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Kaofela re chabana sa khomo: imagining the Lesotho National Museum and Art gallery through the lens of multiculturalism

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Abstract

After many years of uncertainties and attempts, Lesotho kick-started the establishment of the first national museum in the capital town of Maseru. This is a turnkey project intended for research, collection, conservation, and management of the cultural heritage of Basotho. However, in the context of Lesotho, the word ‘Basotho’ often seems inadequate to convey the complex histories and ideas bound up within it. It has been used to erroneously depict Lesotho and Basotho as culturally and linguistically homogenous. This study explores how Lesotho can adopt the notion of multiculturalism in a national museum to define and reshape its history in the contemporary era. Given that the notion of a museum is of European origins, the research focused on the planned national museum and considered how it can position itself within an African context, so as not to reproduce European/ colonial museum models that have been criticized within the museum practice in the contemporary era. Taking a qualitative approach, the research draws from the context of museums in Africa and Lesotho, to explore possible, appropriate models of curating diversity. This research argues that these models should take consideration of the museum's diverse audience, in the pursuit of a multicultural museum.