with respect to rebuilding Johannesburg in a British image, which found material expression in the establishment of Joubert Park, the

[23] Low's case studies are specific to the socio-cultural context of American suburban communities in the early 2000s.

JAG and *The Old Fence*. I observed a subtle difference between the fence in the photograph and *The Old Fence*. Along with my photograph of *The Old Fence*, the concrete wall and barbed wire, this lends weight to my claim that the space has responded in many different material ways to the changing nature of the larger area.



An undated and uncredited photograph of Joubert Park. Note the fence in the background separating the park space and its users from its urban environment (Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa).

The innate power of the materiality of *The Old Fence* and the strategies it signals is belied by its derelict appearance. It stands in for the exclusive power and privilege enjoyed by those who restructured the city over one hundred years ago, and even the ways in which more modern additions have layered themselves around it testify to its durability. Obvious Katsaura (2016: 166) makes use of what he terms "enchanted suburbanism" to illustrate the differences between the perceived chaos and disorder of the inner city and the segregated, marginalised security of the suburb which he claims is "characterised by the costly militarisation of everyday life" (2016: 167). Katsaura writes that fear, linked to larger conceptions of class, race and ethnic identity, come to structure not only the form that suburbia assumes but also the ways in which people move within these urban spaces.

In my photograph of *The Old Fence*, there are three distinct layers of space, formed by the gradual accumulation of walls and fences on the border of the park. Bettina Malcomess (2013: 62) uses the Afrikaans word uitvalgrond (literally meaning excess ground) to describe the pieces of land that are situated on the borders and boundaries of

enclosures, habitation and places of movement in Johannesburg. These liminal patches of land, she writes (ibid), change shape and texture as the city itself moves through periods of history. The patch of liminal space, of uitvalgrond that is *The Old Fence*, is both a material record of restricted access and a material manifestation of the complex lived relationships between the JAG, Joubert Park and the area of the city surrounding these spaces and the people who move through them on a daily basis. It is an encoding of the psychological tug of war that is the hallmark of the post-apartheid South African city. The seemingly innocuous piece of old iron fence, the modern concrete wall behind it, the coils of rusted barbed wire and the positioning of police and security guards at the main entrance to the JAG on Klein Street a few metres away all refer directly to a locking-down of the space, despite the art gallery's being open to the public and free of an entrance charge. They are strategies of power that, even as they erode like *The Old Fence*, maintain a grip on the minds of those who navigate them

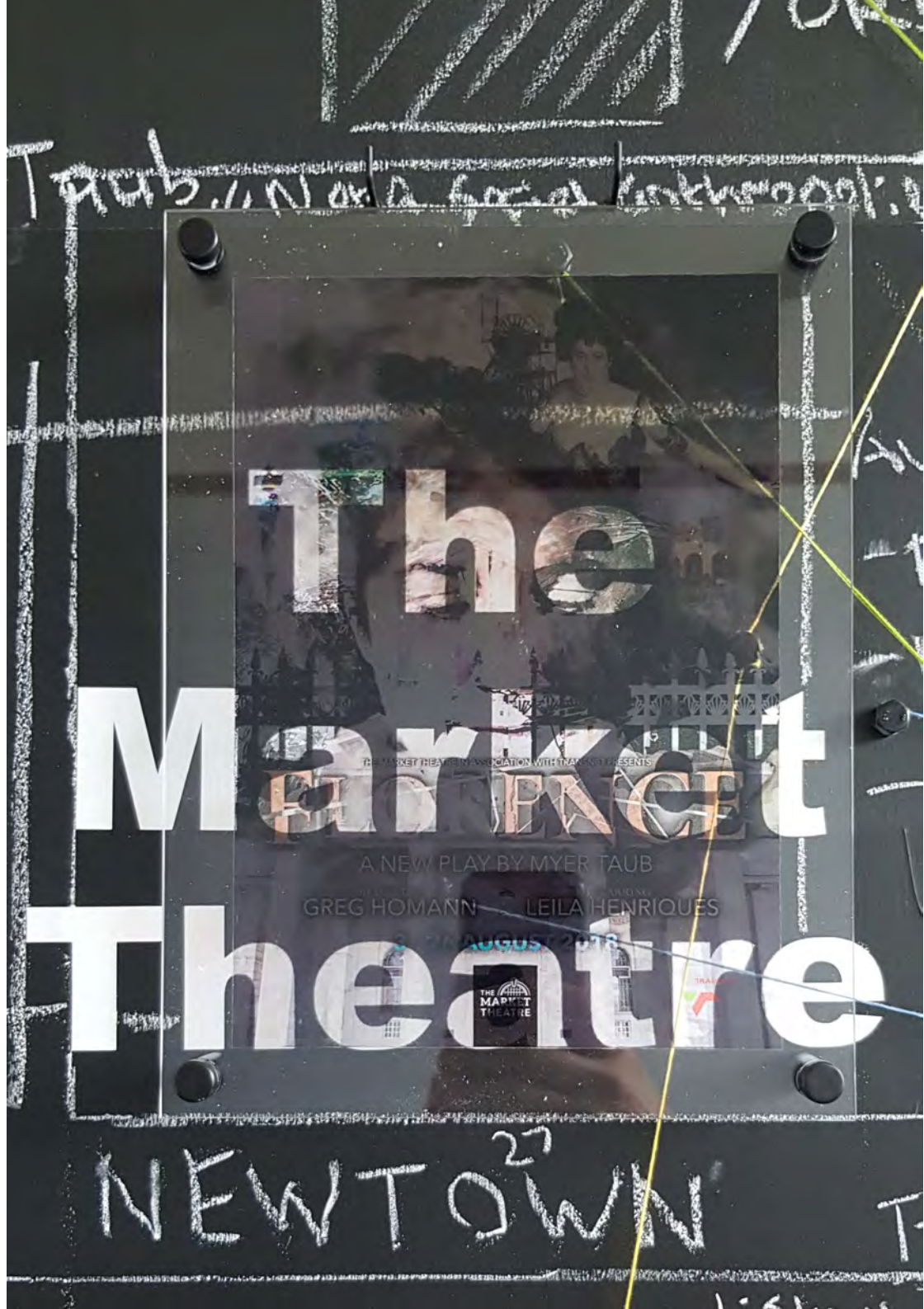
The Old Fence, like *The Darling Postcard*, materially invokes the founding British and Imperial mythologies of the history

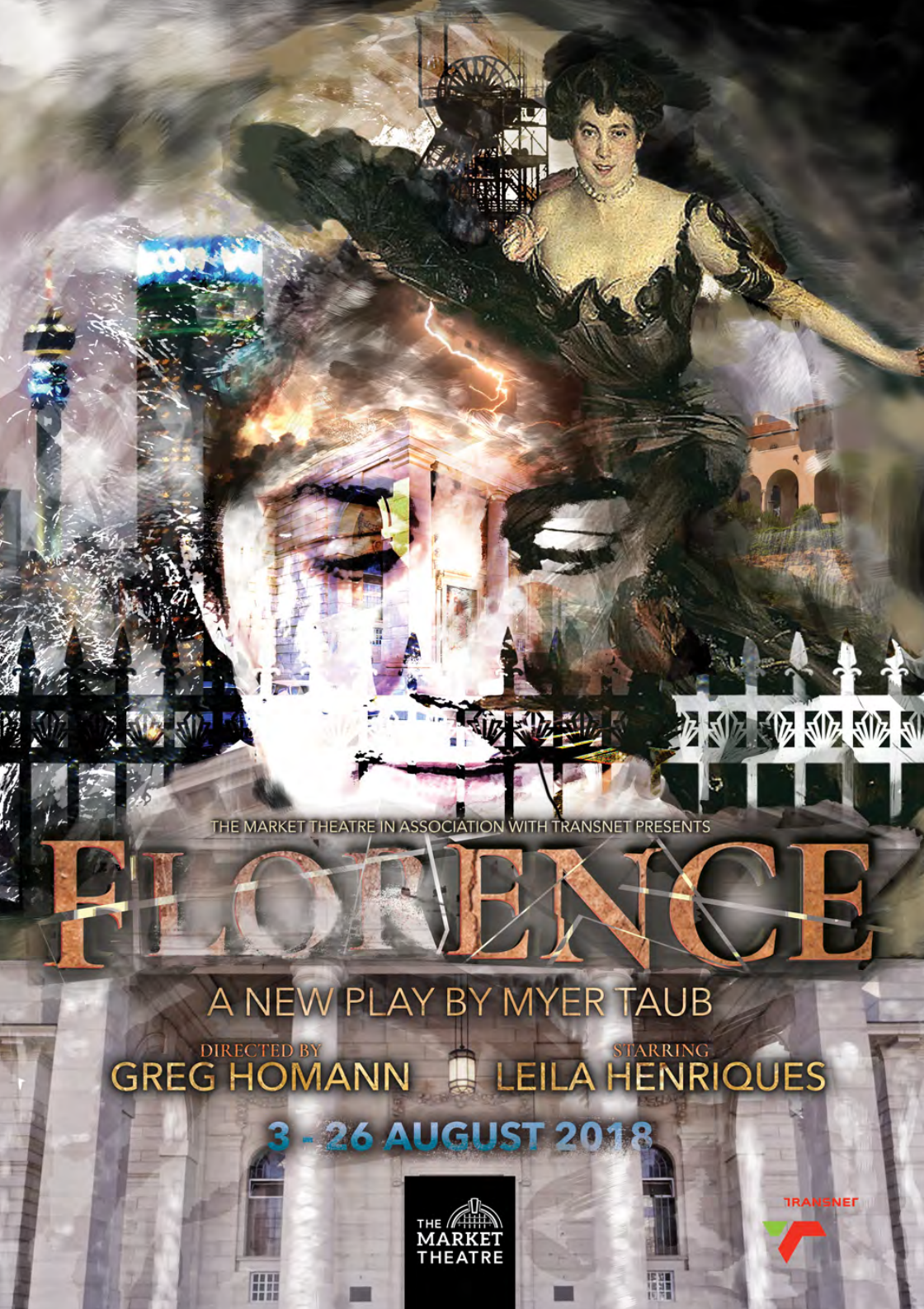
of the park and the gallery, but it does this through the psychological and physical effect of a barrier, through the materiality of its form, as opposed to the signification of a photograph and the composition of an image. The accrual around *The Old Fence* of various other forms of barriers and limits to access of space (the concrete wall, the barbed wire) signal a strategic response to a slow and gradual shift in access, and the perception and use of both spaces by the surrounding communities and those who govern these public institutions. Together with the layers of boundaries that have accumulated around it, *The Old Fence* symbolises the divided identity of the JAG and Joubert Park as public spaces that wrestle with their histories and connections to the publics that they serve. I have linked this chapter to the following chapter on *The Play by Taub* as they both feature the motif of fencing[24] and explore the literal and psychological effects of enclosure on social spaces and the individuals who occupy them.

[24] The fence in Myer Taub's play *Florence* is the green palisade fencing that separates Joubert Park from the JAG on its northern side.

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The Play by Taub


The
Market
Theatre
THE MARKET THEATRE IN ASSOCIATION WITH TRAFALGAR PRESENTS
A NEW PLAY BY MYER TAUB
GREG HOMANN
LEILA HENRIQUES
AUGUST 2018
THE MARKET THEATRE
NEWTOWN
27


THE MARKET THEATRE IN ASSOCIATION WITH TRANSNET PRESENTS
FLORENCE
A NEW PLAY BY MYER TAUB
DIRECTED BY
GREG HOMANN
STARRING
LEILA HENRIQUES
3 - 26 AUGUST 2018
THE MARKET THEATRE
TRANSNET

the stage setting looms like a rocky outcrop at the front of the small room at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg, where I have come to watch a play called Florence by Myer Taub. As the stage lights brighten, the sharp green spikes of palisade fencing, arranged in concentric circles around an innocuous restaurant table, loom into view. They project out into the audience, extending as much of a character as the actress portraying Florence Phillips, the founder of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. I know this fence well from my many trips to the JAG. Throughout the play, the schizophrenic moods of Florence Phillips and the modern day actress launching with an unseen guest are offset by the constant, menacing presence of the fence. Leila Hermanus, playing Florence, interacts with it constantly, as she would a fellow actor, pawing parts of her body through it at various points in the play, sometimes entangled, at other times disgusted by its presence. In the background, obscured by murky lighting, the famous portrait of Florence Phillips by Giovanni Boldini is displayed on a digital screen. An unlikely pairing of two worlds: old and modern.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how *The Play by Taub*[25], performed at various locations in Johannesburg in 2018, can be viewed as an intangible tactic of engagement with the historical and contemporary socio-cultural issues faced by the JAG and Joubert Park, and the mythology surrounding the character of Florence Phillips. I highlight the intangibility of the performance not to negate any possible material effects of the work on the audiences that have engaged with it (discussed later in this chapter), but as a counterpoint to my other traces which have occupied and still occupy physical spaces. I do however demonstrate how Taub indeed uses physical materiality as a tactic of subversion within the play and in earlier work.

According to the playwright Myer Taub, this play is one component of a larger body of work on the nature of the JAG and its marginal position in contemporary Johannesburg (pers. comm. 2019). Thus, *The Play by Taub* constitutes an artistic interaction with the site of the gallery and the park. Killian Doherty (2009: 98-103) has written on the tactics used by contemporary artists to surface underlying social,

[25] The full text of *Florence* is included in the appendix for reference purposes.

political, historical and economic strategies imposed on the built environment by bodies of power. The German artist collective Blinkenlights, for example, subverts the ingrained strategic materiality of public buildings associated with a repressive government regime by using technology to allow members of the public to interact with the building's materiality. ReX, an American artist based in New Orleans, created a system of street signs imposed on the chaos of the city after the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Katrina in response to what he perceived as the strong-arm tactics of the government to re-appropriate public space through capitalist-driven contracts during the clean-up phase. These examples of interventions point to the particular power of tactical artistic engagements with what can be perceived as overpowering, strategic deployments in the public realm. I suggest that *The Play by Taub* is one such intervention.

Florence, a one-woman play with actress Leila Henriques playing dual roles, was performed at the Barney Simon Theatre at the Market Theatre in August, 2018. Henriques plays the role of a disaffected modern-day actress at lunch with an unseen playwright, deciding whether or not to accept his offer of the role of Florence Phillips in one of his

plays. She also plays the role of Florence Phillips, the founder of the JAG, which throughout the play gives the audience insight into Florence's character, background, life and her role in the establishment of the museum.

Taub utilises dramatization of the character of Florence Phillips as a tactic to interrogate the stereotype of the famed benefactor and purveyor of imported British culture and sophistication to early Johannesburg through the vessel of the JAG — or as Jillian Caman has put it (2006: 69), the woman responsible for "...bringing succour to artists in a cultural desert...". Through the dramatic tactics of the play, Taub delves into the history of the JAG, its founder, and how the colonial mythologies of British art and culture still linger inside and outside the gallery. In the play, this residual mythology and the character of Florence lingering outside the green palisade fencing are one and the same. This portrayal of Florence Phillips serves as a tactical tool to interrogate the dynamics of the site of the JAG and Joubert Park both historically and in the contemporary moment. Depicted in *Florence* as a disorientated historical relic thrown into the chaos of downtown Joburg, Florence Phillips haunts the JAG metaphorically and physically. Her

enduring presence is highlighted by Gemma Hart (Hart 2016) in her honours thesis paper. Florence, writes Hart (2016: 13) "...continues to haunt its (the JAG's) hallways in ghostly articulations of whiteness". A line from the play captures this succinctly:

> I was an outstanding woman in my day and generation. Fit to occupy my place among the most remarkable personage of my time in South Africa… Johannesburg had become the city disentangled from the Boer republic. A glittering gold prize along with it came a municipality in distress. Things in distress (*Florence* 2018).

In a paper for the *South African Journal of Art History*, Taub outlines how *Florence* first started as a series of performance art pieces in 2010 and 2011, entitled *Levelling the Enclosure*, which explored the concept of enclosure and the ability of performance art to destabilise boundaries and interrogate the dynamics between Joubert Park, the JAG, and the communities in and around these spaces (2011: 96-97). In the same way as the work of Blinkenlights and ReX, the play becomes a tactical tool that, through art, serves to re-

examine the relationships that have formed on either side of the green palisade fence that features so prominently in the play.

This earlier work depicts the literal and metaphorical battle with the fence that Taub's version of Florence Phillips is engaged in. Taub questions in what way the fence might be viewed as contradicting the mythology of Phillips' original intention for the gallery; a municipal project ostensibly meant to foster community integration and development (2011: 97).[26] In the play, Phillips' physical interaction and battle with the green palisade fence that surrounds the gallery is the same as the struggle enacted by two characters developed by Taub as part of a public performance in 2011. Uncle Mlungu and Greedburg[27], played by Taub himself, physically engage with the borders and boundaries between

[26] In both this text and an interview with me, Taub was careful to point out that his intention with these performance pieces was to interact with the park and museum on the level of artistic experimentation, not to attempt to navigate the wider social and human interactions inherent in both sites. This approach is also expressed by artist and urban developer Stephen Hobbs in the chapter entitled *The Exhibition by Hobbs*.

[27] The name Uncle Mlungu was given to Taub by children playing in the park while he performed. They reprimanded him for being silly and a trickster (2011: 98). Greedburg, according to Taub, was a combination of a version of William Kentridge's Soho Eckstein and the art critic Clement Greenberg (ibid).

the park and the gallery, attempting to climb it, poking limbs through it and interacting with people on both sides of the fence.



Myer Taub, *Levelling the Enclosure*, 2010/2011 (Image courtesy Myer Taub).

Developed through the art of performance, Taub's characters (Phillips, Greedburg and Uncle Mlungu) serve as "… mechanisms for investigation" (pers. comm. 2019) of the concepts of separation and abjectedness in relation to the borders and fences in and around the JAG and Joubert Park. Taub (2011: 100-101) references the work of sociologist Erving Goffman to elaborate on how performance and theatre as an art form presents "bracketed" social action and interaction contextualized for audience. Taub uses the harsh, jagged materiality of the green palisade fence to physically bracket the social actions depicted in the play (the lunch appointment, Florence's delirious and fevered movement around the JAG). The fence, through its harsh, jagged and irregular shape, acts as a signifier for the concepts of whiteness and abjectness.



Actress Leila Henriques, playing the role of the modern-day, disaffected actress at lunch with an unseen playwright in *Florence* (Image courtesy The Market Theatre).

Through the materiality of the fence, *The Play by Taub* destabilises the mythology of the figure of Florence Phillips by depicting her as imprisoned by her own historical legacy and bewildered by the chaos of early and modern Johannesburg. Her body is a surface onto which the turmoil of Johannesburg in 1915 and the contemporary moment is visited. Taub utilises the harsh, violent materiality of the spikes and the vivid green of the palisade fence as a physical representation of his inquiry into the historical mythology of Florence Phillips. At one point in the play, she begs the fence for forgiveness. This is seemingly an act of contrition for being seen as the salvation of cultural life in early Johannesburg, but in the process conversely playing a part in shutting down the site through the colonial mythologies of whiteness, power and privileged access to art and culture — mythologies that still linger there.

The Play by Taub can be viewed as a form of tactical subversion (Chambers 1991: 8) produced in direct response to the strategies of security currently prevalent in both the JAG and Joubert Park, and embedded materially in their foundations and current socio-economic context (see the chapter on *The Old Fence*). The traces of the colonial ghosts

attached to the gallery and the park are materialised through the fences that separate both spaces from the urban precinct in which they are situated, and through the character of Florence Phillips. Taub points out that his tactical response to the challenges faced by the JAG received criticism from the play's first audience, "… an audience of late middle-aged white women…" (pers. comm. 2019) who disapproved of how he depicted the historical character of Florence Phillips, and disrupted the mythology of her as a forerunner and trailblazer of culture and art in Johannesburg. Taub's Florence is angry, disillusioned, disturbed and in pain, not the conventional irrepressible cultural hero depicted, for example, in Boldini's portrait that flickers on a screen at the back of the stage.



Giovanni Boldini, *Florence, Lady Phillips*, oil on canvas, 1903.

Image courtesy Wikipedia

> Clouds continue to gather... Headaches, any movement to one side makes me quite ill, nausea, vomiting, blood in my belly, boiling, blood in groin, in my quim. My dear bloody headaches like a shanty dog/shanty smell of shitty blood/gnawing at me! Bugger, bugger, shit, bloody smell (*Florence* 2018)

In our interview, Taub stated that the first audience's dissatisfaction with the play was also felt by people within the JAG itself, specifically the curator at the time, Antoinette Murdoch (pers. comm. 2019), who perceived the play as a slight directed at her management of the gallery. Official municipal management agencies showed the same opposition to Taub's earlier performances which engaged with city and municipal issues around the gallery and the park (such as bylaws that regulate activity in public spaces) through performance as a "… tactic of nuisance…" (2011: 102).

The Play by Taub also makes use of the tactics of metatheatre and metadrama to subvert the mythology surrounding the JAG and the historical character of Florence Phillips. Metatheatre, a term coined by Lionel Abel (1963), is the form of character presentation, writing and development of the relationship of the play as an art form to the audience, a relationship that calls attention to the play itself as a form of expression and artifice, not a verisimilitude or mimesis of reality. One of the ways in which Taub does this is by introducing references to his own performance of the characters of Uncle Mlungu and Greedberg in *Levelling the Enclosure* and their battles with the palisade fence, creating a self-reflexive moment in the storyline:

> You started dying of a broken heart at the gallery fence. Crushed. Kicked by art. Kicked by the public. You failed as a performance artist and then you dreamt of crashing into a wall (*Florence* 2018).



Leila Henriques as Florence Phillips, the founder of the JAG, in *Florence* (Image courtesy The Market Theatre).

Metatheatre is also introduced through the use of a real lunch engagement between Taub and the actress initially approached to perform the role of Florence (pers. comm. 2019), that Taub uses as inspiration for the lunch scenes in the play. In addition, the character of Florence addresses the audience directly several times, fracturing the illusion of reality in the play. Each character's awareness and emphasis of their own foibles, weaknesses and corporeality is a form of playacting that Richard Hornby (2003: 508) claims is an aspect of metatheatre that allows the playwright to surface the themes he is investigating through the medium of the play. The vivid materiality of Florence's body is evoked repeatedly in the play's script:

> Headaches. Headaches. Headaches. Dear headaches will you ever stop. I must keep still. I must do things. Doing things kept me from the awful pains. My body, blood always on the boil. Several operations. European doctors cutting deep into my body. Back to front. Headaches don't stop (*Florence* 2018).

Florence also makes use of the tactic of treating time as fluid, introducing beats and pauses to transition between the contemporary world of the modern actress lunching with the playwright and the Johannesburg of today, and the character of Florence Phillips lurching simultaneously between both versions of the city. My sense is that Taub uses this technique in order to compress the issues of marginality, borders, fences, inclusion and exclusion into one time period, as a statement that they have always been a deeply engrained part of the history of the park and the museum and bleed into the contemporary moment.

The ability of cultural output to be subversive is elaborated upon by Ross Chambers (1991: 19-31), in his analysis of the ability of a text[28] to create a discourse that is in opposition to the prevalent dominant power structures in a particular society. Chambers (1991: 30-31) details how the narrator (in this case, Taub as playwright), "narratee" (the characters of the actress and Florence Phillips) and what he terms the "third text" or the reader or outside listener (the audience at The Market Theatre) form a relationship that intimately

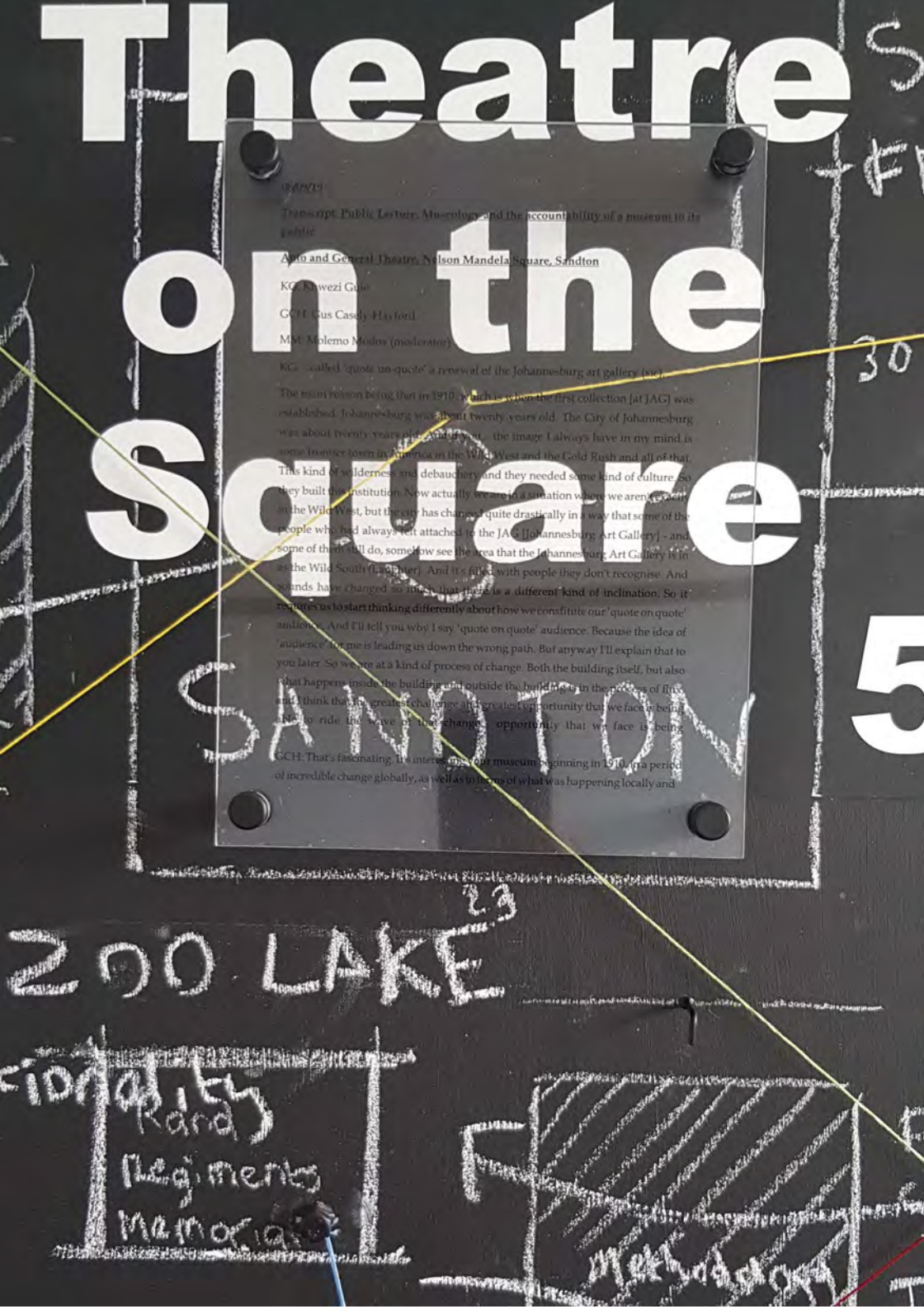
[28] In Chambers' study, the text is a piece of storytelling by a member of an Australian aboriginal community that counteracts the dominant narrative constructed in the archive by the colonial British.

defines the meaning of the piece of text being produced. Taub himself stated that *Florence* is "… a protest play, and a protest about fences…" (pers. comm. 2019).

The materiality of Taub's vivid, green palisade fence is a tactic that pierces the mythology of Florence Phillips. The fence is a signifier of Taub's analysis of the disjunction between the JAG and the park. *The Play by Taub*, as a piece of art, is an ephemeral register of the artist's personal interrogations of the historical mythologies of art, culture, separation and segregation that linger at the JAG.

The Panel Discussion

Theatre on the Square



08/09/19

Transcript: Public Lecture, Museology and the accountability of a museum to its public

Auto and General Theatre, Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton

KG: Khwezi Gule

GCH: Gus Casely-Hayford

MM: Molemo Moiloa (moderator)

KG: ...called 'quote un-quote' a renewal of the Johannesburg art gallery (sic).

The main reason being that in 1910, which is when the first collection [at JAG] was established, Johannesburg was about twenty years old. The City of Johannesburg was about twenty years old. And if you... the image I always have in my mind is some frontier town in America in the Wild West and the Gold Rush and all of that. This kind of wilderness and debauchery and they needed some kind of culture. So they built this institution. Now actually we are in a situation where we aren't exactly in the Wild West, but the city has changed quite drastically in a way that some of the people who had always felt attached to the JAG [Johannesburg Art Gallery] - and some of them still do, somehow see the area that the Johannesburg Art Gallery is in as the Wild South (Laughter). And it's filled with people they don't recognise. And sounds have changed so much that there is a different kind of inclination. So it requires us to start thinking differently about how we constitute our 'quote on quote' audience. And I'll tell you why I say 'quote on quote' audience. Because the idea of 'audience' for me is leading us down the wrong path. But anyway I'll explain that to you later. So we are at a kind of process of change. Both the building itself, but also what happens inside the building and outside the building is in the process of flux, and I think that the greatest challenge and greatest opportunity that we face is being able to ride the wave of that change.

GCH: That's fascinating. It's interesting your museum beginning in 1910, in a period of incredible change globally, as well as in terms of what was happening locally and

the auditorium is packed. It is September 2018, and I am one of many crammed into the Old Mutual Theatre on the Square in Sandton to partake in the public talks programme of the 2018 FNB Joburg Art Fair. The topic noted down in the talks schedule is museology and the accessibility of a museum to its public. The JAG director, Lwazi Gule, is in conversation with Gus-Casely Hayford, director of the Smithsonian museum of African Art in Washington DC. Gule's words are slow and measured. He takes time to construct and communicate his ideas. He is not rushed. This is counterpointed by Casely-Hayford's effervescent and enthusiastic responses to the moderator's questions. More people trickle in during the discussion, which eventually runs over time and the moderator finally opens the floor up to questions. A woman towards the middle rows, who has been audibly voicing her assent or disagreement during the talk, is one of the first to take the microphone. The state of the JAG, she admonishes, is the fault of Gule and his team. How can they allow this to happen? The gallery is nothing. The fine art collections

are in danger and it's the result of the curatorial team at the JAG. They have, she claims, neglected their responsibility to the poets and South Africa at large.

In this chapter, I show how a public talk between the JAG director Khwezi Gule[29] and Gus Casely-Hayford, director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington DC, can be seen as an intangible trace that records the JAG's public response to contemporary debates around the practice of museology, and reveals the impact of the JAG's colonial legacy on its current practice. Gule's contribution to the talk in his capacity as director of the institution can be viewed as part of the JAG's tactical response to these strategies of colonial history in relation to arguments around contemporary museology.

The talk formed part of the larger FNB Joburg Art Fair[30] talks programme in September 2018, and started with Gule referencing the colonial strategies that underpin the JAG's

[29] A biography for the summer edition of *Afterall* (2015: 111-112) lists Gule as having been previously employed by the JAG as curator of contemporary collections, before his work as chief curator for the Soweto Museums, including the Hector Pieterson Memorial and Museum, and the Kliptown Open Air Museum.

[30] Cobi Labuscagne (2010) outlines the inception of the Joburg Art Fair in March 2008. She describes the event as a model that demonstrates "…a relationship between culture, the social, the political, the aesthetic and the economic" (2010: 8) in a South African context. The fair has now been rebranded as FNB Artjoburg, following its buyout by a few major commercial South African art galleries in 2019.

formation, discussed in detail in the previous chapters of this report:

> The city of Johannesburg was about twenty years old. And if you ... the image I always have in my mind is some frontier town in America in the Wild West and the gold rush and all of that. This kind of wilderness and debauchery, and they needed some kind of culture. So they built this institution [the JAG] (Gule 2018).

Gule's observations about the function of imported models of museums in colonised countries, also clarified earlier in this report, resonate with those of Njabulo Ndebele (1991: 128-129), who has written on the various ways in which state institutions are founded and harnessed as part of a larger programme of cultural indoctrination. Ndebele argues that "Culture was designed to socialize the oppressed into accepting the foreign parameters of their domination" (ibid). Tony Bennett refers to this intricate system of power relations as a "...political economy of

power" (1988: 76),[31] claiming that, through the control over and management of appointments, the state can harness and control museums and other cultural institutions as the mouthpieces of a language of state power (1988: 79). Gule, in this public talk, is responding to how this mythology is formed and in particular the ways in which it affects the operations and perception of the JAG.

[31] Bennett leans heavily on the work of Michel Foucault and his *Discipline and Punish* (1975) to illustrate how systems of power in the cultural and museological sphere turn outwards towards the public rather than inwards, as Foucault claims was the case with prisons and other 19th Century discliplinary tools. Bennett argues that these two different approaches are found within the same chronological period.



From left to right: Moderator Molemo Moiloa with panel participants Gus Casely-Hayford and Kwezi Gule (Image courtesy Artlogic).

To understand Gule's contribution to *The Panel Discussion* in context, it is necessary to gain a clearer picture of the history of the museum as an institution which, as outlined by several writers and academics, has often been complicit in problematic discourses related to the construction of cultural, social and historical identities for specific strategic purposes by bodies of power.[32] Susan Pearce (1992: 89-117) sketches out the history of museums as we know them today, detailing how, in the global north, their origins are intimately bound up with the notion of repositories of knowledge during the rise of intellectualism in Europe. She further argues that the categories used to organise objects within a museum (paintings, artefacts, organic materials) were designed to create a "… microcosm of universal nature…" (1992: 119) that orientated the world around the collector and that these categories are still used today, hundreds of years later.

Most relevant to the impetus behind the foundation of the JAG, which Gule refers to directly in *The Panel Discussion*, is Pearce's observations (1992: 128) about the role that public museums and their collections played in the 17th and 18th

[32] See Bishop (2013), Watson (2007), Kreps (2003).

Centuries, as nations started to harness their power to mould public perceptions of national identity. Collections of art and "ethnographic material" (1992: 131) and the systems of chronological division used to arrange them, became tools for the elevation of historical, social and cultural status of the state in which a museum was situated. Gule also refers directly to the power of museums to form a national identity in an interview I conducted with him in October 2019, when he described to me how museums as institutions have taken on different roles at different times in history and have also become responsible for producing a certain kind of knowledge (pers. comm. 2019). He claimed that these forms of discourse and knowledge become part of the language that a museum uses to engage with the local and international public on behalf of what he calls "the nation" (pers. comm. 2019).

The title of *The Panel Discussion* (Museology and the Accountability of a Museum to its Public) speaks directly to the ephemeral idea of the public, and the history of museums and their relationships with their publics, discussed above, show how methodologies of collection and constructed social, political and historical chronologies

within a museum act as strategic tools to communicate with the publics that the museum ostensibly serves. In response to a prompt by the moderator in *The Panel Discussion*, Gule addresses the concept of a public directly:

> There are so many different kinds of people who use the precinct of the art gallery for various purposes, and yet do not see themselves as part of the audience of the art gallery. And they are not treated as an audience (Gule 2018).

Perhaps the public that Gule suggests is not being served by the JAG as an institution that is meant to serve it is the community of park users and the security guards that Radebe interviewed in 2015; those people who navigate the complexities of the colonial mythologies that are materialised in the fabrics of Joubert Park and the JAG. Luke Goode (2005), referencing the work of German philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas, clarifies how public spaces and the publics they are designed to serve are defined within a late-capitalist political, economic and social paradigm. I have drawn from Goode's theories, rather than

directly from Habermas, as his explanation of the German philosopher's analysis of the public sphere originally described in *Structural Transformation* is reviewed and updated through the referencing of multiple new academic sources.

Goode (2005: 3-26) outlines Habermas' deconstruction of what we now understand as the public sphere (spaces that can constitute a public – a town square, a church, a village pub) versus the pre the industrial revolution definition of a public sphere. Especially pertinent to the service that Gule claims museums owe their publics is Goode's argument (2005: 26) that the original intended purpose of the public sphere, that of critical self-reflection, can only be reinstituted once public organisations begin to encourage debate and reconstitute the public space themselves. Museums, as public institutions, then carry this responsibility. "Public spheres must be judged according to their inclusivity: Critical attention must focus on the ways in which particular groups or individuals are marginalised... membership of and participation in such groups should not be conditional on ascriptive markers of status, such as wealth or ethnicity" (2005: 28). In *The Panel Discussion*, Gule seems to concur with

this when he acknowledges that the JAG must disseminate content in such a way that it accessible to and absorbed by all the members of the public who come into contact with the museum on a daily basis. In my later interview with him, he noted that this includes those who work in the museum, such as cleaners and security staff whose investment, and thus interest, in the JAG is limited (pers. comm. 2019). Gule seems to believe that the material mythologies that linger in the JAG can be tactically navigated through revisiting the museum's relationship and communication with the publics that are invested in it, however fleetingly.

This notion — that museums need to be public spaces that open up debate, support diversity and tactically resist the materiality of their histories — was alluded to several times in the course of *The Panel Discussion* by both Gule and Casely-Hayford. They discussed art and cultural objects, the knowledges attached to these objects within the institutions that house them, and the relevance of these ephemera and knowledges to contemporary museum audiences. Through the tactics of redress, museums can become what Homi K. Bhabha has referred to as a "Third Space" (1994: 54-56) where the hybridity of culture can be acknowledged and the

colonial strategies of fixed and static expressions of culture prevalent in western museum discourses can be tactically nuanced. Bhabha argues (1994: 12, 37, 47, 56) that the peripheries of cultural and social exchange, not the centres, are where a fluidity of identity is constructed that counteracts the polarizing, fixed definition of cultural identity. As a trace, and through Gule's contribution, *The Panel Discussion* hints at the idea that the JAG needs to take a more decisive stance against the strategies of its colonial history to become what Bhabha has termed a "Third Space".

The Panel Discussion also alluded to the return of objects to the communities from which they originate in order to better serve the wider public and to undo the strategies of power inherent in museums with colonial foundations:

> A third part is that when these objects are taken out of circulation, for example whether in the 1850s or whatever, it is not that the tradition stopped - the tradition continued. So, people may have a different idea of what these objects mean in their lives today, than what these objects meant in the 1850s (Gule 2018).

The JAG possesses a large collection of cultural and ethnographic material acquired during Christopher Till's curatorship in the 1980s (van Straaten 2015: 144) and it has hosted many exhibitions[33] in an attempt to recontextualise these objects in the museum setting. While such exhibitions facilitate dialogue around these objects, the return of cultural material to their communities of origin can be viewed as another museological tactic in line with Bhabha's Third Space. *Foreign Exchange*, for example, a collaborative artistic and curatorial project at Frankfurt's Weltkulturen Museum in 2013 and 2014, was aimed at redress with respect to collections of ethnographic material sourced by missionaries in South-East Asia in the early part of the 20th Century.[34] The project can be seen as an attempt to refigure the site of the museum as a space of contact and research

[33] *Art and Ambiguity* (1991/1992), *Secular and Spiritual: Objects of Mediation and Views from Within* (1996), *Evocations of the Child* (1998), *Dunga Manzi/Stirring Waters: Tsonga and Shangaan Art from Southern Africa* (2007).

[34] The aim of the project (Deliss 2014: 11), which took place over one year, was to surface the connections between ethnography and commercial trade in the museum's foundation collection which is composed of many hundreds of photographs of Southeast Asian people taken in the early 20th Century.

that, according to Clementine Deliss, is "…about rethinking the possibility of research in a museum…" (2014: 12).

Deliss grapples with the issue of the return of this material, arguing that sites of origin have changed considerably since the time when, in this case of the Weltkulturen Museum collection, photographs of indigenous community members were taken by missionaries as part of what she calls a process of "salvage anthropology" (2014: 16). Contemporary artistic and curatorial interventions such as *Foreign Exchange*, and the many exhibitions at the JAG that invite new critical discourses, are vital spaces for conversation and can be viewed as tactical interventions within the space of the museum through materiality. These tactics are sometimes offered in response to the mythologies that form the foundations of the museum, the collections it houses and its curatorial methodology



Foreign Exchange, **2013/2014 (Image courtesy Weltkulturenmuseum.de).**

In *The Panel Discussion*, Gule refers to his drive for the JAG to broaden its museological practice in ways similar to those mentioned above, in order to tactically resist the colonial mythologies that are materially present at the museum, whether these are in the form of the building's architecture or the methodologies of curating and collecting:

> But actually move even beyond those people who have been initiated, so to speak, into the language of museology, archiving and collection management, to the proverbial person in the street (Gule 2018).

In my interview with him, Gule elaborated on this motivation, claiming that the public the museum serves has changed irrevocably, due in part to the changing nature of the environment in which the JAG is situated, but also because of a larger change in notions of individual, social and national identity in the post-colonial state (pers. comm. 2019). This fluid environment has been sketched out in part by Sizwe Cecil Radebe's (2015) social research which provides a detailed, if somewhat anecdotal, overview of the various activities he observed outside the JAG. From chess players to policewomen on duty and photographers plying

their trade, Radebe's interviews revealed the varying degrees of investment in and different impressions of the JAG among the shifting publics that engage with the larger area around the museum on a daily basis.

The JAG, under Gule's directorship, could be seen in some ways to have attempted the aforementioned tactics of engagement. One such example was the recent interrogation of the JAG's colonial mythology by the artist collaborative MADEYOULOOK composed of artists Molemo Moiloa and Nare Mokgotho. According to Moiloa (Moiloa 2019) the 2018 installation was sited in the courtyard of the building in order to disrupt the colonial museum space. As part of their intervention into the material traces of the British colonial project that informed the foundation of the JAG, Moiloa and Mokgotho sourced and researched records, photographic material and plant life related to the practice of black urban gardening and introduced these elements into the central courtyard of the JAG. According to Moiloa (Moiloa 2019), *Ejaradini* was an attempt to subvert the stifling strategies of hegemony employed by the colonial museum through a tactical practice of reclaiming time, space, land, possession and

sanctuary (inherent to black urban gardening) in the heart of the museum itself.



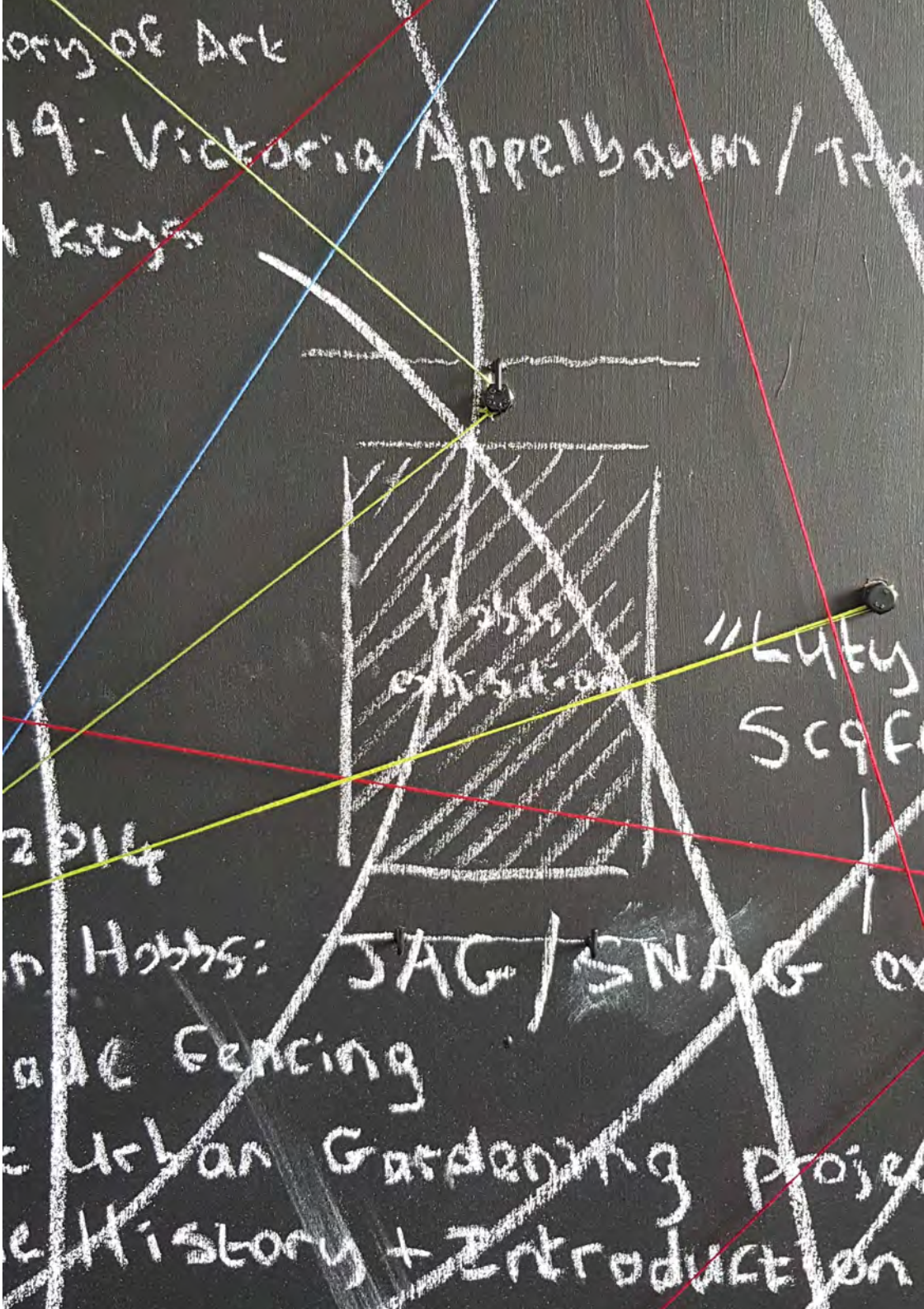
MADEYOULOOK, *Ejaradini*, 2018 (Image courtesy MADEYOULOOK & Ricardo Marcus K).

Contemporary tactics such as those discussed above (public lectures, artistic interventions into collections, and exhibitions of collections aimed at revising historical dialogues or the return of cultural material) interface with the materiality of strategies formed by historical bodies of power in museum spaces. Museums, as recording devices that carry the narratives of a state through time, become critical touchpoints between the nation state and the publics that shift around them, and are thus physical traces that register those constantly changing dynamics.

Taking a critical view, the question that needs to be posed is whether these tactics merely continue to address the same publics. It must however be acknowledged that the JAG, under its current directorship, is introducing various tactical interventions in an attempt to resist, subvert and critically engage with the British colonial mythologies that form the bedrock of the institution.

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The Exhibition by Hobbs


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exhibition
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Scaffe
Hobbs:
JAG / SNAG
Fencing
Urban Gardening
History + Introduction



Installation view of *JAG/SNAG*, 2014/2015 (Image courtesy Stephen Hobbs)

It's an uncharacteristically hot day in early July. I'm in Jeppestown, trying to mount the pavement in my tiny fiat in an effort to find parking. I'm running a bit late for my interview with artist and urban developer Stephen Hobbs at his studio, which is located in an industrial building in this peri-urban neighbourhood. The Jeppestown police station is visible just up the road, and on the way I notice several uniformed security officers in ABSA bank branding lingering on the curbs, positioned there (I am later told by Hobbs) by the bank since the major closed the M2 highway that circles the city for maintenance. The guards, says Hobbs, are meant to offer security through visible policing, and directions to those that would otherwise use the highway to navigate into and around the CBD, and who might feel disorientated by the abrupt deviation to their daily schedules and the sudden need to venture into parts of the inner city. Hobbs studio is a hive of activity. I've caught him as he's preparing for an upcoming exhibition. A massive chandelier, a new commission for a prominent Sandton hotel,

and comprised of hundreds of copper plates, occupies the floor of the main work space. In the room I'm interviewing him in, scuffed parquet flooring and an abandoned fireplace in the corner reveal that this used to be someone's home. The remnants of domestic signifiers brush shoulders with old paint tins, sheets of architectural paper and the other tools of Hobbs trade.

This chapter aims to illustrate how a series of exhibitions by South African artist and urban developer Stephen Hobbs, entitled *JAG/SNAG* (and referred to in this paper as *The Exhibition by Hobbs*) followed a methodology of tactical engagements with material linked to the JAG over a period of five years to facilitate a discussion around the position of the museum within the socio-cultural, historical and economic environment of the Johannesburg CBD. This was done to highlight the structural challenges faced by the museum and culminated in a final exhibition of dense archival work and public and private interactions in 2014/2015. *JAG/SNAG*'s analysis of various components of the JAG'S materiality can be viewed as a tactical interaction with the historical strategies employed by bodies of power manifested at the JAG as material layers over the course of the museum's history, from its construction in 1913 through to Hobbs' final instalment of the *JAG/SNAG* body of work. This chapter should be read in conjunction with the preceding chapter on *The Panel Discussion* as both the exhibition and *The Panel Discussion* deal with issues related to the aim, purpose, content and creative interaction with museums within the context of South Africa and specifically the Johannesburg CBD.

For five years, starting in 2010 (pers. comm. 2019), Hobbs worked with Antoinette Murdoch, chief curator at the JAG at the time, on a project that undertook to foreground all the primary areas of concern regarding the maintenance and upkeep of the JAG building. Hobbs' archival approach to the project resulted in a large accumulation of information, images and documents relating to the various structural interventions in and around the gallery from the time of the first build following architect Edwin Landseer Lutyens' plans in the early 1900s, through to the addition of the east and west wings in the 1930s and the construction of the Meyer Pienaar extensions in 1986 (2015: 118). *The Exhibition by Hobbs* took place at a time when there were many public and private tactical interventions and activities were occurring in and around the JAG.[35] One of these was the publication *Constructure* which according to the editor was compiled with the aim of engaging with the JAG's curatorial practices, the colonial history of the institution, and how the museum has challenged its colonial mythology and

[35] Such as the Joubert Park Public Art Project, which was already been written about in this paper.

positioned itself as part of Johannesburg's future (Murinik 2015: 10).

As indicated in the previous chapter, artistic and creative interventions into museums serve to expand the discourses around collections, museum and curatorial practice, and the problematics of museums with colonial mythologies embedded in their foundations. Similarly to Hobbs, African American artist Fred Wilson worked with the Maryland Historical Society in April 1992 through to February 1993 to produce an exhibition that aimed to recast, review and re-site items in the museum's collection from America's colonial and segregationist history. While *The Exhibition by Hobbs* and Wilson's *Mining the Museum* interacted in different ways with the elements of the museums they engaged with, their interrogations of the materiality of the institutions were very similar. Wilson's engagement with the physical items in the Maryland Historical Society collection and Hobbs' engagement with the materiality of the JAG building itself both questioned the mythologies of the museums and the relevance to the surrounding communities.

Wilson sought to prompt the museum to engage with its collections, reach out proactively to the surrounding community, and shape the museum's future acquisition policies (Corrin 1994: 303).[36] The final exhibition, entitled *Mining the Museum*, aimed "… to confront the difficulty of putting theories of diversity and historical revisionism into practice and to offer a model of change responsive to our particular community" (Corrin 1994: 303). Similarly to Hobbs, Wilson worked with the Maryland Historical Society over an extended period of time to get a firmer understanding of the various elements that comprised the institution; from the objects in the collection down to the minutiae of acquisition processes, curatorial policies, registration, staffing, etc (1994: 305). While Wilson's *Mining the Museum* was, as Corrin claims, about "… deconstructing the museum apparatus" (1994: 312), *The Exhibition by Hobbs* worked to highlight an institution in crisis through a material interaction with the museum itself.

[36] The collaboration (Corrin 1994: 303) was the outcome of a year's residency and was organised through *The Contemporary*, an art museum that engages with local communities through travelling exhibitions.



A component of Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* exhibition at the Maryland Historical Society (Image courtesy bmoreart.com)

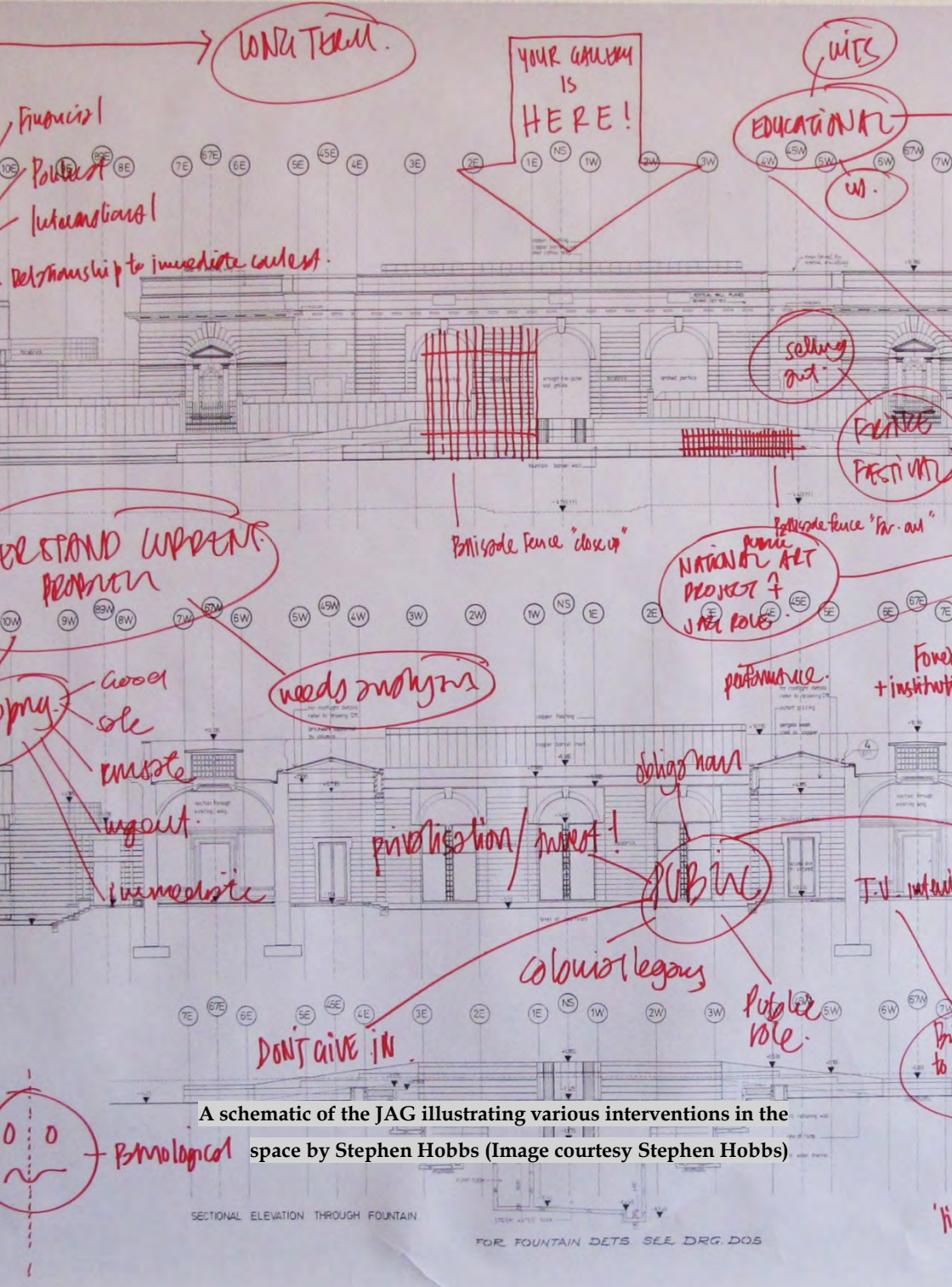
A Conservation Management Plan (CMP) prepared in 2017 detailed the deterioration of and damage to the JAG (Stone 2017: 8, 13, 14, 17) due to years of neglect and inefficient or incomplete restoration work such as water damage and flooding in the Meyer Pienaar extensions. The material evidence of this neglect and disrepair was utilised by Hobbs in several smaller exhibitions and group projects as part of the build-up to the final exhibition of work in 2014. He collated hundreds of archival documents related to the original 1915 building, subsequent additions and alterations, and pervasive structural wear and tear. In an interview with Hobbs at his studio, he highlighted his primary focus on the materiality of the museum as part of the overall project and his view that the materiality itself, such as the improper maintenance of the old Spanish roof tiles on the original JAG building, signified and embodied the crisis at the museum:

> They [the company contracted to restore and repair the JAG] didn't know how to work with 19th Century terracotta tiles, how to renovate sandstone. I was very upset by this, as I heavily invested in the materiality of

> the building. I got into the servitudes, into the cavernous spaces…into the basement where the flooding starts, in the city servitude where the foundations of the JAG building sit, to where the flooding was occurring (pers. comm. 2019).

In an article explaining his rationale and methodology (2015: 120), Hobbs made a conceptual connection between the JAG building and a body as sites of surgery and reconstruction; a metaphor that was also used by JAG director Khwezi Gule in an interview with me. Gule reflected that the JAG can be seen as a body in space, whose health can be analysed through its constituent parts and the ways in which it exists and relates to its environment:

> ...but we read these issues as infrastructure issues, understanding the analogy, is that the infrastructure is like the body, the knowledge side of this is more like the mental aspects, and the soul. If JAG is a person, what kind of person is this, what kind of ... do they have? (pers. comm. 2019).



A schematic of the JAG illustrating various interventions in the space by Stephen Hobbs (Image courtesy Stephen Hobbs)

The Exhibition by Hobbs, claimed the artist, "… engage[d] the entire building as a situation where the building would become material; be the material" (2015: 122). An element of the larger body of work which reflects this is Hobbs' *Lutyens Scaff*. Installed in the Lutyens Room of the JAG, the work directly engaged with the materiality of the room and building. A scaffold of repurposed wood acted as a reminder of the theft of a piece of sculpture from the space before the exhibition was installed. The wooden scaffold physically filled the space, touching the walls and ceilings. According to Hobbs, the work created a friction between the permanence of colonial building materials and techniques, and the relative impermanence of "… contingent building methods in many African cities" (2015: 122). As a literal, material interaction with the colonial mythology of the JAG, the work also called attention to a disjunction between the building and its placement in the city.



Stephen Hobbs, *Lutyens Scaff*, 2015 (Image courtesy Stephen Hobbs)

In my interview with him in 2019, Hobbs stated that:

> My enquiry around that project [*JAG/SNAG*] deliberately avoided the broader social-economic transformation of it [the JAG] … because I was really interested from an architectural-sculptural point of view, and literally intervening in the building and dissecting it (pers. comm. 2019).

However, I sense a disconnect between Hobbs' claim that the *JAG/SNAG* exhibition was not intended to focus on the larger social setting outside of the JAG, and some of the methodologies in his body of work that that seem to gesture to the public outside of the museum. This inconsistency is partly demonstrated by Hobbs' inclusion of outside groups and individuals in the five year *JAG/SNAG* project.[37] In addition, a large part of my interview with him, albeit three years after the exhibition, reflected his concern about the social, economic and governance factors at play around the

[37] Two public participation discussion workshops were included as part of the JAG/SNAG project in 2014, one involving the University of Johannesburg (UJ) Department of Architecture Masters students programme, and the other the Gauteng Institute for Architecture.

JAG precinct and his belief that the project ultimately failed in its duty to the community outside the museum:

> And if you look at it closely, and if you spend five years on a project like *JAG/SNAG*, you can say that this was a failed project, a navel gazing art project, and it made no contribution to community or the public of any substance (pers. comm. 2019).

I would argue that, taken together, these elements indicate a mode of thinking that projects outward and into the urban environment surrounding the JAG. Perhaps this is symptomatic of Hobbs' interest in the overlap of artistic expression and urban design. In our interview, Hobbs expanded on the larger conceptual frameworks that inform his artistic projects and his urban planning work, which occasionally overlap:

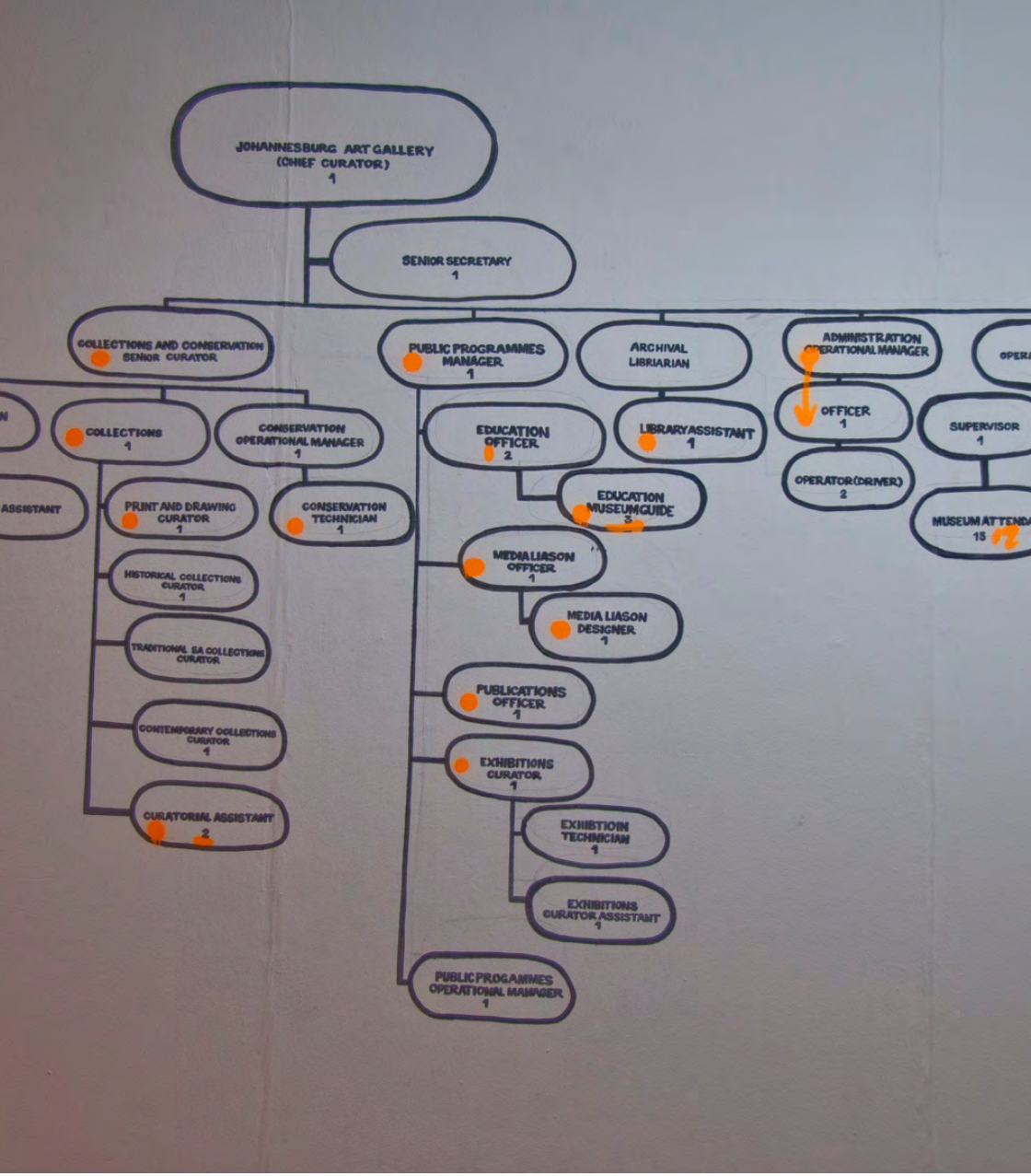
> Running parallel to any of my art, is that we are doing some project somewhere, with some sort of consultation somewhere, with some municipality, around urban design, architecture and public art and because we have

> worked with so many firms of architects in Johannesburg, on sites of memory, memory reconstruction, repurposing, and real issues around services and transport infrastructure, density in terms of housing and so forth (pers. comm. 2019).

On the basis of these observations, I suggest that Hobbs' five years of work on *JAG/SNAG* and his tactical engagement with the materiality of the museum through art and public interventions was an attempt to demonstrate that the disrepair of the museum was a signifier for the disconnect between the institution and outside social and economic networks. He alludes to this signification when he writes that, while standing on the roof of the JAG viewing its place in the context of the city at large, he realised that any effort to maintain the museum would of necessity have to involve the surrounding city and its inhabitants (2015: 120).

Through this theoretical framework and methodology, Hobbs can be seen to be considering the totality of the JAG as an institution through the materiality of its history, how this reflects the various social and historical strategies by

authorities, and the impact of those strategies on the museum's relationship with the larger Joubert Park environment. To Hobbs, the JAG is one component of a large and complex social, historical, economic and urban system. Similarly, Jane Bennett (2010: 23-24) refers to the notion of the assemblage or complex agglomerations of active and inactive elements within a specific setting that act upon one another in myriad ways while maintaining independence of action and agency. She suggests (2010: 24) that assemblages cannot be controlled because no single body within the assemblage — which she sees as having a limited lifespan — can claim to have ultimate power over the whole. As *JAG/SNAG* suggested, the British colonial mythology that informed the foundation of the JAG has been layered over with subsequent materiality (the east and west wing additions, the Meyer Pienaar extensions), thus frustrating their original agency. Hobbs' intervention can be seen as yet another body within the assemblage of the JAG, expanding and extending the agency of the museum as an organism.



An assemblage: A diagram of the JAG staffing posts, with vacancies marked with orange spray paint by Stephen Hobbs. Part

of the larger *JAG/SNAG* final exhibition in 2014/2015 (Image courtesy Stephen Hobbs)

During the *JAG/SNAG* project, Hobbs observed parts of this assemblage in action through the social and economic activities and engagements within and outside of the larger JAG and Joubert Park precinct, suggesting that what can be viewed as the "… vitality of the materiality…" (Bennett 2010: 10) of these activities tactically overrides the colonial mythologies of programming in these spaces:

> There is something about the forces of life that accumulate around the site again, so that it will never be able to service that certain group of people again, the crust-less cucumber sandwiches and Earl Grey (pers. comm. 2019).

This statement is strongly suggestive of the ability of tactics and materiality to overpower strategic frameworks instituted by entities such as governments, municipalities and museum boards.

The *Exhibition by Hobbs* was a creative project that highlighted the prevailing structural and social issues at the JAG at the time. It did this by engaging with the materiality and mythology of the museum through documents and photographs in addition to a lengthy social interaction on a group and individual level over the five years of the project. This multi-faceted, open-ended methodology of study with no particular end-point or conclusive, scientific objective was one of Hobbs' desired outcomes, as he writes that "... this art project would need to have both a philosophical and collaborative attitude towards failure and futility" (2015: 120). In an article on their collaborative cross-border project *Babel Re-Play* in 2014, Cynthia Kros and Georges Pfruender (2017: 56) detail how the tactic of play and experimentation can allow for the development and utilisation of new tools to engage with spaces and concepts. The authors argue (2017: 56) that the introduction of doubt and uncertainty, an essential part of the methodology of play, is conducive to broadening an engagement rather than drawing firm conclusions or limiting one's findings through narrow research methodologies. When one of Hobbs' mirror works was accidentally damaged by a church group using the exhibition space (2015: 120), he used the incident as an

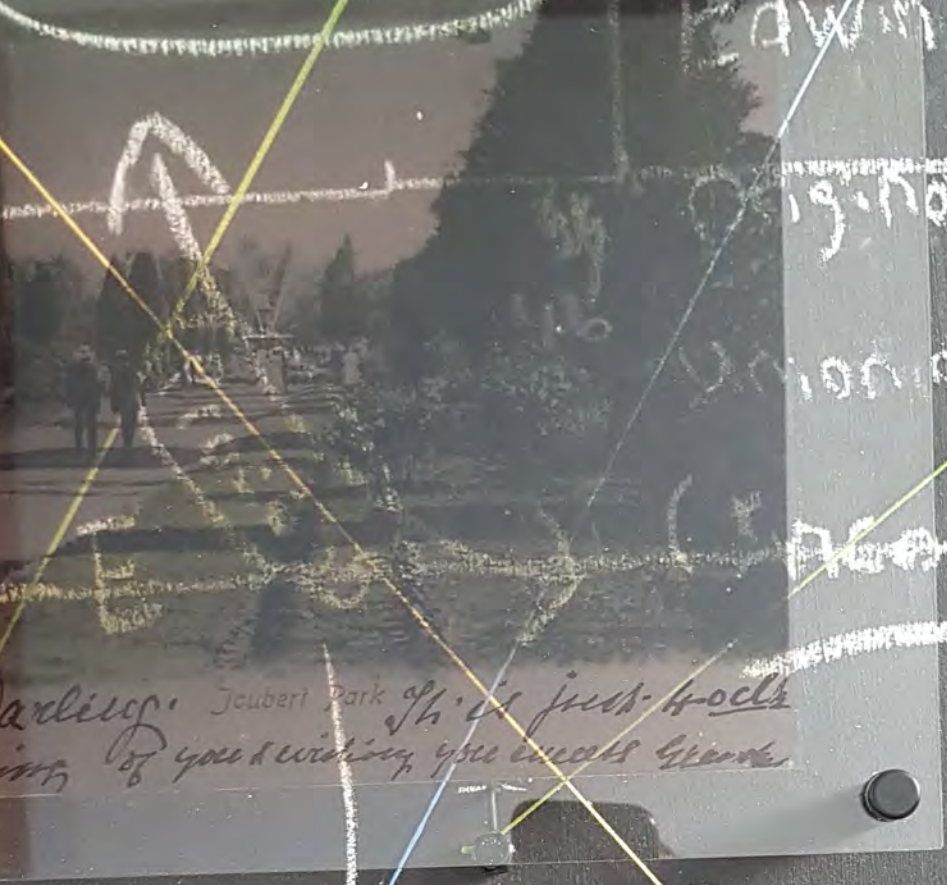
opportunity to surface part of the larger set of questions *JAG/SNAG* was posing:

> Because the work, my original intention was to work with a building in crisis, and make the visual aesthetic of the building that is the evidence in the collapse of the building, is what I am in interested in as form, I am not interested in the plastered and finished things. I am interested in the unfinished, the incomplete, the decaying, both romantically and nostalgically like ruins… and this speaks to the history and this speaks to the contemporary in the sense of the material vernacular (pers. comm. 2019).

The artist's approach allowed *The Exhibition by Hobbs* to serve as a trace that straddles both JAG's history and contemporary moment. It views the museum through a lens that casts backwards and forwards in time.

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The Lutyens Plans



MABON

From Mr. E. L. LUTYENS, A.R.A.

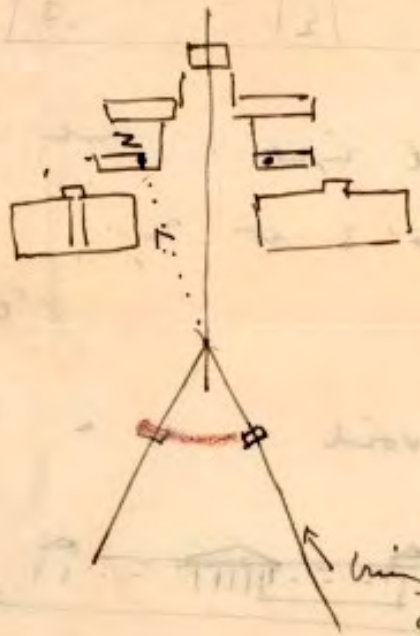
Telephone No. 95 Gerrard.
Telegraphic Address:
"Aedificavi, Vic, London."

17, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.

2.

Is there anything you can do to the

"Summer House"



bring the line to
a focal point at 2

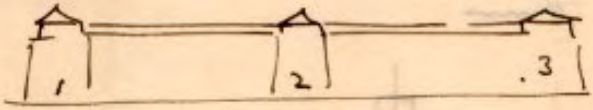
but I don't know what the Summer House is
like & if it permits of it. If it could
even be. but the line of it from the
East is permanent & fixed.

There is only one error & though

Architectural use.

Men, women blocks.

Don't have 1. 2. 3



the same

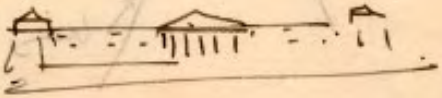
1 & 3 all right. but don't

repeat 1 & 3 at 2.

c'est tous

make a void - a - different

feature



keep run down



if you carry it up



then you have a

carry it right up - - drum

74/111

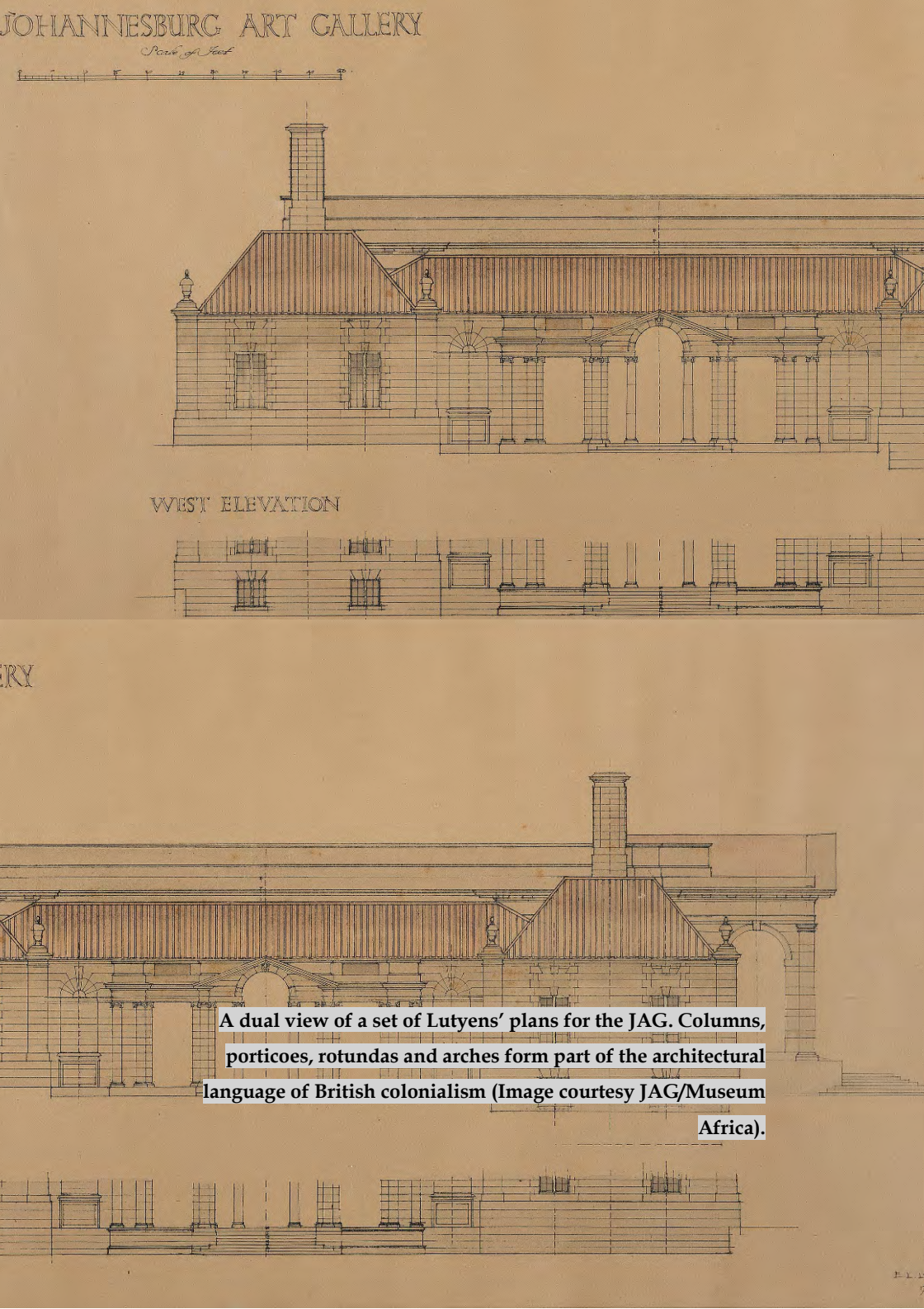
I am meeting Kenneth Mungwene, the collection manager of Museum Africa's archive department, early on a Thursday morning to view some architectural plans for the JAG by British architect Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens, which are held within Museum Africa's artifacts collection. As I walk up to the museum's double volume front doors that open onto Main Fitzgerald Square, a man passing by pauses briefly to urinate against a low retaining wall. In his office, Mungwene hands me the A3 sized gelloved pages in a plastic sleeve, and I am warned that I am not allowed to remove them. I flip them over in the sleeve to get a closer look. This is the first time that I have been able to interact with them physically, my initial introduction to them being at a meeting with Tara Weber, the registrar at the JAG, in 2018 to assess material connected to the Gallery and the park. I had only seen them as high resolution images on her computer screen. Diagrams and scribbled notes flow across the page in an indiscernible order. The notes, numbers and sketches seem like a work in progress: thoughts spilled onto a

piece of paper. Gradually, with some horror, I notice shapes, domes and rotundas that don't match up with the JAG building at all. In fact, these seem to be plans for Lutyens' work on the presidential house in New Delhi, India, from what I can make out, and from the research I had conducted on the architect a few months before. Winspeare confirms that he has no information on the plans themselves. For months, I have been operating on the assumption that, because the plans were filed as part of the JAG visual archive, that they must be of the gallery. It seems that they are not. What now? Have I hit a dead end? I do know that I do not want to abandon the plans entirely. There is something evocative about their lines and scribbles, and what they represent. Something alluring about how one man's imprint of the idealised urban and civic design, a foreign import of civilising principles, contrasts with the aging, thin and yellowed paper. What can these plans tell me about the JAG, and Lutyen's vision for an art gallery in dry and dusty early 20th century Surrey?

The intention of this chapter is to engage with the nuanced ways in which the trace I have called *The Lutyens Plans* can shed some light on the colonial strategies of neo-classical architectural form in public buildings in the early 20th Century in British colonies like South Africa and India. Even though, as I suggest, the plans are most likely not of the JAG building at all,[38] their relevance to my study lies in the construction of British Imperial mythologies through a language of nation-building in material, architectural form in cities such as Johannesburg and New Delhi. As I shall argue here, this language was so pervasive and insidious that it formed a template for architectural design in these cities. Discovering that the architectural plans I had initially thought depicted the JAG were in fact those of a different building required that I think about how suppositions can lead to a new set of questions and research tangents with unexpected connections.

[38] Given the lack of documented information relating to this trace in the Museum Africa and JAG archives, I cannot conclusively state that these plans are indeed part of Lutyens' work on Rashtrapati Bhavan as part of the Delhi Planning Commission in 1912.

During my first physical encounter with *The Lutyens Plans*, a close examination of both sides of the single sheet of paper revealed linear sketches, geometric forms and what appear to be colonnades, pavilions and rotundas, all of which not only hinted at Lutyens' stylistic approach in this building project, but also echoed his designs for the JAG. It was these similarities of shape and form, in addition to my initial encounter with the plans in the JAG archives in 2018, that led me to believe that they depicted the museum. Through the City Beautiful movement, formal neo-classical expressions of authority — realised materially through regimented lawns, flowerbeds, avenues, columns and porticoes — became shorthand symbols of the stamp of colonial civilisation on the urban layout and public building projects in British colonial cities in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries (Cosgrove 1984: 181-183).



A dual view of a set of Lutyens' plans for the JAG. Columns, porticoes, rotundas and arches form part of the architectural language of British colonialism (Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa).

Through the trace of the architectural plans, the authoritative stamp of British colonial architectural mythology is given material form. The sketches, shapes and writing on the plans are a language of signification that, as with my other traces such as *The Darling Postcard* and *The Old Fence*, are imaged onto and into the landscape by bodies of power. The fragility and flimsiness of the trace— yellowed paper aged and faded by time— belies the forcefulness of this mythology. The architect's notes give voice to plans for grand neo-classical domes, pavilions, columns and porticoes framed in and by the landscape:

> Bring this line into a frame point at 2
>
> Make a void in a different fashion
>
> Carrying it (the central dome) right up is a dream

This imposition of framing onto and into a landscape through architecture and how buildings are designed to occupy the space in which they are situated forces a confrontation with those who use those buildings and spaces. Through the subjective encounter in the mind of the viewer or user, a building takes on the form of a body and

its different parts and this corporeality is physically reinforced through the signs and symbols of the architecture itself (Foster 2008: 8-9). Walls, walkways, doors, floors and roofs become arms, legs, a head, a torso, thus drawing a parallel between the structure and the people who navigate it. This exercise becomes particularly powerful when used as part of a language of nationhood within a larger colonial programme, as is the case with *The Lutyens Plans*. At the turn of the 20th Century, when architects such as Lutyens were working and colonial expansion and development was at its height, buildings that formed part of the workings of the government, like museums, were increasingly designed to interact with the public and built as a spectacle in order to emphasise the confrontation between the state and the individual (Bennett 1988: 78-79)

This language of colonial architecture is composed of both subtle forms (a void) and overt forms (the dream of the dome) designed to impose upon the landscape and infiltrate the subjectivity of daily life. Homi K. Bhabha (1990: 291-295), in his study of how the nation state constructs its mythologies, writes how the identity of a nation is inscribed not through its accepted, encoded and archival history, but

through the minute details of the everyday life that occurs within a space and at the margins of its borders. *The Lutyens Plans* are the material realisation of such inscription, where "The problematic boundaries of modernity are enacted in these ambivalent temporalities of the nation-space" (1990: 294). A distinctly colonial narrative of British identity is generated through the neo-classical architectural principles of columns and rotundas and aligning architecture with the specifics of the landscape in which it is located. This subjective and emotive nation-language is then encoded as part of the official historical archive of the nation. The mythology of the state is narrated through how the cities designed to invoke it — in this case Johannesburg and New Delhi — are built. As Bakshi argues (2013: 191) the memories, histories and narratives of states are constructed from the materiality of the lived environment and "… the visual archive of the city is [the] site where official memory is intentionally cultivated".

It is through this encounter between the signification of national identity and landscape, the materiality of architecture, the body and memory that the particularities of a mythology are formed. The British colonial motivations

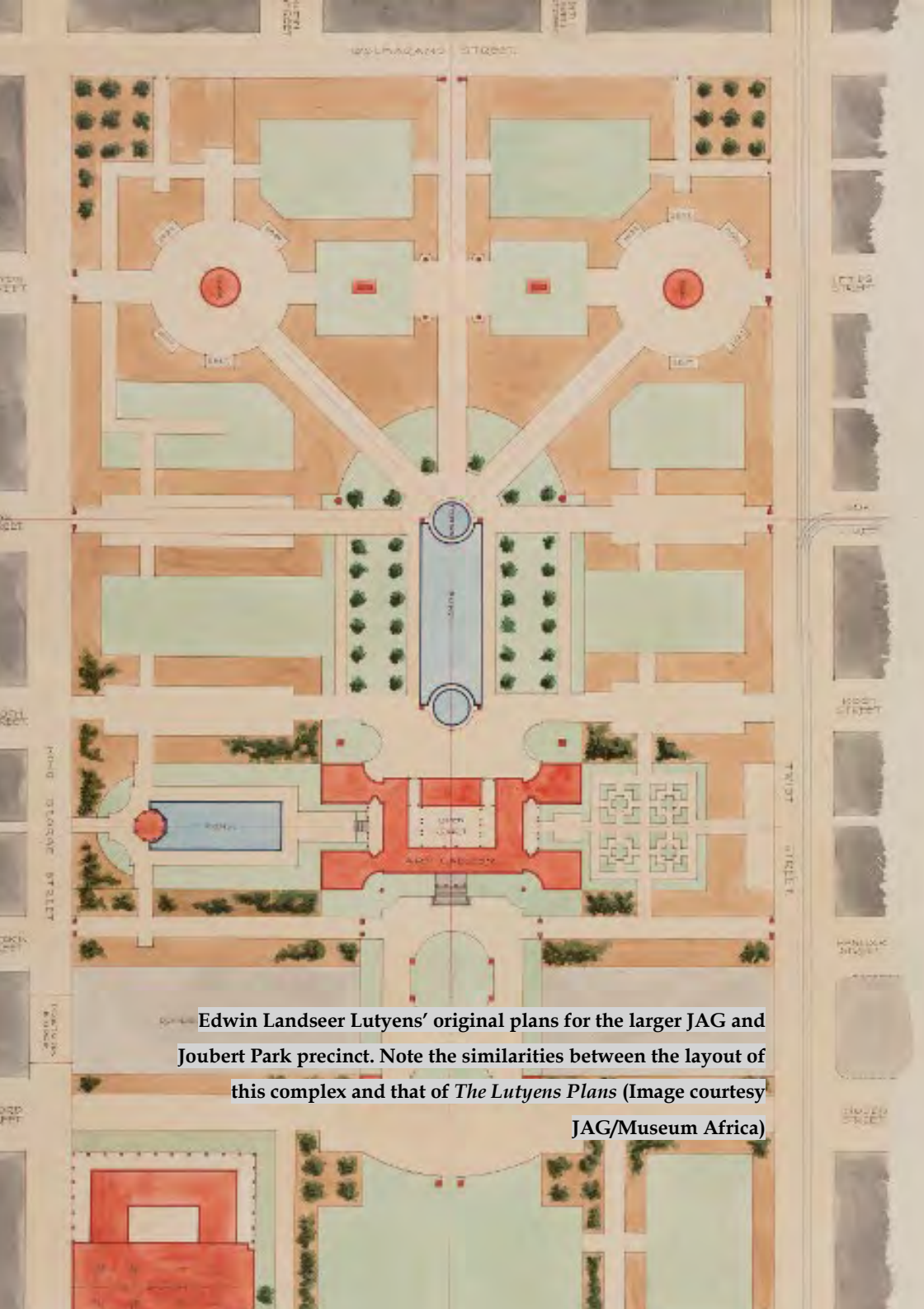
and architectural programme that were the bedrock of Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens' designs for the JAG museum complex and gardens has been written on by Mervyn Miller (2002), who also links (2002: 159) the British colonial architectural principles of the architect in Johannesburg in 1910 to his later programme of building in New Delhi in 1912. Lutyens' stay in Johannesburg in 1910 and his work on the JAG commission was, according to Miller (ibid), a brief period of experimentation to ascertain whether classical architectural principles and forms (the neo-classical colonnades, pavilions and domes evident on *The Lutyens Plans*) were suitable for British colonial cities abroad. From Johannesburg and his work on the JAG, Lutyens moved to New Delhi to continue his construction of British nationality through the built form of public buildings such as the President's House.

As I have written in my historical overview, Lutyens' plans for a grand, expanded cultural and leisure complex with the new art gallery as a focal point was part of a larger strategic effort by a powerful British government under British High Commissioner Alfred Milner to rebuild Johannesburg in a British image. Through a study of Lutyens' work between

1910 and 1915, Miller links Lutyens' plans for the layout of the JAG precinct to the architect's later work on Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi (2002: 165), thus providing a connection between Lutyens' work in Johannesburg and New Delhi. Perhaps the placement of *The Lutyens Plans* in the JAG archives — plans apparently of a different building complex — is yet another signifier of the similarity of the colonial architectural mythologies in South Africa and India.

Just as the JAG was designed in 1910 as a shining beacon of British civilisation in a colonised territory, Lutyens' President's House and the larger urban complex of government housing and administration buildings in the new capital of British India was a trace that aimed to materially reinforce a similar mythology. Mahesh Buch's (2003) glowing praise of the architect's urban planning scheme is evidence of the insidious power of these strategies of architectural mythology. Made chairman of the New Delhi planning committee in 1998 (2003: 34), Buch demonstrates very little sympathy for the tide of new, more modern residential and commercial properties that have developed around Lutyens' original complex,

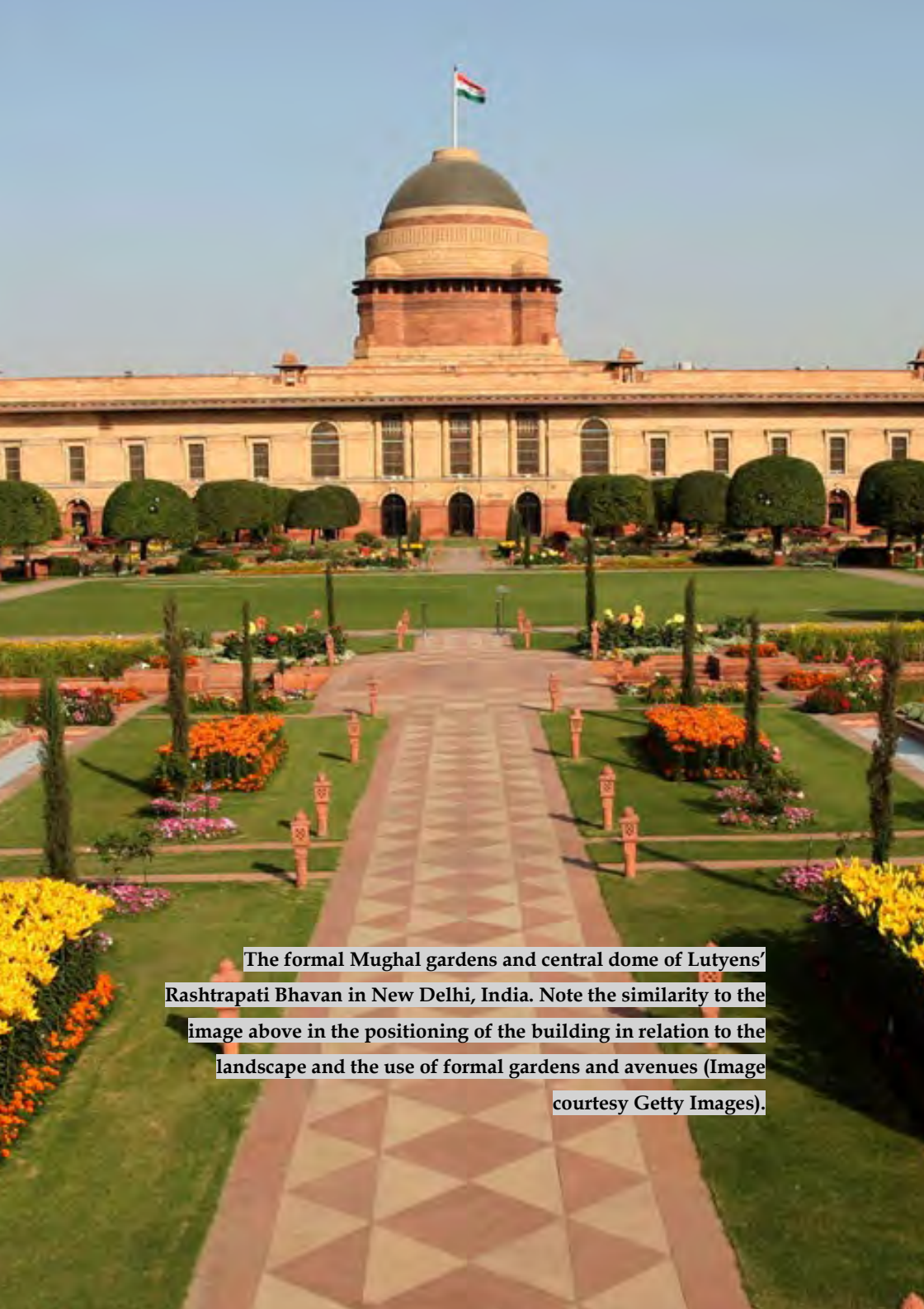
developments which can perhaps be seen as a tactical material response to the outdated British Imperialist principles of capitalist-driven governance that were materialised through these civic building projects.



Edwin Landseer Lutyens' original plans for the larger JAG and Joubert Park precinct. Note the similarities between the layout of this complex and that of *The Lutyens Plans* (Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa)



An undated and uncredited archival image of the north side of the JAG, showing the formal planting arrangement in Joubert Park and the connection between the park and the JAG before the addition of the Meyer-Pienaar extensions (Image courtesy JAG/Museum Africa).



The formal Mughal gardens and central dome of Lutyens' Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, India. Note the similarity to the image above in the positioning of the building in relation to the landscape and the use of formal gardens and avenues (Image courtesy Getty Images).

Developments such as the construction of the Meyer Pienaar extensions on the north side of the JAG in 1986/87 and the erection of the green palisade fence separating the JAG from the park can similarly be viewed as tactical interactions with and responses to the colonial mythologies inherent in the museum and the park. These interventions become critical moments that seek to disrupt the language of nationhood embedded in these spaces and the material forms that signify this language. Such moments are active refusals of the ideological strategies and mythologies of the nation state (Bhabha 1990: 300), initiated by agencies of power with their own motivations and ideologies.

My sense is that the mathematical, geographical depiction of the new urban complex on *The Lutyens Plans* speaks to the architect's disassociation from the landscape. Dreams of a dome that can be viewed from a central avenue, buildings ordered sequentially by numbers. The landscape sectioned by degrees and forcefully divided by compass measurements. For the purpose of the plans, the landscape is a blank page, ready to be imprinted with the template of British imperialist nationalist mythology in architectural form. This conceptual disconnection from the specificities

and individualities of an environment, claims Denis Cosgrove (1984: 30-32), is aided by the strategies of mathematical and geospatial renderings. The sciences of geography and mathematics, along with architecture, become yet more tools in the British imperialist arsenal and are what Cosgrove (ibid) refers to as social formations, or political, social and economic constructs that are imprinted materially onto the landscape.

My assumption that *The Lutyens Plans* were of the JAG building facilitated an engagement with these strategies beyond the walls and fences of the JAG. Through the plans, I was able to see the trajectory of British colonial nationalism in Johannesburg (and a small part of New Delhi in India) and examine in detail the nuanced templates of architecture, urban planning, city and landscape design as imprinted in two different cities that still carry residues of British coloniality in architectural form. It was the materiality of *The Lutyens Plans* as a trace that initiated this process of looking. Cynthia Kros and Georges Pfruender's collaborative film project *Babel Re-Play* (2014) similarly based an exploration of location, modernity, colonialism and academic positionality

in South Africa (2017: 49-66)[39] on a trace that embodied a mythology: the biblical story of the tower of Babel and its destruction. Kros, Pfruender and the artists and researchers involved in the project utilised the mythology of the tower to engage with larger issues of politics, society, economy and history in South Africa and Switzerland. In the South African iteration of the film, these creatives teased out local discourses around site, historicity, narrative and power (2017: 57-59). In the same way that the mythology of the tower was used by these creatives as a starting point for these questions, in my study *The Lutyens Plans* signify a larger discussion around the mythologies of British colonial power, in this case as materialised by the lines, numbers, shapes and diagrams that are etched indelibly on faded and fragile pieces of paper from the desk of an architect over one hundred years ago.

[39] It is important to note that the *Babel Re-Play* project comprised two films that were developed as outcomes of the artist's research process; one set in Johannesburg South Africa and another in Zurich, Switzerland. For the purposes of this paper, I focus only on the South African film.

The Lutyens Plans are connected to the JAG not only through being housed in the museum archives, but also through the British colonial mythologies of the nation state that form the historical foundation of the museum. *The Lutyens Plans* are a material representation and signification of these dynamics of power evident in the materiality of the paper and black ink and the more abstract and intangible imaging of neoclassical architectural forms imposed into and onto the landscape. They are also a conceptual bridge between Johannesburg and New Delhi through the ways that they embody these principles and manifest the colonial project in South Africa and India.

Conclusion and a Continued Interest

As I have attempted to demonstrate in this research report and through the accompanying creative component, the JAG and Joubert Park are spaces loaded with many historical, economic, social and political layers that have accumulated in and around them over the course of their long histories. Some of these layers, I have argued, have been ingrained as mythologies in the materiality of the spaces themselves by bodies of power seeking to inculcate certain predominantly British colonial values and principles. These mythologies, materialities and strategies continue to influence the ways in which both the JAG and Joubert Park are navigated by those that interface with them. I have attempted to demonstrate how *The Darling Postcard*, *The Old Fence* and *The Lutyens Plans* are traces that are evidence of these strategies of power and of attempts to physically control and delineate spaces for very specific purposes. Other traces, such as *The Play by Taub*, *The Panel Discussion* and *The Exhibition by Hobbs*, can be viewed as evidence of tactical subversion and interrogation of these mythologies, materialities and strategies.

Throughout this paper, I have attempted to describe my close examination of six selected traces and the overlap and intersection between them. This approach has also served to highlight how the spaces of the JAG and Joubert Park and the traces that are connected to them are vibrant, constantly changing, diverse and hold multiple meanings for different groups and individuals whose bodies brush up against the materiality of the museum and the park. It is the results of these points of contact that I have attempted to surface in this report.

The fact that researchers keep returning to JAG and Joubert Park and that both spaces continue to be studied[40] is evidence of an enduring fascination with the museum, the green space alongside it, and how both lock in to the larger socio-cultural, historical and economic environment of Johannesburg. What surfaced during my interviews with Stephen Hobbs, Khwezi Gule and Myer Taub was a deep,

[40] The Joubert Park Public Art Project (2000/2001), Jillian Carman's research on the JAG (2003 and 2006), Stephen Hobbs' *JAG/SNAG* exhibition (2014/2015), the publication of *Constructure* (2015) to mark the JAG's centenary, Sizwe Cecil Radebe's research (2015), Gemma Hart's honours and masters research (2016 and 2019), and an anecdotal mention by Stephen Hobbs during my interview with him that Alexander Opper is currently engaged in PhD research on the JAG.

contemporary concern for and interest in the spatial dynamics of post-apartheid, post-colonial Johannesburg, and the ways in which different communities and individuals move through and access the spaces in the city. This can be seen in Taub's observation (pers. comm. 2019) of the "… deep colonial spatial relationship…" that he believes still haunts Johannesburg, and Hobbs' claim (pers. comm. 2019) that current city heritage and cultural plans neglect the JAG because "… JAG is not included in tourist routes, this is the polemic of city planning, like apartheid within apartheid". Based on my own study of selected traces and the interviews that I conducted, it could be posited that the city — and by extension spaces like the JAG and Joubert Park — still carries the residual materiality of its colonial and apartheid histories. This paper is a demonstration of how these residues are physically ingrained in and imprinted on its surfaces, becoming part of the materiality of the urban environment.

As stated in the chapter Methodology, Creative Research and Producing New Knowledge, I applied a process of research-led practice and practice-based research to the study of my selected traces and in my creative component

to expand the discourse on the museum and the park. This expansion was achieved by using my six selected traces as lenses through which to view the two spaces. This creative exercise has allowed me to partially surface the vibrancy of the museum and the park and to engage with the various archival layers that have accumulated over the course of their histories. I have attempted to show that the traces have either supported or disrupted the mythologies and archives associated with the museum and the park. Beverley Butler (2007) argues for this kind of nuanced interaction with and critical reflection on how memories and the archive are constructed and prioritised. She claims (2007: 35) that this manifestation of the archive occurs through writing, books and the museum, all of which act as official, strategic markers of memory, displacing other contributions. Butler (2007: 36) warns that these archives can be polarising, setting up the dualities of the west and the other, civilised and uncivilised and building a mythology of a single source of knowledge that should be preserved as part of a legacy. *The Darling Postcard*, *The Old Fence* and *The Lutyens Plans*, as I have written here, are the vessels for such archives. They are pieces of material that act as the building blocks for the construction of memories and form the fingerprints of those

who have orchestrated these mythologies. These traces hold the residuality of this power from the inception of the trace through to the contemporary moment but this residue is also smudged by conflicting agencies, and this agglomeration is part of a larger web of materiality that deepens the associations and connections between the traces and the environment in which they are located. In the creative component of my report, I have visualised this web and the vital connections between space, trace, time and myself as a researcher who is leaving yet another set of fingerprints and a presence in the archive.

As argued in the chapter Some History and an Introduction, the JAG and Joubert Park can be seen as awkwardly straddling their complex histories, the framing of cultural institutions in South Africa and the weight of the mythologies that have accumulated materially around them over the course of their long histories. How and why these mythologies have been and continue to be created has been expanded on in the chapter on Mythology and Materiality where, through referencing the work of Roland Barthes, Yuval Harari, Anita Bakshi, Annie Coombes, Gaston Bachelard and Daniel Herwitz, I have outlined how

mythologies can be written into the materiality of spaces and places and how this coding configures historical and heritage spaces. This inscription relies on a complex system of signification that, in the case of the museum and the park, formed a language of nationhood that was given voice through both the gesture of spectacle, as in *The Lutyens Plans*, and smaller less conspicuous evocations like *The Darling Postcard*.

It is my belief that these mythologies and materialities indelibly influence the ways in which the complexities of public heritage spaces are navigated, both by private individuals and by the groups responsible for the formulation of the administrative policies governing them. Naomi Roux's (2017) study of the Red Location museum in the New Brighton township in the South African province of the Eastern Cape in 1997 demonstrates this process of influence. The Red Location museum can be viewed as a government-driven attempt to negotiate the ingrained mythologies and materialities of apartheid-era spatial divisions through the establishment of a cultural precinct and museum in an area with a long history of political resistance (2017: 7-8). Roux's study demonstrates how

approaches to this form of memorialisation and heritage work can go awry if efforts do not take into account the complex needs of the surrounding communities and the dense network of private and public histories that are imprinted onto the materiality of these spaces. Like Bakshi's study on conflicted sites in Cyprus and Coombe's writing on the Voortrekker Monument, Roux's study highlights the Red Location Cultural Precinct project as an example of the complexities involved in heritage projects and is an important reference in terms of the considerations involved in public heritage spaces in complex environments. Sites like the JAG and Joubert Park, I have argued here, labour under the burdens of past and current, private and public heritage and memory manipulations. It is these manipulations, as I have attempted to demonstrate here and in my creative component, that act in concert with the vibrant network of connections present in both spaces to produce the traces that I have studied.

The local and international examples referenced in this report illustrate the complex, multi-layered mythologies and materialities that are navigated and negotiated by private and public agencies seeking to interpret historical

and heritage sites. I have suggested in my chapters on *The Exhibition by Hobbs*, *The Play by Taub* and *The Panel Discussion* that this can perhaps explain why both the JAG and Joubert Park are seemingly constantly being revisited in an attempt to recontextualise them. These traces and engagements also highlight what Jane Bennett refers to as the vitality of materiality (2015: 39), both tangible and intangible, that indelibly influences the interpretation of and interaction with a space and its constituent parts. In my chapter on Spaces, Traces and Tactics, I have referred to the work of Jacques Derrida, Michel de Certeau and Roland Barthes to demonstrate how quotidian tactics can be offered up in response to strategies as a tool for this recontextualisation. Through a complex system of signification, as I show in the chapter and in the study of my traces, materialities and their associations can be manipulated for tactical or strategic purposes.

As *The Panel Discussion*, *The Play by Taub* and *The Exhibition by Hobbs* demonstrate, there is an ongoing and critical conversation around public cultural institutions and the responsibility they have in terms of the communities in which they are situated. These traces inform the nature of

these discussions. In the chapter Some History and an Introduction, I have referenced Same Mdluli's (2017: 81) marking of museums and other cultural institutions, especially in a South African context, acting as "...markers as well as makers of history..." and the power they have to edit or omit significant cultural contributions from the archive should not be underestimated. In the chapter on *The Panel Discussion*, I have outlined in detail the strategic ability of museums to arrange, organise and formulate a discourse that includes and excludes on the basis of problematic arbiters of cultural, social, political and economic taste.

In May of 2019, VIAD (Research Centre for Visual Identities in Art and Design) at the University of Johannesburg hosted a panel discussion on the role of museums in the contemporary moment. Entitled *Museums for Whom, Museums for What*, the panel was led by Khwezi Gule and included museum curators from the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro. Gule spoke to the post-apartheid, state-owned museum as being an "imaginary" (Gule 2019) in that it has come to represent the way in which the state conveys its identity to the public in a post-apartheid context.

This statement mirrors my emphasis in this report, through referencing the work of Herwitz, Roux, Benedict Anderson Njabulo Ndebele and Susan Pearce, on how the language of heritage is constituted in the democratic state and the historical complexities of the museum as an institution. During the above-mentioned panel discussion, Gule claimed that the components of the JAG can be compared to the parts of a body, and that "... all aspects of the body are in crisis" (Gule 2019). He was at pains to state, however, that he views this crisis as an opportunity to "centralise black knowledge and black memory" at the JAG and that he sees "... museums as places of contestation" (Gule 2019).

As I have demonstrated in this report, each phase of the passage of our heritage and historical spaces through time influences both the composition of their materiality and the residue left behind by the bodies who brush up against them. This tactile process is either overt (an iron railing that allows some in and leaves others out) or subtle (a few scribbled architectural notes). It is through an awareness of this process and the friction it creates that we are better able to comprehend the vast, intricate and vibrant web of

materialities, mythologies and tactical traces that surround us.

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FlorENCE

A play by Myer Taub

First performance at the Barney Simon Theatre, Market Theatre, Johannesburg, August 3rd 2018

Author's note. Each scene in this historically re-constructed monologue occurs with chronological numbers & headings as theatrical banners possibly announced by the actor. Also when the actor speaks in the text, there are passages in quotation marks: these are spoken in a different annotation. Beats in the text signify a minor but still significant shift in time, action or place. The beat is not as apparent as a pause; scene or act break but still long enough to indicate pause or change.

ONE: FRAGMENTS BEFORE THIS, PRESENT DAY: JOHANNESBURG

Summer. Early-eve. Nocturnal sounds intertwined with light jazzy soundtrack and static, then thunder-lightning. Stormy sunset over a vista of Johannesburg. Sounds of alarms going off in the distance. Storm settles. Alarms fade.

Lights continue to rise illuminating: A table at a fancy restaurant.

An actress seated at one side of the table looking the part of an indignant diva- she is in some disguise of sorts, wearing a hat, sunglasses and maybe even holding an umbrella. Her table is empty on the most part; except for her handbag that contains a largish tome like manuscript placed center on the table, an A La Carte menu and several well-placed pieces of cutlery and crockery; all of which she plays with-very-very slowly.

ACTRESS:

Thought I would never see you again, hear you again. Thought you were away for good. (*As if interrupted by the audience, pauses to listen as to the sound of encroaching static*) Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody, nobody. Nobody. Not interested in any specials. *(Beat*) Happens all the time, all the time, don't care what anyone says: (*addressing the audience as if they are the playwright sharing her table*) Fancy a drink? My Pioneer? (*doesn't wait for her answer but still acknowledges the audience as personas*) Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody... Bugger! Thought you were away for good. (*Beat)* Came to see me? My things? *(Fiddles with several pieces of cutlery next to the manuscript which she looks at with a strange kind of reverence but does not touch the pile of papers. Beat) .* Whatever's left of them! *(Happily.)* Arrived like a pioneer to help me build my things!

Fragments. Scattered. Out there...

(*Sadly. Deliberately, she points out in the distance, to something or someone)* Out there, I would do that for this. *(She takes the manuscript out of her bag)* Deals done. Pacts made. For Kings, for queens, of great things…

(Beat)

I'm not going to do your thing! Thing! O.K I will… (*Teasingly*) Maybe I won't. Maybe I Will! (*Proudly-Quickly*) Why should I even look at this? (*To manuscript/beat)* Mere history. A playoff of things. Florence. Born Dorothea Sarah Florence Alexandra Ortlepp. Florence. After that Italian city. There–-where's there's a fake David to pronounce precedence of lost cities everywhere, lost on their own terms, lost because of things.

Let me start in autumn, my favorite season. Somewhere else. A broken body at the fence… An artist will die at the fence. A body. Smelling-Dead. Fence spiked and green and cruel and tall. Here Johannesburg, autumn, in a very strange year, more PEOPLE everywhere, more buildings faded, derelict, larger rats, trains, more tunnels of the dead. Everywhere–more things. Autumn of this year. Autumn of that year. Autumn with its oranges… Not the fruit but the colors…. Autumn, now–when time seems more broken, when ghosts like us seem to think time and words make less sense. Will anyone care? What better place to start than–than, in autumn. Autumn! Start as a wonder. Start with art. Start by recounting how I will play no ordinary women. Oh, to say how I once played an outstanding white woman. Florence Phillips.

(*Beat - as if she is Florence Phillips*)

"I was an outstanding woman in my day and generation. Fit to occupy my place among the most remarkable personage of my time in South Africa. Smuts said that, about me! Remarkable soldier. That was in? (*Beat*) Boer Generals, de Wet, de la Rey, Smuts and Botha, had gathered certain notoriety. There –in 1901-We, my husband Sir Lionel Phillips and I – there we were–in Piccadilly, cheering on those who had survived. Everyone was there, whispering: 'Kitchener's concentration camps' The whole of the Cape colony was under Martial Law. Boer rebels striking at their will. We were in Piccadilly, no it was a little later, it was Paris of course, Paris when Lionel got that letter from Smuts: that letter was an opportunity from peace for peace. Johannesburg had become the city disentangled from the Boer republic. A glittering gold prize along with it came-a municipality in distress. Things in distress."

Things…

(*Beat*)

I am here. I am not here. Here. Here I am here. I am not here. Once the Queen of Johannesburg! (*Beat*) I of course, I'm smarter than you could ever be. I am not here. I am here. An artist will die on a fence. That's the point, to the end, the end of things, but I am not dead. I am still here. Here…

(*Beat*)

There is a view of Ponte Vecchio, from the Bridge with its forest green river and ambling sweet smelling Mozzarella wind with its graffiti covered walls; its faded signs with its mausoleums, its Gucci's, and its Puccis, and its Burberrys,

(*as if interrupted*)

Yes? No… We need more time.

Bulgaris pronounced by faded Hollywood stars. Do's, and its don'ts, tis twenty or so Palazzos. Bells that don't chime. Hours that are unclear. Sky of medieval turrets and its weir of history, its Italians – Romans… Etruscans… Western desire for the Pontification of civilization, and of the end–to what is art? This is the Carpio, littered with the rape of Sabine women and marble beasts and wonders. Florentine police officers more ridiculous than anything else how they wear strange white hats, to honor their city's own Renaissance.

Christ, this is a running score of wheels in a wheel that goes on…. And on and goes nobody, nobody… Until there's nothing left….These are your words.

That: 'nobody-nobody' you said <u>that</u> when you died. Nobody, nobody, nobody. Remember when you came back to Johannesburg after working in Europe. You were focused as I had wanted to become. We were both

non-living for so long, you there and me here. You re-accepted Europe and became a zombie. You said the border crossings gave you hemroids and sense of hopelessness so you then flew back to Johannesburg, and we met in the Central Library. I followed you home because you were so obsessed with me as I was with me too. Now you write this thing,(*alluding to manuscript*), you ask me to play the part of a condemned woman because I am that sort of person, someone who became kinder but is condemned for not helping all who needed help. Imagine that! Someone who founded houses, museums, botanical gardens and galleries across two oceans. Said she had no real generosity because she may be racist. Only if one helped Black people one would go to heaven. Not just someone who had made houses, and galleries, books, homes for orphans and the aged.

I am afraid, but I have become less afraid so here we are. I'm a ghost now, like you; these things now mean nothing to me. Merely mixed up words and Time.

Look, give me more time, I'll just raise my hand like so-there,….. (*Raising her hand slowly as to gesture to an imaginary waiter not to approach the table*) I need another minute or-two-dear - they only employ people like these in smart restaurants these days, you've to know all the correct etiquette, civilized. Now they call us, *mulungus*. Dirty spit spat up from the sea. Dirty whites, bright, earnest but better other whites, muddy Whites like the Jews or the Asians. Forgive me for I will later make a confession.

(*Beat*.)

You started dying of a broken heart at the gallery fence. Crushed. Kicked by art. Kicked by the public. You failed as a performance artist and then you dreamt of crashing into a wall. You've already fallen off the skateboard and tunneled to another place - Europe. Why did you continue and continue as if from the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence?

(Her one finger taps gently, lightly on the manuscript. Tapping becomes a repeated pattern that builds.)

The beginning is but the end. This is not Ponte Vecchio, views of its forest green river ambling sweet with mozzarella air, it's not Autumn, no – this is dry cold Diamonfiderious day outside Kimberly when Florence Phillips sees her first fence. A mining camp outside Kimberley. 1868 (*As Florence Phillips)* "Five, and told, I've big feet. *(Showing off her feet by plonking one foot on the table)* Tough, a proper, Voor-Trekker Meisie! Diamond Fever! Fever that wouldn't go away. Daddy stakes a claim. Mummy finds our first diamond. Mummy collapses in the heat. Mummy's fingers sink into the earth. Sift. In the high-ground of Colesberg Kop. Dark yellow mackle. Yellow Colesberg Kop. Big Hole of Kimberley! Diamondiferous! Picture-Mummy and I – Picture it! A lady in a parasol. At her side, an impossible girl, of eight, there----all around them are toiling diggers, hardened, bullish bodies, made from earth-the sun, diggers from everywhere, tents of every size, every shape, flags, stuck in the ground, going down into holes... Groups at the sorting tables, drinking coffee at the dozen – ladies and children and---Blacks, Boers, English, Malays, carrying carts, bullocks, water casks... The Hole that is the Hell made from furious flurry of men with claims to the wealth beneath the ground. Thousands of these claims, built an Inferno from Dante, an entrance to an underworld, with promises of everlasting riches, from a crude, cruel Eldorado called Kimberley! Kimberly just a mess of things, 'Deur mekaar'. Became a wild feral cat in the camps, clamored together by these bullish rats, naked, gnawing at cheese. Wanted to see other things beside dust, men, wanted to see beautiful things. Born in an era of Battles. Diamond Fever! Bang bang! Guns, diamonds! In those years, battles were the only thing people talk about: "Battle of Bronkhorstpruit", "Battle of Amajuba". On the horizon, there was always the possibility of war." Now-Here there is only Attrition.

(Plays with her fingers, rubbing them together, puts them up to catch a ray of sunlight against a crystal glass. Beat.)

I want to start sometime else. Autumn of another year. Autumn before War. Autumn with relentless light. So clear. So unbroken. Not like now, now time's more broken. Things like words, dates, numbers make less sense.

(*Beat)*

That is part of this.(*Gestures to manuscript)* A thing about a Victorian white madam as a ghost sitting on a Joubert park bench outside her gallery smoking a cigar. Wearing a faded striped dressing gown, masculine, covering creases of a white-night-gown who bellows out smoke, stubs out the cigar and saves it for another day - maybe carefully placing it alongside a dusty digging spade stuck in the ground.

Lights out.

TWO: WHAT BETTER PLACE TO START THAN at a PART in THE LIFE AND TIMES OF LADY FLORENCE PHILLIPS when she's a nobody.

Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Nobody...

Lights up on actress. She stops just at the fence's edges, beat, lifts up a leaning spade, as if the spade is a machine gun so as to fire a success of rapid shots of gun fire into the air. She does so at the fence, and in the air, while bellowing: "Art-rattttatatat Art-rattttatatat Art-rattttatatat!" She puts down the spade.

Autumn. 1883. What better place to start, again, but than in that autumn falling in love...? (*For a moment she looks vulnerable, and in love, and is transforming into Florence Phillips)*

She cautiously approaches the fence as if to transform herself into a caustic relic, "Florence Phillips" who is careful not to get too close to the fence. It might be an electric fence that could do some real harm to a ghost like her – we hear the fence tick and pulse. She calmly speaks through the fence: in a park, night.

"In 1883, in 1883, in 1883, in 1883... I'm 20. In 1883, in the autumn of 1883, I fall in love, for the first time, fall in love with my future, husband. Mining Magnate-Sir Lionel Phillips - Li Phi. Li-Phi. *(The fence pulses)*

(Beat)

Cold hands-things to warm, from mines of men, machines... Cold hands. Lionel, I love him desperately, desperately, give him three children, many homes, Johannesburg, Noord St, Hohenheim, Arcadia, Wood Bush in the North, Vergelegen in the Cape, London, Beaconsfield, Grosvenor Square, Tylney Hall.

(*Beat*)

In 1883 we meet, a picnic on the Modder river. Li tells me how much he dislikes being called names. (*in Lionel's voice)* 'Name calling makes one look weak' (*In her own voice but to him*) Just like him to act like the man he was to become. "But I like giving people nicknames, much prefer LAL to Li but you can call me Dolly Pie, should we get married?" Just like me to ask him, I was direct, always to the point, Lionel says "yes" .... English, continental, a Jew.... Engaged. Less than a year later, Reverend Tobias marries us at the All Saints in Beaconsfield.

(*Beat*)

“Churches are the best kind of synagogues in England”.

(*Beat*)

I’m alone. Alone. Lost in England, all alone. I can’t’ say I like being alone.... Enceinte...

(Music starts to rise – a ball)

Lionel Phillips, his ladyship, ‘my ladyship’, Lionel always says. (*Beat and then dancing around the fence with spade in the air as if at twenty and at a ball)* I’m nobody. Nobody. Here look at my hands. *(Lifts up her hands, waving them into the sky)* I’ve strong pretty hands. Enceinte. *(Music fades)* A wall within a wall, holding waves of affection - suddenly Lionel gets up-off to work, gone for a long time, gets up, gone. Li–Phi– Li. Fick’s! Gone. Just a year after our marriage, Lionel leaves for work onto the fields of Kromdraai... Gold’s shimmering on the surface like our future, grenadine dusty, cyanide...

(*Beat*)

Did I fall in love with other men, after we got married? Love? No, not love, maybe, merely infatuations, to pass away the time until I saw my Lionel again. *(Beat)* But there’s Hugh. Sir Hugh Lane. (*In Hugh’s high pitched voice*) ‘You came to see me Lady Phillips?’ (*She responds*) Fancy a drink, Hugh, my Pioneer? (*Beat*) I’ve such stories to tell. (*Beat*) Letters to write... Gallery to make.... Hugh-No, don’t go yet. Don’t go!

(sadly – the sounds of Joburg inner-city at night are distant)

Nobody comes here anymore. (*Looks out beyond the fence)* Gallery of Nobodies.

(Beat)

We built a gallery for nobodies. A pact! A series of letters. Burnt. *(Lifts up her hands as if they are now covered in ash to smell at them deeply as if they were her only things covered in the best perfumes. Laughing clutches at her chest, then takes out an imaginary photograph from an inside pocket, that she studies with some amusement:)* My daughter burnt them all. My love letters to Hugh. See-here---this photograph, there's my daughter, Kitsy and that's me! Laughing on that boat on the Nile, a photograph of Florence Phillip's, with her daughter, Edith... My Kitts. My Edith Minnie*. (Suddenly she puts the photograph to her nose. Smells it deeply. Breathes out, sadly "Burnt!" Carefully refolds it away then reopens it again as a letter that she reads)* Carterham Sanatorium. 29th May 1912*.* Dear Mr. Ross, Mr. Michaelis is in London and we are trying to make an appointment for you to meet him tomorrow afternoon at 25 Manchester Square at 5 o'clock. Mr. Michaelis speaks of having spent £2,200 of the money he promised, so at any rate, he is still willing to spend nearly £3,000. He tells me he will do what you think best about the Havard Thomas statue. I am all inclined to spend money on Sculpture, and casts, but that is not so pressing, and if on pictures, certainly not of the English school. We have nothing of Monet nor Renoir. Perhaps you might have a little talk with Sir Hugh before you see Mr. Michaelis. Mr. Michaelis likes the idea of not distributing the money too much. If Sir Hugh is not available perhaps you could talk to Mr. J.M Solomon? Sincerely yours Florence Phillips. Sincerely yours, Florence Phillips. Sincerely, your Florence Phillips. The Johannesburg Art Gallery! My gallery! Mine! Mine…Mine… Mine! *(She looks like she is about to have a headache brings her hands to her face again, calmly smells the ash in her hands, as if to relieve some of her pain)*

(The Joburg city sounds become more prominent) To affect marginality is to be strategic. Know that, as I know other things. Art is to affect marginality, Art is a state of grace. Art is being in a state of hope. Hugh Lane taught Me-Art is about the Aura---with Stillness, Mimicry, Repetition,

Inconsistencies, Catastrophes, Surprises, Chaos, Transitions to Desires to Substitutions to Reversals in Time and Space *(*we had a pact, to make the finest Art Gallery in the World. My dream gallery! And I would do anything, anything, to get the gallery built. What did Hugh ever mean? I had uninhibited outbursts? I've become kinder because I became richer. I'm kinder because I fear being hated. Imagine being hated? An awful thing–when one who has founded houses, museums, botanical gardens and galleries on two continents---is hated. I built beautiful houses, built a treasure house of art, sponsor books, homes for the orphans and the aged, I–introduced Jerseys Cows to the Cape and Culture to Johannesburg. I carry hundreds of names in my handbag. Names, names, names... For my gallery. Meetings with Princes and Kings and Abe Bailey, General Herzog, Barney 'Brute' Barnato, Sammy Marks, Edwin Lutyens, Cecil John Rhodes, Max Michaelis, August Rodin, Baron Rothschild, General Louis Botha, Jan Smuts, The Prince of Wales, the Churchill's even Mark Twain. Names? Letters? Dates. Things to do...To do them properly, you must do them right.

(With some helpless urgency) Art is a state of grace. Art is a state of hope. Art is a state of siege. Things' been stolen! When there's a man like Hugh Lane to be had, one should use him He'll build your gallery! Telegraph Hugh Lane immediately! (*Flirtingly*) He arrives from London, that very afternoon, and is enchanting, with large dark eyes like liquid, remaining tranquil, no matter what trouble. He fears nothing. Not even me. I say: "I know nothing of Modern Art. Advise me?" (*Speaks in a male high pitch voice*:) "How about a tour of London tomorrow?" (*Rapidly, excitedly)* Havard Thomas statues everywhere, it now seems mine was overpriced. Visit Hugh Lane often at his home in Chelsea. Hugh looks like a fiery Irish Prince, standing confident on a stepladder held up by his butler, Hugh examines a picture with such deep intensity, a habit he never lost, his long limbs stretch on-forever, forever!

(Beat – she stands. The Joburg city sounds become more prominent and she cowers somehow to the engulfation of noise)

If I stay at this fence… Everything will go away. Hugh will reappear. We will go into our gallery and look at our pictures. Our footprints will be everywhere. Everything else will go away. Not here, not here, not here, nobody.

Suddenly stops, puts her hand to her mouth, as if to silence herself, out of which she imagines things to fall from her mouth. She gasps: "Forgive me."

Lights out.

THREE: Love letter to a city, JOHANNESBURG, to men, about Headaches and a dead DOG.

Dusky lights up on the actress who as Florence is now praying at the fence. Night. She studies the night sky with some intensity, counting under her breath. Distant Joburg sounds.

Dates, numbers, time and words are messy things. 1891. 1892. Guns. Diamonds. Headaches. (*Feeling pain*) People don't understand... "I am famous in Johannesburg, for my tantrums and my headaches. (*A sense of busyness*) Things to do: (*Gets up as if to do something. Senses there is now nothing to do, so she collapses back in prayer at fence: lonely)* Dear dear Johannesburg. To live in a place like Johannesburg is to understand how something so favored by nature could gradually through man's blind perseverance become one of the most loathsome spots on earth. (*Pain*) But beguiling Johannesburg in surprising ways.

Headaches throbbing. Stiff sore pain. Dear life, alone, forgive me, I marry Lionel who stays behind in Johannesburg, alone. I stay in England, at his family house in Westbourne Park Villas, London, alone. now Lady Phillips

by his sisters, his mother, alone. My dear mother in law secretly curses me in Yiddish, alone. His family thought I was fascinating, alone. I thought they were heathens, alone. Dear time twisting, time, turning, changing. Changing me.

(A flickering light across the fence catches her attention.) Johannesburg, you glittering gold prize, your city in distress. Once the Queen of Johannesburg!

(She gets up to enact the following vision.) This vision. A vision of gold. I'm waiting for train to Johannesburg, overlooking the sea of False Bay, on the stoop. I feel thoroughly melancholy when I happen to look up-and there----in the sky (there'd been a small storm) – up there–is this blaze of gold! – (*She points up to the night sky, now filled with cloud and stars*) An omen of good luck for us all! To be in Johannesburg! Our first real home. Eight hundred miles from Muizenberg to Johannesburg, six thousand miles to London. Spring!

We arrive in the middle of a severe drought. Water and food's scarce. There no roads. Dust storms. Grit storms. Puerperal fever, pneumonia, typhoid, diphtheria, smallpox. Move to Noord St, Johannesburg. A home in Johannesburg. A cottage. I'm twenty six? Harold's three. Frank's just one. I'm pregnant with Edith.. Edie. My Kitsy.

Oh Johannesburg, dear Johannesburg wrapped in promise with decay. My Edith Minnie's born in Noord Street. Li loves her, calls her "Kitsy,"

Things burnt. Ash.

Then it rains heavily. Rain rain rain, dear rain, go away rain. There's mud-mud everywhere. The train track from the Cape would cross our house in Noord Street. I can smell cheap wine, sweat,. Can't stay in Noord Street anymore. Too small! Rains in full fury. Everything's mud. Visitors arrive

like the Churchill's, all the Churchill's. Dear Lord Randolph. Dear Lady Randolph. Dear Little Winston...

(Beat – the sound of a dog knawing at her through the fence.)

Clouds continue to gather... Headaches, any movement to one side makes me quite ill, nausea, vomiting, blood in my belly, boiling, blood in groin, in my quim. My dear bloody headaches like a shanty dog/shanty smell of shitty blood/knawing at me! Bugger, bugger, shit, bloody smell. Masked by lavender. (*Pleasantly)* Dear lavender, dear rose, dear musk, dear Chanel Number Five dear dear Shalimar, dearest Givenchy dear all the perfumes of Arabia, sweetly masking my mangy smell, my blood. I've become too ill to stay in Johannesburg.... Pack for Cape Town. Sail to England. Going away, for a long time, by myself, with no particular aim or object in life. Sail for England on the "Dunn-Otter" with my three children: Harold, Frank, Edie, Josephine, my Irish maid who would never have any other name, but Josephine. Long time before I would see Li again.

(Beat)

Dearest Lionel when you join us in London, you tell me of the new site for our new home in Johannesburg. Villa Arcadia in Parktown. (*Quickly and happily*) Dear Arcadia with your rapturing views of woodlands, of veldt, with your forest of wildflowers, of my perfect tub built like an Edwardian spa to ease away my aches and pains.

(Beat)

If I had a wish, it would be to live in the tub of Acadia forever*. (She stops digging for another memory and closes her eyes to make this wish)* No! Another time, another summer.

Dear men, forgive me for I once had your intimacy... I entertain you all in my Arcadia. My illuminati. My men who were drunk-on my dragon's heart,

with all the power to change lives. As a woman! Do you know what that was like? Like I know now-how every era is done.

(*Beat*)

To and fro, Attend the Convent Garden masked ball, stay until four in the morning, collapse with a headache. (*She turns her attention to several fires in the distance, makeshift fires in waste baskets and tin-drums.)*

Dear Johannesburg. (*Starts to gather things that she can throw into the fire.)* Dogged/doggery/dog. Dogged/doggery/dog... (*Senselessly grabbing at her head, her heart then her waist*) Perhaps these pains? My headaches? Started from my heart? The travelling of my heart, keep the headaches going? Seas saws of passages-sausages of time! Here! There! 1893. 1894. To, fro... My body is tilted by Wilhelm Alexander Freund in Strasburg. (*Stretching her body out onto a park bench*) He says his maneuver's successful. I've another operation, another. 1895. I'm 32. First of January. 1896! Jameson crosses the border into the Transvaal Republic. I hear about the raid. Feel a terrible pain start in my neck, it works its way down. A Dazzling Backache! It never goes away. I call it: "The Jameson Pain". (*Enacts this pain and roaring painfully, and terribly.)* Johannesburg-raw, now angry, restless. An open wound that festers, festers. A wound on a shanty dog, mangy, wet, sore wet eyes, blistering, biting. Dogged, doggery. Dear Dog.

(Beat. An altogether mood and tempo, gets up to stand, still and serious)

Johannesburg's never safe. You can't walk out of your home, feeling safe! (*Bitterly*) Dear Dr. Jameson lit that fuse. It makes everyone panic, makes everyone run. Then Lionel's wrongfully arrested, charged with conspiring against Kruger, (*conspiratorially*) charged with helping Jameson. He's sentenced to hang and is interned at the Johannesburg Fort. (*Points out the prison yard in front of her enters into its imaginary)* A horrid, grey

prison yard, filled with groups of men in despair, in humiliation. All too much for me. I'm led towards the condemned cell. He looks at me, then looks away. Disappointment. We only shake hands, silently. (*She laughs freely*) I smuggle him cigars in the brim of my hat. I tie duck or roasted chicken to my back wrapped in linen. It wasn't only me; dear Mrs. Clement smuggles in Bologna sausage to her husband around her waist. Mrs. Owen gets in a goose pate under her frock. I petition 30,000 names to free Lionel from his death sentence! Names, names, names. He is freed in June 1896! We pay a 25 000 pound fine. Kruger banishes him for fifteen years. Banished to London. In exile. I feel such a sad wanderer on the face of the earth. Want to settle down but we join the "Kaffir Circus" in London. (*Beat. Looks uncomfortable)* Horrible name given to us by those who were envious of our sudden meteoric rise in fortune. They saw us on the Riviera... "

(*Beat. Ashamed-Despite herself. Beat. Shift to actress, talks directly to audience.)*

Have told you that I am not interested in doing this/ No. Nothing has changed. There's no other time, except this, time, that is now. Please as before you offered it to Fiona, why don't you approach her again or Jennifer? Please understand (*Irritably*) Don't want to constantly be put in this position. An awkward tide of waiting. Waiting. Always at the fence. (*Emphatically*)

(*The fence sparks and pulses)*

"Headaches. Headaches. Headaches. Dear headaches will you ever stop. I must keep still. I must do things. Doing things kept me from the awful pains. My body, blood always on the boil. Several operations. European doctors cutting deep into my body. Back to front. Headaches don't stop. (*She stretches out her arms and winds up her hands in the air*

as if she is a cut-up body then stops. Motionless. Snapping) I'm horribly impatient and rude. (*Indignant*) Perhaps, I did hang onto my ill health as an excuse. Only suffering teaches one to understand. I often say things that sound worse than I meant. Dear Johannesburg forgive me; you must not expect too much of me! I know nothing about art, only aura. Dear Hugh forgive me, I'm a terrible student. I buy the things that you liked yet you shrink away from me. Such fine hands, twisting with the desire, the longing, the art. It was all about the art! (*Now edges ever so slightly, slowly, cautiously back to the fence, looks through it to her gallery, stares at it with longing. She is still and silent.*) Queen of Johannesburg, once a Queen, smarter than any of the artists could ever be. Collected them all, housed them... Dear Fence forgive me.

(*Beat*)

Forgive me.

And carefully reaches out-to put her hands through the fence but on touching it, she gasps: "Hugh?" There is an explosion of sounds of a bustling city: Alarms, gun-shots, fireworks, sirens, cacophonies of dance music and then silence. She shudders.

Lights out.

FOUR: FANCY-FANCY

Night. Sounds of happy busy-ness in restaurant. The actress back at table in the restaurant is just finishing her meal; prawns, washes the last of them down with an almost-empty glass of wine. She wipes her hands, somewhat delicately clean with napkin. She smiles broadly, assuredly…

Always been a fag-hag. Happily, so-happy to be that insulting-homophobic-sexist-class ridden label, happily so, happily lived with a best gay-boyfriend from university for years. Both of us doing drama.

(*Folds up napkin as if origami then places on top of manuscript*)

Art. Fun, it was, fun, sharing secrets, always telling him-if he was a mess before he left the house, sharing clothes, make-up, building up his confidence, staying up for hours chatting about men… Always, always been deeply part of the gay community. Brought up not to judge. Stuck up, defended, supported my gay friends. The girl on the bus who if she sees an openly gay guy, like CALL ME! Donatella Versace, Madonna, Edina Monsoon, Liza Minnelli, Kelly Khumalo, there's a swell alumni-out there, then-there's me, and you. Boo! Fluid, funny queer you, funny you taking me out for a fancy-fancy dinner just so to persuade me to do your thing. "Florence".

Struggled to find a drama in this story. What is the point of - (*Tapping manuscript*) Lady Florence Phillips. Ultimate Fag-Hag founder of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Alone. Mis-interpreted. Mis-understood. Mis-aligned. Mystery. No-one wants to hear that voice anymore. Not in this time. Not sure I can do your thing. Not relevant anymore. (*wickedly*) Colonialist! Fag-Hag! Really hurts sometimes but I do try to go around an spread non-bad vibes, singing out aloud: "I will survive!" Even though I'm dead too. Boo.

(*Beat*. *She looks down at her mostly empty plate lifts it up to lick it all clean, which she does thoroughly. Puts down the plate. Gets up as if to signal to the waiter in the busy restaurant, to clear her table. No response. She signals again and again-waving a little more agitatedly then stands for a moment looking helpless then sits down)* Looks like the waiter doesn't even know I'm still here. Doesn't notice me. Doesn't see me. Nobody, nobody. I'm a regular you hear but you know that, just as you've become a regular too. (*Smiles. Beat*)

Have you started to lose the smell of things? Can still smell fire, not perfume, nor paint. Fire. Paint always has this particular smell like pleasant tart laced with turpentine. IMAGINE how Hugh Lane smelt, of

golden apples. Lionel Phillips smelt like the veldt where he lost his eye. Florence Phillips smelt of her own blood, of metal, boiling blood. I do wonder what it would be like to play a ghost? Catching time as it passes by? Like ice still melting. Earth breaking.

You came back didn't you? To see a white ghost in a city alive with hope and death. A city where people steal metal to keep warm while others wear rags at night to keep rats from chewing their faces. So much hope. In a city where the handbags are beautiful enough to be stolen filled with a clutter of things. Fancy-fancy handbags encased in the Malls from where only trees, veldt, once stood. Mess of things. Dead. A fence spiked, green, cruel, tall... Years do get stranger, more people everywhere. Buildings, new, now faded. Derelict. Larger rats, more flies, trains, tunnels, malls more metal more mosques. More of everything. Meanings. More people, more electricity! More cameras! More lightning in the sky! More jump jump jump jump jump! What a terrible mess of things we've made of it all. We all want far too much. We don't care at all.

Yesterday I saw a man jump from the fifth floor of a building, clutching his bible, plunging to his death Crowd on the street chanting "jump, jump, jump, jump, jump" (*Beat*) No! Don't...You'll only become a thing! A thing of mixed up words, of mixed up time... *(Beat)* "Jump, jump, jump, jump, jump..." Don't! You'll be remembered jumping, be remembered for nothing. Nothing, nobodies...

(Beat.)

You died at the fence. Before you left for your European "tour" you became obsessed with the changes in the city. So many, so fast yet things were falling apart like in the gallery. You wanted to know why there was a fence, why it surrounded the gallery, a fence that should be taken down. Racists you called them, separating the public from the art, scared of the poor-the desperate stealing what was left of art. You wanted to do an intervention - something like a performance. There you were-with a

skateboard, a hat, a wig and a dress, skating too and from the fence, wanting to get through to the gallery. Performance as intervention. Wasn't very good. "Everyone" came to see the work, but it was invisible. Flat. Unappreciated, dull and forgotten. You died at the fence. Your multi-disciplinary career as an artist was over. To justify your failure you now write this (*gazes back to manuscript*), a historical melodrama. Life and times of Florence Phillips, performed by actress as a ghost, at the gallery fence. Arrived like a pioneer to help me build my things? My career? Out there... (*Sadly. Deliberately, she points out in the distance, to something or someone)* Would do that for this. Deals done. Kings, for queens, of great things…

(Beat)

I'm watching skateboarding now. I watch a group of young men who seem to do nothing all day except skateboard, crashing into all sorts of things with grace. I'm beginning to understand how this time, this time-now and then - might be like a series of skateboard moves. …. (Explains this all while getting up, using her hands to create big swirling gestures of sorts) "To carve". Cutting up time in a long curving connected arc of time, so time cn be regained, as if to get back to what was once lost. "To kick flip!" Jolt time by kicking the skateboard spinning before it lands back on itself as a gift of the now. "To mongo-foot!" Swopping places in time, of the left foot, and of the right foot on the skateboard so time itself is indecisive. "Fakie-Fakie-Fly in the sky!", means to time travel backwards on a piece of wood. Time travel on just four wheel's and a wooden board, just brilliant!

(Beat)

I'm not sure I'm going to do your thing. (*She gets up from the table, suddenly without warning gestures as to push plate, manuscript and everything else off the table, but she does not*)

Looks like rain.

(*Beat*)

Rains all the time now, but no-one knows what to do with all the water so it-all drains away, all away.

(*Beat*)

I'm going to play the thing until the end, play the thing in the rain, going to stand back at the fence, do the thing until the end, in the rain.

Sound of thunder. Lights out

FIVE: ENCEINTE; Will the wall eventually BREAK?

Dressed in full costume as Florence Phillips back at the fence. It's raining.

"1900: Too dreadful. New century. New dawn? A year that brought with it famine and concentration camps. Quite heartbroken about the war even though wanted it to happen. Carnage of friends I once entertained. (*Beat*) London. Lionel addressed the Royal Colonial Institute with his 'The New Outlook in South Africa'. (*As Lionel)* "Time to speak out, not hold your tongue! On Mining. On Government. On Language. English must be sole language of the colony. (*Less serious, as herself*) Forgive me.

1902. War is over. Who won? We did. Sixty-thousand dead. Bugger. Rhodes is dead. Don't want to leave Europe, the continent. There we were--Lionel and I – in Picadilly holding hands, waving, cheering on those who had survived. *(Whispers)* They might cheer indeed. Kitchener's concentration camps. Lionel tells me of that letter from Smuts. Offer for peace. Johannesburg. Glittering gold prize. Your city in distress. You're the Queen of Johannesburg.

1905. Board the "Feldmarchall" with maids, valets, children and

governess, back to South Africa. 42. And not seen my home in almost nine years. Arcadia. Queen of Johannesburg. Take on good causes. Take on Art. Take on a gallery. Take on Hugh Lane whom I loved with a constant attack of the unrequited... *(Stops and looks around as if in the park with its sudden busyness, gallery in the distance. She waits. Nothing. Sits down on a bench appears to have a distaste for her own loneliness*)

Art's the only thing that goes on mattering once it's stopped hurting. Wanted to make my city-beautiful!

(*Beat*.)

Hugh, my beautiful Hugh who had his portrait painted by Mancini in Rome. Had my portrait painted in Rome by Mancini too, could say my pose was quizzical, refined, awash with soft colors, lemon background. Never liked it much. Mancini's work makes me too pink around the edges of my cheeks. Look flustered. Maybe it was the heat in Rome? Headaches? Terrible fidgety man, Mancini, could never keep still, and would say (*As Mancini:)* "Keep still Lady Phillips" (*As herself:)* "Signor Mancini, I'm not moving at all. Not moving at all, If-I'm moving, its because I can hardly breathe! There's no air. Is there any proper ventilation in your atelier! Signore Mancini? There's no air, please, we must do something about it!" *(Flustered and out of breath.)* It must be said. It was said... Will still say it. Nobody speaks the truth, when there is something they must have. (S*ome composure*.) Always smelt the character of people, liked good wine. Smelt Hugh Lane, smell Hugh at the fence. Smelt him when I first met him at Tylney Hall, smelling-like an effortless autumn, like golden apples, so many years later, I'm still waiting, still waiting for him to ask what to make of this now, for I can't go <u>into</u> my art gallery-fence keeps me away.

(*Beat. She blows out breath.*) 1910 Hugh sails for South Africa having been promised curatorship of the Johannesburg Art Gallery "Get your

pictures, together, first, then think of your building". Hugh, fragile, enchanting. Most beautiful face I had ever known. He's a single purpose. He wants to teach me about art. He wants me to sell my blue diamond ring so he could buy paintings for the Gallery. "Hugh, that is not possible." Hugh's only thirty-five, been knighted and happy when he arrives, first time he travels beyond Europe. A celebrity. Difficult, argumentative. Does not conform. Exhibition to arrange. Leave Hugh at Arcadia with my dearest friend, JM Solomon, the architect, who proves to be an intimate friend, for Hugh. (*Beat)* Death does not release us all.

(*Beat)*

I'm hurt by Hugh. He betrays me.

(*Beat)*

Silly me. Trying to seduce him. Hugh wants the very best of modern art, "the work of living men" hodgepodge after hodgepodge of conversations, distance-misunderstandings. He resigns as honorary director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. I want to murder him, so mad - so tell him. (*To Hugh*) "You could've made it work! You are so brilliant." Brilliant, even in your implacable yet enthusiastic resignation!" I've a tongue on me. Hugh sees this, gets afraid, of such things. He has his gallery in Dublin. He wants to leave early. Beg him to stay. Put my hands to his neck. I tell him I love Him; Could kill him. I want to kiss him. He pushes me way. Hugh says how love's a very strange thing, and he loves Ireland. *(As Hugh)* "I want to go back to Dublin. There... Too many diversions here." (*As herself)* Ireland? Ireland? What about here? I try to kiss him. He pushes me away, as if I'm nothing, nobody, nobody, nobody. I love him. I feel ugly. Acute sepsis. Swollen face marked with red patches. He winces away from me, without saying a word.

(Beat and then with some urgency.) Other things to get in the way. Lionel.

Guns and diamonds! An assassin fires at Lionel five times on his way to lunch, he is like a lion lying bleeding from his own kind. Percy Fitzpatrick picks Lionel up, rushes him to hospital. He never left Lionel's side. There's a bullet in his right lung. Bullet in his left thigh. Bullet in his neck. Hardly sleeps, hardly eats... (*Bea*t) Travel to the Eastern Cape. Thick sea air revives his lung. Only a sign of things to come… Johannesburg's a breeding ground for Socialist revolutionaries. Methods they preach are murder, disorder. Only way forward was for me to play giver to the city. (*Spreads her hands out in the air)* Gallery of Art.... but War came. The Great War.... We went back to England. (*Hands to her side, marching slowly*) Back and forth–across the ocean...

(Beat)

Uncertain tides. Back and forth. To, and fro.

(Beat)

May 1915, a German U-Boat sinks the liner, the Lusitania off the coast of Ireland. Hugh's on board. He disappears forever, just sight of his birthplace, Cork. Beauty dies on a sinking ship. Only forty... *(She thinks she can smell him)*

(Beat. A clap of thunder and lightning. She puts her hands out to shield herself from the possibility of more rain)

I've strong hands. Enceinte! Wall within a wall! My broken heart hid in my fortress, within another wall, broken, suddenly gets up goes, gets up, gone. Hugh! Whisper in your ear: "could kill you." I chased you away. You smile, say: (*as Hugh*) "Let's make a pact you. About Art." I've become kinder because of you. Attend to the things of spirit, to the values of quality, of excellence. Stupid of me to think I could've made a difference?

(*Beat*)

My Hugh Lane. Dead. JM Solomon, my dear friend, one morning shoots himself in his university office - could not live without Hugh. Lionel. Dead. Alone.

Dear Lionel, my Lord of Everything two and fro forgive me, here and there!

(Beat)

To do anything first is only wrong in the eyes of those who never lead". Morning of the...

She stops, confused about the date, appears alone and afraid, so she stops...

When Lionel died, I cause the great bronze bell outside our library to toll day, all night. Flowers fill the room. Smuts says how glad they still have me at least.

Dear Kimberley, I dream of you, Kimberley.

Dear Johannesburg, my coffin. Life is a mess of things, unless you let everything go. Nobody, nobody, parvenu Florence Phillips, the Victorian Africander. Queen of Johannesburg. Trapped in this poring of time. (*She beats at her chest several times*) A lesson in life is to never accumulate too many things, for you never know where the wind will blow you... Hugh! Who's there? (*With some dementia*)

Lights out.

SIX: How her confessions are merely more of history.

Actress as Florence Phillips, as if with an imaginary group of people. She clears her throat as if speaking at a public meeting:

"We once thought that this art gallery designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens would never be completed owing to the delays of Town Councils, War, and misspent funds. Some of us felt, we would never see its completion during our life-time! But it has dawned on the public of Johannesburg, how the municipal blunders have deprived sections of the people of the amenities of life. Talented youth of the place have been done out of its due in art training. The Gallery can provide this– I want to point this out to all members of the Women's Municipal Association of Johannesburg and to all who were so active in developing my case, for the Johannesburg Art Gallery, a case we made - not in anger, but made in joy, once sorrow. It's now up to you councilors who are active in developing this town. So – Please rise to this occasion!

I now open our gallery! Let it not lie forgotten. Ladies and Gentlemen. Let us open the Johannesburg Art Gallery!"

(Florence Phillips, moves an inch forward and raises her hands as if she is cutting a ribbon, or opening a fence. But she can't reach her gallery. Defeated. She waits. Nothing.)

Things have been stolen. Lost lives. Stolen. 'Saint Thomas' by El Greco. Gone 'Suitcase' by Kendall Geers. Stolen from out the gallery. 'Talion' by Gavin Young. Gone. General Hoche' by Jules Dalou. Lost. 'Mourning Woman' by Sydney Kumalo, Stolen 'Peter Pan' by Romano Romanelli. 'King of the Universe' by Ernest Ullman. Gone. Stolen. Lost. Stolen. My God!!!

Time is only about now. Everything else…Stolen.

(*Beat.)*

Dear Fence you surround my gallery like webbed metal claws. Seven meter spiked metal, municipal fence separates us all...

(*Beat.)*

Does it really matter now that I'm now on the other side of things? The point of this life, is that I still exist, brought back to life by this fence.

Dear, Dear Artists, forgive me for not giving you enough money.

Dear Lionel, this-my confession. I married you, I loved you. But I betrayed you. I felt always alone, could never find you. To and Fro. To– and–Fro. Here and there. Alone. Dates, numbers...

Dear gallery... How would I know you would take so much of my life? Of course I knew, I wanted you too.

(Sits where the Actress sat before. The light catches her eye – she holds the crystal glass up to catch a ray of sunlight against it.)

Let me start in Autumn, my favorite season, somewhere else...

Forgive me.

She closes her eyes as if to remember.

Lights out.

17/04/19

Interview transcript: Myer Taub

Wits School of Arts, Bertha Street, Johannesburg

MM: Matthew McClure

MT: Myer Taub

MT: In response to the work, people were asking can they read the play now. In other theatre spaces around the world, they actually publish the play as part of the programme. So, when you go to the play, you get the play text. So when I spoke to Greg, about people were requesting it, I said what do we do, it was not published yet, and both the Market and Greg cautioned, and said wait until it does get published. I know that Leila Henriques has been nominated for a Naledi (Theatre Award) for Best Actress; the Naledi award is at the end of the month. And the Fugard are interested in taking the play there, in Cape Town. But we are just waiting for the Creative Award …

So, I always think there is a caution about sending it out before it is actually published.

MM: I am interested in it as an intangible thing, as opposed to something tangible, as in a postcard.

MT: I think that there are some other things here, they actually publicised the play as part of the programme. When I spoke to Greg, people were requesting this, but it is not published yet. Wait until it gets published, the point is that there is no incentive … by Wits.

MM: When do you hear about the creative award?

MT: I don't know when the Creative Award will be made, but the Naledi is at the end of the months.

MM: maybe I can wait as I am seeing it through the lens of an intangible trace.

MT: Once you start to read the text you wonder why you have made those choices? The tension within the world of the interpretation and translation of the work, and this points to its context of where the play began. I got a kind of multi thing, finished my doctorate in Cape Town, and got a residency in the Bag Factory as a returning Joburg artist, and in that time …

MM: When was this?

MT: 2010, and in this time, I started speaking to FADA to doing a post doc at FADA, a new Research Centre for Visual Art and Design at FACA, and we started discussing themes around marginality, this idea, who are the marginal, and how marginalised communities like the Jews were marginalised, or the queer as marginalised. I was very interested in these concepts, and how marginalised groups were marginalised, then I presented a paper on notions of the archive, called …. Um … for a paper presented around marginality, and what happened is that two people had written an archive of Jewish theatre practitioners in South Africa. I noted that I was absent from this archive – and I noticed that Steven Cohen and William Kentridge were absent from this 'archive'. I was curious why these particularly Jewish theatre makers or artists were absent from an archive that was talking about …. Yet, this archive has other non-significant elements in the archive, like those who had done school repertory work was in this archive. Important people had been taken out of the archive. So, I was curious about who establishes archives, official archives and so on, and I wrote a paper about this. So, who is left out

of the archives? There is a reason why people are left out of archives. Kentridge is an artist and theatre maker. I interviewed Kentridge and Cohen, and I wrote about this on notions around the archive, and saying to the editors of the anthology, saying that we need to talk about this, and on the strength of this, I got the post doc. They said that I need to continue with the research on marginality. During this time I started reading the Hannah Arend's essay on the Jew as a pariah, which was a particular type of archive, post 1944, when she was exiled to America. She wrote this argument that said one needs to sublimate stereotypes, in order to humanise them, as a strategy, and you play out the stereotypes and I was very interested in this. These stereotypes are the Suspect, the dreamer, the Fool and the Man of Goodwill. Thought how could I play these out, and I developed four characters to play this out in Johannesburg. Some of the characters have different trajectories. There is a reason why people are left out of archives. One character was based on Soho Eksteen (William Kentridge). Some are still on-going. One called Greenberg, was an art thief and got trapped in a cone, he wore a cone on this head, and I wanted to explore the idea of someone being trapped in and around the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Anthea (Moys) did a

time arrow, did a series of interventions, and approached artists to intervene in the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

MM: Was this part of the Joubert Park Public Art Project, or after?

MT: This came out of a UJ initiative. Did you speak to Alex Opper? He was at the curator's festival. His PhD is on closures, and did an interesting work, he took all the dust from the Johannesburg Art gallery (JAG) and re-displayed it in the park, made a display of this, with signage, wrote the letters 'fence' out of this dust. It was a very nice, interesting kind of work.

MT: In my work, my character with the cone on his head was trying to get through the fence. In the development of that performance … I have to back track: At UCT, I picked up Jillian Carman's book while doing my PhD. I thought this could make a good play. My writing of theatre was always historically based. There were series of things that were happening, that informed my work, what happened later, a series of investigations. Enclosures happened. I did a live performance, I collected the letters from the Robbie Ross archive, that had been written to Robbie Ross, and asked an actress, Patricia Voyer to read them in the library,

while I was outside trying to get in as Greenberg, with a cone on my head, got in through the gate at some point, and found the ghost of Florence Philips, and found the …, and I had a costume on made from mine dust, and was leaking cyanide, and this was a crazy performance, a public performance, very well advertised so we had about 50 – 60 people there.

MT: This was my first re-entry into the public space as an artist or performer in Johannesburg, I had only worked in Cape Town, so this was quite an important moment for reconsidering what I was doing in Johannesburg. In Cape Town, I was knows as a playwright, and here in JHB, I became known as a performance artist. And then the idea of Florence Phillips as a ghost started to just emerge, and this voice started to come through, and realised that this was what the play was about, that Florence Phillips was this ghost in the Johannesburg Art Gallery. I wrote three drafts, and got funding from the National Arts Council to do a development of the work through POPArt. I spoke to POPArt theatre company about mentoring this work, and did a seven day workshop with Jennifer Steyn as director, Patricia as actress, myself as writer, trying and understand

the female voice as I didn't want to sound as if I was coming through the male lens, and we got to a point where the play had been written, and the POPArt had been invited to Grahamstown to do a performance. I couldn't go, I was invited to India to work, so this all clashed. They tried to do a live Skype feed for me from, and this didn't work. And the audience was an audience of late middle-aged white women, and I got criticised that I was trying to destroy Florence Phillips and I was an iconoclast,

MM: And was this was the first time the work appeared in the public?

MT: This was in 2014. I had hoped that it would get an audience and then produce the play from this.

MT: Colleagues said to me that we don't know who your audience is. We can write all this historical stuff, or what? They said that I didn't know who my audience is. And this stuck me, who was a writing the play for? Was I writing the play for the white 'tannies' and affirming their heritage, or breaking their lineage? But then I realised that the play was about closure, it was a protest play, and a protest about fences, and about the apartheid trope that exists in Johannesburg.

MM: It's fascinating that you are asking yourself about the imagined audience of the play. The projected, imagined audience of the play, these are the questions that the gallery faces on a daily basis.

MT: Trying to get Antoinette to be an ally to the work, but she got very offended about… and we tried to put the play on at JAG, and got Anthea Buys interested, and she was supportive, but then she realised that the interface between gallery and public was being criticised, that there was an attack on her curation of JAG. When she heard about the reading in Grahamstown, Antoinette emailed POPArt and it came out that Antoinette was very upset about this as a direct attack on her curatorship, saying that POPArt was attacking her. But we weren't really attacking her, we were just demonstrating about notion of that 'fucking fence'. But POPArt then lost momentum, and nothing much happened.

Patricia lost interest, and I took her out for lunch, trying to persuade her to stick with the play, but at that point, James Ngcobo got interested in the play, so I put this to Patricia, but she told me she was not was interested in doing the play anymore. But I realised that the conversation at lunch was really the play … even if Patricia was not going to do the

play, I had found my play. The success of theatre as a form was about meta-drama, a play within a play, and then if you have this, it means that there is form. The play was flat until that point. Patricia was refusing to play the play, because it was shit, and this was what the play was about, a diva refusing to do the play. The success of theatre is that once you start creating the dimension of a play within a play, then the play has form. So, then with Patricia's narrative that she was refusing the work, saying that play was 'shit', and then this was important to the play, and that this was actually the play. I went home and over two days, I put it all together. Sent it to James and he loved it. We finally had a play, so let's get going is what James said. So, it was a kind of series of investigations and altercations, and took eight years to get into a form, and then James suggested Greg to direct it: Greg and I were colleagues, we had never worked before. I had never worked in commercial theatre. So, now we are working on that thing, I am working with a commercial director.

Often I work with directors I tried to keep them away from me. I keep away from this type of thing, and so this was a very interesting process. He was very understanding of the

kind of role of this type of work, and he said that he would show things in his world, and said that I should concentrate on showing the type of world that I am in, the spiralling chaos that is my world and text. We were deliberating on the actress, and asked Leila to do a reading for us. We were going to do auditions at the market, and asked Leila to do a reading for us. We didn't continue with the auditions. She did the reading, and we secured her, decided right then. So, we had the director, backing from the producers … From then on, it all happened very quickly. The difficulty for me was that, although it was an amazing moment, for me, as a reflection on an eight year project, we entered into the turmoil of the Market Theatre at that time, and this was problematic. We had got into that space, yet were walking on eggshells in this space in the Market Theatre. This was a difficult time for the Theatre, a split in the energy of the theatre itself. You might upset different persons involved in the production, from PR to wardrobe. It was an interesting space to be in, not that it serviced the interests of the play, really, although we had a lot of support for the play. James is incredibly supporting, this was his baby. The kind of attention the play might have got would have been different if the Market Theatre space had been … helpful.

MM: Interesting how these creative spaces like JAG and the Market Theatre, end up being these divisive spaces, quite closed down in a certain way. By bureaucracy and egos and motivations.

MT: Disciplinary hearings were happening. It feels like the theatre turned into some kind of dramatic … and this was all in the press, not a secret.

MM: I don't know anything about this.

MT: These things have been written about a lot, the public and individuals continue to talk about these issues, these issues are still prevalent.

MT: The play itself was a very interesting moment for me, very important and I felt very justified and committed to a process, and sticking by it, even though no-one was really engaging with the story and themes. The types of themes you are proposing are very important in the post-colonial space, in terms of the colonial legacy, closures, separation. The play was an important moment for me, I felt that my commitment had paid off, I felt that it would never happen. The themes I was raising were very important, and

important to focus on separation, whiteness, the colonial legacy.

MT: The museum doesn't seem to be functional. I haven't been to JAG, and did some work for about three years on people living in the Drill Hall, in relation to JAG, but not with JAG. It used to upset me, and I was not sure of the route to work with JAG, and it became a metaphysical commitment to go into that space … but I was very uncertain about this. We had been talking from this proposal, one of the proposals is that there is an anthology of essays on enclosures, and Greg[41] has been pushing for this … haven't had time to consider this idea, but when I prepared this document in January, and it was ready to go to the publishers. When I got your proposal I could see that people are still writing about this issue, there is enough conversation about the post-colonial. And I had read the Green Fence essay, and it is a very interesting essay, a good conversation about these notions of separation. In that time when *Florence* was being … it was happening in the Market, I wanted to write another play while *Florence* was happening. So I knew that when the play was happening at

[41] Greg Homann, director of *Florence* at the Market Theatre.

the Market, I would be writing my new work. I felt that the play itself had a function to engender other projects.

MM: Those triggers that happen along the line, so I would be very interested to seeing how this new works play out along the line.

MT: I wrote an essay for *Transnumber 1*; an open online journal (Austrian). I wrote a proposal for *Florence* reforming a proposal of performance. The essay goes on about the characters that I used as mechanisms of investigation. I still think like that as a playwright, people ask me what is my form of writing for my play, and I find that it is semi-autobiographical work, my own thinking, but my two more recent works since *Florence* don't take this formula at all.

[Professor Sarah Roberts enters, is introduced].

MM: Was going to suggest that the Naledi award, have you thought of taking this to Khwezi Gule as an intervention, as he is also working with these kinds of interventions.

MT: Greg and Leila Henriques did suggest that we could do something as an intervention, but it feels that the play sits with the negotiation space, and I would be happier it if goes to the Fugard and London, and generates a conversation

and income, rather than it continues as an intervention. My sense is also that I keep thinking that we are going back on the same conversation, so what is the conversation (JAG). The JAG museum/gallery is not speaking to its public, and this is also a think about Johannesburg. Do we need to do JAG Sandton … perhaps as an Investec project, a glass project, etc.

MM: The play functions as an interrogation regardless of the space. It is very literal

MT: Yes, and that is the point. The play is literal, we are intervening, it is a protest play about how we manage our spaces, our heritage moments and sites, we know they are contested and problematic. We go back into the space of Fordism and Fees Must Fall. The questions is what is the point of having Cecil John Rhodes a basement? We should have an annual "Shitting on Cecil" festival, and allow people to vent their frustration on the statue, rather than hiding the statue away. The problem is that no-one in JAG wants to go across the road to talk with the Hillbrow residents, the indigent, the drug addicts, the prostitutes, and say "this is your gallery". A challenge of how to engage with a Picasso on the wall, and dire poverty two blocks

down the road? But of course, the landscape has changed, and there is a deep colonial spatial relationship and that is what it is. But the point is that JAG is not functioning at everyday level as it should.

The issue here is about closures of an institution. If you ask students to go to JAG, students at Market theatre do not want to go to JAG, they will not walk to the Market Theatre. Too difficult to get to, traffic, busses to slow, the city is not safe. These institutions are not creating safe spaces. And this is not a race issue. So, JAG should be filtering out onto the street as a public institution. Most academics or people in management at this stage don't engage with the 'turnstile', they are not engaging with the spaces. What does this turnstile do to the body, the separation? The fence does the same thing. There is another way through it, perhaps it is kind of taking the art into the public spaces, finding interactivity, reading the works differently, making JAG more of an interactive performance space, those things should be happening.

MT: Last time I went to JAG they had a Moroccan event, huge Moroccan tent, seemed odd and disconnected, and it feels very inauthentic. I can also think, wow, I've written

this play, there is longevity in the academic thought, but at the end of the day … where Florence says, forgive me for I can't really make a difference in the world. In the world of the play, and it is ambiguous, the actual actress is a ghost, she is dead because she chose not to activate. This is what I think upset Patricia, it's not that I turned the lunch into a play, but that I criticised her that she was not brave enough to act differently, and how do white people particularly in Johannesburg act in these enclosed spaces. Your trope is a dead trope because you are not brave enough to activate … and this is all about whiteness and privilege, and how do white people operate in silos, in enclosed spaces …

MM: Yes, and whites are also becoming ghosts, dead and shut down, as they are enclosing themselves more and more. You surround yourself with so many turnstiles, barriers, and walls. Then the spaces outside become shut down and dead – although not to everyone.

MT: The majority of people who are engaging at pedestrian level, they don't see things this way, so how are they engaging with thing. I don't want to live in a city where I have to drive. I felt that we should stop driving, but in Joburg you have to drive, but if you choose not to drive, how

do you see the disconnect. In driving, people are driving, they are disconnected. They go from their cluster home and they enter another space in the car, but are not connected with the people in the environment, and this is what frightens me. This all frightens me, this disconnect.

MT: Today I took an Uber in, but I really want to be able to walk. When I was teaching in Pretoria, I was inspired by the idea of walking from Johannesburg to Pretoria, I don't want to rely on cars. Now I mostly use Gautrain and Gaubuses to get to work, and walk from Park Station to work. And if I get up early to get to work, I find this is very meditative philosophy, the getting to work, thinking about my students, rather than this fucked up thing of being in a spiral of disconnection, which is very frightening. There is an epidemic of disconnection. The disconnection is much bigger than just about the museum and art galleries that are cut off, not just about race, the disconnect is in everything. We have always been separated, by race, but now other things separate us. We separate ourselves by very many things, like race. Is there anything else that I can pull out from this framing document.

MM: Was this the submission for the award?

MT: When I submitted this document, I realised that I was submitting a play, and not a critique on Greg's work. But I realised that I had written a play in 2013 called *Christine's Room*, and this was published and was a play about a reworking of the A *Doll's House*. During my PhD I did three years of field research with a group of women who were HIV positive, and one of the exercises was to work with a Western text, and I worked with *A Doll's House* and explored this thing about *Christine* and HIV and not recognising the body, and found a very interesting way to write text, and I wrote the play as text, and this text got published. And in this case, the play is research, and the play comes from research. So how do you persuade a commercial director to produce academic research as a proposition. Commercial theatre frowns on academic theatre. So the play text can be researched, but how to turn it into a commercial production? How to synthesise research into a commercial work? Research as a play? The industrial theatre will frown on the academic thing we were are seen to be messing around with issues, and not facing up to the commercial production elements of producing a play. So, *Florence* had become a springboard for further works.

MM: How can I reference the play text in my study? There is a whole system of permissions that I am dealing with for my masters.

MT: I can send you the play text. We do need to find a way to reference these texts. There is just so much stuff that I need to write about. Don't know when to tackle this all.

MM: There is something very compelling about projects that sit in that space and have tendrils that sometimes connect to other things, or sometimes they don't. And sometimes those connections are very interesting in themselves.

MT: The play happened as a series of interactions. That lunch with Patricia was chance, but was so important, and other events where I bumped into people and they asked for drafts, so these are the connections. The play is very much about Johannesburg and is a love story about Johannesburg.

MM: And it deals with the tactility of the city and that intimate connection. The play is about disconnect, yet is very intimate, that very visceral, the visceral fence.

MT: The choice of using the fence idea, that was Richard Forbes, the designer. James Ngcobo as the producer wanted

an artist, to be the designer, and we resisted at first. But Richard said we must have an artist. Then, I walked in on a rehearsal and a workshop with Greg, and during the rehearsals and the workshop, I was overwhelmed by… I was overwhelmed by the fence. I had just seen *Florence*. The fence in our production was originally much bigger, and cut into the lady's face, so in our previews, we kept trimming the fence. We have to cut more and more of the fence away, lowering the fence. There was a real disconnect! Greg kept resisting cutting the fence. The night before the opening, we really had to cut more of the fence, the audience can't see over, so we did. Asked Steven Sack, and he said we have to cut the fence. So we cut it, even though this play is about not seeing. Greg drew this connection to Barney Simon's production …. a South American play, that whole play happened in a veil, a play about interrogation, a Chilean play, and the point is that the audience watched the play through tulle. Barney Simon wanted us to be peering into a world and not really seeing all of it. Fortunately, Greg didn't get his way entirely. The fence was like a machine, moving in its own form.

MM: Just as an object, the fence was very compelling.

MT: I loved the fence, I loved the way it worked, and whished there was more acknowledgement of how it worked. It was also about timing… Also, we were surprised at the response from people. People were asking, why is the Market doing this, doing a play about a historical white woman figure at a time like this? What is the reasoning?

MM: No such thing as the post-colonial period, this is still part of our current conversation, we are still feeling the effects of this every day, still living this, with the effects of that system, in a very tangible way.

MT: The postcolonial recognises the colonial. A fundamental question arises about what do we do about our quirks? When I was at UCT, and the spray painting starting on Rhodes statue, all the "fuck you all, fuck your dream empire" stuff. So, I thought that through performance, how we dismantle the system, without actualising vandalising things. Let's vent , lets vandalise through performance. This was a very strong argument of mine. There was a sense of irony that the dismantling the statue really changed the paradigm throughout South Africa, in institutions across South Africa.

MM: What was the response to your position, though?

MT: I brought this up … This was in the tail end of my PhD, I was hoping that I would be working with making theatre in the heritage sector, but making plays that were subversive. I so I brought it up twice. What happened is that I created a work, a treasure hunt, on the UCT Heritage Site in response to the defacing of the Rhodes. I got artists to engage with each heritage statues on the UCT heritage walk that was established the year before. Do performances at each moment. I commissioned an artist … I had shown him the photographs I had taken of the Fuck Your Dream Empire slogans. He contracted a group of homeless *appies* to live at the statue for several days. This was very controversial. He had a methylated spirits picnic, with meths and bread at noon each day. This was his response to the statue. The idea was that these are the descendants of Rhodes, this is the legacy of Rhodes. This made a lot of people angry. But as a curator, I knew that this was the choice that the artist had made. And I used this example in a public form, how are we going to dismantle these public statues. We still wondered how we are going to dismantle these problematic statues. I went to Manchester, a big conference in Manchester, and they didn't understand what we were on about. I kept saying is that all we are asking is

that we want to dismantle the statues through performance, but they didn't seem to get it.

MT: Benjamin uses the argument that heritage is a catastrophe. So, I was in this space, why are we immortalising, why are we re-enshrining … if it is a catastrophe, and yeah, I got a lot of resistance. Then Chumani Maxwele throws shit at the statue, and this changed things. I interviewed him. I was so taken by this moment. I flew to Cape Town to interview him. I thought this was very profound, to use shit to transform the colonial … value of the statue. The shit had become powerful, the statue had become shit. It was so profound, the prophecy came true, and the statue had been dismantled. It all talks to Lady Florence Phillips. People are afraid and don't know how to engage. Lady Phillips was white, she obviously was racist, her husband made a lot of money on mining, and a series of things, and so the play does not honour her: we are having a conversation. This conversation is important: we are talking back to a ghost. So we need to talk back to the 'ghosts' about these issues.

MM: Thank you. This was very fruitful. How to reference the play?

MT: Reference the play as a kind of … acknowledge it as a kind of …

End

08/09/18

Transcript: Public Lecture, Museology and the accountability of a museum to its public

Auto and General Theatre, Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton

KG: Khwezi Gule

GCH: Gus Casely-Hayford

MM: Molemo Moiloa (moderator)

KG: ...called, quote un-quote, a renewal of the Johannesburg art gallery (sic).

The main reason being that in 1910, which is when the first collection was established, Johannesburg was about twenty years old. The city of Johannesburg was about twenty years old. And if you... the image I always have in my mind is some frontier town in America in the Wild West and the Gold Rush and all of that. This kind of wilderness and debauchery and they needed some kind of culture. So they built this institution. Now actually we are in a situation where we aren't exactly in the Wild West, but the city has changed quite drastically in a way that some of the people

who had always felt attached to the JAG and some of them still do, somehow see the area that the Johannesburg Art Gallery is in as the Wild South (Laughter). And it's filled with people they don't recognise. And sounds have changed so much that there is a different kind of inclination. So it requires us to start thinking differently about how we constitute our quote on quote audience. And I'll tell you why I say quote on quote audience. Because the idea of audience for me is leading us down the wrong path. But anyway I'll explain that to you later. So we are at a kind of process of change. Both the building itself, but also what happens inside the building and outside the building is in the process of flux, and I think that the greatest challenge and greatest opportunity that we face is being able to ride the wave of that change.

GCH: That's fascinating. It's interesting your museum beginning in 1910, in a period of incredible change globally, as well as in terms of what was happening locally and domestically. Our museum is established, the National Museum of African Art, in 1964 and it is also a period of incredible change and the expectations of that moment were absolutely loaded into the initial set of aims and objectives

for the museum, which sits in front of Washington within the consortium of Smithsonian museums. But you can imagine 1964. We're talking about Vietnam. We are talking about a period of decolonisation. The Human Rights Act actually happens. That Roe vs. Wade [case]. So it's lots of critical changes which are ambiently happening which are all about empowering constituents who have felt they were sitting on margins. And our institution which was established, really more than anything through the will of a single individual who sought, through African art, to make some of the sorts of changes he felt were long overdue.

What Warren Robbins, our founder, felt was that in African art he could find a way of establishing links between communities that seemed to sit on the very edge of what, particularly the Washington DC based museums were interested in. These were African American communities that he felt that African art might be a way of inspiring social cohesion and more broadly, bringing about within the wider population a greater understanding of Africa. That sense of art being potentially transformative is one of the things which has underpinned our museum's development over subsequent decades , and I have come into this role,

and for me one of the most fascinating things is to look at the national institution with an international remit and think about how, with a staff of 35, with a massive responsibility to deliver in terms of we are just a museum with a collection, we also house an archive and one of the finest African art's libraries in the world. We have wonderful conservation labs. We do all of our exhibition preparation on site. We have a very complex operation and it's how we, with very limited resource, make that institution turn from something which was, in its first instantiation, an institution derived around delivering to audiences that were domestic. And the beautiful thing is we can continue to fulfil that original drive and objective of thinking about audiences as communities because now we have digital tools with which we can establish communities. We can begin, and we can continue conversations across the globe because the Africa diaspora is something which links more than just communities. I mean, fundamental changes in development in culture if one thinks of some of the most dynamic areas of culture. Where it be music, fashion, whether it be literature, but they are underpinned by innovative work from peoples of African descent.

And so, we want to see the 21st Century manifestation of our institution as one that rides on that digital wave and works with African communities in ways that they feel is compatible with their needs. And I'm aware that revolution has absolutely transformed this continent. More than 60% of the population are using mobile phones. We want to be there engaging with them. Working with African artists. Working with museums there, in trying to broker new relationships and developing new audience strategies that will impact us. Creating a community that feels a kind of sense of what I feel when I wander around spaces like the Johannesburg Art Fair. That feeling that Africa is not on the periphery. It ***is*** the centre of the art world. That some of the most interesting things that are being developed at the moment, in terms of ideas, are being developed by African artists. And these are discussions which in my mind are of absolutely critical global relevance. So, we want to be there working with artists, but also there making that work feel relevant to a broad spectrum of communities.

MM: Thank you to both of you for giving us that kind of background, and I think it is quite interesting that the conversation emerging is really about museums being built

in response to social changes, and built with the idea that they could create new imaginations of certain kinds of society - it happened in 1910 and 1964, but now we are in the space where we are in another period of flux of major social change, but were are also in a conversation around the relevance of certain kinds of museums and where museums stand at this time, there is quite a lot of critique about what museums can really offer. Speaking of coming into the museum, Gus, you hosted a screening of *Black Panther*, don't suppose you suspected the response to this film. Can you talk a little bit about your museum and its reaction to that film?

GCH: That scene at the beginning of *Black Panther* is enormously powerful, not the major protagonist, his counter, and he breaks into the British Museum (or something similar) and steals an object, but does it with a clear understanding that he sees this as a kind of moral duty, and this is a very powerful scene, and it speaks to underlying themes in the film, and how we renegotiate Africa and the West. I was deeply moved by the film, and it speaks to complex issues. I went with my 12 year old daughter and she left as impassioned by those issues as I

was. I think that museums have to answer the questions that are raised, because they are questions that underpin museology…. Our museum was established in 1964, and from its conception, we worked to establish equitable relationships with museums across Africa.

In 1965, a very major piece of Cameroonian art was stolen from a tribe in northern Cameroon and the Peace Corps - they were pretty integral in trying to find this piece of art, but were utterly unsuccessful. But about four or five years later, led by our museum, we traced that object to an art fair in America and we worked to return that object. From our very conception, we have worked to make sure that the art in our collection is only collected on a basic of very clear provenance. Where there have been questions raised, we have done the necessary work. We are now working in partnership with museums in Benin, who are working to find ways of reintegrating work which has been considered for repatriation from France. We are working to help them think about how they consider their new museums. These are things that are fundamental to us. We believe that there is a new moment in terms of African museology where these issues are worked through in a way that offers a more

positive working relationship between African museums and museums of the West.

KG: A few weeks ago… a few months ago, myself and the curator of traditional African art at the gallery hosted a dialogue. In the dialogue, there were people who were experts, who had studied a lot of the … what we would call 'traditional art', a term which I totally dispute … and experts in other fields. Some of them were linguists and some of them were musicians. So the conversation took many different, unexpected turns. Actually, that's exactly what I was hoping would happen. Because if we rely on the scholarship that exists, it locks us into this particular way of thinking of the 'us and them'. The curator of Southern African traditional art is a white woman, like in the movie *Black Panther*, and so for me those kinds of conversations are already happening in the public sphere, but I don't think they are happening enough in the museum sector in South Africa and especially as far as the collection of The Johannesburg Art Gallery. I don't think that conversation is taken place enough. This was just a way of opening up the conversation to people who would not ordinarily come into contact with the art which we have in our collection. We

want to have more of these conversations. But actually, move even beyond those people who have been initiated, so to speak, into the language of museology, archiving and collection management, to the proverbial person in the street. Part of the reason why I think we should start from a point of just having conversations is that language plays a huge part in us mediating what we experience and what we see and how we understand things. For a large group of people are excluded from the language which we normally use because it tends to be quote unquote academic. We have to find way in which to make the language a little less intimidating and a little less exclusionary. In doing that, what I'm hoping is that we can find different ways of speaking about things which are visually familiar but we have not found a common way of taking about them.

Many objects in our collection, there are discussions around their repatriation of the objects to the communities from which they originated. In this case, the objects do not need to be repatriated because they are already 'home' (laughter). We need to interrogate the idea of 'home' to begin with. One of the things about the *Fees Must Fall* conversation rejuvenated the idea of what South Africa is, and what is the

feeling of belonging, the institutions that interface with … are actually in homely [sic] and are not alienated spaces, and this applies both to universities as well as the museum. When you look at collections - and this applies as much to universities and not just museums. This question has new significance now. We should not look just at the physical objects; there are other questions that surround the object. Like questions about belonging and what does it mean to be a citizen?

A third part is that when these object s are taken out of circulation, e.g. whether in the 1850s or whatever, it is not that the tradition stopped - the tradition continued. So, people may have a different idea of what these objects mean in their lives today, than what these objects meant in the 1850s. And so there has to be some kind of conversation between about how we understand these objects now, and how what they meant in the 1850s. Unfortunately, my sense is that these two worlds are not really speaking to each other, and so I am more interested in how one communicates this, first of all, and also, how they exist now in the current age. What does a Ghana vessel look like today, and what is the immersion?

The last thing I want to say, part of what has been disturbing to me, is the conversations that have occurred around how objects linked to traditional arts, is how certain artists' works have been usurped by what were traditionally ethnographic museums. I will just mention, for example, the art of a certain artist … whose work is being used by people who are frightened to relinquish their received knowledge about traditional objects, as a way of speaking about contemporary art as if it was a continuation of traditional craft making, and refusing to acknowledge that the object is a contemporary art object. Even if the artist's outlook is contemporary and the artist merely uses elements of previous tradition, and not that it is entirely informed by the tradition. I see many examples in SA contemporary artwork, is that people still want to drag that work back into the 19th century. This is another area of the conversation.

MM: Let us return to this question about 'home' - I read that in your predecessor's time, and the audience numbers declined to about half of what they were, while the surrounding area of the Johannesburg Art Gallery is in a very busy place, but when you go into the museum, it is very quiet. This is a kind of conceptual question, a question

about who feels belonging, who is this community, but this is also a kind of bureaucratic museum management question. Can you speak to this contradiction? You both have bosses who are likely telling you about visitor numbers in the museum.

GCH: I ultimately see the audience as the American people. I look at the changing profile of the demographic of America. The Smithsonian museum was set up as a set of museums to fulfil the needs of all American people. This is a huge [egg] …, but it is a noble one. It may well be that we have let down a significant number of people, in terms of how we have applied museum theory, and the way we are resourced for an audience development strategy. We are very fortunate in the moment in which we sit, in that audience expectations are changing, and we have the technology to do so, at a kind of moment in 2005 in London … I managed to coral all of the national museums into thinking about how they might programme African-focused programmes… and many of them for the very first time, and when I sat down with senior teams from these museums, they said they were only considering this for the very first time. They quietly felt there were not audience for

these new things e.g. African objects, and they didn't feel that they had the confidence to speak to these audiences, and where they felt there may be audiences that have an affinity for African people, they didn't feel that they had the confidence to put on exhibitions with relevant to African people. We managed to create the moment for them … many of the shows that they held they were really well attended, 60 % of these audiences were new audiences, and they were people of colour. The idea that it is impossible is utter nonsense.

It may well be that we have lost audiences in our institution and this may because across the Smithsonian, the offer that focuses on people of Africa has grown, but we have not found ways of sitting alongside … as an institution that addresses museums of African American history and culture … we haven't found a way of making our discreet voice heard. But we know the audiences are there; we know that there are large significant African audiences out there.

And beyond all of that, we know that we have the work that should speak to audiences, irrespective of race. And so my intention is to … to prove all of that wrong. To use the experiences that I had in London, but also the faith that I

have of the universal potential universal appeal of African art to make sure it speaks to everyone. We will do it through education, through exhibitions, we will do it digitally .. but we will do it in partnership with our audiences …

KG: OK so, in brief, I attended a round table discussion a while ago, opened by some European museums, and there were similar iterations of this discussion. I attended one done in 2015 organised by the University of Liverpool, and in this discussion, the way that they described the constituent is 'anyone who comes into contact with the museum for whatever reasons'.

At the time, I was working at the Soweto Museums in Soweto, and that made me thing about the Johannesburg Art Gallery, and how there are so many different kinds of people who use the precinct of the art gallery for various purposes, and yet do not see themselves as part of the audience of the art gallery. And they are not treated as an audience. The notion of 'audience' is inapplicable. There is a particular relationship between a museum … or any kind of establishment … and an 'audience'. It is a kind of arm's length relationship. You are the service provider, and you are the person who pays for the service. Also, I have the

knowledge and you just have to receive it. And that the person does not have anything to contribute to the conception of knowledge, and so how do you rethink the relationship with people you engage with on a daily basis. To give you one example - there is a group of about 10 – 15 kids who come to the museum, usually after school, and they come to the museum is just that it is a place they can go after school until their parents come home from work. We have never engaged with these children and find out what they would like to do while they are in the museum. People just give them crayons. We do not actively engage with them. This goes to your question, mam, it may just be 12 – 15 kids, but for me the whole thing about museums is about taking the question about the quality of the experience at the museum, not about the number of visitors.

I worked at the Hector Petersen museum, we had thousands and thousands of visitors, and most of the visitors were primary school kids, and when we talked to them, we realised they were absorbing nothing of the material of the museum. It was just a school outing for them, they were happy to be outside of the classroom. So it's about how does you enrich for the audience, rather than feet through the

door. So we need to find ways to giving messages to audiences that can absorb the message.

MM: This idea that museums are institutions of specialised knowledge production. From the Smithsonian perspective, there is a much larger research process that happens. You (addressing Casely-Hayford)) are an academic and a TV star (laughter), producing information often considered quite … for a smallish audience, but through TV and providing information and what knowledge production means, and making it accessible to a wider audience. And you are talking about people coming through the museums and not receiving the knowledge on the panels, the broader role of museums to creating new modes of thought. How are you seeing the museum in the future .. .? And also the new role of museums in creating new modes of thought, so how do you both sees the role of museums?

KG: OK, so one of the things that historians have discovered, but I don't know if actually curators and artists have discovered, is this idea of embodied knowledge. And the recognition of the idea that each of us carries within us a certain degree of knowledge about certain areas that may in other contexts be considered academic and scholarly and

rarefied spaces. So, how do you tap into this resource? And in order to activate that space itself, also to make it less alienated, but also to invigorate the archive. We tend to think of the archive as something that is stored somewhere and gathers dust. Which is the case most of the time!

There is another way of thinking about the archive as something that is living and growing. There is a dynamic loop between the archive and how it finds its way back to the general public and back to the archive again. So, for me the question that you are asking is about how do we rethink about museology itself and find new ways about the things that matter to us that we can share with other people, and that the things that matter to other people also should matter to us. Some things are not fit for these ivory towers. It is about having this conversation, and it takes time. I feel we need to invest in those kinds of power relations and gain the trust of the constituents with which we interact. It is a great thing to have a wonderful building that we have, and a beautiful collection that we have, and the archives that we have (JAG), but if these things are fossilised in some way, because of our inattentiveness, we have lost the plot.

The kinds of things that are going on now, in the world generally, and how in the west and in the north, politics has moved dramatically to the right, and in SA we have our own problems, so unless we are able to galvanise these kinds of archives and our institutional, … our place within the institutions and thinking towards the idea of social change, we are fall short of our goal to make museums as spaces where social change can take place. The way that things have tended to happen is that we think of museums as places where objects go to die, but maybe it is time to think of museums as … I once said to someone who was in the library business, I said I don't see libraries as quiet places, but I see them as noisy places and something like a market were ideas are exchanged, and there is dialogue, and they were freaked out about this. This is also the kind of conception that I have about museums, as spaces where conversations like *Fees Must Fall,* for instance, get to continue, and other forms of conversations get to continue and take on other forms, and where new knowledge is produced.

GCH: When I was seven or eight, I was given a book, and I read it dozens of times. It told of the story of great paintings

in the National Gallery in London, and I was entranced by this book. I lived in a period when, being six years old, one could go out exploring , and one holiday, I went to visit the National Gallery …

End

11/10/19

Interview transcript: Khwezi Gule

The Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG), cnr Klein and King George Streets, Joubert Park.

KG: Khwezi Gule

MM: Matthew McClure

MM: I attended the Joburg Art Fair 2018 talk with you and Gus and what I found compelling about the talk in relation to my field of study for my Masters was how discussions around museology are obviously cropping up all over the world at the moment, and how your participation in that talk, in my mind, was the Johannesburg Art Gallery's response to that kind of discourse. I wondered if you could expand on how you see JAG positioned within those discourses. I know you are inviting a lot of contemporary artists in to exhibit in the gallery … I wondered if you had invited anyone, any artists, in recently to interact with the collection, the historic collection?

KG: Let me just preface my response by saying that I spend five years here, between 2004 – 2010, and then as Curator Of

Contemporary Collections. I got to see a very different Johannesburg Art Gallery, even though already by then, some of the issues that would become much more prominent later on had already started emerging. One of those main issues was how does an institution like the JAG satisfy a number of different demands? One demand is that it should be a standard bearer for - and this is the wrong word, for 'high art' - but that it should be the yardstick by which what is good and art of the highest standard is personified.

MM: JAG should do that?

KG: Yes, JAG should do this. And this type of definition is often been what art museums all over the world do, museums of fine art had always tried to do this. And there were already problems around the world with what the larger kind of institutional conception of what a museum is, even at that time. It took a while for those kinds of institutional critiques to seep in. There have been a number of reasons, but a lot of them were to do with the crisis of modernity, but I am not going to go into that now. A lot of those had to do with … But there were still that really strong

feeling within the museum profession and the art world, that JAG should be the standard bearer.

There are other institutions that are important to mention, and these are the Academy, and the other one being the …. There are three others in addition to the museum, the academy, the other one on the commercial side are the auction houses, and the fourth is the large scale exhibition. These were seen as the places where the kind of quality control mechanism for the art world would be. And then of course, below that are the commercial galleries, and the art market and the art dealers … everything in between, not that the art levels in here are bad, but that museums represented the 'high standard'. So, there was this kind of conception of museum.

MM: Art fairs? So are commercial galleries excluded? The large scale exhibitions? Biennales?

KG: I am excluding art fairs because these are commercial. They come under the lower commercial markets and stuff.

These four institutions that I have mentioned, they are the gate keepers, even though auctions were commercial, but it was understood if your art enters into the tertiary market,

that a work has achieved a certain level of prominence. So even though auctions are commercial, they were also a standard bearer. There is also the function of being educational, and the issue of knowledge production, and I will speak to these later. So that is the one notion of a museum. The other purpose of an art museum was a kind of a …. The 'elephant' type notion of a museum - large and majestic and formidable, and all of that, but there is another notion of a museum, which was that, museums need to reflect he *Zeitgeist* of the art world, the cutting edge, experimental, new media, digital media, those are more like cheetahs and tigers of the art world, agile, critical …

MM: Able to respond quickly, negotiate …

KG: And in which enters the social and relational aesthetic type of work, performance (live) art, and this is responding to a demand which is probably … is captured by the notion which came about at some point that painting is dead – and the new media were seen as the kind of thing … whereas the contemporary was bringing into question all these kinds of notions of modernity, enlightenment, that is was post-structuralist, and by its very nature, anti-establishment. Of course now, even from the 1960s, they were trying to make

conceptual art, and this kind of non-material forms of art in terms of subverting the market, etc. etc. and it is interesting that these forms of art have also been subsumed into the market anyway.

KG: We find ourselves in a crisis anyway, a crisis of the contemporary that we now find ourselves in. There was that moment, and in fact, it came to South Africa rather late. The moment of that contemporary was very much a thing. This is second concept of the museum, that it should be bit more agile, encompass new media that may not necessarily be considered 'art', and documentary photography which had existed in a kind of periphery, but came into the fore, came into its own

KG: And so this came that a museum should reflect this, even the question of what an art work is, even if something is a digital exploration, what is the art work? Is it the experience? How do you quantify that experience, how do you purchase an experience? How do you make it into a product? Even a DVD of a performance, it still has a physical form, this is the thing, the physical object which we are collection, which will have a barcode number, an accession number, and this is what we are collecting. With some of

the digital media, some of it is very ephemeral … with different media and different platforms, the source code might change. So what is it … these questions came up.

MM: So this is all part of the discourse.

KG: So quickly moving to the educational aspects … I will keep this to the end. The knowledge production aspect was also an important one, especially these are the reasons why the museums gained the status as standard bearers and were able to identify something as an item of high quality. They did this through exhibitions and publications. The academic does things through publications, but also through the curriculum.

MM: I covered this through Nonto's (Nontobeko Ntombela) course and the Curating Exhibitions course, and that museums and knowledge production, even dating back to the 1600s.

KG: I think that, you know, knowledge production has become a lot more important, largely because museums like the JAG need to position themselves to actually say to the outside world that we also are at that level. We are not just some Mickey Mouse gallery in some corner of the world: we

are also part of the heavy hitters. This is also the way that Biennales function. If I can host a Biennale, then I can say "I have arrived". So Biennales fulfil this function.

KG: The other notion of a museum, the old museums, is the idea of the museum as a reflection, not just art museums, but that museums reflect the state of the nation state and its ideas. Even though this should not be confused, and the museums could be in a conflictual position with the state, it does serve the idea. Most of the museums in the USA are privately owned, are private institutions, however they do reflect the status of the United States or New York as a centre of culture… without the MOMA, New York would be a different place, without the Whitney, Guggenheim, New York would be a different place. They not only reflect the artist and the artistic culture of the place, but they also relate to the idea of the modern state and its power and glory.

MM: Part of the state structure even though they are privately owned.

KG: Let me not say 'the state', but 'the nation'.

MM: Part of the national identity...

KG: Like a soccer team with a national identity. They work in the same ways as the Biennale analysis. If you are talking about the Venice Biennale, even if I am an Italian living in the dark corners of Milan or wherever, the Venice Biennale is the oldest Biennale, the Biennale will mean something to me even if I have never been to a single art gallery. Even if I have been to Spain, the soccer teams celebrated all around the world.

MM: It's Anderson's concept of imagined communities.

KG: Yes. So the museum is also a representation of that, and this is one of the reasons why JAG was built in the first place. The notion of culture is not one which is simply … has a … is explicitly performing a particularly function in a society, but is more about the symbolic of the cultures values…

MM: I am reading (Homi K.) Bhabha at the moment and the relation of culture...

KG: So I left and I went to a history museum, I found that the idea of a museum there is quite different, and there are different kinds of conversations that take place in that space, and this relates to what I am going to talk about now. There

much more strongly there was a sense that the museum should respond to the needs of the community.

MM: The Hector Peterson (museum in Soweto) and your work there …

KG: The museum professions cannot have that kind of professional distance. There is not a notion of a … Ok, let me put it this way. The concept doesn't make sense, an community engineer doesn't exist: an engineer is an engineer. Traditionally museum professions viewed themselves as just the same status, that they have a kind of objective reality, and even though the appreciation of art is subjective, the way that we conduct our work, preservation, curation, exhibitions etc. there is a kind of science to it. One has something that one can codify, and professionalise. Which is one notion … it is not what you guys are doing, but is one notion of museum training. Sarat (Maharaj) at the University of the Western Cape makes a distinction between Museology and Museography are two different concepts. He says that the ideas of Museography has to do with technical capabilities … that a museum is a kind of a machine, and you work this museum as a kind of machine, that produces a kind of a product, but Museology is a kind

of concept that is more concerned with the soft skills, how to work in a museum.

MM: And be responsive to the community

KG : I got a decent sense of that when I went to the Hector Peterson museum, but it was just different types of museums… but let me go back to museums and the state. In South Africa, most of the museums are owned by the state, in some form or another, and it doesn't matter if art museums or history museums. And after 1994, there have been no new state owned art museums, but quite a number of new state-owned history museums, so there is something to pick up on as to why this the case.

MM: (Ciraj) Rasool and (Kodzo) Gavua explore in the politics of heritage, and the production of state institutions after 1994 for a very specific dialogue.

KG: I remember the fact that the state is interested in that kind of form of public speech. The thing that characterises the relationship of the museum to the state is much more pronounced in history museums, in the sense that …. I have written about this in the *Democratisation of Memory*, which is the *Rise And Fall of Apartheid* (the book), even in the way

the operational part of the museum, not the content part, is interested in its relationship to the state and how the state functions, and because of that, it tends to box things and police responses to how it communicates. Even the very nature of how it communicates and which it participates with the public, is a form of communication in itself. It does speak to a certain level of regimentation and protocol. And that, I want to argue, is in itself a form of …. a regulation and all of those kinds of things, and is in itself a form of expression.

KG: You would have to go and read that article.

MM: It becomes like an apparatus.

KG: The apparatus itself is a form of speech. Have you read *1984*… but generally the set up … This idea is that certain things that are ritualised in certain spaces are in themselves are a form of expression; they are not just mechanical things. They are a way in which… something which regulates the relationship between subjects. This is not an original idea … This is basically the idea that Marxism represents that Capitalism is not just a thing of exchange, but also regulates our relationships. It is not just simply that a person pays me to do a particular job, but determines the kind of

relationships which I can have with that person, for example, me and my boss, it is also to do with me and my brother. So, in a way, even our social relations are dependent on Capitalist relations that are going on. You can multiply that in many different other contexts... that the transactional world is not just a dry kind of exchange: it does also regulate the relationship. And also regulates how the state relates to citizens, but also regulates the way that citizens relate amongst each another. And in this way it is in a form of speech, of expression.

MM: How does this relate to JAG? But I also attended your talk at VIAD. Is JAG branding itself as a museum? All sorts of public documentations show JAG as a gallery.

KG: It was a gallery, but has become a museum anyway. I will get to how JAG does this. In general, museums, because of their motion of being a standard bearer and purveyor of taste, it does sit up a hierarchy about who is part of the club, and who is not. So, in that sense, it does regulate social relations, who comes feels welcome, who understands the language and who doesn't. In the same way that the academy does this kind of thing. So, ok, so I am trying to move towards the idea of coming of … the relational type

of a museum. Part of what you have raised … you also have to ask why, 'why now?' It is not just a matter of changing with the times, moving along with the times; there is a crisis that is precipitating this change? What is this crisis?

MM: Part of what I am researching is Fred Wilson's work *Mining the Museum*, and it intimately connect to the notion of identity politics and museums as institutions, galleries as institutions, that have formed a very specific scientific language about what constitutes a certain identities, and in South Africa we are a bit behind the curve, and the interrogation about what these discourses are, and who is constituting them.

KG: So there are different notions about …. Because the one notion of identity politics is the idea that either women, or queer person, or Chinese-American, this idea of identity, it has to do mostly with the US, because of this kind of notion of push back against the what we used to call WASPs (White Anglo Saxon Protestants) kind of culture. So, there is this kind of notion of identity politics. But there is another kind of notion of identity politics, which is to say, there isn't a moment which is not so much about …. so, let me first, so we have this kind of notion that there are many other kinds

of identities within in the social body that constitutes America, there are minorities, people of colour, now there is another … so it is a kind of pluralistic kind of notion, pushing against the notion of America as a nation of WASPs, there is another notion of identity politics, which is to say that … there isn't a time ... OK, going back. The other notion is that it is sort of like … Smarties in a box, this one is orange, black, blue, and that America is this box that contains all these boxes. The other notion is that there isn't a time when I am able to switch between being a woman, queer, black. I can be all of these at the same time, now we can switch, your different identities are the Smarties in the box, because we each encompass different identities. So, the one that we have latched onto is the one Smartie in a box …. Where was I going with this?

MM: The relational realities of the museum …

KG: Let me move to the education part, and the education part become important now because education is the conduit through which the museum can reinvent itself. The issue is why is this happening now? The issue of identity politics is a symptom of it, the issue is, after …. So, the ….

KG: I am going to go back to the notion of the nation state. Part of the reason why the 20th Century was so important. A number of important things happened. One of them is the Second World War (WW). The Second WW, like the First WW, did two things. One was to set up these what you call, supranational institutions, the League of Nations after WW I, and then the UN after WW2, and these supranational organisations were purported supposed to organised humanity along ethical lines, These are the ethical standards how people should behave, and how nation states were to behave towards their citizens. This of course happens precisely because of how Germany behaved, and the universal Declaration of Human Rights, this is where a lot of these institutions come from, and this is also where organisations like UNESCO come from, which set out cultural policies which other nations begin to adopt, including ours. So, this has major ripple effects … so the second thing is that the WWII precipitated a crisis within the modern European states themselves. And this crisis forced a change between how people conceived a relationship between …. Notions of how do you treat refugees, you have to give them asylum. All of these nations come from this traumatic event, the WWII.

KG: The second very important thing that the WWII did, is that it presents a moral dilemma in those countries that are colonizers. So, if you say that Germany was wrong to invade Poland and massacre its Jewish population, why is it then permissible for Britain to own a quarter of the countries around the world? This became a very important notion for leaders in the colonial world to say, we want independence from the British colonial rule, Britain and the Portuguese. So, this anti-colonial movement kicked off particularly after the WWII. But then this presents a kind of a very slow … and this is manifested within the US as the Civil Rights Movement, all very slow. There are very strong link between the Civil Rights Movement in US and anti-colonial movements in other countries. This as a political and ideological force, because of what it says, this thing that you have in the United States, we the African, Asian and South American states, we also want these. But this could not sustain this demand, and this is why we are having this immigrant crisis. All these leaders, Fanon, many people, they go to France and Britain as first post-war immigrants, there are huge movements of immigrants go into these places because their economies are expanding and they need labour. But immigrants are not afforded the same

rights and privileges as the citizens from those European countries, they are just immigrants. But their kids are growing up and who come of age in the 1960s and 1970s, begin to say, we are French citizens, and no longer citizens of Morocco or Senegalese, we are French citizens and this is where identify politics crisis began.

KG: But also, at the same time, women are demanding equal pay for equal work, demanding abortion rights, so there are these kinds of things, there are these waves of demands that are making demands on the nation state, and on the global economy. So, feminism and post-colonial movement and later on, or perhaps, concurrently, the queer movement, who are all making demands. In the beginning, there is resistance to these demands, but the resistance is quickly whittled away, and there is an attempt to accommodate these demands. From the 1980s to the 1990s, those arrangements begin to collapse and there is a backlash. Politically, economically and socially … and hence we see the rise of the right wing tendencies in the US and Europe, but this is another story. How does this relate to museums?

KG: So, the idea of museums also changes, because now, because of shifting economic circumstances … I attended a

talk came under the umbrella of Common Knowledge, this one museums in Spain found itself adjacent to a park and were heroin addicts shooting up in the Park, park was littered with hypodermic needs, and this is a health risk, people are using needles. The museum decided it was going to become a dispensary for free needles. So this was radically different to a traditional art museum, but was responding to a crisis. In essence, the museum is responding to a crisis. But this kind of crisis and all of these things can go to many sources, and you will find that these are crises that were precipitated by the structural adjustment policies and all of these things which were happening, you get an increased in homelessness, abandoned buildings, certain dead zones in cities

MM: Geopolitics of spatial politics …

KG: Spaces populated by a different sort of people to the traditional middle classes, different individuals, and how you have to contend with a community that now exists …

MM: Those people … one of the moments that stood out for me at the 2018 talk, that woman who stood up and was incredibly angry on your (JAG) behalf that her community

who felt they were being failed by the museum (JAG).These was clearly that people feel that there was that notion…

KG: So the point of this new type of museum, and this new reality, is that the museum is not capable of servicing its traditional audience that it had always had and relied upon … so this is why you have things like BREXIT and these kinds of notions, because people are saying, there are all of these immigrants … but there have been immigrants all along, why is this a problem now? but people think the state has let them down, and it is their way for citizens to claw back the power that they used to have.

MM: They are responding to a fear …

KG: So when I came back, I realised that some of things which I said earlier, and which had been brewing, had fully matured as a social crisis. And JAG has got to respond to the social crisis in some way. I often make the analogy in some way, that JAG is like a person, and the ill health of that person is reflected …. as if you were to …. to extend the analogy further, the body is like the infrastructure, and the fact that that JAG is in the place that it is, and is having the infrastructural problems that it has, is partly a direct effect of the fact that the money has left the inner city, and that you

won't get the kind of investment that you would get if the gallery was in Sandton, and the social factors of people from the surrounding area stealing copper from the body, compounding the problems for the gallery, but we read these issues as infrastructure issues, understanding the analogy, is that the infrastructure is like the body, the knowledge side of this is more like the mental aspects, and the soul. If JAG is a person, what kind of person is this, what kind of …. Do they have? And also the social, how does this person relate to others, how good is this institution and how it relates to other institutions, and its environment. For me, the issue of the environment of the community is not just one thing, about the immediate … for instance, even though there is a kind of distance… the Johannesburg Art Gallery might be physically close to Rosebank, but conceptually it is very distant. However, a museum in Lubumbashi may be physically far away, but conceptually is much closer …. So the notion of its environment is not just a spatial thing, but is a conceptual thing.

KG: So, I find … and this goes back to my talk last year, if JAG is a body, all the different parts of the body are somehow in crisis, but how do you deal with this crisis? Of

course, we can deal with the infrastructure, but if we are not able to solve the social issues, inevitably the social issues will affect the infrastructure. There is no way of disconnection all of these.

MM: Because all these things are part of the 'body'

KG: So we have to try and address all these things in tandem, and this includes internally the staff and staff members, and because of historical reasons, the staff complement is not just us, there is a hybrid structure, a hierarchy of work and also, privilege within the institution, so we have to try and address those things. So, again, I say that things are not simply transactional, so for example, my relationship with my staff is not just a matter of my job description, it is as much as the social relationship within the staff members themselves, the gender, ethnicity of the institution, these things to play some role in the institution itself, and rules and regulations of the museum are not innocent of the social relations, which is why I say that things are not simply transactional/operational … they are about human relations.

MM: The work that (Fred) Wilson did, to spend two years with the institution, to understand the relationship between

the staff and the security guards, and the daily running of the museum, and the audience who came into the museum.

KG: If the security staff are disgruntled, they are going to treat the visitors negatively. But also , those kinds of issues need to be addressed, so part of why we are doing these talk shows, is because we are trying to … and it is not as though we have the answers, I have an idea of what I would like to happen, but these hasn't been a time in the history of this institution, and shows in many other institutions, were we say we want to chart a new path, but we don't yet know what this path would look like, so we need to consult.

MM: The museum was so shuttered in the past, that there is a fear of engaging in a conversation with bodies outside of the institution because it is from a place of fear.

KG: So this in a nutshell some of the things that I am trying to get at and it is also for me, instructive in that I had to go from this museum as an art museum to a history museum, and then back, to fully appreciate the complexity of what we are trying to do. I am not trying to romanticise the community, whatever it is, the notion of 'community' can become very instrumentalised, all kinds of thing … but … and of course it is not as if the community is homogenous,

and that everyone out there has the same idea of community, so one has to be mindful of those kinds of things. … However, this kind of notion that the museum has often held as a kind of purveyor of taste I don't think we can really get away from, it is part of the DNA of the institution

MM: And especially of this institution, if you look back at the founding principles that the gallery was originally supposed to have been ..

KG: I think, like I said, right now, I feel that the crisis of the modern state is … even though everyone knows now, is acknowledging, that there is a crisis, and I don't feel that there is an acknowledgement of what the crisis is, but everyone can see that there is a crisis, there environmental justice has also come up, there are racial issues, problems of homophobia, problems of corruption, problems of unemployment, and all of these different kinds of things… which are all placing a huge burden on social institutions, not just the state.

KG: The rise of charismatic churches and prosperity gospels and all of these kinds of things, is also part of the crisis that modernity faces. And … whichever way that the crisis

resolves itself, it might not be a progressive resolution, it might be an extremely revolutionary resolution, like in Germany and post-WWI and the rise of Nazism, which was a result of a real crisis in Germany, but that the resolution was highly reactionary. The resolution of this crisis, whether it is reactionary or progressive, will have consequences for this museum. But this is not to say that we are not unaware of ... things such as, for instance … even though we are not directly affected, the recent xenophobic attacks which happened very close to us. So the question of course becomes, how do we respond to those crises happening right at our doorstep?

MM: Do you find that people are labelling you as unaware, because I don't think you are unaware, saying that you are not responding to crises..?

KG: There are two things, when I was in Soweto, there was a localised xenophobic moment when there were threats made to Bangladeshi traders in Soweto. We facilitated a discussion between the Bangladeshi traders and the community, and the conversation spiralled out of control. That was very important lesson for me, we can have good intentions, but if you are unprepared for what might

happen, then you are actually making things worse. Even though there were those community members who said, we have very simple demands for peaceful coexistence, there was another smaller but very vocal group who said that we are unemployed and this and that … but we knew that the Bangladesh traders were in no way to solve problems of local unemployment, so if we cannot put solutions on the table, then we have no business trying to do that.

MM: The scape goat …

KG: So, us as a museum, we have to tread carefully, in terms of not raising unrealistic expectations about what we can do. Which is not to say that we shouldn't try, but then again, the issue is not only about whether or not you respond, but whether we can respond in an ethical way.

End.

12/07/19

Interview transcript: Stephen Hobbs

254 Albertina Sisulu Street

MM: Matthew McClure

SH: Stephen Hobbs

MM: Basically … I want to show you an image … that for me … It was from the *JAG/SNAG* exhibition.

SH: How did you get access to that image? So this year is kind of a…

MM: Yes you did send me an image … You sent them to me last year. I said I would let you know if I used any of them in the actual report. This set me off in terms of understanding … This really is in terms of deconstructing the materiality of JAG and Joubert Park. Basically I've highlighted six traces that I think can be used as a map or indicator of how both spaces, the park and the galley, have moved through time and space, on a trajectory, which can be forwards and backwards, like breaking down the understanding of the idea of time, and the accumulation of

the residual kind of materiality, which only happens from Point A to Point B. So that is one aspect of it. …

There are two fences, there a fence, so, the old remains of the original Joubert park fences

SH: North, south and east and west.

MM: And they are still on the other side of the concrete walls. You can still see them lingering in parts …

SH: Which concrete walls?

MM: The prefab concrete walls that were put up around…

SH: Recently?

MM: Not so recently, if you walk down Klein Street … that is old war time concrete fences. And then the actual old green palisade fences which everyone has written quite extensively about.

MM: There is also an old postcard from the turn of the century, and there are plans by Lutyens when he envisaged the original gallery extending out over the railway cuttings. And then a speech that Kwezi Gule gave at the Sandton FNB art fair on the current status of JAG and where it sits, and a

speech that he gave along with one of the curators of the Smithsonian Art Gallery in Washington .

SH: When did he do this? Last year?

MM: Yes it was 2018. It was a speech that he speech that he gave along with one of the curator of the Smithsonian Art Gallery in Washington. So, what fascinated me about *JAG/SNAG* in two ways, how you treated JAG as a body of evidence ... and then during the course of the project, pulled it apart into its different elements, got different groups involved in the process … and this became, correct me if I am wrong, as if the gallery became a work of art exhibited within the confines of the … and then also as an archival study, and by default …

SH: A lot of shit gets collected and put in folders. The extent to which that collecting took place was weaker and stronger in different areas of the enquiry, depending on interest.

MM: What happened to all that material?

SH: So I have a full archive. Alex Opper is doing his PhD on the JAG. I know I am a chapter in this thesis, which has not been submitted. For him I prepared a very thorough

folder system for him, and broke it down into various parts, I can make this available to you.

MM: I am also investigating other aspects. One of my traces is Myer Taub's *Florence* and the concept of the fence.

SH: Alex is doing his PhD on this, and Myer Taub's play is a key piece. Did you see the play?

MM: Yes I did

SH: Where, Market or Pop Art?

MM: At the Market. I did an interview with Myer Taub. His play developed through a series of interactions with … and relating to the fence, and the original actress that he wanted to approach who was very reticent, and then the play become about a series of oppositions to the concept of the play, and of the fence .

SH: Still seems so relevant, especially for white researchers. And this needs to be marked in some way. My enquiry around that project deliberately avoided the broader social-economic transformation of it … because I was really interested from an architectural-sculptural point of view, and literally intervening in the building and dissecting it …

and literally with Gordon Matta-Clark's voice in my ear … I had been looking for a site, something that was in neglect and decay … and most of Matta-Clark's projects were very temporary and ephemeral, for many reasons, apropos body, as the buildings were actually demolished. And most of his archives sit on old 35mm negs and old 8mm footage and stuff. The *JAG/SNAG* project started in 2010 and ended in 2015, and was always about … I think Matta-Clark had his posthumous retrospective at the Whitney Museum around the time I started working on the *JAG/SNAG*… and Lindsay Bremner, former chair of Architecture at Wits, bought me the catalogue. There was real resonance there for me in that the final intervention that I made through five years of exhibiting and workshops … and external research or shit, and external public workshops and mapping and that shit, was materialising the Matta-Clarkesque installation, I was able to pull panels down, to reveal areas that previous curators had blocked up. I was imagining expansions and excisions.

MM: Impressions of what it could be …

SH: And by the way, that mind mapping was physically drawn by Thuresh Govender during a three day, two and

a half day workshop that we set up with Antoinette in 2011 … so here is the thing, … well, I don't need to over explain, you know most of the parts, and it is well covered in the narrative of the project, and is well described in the JAG centenary catalogue, which I assume you've got … so to answer your question, what interests me is who is interested in the project, and that for some reasons I get the sense that it has a kind of iconic ness as an intervention… It is the kind of project that I dream about doing all the time.

MM: The *JAG/SNAG*?

SH: Well because of the duration … Antoinette has kind of vanished in the process, depression and probably deep embarrassment around some of the things that happened there … that in some ways were way beyond what we … we raised R30 million: my intervention embarrassed the City which in turn led to them getting money, and this is not publicly stated. Someone in the Ward 79 committee came to read an article in the Sowetan about how my exhibition makes a kind of mockery of JAG, and perpetuates how shit JAG is, and they went there. They were responsible for City assets and infrastructure, I think, amongst other things. On that occasion, one of the members was in a wheelchair and

couldn't get access because the lifts weren't working, and then they saw the show and it was fucking brilliant… So, Antoinette called me up and said she can't put it in writing, but my show embarrassed them so much, so worth reflecting, and they released money, and the money was rolled through three separate financial years. The city works through SOE (State-Owned Enterprise) obligations etc. And they have no idea how to work on a heritage building, absolutely incomprehensible

MM: This was the fourth, another renovation, there is another intervention

SH: The last one is the last one, unless there is a new renovation. This is the one remedy to the previous fuckwits who fucked it up, and fucked it up on many levels, they spent the money incorrectly, they didn't know how to work with 19th Century terracotta tiles, how to renovate sandstone. I was very upset by this, as I heavily invested in the materiality of the building, I got into the servitudes, into the cavernous spaces …into the basement where the flooding starts, in the city servitude where the foundations of the JAG building sit, to where the flooding was occurring

MM: Under the old parts of …?

SH: This was all circumstantial. A lot can happen in five years, and the building flooded several times … so the guy said come down and checks … so I would go down there and photograph. So that was what was awesome about the programme of work … So the *JAG/SNAG* project is like a compression of my work in Johannesburg, 25 years of being a curator, running galleries, making public art, doing interventions, travelling abroad, coming back, bringing things back … and Joburg has always been a lens to look at other places. Maputo, Senegal, Bergen, Babesse in the northern part of Paris … and so, ah … so if anything … it's not about sentimentality, but one wants to work like that.

Because the work, my original intention was to work with a building in crisis, and make the visual aesthetic of the building that is the evidence in the collapse of the building, is what I am in interested in as form, I am not interested in the plastered and finished things. I am interested in the unfinished, the incomplete, the decaying, both romantically and nostalgically like ruins, but there is something... I think, when you look at a ruin, the ruin is about the past and imagining the past, but in contemporary heritage architectural practise it also about the remains of the

skeleton, and of the body, and what you can graft and attach onto it… and then reconstruct out of. You can't rebuilt a ruin that is 1200 years old out of those materials, perhaps, but you might find modern equivalents for where you graft and attach, and this speaks to the history and this speaks to the contemporary in the sense of the material vernacular, but it is that edge that is the same mark as a scar.

MM: It is like a palimpsest, layering, tangible layering which I am arguing some of the traces that I am researching embody. The way the Victorian pleasure garden and white people promenading around the very beautifully manicured pathway, speaks to the original intentions behind the garden are now, some may argue, completely different, and have changed in certain irreversible ways, and it is this kind of progression … that I am interested in.

SH: Looking at the postcards from your files you just sent, it occurred to me that this is happening everywhere in the world where there British Empire had ownership over the territory, this was a masquerading of British high class living, linked to Randlord culture, so is a highly performative condition of living, in a way. I feel like in retrospect, I was starting to do it already, I started make all

the fancy art tee shirts, and make this all nice conceptual art and be a cool artist, in my mind, but actually, then what started to happen was … running parallel to any of my art, is that we are doing some project somewhere, with some sort of consultation somewhere, with some municipality, around urban design, architecture and public art and because we have worked with so many firms of architects in Johannesburg, on sites of memory, memory reconstruction, repurposing, and real issues around services and transport infrastructure, density in terms of housing and so forth.

During the last year of the project we were starting to collaborate with Ken Milling and Osborn Lang and we were starting to contemplate some sort of pavilion architecture for the gallery, with the fences, re-imaging the fences as some kind of multi-volume screen system, that provided seating, defined the boundary, provided shade and all the functions … but I didn't publish any of this as it was speculative, and I didn't want it to be part of … as I said, when something happens over five years the project, there are a lot of other forces, and these need to be contained, all of this was not part of the focus at hand. I made, in the five years, the build up to that installation, there must have been

about ten exhibitions that led up to that exhibition, and revisions, and just accumulating bits and pieces and things that helped me think through the final installation … So now I could do it all under one roof with tolerance from the curatorial team.

MM: So this was running in parallel?

SH: So what was starting to happen in the final ear was that we were still under an earlier contract to the JDA, and now we have other major projects all over Joburg. This means that I had a bit of an 'in' with the city, things all over the place. So this is now what never happened, but this is where my head was thinking. When Maboneng was peaking, say around 2014, there were big discussions on how to connect the artistic, cultural interests of Maboneng to link with JAG, as it is really a short walking distance, a 15 minute walk. From here to Newtown is a 30 minute walk, if you do it at a pace.

MM: There is a complete sense of a city structure, small and big …

SH: So the conversation about the imagining it bigger situation, so, you've got JAG, Maboneng, the Gautrain

which came on line much earlier than … and the station was consolidated and the Bus Rapid transit system feeding that, and this was the city council vision of how to consolidate these things, how to create a better tourism experience, with better infrastructure you can attract tourists an partner with local tours so that JAG can be included, that feeder routes to JAG can be created, but JAG is not included in tourist routes, this is the polemic of city planning, like apartheid within apartheid. So, Con Hill is virtually a 5 – 10 minute walk downhill from JAG, but they can't get themselves connected to that because the fear perception is too high … to dog leg down is like running a gauntlet.

So, the ultimate conclusion to the problematic of anything that would revitalise the Johannesburg Art Gallery in terms of imaging programme and purpose in that context for the greater Joburg, and the immediate context, is, like with any urban planning scheme, there is always a clean-up, it can be called gentrification or assisted gentrification, but there is a cleanup. People who don't pay their bills get kicked out, or fucking up the street, are moved to one side, until the rehabilitation has taken place and then there are a more intensive bylaw observation imposed, and if you watch,

apropos palimpsests, if you watch all the urban upgrades that have taken place around JAG, within a few days the place is grey again. There is something about the forces of life that accumulate around the site again, so that it will never be able to service that certain group of people again, the crustless cucumber sandwiches and Earl Grey.

MM: de Certeau calls it strategies and tactics…

SH: And the big reason why you can't do the clean-up … I am not in favour of a clean-up, but in theory, there needs to be some clean up, in order to make the space work, better city making and cultural tourism, making a world class city, ... you have to get rid of the urban poor. I don't believe this, but the city does. So I am speaking like the city. So they did it. Some senior MECs went on a fucking clean sweep through the city and moved all the hawkers out, and dismantled the fabric of a micro-economic system that feeds a lot of people. And the city does that. That's Fascist.

MM: Perhaps they don't understand…

SH: They do understand. They don't want to do the work. The work is, OK, let's imagine that we don't need to protect Impressionist pieces of art, or let's just move the collection

out. The people living around the JAG are not interested in the art, local people do not visit the gallery because clearly it is bounded by alien content … they may go to the park, families might come in for some quietness, modern middle class families, kids in the park sleeping, photos taken with a couple of bronze sculptures. This is kind of what was going down in 1908. But now, contemporary, possibly migrant, middle class families.

Every building around Joubert Park is sectional title, therefore everybody is paying rent to someone who owns part of the building. You can't dismantle this overnight. You just can't.

MM: Can't someone buy up a whole building, but now very difficult because of all the owners …

SH: If each building was owned by only one person, with rental schemes

MM: This is what (Herman) Mashaba is trying to do …

SH: This could work if buildings are owned by one person. Buy out the one owner, and wait for leases to run out, and then convert a whole building. This is the capitalist way of doing things. The counter point, which is what the City is

very confused about, is working with multidisciplinary teams to think in a holistic way to find out what is positive about these forces. Of course those doing crime and bad behaviour must f**k completely right off. But how do you deal with this? The completely redesigning ecosystem of exchanges that take place …

MM: This is all part of the larger system

SH: How about training programmes, creating jobs for the dodgy folks. To do this, you need a strategy that thinks about culture, street economics, public life, and it has to ask its society what it wants, and engage with it and *really* understand what the opportunities are there. Another problem with trying to measure that community, is that the community is migrant, in the sense of work. You come to the CBD, you get a job, get a woman, start a family with kids, and you can afford current rates, and/or then have to stay, or you would move to where it is cheap again … but that's what is so fucked up about our country is that people have to move all the time to get to work.

We have cars and mobility, we can work and live in separate places, we can make our living wherever I like, I am mobile

and have economic emancipation, and doors will open for me much more easily because of my class.

So the point is, what is really interesting and profound and beautiful, is this preciousness around the art, and a seeming un-preciousness around the built environment and the public domain … and if you look at it closely, and if you spend five years on a project like *JAG/SNAG*, you can say that this was a failed project, a navel -gazing art project, and it made no contribution to community or the public of any substance, and OK, I am going to take some credit for helping Antoinette Murdoch to raise some money to fix up a heritage building, and that was noble, and there were elements of inclusivity, exchange and engaging with a broader conversation, but actually the whole project was a big failure, f**ck that! Start again. Forget the building: you need to talk to the people. Map the *bejesus* out of it.

MM: So this is why this consultation and interrogation is on-going? Alex is doing his PhD. There is this fascination to interrogate the politics of it.

SH: But what I am saying, is that do economic and social politics and social life, and not to give a fuck about the building.

MM: Can you separate the building from the collection?

Hobbs: You need to think what the building is good for now. I am in favour of not moving the collection, what is the fucking point in saying that keeping the collection here is good for the city. No-one is working it. Everyone is working at an arm's length. This is not a good relationship. End it. Be friends!

MM: There is a fascination with the romance of the connections of the collection.

SH: From a historical point of view, this is a gorgeous project to interrogate, and this is why I wanted to do it in the first place, and this is a big side of my practice, and the weird decisions that were made, in Christopher Till's time, and we know that the building was f**ked from the get go, Lady Phillips and her husband, and Hugh Lane helped buy some art, and they built a building because they thought culture was important (but to whom?), and this was their first make, one can argue, and the siting of the building was wrong …. many other follies. You must have seen in the documentation a fantastic article in 1960, *Johannesburg Art Gallery to be sold to become an eye museum*, and this is exciting as we are in the business of seeing.

When I got into a deeper interrogation of the actual records behinds the companies involved in building on behalf of Meyer Pienaar Architects responsible for the actual building and the architects … I know Francois Pienaar very well, and he is the architect on all of Bart Dorrestein's projects, … the Michelangelo before that. Francois Pienaar was a very close friend of my grandmother. RAU was always a kicker because of its brutalism and a great building, albeit built under apartheid.

MM: They have become quite demonised these days, that firm …

SH: He came to one of my workshops, one of my Saturday workshops and listened … and even I publically shredded the project, That's professional integrity, you stand there and be criticised. That's 30 years down the line. Christopher Till opened my show … but a key failing of those vaults is that the company that supplied the UV coated plastic component that sits on top of the barrel vaults, quickly went out of business sometime later, and that material was not suitable for JHB's heat and the UV protection was poor, and it quickly began to crack. Also maintaining a sandstone building, you have to know how to work with that material.

My most favourite outcome to the point about failing on the social enquiry into the project, and was the work that I liked the most. Antoinette Murdoch gave me a printout of what their gallery organogram looked like, so this was the social architecture of the building, the people who do the jobs. Only 49% of the positions were occupied, and the other lot weren't, less, 42 % were unoccupied, and the rest were frozen positions. These included the finance department, a proper conservator, maintenance and so on, the key people in the administration. Fuck curating! When you have a building like that, with heritage importance, you need to run the organisation as a well-oiled ship, otherwise it will crumble.

I took her organogram, and she pointed out the posts that hadn't been filled in however many years, and that every time someone left, they closed the post. So, when Reshma Chhiba left her position as a registrar, that was the end, they closed the registrar post. You have to have a registrar post in a museum, or library, because you are dealing with assets. So now, no-one is monitoring things coming and leaving the building. You can play metaphorically with this, the thresholds of control, the permeability which we know all

too well in that site. I projected the organogram on the wall, and traced it, and highlighted all the posts that were unoccupied/frozen with bright luminous spray paint. For me this was actually the definitive work because all the other stuff was about aesthetics and playing with installation and playing with space in the building.

MM: Like a body with arteries getting clogged up, and that part rotting. You can look at this in this way. That organogram sounds fascinating.

SH: I have it in my own archives, drop me a line and I will send it.

So I think in some ways, in a conversation like this, it feels like this is still very much unfinished business. Even if I went back and did all the social-cultural stuff that I would be interested in doing, and there it would be very real. I would take that 2011 workshop… and do it in a funded way, hopefully it would be a funded thing, an ideal way with artists leading a team to reimage, through the application of creative and trans-disciplinary approaches to thinking socially and equitably. There is a fundamental correlation between what people do and the form in which they do the work, which goes down to a fine-grained approach to

design, because then you are looking at every single person's lived experience and daily/weekly/monthly lifecycles so, if you have got shop owners and traders who have been there forever, and find where the pain points are and do a bit of chiropractic work. The same would be for anybody. What's the twist? That's often all that it is, it is an interventionist approach …for example, interventions can be about making safer spaces for women and children, particular kinds of seating, more shade, better places to sit, it can be in the form of better signage, training people to work in the vernacular, whatever. You could research this for a year, two years and come out with a list of recommendations… these are the priorities, this is the time frame, this is what it is going to cost. If I had the opportunity again, this is how you implement it over this time.

If I had the opportunity this is what I would do. I would treat it as an urban design/cultural precinct project, with less emphasis on the precinct, because precinct projects are often myopic, as opposed to connected. I would speculate on this and give it a ten-year projection, where it would become quite logical, in my opinion, as to whether the art gallery is necessary or not. I don't mean fixing the sidewalks

and fixing the park, but fixing the whole fucking package. It would certainly be a good exercise for everyone doing the work … to understand how we intervene in a site of post-colonial crisis and change. I would then have to, in that context, have to surrender my singular voice to an amazing collaboration and conversation, and this would be, for me, a personal project because how could I evolve as a practitioner in this country, whose experience might be quite substantive in doing this kind of work, but this would not the work of one person … but is the work of very focused people with an interest in that kind of problem solving. This is the other side of my practice, we are always doing this as the Trinity Session.

My most recent work for the city, if titled curating and coordinating for art and place-making along the corridors, has found us working and for the last three years, we have been working at a small township just north of Orlando East Township, called Noordgesig, with 50 000 predominantly Coloured people living in a very small area, very much neglected, and not represented on the apartheid planning map, as if they don't really 'exist', but they have their own very profound stories to share. They have very famous

leaders in the past who made massive contributions… completely ignored.

Then Brixton, JDA was building new public facilities in Brixton, there is a huge new social cluster development, amazing robust new social clusters for sport and performances, and a lot going on there. This has been our project for the last three years. I have been managing four construction sites, one major pre-construction ….

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