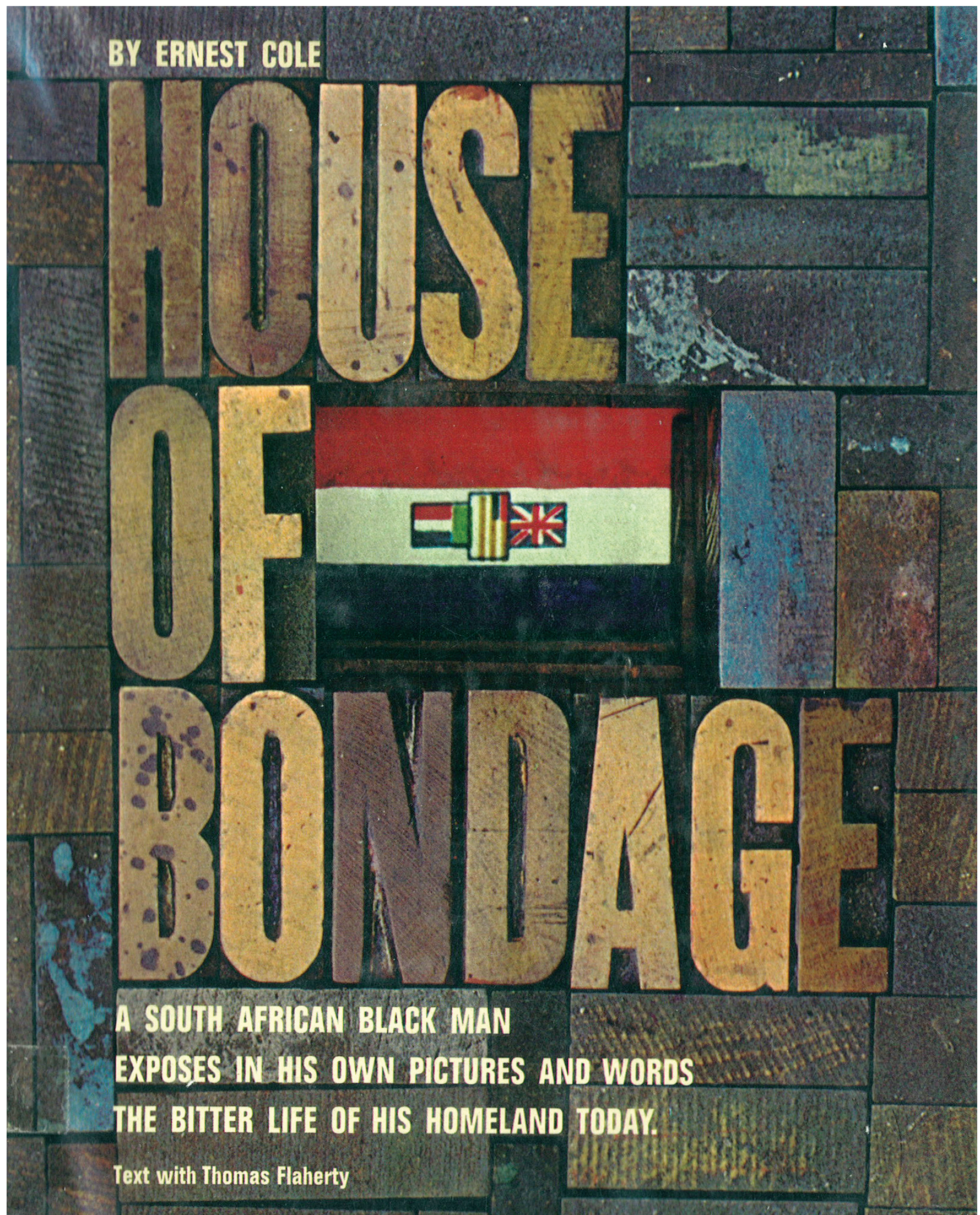


PASSAGES

REFERENCES & FOOTNOTES

A curatorial project by the Center for Historical Reenactments (CHR) in collaboration with the Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism (JWTC)



PASS-AGES: REFERENCES & FOOTNOTES

What is the relationship between art and history? How can art contextualize history and how can it affect how we receive or understand history? The “Center for Historical Reenactments” (CHR) collaborates with artists who use these questions as the departure point for their work as they consider how society acknowledges certain historical narratives. Furthermore, CHR explores how certain constellations of artistic practices can effectively form or repeat specific histories. The center utilizes the exhibition as a site for historical and artistic research within which artists are invited to share their processes of examination. CHR’s inaugural exhibition *PASS-AGES: references & footnotes* is such a site. It pulls together ideas that have helped shape practices of contemporary artists from South Africa alongside ideas that have and continue to shape history and our memories of it.

Located at the historical site of the Pass Office, *PASS-AGES* draws from artworks and texts that expose political spaces not currently recognized as sites of struggle. At The Pass Office, the most basic work of the apartheid state was accomplished: the control of black bodies across the South African landscape. The documents that may have served as testimony to the site’s activities have been destroyed, thus denied their roles as witnesses and spared the interrogation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Ironically, it is this very emptiness that creates a space for us to call upon our abilities to remember and inject memory (unreliable and slippery as it may be) to the site.

It is within the context of The Pass Office that *PASS-AGES: references & footnotes* focuses on contemporary work that explores how certain codes and cultural signifiers are repeated, universalized and preserved. The project aims to draw attention to the historical and personal references that artists have called upon in order to evolve their individual practices. These references have been displayed in a non-sterilized space that promotes exchange and an accompanying “newspaper” featuring essays, conversations, opinions and images has been compiled to suggest the various ways of sifting through the rubble of history. *PASS-AGES* therefore calls for a communal and interdisciplinary investigation into the construction of historical legacies and their potential impact on the local art scene. Ultimately, the project aims to promote reinterpretations of the past through proposals for future reflections.

Participating artists are Dineo Seshee Bopape, Ernest Cole, Kemang Wa Lehulere, Zanele Muholi and Mary Sibande with contributions from Sean Jacobs, Coco Fusco, Desiree Lewis, Hlonipha Mokoena, Gabi Ngcobo and Zamani Xolo. *PASS-AGES* is a curatorial project by the Center for Historical Reenactments in collaboration with the Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism (JWTC).

CHR and JWTC would like to thank

the staff of uSindiso Ministries: Jay Bradley, Marie Koch, Bert Mostert, Kenneth Sibiyi and Fani Velile for all their kind assistance. We are also grateful to the Goethe Institute for financial assistance, and for assistance with content we thank Ellen Eisenman, Thando Mama, Francesca Sonara and Hylton White.

The Center for Historical Reenactment (CHR) is a Johannesburg based curatorial platform responding to the immediate demands of contemporary art practices from a South African perspective. CHR’s programmes are realized through exhibitions, publications, screenings, discussions, performances, workshops and seminars, and by engaging local and international practitioners. The center believes that within the scope of artistic productions, historical reenactments can and do play a significant role; they are sites of curiosity from which two poles of history are kept in continuous creative tension. As essential questions, CHR explores how artistic production can help to deconstruct particular readings of history and how historical context informs artistic practices. How art can facilitate in reinterpreting history and its contextual implications and how it can add and suggest different historical readings and play a major role in the formation of new subjectivities.

The Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism is an independent platform for critical social analysis based at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). It was founded in 2008 by three members of the Wits Faculty of Humanities, Achille Mbembe, Kelly Gillespie and Julia Hornberger. It is intended for intellectual stimulation, exchange and sustained interaction around the work of noted scholars in the humanities and social sciences, and the emerging fields of critical legal and science studies.

Building on rich historical traditions of subversive counter-readings in Africa and elsewhere, our goal is to contribute, from the Southern Hemisphere, to a reappraisal of theory and criticism in such a way as to think anew about a de-centered world.

We hope to take advantage of the new age of academic mobility and the renewed convergence of theory and civic activism worldwide to highlight the variety of human forms in which argumentation occurs, contributing therefore to the global movement towards the de-provincialization of intellectual praxis.

The main object of the Workshop is to focus on the contemporary and the emergent - those domains of human life and those forms of “the social” that profoundly interrogate the way we think and act, who we think we are, who we want to be and the kind of world we want to inhabit.

CONTRIBUTORS:

dineo seshee bopape, was born in 1981 in polokwane, south africa. she has exhibited her work in several solo projects and numerous group shows internationally. her works take on different forms in various mediums from video, to installation, painting, drawing and ‘situations’, often engaging ideas of the performative object and the disruption of a linear narrative. she is a recent columbia university mfa graduate. bopape attained her visual arts b-tech from durban institute of technology in 2004, thereafter she was a resident artist at de ateliers in amsterdam, from 2005-7

Ernest Cole was born in 1940 as Ernest Levi Tso-loane Kole in Eersterust, Pretoria. He is known for having managed to outwit the Race Classification Board when he was re-classified as a coloured by changing his name from Kole to Cole. This gave him more privileges and access to photographically document life under apartheid, a project he called “The Apartheid Project”. In 1966 taking his negatives with, Cole left South Africa for New York City via France and England. Random Press published his book, “The House of Bondage” in 1967 leading to his and the book’s banning by the apartheid government. He died in New York in 1990 aged 50.

Sean Jacobs was born in Cape Town. He teaches international affairs at The New School, New York and blogs at “Africa is a Country” Jacobs, holds a Ph.D. in Politics from the University of London and a M.A. in Political Science from Northwestern University. He is working on a book on the intersection of mass media, globalization and liberal democracy in postapartheid South Africa. Previously he taught African Studies as well as communication studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He worked as a political researcher for the Institute for Democracy in South Africa

Desiree Lewis is Associate Professor in the Women’s and Gender Studies Department at the University of the Western Cape. She has published on feminism, black women’s writing, sexual politics, popular culture and South African literature, and much of her recent research deals with representation, visual culture and embodiment. She has guest lectured and held research fellowships in Atlanta, USA; Uppsala Sweden; Zimbabwe; and Uganda.

Kemang Wa Lehulere is a Cape Town born Johannesburg based artist who has also worked in film/television, radio, and writing. In 2006 he co-founded artists’ collective *Gugulective*. Exhibitions he has been featured in include *US*, Cape Town (2009); *ARCO 09*: Madrid Art Fair, Madrid (2009); *Performing South Africa*, Berlin (2008); *Scratching the Surface: Vol. 1*, Cape Town (2008); and more recently *Dada South?*, Cape Town (2009). Wa Lehulere has also co-curated a number of exhibitions with the *Gugulective* and the Dead Revolutionaries Club. His writings have been published in *Remembering Future Africa* (2009) by the Chinua Achebe Centre for African Writers and Artists in New York as well as *KAP* (2008) in Basel. He is a recipient of the Mellow Mays Fellowship (2010) and the Zentrum Paul Klee Fellowship (2010).

Hlonipha Mokoena received her Ph.D. from the University of Cape Town in 2005. She is currently

an assistant professor of Anthropology at Columbia University in the City of New York. Her main area of interest is South African intellectual history and her current research is on Magema M. Fuze, author of the *Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona* (1922) / *The Black People and Whence They Came* (1979).

Zanele Muholi is a visual activist born in uMlazi, Durban. In 2002, Muholi co-founded the Forum for Empowerment of Women (FEW), a black lesbian organization based in Johannesburg. She completed an Advanced Photography course at the Market Photo Workshop in 2002 and held her first exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 2004. In 2009 she earned an MFA in Documentary Media at Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada. In 2009 Muholi received a Fanny Ann Eddy accolade from IRN-Africa for her outstanding contributions to the study of sexuality in Africa. She also won the Casa Africa award for best female photographer and a Fondation Blachère award Les Rencontres de Bamako Biennial of African Photography.

Gabi Ngcobo is an independent curator, writer and artist from Durban, South Africa. Ngcobo’s curatorial projects include *Second to None* at Iziko South African National Gallery, *Olvida quen soy/ Erase me from who I am* at CAAM, Canary Islands, Las Palmas 2006, CAPE 07, a Cape Africa Platform project, *Titled/Untitled*, a curatorial collaboration with Cape Town based collective *Gugulective* and *Scratching the Surface Vol.1* a manje-manje projects initiative at the AVA Gallery, Cape Town. Recently she co-curated *rope-a-dope: to win a losing war* at Cabinet, New York, *Second Coming, a curatorial collaboration* at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College and *Just How Cold Was It?* at “6-8Months” project space, NYC. Recently she co-founded the “Center for Historical Reenactments” an independent platform based in Johannesburg. She recently completed a masters program at the Centre for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, NY.

Mary Sibande was born 1982. She obtained a B-Tech degree with honors in Fine Arts at the University of Johannesburg in 2007. Sibande’s work highlights how privileged ideals of beauty and femininity aspired to by black women, discipline their bodies through rituals of imitation and reproduction. She inverts the social power indexed by Victorian costumes by reconfiguring it as a domestic worker’s “uniform” complexifying the colonial relationship between “slave” and “master” in a post-apartheid context. The fabric used to produce uniforms for domestic workers is an instantly recognizable sight in domestic spaces in South Africa and by applying it to Victorian dress she attempts to make a comment about history of servitude as it relates to the present in terms of domestic relationships. She lives and works in Johannesburg.

Zamani Xolo is Durban born Joburg based independent graphic designer. He has worked in a number of publications including creative directing *Wordsetc* a quarterly literary journal a publication which he co-founded in 2007. He has also worked for Avusa titles from magazines to newspapers, besides publication design Zamani has worked as a freelance designer designing corporate identities, newsletters, posters and has been involved in numerous branding projects.



Young boy is stopped for his pass as a white plainclothesman looks on. Checks go on in the townships, too. Photography by Ernest Cole

THE PASSING OF ERNEST COLE

SEAN JACOBS

Information on Ernest Cole's decision to pass for coloured, is not readily available beyond the ready-made theories and rationalizations repeated in museum catalogues or on websites. We get glimpses of his anxiety or the stress the decision brought his family in short scenes from the only documentary film on Cole's life, that by the photographer, Jurgen Schadeburg. But even then, Schadeburg's film neatly sidesteps the issue of passing by not probing Cole's motives. Like with play whites (coloureds who passed for whites), we won't know how many 'play coloureds' there were. (What the writer Zoe Wicomb has said of play whites applies: "We don't even know how many of them there are. There's no discourse, nothing in the library, because officially they don't exist [anymore]."

Catherine Dilokweng Hlongwane: "[My brother, Ernest] did a funny thing. He started stretching his hair ... My mother [Martha Kole] was worried. He did not want to tell the truth ... [Finally] he said, 'I don't want this pass. I want to be a coloured.'"¹

Struan Robertson, photographer: "Other friends had been [been through the experience before] him"²

Jan Raats, the director of the apartheid government's census: ... (1) 'Asiatic means a person of whose parents are or were members of a race or tribe whose national or ethnical home is Asia, and shall include a person partly of Asiatic origin living as an Asiatic family, but shall not include any Jew, Syrian or Cape Malay; (2) Bantu means a person both of whose parents are or were members of an aboriginal tribe of Africa, and shall include a person of mixed race living as a member of the Bantu community, tribe, kraal or location, but shall not include any Bushman, Griqua, Hottentot or Koranna; (3) Coloured means any person who is not a white person, Asiatic, Bantu or Cape Malay as defined, and shall include any Bushmen, Griqua, Hottentot or Koranna; and (4) a white person means a person both of whose parents are or were members of a race whose national or ethnical home is Europe, and shall include any Jew, Syrian or other person who is in appearance obviously a white person unless and until the contrary is proven.' ...

Ernest Levi Tsoloane Kole successfully applied to be reclassified from African to Coloured in 1966. He was 26 years old.

A few months after he successfully applied to become coloured, Cole left for the United States, where he died in 1990 as a black man.

We don't know why Cole decided to become coloured apart from the politi-

cal motivations suggested by his friends and passed down in museum catalogues, Wikipedia, or reviews of his work. These are: a coloured ID card would mean less harassment when photographing Apartheid; it would make it easy to obtain a passport.

Who helped Cole's prepare for his question to become coloured?

Did he look or sound like a coloured?

Like A Pretoria coloured?

What do Pretoria coloureds sound or look like?

Did Cole act coloured around his mother after he successfully passed?

What kind of coloured did he become? Other Coloured? Malay? Cape Coloured?

Did some of his family see him as a race traitor? Did they admire his decision?

In the 1950s at least 10 percent of whites were coloureds passing for whites. How many Africans passed for coloureds?

Coloureds who passed for whites were known as "play whites."

Its unclear why Cole decided to apply to be reclassified for coloured so soon before he left South Africa for the United States?

What about Cole's anxieties? There are a lot of problems with the certainty attached to the narrative and his mo-

tives?

How does becoming coloured make it easier to leave 1960s South Africa? Are there reports or other instances of this? Were there laws or procedures that made it easier for coloureds to leave?

When he arrives in the US, he settles in Harlem—where black nationalism is growing and differences among black people, i.e. class, color prejudices, are played down and collusion with official categories or discourses are frowned upon. Politically and culturally he's neighbors are and want to black.

How does being a South African coloured figure or play into this world? What privileges come with being a South African coloured in America?

Why was he so focused on becoming coloured when his work is more interested in the apparent certainties of Apartheid black and white binaries?

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¹ Quotes from "Ernest Cole," documentary by Jurgen Schadeburg. 2006. ² Quotes from "Ernest Cole," documentary by Jurgen Schadeburg. 2006.

Sun News DECEMBER 13, 2002

Work as usual for Bester



Bester Muhloi.

BESTER Muhloi (67) has worked for the Harding family for 41 years. Bester became part of the family when the Wentworth government village became a coloured area, under the former Group Areas Act, in 1961. The Hardings had lived in the area for some time and Bester worked for the family next door. "I was always looking over the fence thinking, 'I like that missus there'," said Bester.

MOVED

When the Harding family moved from Wentworth to Woodlands, they asked Bester to move with them. Bester currently works for the eldest Harding son, David, in Montclair. Once a week, she works for Mickey and Kathy Harding, recently retired to Athlone Park. According to Kathy Harding, her children adore Bester.

"In our time, there were very few factories and the only option open to women was to clean houses," said Bester. "I like working. I have no plans to retire."

Bester was born in Ladysmith and later moved to Durban with her mother. Here she married her late husband Ashwell, a Malawian. Bester has six surviving children, 20 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Bester currently lives in Umlazi. Bester is incredibly proud of her children. "I was always worrying about my children but Mr Harding would say that I mustn't because I was part of their family," said Bester. "They took me into their hearts and I thank them for this."

Bester has no immediate plans to retire, even though she went on pension two years ago.

An article featured in a suburban newspaper *Sun* written about Bester Muholi (the surname was misspelt by the writer) at the request of Mrs. Harding, on occasion of Bester's retirement. Bester Muholi is visual activist Zanele Muholi's late mother.

'MAID CHIC'

Anyone can be a maid. With two hundred rand in your pocket you can transform yourself into a maid. If you take your two hundred rand to your local Pick n' Pay or Shoprite you can buy a maid's uniform. In the bad old days the uniform was in timid and unimaginative pastel and powdered colours – pink, yellow, blue, green. But, in the new dispensation companies with names like 'Ethnix' make maids' uniforms that cover the cultural landscape of the adolescent South Africa. Indigos that imitate the traditional *isishweshwe* wink at you and declare their functionality. Geometries of shape and colour call to you in a Ndebele dialect that you may not speak. When you open the package the smell of starch and cardboard signals the cleanliness that the maid is expected to preserve and uphold if only by keeping her uniform clean and ironed. What you soon discover is that the uniform is not just a practical coverall to protect the wearer's clothes. The uniform is a cultural and sartorial artefact – part throwback to some aristocratic age when all wealthy households had liveried servants and part mockery of African femininity. The aristocratic inheritance is in its definition as a uniform: for the maid to do her work she has to strip herself of all accessories

HLONIPHA MOKOENA

"THE UNIFORM IS A CULTURAL AND SARTORIAL ARTEFACT – PART THROWBACK TO SOME ARISTOCRATIC AGE WHEN ALL WEALTHY HOUSEHOLDS HAD LIVERIED SERVANTS AND PART MOCKERY OF AFRICAN FEMININITY."

and clothes that make her unique. She has to become nondescript, inconspicuous, non-threatening. For her to perform her duties, she has to be seen to be submitting to the discipline of sameness. That's why all maids are called Sheila. It's the job description: to have a name that is directed at you but has nothing to do with you. The mockery hidden between the folds of the apron is not derision

but a deceptive counterfeit. The maid's uniform mocks African femininity by packaging an overall, apron and *doek* and presenting these as a set to be worn together: never the overall on its own or the *doek* on its own. It's the togetherness, the inseparability that makes the uniform a deceptive counterfeit of the sartorial choices an African woman may make. The often colourful and mix-and-match *doek* becomes a monochrome square to be folded into a triangle and tied around the head. The apron places the maid in the kitchen where she cooks, chops, peels and scrubs with the implied confidence that the splatters will land on her apron. As with the *doek*, the apron may be hemmed by white frilling; another nod to the feminine nature of the work and uniform. Once she takes the uniform out of the packet, it may become her property and she may fold it neatly into her bag when she leaves work. Or, the uniform may remain with her employer neatly hanging in a broom cupboard or on a nail in the pantry or draped over the ironing board. It is her uniform; no one will ever wear it so she'll always find it where she last left it.

And, if you need a script to go with the uniform then you can just read the cartoon *Madam & Eve*. Like with the purchasable uniform, the cartoon allows all who read it a voyeuristic journey

into the domestic world of madams and their maids. The madam and her mother are tight-fisted ladies of leisure who are not willing to fall for Eve's tricks. Eve, the maid, is inventive especially when it comes to shirking her work, and she is always looking for novel ways to ask her madam for a pay raise. *Madam & Eve* represents the unspoken question of post-apartheid South Africa. Why has the madam and maid relationship endured? Is it because South Africans are addicted to gleaming brass and sparkling windows? Or, is it that we are addicted to exploitation? The fact that the cartoon itself has continued to make South Africans laugh may point to a possible answer. The madam and maid relationship has been elevated, like other exploitative and oppressive institutions and conditions, to the status of chicness. Whether it's shabby chic or shack chic, popular culture has found a vocabulary for comprehending and labelling a troubling human relationship. The appending of the language of style and aesthetics to deprivation and poverty has the effect of implying agency. In the same way that an interior decorator may intentionally choose distressed and coarse fabrics to create the look of antiquity, the availability and saleability of maid uniforms and cartoon characters lulls us into the belief that being a maid is a choice.

EMBODIED POWERS AND RESISTANCE

DESIREE LEWIS

In a provocative study of the politics of spectacle in Argentina, Diana Taylor (1997) questions the neo-Marxist trend towards defining spectacle as false consciousness, as performative ideological practice that directs attention away from “real politics”. Drawing attention to its centrality to everyday repression and the negotiated rebellions of subaltern groups, she also considers the importance of gendered images, discourses and narratives in postcolonial struggles, especially as these mesh with nationalism. This article examines recent South African struggles in relation to the patterns that Taylor identifies. I am especially concerned with how meaning-making – often at deep and subliminal levels – occurs through the slippery, sometimes partial expression of subject positions and voice in struggle as spectacle. My primary concern, therefore, is not with exploring politics in the sense of definitively explaining who wields and contests power. What interests me are the more intricate processes of identity construction and subjectivity that effectively drive struggles for and about power in the present day.

How social subjects gain a resilient senses of self has received relatively scant attention in South African research; to date, much of the psychoanalytic work on race deals somewhat two-dimensionally with the racialised subjection associated with “blackness” and “colouredness” and with the dominance attached to “whiteness”. While gendered struggles have been extensively explored, even here the tendency is to dwell on essentialist notions of what women and men do and feel, rather than to focus on how gendered discourses are embedded in particular practices, identities and performances in ways that often have little to do with the actual bodies of gendered persons. Analysis of the intricacies of struggle has also been blunted by the focus on “social movements”, by an emphasis on how self-consciously and avowedly “political” groupings and processes act in the political realm.

In what follows, I develop psychoanalytic and textual readings of what is referred to as gendered spectacle and embodied struggle. I’m concerned with how certain events and practices function to construct identities through collective imagining and fantasy, and with how spectacle provides sources for the fictions, symbols and memories that are central to individuals’ personal sense of gender and personhood. I’m also interested in how spectacles stir the imagination of actors and spectators, in many cases breaking down barriers between actors and spec-

tators and allowing spectators to invent, discover or confirm senses of self in ways that may be explosively “radical”.

Staged Powers

Spectacles involving the degradation and torture of human bodies have loomed large in South African life. Especially important is the way that current images, icons and practices reflect decades of brutally masculinist violence associated with apartheid and colonialism. Past acts of torture – necklacing, the interrogation and murder of political detainees by the SADF, the rape of young women guerrillas in ANC camps – continue to resonate in the social imaginaries of South Africans in spectacles that are ghostly, enduring and brutal. Much of the meaning of past and present acts derives from the way that repression is caste as theatrical performance. Certain ritualistic and graphic displays of humiliation and degradation enact particular groups’ control over and naming of the bodies of projected outsiders. Their impact also derives from their being witnessed by those who are not principle participants, and from the way they allow witnesses to participate vicariously in the identity-construction and meaning-making that they configure.

It is often acknowledged that these acts institute authority by constructing ethnic, racial, or anti-apartheid identities. But less emphasis has been placed on the way they centralize gendered and sexualized meanings in ways that often encode complex patterns of authority and contestation. In contemporary neoliberal South Africa, this is especially evident in a pervasive culture of physically expressed authoritarianism. Even though the post-apartheid state is committed to “good governance”, constitutional rights, citizens’ bodily integrity and freedom of speech and expression, many repressive and coercive mechanisms are manifested in spectacles, rather than in formal politics, namely institutions, legislation and policy-making. The force of visibility and the somatic has been crucial to these spectacles.

At one level, we see this in the disciplining of actual women, especially black women. The control of black women’s bodies has been central to the construction of masculinist citizenship and nationhood, as well as masculinised ethnicity. At another level, authoritarian cultures draw on and are rationalized by gendered behaviour and language, by somatic symbols and meanings – through which notions such as citizenship, order and the healthy social body are imagined.

In recent public life, many localised spectacles have been taken up in national debate and affect national consciousness. For example, in February of 2008 a twenty-five year old woman wearing a miniskirt at a Johannesburg taxi rank was

subjected to abuse by taxi drivers. They sexually molested her, poured alcohol over her head and called her names to teach her a lesson for her immodest dress. In this case, the brutal humiliation of a young woman surfaced in media stories. Yet the violence was (and still is) routine in the verbal abuse, harassment and rape of women at Noordhoek, and many other taxi ranks in the country. Like others, the young woman in February of 2008 was scripted as a sexualized receptacle of male virility and as a signifier of a corrupt modernity. Her debased body became the common ground around which different men could position themselves, and affirm their precarious masculinity.

Although this incident made headlines, it was one of a series of similar events at the infamous Noordhoek taxi rank, a public space which, like many others in South Africa, is a prime site of masculine entitlement and aggression. In similar ways to the “curative rape” of lesbians, the violent conquest of the woman’s “undisciplined” body came to signify certain men’s reclamation of a threatened masculinity and their imagined suppression of female independence. The incident starkly captures the way in which women’s bodies are constructed as surfaces for political inscription, and the specific ways in which black female bodies are charged with meanings in others’ scripting.

Events at the Noordhoek taxi rank, in the centre of one of South Africa’s most urbanized provinces, are remarkably similar to the ritualised humiliation of young women in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Here, within a short period of time, young women wearing trousers were tormented and assaulted by men regulating their obedience and “traditional” decorum. Between 2007 and 2008, several incidents of the consequences of women breaking a ban on the wearing of trousers made headlines in the South African regional and national media. In one, for example Zandile Mpanza was assaulted, had her pants torn off, and was then made to walk half-naked around Umlazi’s T Section. Significantly, KwaZulu-Natal continues to be a bastion of elaborately fictionalised “Zulu-ness”. A store of archetypes, rituals and symbols of “Zulu-ness” has given symbolically charged legitimacy to authoritarian repression in the present day. Colonial and apartheid codifications of tribalism – promoted through technologies ranging from native rule to anthropology – help to explain the force and form of these acts. The recurrence of similar discourses of “tradition” is evidence of the enduring power of colonialist discourses of tradition, as well as the naturalised brutality at the heart of South African cultural processes and self-definitions.

The prevalence of these two acts of disciplining young women in different

areas is also evidence of the compulsive need for assertions of identity to take the form of repeated and elaborated staged theatre. Given the enduring structural basis of masculine entitlement and privilege in much of South Africa, the men involved in these acts might not have had any practical reason for feeling challenged by the women in their communities. But the process of self-definition demands rehearsing authority, enacting spectacles that starkly create the most crude and debased imagining of patriarchal control over women. Describing the bizarre logic of the process in which violence is enacted on the bodies of subordinate groups, Judith Butler writes: “those who are violated have a strange way of remaining animated and so must be negated again (and again)...since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in this state of deadness” (2004: 33).

At the same time as the Noordhoek incident, another spectacle became the subject of more animated public attention: the making of a racist video by white male students at the Reitz residence at the University of the Free State. Leaked to the media, the video was a response to proposals for racial integration. It featured a group of male students humiliating black workers, mainly women, by making them play rugby, eat food contaminated by urine on their hands and knees, and by taunting them in farcical contests and award ceremonies. Among the symbols of power and control used by the students, the rites and images associated with rugby were especially prominent in the video’s content, and reflected the way that this sport has ritualistically enacted hegemonic white masculinity in South Africa.

The production of the video immediately after calls for integration at the university reveals its role in helping to recall an identity perceived as being under threat in the “new” South Africa. Although most public debate about the video focused on racism and erased the significance of gender, the incident speaks volumes about a beleaguered group’s response to the threatened displacement of hegemonic white masculinity. In particular, the making of the video reveals the importance of staged performances of power to patriarchal processes of group identification. In the early 1900s, the re-staging of the Great Trek to fabricate a renewed sense of Afrikanerdom illustrated the reliance on extravagant spectacle to confirm the relative precariousness of “Afrikaner-ness” at that time. Through a staged event, a sense of being “Afrikaner” was linked to compelling images, myths and historical narratives, such as the enduring of hardship, claims to the land, and the sanctity of patriarchy. The Reitz residence video, while a comparatively insignificant performance, reveals similarly efforts to summon forth images, icons



Zanele Muholi *Massa and Mina(h)* series 2008 and ongoing

and relationships that rehearse identity and power at a stage when such power seems to be declining. The video was intended for restricted viewing - allowing a group of young white men to reinvent a past omnipotence in the face of their (perceived) threatened social supremacy. Consequently, in the same way that black male taxi drivers scripted the body of a young black female to imagine their sexual and social dominance, so did white men at the Reitz residence construct a debased black female body to fictionalise their ascendancy.

Many of the recent performances in public life show that ethnic and national identities are linked to sexualised performance. Furthermore, connected fantasies of gender and sexuality serve different masculinist scriptings of the “healthy” body politic. This scripting is especially evident in the rape and murder of lesbians in various parts of South Africa. Currently, horrific instances of the “curative rape” of lesbians are increasing at the same time that South Africa boasts a path-breaking constitution, becomes the first African country to host the soccer world cup, presents itself in the global imaginary as an exemplary developing nation, and leads the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) in pioneering “good governance” in the region. It is within this context of “deepening democracy” that homophobic violence directed mainly at black lesbians holds tremendous meaning for certain men (and women) citizens within the body politic. Much homophobic violence against South African lesbians consequently exposes the hetero-nationalism that is the underbelly of South Africa’s post-apartheid neo-liberalism. Heterosexuality and patriarchy are fundamental to the way that many derive a sense of fantasy meaning and belonging within the post-apartheid nation.

As Adrienne Rich (1980) forcefully argues, “lesbian existence” and not only “homosexuality”, defies the centrality of heterosexuality as an institution for enforcing women’s obedience and patriarchal disciplinary power. Although homophobia dramatises the expulsion of queer bodies in the name of heterosexuality, the homophobic violence directed at black lesbians is a specific way of rehearsing patriarchal sexual and political power. The “curative rape” of lesbians, enacts the construction of heterosexism and masculinity and serves both as a confirmation of hetero-patriarchy and a dramatization of the price exacted for disobedience.

A number of commentators on the construction of nations and communities remind us of the discursive content of collective identities, the fact that the enduring force of a sense of community derives from how collectivities are imagined. Spectacles play a central role in this imagining because they link an interior world of constructed fantasy to an external political reality. Such acts can be read as patriarchy’s “rational”, instrumentalist and politically driven responses to the threats of women’s economic and political

empowerment. But they can also be read as “irrational” fantasies of self-invention. By enlisting women’s bodies as signifiers to ritualise acts of purging or discipline, they have a self-constituting discursive function - and so imagine fictions of a cleansed body politic.

Theatrical displays of power and discipline are rapidly being institutionalised as the face of authority in South Africa. They function as powerful warnings to South Africans, and as portents of the consequences of deviance. A viewing public is consequently engendered and controlled, or warned of controls that will be taken in the case of transgression. Theatrics and performance therefore come to be closely connected to the operation of the contemporary South African state, with the state’s unofficial but incessantly performed messages of a healthy social body revolving around purging, expelling or reprimanding wayward, deviant and feminized bodies.

Registers of Rebellion

Taylor (1997) explores the potential of performance and theatre not only as instruments of the state or dominant groups, but as subaltern spectacles: performances that offer fictions for spectators to image themselves in oppositional ways, and to act out complex rebellions. The subversive potential of certain spectacles is evident in the way that spectatorship opens up spaces of resistance. With spectacle, the viewer is invited not simply to witness passively, but also to act, to respond - either by accepting the messages of nation and identity offered by spectacle, or by taking a stand against such messages. Oppositional action can take the form of public dialogue, which can play a central role in resistance and mobilisation. Ironically, for example, the spectacle of the Zuma rape trial galvanised solidarities and conversations that were not happening before - through listerves, websites, public talks, many women and men came together to forge new forms of solidarity and consciousness.

Similar subversive solidarities were generated in the protests, coordinated by People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), against the territorial control of the previously mentioned Noordhoek taxi drivers in 2008. In one of these protests, hundreds of women wearing miniskirts and led by a prominent radio personality, marched to the taxi rank to express solidarity and celebrate their control over their own bodies, and their rights to public spaces. Marked by the spirited display of bodies and dress, the demonstrations were exuberant retorts to the repressive patriarchal violence previously exercised over the bodies of women at the rank. The animated protest revealed the eruption of a “voice” - audible above the monologue of the patriarchal regime - which opened up possibilities for what Mikhail Bakhtin has described as dialogic interaction (1981). Bakhtin’s dialogue identifies possibilities for revolutionary futures where the univocality of dominant groups no longer wields absolute control. It concep-

tualizes the scope for future contestation even when those in power work so unceasingly to mystify, reproduce and reinvent their ascendancy.

The Noordhoek protest reveal that the sheer energy of the active body can reinforce the impact of subversive acts. The protests highlighted the power of the mobile body, and the way that conceptual and politicised action can be manifested in embodied acts. This is an indication of the way that attention to the politicised body expands ideas evident in a social movement study like *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Ballard, Habib and Valodia, 2006). As a pivotal study of present-day resistance, the collection plots trajectories of post-apartheid struggle mainly by tracing how thought precedes and guides action, by showing how political action - conceived in terms of a Cartesian binary - emanates from the mind. Theorised politics is seen to direct the moving body in a unilinear way, this illustrating the rather tired formulations, paradigms and constructs that characterise much South African Marxist and early feminist work on politics and struggle. Even the attempt to acknowledge identity politics ends up ignoring how complicatedly individuals and groups define and name themselves through public performance and embodiment. It is often through the body in motion, the acting body, that “politics” takes shape, that a sense of solidarity and of political identity acquires meaning, and that new social identities and ways of being in the world are envisaged.

As a book such as *Voices of Protest* recognizes, there has been a proliferation of social movements since 1994, and contributions to the book demonstrate how diverse they have become since 2000: many are closer to the state than others, and there are important differences between movements focusing on identity politics, and those concerned mainly with resource allocation and distribution. Yet it becomes crucial to consider how performance and embodied struggle have deviated from previous traditions of political action. Currently, many almost anarchic acts are registering an increasing dis-ease with the neo-liberal state, including the standard routes that it provides for opposition and what Noam Chomsky calls the manufacture of consent (see Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

In South Africa, politicised performance and embodied struggle have been defined through acts like the *toyi-toyi*, or organised marches or funeral processions. Here, symbols, movement and sounds linked to bodily performance served a very focused purpose in challenging the apartheid government. In the present day, it becomes important to consider how resistance and body performance and styling have been deviating from those rooted in a specific moment of resistance. Particularly important here is a reconsideration of how dis-organised and incoherent performance, movement and sound expressing opposition can be - compared with a previous period. It be-

comes crucial to think about how bodies occupy and move in spaces in less ritualistic and organized ways, for example, in performing acts of irreverence, parody, revelry or sabotage.

The Noordhoek protests are evidence of this spontaneous and relatively dis-organised spectacle, spectacle which enlists a repertoire of images and signifiers that complicatedly subvert patriarchal authority. Defiant and irreverent, the protests regularly featured women wearing miniskirts, carrying placards that proclaimed their disobedience and defiance, and generally celebrating the behaviour and dress that have been used to castigate women. Overall, the demonstrations (clearly different from the orderly march or procession) y proclaimed women’s rights to be whom they wish to be. We can liken the power and subversive force of such protest to the subversively riotous powers of many gay pride parades, where the foundations of heterosexist normalcy are challenged not only through a cerebral rejection of the status quo (marches or placards challenging heterosexism), but through a joyous celebration of autonomy, of entirely “other” ways on being. POWA’s demonstrations and other protests at Noordhoek celebrated freedoms that mock the scripts of identity and sexuality available both in patriarchal heterosexist behaviour and identity, and in the orthodox routes of orderly protest encouraged by patriarchal regimes and the neo-liberal state.

As riotous bodily performance, these illustrate codes different from the sobriety of anti-apartheid marches in a previous era. Generally, the unfettered vigour of the body in motion as well as its shocking nakedness or near-nakedness have been key to the resistances of both gay and lesbian protest, and protests by colonized and other multiply subordinated women. Often eluding the civil codes of rebellion used by other less marginalised groups, these rebellions frequently unsettle an entrenched mind-body opposition: the sanctification of the logical mind in determining the “ordered” movement of the body. In so doing, they undermine the foundations of the hegemony of repressive regimes - including patriarchy, neo-liberal democracy and nationalism - that speak in the name of the “truth” of “human” behaviour, or of “reason”, or of citizenship.

The subversive force of such performance becomes evident when we consider how neo-liberalism institutes a very distinct coercive control over bodies, a control that involves surveillance instituted through the covert use of spectacle or example. The methodologies and analysis in studies such as *Voices of Protest* focus on fairly clearcut organised political events. Yet performance and resistance under neo-liberalism can be much more covert, at the margins of the public sphere, and maybe inbetween spheres - for example, in what we define as entertainment and leisure. As Taylor (1997) shows, many leisure and entertainment activities in Argentina have been emphatically politicised, and resistance is not only that

which is expressed through social movements and “the political event”.

Riotous Acts

Even though power requires endless fictional re-invention, the language condemning it can curiously reinforce its inevitability. For example, feminist activist and intellectual fixation with the materiality of power can peculiarly recreate the conditions for its persistence: stressing the extent to which present-day culture is saturated in gender violence often represents women as the casualties and potential casualties that they have been constructed to be.

It is often believed that this language of recognition is a primary way of addressing the urgency of the violation of women's bodies. et what are the possibilities for imaginative responses to dominant textual constructions of bodies? Butler speaks about these by arguing that “Just as bodily surfaces are enacted as the natural, so these surfaces can become the site of a dissonant and denaturalised performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself (1990: 200). Here she suggests that “agency” cannot lie in “forsaking” a position into which one is subjected, but in destabilising this position through an iterative performativity.

Self-conscious body performance is central to this in the way it can mock authority in ways that are not conventionally or directly “political”. Through movement, dress, sound, and a range of behaviours, performing bodies can undermine institutions, relationships, and most importantly, the symbols and icons that mystify the suppression of human freedoms. Such performance becomes especially powerful when the capitalist state so effectively mobilizes forces, discourses, symbols and institutions to speak in its name. What theorists ranging from Antonio Gramsci (see Bozzini, 1985) to Ralph Miliband (1978) have revealed is that the apathy often seen among subordinated groups is both an effect of hegemony, and an effect of surreptitious intimidation – of threats of exclusion and punishment, and that these threats are covertly conveyed through spectacles of power.

Confronting the way that opposition is controlled by the democratic capitalist state, Miliband argues that capitalist democracy requires subordinate classes to accept the legitimacy of the social order. Their complicity involves confining rebellion to the traditional procedures of the political system. Consequently, all thoughts of radical change are construed as being detrimental to the common good of democracy. As evidenced in recent arguments about the need for South African workers to contain their resistance in the interests of “the nation”, its international reputation, and the smooth functioning of the country's hosting of the soccer World Cup, neo-liberal democracy can work hand in glove with nationalism in persuading subordinate groups to repress their resistance.

But hegemony is always partial, and Miliband's explanation of desubordina-

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tion captures the erosion of deference towards groups in positions of power – despite the formidable ideological and institutional machinery they may use to control. The tactics enlisted in doing this include inversion, parody, mockery, especially one of the three forms of carnivalesque that Bakhtin (1981) describes in ritual spectacle. As many spectacles of discipline reveal, technologies of intimidation – ranging from those co-ordinated by the state, to individuals and regimes supported by and through the workings of the state - are entrenched through the drama of their enactment. And key ways of subverting this power is through riotous mockery and caricature. In fact, much of the performance of bodies and the responses to these performances reveals that the public presence of transgressive bodies can pose even greater challenges to the status quo than equal rights. The existence of un-nameable bodies, of indecipherable bodies of ambiguous bodies, has existen-

tial and psychological implications; it, obliges “normal” bodies to re-assess their traditional power in fundamental ways.

There are numerous, yet often under-rated, examples of these performative acts in the present. One that poses especially interesting challenges is associated with the documentary photographer, Zanele Muholi. In March 2010, the eruption of a controversy around the exhibition in which she featured reveals that there are many contemporary artists whose work poses subversive challenges to official ways of seeing gender, bodies and South African identities. The Minister of Arts and Culture, Lulu Xingwana walked out of the opening of the Innovative Women exhibition and went on to condemn artists including Muholi and Nandipha Mntambo as creators of work that was pornographic, immoral, offensive and inimical to nation-building. As a prominent artist and personality in public life, however, Muholi has posed especially explosive challenges to normative ideas about bodies, gender and legitimate ways of representing South African identities. Muholi has worked for several years as a documentary photographer, having become a central figure in black lesbian activism, especially through her involvement in the Forum for the Empowerment of Women. More recently, she has broken into the South African art establishment, with her powerful images of black women, mainly lesbians, usually working to subvert conventional images of black femininities and female sexuality.

One of her most memorable photographic images features the still life of a soiled sanitary towel on a plate, framed by a knife and fork. The meanings of this image can and have been analysed in various ways; but generally it is important to identify the demystification and laying bare of “silenced” processes about the (silenced) female body: the taboo, dirt and pathology associated in most cultures with the female body and especially with menstruation.

Muholi's photographs not only tell stories about invisibilised bodies and struggles; they also shock and challenge. Moreover, Muholi herself extends the subversion evident in her artwork with highly conscious presentations of the self. Short, athletic and androgynous in her appearance, dress and bodily movements, she refuses cultural identification as “feminine” or “masculine”. At public events in recent months she has worn the traditional dress of a southern African domestic worker, an outfit which she combines with brightly-coloured funky socks and designer sports shoes. This, alongside her long dreadlocks, and the camera equipment she always carries, makes her “presence” impossible to place: an “unsettling” mixture of: indices of servitude, masculinised tools conferring the control over the gaze and the power to represent; and the unsettling of her binaristic identification as either male or female, masculine or feminine. At the AWID conference held at the Cape Town Convention Centre in November 2008, Muholi insisted to

organisers that she was a domestic worker who had run away from her employer to attend the conference, and called on those at the door to therefore let her in free of charge. While it was obvious to all that she was not a fleeing domestic worker, and obvious to many who know her that she is by no means still a struggling photographer-activist, she was of course allowed in.

Apart from the obvious mockery here (the stripping away of stereotypes of black feminised servitude and the attack on those who perpetuate and feed off such stereotypes), the exuberance of this performance is striking. And it is worth remarking once again on the new tone of humour in many forms of recent South African radical protest, a tone which deviates diametrically from the dourness of opposition in previous decades.

We could speculate about a similar exuberance in certain dress styles among the black youth in South Africa. For example, at Maponya Mall, the enormous new shopping complex in Soweto, many young black South Africans have adopted an eclectic dress style which defies the conventions of globalised and national designer consumer capitalism and branding. Often tacky and feisty, it refuses the expensive branding defined by Calvin Klein, Tommy Helfinger, Nike, or Prada, as well as a local fashion label such as Stoned Cherry. The oppositional brand image constructed through the bricolage of individual young men and women is therefore unique vis-à-vis the dictates of fashion houses and dominant advertising campaigns; it is the dress style of young black South Africans who use their limited financial resources as well as an astute valuing of symbols and icons linked to other local, national and global forms of popular cultural resistance to assertively talk back to the dominant world that they intimately know. They proudly define new possibilities for “identification”, their allegiance to *this* particular urban place at the periphery of global consumer capitalism, and extend the possibilities of youth subculture “being” beyond a world determined only by commodity capitalism, advertising monopolies and global mass media images.

It is misleading to generalise about all the above performances under the rubric of “desubordination”. Many are complicit with capitalist consumerism and prescribed masculinities and femininities. Some, such as Zanele Muholi's artwork and self-performance, are anarchically individualist, and some, such as the protests of women at Noordhoek, have a very clear political focus. Yet the persistence of such rebellions through bodily performance and public spectacle – whether displayed in the shopping centres of South Africa's townships or surfacing at taxi ranks in Noordhoek - are reminders of the resilience of the human spirit in searching for various freedoms. They remind us that: “Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken” (Bakhtin, 1984: 166).



UNEARTHING SKELETONS IN HISTORY'S SHALLOW GRAVES

a conversation between Gabi Ngcobo and Kemang Wa Lehurele

This conversation is between Kemang Wa Lehurele and Gabi Ngcobo and is a follow up from the outcome of the performance forming part of Gugulethu's contribution to the group exhibition *Scratching the Surface Vol.1* titled "NY7 Pavement Memoirs" 2008. Wa Lehurele's performance titled *uGuqul'ibhatyi* took place in Gugulethu township, at the back yard of Kwa Mlamli's, a sheeben the collective has been using as a project space since 2006. On Friday August 8, 2008 at exactly 1.36pm Wa Lehurele sent Ngcobo a text message that read thus:

"I just ran into a ribcage in my hole, and its still intact. Am scared it might b human. If not it'll be of a sheep, dog or cow."

This was relating to a hole he had started digging with combs two and a-half days before. It was a performance from his series titled *uGuqul'ibhatyi* which on this occasion formed part of the group exhibition mentioned above.

Gabi Ngcobo: Kemang, it has been almost two years since the performance described above occurred. 20 days after this day I was to leave the country to study in the United States at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College. Among other things, I hoped my time away and the curatorial education I was to be exposed to will help me figure out how to conceptually grasp what 'accidentally' transpired as part of your performance; you had aimed to dig a hole for three days accompanied by a sound of you combing your hair. When I received your text I was at the AVA Gallery where the main exhibition featuring 17 artists had opened four days prior. I remember the text sending a cold chill through my entire body and as a result I did not even respond, I couldn't. When we arrived in Gugulethu for the second leg of the opening of the exhibition featuring a parallel installation by the Gugulethu later that afternoon, there was a hole big enough for at least two people to stand on, perhaps even lie in, and true enough, a carefully excavated rib cage, too big to be human, lay inside.

Can you give the readers some background on this series of performances; that is, why the title *uGuqul'ibhatyi* and your response in the context of the exhibition "Scratching the Surface Vol.1" and as part of a larger body of work "NY7 Pavement Memoirs" created by Gugulethu for the same exhibition?

Kemang Wa Lehurele: It certainly is almost two years since the work materialized. And like you, when I hit the first bone, I received a chill through my own body having realized what I had discovered. First off let me give some background to the work as it is situated within a series of performances. Since 2008 I



Kemang Wa Lehurele *uGuqul'ibhatyi* performance, 2008, Gugulethu, Cape Town

have been working with *uGuqul'ibhatyi*, a Xhosa term denoting to turn a coat inside out. The term was especially used to describe individuals who had undergone race reclassification, but more so those who had reclassified from "Black" to "Coloured".

Some time before I decided to fully dedicate my time to art making, I worked in the film industry, then later, television industry. During this period I had the luxury to contribute to a script for a feature film that is yet to materialize. The film script is a true-life drama about a man who underwent race classification during apartheid South Africa. Having raised two children with his wife for many decades, the man, lying on his deathbed, told his family who he really was: a black man. He had reclassified from Black to Coloured upon arrival in Cape Town from the Eastern Cape. He married a 'coloured' woman and lived in Bonteheuvel for the rest of his life. Thus, the series of performances were directly influenced by the work I had done on the script. And having met the wife and both daughters in person, I realized the volume of narratives that needed to be told but also the open wounds in country.

So after many years of contemplating the erasure not only of personal stories but also of identities, I imaged a work that would unearth such stories and narratives, those that the dominant historical narratives have shoved six-feet under. Digging is not something that I begun while doing this work. As a child I used to dig in the field in front of my aunt's house. I remember digging for hours on end, and discovering objects that belonged in another time. Objects varied from plastic bags, bottles, to handcuffs

and hand grenades. So the act of excavating as such has constantly reminded me about the origins of Gugulethu: a result of the Group Areas act of 1950. I must state though that when I started digging at Kwa Mlamli, I had no illusions of finding anything. Rather the work was intended to be symbolic gesture of excavation.

When I hit the first bone with my afro-comb that I had been using to dig, I thought that it was a human bone. As a result I jumped out of the hole and informed 'lectives. But none of them believed me. I called Ta Mlamli and notified him and asked whether he wished me to discontinue? Ta Mlamli sent his older brother who was able to assure me that it was a cow skeleton and not human.

Further my interest in the human body, more so the black body has led me to examine means and ways of identifying and stereotyping black bodies. The pencil test that was used as a determining factor of ones race and identity or rather policing blackness is not as Jurassic an ideal as we like to imagine. So the decision to dig with an Afro-comb was an attempt at mining, an archeology using an object familiar to most black bodies and black people who grow their hair.

The discovery of the skeleton has been a discovery of another time. And as much as it was unexpected to discover anything, it did lead to a discovery of a history of the area when the cows were buried. The neighbors who heard about the find came and told stories about the time, and era. Resulting in a public cross-generational dialogue about the past that rarely happens, if at all.

Gabi: In the context of "NY7 Pavement

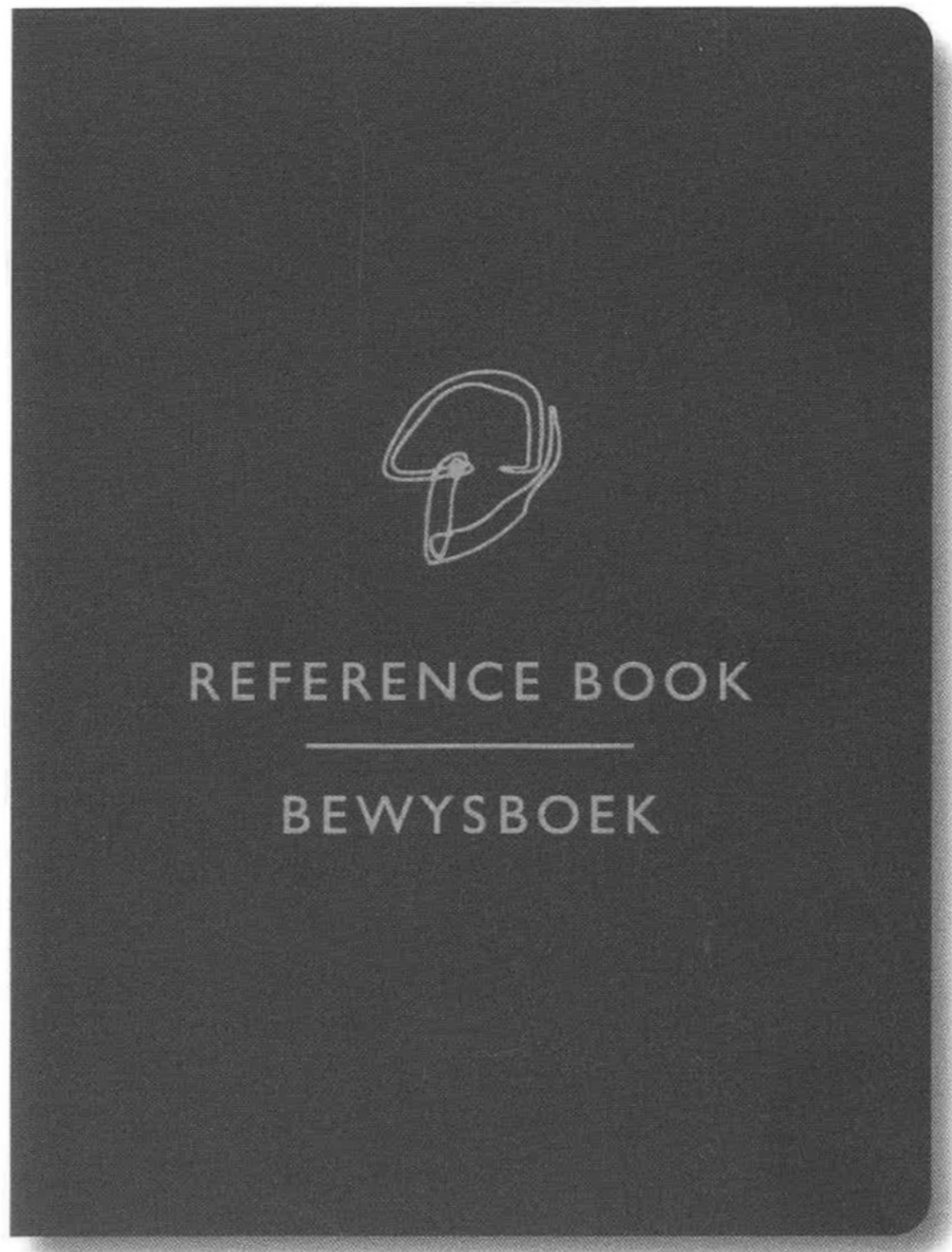
Memoirs" it is also fascinating that the finding of the skeleton became not only a critical moment of narrating that which history has buried but also reminded us things we tend to take for granted, such as the historical branding of places such as "Native Yard" (NY) in Gugulethu. We know very well that those bones could easily have been those of a human being, therefore our initial reaction.

I also remember that among the things that came out of that excavation was a small bottle of a product called "He Man," a cosmetic solution that was used by black people to make their skins lighter, a vehicle for passing, both officially and unofficially. So you have that historical rubble converging with the current drive to rename places and streets. As far as I understood then, there was a proposal to rename NY1 Street "Biko Drive", Steve Bantu Biko being the founder of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). I also registered a genuine concern from Gugulethu members, of the sad state of that very road to be named after a man who up to this day stands for the restoration of African consciousness. So there are so many layers to these histories, making the gesture of a promise of a sequel suggested by the title "Scratching the Surface Vol.1" seem pertinent.

It is also true that this accidental discovery of the bones happened outside the frame of premeditated curatorial and artistic gestures, between a conscious process and a consciousness removed from the realm of will and expectation. Even though we were not quite sure how, we affirmed the moment because we knew doing so meant that we had witnessed a collision between the past and the present—two regimes of historicity that, kept in continuous tension produce guidelines for the future.

Can you say briefly how, if at all, what transpired from that performance has impacted on your thoughts about the direction of your creative work?

Kemang: The impact of the work and the discovery as such, led me to a continuous interest in resurrecting other 'histories'. The work was just the beginning of 'scratching of a surface' in a way and has led to a larger body of work comprising of drawings and performative work. It marks the beginning of a series of work that continuously intends to unearth histories that refuse to rest in the shallow graves in which they have been buried. This particular work also embodies the nature of my performance work, in that they are never rehearsed. And in a sense, the performance becomes as ungovernable as an excavation or archeology itself in that you never know what you may unearth. So to a large degree, this work has assured my interest in spontaneous and unrehearsed gestures that still influence most of my work.



RIGHTS OF PASSAGE was a site-specific performance by Coco Fusco that took place at the Johannesburg Biennale on October 11, 1997. During the performance Fusco handed out passbooks that served as evidence of payment for entry to the Biennale, an artist's "multiple", and a document of the performance. According to Fusco, "The "passbook" is a souvenir, a reminder of a critical moment in history of demarcation of space in South Africa, of our ambivalent attraction to and repulsion from that past, and of its immanent commodification."



THE PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN DEFERRED

DINEO BOPAPE