Demanding Recognition

Curatorial Challenges in the Exhibition of Art from South Africa

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Curatorial Challenges in the Exhibition of Art from South Africa

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VIBE NIELSEN

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CURATORIAL CHALLENGES IN THE EXHIBITION OF ART FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Supervised by Professor Oscar Salemink and Dr Bjarke Oxlund

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PhD Thesis by Vibe Nielsen

Department of Anthropology · Faculty of Social Sciences · University of Copenhagen

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Introduction

"This time for Africa!" The slogan was being sung by a cheerful multitude of voices at a party some distance away. Originally performed by the Colombian singer Shakira (2010) for the official opening of the first FIFA World Cup to be held on the African continent, the famous lyrics still filled the air of the hillsides of Johannesburg when I visited the South African metropolis seven years later. Shouting to the world that *this* is the time for Africa, the party-goers echoed demands for recognition that I often heard expressed in South Africa, where a wish to be recognised on the international art scene was constantly present in the museum settings, art fairs and exhibitions in which I conducted the fieldwork for this thesis. These demands for recognition were voiced by curators, artists, students and sex-workers, who demanded to be heard in a world which they felt for many years had neglected Africa and African artists and not given them the attention they deserved. Recognition in the context of this thesis is understood as *Anerkennung* in the sense used by Axel Honneth (1995). As such, the demands for recognition raised in the South African art circles in which I conducted my fieldwork are demands for respect and esteem, a wish to be ascribed a *positive* status in a society in which they continuously are marginalised.

In the newly opened Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) in Cape Town, the founders expressed a wish to bring "the world to [the] shores [of Africa] – to share in its own story" (V&A Waterfront 2016), as if to share with the world all that it had not so far granted sufficient attention. The team behind the new museum sought to be recognised on the global art scene by simultaneously highlighting the local and global qualities of contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora. At the Iziko South African National Gallery (SANG), curators were met with similar demands for recognition by members of the public who refused to be represented by white South Africans, whom they deemed unsuitable for representing the art of a nation as diverse as South Africa. These demands reflect the ongoing attempts to decolonise South African institutions that have strong colonial ties, which also took place in universities around the country, ultimately leading to the fall of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) that had long stood at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Artists who rejected being labelled *African* because they wanted to be recognised for their own achievements as individuals similarly voiced demands for recognition that the curators at whom the demands were often directed often found rather demand*ing*. In combination, these demands for recognition form the empirical basis for this thesis, in which I explore how they are influencing debates about curation and decolonisation in contemporary South Africa.

The demands for recognition that I heard expressed during my fieldwork show that the legacies of centuries of colonialism, followed by half a century of apartheid rule, has not disappeared overnight.

Justice demands more than a fair distribution of material opportunities (Honneth 1995: 137) and even if conflicts over interests had been resolved in accordance with the wishes of, for example, the Rhodes Must Fall movement, in the years following apartheid, people who feel deprived of recognition are likely to remain normatively deficient until the systematically denial of the recognition they demand has been corrected. As Charles Taylor (1994: 26) has emphasised, "recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need". As such, demands for recognition are often the driving force behind political movements and social struggle (Honneth 1995: 137; Taylor 1994: 25). As this thesis will show, they can also be one of the driving forces behind the establishment of a new museum: at the Zeitz MOCAA, attempts to direct international attention toward the South African art market is not just a corporate adventure, but also an example of an institution that demands global recognition for Africa as a continent that has been overlooked in "the global art world" (Belting and Buddensieg 2009).

The research behind this thesis forms part of the research project *Global Europe: Constituting Europe from the outside in through artefacts*, which explores how the collection, circulation, classification and museum exhibition of objects define Europe from the outside in. The project examines how European classification and exhibition practices are performed outside Europe and has Japan and the four non-European BRICS-countries – Brazil, India, China and South Africa – as its primary focus. With this as my starting point, I arrived in South Africa for the first time in April 2016 and quickly found my search for Europe being materialised. From the Cape Dutch-style house I stayed in on the outskirts of Cape Town to the statues of white men of European descent and street names in Afrikaans and English, I was never far away from material reminders of European colonisation and white minority rule. However, continuing my search inside the museums and art galleries surrounding Company's Garden in Cape Town's City Bowl, I quickly realised that the material reminders of European dominance were not the only ones present. Europe was everywhere: in the wording of the exhibition labels, in the selected objects on display, in the classificatory boundaries between art and artefacts. Through centuries of European domination, South Africa has become a hybrid of European classification practices, "traditional" as well as contemporary African artworks, a multitude of languages, and people of all colours who often struggle to shape their own identities in a constantly changing environment.

Still finding its feet after apartheid came to an official end in 1994, South Africa is a place where many grapple to develop a commonly shared identity (Comaroff 1997: 119-120). The old order of the apartheid regime did not vanish from one day to the other: in the aftermath of centuries of colonialism, imperial sovereignty was replaced with another kind of oppression, which makes some feel just as powerless. Achille Mbembe (2015a: 13) calls the existence in this postcolonial reality an

"existence that is contingent, dispersed, and powerless [which] reveals itself in the guise of arbitrariness". It is a reality that is full of *entanglements*, a "'hydra-headed' [time] made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another" (Mbembe 2015a: 14). The ambivalent feelings of being in a "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967: 97) environment like this was shared by many of the people I met through my fieldwork and was reflected in the practices of curators, who can be described as "liminal beings" undergoing a "move from anti-colonial longing to postcolonial becoming" (Motha 2010: 286). The "liminal state" they were experiencing is in this context understood as the period between two different structural positions – a process in which societies or people move in a "state of transition" from one state to another (Turner 1967: 93-94). I use Victor Turner's (1967) concept of *liminality* in order to emphasise the inter-structural element of the "passage" experienced by people and societies finding themselves in a liminal period of transformation. In South Africa, a liminal state between one "relatively fixed or stable condition" and another has arguably occurred since the end of apartheid, where "social constancies [such] as legal statuses" changed significantly for many people (Turner 1967: 93). As I will show, the people I have interviewed and talked with in the context of this thesis, often find themselves in ambivalent states of being in-between: like the initiation rites examined by Turner (1967: 97) the current period of transition experienced by my interlocutors in South Africa, is characterised by its liminality making the people living in it feel ambivalent and "betwixt and between".

As I will show, the period of transformation experienced by my interlocutors also affects museum objects, which since the end of apartheid have undergone a process of reclassification. As such, they can be described as objects that are "not yet classified" just like the neophytes examined by Turner (1967: 96). An example of a type of object that is in a process of transformation is the rock art paintings produced by the San|Bushmen and Khoekhoen, who are indigenous to southern Africa.[1] Rock art paintings are currently on display at both the Iziko South African Museum, next to natural specimens of all kinds, and the Iziko SANG, alongside artworks by contemporary South African artists. The former site reveal the historical home of objects made by the indigenous inhabitants of southern Africa, while

[1] Now that the colonial terms "Hottentot" and "Bushman", used previously for indigenous South Africans, are widely perceived as offensive, anthropologists and linguists have for some time preferred the terms "Khoi" and "San" respectively (Mesthrie 2002a: 6). However, as Anthony T. Traill (2002: 45) has emphasised, the term "San" is derived from the Khoekhoen word *saan* and is thus not a word the group it denotes would use of themselves. As it may very well have a derogatory meaning, "[a]rchaeologists are now gradually reverting to the term 'Bushman' in recognition that 'San' might be no better in its connotations" (Mesthrie 2002a: 6). In this thesis, I have chosen the combined term San|Bushmen in the absence of any meaningful alternative and in full recognition of the possibly derogatory meanings of both words. I have further adopted the spelling "Khoekhoen" rather than "Khoi" or "Khoikhoi", accepting Gabriel S. Nienaber's (1990) argument that this is the best representation of the phonetics and is the form preferred in Nama orthography.

the latter site is a result of the post-apartheid desire to bring these objects into the realm of aesthetics, alongside artworks traditionally categorised as fine art. The Iziko Slave Lodge similarly highlights the shift in classification practices that has been ongoing since the end of apartheid: the first floor of the building still bears witness to the time when it housed the South African Cultural History Museum, with a collection consisting mainly of cultural historical objects originating from Europe or the private collections of white South Africans. Objects of black African origin, which until recently predominantly were displayed in the context of natural history (Goodnow 2006: 53; Nettleton 2013: 421), are now also displayed in art galleries, but are only slowly, if at all, finding their way into collections of cultural history.

The process of change that South Africa has experienced since the end of apartheid and is still in the middle of can be seen as a process of decolonisation in which curatorial practices originating in European distinctions between art and artefacts are constantly being challenged. The tense environments I often found myself in during exhibition openings or public discussions made me realise that the demands for recognition expressed by artists, curators, students and sex-workers reflect a sense of ambivalence not only for those expressing them, but also for those who are expected to meet them: the often white curators who were on the receiving end of the demands also struggled to navigate in the rapidly changing environment of their institutions, where few things are as they once were. *Their* navigation through the demands of recognition they were being met with became a key topic in my investigations. Alongside the voices of contemporary South African artists protesting at the perpetuation of the oppressive aspects of their society, they proved to be key interlocutors in my attempts to recognise both sides of the conflicts over decolonisation: the unrecognised, mostly black South Africans who continuously struggle to be heard and recognised, and the often white curators, whose curatorial decisions are constantly being challenged. They are all experiencing dramatic changes, and although their circumstances are different – some are highly privileged, while others have to fight even to make themselves heard – they all find themselves captured in a constant state of ambivalence. As subjects of a similar "colonial discourse" to that explored by Homi K. Bhabha (1994: 137-139), the interlocutors whose statements form the basis of this thesis are "splitting, doubling, turning into [their] opposite, projecting [and are] of such affective ambivalence and discursive disturbance, that [both the] colonizer and colonized are in a process of miscognition where each point of identification is always a partial and double repetition of the *otherness* of the self – democrat and despot, individual *and* servant, native and child".

Although Bhabha (1994) is referring to postcolonial India, his concept of ambivalence is equally relevant to my study of contemporary curatorial challenges in South African museums and art

galleries. The ambivalent state of being in-between as "almost the same but not quite […] Almost the same but not white" (Bhabha 1994: 127-128) is a situation many of my interlocutors found themselves in. In Chapter I, I examine the frustrations of Ayanda, a Johannesburg-based curator: having been schooled in a system shaped by colonialism, she sees her own material culture with the eyes of the coloniser. Refusing to be considered an "other" in her own country, she rejects the specifics of historical art from Africa in an attempt to become equal to the former but still ever-present coloniser. Ayanda is trapped in an ambivalent situation, as she cannot establish any difference for herself from the coloniser but cannot fully become his equal either (Cixous 1986: 71; Young 1990: 6). Similarly, the South African visual artist Lerato, to whom I likewise return in Chapter I, found herself caught between how she would *like* to express herself visually and how people around her *expect* her to express herself as a black, Zulu-speaking South African artist: producing art based on history, spirituality, gender, etc. resulted in a categorisation of her art as *African*, although artists who base their work on these themes can be found in most places. Lerato thus found herself in an ambivalent situation, where the colour of her skin continuously made her experience being considered "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha 1994: 127): as an individual being thrown from side to side in a constant internal negotiation forced upon her by a colonial system, which through its "systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity" continuously forced her to ask herself: "'In reality, who am I?'" (Fanon 2001: 200).

The ambivalent state in which my interlocutors found themselves is further complicated by the willingness with which they themselves have adopted and accepted the customs, curricula and material culture of the (former) coloniser. As Jean-Paul Sartre (2001 [1961]: 17) writes, the "status of 'native' is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among colonised people *with their content*". However, the colonised and their descendants have not been given a choice (Sartre 2001: 17). Indeed, they cannot choose, but must embrace both worlds in order to survive in a society so heavily influenced by Europe and the West. When Sartre (2001: 17) wrote his preface to the *Wretched of the Earth* at the beginning of the 1960s, this contradictory situation seemed "explosive" – as it still does today at times. Sartre (2001: 17) believed that he was living in the "moment when the match is put to the fuse" and witnessed in his lifetime (1905-1980) a long list of European colonies becoming independent. But as this thesis will show, the ambivalent situation resulting from the hybrid environment in which my interlocutors live is still a reality. As I will demonstrate in the upcoming chapters, this emphasises just how difficult it is to "thrust out colonialism" (Sartre 2001: 18) and let go of the material as well as immaterial legacies it left behind.

It is in this environment of constant ambivalence that I conducted my fieldwork. The curatorial debates I have examined by talking to artists and curators and participating in museum openings and public discussions have highlighted the difficulties at work in contemporary South Africa, where the dream of the Rainbow Nation is now long gone, but the alternatives are still in the making.[2] This thesis is an attempt to capture this specific moment in time, in which discussions about representation and decolonisation are at the forefront of many a debate in museums exhibiting art from South Africa. It is a time in which the plinth on the UCT campus, where the statue of Rhodes once stood, is still empty and the gallery walls of the Iziko SANG, which were left empty by the controversies over the *Our Lady* (2016-17) exhibition, are still the topic of many curatorial discussions. The replacements for the empty spaces examined in this thesis are manifold and sometimes contradictory, but are very much present and sometimes come in the form of a black, African eagle rising like a phoenix from the ashes of her colonial, patriarchal or otherwise oppressive predecessor.

By examining how demands for recognition influence debates about curation and decolonisation in the current "times of urgency" (Mbembe 2015b) in South African museums and public spaces, this thesis contributes with an anthropological analysis of contemporary South African museum practices to the field of postcolonial studies. This field took shape in the aftermath of the Second World War, which left Europe in ruins and resulted in resistance against European colonial powers to such a degree that their colonies started to gain independence one by one. In Africa, Egypt (1954), which had been declared a British protectorate in 1922, Morocco (1956) and Ghana (1957) (then known as the British Gold Coast) became independent in the years following the independence of India (1947), the most populous colony in the British Empire, known as its "finest imperial" or "crown jewel" (Blake 1991: 1; Kopytoff 1986: 74; Schneider 2017: 163; Wolpert 2009: 10). In the context of the Algerian War of Independence from France (1954-1962), Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) wrote his influential works *Peau Noire, Masques Blanc* (first published in 1952) and *Les Damnés de la Terre* (first published in 1961), which can be considered "the Bible of decolonisation" (Stuart Hall quoted in Young 2001: xv).[3] Fanon's (2001) analysis of colonialism and anti-colonial resistance shaped the ideas of early postcolonial theory and formed the basis of the field of research of which this thesis is a part. Defining decolonisation as a "violent phenomenon" in which one "'species' of men" is replaced by another

[2] It became popular to talk about South Africa as the Rainbow Nation in the immediate aftermath of apartheid, when President Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), in his inaugural speech outside the Government Building in Pretoria, famously proclaimed: "We shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world" (Mandela 1994 in Peck 2014).

[3] In this thesis, I will refer to the following English translations of these texts: the 2017-edition of *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles L. Markmann, and the 2001-edition of *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington.

(Fanon 2001: 27) perceived decolonisation as a "programme of complete disorder [which] cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding". Instead, Fanon argues, it has to come through struggle. Heavily inspired by Karl Marx (1994 [1845]: 101), who, in his *Theses on Feurbach*, famously concluded that "philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is, to change it", Fanon (2017: 8) believed that "when one has taken cognizance of [the] situation [of colonialism] one [cannot] be deaf to that voice rolling down the stages of history: 'What matters is not to know the world but to change it'".

In the context of this thesis, Fanon's understanding of decolonisation as a violent process was shared by the Rhodes Must Fall students examined in Chapter II. Their struggle to remove the statue of Rhodes and other material and immaterial reminders of colonialism was very much inspired by Fanon (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 222), and the sometimes violent opposition to the UCT was often justified in his name. However, the attempts to decolonise UCT initiated by the Rhodes Must Fall movement can also be seen as the kind of Africanisation that Fanon (2001: 125-126) expressed his sincere concern about, when he anticipated that the "nationalisation and Africanisation of the ruling classes [would] become more and more tinged by racism [until the] resounding assertions of the unity of the [African] continent [would result in] a heart-breaking return to chauvinism in its most bitter and detestable form". As I will show, the attempted Africanisation of the UCT led by the Rhodes Must Fall-movement did indeed result in an increased focus on race, sometimes to the extent that people who self-identified as black were met with accusations that they were not black enough.

Since Fanon wrote his influential analyses of colonialism and anti-colonial resistance, postcolonial scholars have analysed the impact of the colonial experience and its legacy (Appiah 1996; Bhabha 1994; Mbembe 2015a; Mudimbe 1988; Said 1978; Spivak 1988). Inspired by this research, and especially by the works of Homi K. Bhabha (1994), I understand the museological representations examined in this thesis to be part of a "colonial discourse" that is shaped by established ideas about the world that originate in Europe (Appadurai 1990: 299; Herzfeld 2004: 2). The dominating discourses in South African museum practice can be seen in the ways curators choose to classify and exhibit art from Africa. According to Michel Foucault (1972), the dominant discourses in society are the results of established truths linked to various relations of power. By analysing the written and oral discourses that are revealed in how art from South Africa is classified and exhibited, I highlight how dominant discourses make certain ideas of the world more *natural* than others in a process in which "other" ways of seeing the world are either made less plausible or at worst excluded entirely (Phillips 2010: 265). As I will show, the colonial discourse still predominates in the curatorial practices I have

examined, even though exhibitionary practices are constantly being challenged by the demands for recognition the curators are met with.

Bhabha (1994: 109) emphasises that the "anatomy of colonial discourse remains incomplete until […] the stereotype, as an arrested, fetishistic mode of representation within its field of identification" has been located. He aims to re-constellate the problem of colonial representation "out of its simplistic binary, oppositional logic, into a postmodern one of ambivalence, hybridity and heterogeneity" (Chakrabarti 2010: 239). Through his concept of *mimicry*, Bhabha (1994) challenges the traditional binary between coloniser and colonised: the colonial subject mimics the colonial master and adapts to his customs, tastes and ideas, but nevertheless remains in an ambivalent state of being in-between. In the context of this thesis, I show that it is not only the (former) colonised who find themselves in this position: the ambivalence is simultaneously felt by the (former) colonisers, who, rather than feeling "almost the same but not quite […] Almost the same but not white" (Bhabha 1994: 127-128), experience being considered not black or not African enough. They feel challenged by the (former) colonised whose mimicry is never far from mockery (Ashcroft et al. 2013: 13).

Through an examination of the written or spoken "truths" of South African museum practices, I emphasise the established relations of power and expose the conscious or unconscious domination of one group over others. In line with Tony Bennett (2004: 5), I look at the ways in which practices of classification and exhibition shape thoughts, feelings, perceptions and behaviours *within* the museum. Museums and other cultural institutions are not mere reinforcements of already existing forms of power, such as class or gender domination, but also places in which "relations of power are constituted" (Bennett 2004: 5). By exploring the contemporary consequences of what Edward Said (1978: 88-89) calls "the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the [non-European] politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period", I examine how contemporary South African museum practice continuously reproduces power relations originating in colonialism. My analysis of the specific wording used by curators and art historians in exhibition labels and museum catalogues emphasises how colonialism operated not only as a form of military rule, but also as a discourse of domination (Young 2016: 383-394). For centuries the non-European has been represented by Europeans, and in contemporary South Africa it is still predominantly white curators of European descent who claim the right to represent what qualifies as the art of the nation. As I will demonstrate in Chapter III, the Zeitz MOCAA is also continuing a long-established tradition of fitting exhibitions to European or Western epistemological frameworks in an attempt to receive global recognition. Although the exhibition practices performed in South African museums are being

challenged by demands for recognition expressed by South African artists, curators, students and others who no longer want to accept the domination of white curators in their institutions, Eurocentric ideas about what art is and who produces it are largely accepted. This shows that European notions of art and culture, just like notions about freedom, welfare, human rights, sovereignty, representation, democracy and tolerance, which similarly have spread from Europe since the age of Enlightenment, have now become universal (Appadurai 1990: 299; Herzfeld 2004: 2).

Like Said (1978), Bhabha (1994), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) and other postcolonial scholars before me, I seek to highlight the dominant structures of power in society, be they racial, sexual or political, and to connect them to the "complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (Bhabha 1994: 3). I do this by examining the Eurocentric curatorial practices performed in South African museums, which emphasises the intellectual process through which European cultural, political, religious and philosophical assumptions, concepts, structures of knowledge and values (today also referred to as Euro-American (Appadurai 1990: 300), North Atlantic (Trouillot 2002) or Western) are considered, consciously or unconsciously, the *normal*, the *natural* or the *universal* (Ashcroft et al. 2013: 107; Mota-Lopes 2007: 55). Since the "world became global in the sixteenth century" (Trouillot 2002: 839), European colonial powers have created an image of themselves in relation to the non-European as modern, by referring to the non-European as pre- or non-modern, and as civilised, by referring to the non-European as uncivilised or primitive (Monroe 2018: 93). In this comparative mode of seeing and experiencing the world, non-European peoples, who were judged to be too different from Europeans, thus came to be viewed as non-modern (Meier 2013: 99). In this way, modernity belongs to the bundle of terms that Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2002) has dubbed *North Atlantic Universals* – a group of words and concepts "that project the North Atlantic experience on a universal scale" (Trouillot 2002: 847). Confirming what Michael Herzfeld (2004) calls "the global hierarchy of value", Trouillot (2002: 848) emphasises that, although North Atlantic universals have their inception in the West, they are now accepted as "seductive [and] at times even irresistible [universal experiences] precisely because they manage to hide their specific – localized, and thus parochial – historical location". The European origin of the curatorial practices I examine in this thesis is thus concealed in a Eurocentric process that, in an a priori fashion, presents the modes of thought that emerged from centuries of European colonialism as the universal norm.

The internalisation of European ideas within the colonies and among the colonised was ensured by the European colonial domination of a majority of the planet's land surface (Macqueen 2014: xv). In the nineteenth century, at the height of European imperialism, this domination was increasingly

legitimised by anthropologists, philosophers and other European scholars who portrayed the peoples of the colonised world as inferior and childlike: ideas of Africa as a "land of childhood, removed from the light of self-conscious history and wrapped in the dark mantle of night" (Hegel 1975 [1830]: 174) were widespread and justified a system of paternalistic European colonisation that placed white, European culture at the top of the ladder of cultural evolution – the one true world civilisation (Bayley 1860: 5; BM 1899: 98; Mahmud 1999: 1221; Monroe 2018: 93; Tricoire 2017: 33). In Chapter I, I will show how these theories shaped the ways in which museums represented (South) Africa throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe and North America, as well as in South Africa itself, where white European minority rule took over from direct British rule when the Union of South Africa was established as a self-governing dominion of the British Empire in 1910. The Eurocentrism dominating European perceptions of "the other" thus not only defined the ways in which the world was seen from Europe – it also defined how non-European peoples perceived, and became alienated from, themselves.

As well as being situated in the field of postcolonial studies, this thesis also contributes to the field of museum studies, one that over the course of the past few decades has increasingly directed its attention towards the decolonisation of the museum space (Aldrich 2009; Chambers et al. 2014; Edwards et al. 2006; Thomas 2010; 2013; Tolia-Kelly 2016). This attention has influenced a political debate in which European museum employees and politicians now openly discuss ways to repatriate parts of collections that found their way to Europe during the era of colonialism (Beurden 2018; Kuprecht 2014; Laely 2018; Macron 2017). The claims for repatriation from former colonies to museums based in Europe have led to a discussion about who has the right to represent objects from Africa. In the context of this thesis, I will engage with this issue in my analysis of the ongoing curatorial discussions taking place at the Iziko SANG and the Zeitz MOCAA. While it is not the issue of repatriation that is being discussed in these cases, it is a discussion about whether curators of European descent can continue to assume authority to represent the art of the nation of South Africa. The white curators are being challenged because of their ancestry and because of the privileges their skin colour represent. In that sense, it is not a discussion about the repatriation of objects that is taking place in the discussions I have examined, but one about the repatriation of the assumed authority to represent.

The Exclusive Museum Space

Through its examination of how demands for recognition influence debates about curation and decolonisation, this thesis shows how reclassifications of art from South Africa are often initiated in response to demands for recognition expressed by South African artists, students and curators who are protesting against the exclusivity of their institutions. In this way, they are challenging what Pierre Bourdieu et al. (2002: 108) call the validity of the "collective taste" of a group of curators from South Africa's predominantly white elite. The well-educated curators distinguish themselves from the rest of the population and claim the right to represent what constitutes the art of the nation at the Iziko SANG. In most cases the curators are "children from cultivated families" who grew up in families that allowed them "a lasting and assiduous disposition to cultural practice [formed by a] regular and prolonged practice [of] visits to museums or special exhibitions [providing them with] a certain demarcation between what is worthy or unworthy of admiration, love or reverence" (Bourdieu et al. 2002: 109). The curators' upbringing and education thus provided them with a form of *cultural capital* that excluded members of the public who had not been brought up with the same set of cultural codes needed to feel at ease in the otherwise exclusive museum space.

With their habitually embedded forms of knowledge and their accompanying ability to manoeuvre in certain circles in society, the curators possessed cultural capital that was significant for the privileged classes in society, enabling them to define their culture as superior to that of society's more disadvantaged classes (Bennett et al. 2009: 9). According to Bourdieu, structural distinctions between groups in society – in this context the well-educated and often white curators and the mostly black artists who had not received similar schooling, nor had been brought up in museum-going families – are products of struggles between social agents who attempt to reconcile their *habitus* with the objectified cultures in society (Robbins 2005: 25). It is when one's habitus does not fit with society's objectified cultures that institutions like the Iziko SANG and other art museums seem exclusive, while also appearing welcoming to those whose habitus more readily corresponds with the objectified cultures they represent. Thus with a habitually ingrained understanding of the kind of art exhibited in art museums, they possess the cultural capital to make the artworks more easily accessible to them. People who do not possess a similar cultural capital will consequently feel unwelcome or lost in a space where they are not familiar with the cultural codes they are expected to perform (Duncan 2004: 8). This exclusivity of the museum space is something I will particularly explore in Chapter II in relation to the Iziko SANG, but the mechanisms of social distinction are evident throughout the global museum landscape. Since for Bourdieu (1984: xxv) a work of art only has "meaning and interest […] for someone

who possesses the cultural competence, that is the code, into which it is encoded" art often becomes an exclusionary marker of social status and class:

> A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason. Not having learnt to adopt the adequate disposition he stops short at [the] emotional resonances aroused by these properties, referring to 'austere' colours or a 'joyful' melody […] [T]he encounter with a work of art is not 'love at first sight' as is generally supposed, and the act of empathy […] presupposes an act of cognition, a decoding operation, which implies the implementation of a cognitive acquirement, a cultural code (Bourdieu 1984: xxv-xxvi).

During my fieldwork I met Lerato, a visual artist who, during her first years at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in Cape Town, felt excluded in similar ways to this beholder. Having not been taught art in the school she attended in the Johannesburg neighbourhood of Soweto (South-West Township) where she grew up, she felt far behind her fellow students, who primarily came from white, middle-class and upper-middle-class families capable of sending their children to private schools offering formal art education. The exclusion felt by Lerato was not only an exclusion based on her lack of formal, Western or Eurocentric art education, but also an exclusion of other ways of perceiving art. Lerato felt misunderstood in an environment in which her background as a black, Zulu-speaking South African artist excluded her understanding of and thereby access to the perceptions of art taught at Michaelis. Her habitus, the set of cultural practices she was brought up with, was not the same as the habitus shared by her fellow students.

Like Lerato herself, the other students were products of the structural conditions to which their upbringing had exposed them: their parents' employment rates, and theirs and their own access to education and other structural factors that made each of them "a certain specification of the collective history of [their] group or class" (Bourdieu 1977: 86). Each individual, Bourdieu (1977: 86) writes, can in this way be seen as a "*structural variant* of all the other group or class habitus". As such the other students were variants of the same group, whose members shared a similar upbringing, similar values and similar possibilities. Lerato's upbringing had been very different from that of her white fellow students, and although she and they were now members of the same academic community at UCT, their different cultural references provided them with different forms of cultural capital, which divided them from each other and constituted the class differences between them. Culture, understood as a form of capital or asset, is in this way "central to the constitution of class relationships" (Bennett et al. 2009: 2), but in this specific South African context, the differences between Lerato and her fellow students also highlighted their racial differences: as in other former colonies, "the economic substructure [in South Africa] is also a superstructure [which causes] the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich" (Fanon 2001: 31). I will return to this

aspect of the overlaps between class and racial distinctions in presenting my research methodology below.

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) draws attention to the importance of the reproduction or inheritance of cultural capital. This kind of capital is passed on to children whose parents, "equipped with cultural capital, are able to drill their children in the cultural forms that predispose them to perform well in the educational system through their ability to handle "abstract" and "formal" categories" (Bennett et al. 2009: 13). In an educational setting that caters for a specific kind of knowledge. The differences experienced by Lerato were thus a result not only of her different educational background, but also of her lack of the same kind of cultural capital as her fellow students had been nurtured into possessing. Capable of turning their cultural capital into credentials useful in a schooling system catering for their kind of cultural capital, the students at Michaelis who, through their upbringing and primary education, understood the cultural codes of the art school, found themselves in a situation that reproduced their privileges. In this way, a system of cultural or social reproduction in which the "same kind of dominant classes are able to remake themselves, and their children, in remarkably persistent ways" (Bennett et al. 2009: 13) is maintained.

However, the habitus inculcated into the privileged white students at Michaelis by means of the set of ideas, skills and tastes they have been brought up with do not necessarily amount to cultural capital (Prieur and Savage 2015: 316): "For an asset to serve as a capital in a bourdieusian sense, it should be linked to legitimacy, convertibility and domination, and this link has to be shown. It is not a given that the cultural specificities of the highly educated […] enjoy any wider recognition as good taste, and it is not a given that they may be converted to social or economic capital. When curators are met with demands for recognition, it is this legitimacy that is being challenged: the ideas, skills and tastes of the well-educated South African elite are no longer automatically seen as an asset in institutions in which previous absolutes are now largely being negotiated. While social features like taste can still be turned into "processes of social closure" (Prieur and Savage 2015: 316) and exclude people with a different cultural habitus, it is no longer preordained that it will be the social features of the well-educated, white curators which will remain dominant. As my analysis of the discussion in relation to the *Our Lady* exhibition in Chapter II will show, white curators, artists and feminists still attempt to exclude other voices than their own by transforming their cultural assets into cultural capital. Given their academic backgrounds, the cultural habitus of these discussants was fitting in the setting of an academic discussion about the role of art in South Africa. The well-educated, mostly white discussants thus felt comfortable in making themselves heard and used their habitually embedded knowledge (their

education) as cultural capital in order to give legitimacy to their arguments and preserve their dominant position.

The demands for recognition targeted at curators who in this way make use of their cultural capital to ensure their dominance in society can be seen as attempts to emphasise that those who do not fit into hegemonic understandings of society do not fit into it at all. The demand for recognition thus "extends beyond an acknowledgment of the equal value of all humans potentially, and comes to include the equal value of what they have made of this potential in fact" (Taylor 1994: 42). The recognition sought by the artists and students I spoke with in the context of this thesis was thus as much a recognition of their struggles against what they perceived as a male-dominated and neo-colonial society as a recognition of themselves as individuals. Through their demands for recognition they sought to stress that the allegedly "neutral" state of South Africa and South African museums and universities is by no means neutral, as it constantly privileges some groups over others. The valuation of them as artists and individuals in their own right is thus associated with their "being incorporated in some larger, social totality" (Graeber 2001: xii) which respects their lived experiences.

The Artist as Solitary Genius

If the demands for recognition that artists, curators and others express in South African museums challenge the domination of white curators of European descent, they also simultaneously constitute "the global hierarchy of value" (Herzfeld 2004) by confirming the global adaptation of an understanding of art originating from Europe. As I will show, the artists and curators with whom I spoke during my fieldwork share an understanding of art as something produced by solitary geniuses. This idea developed in the European Renaissance and was later perfected as a Romantic myth (Bacharach et al. 2016: 4). It came about as a result of the increased recognition of painters, sculptors and architects as part of the liberal arts, rather than as producers in a menial trade (Janson and Janson 2003: 408). Until the Renaissance, the liberal arts had included mathematics (including musical theory), dialectics, grammar, rhetoric and philosophy, but not the so-called *fine arts*, which until then were considered "handiwork" (Janson and Janson 2003: 408). With the acceptance of painters, sculptors and architects into the realm of the liberal arts, appreciation for individual artistic creativity grew, and artists were increasingly chosen by patrons who valued them for their unique style or specific technical approach. European Renaissance painters and sculptors thus came to be viewed as "people with ideas", and their artworks began to be appreciated as the "visible records of creative minds" (Janson and Janson 2003: 408).

The idea of the artist as a solitary genius is closely linked to what Charles Taylor (1994: 29) calls "the massive subjective turn of modern culture", which, from the eighteenth century onwards, created "a new form of inwardness, in which we [came] to think of ourselves as beings with inner depths". Before the late eighteenth century, the differences between human beings were not linked to moral significance (Taylor 1994: 30). The subjective turn thus brought with it the idea of humans as *individuals* living according to what is right for that particular person. As such, the notion of individuality gives new importance to being true to oneself and emphasises that "each of our voices has something unique to say" (Taylor 1994: 30). It is this uniqueness that is threatened when artists from Africa are labelled *African*, as they are made representatives of the entire continent. Furthermore, the lack of recognition that is experienced by South African artists, who feel deprived of their individuality when they or their art is labelled African, is constituted by the condition that identities are not created in isolation, but negotiated through dialogue with others (Taylor 1994: 34). Even a solitary artist addresses his or her work to an audience, whose recognition the artist thus will attempt to gain (Taylor 1994: 34).

The classificatory practices examined in this thesis are part of a progressive specialisation that has been ongoing since the early European cabinets of curiosities were established in the Renaissance. As Anna Tietze (2017: 5) has highlighted, the concept of art evolved significantly during this period, "from indicating any skilled human activity […] to only a very narrow, privileged group of such activities". From the Renaissance onwards, the idea of art increasingly became restricted to non-functional objects, often classified as fine art, which were created solely for aesthetic contemplation. Other man-made objects became classified as applied arts, decorative arts, arts of design or, when the producer was not European, *ethnographica*. The former category was associated with the work of solitary geniuses and came to be "regarded as significantly different in nature and status from objects of use" (Tietze 2017: 5). Associated with this idea of unique and individual artistic performance is that of "authenticity" (Taylor 1991). Building on earlier forms of individualism, this idea similarly rose by the end of the eighteenth century and was "deeply related to the idea of an inner core, a self in which the real, the sincere and the valuable is located in the inner constitution of the individual" (Sjørslev 2012: 115). The modern idea of authenticity is thus, as Inger Sjørslev (2012: 116) emphasises, "a Western concept […] based on the tradition of Romanticism and going back to Christian ideas of a personal self". In Europe, the distinction between "authentic" art and objects of a more useful nature became evident through the establishment of museums dedicated to decorative arts and design, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, established in 1852 as a Museum of Manufactures in the wake of the Arts and Crafts Movement (Blakesley 2006; Smith 1983: 171). The objects exhibited as arts and crafts, design, etc. were primarily produced in Europe, while similar objects of African origin were

exhibited in ethnographic museums or museums of natural history, in contexts which effaced any trace of their individual maker.

The idea of the artist as a solitary, creative individual thus remained limited to the realm of European or Western artists, just as the *individual*, whether artist or otherwise, was perceived as "a strictly Western creation" (Mbembe 2015a: 4): "Instead of the individual", Achille Mbembe (2015a: 4) notes, Africans have been treated as belonging to "entities, captives of magical signs, amid an enchanted and mysterious universe in which the power of invocation and evocation replaces the power of production, and in which fantasy and caprice coexist not only with the possibility of disaster but with its reality". Because of this perception, African artists have often not been recognised as artists in their own right, but as representatives of their place of origin or language group. Their works have been collected with no interest in noting down their individual names and are thus today often exhibited with labels stating "artist(s) not recorded".

The perception of African artists not as individuals or producers of their own work was formerly imagined by the colonial master, but can still be found among art students in contemporary South Africa. The perception has further been adopted by Europeans and Africans alike, to an extent where contemporary South African curators do not find art produced by African artists, in forms similar to those classified as "arts and crafts" or design, suitable for art museums like the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG). The link between originality and individualism that generations of art historians have used to separate the artistic traditions of non-Europeans from what they perceived as European "high culture" is thus "an example of the Western proclivity for seeing otherness as an absence or lack of some quality especially appreciated in Western cultures" (Herzfeld 2004: 39). As the thesis will show, the refusal to be labelled *African* was often expressed by the artists I spoke with, who felt they were being deprived of their individuality and uniqueness as artists when curators or others perceived them as representatives of their continent of origin. The refusal to be labelled anything but an individual artist with authentic and unique ideas show that the originally European idea of the artist as a solitary genius has been adopted widely. Like other notions originating from Europe, the understanding of art as fine art produced by individual artists with authentic and unique skills and ideas "serve as [a] global yardstick[…] for particular patterns of interaction" (Herzfeld 2004: 2).

The ideas that have spread from Europe since the age of Enlightenment and have now become universal include notions of freedom, welfare, sovereignty, representation and democracy (Appadurai 1990: 299). Since their birth as children of the European and North American Enlightenment, the ideas have changed from their "Euro-American master-narrative [and have become] a loosely structured synopticon of politics, in which different nation-states, as part of their evolution, have organized their

political cultures around different 'keywords'" (Appadurai 1990: 300). The global hierarchy of value is constituted by this global spread of ideas (Herzfeld 2004: 2) and can be seen in the adoption of the idea of art as something produced by a solitary genius, which the artists and curators I spoke with in South Africa are committed to. Their reluctance to be described as anything but individual and unique artists thus confirms the spread of an "increasingly homogenous language of culture and ethics [which was] promulgated worldwide by the erstwhile colonial powers of Europe" (Herzfeld 2004: 2-3). Springing from "the massive preoccupation with the definition of spaces and concepts that characterized the emergence of the modern nation-state in the heyday and aftermath of colonialism" (Herzfeld 2004: 3), notions of art and culture that are entailed by the global hierarchy of value betray a European and colonialist origin that is often visible in the curatorial practices I have examined in South Africa. While the influence of Europe is largely criticised in museums and universities in South Africa, it is significant that the notions of art and culture that spread through colonialism remain largely unchallenged. This highlights a crucial element in the struggles over decolonisation, to which I will return in Chapter II: that it is virtually impossible to find alternative languages in institutions like universities and museums whose founding principles originate in Europe.

Valuing Art from Africa

Just as notions of art and culture have become globally accepted, the idea of the particular has also become universal (Herzfeld 2004: 2). This is confirmed by the constant search for "new entries to the canon of the contemporary" within the art world, which has become increasingly global in recent decades (Belting and Buddensieg 2009; Harris 2012: 152). The significant number of new art fairs and biennales focusing on contemporary African art shows that even in a globalised art world, where previous power imbalances between the Global North and the Global South are largely conceived as having been overturned, curators and art collectors keep searching for the specific and place-bound (Harris 2012: 152-153). Since 1992, when the first *Dak'Art* Biennial opened in Dakar and the first African artists were included at the Kassel-based Documenta, the Johannesburg Biennale was introduced in 1995, the first *1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair* was opened in London in 2013, and the first *Also Known As Africa* art fair was opened in Paris in 2016. Significant for this attention is that although "the art world has extended its reach to all corners of the planet [and that the] identity [of artists is considered] less significant [than the art they produce] there is a fundamental tension underlying these universalizing ambitions […] Even as [the art world] seeks to renounce the old categories of national, 'primitive', 'Black' or 'Post-Colonial' art in preference for the stateless, the

deracinated, and the global, there is still a desire to discover previously underrepresented ethnicities and undiscovered territories" (Harris 2012: 152).

The attention directed towards contemporary African art sometimes inflicted feelings of limitation or insult among the artists I spoke with: "Why", they wondered, "do buyers and exhibitors of our art keep labelling us as *African*?" The artists found themselves in an ambivalent situation in which their art profited from the international attention that contemporary art from Africa received, but which simultaneously kept them from being recognised as individual artists in their own right. By being exhibited as representatives of their continent, their artworks became the objectives of what Clare Harris (2012: 152) calls the "voracious appetite of the art market for difference and distinctiveness". Despite conceiving of itself as egalitarian, the artists I spoke with thus experienced the increased attention from the art market and museums as an international craving for their individual or (imagined) collective cultural style.

In an art world "eager for uniqueness" (Harris 2012: 153), the African artists who were exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA and sought after in international art fairs were not only hailed for their unique and authentic style, but were also, like the Tibetan artists examined by Harris (2012: 153), considered representatives of a "region with a troubled history". The links to South Africa's colonial and apartheid past that many of the artists exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA deal actively with in their artworks thus became an asset when they were introduced to the art market. The value of their art was in other words mobilised by "the desires of those who recognize it" (Graeber 2001: 105). For the South African artists I spoke with in the context of this thesis, the imagined sources of recognition were usually based in art institutions in the Global North: in the grand art capitals of the former colonial powers plus a few in North America. Artists and curators were looking towards London, Paris and New York, towards Documenta in Kassel and the Biennale in Venice. In its branding as the new "glowing beacon" (Heatherwick 2018) for Africa, the Zeitz MOCAA team had one clear message: "We are as good! We too are in that group of high-class, expensive and trend-setting art metropoles!" The team behind the new museum on the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town wanted to uplift Cape Town to the sphere of "the global", but did so at the cost of *some* elements of locality. Artists exhibiting there thus felt that they had to fit in and remove themselves from part of their cultural heritage in order to be welcomed on the global art scene. The balance between the local and the global was ambivalent, as I will argue in Chapter II: while the art sought after by actors within the international art community had to be global and place-less, it was simultaneously celebrated for its uniqueness (Harris 2012).

Many of the artists I spoke with who were exhibiting at the new museum on the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town saw the Zeitz MOCAA as a stepping stone, as a way to reach out to a larger international

audience and to be discovered by collectors and curators from the Global North. Both they, and many of the students at the UCT, were "looking towards Europe and the United States to pursue their careers", as one of the lecturers at the Michaelis School of Fine Art explained to me: "They might be highlighting their African roots in their work and make strong statements about their African connections, but the future for them is still in the so-called Western world, where they would go instantly if given the chance". This is not because the students cannot see the irony in accepting Rhodes scholarships to the University of Oxford when they have openly and fervently criticised their eponymous founder for his imperial legacies in South Africa,[4] nor is it because artists do not find it frustrating that the go-to galleries in which they must exhibit their works are based in the former colonial capitals of their own country. It is because they have to go where the money is, and the buyers of art are, with a few significant exceptions, still based in Europe and North America.[5]

These conditions reveal that the legacies of centuries of European domination do not disappear overnight. The centres and peripheries created by colonialism still exist, although things are slowly changing: today, museums and art fairs exhibiting and promoting contemporary African art are no longer solely based in the Global North. With the opening of the Zeitz MOCAA and art fairs in cities as far apart as Cape Town and Marrakesh, African artists now have locally based showrooms in which to exhibit their art for audiences who will now also have to come to them, rather than being able to stay in Basel, Venice, London or New York. This was celebrated by several of the artists I spoke with as a chance to exhibit together with other artists from Africa, and to do so in a setting celebrating "the identity of being African", as one artist put it. Another, the Johannesburg-born William Kentridge, put it this way:

> To show at the Zeitz MOCAA, obviously it is an enormous new undertaking in its scope, in its ambition, and in that I am completely supportive. In the opportunities it gives both to artists, in South Africa and from further afield, and audiences from Cape Town, from the rest of the country

[4] In 2017 two South African student activists, Mbalenhle Matandela and Joshua Nott, who were both involved in the Rhodes Must Fall movement at the University of Cape Town in 2015, were accepted by the University of Oxford as Rhodes scholars. The news of their acceptance of Rhodes Scholarships worth £40,000 was received with criticism, but according to the South African newspaper *Business Day*, the "paradox of being a Rhodes Must Fall activist and a Rhodes scholar-elect [was] not lost on Mbalenhle Matandela [who] believe[d] [that] being in this unique position [would] help her do good" (Henderson 2017). Joshua Nott similarly defended his decision to accept the scholarship offer, as he intended to use it to "defeat the very ideals of what it originally stood for" (Yorke 2017).

[5] According to the Artnet News Index (2016a; 2016b) listing of *The World's Top 100 Art Collectors for 2016*, 70% of "the world's most essential inventory of major art collectors" come from the US (43%) or Europe (27%). 18% comes from Asia; seven from China, two from Japan and one from each of the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, Bangladesh and Indonesia. South America follows with 5%, including two from Brazil, one from Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, one from Argentina and one from Mexico, while collectors from Africa make up only 3% (two from Nigeria and the German-born Jochen Zeitz who is listed as South African). Two collectors come from the Middle East, where the collectors come from Qatar and Lebanon. Australia and Canada each have one collector on the list.

> and also from further afield, to see work that otherwise would be much less visible, and in that I was very happy also to be showing, not only with other people from other parts of the continent, but in the context of people of different generations, people sometimes one generation older, but mainly one generation or two generations younger […] I was very pleased to be shown in the Zeitz MOCAA, and the fact of a local audience, and of more local other participants in it, does change the feeling.

Within the last decade, Africa, and more specifically *African art*, has often been described as the "new hot thing" (Klein 2015: 21). International art fairs like the 1:54 and AKAA, biennales in Vienna and auction houses the world over have turned their attention towards artists and designers from the African continent. As this thesis will demonstrate, this attention is nothing new: "[Africa] has been the new hot thing at various times in history before", as the Nigerian-born curator Okwui Enwezor (1963-2019) recently put it (quoted in Klein 2015: 21).[6] Africa has several times been the source of inspiration and attention for European colonisers, artists, curators and collectors, not least during the so-called *Scramble for Africa*. During this, the most active period of European colonisation in Africa, beginning with the summoning of the European colonial powers to the Berlin Conference on the partition of Africa in 1884-85 and ending with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the European powers divided what was then commonly known as the "Dark Continent" between them, bringing dramatic changes to millions of Africans (Griffiths 1995: 29; Harlow and Carter 2003: 1; Rutz 2018: 2).

In South Africa the Scramble had already erupted in 1869, when diggers searching for diamonds rushed to alluvial sites along the Orange and Vaal rivers from all over the world (Griffiths 1995: 29). The diamond discoveries in the south of the continent, as well as the opening of the Suez Canal in Egypt in the north the same year, "provided new starting points in Europe's interest in Africa [and] represented Western capitals' first major penetration of Africa and the start of industrialization" (Griffiths 1995: 29). Within the span of a few decades, the European colonial powers had taken control of almost 80% of Africa's territory and introduced dramatic changes to the relationship between the two continents (Rutz 2018: 2). During the height of European colonialism, "radically new types of discourses on African traditions and cultures" (Mudimbe 1988: 1) were established. The ways in which both Africans and Europeans perceived the African continent and the art and artefacts originating within it consequently changed fundamentally. As this thesis will show, the legacy of these changes is still very much present.

In Europe, French painters like Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), André Derain (1880-1954) and Henri Matisse (1869-1954) turned their attention towards "Les Masques […] magique" (Picasso 1937 quoted

[6] Aside from curating what Documenta (2019) itself calls "the first truly global, postcolonial Documenta" in 2002, Enwezor curated the 56th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2015 and the second Johannesburg Biennale in 1997.

in Malraux 1974: 17), which had been brought to France from the country's colonial possessions in West and Central Africa. Although he never went to Africa himself, Picasso became known as the "discoverer" of "Negro Art" (Zayas 1914 in Flam and Deutch 2003: 70), and he and other artists of his time became heavily inspired by the stylised human figures and "spiritual aspect of [their] composition" (Murrell 2008). Together with other artists in the School of Paris (Nacenta 1981; Voorhies 2004), Picasso, Derain and Matisse kick-started a process of European valorisation, leading to the reclassification of African objects from artefacts to art, as I will explore in detail in Chapter I. In the period between the two World Wars, Swiss expressionists like Paul Klee (1879-1940), whose sign-like forms have been associated with the inspiration of "masks of the Bwa culture of Burkina Faso and geometrically patterned fabrics from the Bambara of Mali" (Murrell 2008), similarly turned their attention towards art from Africa. In Germany, as elsewhere, the significant influence of African-American jazz in the years of the Weimar Republic (Heinrichs 1998) further emphasises that international cravings for art in various forms originating from Africa, and what Paul Gilroy (1993) has labelled *The Black Atlantic*, are nothing new.

Although European colonisers, artists, collectors and curators have also previously turned their gaze to Africa and African art, the present-day attention they are receiving differs in its approach towards the artists from Africa who produce the sought-after artworks. Unlike exhibitions of African art in the beginning of the twentieth century, contemporary exhibitions of African art illustrate a changed attitude towards artists from Africa, the result of years of demands for recognition. The demands for recognition examined in this thesis are forcing European and white South African curators of European descent to realise that the ways in which they choose to curate art produced by black (South) African artists matters. The demands for recognition I witnessed in South Africa during my fieldwork are only the latest wave of demands targeted at South Africa's white minority, which is no longer permitted to curate the art of the nation undisturbed. Established structures in museums and universities are constantly being challenged by artists, students, curators and sex-workers who demand change and recognition.

The removal of the statue of Rhodes from the main UCT campus in 2015 was not merely a symbolically strong performance, but also a moment that provided a chance for academics and students to rethink their institutional practices at a deeper level. Similarly, the demands for recognition that I experienced during the public discussion at the Iziko SANG in Cape Town contributed to a more diversified form of curation by directly confronting the curators' assumed authority to represent. I highlight these demands for recognition, which are often forcefully expressed in conflicts constituting decolonisation as a "violent phenomenon" (Fanon 2001: 27), in order to show that, although their outcomes might

at first appear like "nothing at all" (Mbembe 2015a: 4), they can also be seen as cleaning the slate upon which the future of South Africa can be rewritten. The absences left behind by the removal of Rhodes' statue at the UCT and the artworks in the *Our Lady* exhibition at the Iziko SANG, which I will examine in Chapter II, were not lasting absences, but became opportunities for academics and curators, university students and artists, to write or paint something new. The South African visual artist Sethembile Msezane took this opportunity upon herself when she rose like a phoenix from Rhodes' ashes and provided an image of what South Africa can also look like: a country whose public spaces also include those of black women and of stories linked to the African continent – such as that of Chapungu – rather than solely European colonial heroes.

As presenters of art from South Africa, curators of institutions like the Zeitz MOCAA and the Iziko SANG in Cape Town, together with the artists exhibiting there, have been the key group of interlocutors behind the findings of this thesis. By looking at the ways in which the curators choose to exhibit and classify art from South Africa, I explore how they navigate the demands for recognition that artists, students, sex-workers and others voice in attempts to be shown a kind of respect by others recognising that the allegedly "neutral" society in which they live is by no means neutral, but rather based on a partial, male-dominated, neo-colonial, white and heterosexual interpretation of citizenship, which continuously privileges specific groups over others. Taking my cue from Charles Taylor (1994), I will show that the demands for recognition examined in this thesis extend "beyond an acknowledgment of the equal value of all humans potentially, and come […] to include the equal value of what they have made of this potential in fact" (Taylor 1994: 42).

As I will show, the demands for recognition that curators of art from South Africa are met with are expressed simultaneously as demands for decolonisation voiced in universities like the UCT by the Rhodes Must Fall movement. The demands for recognition heard in museums and art galleries are thus part of a much larger debate about how South Africa should deal with its colonial heritage. In this way, the overall topic of this thesis – the often demand*ing* demands for recognition – has a greater reach than research on art and museums sometimes do: my analysis of curatorial practices reflects discussions in other parts of South Africa and has been greatly shaped by events that took place during the Rhodes Must Fall movement. In an ambivalent environment in which demands for recognition and decolonisation are often heard, museum curators are being challenged to rethink their collections, which often have deep roots in colonial and apartheid-era structures of exclusion. In this thesis, I therefore explore how curators are dealing with these challenges by looking at how they choose to classify and exhibit art from South Africa, as well as how they engage with the public and showcase themselves as promoters of a global and united South Africa. By looking at classificatory and exhibition

practices in museums and art galleries in South Africa, I examine how artists and curators are dealing with the legacy of colonialism and apartheid in order to explore how the global hierarchy of value influences curatorial choices and exhibition strategies. I highlight the motives behind the new initiatives museums are undertaking in order to reach broader audiences and explore how curators and artists alike attempt to navigate in a highly ambivalent environment shaped by the legacy of colonial and apartheid-era structures of exclusion.

Outline of the Thesis

In Chapter I, *From Artefact to Art*, I examine historical museological representations of art from (South) Africa, starting with the colonial collections of fifteenth-century Europe. The chapter shows how, as elsewhere, museum classifications in South Africa were founded on the basis of European ideas and conceptions of the world. It describes how, through their representations of Africa, European and North American museums have shaped many stereotypical views of what Africa and African art is. It further highlights the development many museum objects from Africa have gone through over the course of the last century in changing from being seen as artefacts to being acknowledged as art. I argue that this development happened through a process of European valorisation in which objects from Africa that had not necessarily been made as art originally became art in the eyes of European artists and curators, who began presenting them as such. This valorisation happened after a period in the mid- to late nineteenth century when objects from Africa were mostly removed from the cabinets of curiosities they had been part of until then and moved into contexts exhibiting them as "ethnographica". In South Africa the valorisation of objects of black African origin took place much later than elsewhere due to the apartheid regime's aim to classify black South Africans as "second-class citizens" (Taylor 1994: 37). It was thus not until the so-called transformative years of the 1990s that museums and art galleries like the Iziko SANG and the JAG tried to diversify their collections through the incorporation of African objects formerly known as "ethnographica".

Through fieldwork conducted in the JAG and the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg and the Iziko SANG in Cape Town, I examine the consequences of the post-apartheid expansion of classificatory boundaries. I argue that the curatorial practices of a number of private and public art galleries in South Africa are mimicking European ideas about art as something originating from an individual artist. This and other ideas about what Africa and African art is have been adopted to a degree that African curators, like their European counterparts, are using them to classify objects from Africa. While this may not be surprising in a globalised world in which African and European curators are trained in

similar ways, it is significant that these curatorial practices leave little room for difference: in the process of being respected and *recognised* on the global art scene, South African artists and curators alike are letting go of the place-specifics of art from Africa.

In Chapter II, *Recognition through Representation*, I turn my attention to two concrete examples of attempts to decolonise South Africa through demands of recognition: in the first part of the chapter, I examine how the Rhodes Must Fall movement's demands for decolonisation can be seen as a desire to undo existing structures without having a clear idea about what should replace them. By demanding the removal of the statue of Rhodes from the main UCT campus, where it had stood for fifty-three years, the student protesters were attempting to undo the colonial oppression that was still hovering over their campus, but presented few ideas as to what should be put in its place. This exemplifies the difficulties involved in decolonising institutions like universities and museums. The removal of statues, curricula and museum objects found derogatory or humiliating is only one part of the change demanded. What should replace the empty spaces left behind when the dust of the initial conflicts has settled? The empty plinth on the UCT campus, like the empty gallery walls of the Iziko SANG, which I examine in the second part of the chapter, both stand as material reminders of the difficulties involved in decolonising the *postcolony* (Mbembe 2015a) that is South Africa: the absences on and around them are waiting to be filled, but by what? This is a question of curation, one which many of the South African artists and curators with whom I spoke during my fieldwork are eager to answer. Some, like the South African visual artist and UCT graduate Sethembile Msezane, are doing so by dressing up as the bird-like figure of Chapungu and rising like a phoenix from the ashes. Others are replacing a photographic artwork by an artist convicted of murder with a painting of his until then faceless, invisible, black, female victim.

In the case of the Iziko SANG, I examine how curators in an institution with strong colonial ties attempt to curate and represent art from a nation as divided and diverse as South Africa. Using the *Our Lady* exhibition as my starting point, I explore the dilemma of who is entitled to represent whom through an analysis of the different viewpoints presented in the public discussion of the exhibition. I argue that the demands for recognition that the predominantly white curators are met with can be seen as a desire to challenge their privileged ability to decide what qualifies as the art of the nation. However, it can also be seen as a way *other* white curators and artists try to secure a place for themselves and to assume the moral high ground in an environment where the viewpoints of white curators generally are increasingly being challenged. The often hostile debates that occurred between white curators, artists and feminists during public discussions on this issue can as such be seen as an example of a situation in which the voices of subalterns (Spivak 1988) – in this case the black artists and sex-workers

from the Sex Worker and Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) – were mostly heard through a number of self-appointed white spokeswomen. As I will show, one of the main allegations against the curators of the Iziko SANG is that the institution they work in and the way they choose to curate its collection are elitist. I will explore this accusation in relation to Pierre Bourdieu's (1984; et al. 1991) ideas about distinctions and exclusivity in the museum space.

In Chapter III, *Searching for Global Recognition*, I explore the demands for recognition expressed by the team behind the new Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town. I argue that the branding of the museum as "a glowing beacon of the harbour, a lantern looking out, not only to the sea, but to Africa [and] to the World" (Heatherwick 2018) is aimed more at the *Western* world than at Africa. The Zeitz MOCAA team's attempts to attribute value to Cape Town and to Africa as an overlooked continent by exhibiting contemporary African art are primarily targeted at audiences in Europe and North America. The expected listeners to the expressed wish to bring "the world to [the] shores [of Africa]" (V&A Waterfront 2016) come from the wealthy Global North, just as the expected recognition of art from (South) Africa is imagined as coming from Europe or the West. By primarily addressing their messages about the greatness of Africa and African art to European or Western audiences, the Zeitz MOCAA team is continuing a long established tradition of fitting exhibitions to European or Western epistemological frameworks. The greatness of the art they want to emphasise is thus made dependent on its imagined recognition by the Global North. As I will show, this approach excludes the great majority of (South) Africans for whom the museum claims to exist. By aiming its exclusivity and branding at international visitors, the Zeitz MOCAA has become more of a luxurious playground for white Capetonians and foreign tourists than the "open and shared space for all" (Heatherwick in Frearson 2017) it set out to be. Its curators' reluctance to discuss *what* they consider Africa and African art to be further emphasises the exclusivity of the new museum, where some of the exhibited artists feel caught in an ambivalent position between the curators' wish to highlight African art as *global* art (Belting 2009) and the place-specifics or locality they would have liked to express through their art.

Research Methodology

As the thesis focuses on how demands for recognition influence debates about curation and decolonisation in contemporary South Africa, it has been the curatorial choices and exhibition practices, rather than the artworks and material culture of the museums and art galleries I have examined, that have been the main focus of my investigations. I have looked at the underlying structures, intended messages, ideas and statements that have shaped the exhibitions in my research, as well as the ways in which these underlying structures, intended messages, ideas and statements are expressed by the curators and artists in the institutions I have chosen to focus on. In order to understand their ideas about what art is, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork in a number of museums and art galleries in South Africa, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. During my visits to museums, art galleries and exhibitions displaying art from South Africa, I took pictures of objects and artworks, studied the wording of exhibition labels, described the layout and content of the exhibitions and paid attention to visitors' behaviour. First and foremost, however, I spoke with a long list of artists, academics, curators and other museum professionals about their views on art and Africa, the curatorial challenges they experienced and the demands for recognition they were either faced with or expressed themselves. I spoke with curators about the intended purposes of the exhibitions they were working on and asked them how they classified and perceived art from South Africa. In the section on interviews below, I will describe how these conversations came about and how they have contributed to the findings of this thesis. A full list of interviewees and the institutions they worked in (narrowed down for the sake of anonymity to museum, university, art gallery or research centre and the country in which the institution was located) can be found in Appendix Two.

Another important part of my fieldwork was my participation in art fairs, exhibition openings and public discussions about representation, which exposed me to some of the strongest tensions in my field. Sitting on the edge of a chair in the gallery space of the Iziko SANG during a discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition, I realised just how much was at stake for those involved in debates about art and representation. In contemporary South Africa, curatorial practices and the classification and exhibition of art and artefacts are not merely the outcomes of amicable discussions among curators, art historians and museum professionals. In South Africa, the ways curators in museums and art galleries choose to classify and exhibit what is sometimes labelled "the art of a nation" often become a matter of great concern for members of the public who feel continuously excluded and demand to be recognised. Like the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition, the grand public opening of the Zeitz MOCAA was ripe with tensions. However, in this case the curatorial challenges were not open for discussion. Rather, they were swept under the red carpet in an attempt to solely focus on the glittering

and glamorous future of the new museum representing Africa on the global art scene. I will analyse these tensions in Chapter III, and those in relation to the *Our Lady* exhibition in Chapter II. The tensions I experienced were carefully examined through the participant observation I conducted during these events. In the section on participant observation below, I will describe how my observations were conducted and how I have examined and actively used the tensions I witnessed through my fieldwork.

My exploration of how art from South Africa is represented as "global art" (Belting 2009) is thus based on ethnographic research, which has enabled me to analyse curatorial tensions in contemporary South Africa through an ethnographic lens. I have chosen this approach to explore how notions of arts and culture are experienced among artists and curators locally in South Africa in order to emphasise that, even in a supposedly "globalised" art world that is "often imagined as a placeless utopia where artists are free to circulate and [where] their nationhood or ethnicity is of little relevance" (Harris 2012: 152), place and race *do* matter: black artists from South Africa experience a different treatment than artists from elsewhere, and although artworks made in Africa are now largely classified as *art* rather than as *ethnographica*, they are still grouped within the same category, while objects of European or white African origin are divided into categories of art or cultural history. I will return to this aspect of classificatory practices in Chapter I. Here I highlight that my ethnographic approach enabled me to explore first-hand how artists and curators experienced living and working with these classification and exhibition practices.

I continued to revisit and re-document many of the exhibitions and museums listed below in order to acquire a better understanding of the places and people I examined. How did the atmosphere of the gallery change depending on whether my visit fell during a Friday Late reception or on a normal Wednesday afternoon? Who visited on a Sunday morning, when no school groups were around? And what did the front-of-house staff have to say about the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition when they were busy taking down posters and stacking up chairs the day after the discussion? The observations I made during, before and after my visits to the museums, art galleries and events were documented using a field diary, which I rewrote as a digital field report, including my photos, at the end of the day. I quickly found that my analogue handwriting approach tended to put me in contact with my surroundings in a more productive way than writing on a phone or laptop would have done. People around me in cafés or other public spaces would often be more inclined to ask about my writing, which provided me with good opportunities to hear about the museums of my research from so-called non-visitors. A black South African man I met at the Company's Garden's centrally located café thus revealed to me that, despite having passed by the Iziko SANG daily for eleven years, he had never been inside. It was not a place for him, he said, revealing the sharp divide between South

Africans who *do* feel welcome in museums and those who do not. It is reflections like these on the impressions of my days in the field that have formed the basis of the writing of this thesis.

My fieldwork took place from April 2016 to March 2018 in brief instalments and with a special focus on the following exhibitions, museums and art institutions:

- London
  February 2016: *Africa Worlds* gallery at the Horniman Museums & Gardens, *Artist & Empire – Facing Britain's Imperial Past* at Tate Britain and the *Sainsbury Africa Galleries* at the British Museum.
- Cape Town
  April 2016: District Six Museum, Iziko Museums, Robben Island Museum and the Zeitz MOCAA Pavilion.
- Amsterdam and Leiden
  October 2016: Museum Volkenkunde, Rijksmuseum and Tropen Museum.
- South Africa
  Oct 2016-Jan 2017: Ditsong Museum of South Africa, Freedom Park, Kruger House Museum, Pretoria Art Museum and Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, Apartheid Museum, Constitution Hill, Cradle of Humankind, Goodman, JAG, Maboneng, Museum Africa, Standard Bank Gallery, Stevenson and WAM in Johannesburg, Durban Art Gallery, Durban Natural Science Museum and the Kwazulu-Natal Society of Arts in Durban, Goodman, the Iziko Museums and Stevenson in Cape Town and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum in Port Elizabeth.
- London and Oxford
  February 2017: Pitt Rivers Museum, the *Sainsbury Africa Galleries* and *South Africa: the Art of a Nation* at the British Museum and Tate Modern.
- Amsterdam and Leiden
  Feb and April 2017: *Good Hope: South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600* at the Rijksmuseum and Museum Volkenkunde.
- Paris
  July 2017: *Picasso Primitif* at the Musée du Quai Branly.
- South Africa
  September 2017: Joburg Art Fair and Maboneng in Johannesburg, the Iziko Museums and the Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town.
- Paris
  November 2017: *L'Afrique des Routes* at Musée du Quai Branly, Also Known as African Art Fair (AKAA) and *Dada d'Afrique* at Musée de l'Orangerie.
- Cape Town
  Jan-Mar 2018: Cape Town Art Fair, the Iziko Museums, Maitland Institute, Rhodes Memorial, UCT main campus and the Zeitz MOCAA.
- Berlin
  April 2018: *Beyond Compare: Art from Africa in the Bode Museum* at the Bode Museum.
- London and Oxford
  April-June 2018: Ashmolean Museum, British Museum, Pitt Rivers Museum and the V&A.

My fieldwork was divided into shorter stays in order to coincide with the openings of museums like the Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town and events like the Joburg Art Fair. I spent most of my time in Cape Town, the location of two of the museums on which this thesis is centred: the Iziko SANG and the Zeitz MOCAA. My fieldwork included the documentation of a long list of exhibitions, primarily at these two museums, but also in other major South African cities. The exhibitions I visited in Europe were selected for their focus on art and artefacts from (South) Africa, either permanent, as in the now closed *Africa Worlds* gallery at the Horniman Museum & Gardens in London, or temporary exhibitions. I kept my eyes open for temporary exhibitions throughout my years of research and found them in London, Amsterdam, Paris and Berlin. In London and Amsterdam my focus was on the temporary exhibitions on South Africa at the British Museum and the Rijksmuseum, while my fieldwork in Paris included visits to the Musée du Quai Branly's *Picasso Primitif* (2017) and *L'Afrique des Routes* (2017) and the Musée de l'Orangerie's *Dada d'Afrique* (2017-18). In Berlin, I visited the Bode Museum's *Beyond Compare* (2017-19) exhibition, which showcased art from Africa together with European sculptures and religious objects. While the temporary exhibitions examined in these cities have not been a direct focus of my research, they have helped me gain insights into contemporary European narratives about Africa as they appear in exhibitions of art and artefacts. I documented them by taking photos and collecting written materials such as exhibition catalogues and information flyers, but did not spend time conducting participant observation and interviewing curators in all of them. As such, the exhibitions I visited in Europe provide an important point of reference, while not acting as key examples in my research.

For clarification, I have listed each visited museum, exhibition and art fair in Appendix One with details about the field methods used in each case. The Appendix shows that, of the sixty-three museums, exhibitions and art fairs at which I conducted fieldwork, forty-two were in South Africa, eleven in the United Kingdom, five in the Netherlands, four in France and one in Germany. My overall focus on museums in South Africa is thus reflected in the places I have visited and conducted fieldwork in. The time spent and the interviews I conducted similarly reflect my overall focus on South Africa, where the great majority (80%) of my interviews took place. In Appendix Two the thirty-five interviews I have conducted are listed, with date and place, pseudonyms of the interlocutors where applicable, as well as notes on their profession (narrowed down to three categories of artists, curators and researchers), gender (male or female) and race (black, white or mixed). When known, I have noted down the mother tongues of my interlocutors in order to identify their ancestral origins. Most white Afrikaans-speakers in South Africa are the descendants of Dutch colonial settlers who arrived in South Africa from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, and they thus differ in ancestry from the white English-speaking South Africans, who in most cases are the descendants of later British colonial settlers. Similarly, black

Xhosa- and Zulu-speakers share the same skin colour and originate from the same language group (Bantu), but have different customs and traditions.[7] This emphasises that South Africa's population is not only divided by gender and race, but also by language group. Appendix Two shows that a majority of my interlocutors (54%) were white, while 26% were black and 20% mixed race or so-called *coloured* – a term used in South Africa for a multi-ethnic group descended from European, African and Asian ethnic groups.[8] As I will describe in the section about my interviews below, the majority of white interlocutors, even in South Africa, where they make up 50% of the twenty-eight interviews I conducted, reflects the large percentage of white curators and art historians in museums and academic positions. This is particularly visible in South Africa, where whites only make up 7.8% of the overall population (SSA 2018: 9), but around 60% of curatorial teams and academic positions in leading art departments and schools.[9]

In South Africa, I visited a more general range of museums and art institutions than those I visited in Europe in order to familiarise myself with the museum landscape of South Africa on a broader level. Although mostly centred around Cape Town, the location of 48% of my South African examples, the South African part of my fieldwork led me to travel wide and far to a long list of art fairs, monuments, galleries and museums displaying art of all kinds, natural historical objects, archaeological treasures, colonial relics, and trophies from the anti-apartheid movement's struggle to freedom. As listed above and in Appendix One, my fieldwork in South Africa took me from seaside cities like Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Durban to the inland gold-rush city of Johannesburg and the administrative capital of Pretoria – now also known by the name Tshwane. Travelling between the major cities, I witnessed the vast rural landscapes of the country that stretch for miles without end and change from bushland as dry as a desert to the moist swamps of St Lucia. From the mountain tops of the Cape Peninsula to the vast grasslands of the Kruger National Park, I met men, women, children and gender-non-conforming people who called this country home. Some did so because their families had lived there for centuries, others because the dream of accessing just a bit of the wealth dominating the pool-clattered

[7] Bantu-speaking South Africans, who make up 77.9% of the country's population, originate from West Africa, from where large-scale and long-distance population migrations moving east and south took place from the fourteenth and fifteenth century onwards (Griffiths 1995: 11; Nel et al. 2012: 920). The migration route took the Bantu-speaking migrants to the Great Lakes in East Africa and then, following the fairly open savannah country around the tropical rain-forest of the Congo basin, into southern Africa (Griffiths 1995: 11). Bantu-speaking South Africans are generally divided into the following nine language groups: Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Tswana, Ndebele, Swazi, Xhosa, Zulu, Tsonga and Venda (Nel et al. 2012: 920).

[8] In this thesis I use the term *coloured* in italics only, in order to emphasise that, in line with Rajend Mesthrie (2002a: 4) and many others, I do not wish to "'naturalise' a largely arbitrary division among people, made in the interest of apartheid".

[9] Put together, the curatorial teams of the Art Department of the Iziko (2019c), the Wits Art Museum (WAM 2019) and the Zeitz MOCAA (2018a), plus the academic staff of UCT's Michaelis School of Fine Art (2019), make up 45 people. Of those, 27 (60%) are white, 12 (27%) are black and 6 (13%) mixed race or so-called *coloured*.

neighbourhoods of Camps Bay and Clifton in Cape Town or the roof-top bars of Sandton in Johannesburg had led them to flee from war-torn Congo or poverty-stricken Zimbabwe. Some, despite all the odds, had made their way from childhoods in townships like Soweto to the exclusive halls of fame in newly built art museums like the Zeitz MOCAA, while others were struggling to find a place of belonging in discussions in which what being South African means is not that easily defined. Some of the encounters I had with these people have made their way into this thesis. Whether noted down as a result of semi-structured interviews or participant observation, these encounters form the basis of my empirical data. It is *their* words on art, Africa, curation and museums which make up the foundation of my findings. In the following, I will describe how these encounters came about.

Figure 1. Map of South Africa marking the five cities in which I conducted fieldwork: Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Durban and Port Elizabeth. Map by Global Travel Publishers (2012) with markings by the author.

Interviews

Over the course of my two years of fieldwork, I carried out thirty-five qualitative, semi-structured interviews with curators, researchers and artists exhibited or exhibiting in the museums, galleries, exhibitions and art fairs I visited. I mainly spoke with museum staff working in curatorial positions on exhibitions, collections and education, but also with assistant curators, tour guides and front of house staff. As I mostly talked with the latter group of museum staff during my participant observation in the museum and gallery spaces, my meetings were often briefer and more improvised than my interviews with the more senior curators, whom I interviewed on a one-to-one basis. Due to their brief and spontaneous nature, I have not counted my meetings with front of house museum staff among the thirty-five interviews listed in Appendix Two, but solely those I had scheduled as an arranged meeting with a list of prepared questions. I chose to interview the more senior curators rather than the front of house staff, as my research interest centres around the curatorial choices behind the exhibitions rather than the front of house aspects of museum practice. However, my meetings with the latter group of museum professionals have still been significant for my research, which is why I have spent a substantial amount of time exploring museum and gallery spaces as a visitor in order to acquire an understanding of how the exhibitions in my research work from the visitor's point of view. I will describe this part of my fieldwork in more detail below in the section on participant observation.

The senior curators I interviewed made up 43% of my interlocutors. Their "self-conscious awareness of the theory of their [curatorial] practice" (Shelton 2000: 5) made them distinct from other museum professionals I met, and they would most often have a background in art history or a related field of research. Through their academic training they had developed a clear "understanding of how meaning and knowledge are negotiated and mediated, and [had] a finely tuned and trained sensitivity towards the process of cultural translation, as well as scholarship based on cumulative and specialised knowledge" (Shelton 2000: 5). They thus had clear ideas about the research I was conducting and often engaged actively with it. Aside from curators, academic researchers, who were often trained art historians with curatorial experience, make up another significant part of my interlocutors (40%). Both groups of interlocutors can be considered experts or elite interlocutors (Hertz and Imber 1995; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 167; Zuckerman 1972), and in many cases they had done substantial research in fields related to the ones I was investigating. In these situations, the interviews quickly became lively peer-to-peer conversations in which I experienced being asked about my views on the research and exhibitions my interlocutors had worked on. Sometimes it almost seemed as if they were as interested in my research as I was in their curation, and many felt pleased that I had travelled all the

way from northern Europe to South Africa to speak with them about matters they had deeply invested in.

When my interlocutors were professors or senior researchers in the field, the interviews almost became sessions of supervision where the interlocutor would recommend different paths of research to me, books to read and exhibitions to include. In this way I was drawn into the academic discussions that my interlocutors engaged in, and although it often proved helpful to be informed about matters they were concerned about, the reading suggestions of my interlocutors have also influenced the topics I have chosen to focus on in my research. While it is never impossible to remain (or indeed ever be) an objective fly-on-the-wall researcher, it is significant for the study of one's peers that the researcher engages in the same debates as the interlocutors themselves. This element has made it important for me to step back from my fieldwork and examine my empirical data on my own and from a distance. I have thus written most of this thesis not surrounded by or in continuous conversations with my interlocutors, but from a distance, in my Copenhagen-based office far from the South African museums of my research. However, the academic conversations my research contributes to have continuously influenced my work, and in many ways I have now become as deeply involved in them as many of my interlocutors.

Most of the interviews with curators and researchers came about through a complex web of connections: I would talk with one, who would recommend me to speak with a couple of others, and in a matter of days I would be on my way to my next interview, where a similar thing would happen. In this way my interviewees worked as gatekeepers in the field, opening doors I would not have been able to open on my own. The friendly atmosphere of the interviews was emphasised by the settings in which they took place: while almost half of the interviews (40%) took place in my interlocutors' offices in the museum or university where they worked, a large number of interviews (31%) took place in cafés, either at the museum where my interlocutor worked or in the cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg. One even took place in the garden of my interlocutor's home, and another in an artist's private studio. In these cases, the setting may have influenced the ways in which the conversations with my interlocutors took shape. In the privacy of their own home or in the relaxed atmosphere created by a freshly brewed cup of coffee or the pieces of cake between us in a café surrounded by other people, difficult aspects of the work of my interlocutors might have been shared more willingly in a tone of mutual understanding.

Five of my interviews took place in the actual galleries or exhibition spaces around which the interviews revolved, while several of the interviews held in museum offices would develop into walking tours where we talked as we went around the exhibition. This made it easier for my

interlocutors to describe issues they were struggling with, with concrete examples from the exhibition. This happened during one of my interviews with a curator at the Iziko SANG, where the attempts to challenge the existing hierarchies in the art world were exemplified with a section of the *At Face Value* (2016-17) exhibition, where prints and drawings by Picasso and the less well-known South African artist Cecil Higgs (1898-1986) were hung side by side. We had just been talking about the ways in which old European masters still dominate in terms of being the best known among museum guests, and as we passed by the framed artworks on the walls, the curator showed me a very concrete way that the curators were attempting to challenge this hierarchy: "In this way" she said, "we try to break down as much of the hierarchy as possible".

While most of the people I contacted for interviews were eager to participate and showed great interest in contributing to my research, others proved more difficult to get hold off. These situations occurred when I tried to obtain interviews with some of the most senior curators in South Africa and the United Kingdom. Despite numerous attempts to meet with Mark Coetzee, the then Director and Chief Curator of the Zeitz MOCAA, no first-hand interviews were conducted with him. The schedule of the founder of the Zeitz collection, Jochen Zeitz, also proved too busy to fit in an interview. The lack of first-hand interviews with these people was a challenge I chose to meet with participant observation in the form of guided tours, informal conversations with assistant curators and other museum staff within the gallery spaces, as well as the inclusion of interviews made by others. In my chapter on the Zeitz MOCAA, quotes from Zeitz, Coetzee and other curators have thus been retrieved from official statements, museum websites, newspaper and magazine articles, and exhibition catalogues. The informal conversations I had with assistant curators and other museum staff came about through participant observation, which I will describe in more detail below.

As previously mentioned, it is significant for the part of my fieldwork that took place in South Africa that 50% of the twenty-eight people I interviewed there were white, despite the fact that white people only make up 7.8% of South Africa's overall population (SSA 2018: 9). While this figure reflects the large percentage of white people in curatorial and academic positions in South Africa, it also reveals that the networks I found myself in often were those of white, middle-class curators and researchers not very different from myself, in terms of our shared European ancestry, similar academic background, etc. Interviewing one's peers has a variety of relevant characteristics. Like the colleagues across the arts area interviewed by Jennifer Platt at the beginning of the 1980s, my interlocutors were "in a diffuse sense [my] social equals" (Platt 1981: 76). Being my "social equals" through their roles as academics doing research in a similar topic as myself, my interlocutors and I shared the same background knowledge and sub-cultural understandings and as such were members of the same

group or community (Platt 1981: 76). By sharing what Pierre Bourdieu (1977: 80) calls the same *cultural habitus*, we shared "a commonsense world endowed with the *objectivity* secured by consensus on the meaning (*sens*) of practices and the world". Our experiences were, in other words, harmonised and continuously reinforced by our similar or identical expressions and experiences (Bourdieu 1977: 80).

In my research, working with my peers implied a shared language, which would sometimes put me in challenging situations, where I would be tempted to accept the points of my interlocutors too quickly. In order to obtain clear and explicit statements from my interlocutors, I had to make sure to ask for detailed explanations of matters they would often assume I knew about. In situations where it was assumed that our norms or understandings of a particular situation were shared, the rationale and content of my interlocutors' choices and considerations did not necessarily need explanation. However, fearing that this might create thinner data (Platt 1981: 82), I would have to ask for an explanation anyway, thus potentially risking not being considered a member of the same community. As such, the background knowledge I shared with my interlocutors would be beneficial in creating a sense of intimacy with them, which made them more inclined to reveal difficulties about their work to me, sensing that I would understand them. However, being considered part of the same group of researchers as my interlocutors has also potentially created thinner data in situations where explanations were left unsaid due to the common understandings I (presumably) shared with my interlocutors.

While many of my interlocutors could be considered my peers in terms of being white, middle-class and female researchers in the field of art from South Africa, my South African interlocutors' relationships with the South African art world were significantly different, since, unlike me, they had mostly lived and worked in South Africa most of their lives. Being South Africans, as 80% of my thirty-five interviewees were, they might have been trained in a similar academic field as myself, and while we might have *looked* similar we were not. Even if I were to spend the next decades living and working in South Africa, I would not be equally familiar with the things a person born and bred in South Africa would be familiar with. The constant focus on race that I experienced in the discussions I observed and the conversations I had with curators, artists and people on the street was something I had not experienced to the same degree anywhere else. Having lived in multicultural metropolises like London and Paris, where to a large extent people mix and where a journey on the tube or metro often confronts you with a multitude of languages, hairstyles and skin colours, I was taken aback by the segregation I experienced in many places in South Africa. In the centre of Johannesburg, for example, among the students of Wits University, I experienced a similar feeling to that I knew from London and

Paris, of people interacting and engaging with each other across differences in skin colour and genetic origin. But in Cape Town, in the suburbs of Johannesburg and the streets of Pretoria, it was different. And on the wine estates around Stellenbosch and Franschhoek, the skin colour of those who owned and ran the farms almost made me feel as if I was back in Europe on a French château far from the multiculturalism of Paris: in South Africa race divisions are still very visible. Twenty-plus years of ANC rule and fairy-tale stories of the Rainbow Nation have not been able to change the structural divisions left by centuries of colonialism and decades of apartheid. The transition from the brutality of apartheid to the rights-based freedoms of democracy has not been easy. South Africa is still grappling to develop a commonly shared identity (Comaroff 1997: 119-120), and for the great majority of South Africans the colour of your skin still very much determines who you are and what your destiny will be (Posel 2001).

Michael MacDonald (2006) has examined the reasons why race still matters in South Africa. He argues that the origins of the importance of race are closely linked to the apartheid regime, a version of white supremacy that ensured inequality and distinctiveness not only between black and white, but also between South Africans of mixed – so-called *coloured* – background and South Africans of Indian descent: "Apartheid" MacDonald (2006: 6) argues, thus "prepared South Africa badly for liberal democracy […] not only because of its racism [but also because it] was racialist". The racialisation of state and society during apartheid became a tool to ensure white supremacy. By reducing particularities among Africans, the apartheid state recoiled from nationalising black South Africans in the manner of white South Africans, in order to prevent them from forming a united threat to the regime (MacDonald 2006: 13). The patterns created through years of systematic oppression still impact on the lives of most people in South Africa, where "wealth still is distributed extremely unequally and economic inequality still is expressed racially […] Most of the economic elite is white […] and most Africans are poor" (MacDonald 2006: 4).

According to Deborah Posel (2001: 50), the segregation imposed by the apartheid state is still very real: large numbers of respondents of a survey conducted by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation just after the turn of the millennium continue to "make lifestyle choices and judgements about others that reiterate and entrench existing norms of racial separateness". According to the survey, 56% of black South Africans (known as "Blacks" or "Africans" during apartheid), 42% of South Africans of Indian descent (known as "Indians" during apartheid), 33% of white South Africans (known as "Whites" or "Europeans" during apartheid) and 27% of so-called *coloured* or mixed race South Africans perceive people of other races to be "untrustworthy" (Posel 2001: 50). The segregation enforced by law during apartheid thus lives on in the minds of many South

Africans, who, despite the new democratic constitution of 1996 enshrining a "thoroughgoing commitment to non-racialism" feel "uncomfortable around other races" and thus continue to live apart (Posel 2001: 50). After decades of apartheid's racial reasoning, "the idea that South African society comprises four distinct races […] has become a habit of thought and experience, a facet of popular 'common sense' still widely in evidence" (Posel 2001: 51).

This overall condition – that many South Africans continue to feel and live separately and that one's racial background often reveals one's class, living standards and financial opportunities – is crucial for any study of contemporary South Africa. In the case of this thesis, it determined where I had access and to whom I was able to speak. White skin and European ancestry opens doors in the elitist art circles of South Africa where most curators, art historians and other academics are white, middle-class or upper middle class. The colour of my skin thus made it easier for me to blend in and obtain access to art events and exhibition openings like that I attended on the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town in September 2017. During the run-up to the grand public opening of the Zeitz MOCAA, I managed to get close to one of the private events held for patrons and supporters. The selected group of people was significantly different and much less diverse than those at the public opening I attended a few days later. Dressed in fancy dresses and suits, the group gathered for speeches and champagne behind the glass walls of the new museum. Red carpets were laid out in front, and the guards and waiters serving the crowd were, with very few exceptions, the only black people present. This sight initially puzzled me: how was it possible to gather so many white people together in such a big city on the African continent? But this was not the first time I had been faced with the ever-present and continuous segregation still dominating South Africa. In many of the leafy suburbs and central neighbourhoods of Cape Town the image is the same: restaurants, bars and cinemas in Camps Bay or Gardens, where only white people are seated as if the signs of apartheid dividing the land- and cityscapes into *White European*, *Black*, *Indian* or *Coloured* areas were still hung on the walls. Had I worn a slightly more glamorous dress, I feel certain that the security staff would not even have considered approaching me with the information that this was a private event. Dressed in Gucci, one of the main sponsors of the event, I would easily have been able to fit into the crowd and mingle my way through to the free champagne. *That* is the privilege that being white in South Africa – as elsewhere – still implies.

The continuous segregation I experienced in South Africa was something that made me highly uncomfortable despite (or because of) the privileges it gave me as a white European foreigner. As I will describe in the section below on the participant observation I conducted, this feeling of discomfort helped me understand the discomfort of the white curators I spoke with during my fieldwork. Experiencing first hand which areas of Cape Town and Johannesburg I was able (or encouraged) to

walk in and which I was warned against provided me with a clear idea about the invisible borders in South Africa's urban landscapes. These borders, resulting from the dangers white South Africans often associated black and so-called *coloured* South Africans with, became evident in situations when I was warned against walking along certain streets even in broad daylight: "Do not go up that street" I was told, as I crossed the central Long Street in Cape Town heading towards the colourful houses of the Bo Kaap neighbourhood. The side streets of the neighbourhood formerly known as the Malay Quarter, due to its many residents of Cape Malay descent, were considered too dangerous by the white middle-aged woman who had noticed the direction in which I was heading. Well-meaning concerns like these dictated my walking routes around the city: "I can go down this street" I reminded myself, thinking about the recommendations I had received from landlords, shopkeepers or interlocutors in my network, "but only in daylight and only as far as that building" or "I can walk around this neighbourhood on my own, but have to stay on the main streets and should ideally take a taxi home". The restrictions were many and revealed the invisible borders that still separated the neighbourhoods of Cape Town and Johannesburg, and the people living in them.

Participant Observation

As starting points for my analyses, I use descriptions of events like the opening of the Zeitz MOCAA (Chapter III) or the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition (Chapter II) by way of introducing the demands for recognition being expressed. The events I participated in are recorded as I experienced them during the course of a single day. As Max Gluckman (1958: 2) noted in his "Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand", social situations are a large part of the raw material of the anthropologist:

> [Social situations] are the events [the anthropologist] observes and from them and their inter-relationships, institutions, etc., of that society. By them, and by new situations, [the anthropologist] must check the validity of his generalizations (Gluckman 1958: 2).

Like Gluckman (1958: 2), I have deliberately chosen to describe my participant observation of these particular events from the recordings in my notebooks, as they "illustrate admirably the points I am at present trying to make". Unlike the interviews conducted as part of my research, the events I attended and observed in a participatory manner were in many cases characterised by conflicts. This was particularly the case for the public discussion I attended at the Iziko SANG in December 2016: forming part of the empirical basis for Chapter II, this discussion reveals some of the tensions at work in the art world of South Africa regarding the dilemma of who can represent whom. In this case, the discussion revolved around the *Our Lady* exhibition, from which contemporary artworks had been

removed in response to strong objections against the inclusion of an artwork by Zwelethu Mthethwa, a contemporary South African artist, who was then on trial for murder. As the chapter emphasises, the criticism quickly turned towards the three white curators of the exhibition, who were accused of racism by members of the audience. Sitting quietly on the edge of a chair trying to follow the discussion and take note of the different accusations flying around the room, I did my best to fit in and observe the people around me without interrupting the debate. How were they dressed? What were their racial and social backgrounds? Who did most of the talking? What were the responses of each individual to what the others were saying? Listening in on the debate, I tried to grasp the meanings of what was being discussed, while noting down statements and observations in my notebook.

During the debate, I tried to stay as "neutral" as possible, blending into the crowd without taking sides. This turned out to be a difficult balance, as those around me were actively voicing their disapproval and clapping at statements they agreed with. As a white woman in the audience I looked like the curators who were being criticised for being white, and I felt a similar feeling of discomfort about my whiteness in a room which was being criticised for its dominance of white voices. The "neutrality" I was aiming at, despite my quiet attempt to behave like a fly on the wall, was not possible. My skin colour revealed my European ancestry and thus my privileged position in South Africa, as elsewhere, where white skin provides access and opportunities that people with other skin colours are often deprived of. As I will show later, my behaviour was noticed by one of the museum's members of staff, who approached me during my visit the following day. Approvingly she noticed that it was "good that [I] did not do anything wrong". This remark by the custodian made it clear that a certain type of "museological behaviour" was considered "the proper one" despite the Iziko SANG's declared intention of opening its doors to new kinds of debate and engagement. As such, my active participation, not only with the crowd during the public discussion, but also the following day in a casual conversation with a member of staff, became important tools in my research. Through my interactions with the field I noticed important details about it, something which enriched the overall quality of my observations.

Conducting participant observation further enriched my ability to understand museums like the Zeitz MOCAA from within. As already described above, it was difficult to obtain formal interviews with the curators and founder of the newly opened museum on the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town. Instead, I participated in a number of guided tours of the museum, led by assistant curators. Talking informally with the latter, I gained insights into the internal structures of the museum institution that would have been difficult to obtain in any other way. For example, I was able to hear the assistant curators' impressions of the compositions of visitors and the curators' ideas behind the exhibitions, as well as

of their working environment. How long had they worked in the museum? What was their educational background? Would they like to continue working at the Zeitz MOCAA, or did they perceive their one-year curatorial training position as a stepping-stone hopefully leading to something else? These and many more issues were talked about in a casual manner walking up and down the spiral staircase and crossing the concrete cellars of the old silo. However, in playing the part of the curious tourist visiting one of Cape Town's newest sights, I was aware that the information I retrieved in this way might not have been revealed to me had I immediately stated the true nature of the purpose of my questions. For the same reason, I have chosen to fully anonymise all interlocutors to whom I spoke in this manner.

Aside from talking with assistant curators and front of house staff in the sixty-three museums, exhibitions and art fairs making up my field cases, an important aspect of my participant observation conducted in these places was to visit the sites as a normal visitor. During these visits, I would walk around, take in the atmosphere of my surroundings, note down the visitor interactions I came across, and pay attention to the exhibited objects and the ways in which they were described in exhibition labels. In most cases I prepared my visit beforehand with readings about the specific institution, but I would always aim to not let my preparations stand in the way of spontaneously developed opportunities and ideas. If, for example, I learned about a public discussion taking place at the Iziko SANG, I would go there, even though I had planned to observe visitor interactions at the Zeitz MOCAA. Or if during a visit to the Iziko SANG I was struck by the many British painters from the nineteenth century on display, I would start noting down the nationality and year of birth of all the exhibited artists, rather than paying attention to what I had set out to observe on that particular day. Observations like these were very much a result of place- and time-specific moments that occurred spontaneously. I let myself be guided by them and followed up suggestions made by my interlocutors. As such, I used their expertise and guidance to discover a field that was new to me when I first set out to explore it in April 2016. Following various hints and advice to which I was drawn in specific situations meant that I conducted my fieldwork in a less structured manner than I might have done. The lack of planning, for example, in terms of who my interlocutors should be, meant that the list I ended up with (Appendix Two) is very much a result of who my other interlocutors found it relevant for me to speak with. As such, my fieldwork is in itself a reflection of the enclosed networks of South Africa's art world, which I was able to gain access to primarily due to the similarities I shared with my interlocutors in terms of gender, race and academic background.

Chapter I: From Artefacts to Art

Where are the artworks from southern Africa? Looking through art books of African art and artefacts, the maps illustrating where the works of art come from often have far more dots in West Africa than anywhere else on the continent (Phillips 1996: 13): the dots are few and far between in southern, eastern and northern Africa, suggesting that vast parts of Africa suffer or have suffered from visual inarticulacy. Why is that? When comparing the dotted maps of African art with those showing the borders of colonial Africa, it becomes clear that the lack of dots, rather than reflecting a lack of art production in large parts of Africa, is a result of the nationality of most of the European producers of literature on art from Africa in the early twentieth century: art from Francophone West Africa was often more thoroughly documented in the twentieth-century European literature on art from Africa because most of it was produced by Francophone scholars (Phillips 1996: 13).

Forming the basis of European knowledge about art from Africa, it is not surprising that it is art from this part of Africa that was hailed by European modernist like Picasso, Derain and Matisse at the beginning of the twentieth century. For many years, and to some extent still today, it is wooden masks and sculptures from the francophone colonies of West Africa that are the first artworks that spring to mind when thinking about the term *African art*. Even today, museums like the Horniman and the British Museum in London tend to focus on West Africa to such an extent that heartfelt pleas from the public encouraging the curators to "remember that Africa is not just West Africa" were heard during the African Worlds conference at the Horniman in June 1999 (Spring 2003). These examples show that European conceptions of what art from Africa is have deep roots in colonial structures. Despite their now long periods of independence, the former African colonies are still presented in European museums according to the places that European producers of literature on art from Africa found most intriguing.

Figure 2. Political map of Africa from 1915 showing Francophone colonies in green and Anglophone colonies in pink (Bartholomew 1915).

Through their production of knowledge about Africa, European exhibitions of art and artefacts from the continent have influenced public understandings of what art from Africa is and has been. In this chapter, I show how this art has been exhibited historically in Europe and North America in order to demonstrate the Eurocentric foundations of the contemporary exhibitions of South African art that are presented in this thesis. The distinctions between objects of art and so-called "ethnographica" to

which I will return later in this chapter are the results of nineteenth-century European museum practice, as are other classificatory and exhibition practices that have shaped public as well as professional understandings of Africa in past centuries. Since, as Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss (1963 [1903]) remind us, societies order things in response to the structural patterns of society itself, the classificatory practices examined in this thesis are marked by the societies in which they were created. Objects from Africa were therefore classified as "ethnographica" in the European museum practice of the late nineteenth century in order to emphasise the racial hierarchy between white Europeans and black Africans that European colonial powers created at the time to justify their imperial expansion in Africa.

In his chapter on *The White Man's Burden*, Michael MacDonald (2006: 33-48) explains how white European colonisers did not arrive in what was to become South Africa in 1652 with collective interests as whites. Slavery was not motivated by racial prejudices or solidarities, but by a search for land and labour directed towards those who had them, and in Africa those who had them were black and mixed raced (MacDonald 2006: 34). In order to get what they wanted, the white settlers thus banded together as whites in order to justify their entitlement to conquer both land and labour. But prior to British intervention at the beginning of the nineteenth century, white European colonisers "did not regard their supremacy as something that had to be justified by superiority and did not regard superiority as something that originated in colour" (MacDonald 2006: 35). White European colonisers in South Africa thus established their supremacy *before* they legitimised it with reference to their worth as whites (MacDonald 2006: 37). European museum classifications of the late nineteenth century played a part in this justification and emphasised the imagined right of Europeans, which had developed since the late sixteenth century, to civilise the "savages" and "barbarians" of the world through colonisation (Tricoire 2017: 33).

According to Richard Bayley (1860: 5), who in September 1860 reported on the inauguration of the new buildings erected for the South African Public Library and Museum by Prince Alfred, "the African tribes" of South Africa which the British colonial power attempted to "civilise" were in "a state of heathen barbarism […] so complex in its structure […] and, in some respects, so adapted to and so attractive to uncivilised men, that to overturn it and destroy it has been deemed by many impossible, and has been found by all who have attempted it a task of no ordinary difficulty". Perceiving "African tribes" as peoples in need of civilisation, the European colonisers in Africa attempted to establish "civilization and Christianity [and spread] their blessings through the boundless territories which lie beyond our borders" (Bayley 1850: 6). They did so in many ways that cannot be covered in the context of this thesis, but that *also* included museum classifications, which established European art as "high

art" and African art as "ethnographica" suitable for exhibition in natural history museums (Goodnow 2006: 53; Nettleton 2013: 421) or ethnographic museums created in order to educate and entertain Europeans with spectacles of the *other* (Bouquet 2012: 89).

As I will show, nineteenth-century exhibitions of objects originating in Africa denied their makers both historical depth (Bennett 2004: 5) and individual artistic qualities by presenting them as representatives of either specific "cultures" or of the entire African continent. Amending Durkheim and Mauss's notion that "society orders the world of things on the pattern of the structure that prevails in the social world of its people", Igor Kopytoff (1986: 90) has suggested that "societies constrain both these worlds simultaneously and [construct] objects [in the same way] as they construct people". The museum classifications examined in this chapter are in this way not merely the results of the societies in which they were created: they also took and take an active part in creating the societies they are a part of. Museums are thus powerful institutions in which representations of people and societies are created. As I will show, the representations they create are not easily removed or reconstructed, but continue to determine certain narratives about objects as well as people.

Collecting and Classifying Africa in Early European Museum Practice

Humans have collected objects they found to be curious, beautiful or otherwise of interest since the very first traces of human existence. Collecting as such is a practice associated with the fundamental human relationship with the material world and can be seen as a "significant aspect of this complex and fascinating relationship" (Pearce 1995: 3). One of the earliest examples of what can be considered "found art" was discovered in the Makapan Valley in South Africa's Limpopo province by a local schoolteacher in 1925 (Grine 2013: 76). The Makapansgat Pebble, believed to have been collected by an unknown Australopithecine collector around three million years ago (Giblin and Spring 2016: 28), is alien to the dolomite cave where it was found, suggesting that it had been brought to the site from some distance away. Its face-like markings could have been what attracted the early human collector who picked it up (Dart 1974: 168). It is not known why or how the pebble was collected, but the fact that it was removed from its original position indicates that the practice of collecting is millions of years old and that it most likely began in Africa.

The *making* of what was later to be identified as art is similarly as old a practice as the story of humanity itself. Some of the earliest examples are pieces of rock art produced by the San | Bushmen and Khoekhoen. In the Blombos Cave, in what is today South Africa's Western Cape Province, ancient

humans were making red ochre paint and decorating rocks as far back as 100,000 years ago (Fleur 2018). The habits of collecting and producing art thus existed in Africa thousands of years before the Lascaux cave paintings were made in France around 17,000 years ago, something that has only recently been acknowledged.[10] Other kinds of material culture have likewise been assembled and displayed in many parts of the world, but it is nevertheless the case that the collecting of objects for museum-like institutions is a European invention: starting "around the fifteenth century in the Renaissance cities and courts of Italy [museum collecting has] continued in a linear development in Europe since that time, spreading to the rest of the world along with all other characteristically European institutions" (Pearce 1992: 1-2).

Figure 3 and 4. The *Makapansgat Pebble of Many Faces* originally collected around three million years BP by unknown artist(s) (left), is today part of the collection of the Evolutionary Studies Institute at the Wits University in Johannesburg. To the right, a detail from the *Zaamenkomst Panel* by unknown artist(s) is recorded as a San | Bushman production in the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town. The age of this specific piece of rock art is not known: it is recorded as pre-1900, as it was discovered in 1912. Photos from Giblin and Spring 2016: 16 and 29.

The early forms of private museums, known as cabinets of curiosities, "typically comprised an eclectic assortment of natural and manufactured objects designed to demonstrate the cornucopia of visual delights and intellectual stimuli available to the human observer" (Tietze 2017: 4). The objects were sometimes distinguished from each other, but for most Renaissance collectors, "the accumulation of objects for viewing and comment took precedence over distinction and separation" (Tietze 2017: 5).

[10] Henshilwood et al. (2002: 1278) have shown that ancient examples of rock art, found in what is today known as South Africa, date as far back as 77,000 BP. Perforated beads found in the Blombos Cave in Western Cape province have yielded further evidence of some of the earliest examples of personal ornaments, while the burial of a young individual found at Border Cave in the KwaZulu-Natal province "may represent the first known instance of an ornament used as a grave good" (Vanhaeren et al. 2013: 00-01). Henshilwood (quoted in Tollefson 2012: 291) has argued that the cross-hatched etchings found on pieces of ochre in the Blombos Cave are "examples of symbolic behaviour […] representing the earliest known evidence of abstract thought". As such, they can be seen as some of the earliest examples of produced art.

One of the earliest examples of these Renaissance collections is the *Musei Wormiani Historia* in Copenhagen, which was founded by the Danish physician, natural historian and antiquary Ole Worm (1588-1654). The frontispiece of the publication describing Worm's collection shows how museums of his time were collecting and displaying "everything curious" in a cabinet-style manner, in which objects of natural history, hunting tools, sculptures, memorabilia and rarities from around the world were all displayed alongside each other. At the Worm Collection the objects were arranged "partly in an effort to create the distinction between *artificialia* and *naturalia* and to classify the *naturalia* into groups based upon their apparently obvious physical characteristics [while the] artefacts (then and now) proved more difficult to sort" (Pearce 1992: 97).

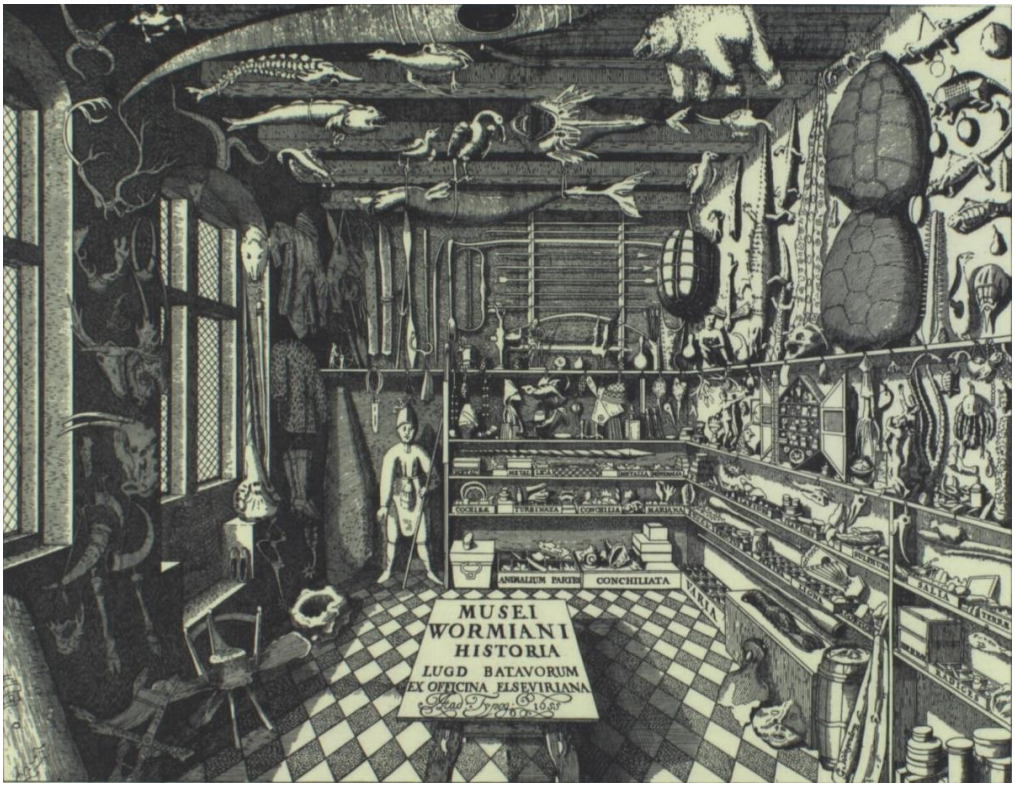

Figure 5. Engraved frontispiece of Ole Worm's *Musei Wormiani Historia*, Copenhagen 1655. Photo from Det Kgl. Biblioteks Billedsamling 2019.

During the eighteenth century, in accordance with the Enlightenment quest to classify the world, an increasing depth of scientific knowledge was added to the early museum collections, which reduced their scope and kick-started their specialisation (Pearce 1992: 99; Tietze 2017: 5). Simultaneously, a new development in collecting procedures began to revalidate "the artistic creations of man's own hand" (Schulz 1990: 212): in 1727 the son of a Hamburg merchant produced his *Museographica* under

the pseudonym of C.F. Neikelius (Schulz 1990: 212). In this study, the importance of the early museum collections was highlighted by the following statement: "Man can […] acquire knowledge of physical things only by way of libraries and curiosity cabinets" (Neikelius 1727 in Schulz 1990: 214). Neikelius divided the creation of nature into three realms, which are still having their mark on minds and languages today: the *regno animali*, *regno vegetabili* and *regno minerali* (Neikelius 1727 in Schulz 1990: 214). Eva Schulz (1990: 214-215) and Susan M. Pearce (1992: 99) have both highlighted the significance of Neikelius' description of *artificialia* (art) as a category not only including originals by famous masters, but also "curioso Artificialia … antique und modern" (Neikelius 1727 in Schulz 1990: 215). Art was to be understood as "multiple and so more difficult to define" than objects of natural history (Pearce 1992: 99). As a result, art and what was later known as "ethnographica" were not separated from each other, but linked in a shared category of all things man-made. It was not until the nineteenth century that distinctions between objects of art and "ethnographica" became common in museum classifications. Natural history specimens had gradually vanished from the earlier cabinets of curiosity-style collections they had been part of, thus leading to objects of natural history being distinguished from those that were man-made. A further specialisation, moving the Renaissance collections of "all things curious" into the modern era, was seen in most European museums in the late nineteenth century, where collections de-contextualised repositories of artefacts from non-European countries and turned them into specialised ethnographic museums. The Ethnologische Museum Berlin, the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge are all results of this process (Delistraty 2018).

The specialisation that was introduced to the University of Oxford's museums provides a good example of the distinctions between art and "ethnographica" that were made in the late nineteenth century. In the 1880s, the Ashmolean Museum decided to move its ethnological holdings to the newly established Pitt Rivers Museum, which had been established in close connection to the Natural History Museum (Larson 2008). The debates over where the anthropological and archaeological collections of the university should belong show that "the material substance and the intellectual character of these disciplines were less distinct then than might now be assumed" (Larson 2008: 87). But the consequences of the distinctions made formed a lasting impact on the ways in which museums all over the world have since classified their collections. In Oxford, the Ashmolean Museum became specialised in art and archaeology (Ashmolean 2019a), while the Pitt Rivers Museum came to display "archaeological and ethnographic objects from all parts of the world and all time periods" (PRM 2018). The distinction between the art objects exhibited at the Ashmolean and the so-called ethnographic objects exhibited at the Pitt Rivers resulted in a narrower definition of art that is still visible at the Ashmolean Museum today. The collection covers a wide range of objects from Ancient Egyptian

mummies, Byzantine coinage and European Renaissance art to sculptures, textiles and ceramics from the Islamic Middle East (Ashmolean 2019a and 2019b), but no objects from South America, Oceania or sub-Saharan Africa.[11] The only exception to this rule is found in the displays showing the history of the Ashmolean collection on the lower ground floor of the museum. Here, objects which were taken away from the collection and placed elsewhere through the process of specialisation in the late nineteenth century are shown: a Ginny Drum from 1656 made in West Africa of elephant hide and wood, objects of natural history, and a match-coat tunic from Canada made in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Figure 6, 7 and 8. Displays from the *Ashmolean Story Gallery* exhibiting objects similar to the ones taken away from the collection in the process of specialisation in the late nineteenth century. A Ginny Drum from 1656 made in West Africa of elephant hide and wood (left), objects of natural history (centre), and a match-coat tunic from Canada made in the first half of the seventeenth century (right). Photos by author June 2018.

At the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, "the world's leading museum of art and design" (VAM 2019a), a similar specialisation is shown in exhibitions where only objects from the "Islamic Middle East, Japan, Europe (1600-1815), Korea, China and South Asia" are displayed (VAM 2019b). Here, it is furthermore only the European part of the collection which has a certain period attached to it on the museum website, something which highlights the Eurocentric exhibition practice of displaying European objects in a certain timeframe and non-European objects with only their place of origin defining them. Displaying non-European collections in dehistoricising ways is often seen in European and North American museums, where objects of non-European origin are presented in a "modernist map of world culture [in which non-Europeans] move across space and Western culture is defined by change across time" (Meier 2013: 99). At the National Museum of Denmark the exhibited collections

[11] Objects from ancient Egypt and Sudan representing "human occupation of the Nile Valley from prehistory to the seventh century AD" (Ashmolean 2018b) are currently the only African objects on display in the Ashmolean, and the museum has "no plans to exhibit any more at this stage" as one of the curators informed me.

are roughly divided into one part covering antiquity and Danish history, with three floors focusing on prehistory, the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, as well as *Stories of Denmark 1660-2000*, and another part covering the museum's ethnographic collections, which are grouped geographically. This distinction, which is based on how the National Museum was divided into collections of Danish prehistory, non-European ethnography and Danish ethnology at its opening in 1892 (Levitt 2015: 26), thus highlights Denmark's own historical development, while objects from the rest of the world are grouped together based on place rather than time.

De-historicising exhibitions is not a new phenomenon. Both the so-called "life group" that Franz Boas (1858-1942) arranged for the Hall of Northwest Coast Indians at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in 1896, and Walter Baldwin Spencer's (1860-1929) conjectural series of the evolution of the Australian Aboriginal throwing stick to that of the boomerang, displayed at the National Museum of Victoria in Melbourne in 1901, de-historicised indigenous peoples (Bennett et al. 2017: 9-15). At the British Museum, a newly reorganised "Ethnographical" gallery was opened to the public in 1886 containing "Ethnographical Collections from different parts of the world (excepting those from China, which are placed in the Asiatic Saloon)" (BM 1899: 98). It did not contain any objects from Europe either, but this was not even found worth mentioning in the *Guide to the exhibition galleries of the British Museum* published in 1899:

> The general arrangement of the collection is as follows: entering from the Asiatic Saloon, the first two bays, left and right, contain a series of Oriental Arms and Armour and collections from Asia. In the second and third pairs of bays are objects from the Asiatic Islands and from Oceania: the collections from the black races of the Pacific, inhabiting Australia and Melanesia being on the left; those from the brown races, inhabiting islands grouped under the names of Polynesia and Micronesia being on the right. The fourth pair of bays is occupied […] with objects from Africa; the specimens from southern, western and northern Africa and Madagascar being on the left; and those from Egypt and from Eastern and Central Africa being on the right. America occupies the last bays (BM 1899: 98).

It is noteworthy, and very much in line with the evolutionist paradigm of the time, that European objects were not exhibited as part of the Ethnographical Collections. The gallery was put in place not as a "mere haphazard gallery of native curiosities without educational value" (BM 1899: 99), but as an exhibition, where the "manners and customs of particular peoples and of their development from savagery towards civilization" (BM 1899: 98) were shown. The "primitive races […] as a whole" were seen and thus exhibited in order to "represent stages of culture through which our own [European] ancestors passed on their upward path; in all probability the implements and weapons and utensils which they make and use are similar to those made and used in Europe thousands of years ago" (BM 1899: 99). The display of the Ethnographical Collections at the British Museum was thus used to highlight European civilisation at the expense of the representative of other civilisations, whose non-

European objects were presented to their usually European viewers as an indication of ”the stage of savagery or primitive civilisation in which he exists” (BM 1899: 98). By the end of the nineteenth century, European museum visitors had been shown a substantial number of exhibitions and displays depicting an image of a wild and savage Africa, which would remain dominant for many decades to follow. One of these exhibitions was the *Stanley and African Exhibition* (1890) showcasing objects brought to England by the Welsh-born American explorer Sir Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904) from his long trek across central Africa:

> [With its] palisade of tree stems ornamented with skulls [and] dozens of spears and swords [the exhibition was] the physical instantiation of many of the partially-formed ideas of a Victorian audience; an audience eager for knowledge of what Stanley called ‘Darkest Africa’ (Casely-Hayford 2002: 115).

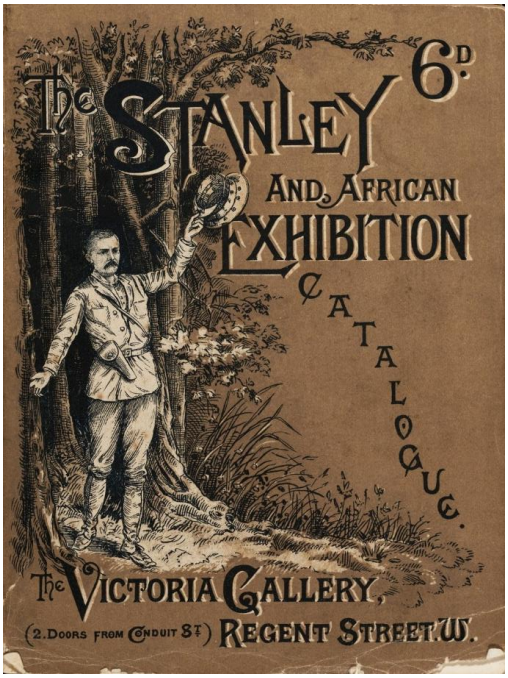

Figure 9 and 10. The front page of the catalogue accompanying the *Stanley and African Exhibition* held at the Victoria Gallery in London in 1890 (left) and a photo from the exhibition display. Photos from the Smithsonian Institution Libraries 2019 and Coombes 1994a: 71.

The image of Africa that was presented to the British public from the last decade of Queen Victoria’s (1819-1901) reign to the First World War (1914-1918) was produced through a series of tropes as a ”land of darkness” inhabited by people whom it was considered *The White Man’s Burden* to civilise (Coombes 1994a: 2; Kipling 1994 [1899]: 334). Africans were portrayed as “savages [who were] inherently inferior […] both intellectually and morally, to the white coloniser” (Coombes 1994a: 2), and Africa consequently began to exist as “an ideological space, at once savage, threatening, exotic

and productive" in the popular imagination of Europeans (Coombes 1994a: 2). Often produced as tools to justify colonialism, European exhibitions of Africa from this time reveal more about European interests in Africa and about the world views and ideas of the European coloniser, than they do about Africa and Africans (Coombes 1994a: 2-3). However, as I will show below, these world views and ideas came to dominate representations of Africa throughout the twentieth century – especially in South Africa, where the ideals of the apartheid regime were visible in museological distinctions celebrating objects of white African and European origin as art and those of black African origin as "ethnographica" suitable for displays in museums of natural history (Goodnow 2006: 53; Nettleton 2013: 421).

Art from Africa as Avant Garde

In the beginning of the twentieth century objects of African origin began to be exhibited in art galleries valuing them more for their aesthetic than their "ethnographic" qualities. Although some objects had been part of European colonial collections since the fifteenth century, it was not until the first decades of the twentieth century that their artistic qualities came to be fully appreciated as works of art (Clarke 2003: 167). Inspired by avant garde artists like Picasso, Derain and Matisse, who were heavily influenced by the African artworks they themselves collected, museums and art galleries in Europe and North America began to appreciate and value African objects in similar aesthetic ways to how objects of European fine art were appreciated and valued. Along with the formation of private collections, such as that of Picasso, temporary exhibitions in art galleries and museums became standard-bearers of what Christa Clarke (2003: 167) has called "the aesthetic valorisation of African art". It is important to note that the "aesthetic valorisation" Clarke (2003) identifies is seen from a Eurocentric point of view: these objects, which were now increasingly exhibited in art contexts rather than solely in ethnographic contexts, as they had been since the period of museum specialisation in the mid- to late nineteenth century, were often already aestheticized objects in the social contexts in which they originated. They had different meanings and were not showcased behind glass or on gallery walls, but in many cases they were still highly valued objects. When we talk about the aesthetic valorisation of African objects at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is thus in a Euro-American or Western context, which, however, significantly influenced the ways in which African objects came to be exhibited not only in Europe and North America, but also in Africa itself.

This change was significant because it turned so-called "ethnographic" objects or artefacts into art through the medium of a group of European artists and art collectors, who functioned in a way as mediators in the objects' transformation from artefacts to art. In Figure 11 below, I show how artefacts were removed from Africa as such, but returned via Europe (to Africa as well as the rest of the world)

as works of art. This process emphasises the position of artists, curators, collectors and art historians from the Global North whose assumed authority to valorise objects from Africa made them act as mediators attempting to transform "ethnographica" into art. As I will show below, the predominantly white curators who in South Africa's post-apartheid years of transformation attempted to "valorise" objects of black African origin, by removing them from the context of the "ethnographic" to a context of aesthetic contemplation within the art gallery, had a similar approach as the one taking place in the beginning of the twentieth century. Like Picasso, Derain and Matisse before them, the curators sought to valorise objects of black African origin by removing them from what Picasso (1937 quoted in Malraux 1974: 17-19) referred to as the disgusting and malodorous context of the ethnographic museum.[12] That the reclassification from "ethnographica" to art is considered a valorisation by art historians like Christa Clarke (2003) shows the hierarchy between the two categories of objects, but the fact that it was a white European artist who became known as the "discoverer" of "Negro Art" (Zayas 1914 in Flam and Deutch 2003: 70) in Western art history also shows the dominant aspect of European valorisation: although aesthetic production has been practiced on the continent today known as Africa for thousands of years, objects collected from Africa were in most cases not classified as art until a group of European and North American artists and curators at the beginning of the twentieth century decided to collect them as such. Similarly, it was not until white curators in South Africa decided to exhibit objects of black African origin as art in art galleries that it was appreciated as such by institutions such as the Iziko SANG.

[12] In a conversation with the French art theorist André Malraux (1901-1976), published in *La Téte d'Obsidienne* in 1974, Picasso explained how his painting *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) was inspired by his fascination of the "Negroes' sculptures" he had seen at the disgusting and malodorous Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro around the time of its making (Malraux 1974: 17-19*: "*Quand je suis allé au Trocadéro, c'était dégoûtant. Le marché aux Puces. L'odeur. J'étais tout seul. Je voulais m'en aller. Je ne partais pas. Je restais. Je restais. J'ai compris que c'était très important: il m'arrivait quelque chose, non? Les Masques, ils n'étaient pas des sculptures comme les autres. Pas du tout. Ils étaient des choses magique. […] J'ai compris pourquoi j'étais peintre. Tout seul dans ce musée haffreux, avec des masques, des poupées peaux-rouges, des mannequins poussiéreux. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* ont dû arriver ce jour-là mais pas du tout à cause des formes: parce que c'était ma première toile d'exorcisme, oui!"

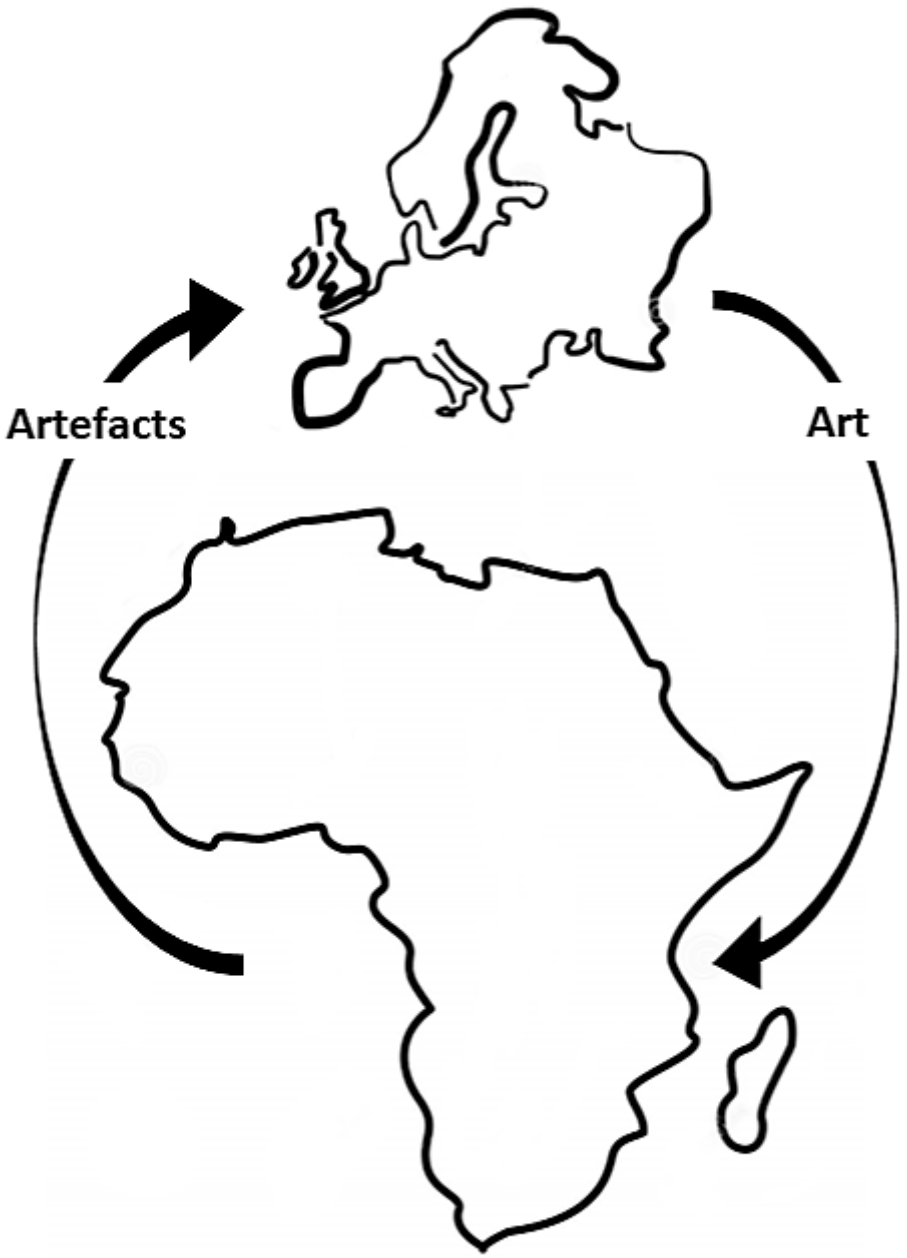

Figure 11. Artefacts were removed from Africa as such, but returned via Europe (to Africa as well as the rest of the world) as works of art. This emphasises the historical (and to some extent contemporary) position of Europe and the West by showing that it is artists, curators and art historians from the Global North, who have the assumed authority to valorise objects or artefacts to an extent that the objects can be perceived as art. Illustration made by author with drawings of continents by Tupungato 2019a and 2019b.

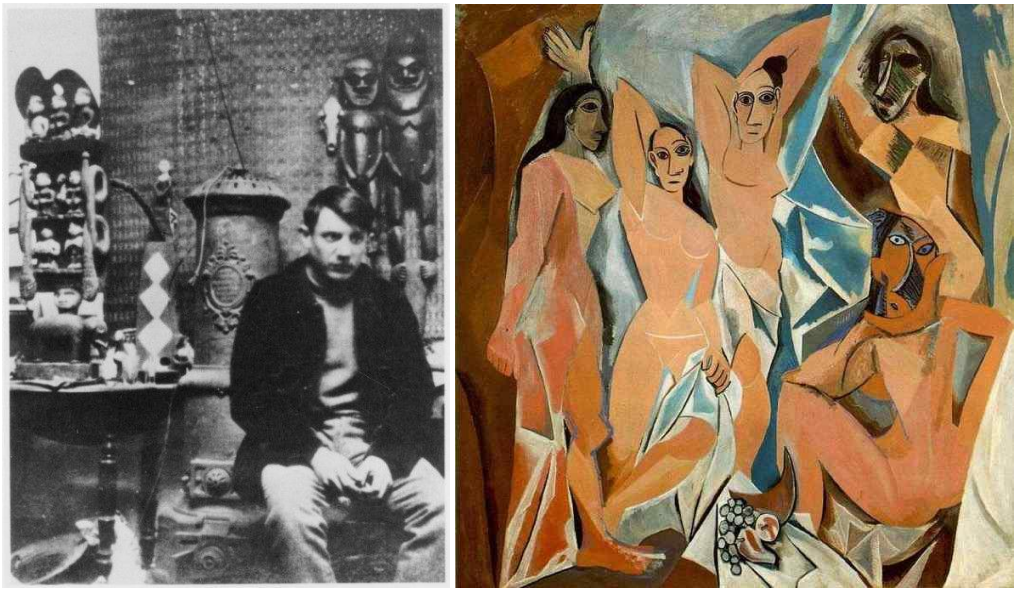

Figure 12 and 13. Picasso in his studio in the Bateau-Lavoir house in Montmartre in 1908 (left) and his painting *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) inspired by his fascination for the "Negroes' sculptures" he had seen at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris at around the time of its creation (Picasso 1937 in Malraux 1974). Photos from Flam and Deutch 2003: 34 and MoMA 2019.

One of the first influential exhibitions in the early twentieth century that sought to validate African objects as art was the *Statuary in Wood by African Savages: The Roots of Modern Art* (1914) at Alfred Stieglitz's Gallery 291 in New York (Clarke 2003: 167). The exhibition was one of the first in the United States where African objects were displayed "solely from the point of view of art" (Flam and Deutch 2003: 70). It was organised by the Mexican-born caricaturist Marius de Zayas (1880-1961), who in his own words was "a propagandist for modern art" (Flam and Deutch 2003: 70). De Zayas (1914: 70) distinguished between "the comprehension of form" that artists like himself had acquired through European art and "the plastic principles of negro art" which he referred to as the "point of departure for our abstract representation". Despite the racist premise of its title, *Statuary in Wood by African Savages: The Roots of Modern Art* was "notable not only for its subject, but also for its innovative strategy of display [in which a] select grouping of eighteen African masks and statuary [were] presented as singular masterpieces" (Clarke 2003: 167).

The fascination with African art in exhibitions and collections like the *Statuary in Wood* was not only an "aesthetic valorization of African art" (Clarke 2003: 167), but also a continuation of the exoticisation that is significant for the colonial exhibitions of the late nineteenth century: Picasso's view of African masks as "des choses magiques" (Malraux 1974: 17) reveals a view of non-European objects as products of an "exotic other" that was equally noteworthy of the time. Alongside the valorisation of *some* African art objects – masks and statues in wood and metal tended to fit more easily into the

established categories of European fine art (Clarke 2003: 167) – the image of the wild ”African Savages” (as the title of the exhibition indicates) was maintained. The European modernists' fascination with African art as such was not in opposition to, but an extension of nineteenth-century European understandings of ”primitive” Africa (Eyo 1998: 10-11).

The transformation in the way African objects were perceived by European and North American curators, artists and collectors at the beginning of the twentieth century, was as such only a significant change in the way that it kick-started a trend in exhibiting as art what had until then been known as artefacts or “ethnographica”. The inclusion of so-called ”ethnographic” objects in art galleries still meant exoticising Africa in similar ways to the colonial exhibitions of a generation before. Put on display next to artworks by European modernists, the African masks and statues might have been shown as ”singular masterpieces” (Clarke 2003: 167), but were nevertheless displayed in order to emphasise the ”point of departure [of the] abstract representation” (Zayas 1914: 70) associated with European or Western artists, rather than as artworks in their own right. As I will show in the following, much so-called ”traditional” or ”ethnographic” art from Africa is still exhibited in this way. For example, at the recent *Picasso Primitif* (2017) exhibition at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, as well as in the *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* (1984) at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York thirty years earlier, so-called ”primitive” artworks of Africa were juxtaposed with so-called ”modern” ones from Europe and North America. Both exhibitions attempted to ”overcome the discriminatory legacies of empire” (Monroe 2018: 93), only to be criticised for doing the exact opposite:

> By imposing a universalistic explanatory scheme to justify the placing of so-called primitive art and Western art in a single frame [both exhibitions] replicated the epistemological strategies of colonialism itself, which of course also depended on the Western imposition of universalistic explanatory schemes, such as the distinction between ‘civilized’ and ‘primitive’ (Monroe 2018: 93).

John W. Monroe (2018: 93) has highlighted how the ”imposed framework” – in the case of the *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* exhibition – can be seen as a ”formalist aesthetic vision that subjugated all objects to the judging eye of the Western connoisseur”, while the *Picasso Primitif* exhibition was a ”psychoanalytic conception of the creative process as a form of sublimation and exorcism, in which the same psychodynamics ascribed to Western creators were assumed to drive their non-Western counterparts”. As such, each exhibition was continuing the juxtaposition between ”primitive” and ”tribal” African artists, who in most cases were kept anonymous, while the ”modern” European or Western artists were celebrated for their individual “authenticity”.

Postmodern Exhibitions of African Art

Around seventy years after objects of African origin started to appear as artworks alongside and in the private collections of modernist European painters, another époque of increased interest in exhibiting non-European or non-Western art took place. Occurring simultaneously with a number of critical studies in postcolonial theory (Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1988), the period from around the mid-1980s to the late 1990s was significant for its ”explosive interest” in what was often labelled ”ethnographic art” (Price 2013: 200). The interest went well beyond the world of academic studies and included a long list of new exhibitions, some of which I will describe in the following. Perhaps most famous in the early years of what I have chosen to call the postmodern exhibitions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is the *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* (1984) at MoMA in New York, already mentioned, and the *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) at the Centre Georges Pompidou and Grande Halle in Paris. Both exhibitions tried to counteract the Eurocentric exhibition practices of the past and can be seen as forerunners of the many postmodern and in many ways postcolonial exhibitions that followed.

The aim of *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* was ”to open a new interdisciplinary dialogue on the relationship between Western and non-Western art” (Price 2013: 200), but it created controversy because of the indication in its title that some art was purer and more ”primitive” than other. Evoking reminders of nineteenth-century evolutionist ideas about the ”exotic other”, the exhibition was heavily criticised for its Eurocentric underpinnings (Palmer 2008: 187). James Clifford (1988: 196) early on pointed out that the abrupt redefinition of a large class of non-Western artefacts, which in the space of a few decades at the beginning of the twentieth century came to be perceived as art, is a ”taxonomic shift that requires critical historical discussion, not celebration”. It is thus important to see the significant changes of museum exhibitions from the late 1980s onwards in a critical light and to note the fundamental curatorial practices which did *not* change, but rather continued existing practices in new forms.

Magiciens de la Terre (1989) was curated by Jean-Hubert Martin, who famously stated that he would no longer allow ”100 percent of Western exhibitions to systematically ignore 80 percent of the surface of the globe” (Lamoureux 2005: 65). This exhibition featured contemporary artworks by 50% Western and 50% non-Western artists, who were all identified by name (Hanru 2014: 7). Until then, this was often not the case when exhibiting non-Western artists, who tended to be presented as spokespersons for a specific group of people, a country or even a whole continent. In *Magiciens de la Terre* the artists were presented as individuals rather than by geographical region or time period in order to ”subvert the traditional division between centre and periphery of civilizations and challenge the Eurocentric illusion of superiority in the field of artistic representation” (Hanru 2014: 8). Although

the exhibition brought contemporary African art to the forefront of attention in European and North American museums and art galleries, its emphasis on independent artists who had not gone through academic training can be seen as a ”neo-primitivizing” of Africa (Fillitz 2009: 118-119). By continuing to focus on African artists without academic training, Martin and other curators of his time presented an image of Africa as backward and pre-modern, rather than focusing on contemporary and trained artists similar to their counterparts in Europe. In Chapter III I will show how Zeitz MOCAA’s severe focus on contemporary and academically trained artists can be seen as a reaction to exhibitions like *Magiciens de la Terre* in that it focuses solely on African art produced in similar ways as art from the rest of the world.

A number of semi-permanent reinstallations took place in major museums around Europe and North America in the aftermath of the debates anticipated by the organisers of temporary exhibitions like *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* and *Magiciens de la Terre*. One of the earliest of these took place when the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York reinstalled one of its African galleries in 1995 (Phillips 2007: 82). Four years later the *African Worlds* (1999-2016) gallery opened at the Horniman Museum in London as a semi-permanent exhibition of the museum’s collection of African objects, ranging from Egyptian mummies and bronze art from Benin to a version of ”the spectacular Igbo Ijele, Africa’s largest mask” (Horniman 2016) and Dogon and Bwa masks from Mali and Burkina Faso (Peek 2006: 70). The Horniman exhibition brought together ”a rich mixture of sculpture and decorative arts” (Museums of the World 2019) and was significant for its time in the way that the curators brought together a diverse group of co-curators in order to include many voices: ”elders, maskers, drummers, diviners, artists and exiles” (Museums of the World 2019) were brought in as experts to accompany the academic (and mostly European) curators and anthropologists.

African Worlds replaced the Horniman’s previous exhibition devoted to ”world ethnography” (Phillips 2007: 82), but is now once again incorporated in a gallery presenting objects from ”the world’s many cultures” (Horniman 2018a), after the Horniman opened its *World Gallery* in June 2018. The newly opened gallery goes against the long established tradition of exhibiting the customs and lives of non-European peoples in ethnographic museums *apart* from the art and design produced in Europe. Instead of continuing the distinctions still made at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford between art and design mainly from Europe, Asia and the Islamic Middle East and ”ethnographica” from the rest of the world, the Horniman includes the *whole* world in its new exhibition. Thus a straw goat from Sweden is exhibited on equal terms with ”intricately tooled Tuareg metalwork” and ”aromatic herbs used by Bhutanese ritual healers in the Himalayas” (Horniman 2018b). As such, Horniman’s *World Gallery* highlights what is *common* about

the customs and habits of people around the world, rather than displaying one group as more ”curious” or ”exotic” than others. According to the newly appointed director of the museum, Nick Merriman (quoted in Ahmed 2018), this approach is much more in line with the philosophy of the museum’s founder, Frederick Horniman (1835-1906), who was ”much less interested in demonstrating the superiority of the West [than in] showing the common humanity, the different cultural responses to common human issues”.

Figure 14 and 15. The *African Worlds* (1999-2016) gallery at the Horniman Museum in London showcasing African objects ranging from Egyptian mummies and bronze art from Benin to a version of ”the spectacular Igbo Ijele, Africa’s largest mask” (Horniman 2016) and Dogon and Bwa masks from Mali and Burkina Faso (Peek 2006: 70). Photos by author February 2016.

In the same year that the Horniman Museum opened *African Worlds*, the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in Washington D.C. opened its new *African Voices* exhibition in galleries previously occupied by a conventional mid-twentieth-century ethnographic display on Africa (Phillips 2007: 82). The previous *Hall of African Cultures* had been developed in the 1960s, and while it was a ”distinct improvement [on] its predecessor, whose framework was based on nineteenth-century theories of social evolution” (Arnoldi et al. 2001: 17), it too had become embroiled in public controversy by the mid-1980s. As the curators of the redeveloped *African Voices* exhibition have described, the NMNH ”regularly received written criticism of some of the displays and label copy from Africanists, African diplomats posted in Washington, and local African American organizations” (Arnoldi et al. 2001: 17). After a hearing in 1992, when the Secretary of the Smithsonian was ”asked directly about offensive and racists labels” (Arnoldi et al. 2001: 18), the exhibition was closed down. In line with the more inclusive ways of making exhibitions about Africa in the late twentieth century, *African Voices* was created ”in concert with a diverse Extended Team composed of Africans, African Americans, Africanists, and community leaders [who] agreed broadly along the following lines: the exhibition

needed to highlight Africa's history, diversity, and dynamism; Africa's connections to the wider world; and African agency both historically and in the present" (Arnoldi et al. 2001: 8-19). As such, the curators listened to demands for recognition expressed by visitors to the museum before the re-installation, but their new inclusive approach did not change the context in which objects from Africa are exhibited: African objects from the Smithsonian Collections are shown not only at the National Museum of African Art, which opened to the public in 1987 (Smithsonian 2019a), but also at the NMNH alongside displays of turtles, dinosaurs and insects (Smithsonian 2019b). Unlike man-made objects from any other part of the world, those from Africa are thus continuously "treated in much the same way as butterflies and birds [...] presented as if they were […] specimens" (Hudson in Goodnow 2006: 53).

In the wake of the same process of the reinstallation of permanent displays on Africa, the *Sainsbury African Galleries* opened at the British Museum in 2001. Setting out to offer "a positive view of African arts and cultures as an antidote to the relentless tide of negative depictions of Africa and the Middle East in the world press" (Spring 2015: 3), its curators chose to include contemporary artworks in order to "emphasise the continuing significance of the diverse traditions represented elsewhere in the galleries". The inclusion of contemporary art in the British Museum's *Sainsbury Galleries* coincided with what Susan Vogel (2005: 12) dubbed the *End of an Age*. Describing a shift in focus, among scholars and museum professionals alike, between what she called "classical [and] contemporary African art", she noticed that in the field of collecting, as well as in academic research, "it is increasingly clear that […] contemporary African art has become a field of its own" (Vogel 2005: 15). I will return to this point below, in relation to the heritage collection at the JAG, which Ayanda, a Johannesburg-based curator I spoke with during my fieldwork, felt ambivalent about, as well as in Chapter III, where I argue that the heavy focus on post-2010 art at the Zeitz MOCAA further emphasises this notion of the *End of an Age* in historical African art.

At the British Museum, the permanent *Sainsbury Galleries* is not the only exhibition where the museum's curators have included contemporary artworks such as El Anatsui's *Man's Cloth* (2001) in exhibitions showing historical or so-called "traditional" objects. In the recent temporary exhibition *South Africa: the Art of a Nation* (2016-17), the curators similarly chose to include contemporary artworks alongside historical objects such as the Makapansgat Pebble. In the *Sainsbury Galleries*, a sign on the wall close to the entrance, in the basement below the Great Court, states that the contemporary artworks on display "emphasise the continuing significance of the diverse traditions represented elsewhere in the galleries, but also suggest new perspectives on Africa in the twenty-first century and the continent's immense impact on the rest of the world". John Giblin, one of the three

curators behind the *South Africa: the Art of a Nation* exhibition, has similarly highlighted how ”it is important for [the British Museum] to bring […] historical and archaeological periods into the present to explain why they are important for contemporary communities and why they are important to South Africa’s collected history […] [The] contemporary artworks [are as such used] to highlight the importance of these periods for the present” (BM 2016). In both statements, whether to emphasise the continuing significance of Africa’s diverse traditions or to show contemporary communities the relevance of historical and archaeological periods, contemporary art by African artists is being used to accompany – as if to explain – the historical objects on display, something which would most likely not have happened in an exhibition of European objects displayed for their socio-historical significance.

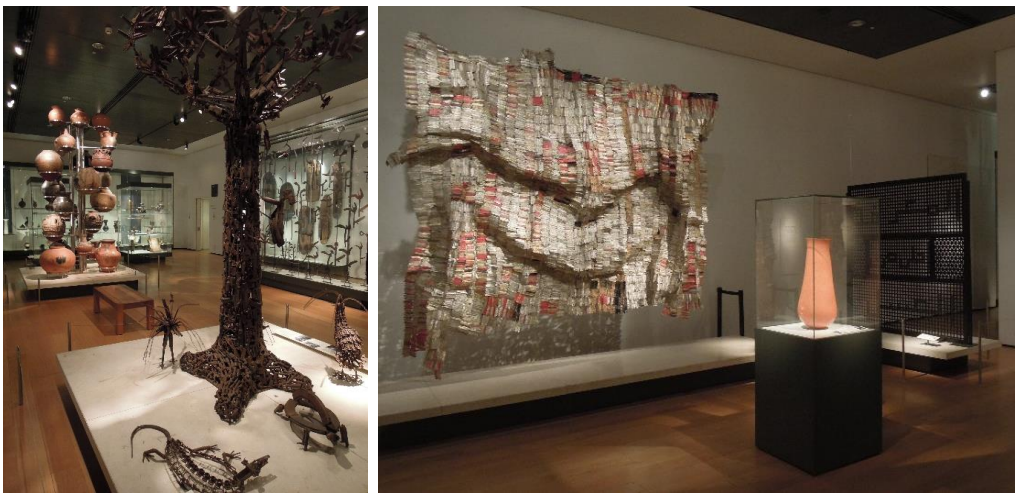

Figure 16 and 17. The *Sainsbury African Galleries* (opened 2001) at the British Museum in London. The exhibition showcases all kinds of man-made objects, ranging from the much-debated Benin bronzes to South African headrests from the early twentieth century and contemporary artworks by artists such as the *Man’s Cloth* (2001) by El Anatsui seen on the right. Photos by author February 2016 and February 2017.

Ingrid Heermann (2013: 246) has argued that the inclusion of contemporary artworks in otherwise so-called ethnographic exhibitions ”constitutes a personal voice that reflects different issues of time, place, and identity”. According to Heermann (2013: 246), the mixture of ”ethnographica” and contemporary art from the same geographical areas enable curators to ”demonstrate change and modernity and thereby help to position […] traditional collections in a historic perspective against the timeless and a-historic modes of reconstructed contexts of the past”. By explaining ”traditional” collections in this way, however, the curators are continuing a form of exoticisation. Rather than assuming that the geographical areas the collections come from are fully modern and thus equal to any geographical area in the Western world, the geographical area in question – be it Africa, Oceania or Latin America – is presented as if the contemporary artists there are not part of a globalised art world, but instead practitioners continuing old artistic traditions from the region they are made to

represent. As exemplified above by the ambivalent feelings of the black, Zulu-speaking, South African artist Lerato, who found herself caught between the ways she would *like* to express herself visually and the ways people around her *expect* her to express herself, many of the artists I spoke with during my fieldwork refused to be ”ethnographied” in this way. They demanded to be exhibited in their own right on equal terms with contemporary European or Western artists, who in most cases are exhibited in art galleries without reference to their possible geographical or historical links.

The assumed need for further contextualization in exhibitions displaying historical objects from Africa, whether through contemporary art or otherwise, is something Kavita Singh (quoted in Delistraty 2018) has advocated: in order to stay relevant, ethnographic museums will in her view ”need to deliver greater degrees of contextualization and description for the objects that they exhibit”. But, as I will show below, the need to expand classificatory boundaries in the quest for transformation in post-apartheid South Africa implied a showdown with the contextualizing museum practices of the past. Not risking replicating earlier ethnographic museum models primarily intended for the European viewer (Delistraty 2018; Ford 2010: 641), curators of museums with objects formerly known as ”ethnographica” have increasingly chosen to exhibit them in art contexts without much explanation. In doing so, the curators have attempted to uplift or valorise the African ”artefacts” in their collections by displaying them as “global art” (Belting 2009), just as the European modernist painters did with their private collections at the beginning of the twentieth century. As such, an opposite tendency to that being pursued at the British Museum is taking place: while contemporary artworks find their way into so-called ”ethnographic” exhibitions at the British Museum, the curators of the Iziko SANG and the JAG are moving in the other direction to include objects formerly known as ”ethnographica” in the white cube settings of the art gallery.

Like other reinstallations before it, the reinstallation at the British Museum in the early 2000s involved a rethinking of curatorial approaches and a complete redesign of architectural space and exhibition furniture (Phillips 2007: 82). The redesign of the Africa exhibition at the British Museum was, like the redesigns at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Horniman Museum in London and the Smithsonian’s Museum in Washington D.C., structured in order to replace previous exhibitions that to varying degrees had ”represented Africa as distant from and prior to the space and time of Western modernity” (Phillips 2007: 82). Until the exhibition redesigns of the 1990s and early 2000s, the geographical space of ”Africa” was often confined to sub-Saharan Africa, with objects from Egypt and other North African regions being exhibited in other contexts. This is still the case in many museums, such as the British Museum, where sub-Saharan objects are either exhibited in exhibitions on their own or, as previously noted, were removed from museum collections altogether as part of the late

nineteenth-century museum specialization. The *time* of Africa was often defined as a fictive ”ethnographic present” (Fabian 2014) that represented Africa as pre-modern. As Ruth B. Phillips (2007: 83) and others (Errington 1998; Hiller 1991; Price 2001; Stocking 1985; Vogel 2006) have argued, the constructs of time and space in relation to exhibitions of Africa were thus tied to ideologies of primitivism and cultural evolutionism. Inscribing essentialising notions of race, the constructs made by most ethnographic museum displays throughout most of the twentieth and in some cases well into the twenty-first centuries have shaped stereotypical ideas of Africa as a continent without modernity – backward, and frozen in time.

Following the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in February 1990, many museums and art galleries in Europe and North America turned their attention towards *South* Africa and tried to capture the transformative processes that followed the ending of apartheid through representations of art. Following the Venice Biennale in 1993, in which South African artists were allowed re-entry after years of exclusion due to the racial policies of the apartheid regime, the Stedelijk Museum of Modern Art in Amsterdam opened its *Zuiderkruis* exhibition, displaying artworks by twenty-seven contemporary South African artists. In the following years, a long list of museums and art galleries followed suit. From Galerie l'Esplanade in Paris (*Un Art Contemporain d'Afrique de Sud*, 1994) and De Blaue Saal in Zürich (*Towards-Transit: New Visual Languages in South Africa*, 1999) to the Van Reekum Museum in Apeldoorn (*Rewind-Fast Forward: New Work from South Africa*, 1999) and the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C (*Claiming Art, Reclaiming Space*, 1999), contemporary art from South Africa became increasingly sought after internationally.

At the Museum for African Art in New York, an exhibition entitled *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa* (1999-2000) set out to offer viewers insight into post-apartheid South Africa through artworks produced by contemporary South African artists (Cotter 1999; Roome 2005). Like the other exhibitions listed here, *Liberated Voices* claimed to ”capture” what was perceived to be the ”magical moment of 1994”, as if the year presented a line in the sand and all artistic production in South Africa assumed completely new forms and directions from then onwards (Roome 2005: 8). Several of my interlocutors in South Africa looked back on this period of international attention as a decade boosting South African artists abroad. Today, the attention has changed its focus somewhat and broadened out to cover larger parts of Africa. This has enabled art markets in countries such as Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana to thrive and opened up opportunities for artists elsewhere on the continent. South Africa is no longer the sole go-to country for international buyers of art, who, with the first 1:54 African Art Fair in Marrakesh in February 2018, were given yet another new platform for spotting artistic talent on the continent.

The early 2000s brought with it a large-scale travelling exhibition, which in many ways reflects this change of focus from South Africa to all of Africa. The *Africa Remix* (2004-07) exhibition, curated by Simon Njami and shown in a long list of museums from the Museum Kunst Palast in Düsseldorf in 2004 to the JAG in 2007, presented contemporary Africa as ”the fruit of a history altered by others” (Njami in Lindsey 2005). This, ”the largest exhibition of contemporary African art ever seen in Europe” (Malbert 2005: 9), highlighted the impossibility of separating ”the construct of Africanness from its historical context” (Njami in Lindsey 2005) and emphasised that history has made it ”impossible for Africans […] to think of themselves in any other way than as a reaction to others – in this case the colonisers”. Njami (2007) defined three “stages of metamorphosis” or ”finding a voice” for African artists in the later part of the twentieth century. The first, pre-1980, post-independence stage was described as ”the sometimes extreme celebration of [African] roots [where artists] wanted to show and assert their Africanness, and make use of the virtual library of symbolism to show they were finally free of all colonial influence” (Njami 2007: 20). The second stage, which fell between the late 1970s and the late 1980s, was described as ”a period of denial” (Njami 2007: 20):

> Artists had felt so trapped within the narrow limits of their origins that they needed to get away from the images that others created of them. This is when you would hear people say, ‘I am not an African. I am an artist’. This declaration was a cry. It expressed the will finally to be perceived as people in their own right, participating in the artistic creativity of the planet just like anyone else, not as exotic beings turning up to confront a world that is not their own (Njami 2007: 20).

The third stage – ”the one that *Africa Remix* proposes to illustrate” – is, according to Njami (2007: 20), a stage when ”artists no longer need to prove anything through their work”. In this contemporary stage, the “stakes have changed [and artists] are no longer essentially ethnic, though no one can disown their roots; they are aesthetic and political. The quest remains, but its nature has changed” (Njami 2007: 20). Over the course of my fieldwork I met artists and curators who, to varying degrees, found themselves in between these three stages, but none of them seemed to agree that they no longer had to prove anything through their work. While this might be the assumption one receives from walking through exhibitions like *Africa Remix* or museums like the Zeitz MOCAA, which both have a heavy focus on contemporary African art and celebrates the “placelessness” of the global art world, several of the artists I spoke with during my fieldwork expressed a frustration at being labelled *African* rather than simply being perceived as artists. In this way the artists I spoke with were still fighting to be recognised as individual artists in their own right, as in the second stage defined by Njami (2007: 20).

Furthermore the independence from what Njami (2007: 20) calls the ”essentially ethnic” is, as I will describe later on in this chapter, significantly limited to exhibitions and museums exhibiting *contemporary* African art. Historical objects from Africa are still treated differently from their

European or Western counterparts, with objects formerly known as ”ethnographica” now often exhibited in art contexts rather than contexts valuing their socio-historical qualities. It was upsetting for some of the artists and curators I spoke with during my fieldwork that more “traditional” objects from Africa were now exhibited alongside contemporary artworks as they felt the combination prevented contemporary artists from Africa from being recognised internationally as artists in their own right. However, by seeking to uplift themselves to the sphere of the global art world, where one can supposedly move freely without any attachments to place (Harris 2012), a significant part of the material cultural heritage of the artists were neglected. The quest to be accepted as individual, contemporary and “global” artists with no attachments to place or ethnicity thus comes with a price: in order to become truly global, one cannot at the same time be locally attached, but has to let go of an important part of ones’ local artistic history in the process. As Michael Herzfeld (2012: 49) puts it, “the price of acceptance [in the global hierarchy of value] is often concealment of the most intimate dimensions of everyday sociability and cultural form – aspects of a long social history that today clash inconveniently with this world aesthetic”. There is in other words little room for locality in a global art world desiring to “measure up” to a hegemonic notion of art as something removed from place and ethnicity.

Expanding Classificatory Boundaries in South African Museum Practice

The critical trends in the so-called *New Museology* (Vergo 1989) of the late twentieth century led to questions about representation and community relations throughout the museum landscape, but also to the establishment of many new museums in Africa (Kratz and Karp 2006: 10; Kratz 2014). Among them was a list of museums built in South Africa during the first decades of post-apartheid democracy: the District Six Museum (1994) in Cape Town, the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg (2001) and Freedom Park (2004) in Pretoria/Tshwane were each in their own ways products of ”the sense of optimism and anticipation of elemental social transformation” (Dubin 2009: 1) that invigorated the South African public in the years after democracy was established in 1994.

While new museums were being set up, existing museums started to engage in transformational politics in what has been dubbed the ”New South Africa” (Comaroff 1997: 120; Dubin 2009: 1; Madlingozi 2007: 77). The Iziko SANG in Cape Town launched a new acquisitions policy, which aimed to ”constantly assess and challenge definitions, categories and standards, and to shift boundaries in order to include a wide range of visual expression” (Bedford 1996: 39). Curators began to acquire works of art by black South African artists in order to demonstrate the long overlooked developments

and trends in the visual arts of the country. Exhibitions like the *Ezakwantu: Beadwork from the Eastern Cape* (1993-94) were put in place to highlight the Iziko SANG's new "open-ended and pluralistic approach" reflecting all of South Africa's population (Nettleton 2013: 421-422; Tietze 2017: 68-171). At the JAG, curators behind the *Art and Ambiguity* (1991) and *Dunga Manzi/Stirring Water* (2007) exhibitions similarly intended to show the "transformed state" of their institutions by representing artists from all parts of the so-called Rainbow Nation (Nettleton 2013: 422).

In the following, I will examine the curatorial aftermath of the wider range of visual expressions in South African museums of the 1990s, which included ritual and functional artefacts previously regarded as "ethnographica" (Tietze 2017: 168). I will show how South African curators, whose classificatory and exhibitionary practices were based on the Eurocentric museological practices presented above, attempted to expand their ideas about what art from South Africa is. By including objects such as beadwork, ceramics and black African household items in exhibitions at art museums, objects of black African origin largely went from being considered artefacts to being considered art. Letting objects of black African origin join "the utopian totality of the aesthetic" (Nettleton 2013: 422) that was significant to the art museum, curators increasingly began to value these objects more for their aesthetic qualities than for their social-historical contexts. In the following, I will examine how this approach has influenced contemporary South African museum practice as deployed by curators at the JAG and the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg, as well as in the Iziko SANG in Cape Town. I will do so in order to explore how the long history of European valorisation presented above has shaped the ways European and South African curators alike classify and exhibit the collections they work with. The historical development from artefact to art shows how contemporary understandings of Africa were formed through centuries of colonial representations of African objects.

The inclusion of artefacts in the realm of the aesthetics, which has been an ongoing process since the beginning of the twentieth century, might appear like a valorisation equating African and European objects, but as I will show, it is rather a continuation of the exoticising and exclusionary curatorial practices of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. African objects are in many ways still treated differently than objects from Europe or North America and are largely classified according to the ethnicity of their makers. Contemporary curatorial practices are based on European ideas about art and Africa to such a degree that African curators are using them to classify objects from Africa just like their European counterparts. While this may not be surprising in a globalised world, where African and European curators are trained in similar ways, and notions of art and culture originating from the European Enlightenment have become universal (Herzfeld 2004: 2), it is significant that curatorial practices leave little room for differences. In the process of being respected on the global art scene,

South African artists and curators alike are, as I will demonstrate below, letting go of any place-specifics of art from Africa. Lerato, the South African visual artist whom I met at her Cape Town-based studio while she was preparing works for her upcoming show at a private art gallery in London, explained to me how, during her years as a student at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, she was taught things like ”Africans are not necessarily producers of their own work”. Building on stereotypes suggesting that most artworks produced in Africa are the result of collaborations between mostly unknown makers of arts and crafts, African art had been described by white South African art students as something more ”vibrant” and different from the art they themselves were producing.

The idea that the art produced by them as *white* South Africans was different – and to a greater extent more *individual* – than the art produced by black South African artists like Lerato stems, as previously described, from the understanding of artists as solitary geniuses, which developed in the European Renaissance. In the case of Lerato, the lack of individuality that was perceived in her art made her reject the African label being used of her art altogether: ”My art is not *African art* just because I am African” she insisted, rolling her eyes in disapproval of her fellow students. ”My work is based on history, spirituality, and gender, but there is art like that everywhere!” Lerato’s objection to being categorised as an *African* artist, rather than simply as an artist, is linked to the uniqueness and authenticity with which art made by individual artists is associated. When she is labelled as an *African* artist, Lerato is deprived of her individuality, as well as of the uniqueness that makes *her* art special. This deprivation is a result of centuries of European classification practices labelling African art as a product of communal activities and European art as a product of individual artistic creativity. Lerato resisted having her art classified in the same stereotypical ways as people and societies of sub-Saharan Africa have been described by European and white South African curators throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The European idea of sub-Saharan Africa as a single continuum not only involved thinking of the continent as without individuals, it also reflected the idea of a racial unity among sub-Saharan Africans, which expressed itself in the so-called “savage rhythms” of African music, the “sensuality” of African dance and the ”primitive vigour” of sculpture and masks from what was for many years considered the ”Dark Continent” (Appiah 1996: 23). As the experience of Lerato at the Michaelis School of Fine Art shows, stereotypical ideas about art from Africa are still being reproduced, even in South African art schools. As a result, the curators and artists from South Africa I spoke with during my fieldwork often felt a need to emphasise that contemporary art produced in Africa is just as modern, experimental, conceptual and non-traditional as its counterparts from the Global North.

Sometimes, this need to emphasise that contemporary art from Africa can be as little place-specific as art made by contemporary artists from elsewhere has turned into a rejection of so-called ”traditional” art from Africa altogether. In an attempt to make contemporary art from Africa as valuable and non-place-specific as the art of other artists, the historical differences between artworks from Europe and Africa were underplayed. This was the case with Ayanda, a Johannesburg-based curator, who asked me: ”Why are my grandmother’s everyday objects on display in an art gallery, when your grandmother’s aren’t?” Ayanda was frustrated to see how wooden headrests from the beginning of the twentieth century were exhibited at the JAG alongside paintings, prints and sculptures primarily made by African artists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. She wondered what separated the objects her black, Zulu-speaking grandmother would have had at home from the objects my white, Danish-speaking grandmother would have had in hers. There were indeed no so-called ”functional objects” of European or white African origin to be found on display at JAG, illustrating the different treatment that objects from Europe and Africa are still subjected to in contemporary South African museum practice. For Ayanda, it would have been sufficient for the gallery to exhibit newer or contemporary African art produced in the same artistic tradition as its European counterparts: artworks drawn on paper, painted on canvas or sculpted in wood, but no objects previously exhibited as ”ethnographica”, such as her grandmother’s headrests. Working as a curator herself, Ayanda was very well aware of the power of classification and representation. As a result, she rejected the very idea of having objects that stood out as ”traditional” African art exhibited in an art gallery like the JAG. By refusing to include headrests in the category of art, she emphasised that art from Africa is equal to art from anywhere else, but in doing so, she also let go of an important part of her own material culture.

In her review of the hierarchical positions of Western philosophical thought, Hélène Cixous (1986: 71) argues that there is no place for the other as other, unless it becomes an absolute other. ”What is the ‘Other’?” she asks: ”If it is truly the ‘other’, there is nothing to say; it cannot be theorized. The ‘other’ […] is elsewhere, outside: absolutely other”. The difficulties which arise from this structure are, as Robert Young (1990: 6) highlights, ”familiar from the debates in feminism, where ‘women’ seem to be offered an alternative of either being the ‘other’ as constituted by man, that is confronting to the stereotypes of patriarchy, or, if she is to avoid this, of being an absolute ‘other’ outside knowledge, necessarily confined to inarticulate expressions of mysticism or *jouissance*”. ”The only way”, Young (1990: 6) argues, ”to side-step these alternatives seems to be to reject the other altogether and become the same, that is, equal to man – but then with no difference from them”. In the case of Ayanda, her dismay at seeing Zulu headrests on display at the JAG can be seen as a result of her adaptation to Eurocentric understandings of art. Schooled in a system shaped by colonialism, she sees

her own material culture through the eyes of the coloniser. She refuses to be considered an ”other” in her own country but has to reject the specifics for historical art from Africa in the process. She thus becomes equal to the coloniser, but cannot possess any difference from him. Like the women described by Cixous (1986: 86), Ayanda has been brought up in a system which even post-apartheid has told her:

> […] hers is the dark region: because you are Africa, you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you are afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Above all, don't go into the forest (Cixous 1986: 68).

Having been taught not to have ”eyes for [her]self” (Cixous 1986: 68), Ayanda has adapted the same kind of anti-narcissism defined by Cixous in relation to women. In the case of Ayanda, however, the anti-narcissism has not (only) been committed to her by men, but by the colonial understandings of Africa, which have formed the basis for the museum practice she herself is performing. Having grown up in a society still affected by the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, Ayanda is thus deprived of recognition to such a degree that she has internalised a picture of her own inferiority (Taylor 1994: 25). Even post-apartheid, the demeaning image of black people and the art they have produced, which was created by white people over generations, is so powerful that Ayanda has been unable to resist adopting it (Taylor 1994: 26).

The inclusion of objects like the Zulu headrests in the sphere of the art gallery was part of the (attempted) transformation of the South African museum landscape in the 1990s, which – as highlighted above – was part of a larger international development towards more inclusive museological representations. As explained, the inclusion of all kinds of man-made objects of black African origin provided a way for South African curators to rethink the collections they were working with in the aftermath of apartheid. By applying a new and broader understanding of what art is, they opened the doors of their institutions to a more diverse representation of art from Africa. By doing so, they applied an understanding of art as conceptual, something which had been *comme il faut* in the art world since Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) famously exhibited his *Fountain* in 1917, but which nevertheless, in a South African context, had so far mostly been associated with Western or European art.

Since Duchamp, the question of whether *any* object of human manufacture can be circulated and exhibited as art has been trivial (Gell 1996: 35). However, as this chapter shows, curators in South African museums and art galleries still treat objects differently depending on who made them. Objects are only considered art when they are conceptualised *as art*. If it had been exhibited in a socio-historical setting, Duchamp's *Fountain* would have remained an object displayed for its historical or design qualities. If it had not been exhibited at all, it would simply have remained a urinal. In the 1990s

African objects that were formerly considered and exhibited as ”ethnographica” in natural history museums (Goodnow 2006: 53; Nettleton 2013: 421) had to undergo a kind of valorisation in order to be considered art. This valorisation was largely performed by a group of white South African curators who oversaw an important element in their attempts to diversify the collections they were working with: they only deployed an inclusive way of perceiving art in the case of objects made by black African artists and craftsmen (Tietze 2017: 175). Some of the objects that were now starting to be looked at as art had not been made as art and had only started being perceived as such when they entered the white cube-interiors of museums and art galleries.

At the SANG (the Xhosa-term for ”hearth” or *Iziko* was not added until 1999), issues about *art* and *craft* were often raised in the so-called transformative years of the 1990s. The new director of the gallery, Marylyn Martin (quoted in Bedford 1996: 18), took it upon herself to ”continue to erode traditional boundaries and eliminate categories which have invariably been imposed from outside our own borders and experience”. However, the erosion of traditional boundaries was limited to objects from non-Western cultures. An example of this is the inclusion of beadwork as a way of diversifying the collection of the National Gallery. Beadwork is often perceived as a prime example of so-called ”traditional” African art, but most examples of South African beadwork are the result of cross-cultural interactions linking European and African artistic traditions. Already flourishing in continental Europe, beadwork became popular in England in the mid-nineteenth century, spurred on by a relaxation of the sumptuary tax on glass, which enabled large-scale imports of Italian and Bohemian beads (Nettleton 2018). Afrikaner women in South Africa, like women in Europe, were enchanted by the detailed and colourful embroideries made possible by the import of European glass beads. Like their Zulu- and Xhosa-speaking country(wo)men, many Afrikaner women became expert bead-weavers and started producing caps, slippers, tobacco bags and beaded jewellery, which at times paralleled the forms of black African bead-weavers (Nettleton 2018; Pretorius 1992).

As the three examples below show, beadwork produced in South Africa from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries is still to this day treated much differently depending on who produced it. While not belonging exclusively to any one group of South Africans, beadwork made by *black* South Africans has largely gone from being exhibited as ”ethnographica” in natural history museums to being exhibited as art in art galleries like the Iziko SANG. Beadwork made by *white* South Africans, on the other hand, is still largely exhibited as objects of cultural history and is therefore distinguished from so-called fine art.

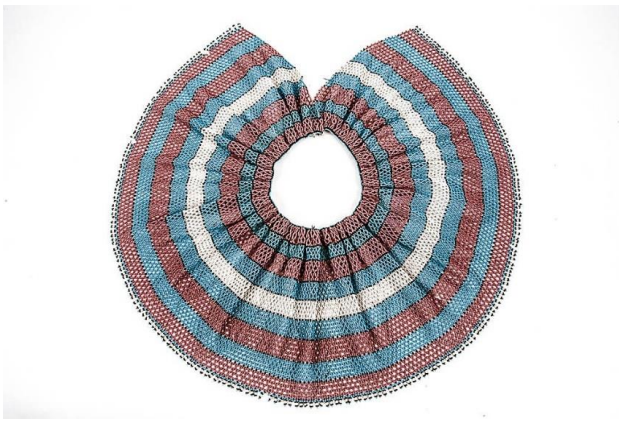

Figure 18, 19 and 20. Example of bead belt from the late nineteenth century (top), made by an unrecorded Zulu-speaking artist, and a bead collar from the mid-twentieth century (bottom left), made by an unrecorded Xhosa-speaking artist. The so-called *tree of life* pattern (bottom right) is beaded on a tobacco bag from the nineteenth century. The latter is made by an Afrikaner woman in the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century and is thus an example of beadwork made by a white South African. Like the belt and collar, the tobacco bag was not made as art, but had a more functional purpose along with its aesthetic qualities. But unlike the belt and collar made by Zulu- and Xhosa-speaking women, the tobacco bag made by the Afrikaner woman would not have been included in the art collection of the SANG in the transformative years of the 1990s. Instead, it is part of the cultural historical collection of the Ditsong National Cultural History Museum in Pretoria. Photos from Nettleton 2018 and Pretorius 1992: 114.

The parts of South African beadwork exhibited in art galleries are today mostly exhibited on neutral backgrounds in white-cube gallery interiors. But most beadwork was ”never made as something abstracted from bodies” (Nettleton 2018). The bead belt and collar above are both displayed against neutral backgrounds, as they would be in most contemporary exhibitions. This exhibition practice emphasises the artistic nature of the objects rather than their function as body adornments and highlights their aesthetic qualities (Nettleton 2018), but it also denies the ”essential link [of the

beadwork] to the bodies of the persons that wore them" (Nettleton 2018). In the nineteenth and throughout most of the twentieth century, beadwork made by black South Africans would have been displayed in ethnographic settings, which would have highlighted the functional qualities of the beadwork rather than – or in combination with – the aesthetic aspects. But since most "imaging of black South Africans wearing beadwork […] until very recently [was] produced by white colonial agents, visitors, or settlers" (Nettleton 2018), these kinds of displays have now largely been discarded. What remains on display are artworks, not made as such, in art galleries eager to diversify their historical collections with objects from all sectors of society. But as Patricia Davison (1993: 24) has highlighted, the question is not whether or not beadwork can be considered art. The issue rather is *why* the Iziko SANG and other galleries chose to define and present beadwork made by black South Africans as art in their process of transformation in the 1990s, when they did not include beadwork made by white South Africans.

An explanation for the lack of acquisitions of white African, European or Western craft and design products can be found in the era of redress, which was central to museum policies in South Africa in the early post-apartheid years: "There needed to be a particularly heavy investment in African artefacts after decades in which they had been almost completely overlooked. But [when] an art gallery begins to expand classificatory boundaries, it needs to do so in relation to the material culture of all communities" (Tietze 2017: 175). By leaving out European or Western craft and design products, the curators of the Iziko SANG invariably failed to challenge the conventional definitions of art they set out to speak out against. By keeping the distinction between European or white African "high art" and European or white African craft and design (often classified as cultural historical objects), South African curators of the 1990s did not change their views of objects of black African origin, but merely reclassified them as *art* rather than *ethnographica*. In this way the curators continued what Michael Herzfeld (2004: 3) calls "the most arrogant [kind of] Eurocentrism […] the kind that automatically assumes pride of place for Western 'high culture' [which is] itself an opaque concept despite a superficial gloss of obviousness".

Historically many European objects have been displayed at the JAG. However, very much in line with the Iziko SANG in Cape Town, the historical collection of the JAG centres around European "high art" rather than craft and design. It includes seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European artworks and South African art from the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. JAG's collection has strong European roots, being established in 1910 by the South African art collector Lady Florence Phillips (1863-1940) as "part of an attempt to create a cultural infrastructure [promoting] British cultural values to the exclusion of a South African content"

(Carman 2014: 231). Anitra Nettleton (2013: 420) has described how ”objects housed in art museums from Cape Town to Durban, Johannesburg, Pretoria and Harare were initially all imported from Europe”. In the case of the JAG this meant a collection of ”Dutch and English paintings, landscapes, portraits and still-lifes, works by minor impressionists and postimpressionists such as Signac, some original ceramics, a (disputed) El Greco, some antique furniture, Victorian lace, prints, drawings, including some by Rembrandt, and various sculptures, including one or two by Rodin and Maillol” (Nettleton 2013: 420). Most of the objects, except for the antique furniture and Victorian laces with their dual purpose, were categorised as ”high art” and thus distinguished from objects of use.

The present-day curators of the JAG, whom I met during my fieldwork in the gallery, are cautious in putting the institution’s strong historical ties to European ”fine art” behind them. One of them, the recently graduated Alva, took me on a tour around JAG’s airy, white-painted rooms with its elegant early twentieth-century neo-classical ceilings and grand wooden doors. Not many visitors had chosen to transgress the invisible border of safety between the gallery doors and the surrounding Joubert Park, where many homeless people live and where tourists are warned from going even in broad daylight. The central neighbourhood of Hillbrow, in which the gallery is based, was known as a no-go zone during the 1990s. While the situation has improved since, the location of the gallery still influences its visitor numbers, and although strategies have been put in place to include local citizens, only a few find their way into the JAG.

As we went through the rather empty gallery halls, passing by paintings, prints and photos primarily by contemporary African artists, Alva explained how she and her colleagues are trying to balance the displays so that around 70-80% of the exhibited works of art are made by African artists. This meant that artworks by European artists such as Picasso, Lucien Freud (1922-2011) and Salvador Dali (1904-1989), which other galleries would likely have shown off with pride by putting them on permanent display, were not exhibited during any of my visits. Alva explained to me that only a few international artworks were collected these days, such as a recent purchase of a work by the British artist Damian Hirst. Otherwise the museum tries to ”cover the holes in the collection”, as she put it, by concentrating on art from the African continent.

Instead of exhibiting European painters, in November 2016 the curators of the JAG were working on a temporary exhibition, which exclusively displayed artworks from the JAG collection made by ”artists of colour” (JAG 2016). The exhibition titled *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* explored ”various forms of identity and […] issues of feminism, queerness, revolution and culture in Black identity” (JAG 2016). It coincided with the *Black Portraiture[s] III: Reinventions – Strains of Histories and Cultures* conference taking place at Wits University (Contemporary And 2016a), a connection that highlights the curatorial

aim behind the exhibition of engaging in a larger debate about “black identity” in present-day South Africa. It did so by featuring a long list of prominent contemporary African artists, as well as older works by South African modernists, but left out the corner of the gallery displaying artworks that until the 1990s would have been placed in exhibitions displaying so-called ”ethnographic” objects. Left in a section on their own with very limited explanation, the artworks here were displayed in similar ways to the artworks on display in the rest of the gallery, that is, in white, glass-covered showcases, but with a significant difference in their labels: ”Artist(s) unrecorded”. The artworks, ranging from pre-1930 headrests to southeast African wooden sculptures, were very much displayed *as art* at the JAG, but still appeared different from the rest of the works on display through their lack of named artists and perhaps their history as objects not made solely for aesthetic contemplation like the paintings and sculptures in the gallery, but as objects with a more ”useful” purpose.


Figure 21 and 22. The main entrance to the JAG seen from Joubert Park (left) and the part of the gallery where historical objects, including Zulu headrests, made by unknown African artists are displayed (right). Photos by author November 2016.

On the Friends of JAG’s website, where financial support for the gallery is gathered, the collection in question is referred to as the *KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Collection* (Friends of JAG 2017). Drawing on JAG’s recently acquired Maritz collection of ”heritage artefacts” from various parts of the KwaZulu-Natal province, the collection forms part of the *Trial for the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative* at University of Cape Town’s *500 Year Archive Project* (Friends of JAG 2017). As such, the objects, unlike the artworks exhibited in the rest of the gallery, are used as a resource for a project focusing on ”collecting and recording valuable cultural knowledge around [artefacts] that date from five hundred years immediately before colonialism” (Friends of JAG 2017). The objects are, in other words, valued for their socio-historical or ”ethnographic” contexts, at the same time as the exhibition

of them in an art gallery is highlighting the aesthetic qualities of the objects. This shows that the contemplation of the ”heritage artefacts” is still manifold, while other objects in the gallery are to be contemplated solely, or at least primarily, for their aesthetic value. The objects that are mainly contemplated for their aesthetic value are usually those created out of a traditionally Eurocentric ideal of art. They might be contextualised and described in relation to their maker or to the time in which they were created, but usually – in the JAG as elsewhere – they are displayed without much explanation, as artworks that are valuable in their own right.

Less than two kilometres from JAG, in the private Standard Bank Gallery situated on the corner of Simmonds and Frederick Street in central Johannesburg, another exhibition space has recently combined contemporary art with objects which, had they been European, would most likely not have found their way to an art gallery in this form. In a temporary exhibition called *Air: Inspiration – Expiration* (2016) historical African artworks formerly described as ”traditional”, ”ethnographic”, ”tribal” or ”primitive” (terms now largely discarded in the art world) were exhibited as artworks in an art gallery alongside contemporary artworks. However, the objects were treated differently than similar objects of European origin would have been treated. On display in the exhibition were ornately carved musical instruments from southern and central Africa, but no classical European violins or similar ”functional” objects. The different treatment of objects of European and African origin resulted in an exhibition in which artworks by black artists were primarily so-called ”traditional” artworks, such as snuff containers and pipe bowls, where the artists were registered as unknown, or a ceremonial fly whisk and crowns made of beads, where the date of its creation was unknown.

The *contemporary* artworks on display were predominantly by white South African artists. The division between the objects on display was highlighted further by the traditional African proverbs quoted on the walls in the section of the exhibition displaying the older artworks by unknown black artists: the spiritual nature of the quotes seemed to juxtapose the contemporary artworks by white South Africans, hung together in another part of the exhibition, which to a larger extent included scientific references. An example of this was the *Weather I* (2011) installation by the white South African artist Gerhard Marx, which depicted a cloud made entirely out of black and white plastic rulers, or the white South African artist Lyn Smut’s *Silence and Vibration* (1995) installation inspired by the ”quirky history of scientific experimentation” (Standard Bank 2019). The inclusion of historic and to a larger extent ”useful” objects of black African origin in this setting thus became a continuation of past stereotypical depictions of black and white, Africa and Europe. Avigail, a recently graduated art student from Wits University with whom I visited the exhibition, was like Ayanda a strong opponent of the use of ”traditional” objects from Africa in an art context like this. For her, the inclusion seemed like a

continuous exoticisation, a way for the white curators of the exhibition to maintain a stereotypical view of black Africans as makers of ”ethnographica” and white Africans of European ancestry as makers of scientifically inspired ”high art”.

Figure 23, 24, 25 and 26. A group of young South Africans studying the *Sickeningly Sweet: Rainbow Butterfly by the Crash Site at Night in the Future Utopia* (2015) installation by the white South African artist Lyndi Sales (top left) exhibited in the section of the Standard Bank Gallery exhibition *Air: Inspiration – Expiration* (2016) and dominated by contemporary white South African artists. This part of the exhibition also featured the *Weather I* (2011) installation by the white South African artist Gerhard Marx (top right) depicting a cloud made entirely out of black and white plastic rulers and the white South African artist Lyn Smut's *Silence and Vibration* (1995) installation (bottom left) inspired by the ”quirky history of scientific experimentation” (Standard Bank 2019). The photo on the bottom right shows the section of the exhibition displaying historical objects by unknown black African artists. Exhibition photos by author November 2016, object photos by Goodman Gallery (2019) and Creative Feel (2016).

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have shown the historical development of the museum institution, which originates in the cabinets of curiosity of the European Renaissance. I have examined how museums in Europe, North America and South Africa have represented Africa and Africans through exhibitions of objects from the continent that at first was classified together with man-made objects from other parts of the world, including Europe, and later was moved to specialised ethnographic collections separating them from objects of European origin. This specialisation took place in the mid- to late-nineteenth century,

before European and North American modernist painters and curators started to perceive and collect objects from Africa as art rather than ethnographica. From the early twentieth century onwards objects of African origin began to be displayed both in the context of the ethnographic museum and in art museums and galleries, where they were valued more for their aesthetic qualities than for the socio-historical contexts of their origin. I have described this process of reclassification as a European valorisation turning artefacts into art: it is significant for this process, that it was Picasso, a white European artist who became known as the ”discoverer” of ”Negro Art” (Zayas 1914 in Flam and Deutch 2003: 70) in Western art history. This shows the dominant aspect of European valorisation: although aesthetic production has been practiced on the continent today known as Africa for thousands of years, objects collected from Africa were in most cases not classified as art until a group of European and North American artists and curators at the beginning of the twentieth century decided to collect them as such. Similarly, it was not until white curators in South Africa decided to exhibit objects of black African origin as art in art galleries that it was appreciated as such by institutions such as the Iziko SANG.

In South Africa, objects of black African origin did not undergo the same reclassification from artefact to art until the end of the twentieth century, when the apartheid regime's aim to classify black South Africans as ”second-class citizens” (Taylor 1994: 37) had come to an end. It was thus not until the so-called transformative years of the 1990s that museums and art galleries like the Iziko SANG and the JAG tried to diversify their collections through the incorporation of African objects formerly known as “ethnographica”. With examples from fieldwork conducted in the JAG and the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg and the Iziko SANG in Cape Town, I have examined the consequences of the post-apartheid expansion of classificatory boundaries. I have argued that the curatorial practices of a number of private and public art galleries in South Africa are mimicking European ideas about art as something originating from an individual artist. This and other ideas about what Africa and African art is have been adopted to a degree that African curators, like their European counterparts, are using them to classify objects from Africa. While this may not be surprising in a globalised world in which African and European curators are trained in similar ways, it is significant that these curatorial practices leave little room for difference: in the process of being respected and *recognised* on the global art scene, South African artists and curators alike are letting go of the place-specifics of art from Africa.

I have examined how contemporary South African curators like Ayanda and Avigail do not support the assumed “valorisation” that objects formerly known as “ethnographica” supposedly gain when they are exhibited in the realm of the aesthetics in the setting of an art gallery. They object to the inclusion

of material culture from Zulu- or Xhosa-speaking South Africans in a place where the material culture of English- or Afrikaans-speaking South Africans is not included. Their argument is that all South Africans are capable of expressing themselves artistically in ”global art forms” (Harris 2017: 87). However, by highlighting that contemporary South African artists are just as modern, experimental, conceptual and non-traditional as their counterparts from the Global North, they let go of an important part of South Africa’s artistic history. If objects like the headrests in JAG’s heritage collection are not to be displayed in an art gallery, but alongside the cultural historical objects of white South Africans in history museums, where, then, is the room for art forms that are *not* printed, painted or sculpted for aesthetic contemplation? Where, then, is the space for art from Africa before European contact? In the process of being respected and recognised on the global scene of art as individual and modern artists in their own right, South African curators like Ayanda and Avigail and artists like Lerato are letting go of any place-specifics of art from Africa and are thus discarding an important part of the artistic tradition of Africa in the process.

As I have shown, curatorial practices and classifications of art and ”ethnographica” are linked to nineteenth-century ideologies of primitivism and cultural evolutionism. Curators of art from South Africa who, in their desire to let go of this link attempted to transform their institutions post-apartheid, began to include previously non-included objects of black African origin into their collections. They adopted an inclusive way of perceiving art, but only did so when classifying objects made by black African artists and crafts(wo)men. The division of art and social historical objects when classifying objects of European or white African origin is in many cases not applied in collections of objects of black African origin. Or, as Ayanda put it with reference to the JAG, her grandmother’s everyday objects went from being exhibited in natural history museums to being exhibited in art galleries, while my grandmother’s everyday objects would most likely still be exhibited in a display of social history, if they were to be exhibited at all. Unlike the Zulu headrests of Ayanda’s grandmother’s generation, which are still to some extent treated as curiosities, objects of white, European origin will in most cases only be exhibited if a certain history or design quality is attached to them. As such, a significant distinction between objects, depending on the ethnicity of their maker, is still retained.

Despite the seemingly inclusive approach adopted by South African curators since the 1990s, a hierarchy of objects is still in place. It is this hierarchy that artists like Lerato and curators like Ayanda and Avigail are objecting to by neglecting the place-specifics of objects from Africa. And it is this hierarchy that is being challenged by the demands for recognition that I will examine in the following chapter, where I will show that the struggle to navigate in institutions that are linked to a painful past,

in a present still shaped by the trauma of it, is by no means an easy task – neither for those expressing the demands for recognition nor for those who are expected to meet them.

Chapter II: Recognition through Representation

”We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know […] The doors of learning and of culture shall be opened!” (Freedom Charter 1955). In the Freedom Charter of 1955, adopted at the Congress of the People at Kliptown, Johannesburg, members of the South African Congress Alliance[13] demanded the right to equal rights, land and housing, security and comfort, as well as access to education and culture. With their statement, those who signed the charter began a long journey towards equal accessibility to knowledge and cultural heritage. However, as this chapter will show, their journey is not yet over. Universities and museums in South Africa are often criticised for their exclusivity and are forced to rethink their public spaces. Long before the Freedom Charter was signed, and still today, many South Africans are deprived of access to their country’s educational and cultural institutions. In this chapter I show how this deprivation sometimes leads to struggles for recognition, not only through accessibility, but also through representation. Students at the campus of the UCT and artists and sex-workers at the Iziko SANG demand to be recognised and represented in their national institutions. They demand access, and they demand to be heard.

Expanding the discussion from the classificatory practices examined in Chapter I, I now turn my attention to the demands for recognition heard in debates about the decolonisation of South African universities and museums in order to examine two concrete examples: the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT in April 2015, and the removal of artworks from the *Our Lady* exhibition in December 2016 at the Iziko SANG. The struggles to decolonise UCT and the Iziko SANG both show that the process of decolonisation ”which sets out to change the order of the world” (Fanon 2001: 27) rarely happens overnight. It is a long and often painful process, which sometimes end up reintroducing the very same racialized categories of the oppressive system they set out to replace. The process of rethinking and replacing old thought systems and structures in society is difficult, and the removal of statues, curricula and museum objects found to be derogatory or humiliating is only one part of the change demanded. What should replace the empty spaces left behind when the dust of the initial conflicts has settled? The empty plinth on the UCT campus, like the empty gallery walls of the Iziko SANG, both stand as material reminders of the difficulties involved in decolonising the *postcolony* (Mbembe 2015a) that is South Africa. The absences created on and around them are waiting to be filled, but by what? This is a question of curation, one which many of the South African artists and curators to whom I spoke during my fieldwork are eager to answer. Some, like the South African visual

[13] The South African Congress Alliance consisted of the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats and the Coloured People’s Congress (Ngoepe and Netshakhuma 2018: 53).

artist and UCT graduate Sethembile Msezane, are doing so by dressing up as the bird-like figure of Chapungu and rising like a phoenix from the ashes, others by replacing a photographic artwork by an artist convicted of murder with a painting of his until then faceless, invisible, black, female victim.

Msezane's performance at UCT and the Iziko SANG's addition of the South African artist Astrid Warren's painting of Nokuphila Kumalo (1991-2013) to their collection show that the absence of the Rhodes statue and the contemporary artworks in the *Our Lady* exhibition should not be confused with a lasting absence: they are absences that are to be replaced by alternatives. And these alternatives seek to celebrate something other than what was celebrated before: rather than celebrating a white British imperialist of a bygone age, the human statue embodied by Msezane, which replaced the statue of Rhodes on the day the latter fell, celebrated black female capacity when it overtook the public space formerly ruled by Rhodes. At the Iziko SANG, the gallery walls left empty due to the protests against the inclusion of an artwork by the South African artist Zwelethu Mthethwa were soon after hung with a painting commemorating the life of the woman he killed: a black, female sex worker, who until then had been leading an unrecognised existence on the margins of society. In this way, the absent spaces, materialised by the empty plinth and the empty gallery walls, are not only reminders of the difficulties involved in decolonising South Africa, but also clean slates upon which new stories about South Africa are being told and that represent a more diverse group of South Africans, including the (previously) marginalised.

The ways these new stories should be told and who they should represent is, however, not always so easy to define. In this chapter I argue that the demands for decolonisation raised by the protesting Rhodes Must Fall students can be seen as a wish to undo existing structures, without always having clear ideas about what should replace them. The difficulties the protesters had in finding replacements for the displays they fought to remove reveal a fundamental difficulty in the process of decolonisation: terms and practices, sometimes labelled European or Western, have, as Ashraf Jamal (2018) has argued, become global, and institutions like universities and museums should thus perhaps no longer be considered either European or Western, but simply universal. In a talk held during the 2018 edition of the Cape Town Art Fair, Jamal (2018), who lectures in Film and Visual Cultural Theory at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, highlighted this point of view by saying: ”Decolonisation of a global institution is not possible! It is not a continental issue. You must understand the local, the national, the continental and the global to understand your being”.

But while Jamal (2018) argued that South African universities and museums are as European or Western as they are African, others, including members of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, continue

to reject what they see as universities and museums in Africa mimicking European and Western institutions. Like the revolutionary class described by Jean-Paul Sartre (2001: 10) in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, the most radical of the Rhodes Must Fall students demanded "no less than a complete demolishing of all existing structures". This demolishing, it was argued, should be based on thorough-going rejection of the curricula and material culture associated with or resulting from European and Western thinking and its replacement by a completely rethought and rebuilt education system. In the words of the student activist Athabile Nonxuba, the Rhodes Must Fall movement was propelled by "an oath of allegiance that everything to do with oppression and conquest of black people by white power must fall and be destroyed" (Nonxuba in Booysen 2016: 4). The protests of the Rhodes Must Fall students were thus a reaction against centuries of white domination during colonialism and apartheid, but can also be seen as a reaction against the unknown future of the students: as young South Africans who have grown up post-apartheid, they were frustrated to see how little had changed in terms of living standards, job opportunities, etc. since the end of apartheid. Like youth movements in other parts of the Global South, where "global inequalities are […] deeply entrenched and hence readily visible", the Rhodes Must Fall students set out to push the boundaries of the structural adjustments that affected them disproportionately (Salemink et al. 2017: 127).

The Rhodes Must Fall students' demands for free, decolonised education, without sexism, patriarchy and racism, and without colonial or apartheid-era iconography, were inspired by Radical Black Feminism,[14] the Black Consciousness Movement,[15] Fanonianism and Pan-Africanism[16] (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 222; Xaba 2017). Their demands were clearly framed by a broader demand for the decolonisation of South Africa, but also by ideas about something essentially African, that is, a pre-colonial or pre-modern Africa that contemporary Africa can strive to reconnect with through

[14] Although sections of the Must Fall movement were inspired by Radical Black Feminism, other sections remained less concerned with fighting for rights related to gender and sexuality. The Fees Must Fall and Radical Black Feminism-activist Wanelisa Xaba (2017: 102) has stressed that because "queers, women and differently abled bodies are operating outside of White supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal, cisnormative, ableist imagination of what is human […] their intersecting identities are [often] not seen as part of the Black struggle". Instead, they were often marginalised and victimised within the black community itself.

[15] The Black Consciousness Movement of the 1970s was closely associated with the South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko (1946-1977), who, through the movement, sought to help "black people reach their full potential by improving their self-reliance and sense of human dignity" (Hadfield 2016: 2).

[16] In 2013 an AU Echo publication put out by the African Union on the occasion of its twentieth summit fifty years after the founding of its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity, explained that "Pan-Africanism is an ideology and movement that encouraged the solidarity of Africans worldwide. It is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social and political progress and aims to 'unify and uplift' people of African descent. The ideology asserts that the fates of all African peoples and countries are intertwined. At its core, Pan-Africanism is 'a belief that African peoples both on the continent and in the diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny'" (Adi 2018: 1).

decolonisation. These ideas also run through the demands for recognition expressed in the art world, where something essentially African is often sought after. I will return to this aspect in my analysis of the Zeitz MOCAA in Chapter III.

Attempts to decolonise Africa through Africanisation have been made before. In the 1960s, at the dawn of African political independence, decolonisation was widely considered the same as Africanisation (Mbembe 2016: 33). Intensified struggles to transform, Africanise and decolonise universities in Africa were launched in order to turn them into African universities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 176). As Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018: 176) has described, the ”struggle entailed formulating a new philosophy of higher education informed by African histories, cultures, ideas and aspirations as well as fundamental redefinition of the role of the university”. In what was then known as Zaire, President Mobutu Sese Seko (1930-1997) found it ”inappropriate […] to train [Congolese] youth as if they were Westerners” (Mobutu in Mkandawire 2005: 22). Mobutu believed it ”would be more desirable to have an educational system which shapes the youth according to [Congolese] requirements [and] would make them authentically Congolese” (Mobutu in Mkandawire 2005: 2-23). Mobutu was a strong advocate of authentication as part of the national project of Africanisation and thus abandoned the use of European names (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 176). This included his own name (Joseph-Désiré Mobutu), but also that of his country, which before his presidency was known as the Republic of the Congo (1960-1971), and after his rule ended in 1997 became known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The desire to Africanise was strong among nationalist leaders in Africa in the early days of postcolonial independence. Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972), who became the first prime minister and president of Ghana, having led the then British Gold Coast to independence in 1957, thus opened the Akuafo Hall of Residence at the University College of Ghana in 1958 by stating that ”We must in the development of our University bear in mind that once it has been planted in African soil it must take root amidst African traditions and culture” (Nkrumah in Ashby 1964: 61). This process of Africanisation sometimes led to interference with universities’ autonomy and academic freedom, something Nkrumah became notorious for (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 178). Fanon (2001) expressed his sincere concern about perceiving decolonisation as Africanisation in the manner of Mobutu, Nkrumah and other postcolonial leaders in Africa. In *The Wretched of the Earth* he examines the pitfalls of national consciousness (pp. 119-165) and highlights the shortcut from ”nationalism […] to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally to racism” (Fanon 2001: 125). Fanon (2001: 125-126) anticipated that the ”nationalisation and Africanisation of the ruling classes [would] become more and more tinged by racism [until the] resounding assertions of the unity of the [African] continent [would fade] quicker and quicker into the

mists of oblivion, [with] a heart-breaking return to chauvinism in its most bitter and detestable form". As I will show later in this chapter, the attempted Africanisation of the UCT led by the Rhodes Must Fall-movement did indeed result in an increased focus on race, sometimes to the extent that people who self-identified as black were met with accusations of not being black enough.

In the case of the Iziko SANG, which is the focus of the latter part of this chapter, I examine how curators in an institution with strong colonial ties attempt to curate and represent art from a nation as divided and diverse as South Africa. Using the *Our Lady* exhibition as my starting point, I explore the dilemma of who can represent whom through an analysis of the different viewpoints presented in the public discussion of the exhibition. I argue that the demands for recognition with which the predominantly white curators are confronted can be seen as a wish to challenge their privilege to decide what qualifies as the art of the nation. Their positions are demanded by black and mixed raced South Africans, who no longer want their art to be represented by white South Africans. But, as I will show, the demands to "have these posts", as Fanon (2001: 125) put it, are not only raised by black and mixed raced South Africans: they are also raised by white South Africans trying to secure a place for themselves and to assume the moral high ground in an environment where the viewpoints of white curators are increasingly being challenged. As such, the often hostile debates that occurred between white curators, artists and feminists during the public discussions can be seen as an example of a situation in which the voices of subalterns (Spivak 1988) – in this case the black artists and sex-workers from the SWEAT – were mostly heard through a number of (self-appointed) white spokeswomen. Although the black and mixed raced protesters from SWEAT were both present and spoke out, the debate was dominated by the voices of white curators, artists and feminists, who, with their academic backgrounds and appropriate cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), had the confidence to make themselves heard.

The Day Rhodes Fell

Windswept and proud, with monumental stone pillars and bronze lions, the Rhodes Memorial stands on the slopes of Devil's Peak, overlooking the vast cityscape of Cape Town. The stark contrast between the grand Greek-style temple and the empty plinth on the main UCT campus just below reflects the difficult process of decolonisation in South Africa. Until recently both sites commemorated one of the most renowned imperialists of the nineteenth century, Rhodes, who served as Prime Minister of the

Cape Colony (1890-1896) and dreamt of a British Empire stretching from the Cape to Cairo.[17] Today, due to strong protests by members of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, only one of the two monuments remains: the Rhodes Memorial, designed in 1912 by the British architect Sir Herbert Baker (1862-1946), which is situated on the hillside just above the university campus on land once claimed – or stolen (Xaba 2017) – and later donated to the UCT by Rhodes himself (Ankomah 2015: 47). Colossal, and cut in granite quarried on Table Mountain, the memorial bears a strong resemblance to the ancient Greek Pergamon Altar. Its massive staircase, flanked by eight bronze lions and an equestrian statue, has forty-nine steps, one for each year of Rhodes' life. The staircase leads up to a temple-like structure surrounded by granite pillars over which a bronze bust of Rhodes designed by the English sculptor John Macallan Swan (1846-1910) is presiding.

If one is searching for the physical remnants of European colonialism, as I was on that sunlit afternoon in February 2018, no further search would be necessary. Here, on the windy slopes of Table Mountain, even the tall pine trees surrounding the memorial are colonial: the *Pinus Pinea*, also known as the Stone Pine, which is native to the Iberian Peninsula and southern Europe, reached the Cape in the late seventeenth century (Showers 2010: 298). Today, the tall trees surrounding the Rhodes Memorial have become a significant part of the landscape of the area, and the smell of their resin filled the air as I walked uphill on the grand granite staircase. I was visiting the memorial in the company of a young Zimbabwean, who, like me, was overwhelmed by the grandness of the memorial of the man after whom his home country was named until a few decades ago. Rhodesia, northeast of South Africa, had been acquired by Rhodes' British South Africa Company in the 1890s and was known as such until its southern part acquired internationally recognised independence in 1980. From then on it has been known as Zimbabwe, in praise of the largest ancient stone construction in sub-Saharan Africa (Coatsworth et al. 2015: 343), while the northern part of Rhodesia, which gained independence in 1964, is now known as Zambia.

Walking around the Rhodes Memorial, I wondered how it was possible that this monument was still standing here in all its splendour, more than two decades after the end of apartheid, celebrating a man who had openly and matter-of-factly described the majority of the people whom he governed as inferior to the British colonialists (Magubane 1996: 97-120). But despite strong associations with colonialism and the oppression of the black population of southern Africa, the "cult of Rhodes" (Sèbe 2014: 945), which is also visible in his final resting place in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe, has

[17] According to Sir Leander Starr Jameson (1853-1917), who was an intimate associate of Rhodes and the appointed administrator of the British colony of Matabeleland in Southern Rhodesia, the "idea of the occupation of unoccupied Africa, South and Central, for England's benefit, was always in Cecil Rhodes's mind" (Jameson 1897 in Harlow and Carter 2003: 532).

somehow managed to survive beyond the ending of apartheid and into the present period of black majority rule (Sèbe 2014: 945). As Benedict Anderson (2006: 183) has noted, it is perhaps ”not too surprising that post-independence states, which exhibited marked continuities with their colonial predecessors, inherited this form of political museumizing”. All over Africa, monuments like the Rhodes Memorial have either been restored or accompanied by new ones, amounting to the development of new statues in the form of Euro-African hybrids (Sèbe 2014: 947). In fact, the few statues which, under dramatic circumstances and with great media attention, have been taken down since independence make up only a small part of the overall number of statues in Africa that celebrate imperial heroes like Rhodes. While many unwanted colonial memorials were removed from public sight in the immediate aftermath of independence, a substantial number of ”European heroes of the colonial era” have been kept in place in what Berny Sèbe (2014: 936) has interpreted as ”a new lease of life in sub-Saharan Africa”. Under ”the impulse of a variety of factors linked to local religious beliefs, global tourism or new approaches in the construction of post-colonial national identities” (Sèbe 2014: 936), statues depicting colonial figures have in many cases been spared demolition. In the process of decolonisation they have either lost their original meanings or become woven into new imaginaries.

However, although the Rhodes Memorial has managed to survive in its current location for more than a century, it has not completely been spared from protests. On the day of my visit the bust of Rhodes appeared nose-less, as it had been defaced by unknown protesters five months after the Rhodes statue at UCT had been removed (Hatherley 2016: 32; Petersen 2015). The remnants of the painted words *racist, thief, murderer* were still visible across the plinth, but not more so than the inscription of a poem by Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), referring to Rhodes as an ”immense and brooding spirit” (Kipling 1902), was still legible. Aside from its missing nose and a few coats of paint, the bust was in good shape, marked by more than a century of strong Atlantic sea breezes, but well-kept, despite having stood there for so long. It had clearly been important to *some* South Africans – those in power – to keep this memorial of one of the founding fathers of the British Cape Colony in good condition. Looking rather gloomy, the depicted colonialist was resting his head on his right hand and staring out over what was once the part of the British Empire he used to rule.

In stark contrast, the empty plinth on the main UCT campus stood empty and grey, with fading black paint on the staircase in front of it, illustrating the shadow the statue had once cast. No other indications of the high level of drama that had led to its removal were visible. The drama had unfolded within a matter of weeks, but it gained momentum and continued as a movement of protests under different hashtags. Ranging, among many others, from *Rhodes Must Fall* to *Fees Must Fall* (Booysen 2016; Hodes 2017) to *Patriarchy Must Fall* (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 222) and even to *Everything Must*

Fall (Oxlund 2016), the student-led movements of 2015 and 2016 became significant expressions of the conflicting debates over the future of academic and public representation and decolonisation in South Africa. The now removed statue of Rhodes, made in 1934 by the British sculptor Marion Walgate (1886-1975), was placed prominently at the centre of the UCT's upper campus for more than fifty years (Miller and Schmahmann 2017: viii). Originally it was situated overlooking the De Waal Drive towards a rose garden on Rhodes' estate, but in 1962, when the widening of the road necessitated its relocation, it was placed in an even more elevated position just above the rugby field and beneath the stairs leading to Jameson Hall (Miller and Schmahmann 2017: viii).

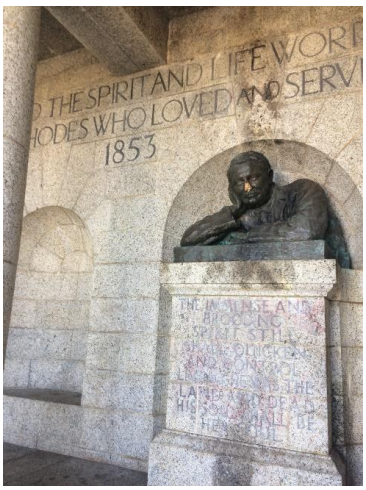

Figure 27 and 28. The Rhodes Memorial on the slopes of Devil's Peak in Cape Town (left), commemorating Rhodes, the former Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, who dreamt of a British Empire stretching from the Cape to Cairo. On the main UCT campus (right), the only remnants of the Rhodes statue that once stood there are the empty grey plinth and a painted shadow on the staircase. Photos by author February 2018.

The statue had previously attracted controversy when a group of white Afrikaner students demanded its removal as early as the 1950s due to Rhodes' deep involvement on the British side in the second Boer War (1899-1902) (Hatherley 2016: 32; Oxlund 2016: 2). For more than a century Rhodes has been a highly controversial figure, not least due to his firm belief that only "one race […] approached God's ideal type, his own Anglo-Saxon race" (Williams 1921). In 1877, while he was still an undergraduate student at the University of Oxford, Rhodes famously proclaimed:

> I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimen of human beings, what an alteration there would be in them if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence (Rhodes 1877 quoted in Walker 2016: 703).

Despite his racist ideals, celebrating the expansion of the British Empire as far and wide as possible, the statue of Rhodes was left standing on the UCT campus for more than two decades after the ending

of apartheid. As described above, that was a not unusual fate for a statue depicting a colonial figure in sub-Saharan Africa. In the post-apartheid era of reconciliation, statues and material reminders of years of oppression and colonialism were in many cases kept on public display. In Nelson Mandela's vision for what he called "a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world" (Mandela 1994 quoted in Peck 2014), forgiveness and reconciliation were key concepts (Posel 2008: 133), and all kinds of differences, even in a figure like Rhodes, were welcome. The former president famously allowed his name to be combined with that of the British imperialist, changing the Rhodes Foundation to the Mandela Rhodes Foundation in an attempt to leave controversies and disagreements between colonisers and colonised in the past (Lemon 2016: 218): "Combining our name with that of Cecil John Rhodes in this initiative", Mandela explained in his keynote speech marking the launch of the new foundation, "is to signal the closing of the circle and the coming together of two strands in our history" (Mandela in Maylam 2005: 134).

The then secretary of the Rhodes Trust, John Rowett, described the linking of Mandela and Rhodes as a "symbolic partnership [affirming] once more the commitment to the reconciliation of different historical traditions that is so central to the new South Africa" (Rowett in Maylam 2005: 136). But while "Mandela's endorsement […] clearly smoothed the way for Rhodes' rehabilitation" (Maylam 2005: 136), not everyone has shared what Paul Mayham (2005: 142) has called "Mandela's magnanimity and charitable understanding". Members of the so-called "born-free" generation in South Africa, those born after the ending of apartheid in 1994, have not been as inclined to forgive and reconcile. They want change, real change, and they want it now. Rarely clear on *what* exact change they were fighting for, the Rhodes Must Fall students *did* have one thing in common: they wanted a clear decolonisation of their university, and they set out to end the era in which the statue of Rhodes resided prominently at the centre of the UCT campus.

For many years the statue of Rhodes belonged to a species of what Paul Veyne (1988) has dubbed *Works of Art Without Viewers* – a monument left untouched due to its impregnation against attention (Gamboni 1997: 51): virtually "invisible for decades", statues like the Rhodes statue on the UCT campus "lost their power to inspire and incite long ago" (Curtis 2017: 98). But silently, and for almost a century, the statue of Rhodes nevertheless contributed to the institutional geography of a university that was organised to maintain status and prestige based on a Euro-American model (Morreira 2017: 287). As such, its very form highlighted UCT's links to Europe and the West as a symbol of the mimicry (Bhabha 1994) performed not only within the institution, but also on its external premises. It was not until the 9th of April 2015 that the days of the Rhodes statue on the main UCT campus came to an end. Following protests that started a month before, when Chumani Maxwele, a black political science

student, threw a bucket of human excrement over the statue, the UCT council agreed to remove it from its plinth (Booysen w. Bandama 2016: 319; Hodes 2017: 142; Oxlund 2016: 3; Simbao 2017: 2).

The hundreds of students and protesters who gathered for the removal of the statue were captured by Sethembile Msezane in her work *Chapungu: the day Rhodes Fell* (2015). When I met her at her Cape Town-based studio in the leafy suburb of Rondebosch in February 2018, she told me how the idea to dress up as the bird-like figure of Chapungu had come to her from a spiritual drive – a dream, which had kept occurring at the time. Chapungu is the Shona name of the sacred or totemic Zimbabwe Bird, the Bateleur Eagle (*Terathopius ecuadatus*), which is often considered to be a messenger from *Mwari* (God) or the ancestors who transformed themselves into the bird after their deaths (Fontein 2009: 99; Munjeri 2009: 15). The original soapstone birds were part of the now ruined city of Great Zimbabwe, the twelfth- to sixteenth-century metropolis famous for its dry stone architecture (Munjeri 2009: 13). In response to her reoccurring dreams about the bird-like figure, Msezane looked into the history of the Zimbabwe Bird and realised that, out of the group of birds that were looted from Great Zimbabwe in the late nineteenth century by the South African hunter and private collector Willi Posselt (Mawere et al. 2015: 99; Munjeri 2009: 16), one had still not found its way home. The bird purchased by Rhodes for his Groote Schuur residence in Muizenberg, southeast of Cape Town, remains at the official government residence of South Africa (Mawere et al. 2015: 98). It was this bird Msezane had seen in her dreams, and it was this bird that she decided to embody when she heard the news that the statue of Rhodes was to be taken down.

Dressed in a black, laced one piece and a pair of tall, black stilettoes, Msezane put on wings of hair-extensions, with golden attachments to her arms and a beaded veil, similar to those worn by traditionally dressed Xhosa diviners (Van Wyk 2003: 20). She then climbed up on to her own plinth on the Jameson staircase, just next to the one from which the Rhodes statue was being removed. People gathered around her interpreted her performance in different ways. Was this a fashion shoot? A protest? Some commented on her body, while others tried to protect her from those comments. Msezane continuously raised and lowered her arms, as if the bird she depicted was stretching its wings. Hiding her own self behind her veil, just as Xhosa diviners induce a trance in themselves from the swaying beads that make up their *amageza* veil (Van Wyk 2003: 19), Msezane *became* Chapungu. In this way, she explained to me, she was using her body as a medium for Chapungu to speak through her movements. In the reflections of the sunglasses and phones of the onlookers around her, Msezane could see when the statue behind her was being lifted and lowered with the arm of a crane, and as Rhodes fell, Chapungu majestically raised her wings into the air.

Figure 29. The removal of the statue of Rhodes from the University of Cape Town's main campus on 9th April 2015 was documented in the photographic work *Chapungu: the day Rhodes Fell* (2015) by the South African visual artist and UCT graduate Sethembile Msezane. The photo is part of the Iziko SANG's collection and was displayed in the group show *The Art of Disruptions* in 2016. Photo from Sethembile Msezane 2019a.

Msezane's performance can be seen as a "ritual of rebellion" (Gluckman 1952), in which a symbol of colonial oppression – the statue of Rhodes – was replaced with that of a black, female phoenix, a winged symbol of hope in a setting previously celebrating the life of a man who openly and proudly declared his purpose in life to be to improve "the most despicable specimen of human beings" (Rhodes 1877 in Walker 2016: 703) by means of British imperialism. Like the *simemo* songs of the Swazi Ncwala examined by Max Gluckman (1952), Msezane symbolically connotes "the king's separation from his people" (Apter 1983: 521) – or in this case, the separation of Rhodes from contemporary South Africa. Similarly, she is not disputing "the structure of the system itself", given that she is using the same material language as the one she is protesting against, but rather disputing "particular distributions of power" within it (Gluckman 1952: 3). By using a meta-communicative form of communication in order to reflect – and make the viewers of her artwork reflect – upon the current state of affairs in South Africa, Msezane emphasises the reflexive element of ritual performances (Sjørslev 2015: 114). This

reflexive element highlights the liminality of the situation (Turner 1967), an uncertain moment in time in which South Africa is caught between what it once was and what it will be.

In her embodiment of Chapungu, Msezane made use of the visual language of the phoenix, and thus drew on a combination of Greek and Egyptian mythology. While the phoenix most likely originates from Greek mythology, the Egyptian (and thus African) *benu* has many similarities (Van den Broek 1971: 14-32). It too rises ”radiantly from the hill of creation” (Van den Broek 1971: 16), and both the Greek phoenix and the Egyptian *benu* are “self-generated” and thus powerful creatures spontaneously arising from the ashes (Van den Broek 1971: 16). It is significant that the phoenix materialised by Msezane is silent and faceless: in this way, it represented the great majority of black women in South Africa, who are kept voiceless in museums, universities and other public spaces. Msezane’s “ritual of rebellion” is triumphant, but also has elements of danger: the female eagle she is depicting might be beautiful, but it also has the ability to violate and kill its chosen victims. As such, Msezane’s Chapungu is a significant symbol of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, which Msezane – in her own words – had to ”break away from [in order] to be in the spiritual process”. Her performance was created in response to what the Rhodes Must Fall protesters perceived as a continuously oppressive university, where colonialists like Rhodes were still celebrated two decades after the ending of apartheid, and in an urban landscape where no black South African, and in particular no female black South African, were given similar status.

The literal *fall* of the Rhodes statue echoed the footage of the many statues and monuments that fell in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein (1937-2003) in Firdos Square in Baghdad shortly after the United States-led invasion of Iraq in April 2003. Dario Gamboni (1997: 51) has highlighted how the tumbling down of monuments like these seem ”predestined to symbolize the metaphorical fall of the regime that had ordered its erection […] The fall of images seems to tell of a revenge of the numerous and powerless over the few and the mighty, of the living over the petrified” (Gamboni 1997: 51). In this way, the fall of the Rhodes statue was a powerful symbol of the end of one era and the beginning of a new one. However, its removal was different from other symbolic removals of statues put up by vanishing regimes. Although the events leading to its removal had clear iconoclastic references (Kros 2015), unlike the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad and the many statues of Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) and Josef Stalin (1878-1953) in the former Soviet Union, the Rhodes statue was raised with a crane rather than pulled down with a rope. Instead of falling down and breaking into pieces, it was lowered on to a waiting truck, which drove it away to an undisclosed location for safekeeping (Bester 2017). The Rhodes statue was, in other words, kept rather than crushed – a destiny not much different from that of the

Eurocentric curricula, culture and faculty at UCT, which might have been sporadically adjusted in the aftermath of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, but which fundamentally remain unchanged. The shadow of Rhodes on the Jameson staircase remains, just like his impact on contemporary South Africa, together with the British colonialism he represents. As such, the fall of the Rhodes statue was part of a rather late and comparatively quiet revolution, in stark contrast to those that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Taking place at the same time as statues associated with the transatlantic slave trade were removed in the United States (Curtis 2017), the removal of the Rhodes statue on the UCT campus was part of a global moment in which discussions about race and the decolonisation of university campuses and public spaces took place in a long list of locations. The demands for decolonisation expressed by students at UCT are thus part of a global demand for recognition, which makes itself heard loud and clear, but which rarely manages to turn itself into existing alternatives. While the demands thus made sometimes succeed in bringing down the material reminders of years of oppression, as in the case of the Rhodes statue at UCT, the protests often leave empty wounds of *nothingness* behind them. As such, a vicious circle is continued: the demands for recognition might have been heard and acknowledged for a brief moment, but in the difficulties of finding an alternative to the existing Eurocentric curricula and material culture, an emptiness in the form of a nothingness persists, confirming stereotypical assumptions of Africa not only as *not being like* the West, but as *not being at all* (Mbembe 2015a: 4). Reading the world like Europe and the West have read the world over recent centuries has ”assigned Africa to a special unreality such that the continent becomes the very figure of what is null, abolished, and, in its essence, in opposition to what is: the very expression of that nothing whose special feature is to be nothing at all” (Mbembe 2015a: 4). It is this nothingness that is confirmed when protest movements like Rhodes Must Fall fail to formulate a concrete alternative not only literally, to the empty plinth on the UCT campus, but also to curricula that mimic those of European and Western universities and the institutional racism and lack of racial transformation that they so fervently fought to get rid of.

However, as my analysis of Sethembile Msezane’s performance above shows, not everything is left empty. While the plinth where Rhodes once stood might still stand empty and grey, another statue *did* emerge in the absence of Rhodes – that of Chapungu, embodied by Msezane. She might not have been there on the days after Rhodes fell, but a material reminder of the performance she made was prominently displayed in the entrance hall of the Iziko SANG in the group show *The Art of Disruptions* (2016), alongside the works of other young artists, who, according to ArtThrob writer Amie Soudien (2016), are ”unwilling to adhere to the rules of respectability [and whose] sense of urgency clashes

with the slow-moving cogs of bureaucracy, but […] nonetheless [catches] the nation's attention". Msezane's photo spread like a wildfire around the globe in the days following the removal of the statue of Rhodes and thus became an image of what was perhaps the Rhodes Must Fall movement's most lasting achievement: the removal of the Rhodes statue. The *nothingness* emphasised by Mbembe (2015a: 4) can thus also be seen as a clean slate, wiped clean by the removal of the statue. The emptiness thus becomes more than a nothingness: it is an opportunity to write or paint something new. Msezane took this opportunity upon herself when she rose like a phoenix from Rhodes' ashes and provided an image of what South Africa can also look like: a country whose public spaces also include those of black women and of stories linked to the African continent – such as that of Chapungu – rather than solely European colonial heroes.

Demanding Decolonisation

The Rhodes Must Fall movement was part of a wider demand to decolonise the production of knowledge in South African universities (Lemon 2016: 218). Revealing numerous lines of fracture within South African society, the protesting students brought back on to the agenda the question of the re-racialization of South Africa's institutions and public culture (Mbembe 2016: 32). They did so by questioning the Eurocentric epistemic canon that dominated the academic model of their universities and discussed how what was seen as a Western way of knowledge production could be challenged and replaced. In the following section I will examine the ways in which the decolonisation of universities was imagined and performed by members of the Rhodes Must Fall movement in order to explore what their demands for recognition through representation say about the current "times of urgency" (Mbembe 2015b) South Africa is going through.

In its own words, the Rhodes Must Fall movement is a "student, staff and worker movement mobilising against institutional white supremacist capitalist patriarchy for the complete decolonization of UCT" (UCT RMF 2018). Using social media as its primary form of communication – the above statement is written on the movement's Facebook page – the main issues of the Rhodes Must Fall students were "the removal of oppressive symbols at the university such as the statue of Rhodes, institutional racism, and the lack of racial transformation at the university" (Adam 2016: 198). In solidarity with the Rhodes Must Fall students at the UCT, students at Stellenbosch and Grahamstown universities formed campaigns with similar aims. In Grahamstown, where the university itself is named after Rhodes, the university started being referred to as the "University currently known as Rhodes" as a way of protest. In Johannesburg, students at Wits University teamed up and protested under the hashtag of Fees Must

Fall, while students at Oxford in the United Kingdom, where Rhodes himself once studied, called for the removal of the statue of Rhodes at Oriel College (Qwabe 2018): ”We stand here” the student-protesters wrote on their Facebook page, “in Oxford in solidarity with all those people on the empire’s periphery, and bring the world’s decolonising fight to its heart” (RMFO 2015: 4). But unlike the statue at UCT, the Rhodes statue in Oxford did not come down. After the anonymous interference of some of the biggest donors of financial support to Oriel College, who had warned the college that it might lose around £100 million in gifts, it was decided to let the statue be (Rawlinson 2016).

In Cape Town, the protests leading to the removal of the statue of Rhodes were started on the 9th of March 2015, when Chumani Maxwele, driven by anger over the realisation that the ”apartheid past […] was still shaping his life” (Fairbanks 2015), travelled by minibus taxi to one of the largest informal settlements in South Africa, the township of Khayelitsha, located in the Cape Flats on the outskirts of Cape Town. Maxwele, the son of a domestic worker and a father who had died in the mines, grew up in Delft, a township not far from Khayelitsha (Fekisi and Vollenhoven 2015). On the day of his protest, he bought back from the township one of the buckets of human excrement that sat reeking on the kerbside to the UCT campus. Shouting ”Where are *our* heroes and ancestors?” to the gathering, curious crowd around him, he opened the bucket and hurled its contents over the Rhodes statue (Booysen w. Bandama 2016: 319; Hodes 2017: 142; Fairbanks 2015; Oxlund 2016: 3).

The event started a series of protests that eventually led to the removal of the statue a little more than a month later (Fairbanks 2015; Oxlund 2016). Choosing a monument like the Rhodes statue as the target of protest can be seen as a calculated act to despoil the sacred character of a monument in order to bring it into the human realm (Katherine Verdery in Kros 2015: 154). Notably, Maxwele wanted the statue to feel ”ashamed, the same way [he] feels ashamed that these faeces […] are in his living environment” (Boroughs 2015). As such, his action can be seen as aiming to ”convert the statue from untouchable icon to sentient human being” (Kros 2015: 154). The strong symbolism, first of what can be considered iconoclastic conversions of the statue, and later its actual physical removal, was recognised by the UCT student Kealeboga Ramaru, who, a week before the removal of the statue, observed: “Symbolically what we’ve done is so powerful […] We’ve brought this space where decisions are made without our consent and said: ‘Look, this is our space too, and we deserve to be here’” (Ramaru in Pather 2015).

However, the removal of the statue did more than simply emphasise that public spaces and university campuses also belong to South Africans, who, like Kealeboga Ramaru, feel excluded from them. It highlighted an approach to history that is very different from that of Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who, in the hope of peace in the 1990s, attempted to leave the traumatic apartheid

past behind them by relentlessly pushing their mission of reconciliation (Jansen 2016: 188). Forgiveness was a central part of the deal the African National Congress (ANC) made when it took power in 1994 (Posel 2008), just as it had been for many other leaders of newly established democracies in Africa post-independence. Jumo Kenyatta (1891-1978) too preached reconciliation in the early days of Kenyan independence, and even Robert Mugabe emphasised the need for reconciliation between white and black Zimbabweans before domestic political challenges made him adopt a policy of radical land reforms (Zeleza 2014: 135). In South Africa, the ANC's eagerness to leave the past behind it resulted in the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), in which first-hand accounts of the crimes committed during apartheid individualised both victims and perpetrators (Posel 2008: 121; Zeleza 2014: 136). As Paul T. Zeleza (2014: 136) has highlighted, the logic behind the TRC was very different from that of the Nuremberg Trials following the crimes committed during the Second World War. The testimonies of the crimes committed during apartheid were met with a "logic of crime and confession" rather than a "logic of crime and punishment" (Zeleza 2014: 136). In the atmosphere of reconciliation and forgiveness preached by Mandela and Tutu, the statues depicting white heroes of the colonial age were left standing.

But as the events during the Rhodes Must Fall campaign show, turning away from history in the immediate aftermath of apartheid proved to be a strategy that was impossible to sustain in the long run. Today, students like Chumani Maxwele are starting to deal with the traumatic issues of the past from which their parents' generation tried to protect them. Unlike many in their parents' generation – who, in the anti-apartheid struggle, as well as in the immediate aftermath of apartheid, strongly opposed narratives of race essentialism in order to challenge the categorical divisions constructed by apartheid and move towards a more unified society (Whitehead 2012: 1249) – the Rhodes Must Fall students were determined to discuss the persistence of race in their daily experience. As such, their approach is more similar to that of the South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko (1946-1977) and other members of the Black Consciousness Movement, who adopted what Michael MacDonald (2006: 6) has called a *racialist* approach to the anti-apartheid struggle, than that of the ANC, which popularised the concept of *non-racialism* as an anti-apartheid value (MacDonald 2006: 115; Posel 2001: 50; Whitehead 2012: 1249).

In his essay on "The Problem of Generations", Karl Mannheim (1952 [1927/28]: 282) notes with reference to Martin Heidegger (1996 [1927]: 352) that the "inescapable fate of living in and with one's generation completes the full drama of individual human existence".[18] It is within this drama that

[18] In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger (1996 [1927]: 352) writes that "individual fates […] are already guided beforehand in being-with-one-another in the same world and in the resoluteness for definite possibilities […] The fateful

individuals share "a particular kind of identity of location" that is embraced by their age group and "embedded in a historical-social process" (Mannheim 1952: 293). Significant for each new generation is a "'fresh contact' with the social and cultural heritage" of society (Mannheim 1952: 293). This "fresh contact" can, according to Mannheim (1952: 294), lead to a novel "change of attitude […] towards the heritage handed down by [their] predecessors" and can be radical in nature. This was the case for the Rhodes Must Fall movement, where the members' change of attitude towards the social and cultural heritage of apartheid and colonialism often resulted in conflicts. In a Mannheimian understanding the conflicting viewpoints between the so-called *born free* generation of the Rhodes Must Fall movement and their parents can be seen as a necessary conflict that guarantees a process of continuity in society. Fanon (2001: 166) was of a similar opinion. In the *Wretched of the Earth* he writes:

> Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it. In under-developed countries the preceding generations have both resisted the work of erosion carried out by colonialism and also helped on the maturing of the struggles of today (Fanon 2001: 166).

As if speaking directly to the activists in the Rhodes Must Fall movement whose members he greatly inspired (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 222), Fanon (2001: 166) continues:

> We must rid ourselves of the habit, now that we are in the thick of the fight, of minimizing the action of our fathers or of feigning incomprehension when considering their silence and passivity. They fought as well as they could, with the arms that they possessed then; and if the echoes of their struggle have not resounded in the international arena, we must realize that the reason for this silence lies less in their lack of heroism than in the fundamentally different international situation of our time (Fanon 2001: 166).

From the Freedom Charter adopted in 1955 to the first democratic constitution of South Africa signed in 1996, non-racialism featured significantly in the canon of most anti-apartheid organisations within South Africa and abroad (Everatt 2009: 1). However, rather than standing together with white South Africans in unison and forgiving in order to be able to move on, as Mandela, Tutu and other ANC members once preached, the Rhodes Must Fall students want the material celebrations of the oppressive colonial and apartheid eras gone and out of sight. They might agree with Fanon's (2001: 1669) appeal not to minimise "the action of our fathers", but rather than accepting Tutu's (1999) words, "No Future Without Forgiveness", the demands presented by the Rhodes Must Fall students indicate that there will be no future for universities like the UCT without recognition. Instead of forgiving, they want white South Africans to recognise them. Instead of continuing to read the works of white, male scholars, they want to read and write ones in new decolonised curricula, where the works of black and female writers and academics play a much bigger part. By refusing to forgive and reconcile, the Rhodes Must Fall students remove the responsibility for South Africa's future from

destiny of [the individual] in and with its 'generation' constitutes the complete, authentic occurrence of [being there]".

themselves on to white South Africans, no longer being willing to accept the lingua franca of the 1990s that requires *them* to forgive and reconcile. Rather, they want white South Africans to realise and recognise their demands to be seen, heard and recognised.

The movement from reconciliation to recognition that has taken place in South Africa since the 1990s relies on neither genealogy nor historical context alone. Like the movement *From Revolutionaries to Muslims* analysed by Anja Kublitz (2016: 68), the movement from reconciliation to recognition is a result of "structural continuities across generations". The two generations are not solely "products of [each their part of] history, but simultaneously subjects of change that transform the very history of which they are part" (Kublitz 2016: 69). Like the revolutionaries and Muslims in Kublitz's (2016: 82) analysis of liminal becomings across Palestinian generations in Denmark, the anti-apartheid activists of Mandela and Tutu's generation and the Rhodes Must Fall students of today are "neither […] related by causality, nor [perceivable] as oppositions". Rather, they are connected across historical generations through their shared fight against colonial and apartheid-era oppression. In this way they share the same "drive towards transformation" (Kublitz 2016: 82), although their tools of protest are very different from each other.

Through their protests, the Rhodes Must Fall students managed to get rid of one of the most powerful symbols of oppression – the statue of Rhodes – but not only that. While the shadow of Rhodes may still linger on the Jameson staircase at UCT, new statues have materialised all over the country. In the work of Sethembile Msezane, living statues take a prominent place next to those symbolising the oppressive colonial past. In her *Public Holiday Series* (2013-14), Msezane uses the past actively and speaks out against its symbols of oppression through engagement. In that sense she is reclaiming the public spaces of South Africa not necessarily by removing its past (most of the statues and buildings she performs next to are still standing), but by writing her own stories into it. Dressed in symbolic costumes, she creates living sculptures of her body and positions herself in public spaces such as the square on Government Avenue in central Cape Town, where a statue of the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, the Boer general Louis Botha (1862-1919), resides, or in front of the Central Methodist Mission Church in Cape Town's Green Market Square.

Figure 30 and 31. *Untitled (Heritage Day)* (2013) in front of the statue of Louis Botha on Government Avenue in central Cape Town (left), and *Untitled (Freedom Day)* (2014) in front of the Central Methodist Mission Church in Cape Town's Green Market Square. Both photos are by the South African artist Sethembile Msezane from her *Public Holiday Series* (2013-14). Photos from Sethembile Msezane 2019b.

Through her work, Msezane silently and facelessly reclaims the public spaces of South Africa, where the absence of celebrations of black women has been evident for so long. By speaking to the existing material culture, she approaches what she considers public symbols of oppression by including histories of South Africa's marginalised groups into the overall landscape of monuments and memorials. However, by turning her body into a statue, Msezane expresses herself in the same monumental language as the white oppressors she tries to speak up against. In so doing, a crucial dilemma of decolonisation is highlighted: how does one protest against the system one lives and breathes in without using the symbols and language of that system? What is the alternative language of institutions like universities and museums, whose founding principles originate from Europe?

Not long after his protests against the Rhodes statue, Chumani Maxwele was involved in physical squabbles with members of staff, which led to his suspension from the university on the grounds that "his continued presence on the campus was considered to pose a threat to the maintenance of good order" (UCT statement 2015). Anthony Lemon (2016) has highlighted the puzzling and even counter-productive aspect of protesting against the violent regimes of South Africa's past by inflicting more violence, but Maxwele's actions can also be seen as a result of a situation in which "the South African intelligentsia and political moderates publicly decry the reality that democratic dialogue seems to be collapsing [while] only a few address the problem that underserved and marginalized groups are never heard when they do not engage in violent protests" (Oxlund 2016: 12). In such a situation, violence may, in the words of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), be the only possible way the *subaltern* can be heard.

For the UCT graduate and Fees Must Fall activist Wanelisa Xaba (2017: 100-102), the use of violence during the protests happened in response to the violence inflicted upon the students by what she, inspired by Fanon (2001: 27-84), calls *colonial violence*. Highlighting how the public was not outraged ”when students were continuously brutalised by the State and the university”, but were greatly offended when a group of students took what they perceived as ”colonial paintings” from the walls of UCT and burned them, Xaba (2017: 100) argues that ”violence is inextricably linked to who society deems as human”. Taking her cue from Steve Biko, who, with the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s, sought to produce ”real black people who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society” (Biko 2004 [1978]: 55), Xaba (2017: 100) writes:

> The dehumanising poverty [of black South Africans] is not considered violence because those affected by it exist as subhuman or ‘appendages’ under White supremacy. […] In the South African imagination, paintings of colonisers and buildings are of greater value than young Black South African students who are too poor to access education, and therefore unable to access employment (Xaba 2017: 100).

Opponents of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, whose criticisms often echoed the same kinds of racist assumptions expressed by white Zimbabwean farmers in the aftermath of the country’s extensive land reforms,[19] were quick to judge the movement’s use of violence. In a response to the many accounts labelling the students ”violent and unruly” (Xaba 2017: 96), Barbara Boswell (2015), a literary scholar from UCT’s Department of English Literature, wrote:

> Our uneven and hypocritical responses to various acts of violence have left me wondering: When we talk about violence [which] acts of violence ‘matter’ as contemptible? […] At UCT [the] students involved in […] non-violent, civil disobedience were immediately admonished for their ‘violence’ when they prevented access to the UCT campus [although] not a finger was laid on a single person trying to enter the campus. [The] mere presence of these students refusing the spatial arrangement of exclusion disrupted the privilege of those who felt entitled to their access to the exclusive space of the university. When the privileged are confronted with their privilege, there are two ways to proceed: acknowledge it, and work to share some of the good things in your life for the greater good of everyone […] or cling to it. Many at UCT chose the latter option, by which logic peaceful, non-violent protesters were discursively constructed as ‘violent’ in order to justify the use of violence against them (Boswell 2015).

Some critics of the Must Fall movement stressed that many of the student protesters could not be considered subalterns in a contemporary South African context, as they came from middle-class families rather than the most poverty-stricken sections of society. However, despite having grown up with possibilities many of their parents and grandparents could only have dreamt of, members of the Rhodes Must Fall movement did see themselves as marginalised victims of a continuously repressive

[19] In his *Foredoomed Is My Forest: The Diary of a Zimbabwe Farmer*, the former farm-owner Richard F. Wiles (2005: 171) writes: “There is absolutely no hope that Africans will succeed in putting together anything worthwhile. They are unable to anticipate. They cannot administer. Responsibility is still a foreign word. Whatever they touch ends in ruin”.

Eurocentric society. While not necessarily having to live in townships like Khayelitsha or, in financial terms, be categorised as "vulnerable", "transient" or "chronically poor" (Saba and Coetzee 2018),[20] many of the Rhodes Must Fall students did nevertheless identify with this large group of primarily black South Africans and expressed themselves within "narratives of selfhood and identity [which] are saturated by the tropes of pain and suffering" (Mbembe 2015b). In doing so, the students expressed a view of themselves as victims – just as the racist narratives of apartheid would have wanted them to.

According to Achille Mbembe (2015b), "racism has encouraged its victims to perceive themselves as powerless, that is, as victims even when they were actively engaged in myriad acts of self-assertion". The self-understanding of members of the Rhodes Must Fall movement that they are victims is expressed through their accounts of personal experiences that "cannot be challenged by any known rational discourse […] Because, it is alleged, black experience transcends human vocabulary to the point where it cannot be named" (Mbembe 2015b). In this way black pain was essentialised during the Rhodes Must Fall campaigns, where race was considered the "main medium within which black subjectivity [can be] asserted" (Nyamnjoh 2017: 263). Anye Nyamnjoh (2017: 263), a former UCT student, has described how the claim that "black lecturers will channel the 'politics of being black' in their disciplines [results in the] expectation […] that this will solve the problem of relatability (or lack thereof)" in South African universities. The claim "brings to the fore assumptions regarding the universality of a black experience [and] seems to suggest an experience particular to an identity that all others who identify with said identity possess" (Nyamnjoh 2017: 263). But Nyamnjoh (2017: 263) does not believe that more black representation in the academic staff is sufficient for the decolonisation of an otherwise alienating university:

> [S]uch transformation or decolonisation is equally a matter of expertise as well as unwavering commitment. Problematically, therefore, such reification of identity can come at the expense of real decolonisation (Nyamnjoh 2017: 263).

The essentialisation of black pain and blackness within the Rhodes Must Fall movement turned the protesting students' demands for decolonisation into a demand for Africanisation (Nyamnjoh 2017: 262). As already mentioned, decolonisation was widely considered the same as Africanisation at the time of the postcolonial experiments in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s (Mbembe 2016: 33), something

[20] In 2015 close to 80% of South Africa's 56.72 million citizens were categorised as "vulnerable", "transient" or "chronically poor" (Saba and Coetzee 2018). The middle class (which has decreased in the last few years) consists of around 18% of the population, while the elite constitutes around 5% (Saba and Coetzee 2018).

Fanon (2001: 119-165) expressed his sincere criticism of. Fanon (2001: 119) warned about the shortcuts between nationalism and chauvinism that can lead to racism:

> The faults that we find in [national consciousness] are a quite sufficient explanation of the facility with which, when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity (Fanon 2001: 119).

In the Rhodes Must Fall movement, the essentialisation of blackness, or the preference of "the race [over the nation] and the tribe [over] the state" as Fanon (2001: 119) put it, became visible in the accounts of students and staff members who experienced being accused of not being black enough. Thomas, a senior lecturer at UCT's Michaelis School of Fine Art whom I met during my fieldwork in December 2016, told me how the Rhodes Must Fall movement, which to begin with had been inclusive and open to all supporters of the cause, had ended up being restricted to black students. Self-identifying as black, Thomas told me how students and staff members who were considered white or, in his case, not black enough had been silenced and excluded. Factions within the movement had started turning against each other, accusing one another of not taking their specific concerns into account. One of these factions was the UCT's Trans Collective, a student-led organisation whose members felt excluded from the Rhodes Must Fall movement, which in their opinion did not "tokenise [their] presence […] as part of [the] movement" (Reygan 2018: 79). Members of the Trans Collective protested against what they perceived as an "excessive loyalty to Patriarchy [and] heteronormativity" within the movement and painted words like "Rapist" and "Trans-erasure" across photos of activists like Chumani Maxwele (Reygan 2018: 80). The protests within the Rhodes Must Fall movement show how "victimhood is [often] reconfigured [and] discursively reclassified" (Jensen 2014: 105). In his own understanding Maxwele is a victim of colonial victimhood, but in the eyes of the Trans Collective he is a perpetrator, its members perceiving him as such in the context of victimhood organised around sexual violence.

In the case of Thomas, he experienced the reconfiguration of victimhood as a narrowing down of who counted as victims. He too saw himself as a victim of apartheid, but in the eyes of members of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, he was not as much of a victim as they were. As a so-called *coloured* South African, he found himself in an ambivalent state of being in-between. During the racist laws of apartheid he was not considered white enough to qualify for the privileges of the regime – now he was not considered black enough to count as a victim of that very same regime. In the words of Victor Turner (1967: 97) he was "neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere […] and [was] at the very least 'betwixt and between' all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification". In Thomas's opinion, the exclusion of mixed raced

people like himself from the Rhodes Must Fall movement was the result of a reductive logic that will ultimately end up creating an intellectual ghetto. He found that it was based on a false logic of race, rooted in the racial divisions seen during apartheid. Thomas felt disappointed by the apocalyptic stand taken by many students during the protests, as in his opinion all knowledge can be of value.

Sitting in his office reflecting on the past few hectic months of his life in which he had experienced the campus he worked on being locked down, as well as an avalanche of questioning accusations by students he used to identify with, he said: ”One needs to ask oneself: ‘How can I use the system to improve it?’ This approach is much more fruitful than individual attacks”. Describing South Africa as a ”deeply wounded country” with many financial obstacles, Thomas explained how he thought the protests needed to take place through intellectual change in order to matter: ”The students need to focus on being better students rather than burning books and smashing windows. Things taken by force will not last, and by doing what the student protesters have done lately, the only thing happening is a replica of the violence seen during apartheid”. In Thomas’ opinion disputes should be fought out in the realm of thought, not by continuing the violence of apartheid. He hoped the students would not fall into the same trap as when there were only white people on the Michaelis campus, but he was worried about the post-trauma he was experiencing among them: ”Universities should be therapeutic universes without violence, where your enemy can be your greatest teacher”, he said. Referring to the phoenix aspect of what he called the Rhodes Must Fall movement’s ”anarchistic ‘to the rubble’ mentality”, he said:

> I think it is naïve to believe that things can only change for the better if it grows from ruins. The strategy should not be fatalistic. Instead students should produce knowledge within the system and change it by challenging teachers and professors intellectually. Nothing changes overnight, but people change in the face of new ideas.

As my conversation with Thomas shows, the Rhodes Must Fall movement was far from being a monolithic structure. In many ways it can be described as a ”movement of contradictions” (Nyamnjoh 2017: 275) in which diverging interests often collided. Its internal struggles and its inability to look beyond the black pain that a large number of its members experienced resulted in a lack of concrete alternatives to the existing structures they had set out to decolonise. Mbembe (2015b) argues that the demand for decolonisation sometimes pursued violently by the Rhodes Must Fall protesters was in fact *a psychic state* rather than a political project in the strict sense of the term:

> Psychic bonds – in particular bonds of pain and bonds of suffering – more than lived material contradictions are becoming the real stuff of political inter-subjectivity. ‘I am my pain’ […] ‘I am my suffering’ […] this subjective experience is so incommensurable that ‘unless you have gone through the same trial, you will never understand my condition’ – the fusion of self and suffering in this astonishing age of solipsism and narcissism (Mbembe 2015b).

This individualisation of the experience of pain can be seen in relation to the ethno-nationalist movements in South Africa examined by Jean Comaroff (1997) in the era of transition from apartheid to the new post-apartheid nation state. Just like conservative white Afrikaners and members of the Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party, who "struggled hard to ensure that the principle of ethnic sovereignty be inscribed in the constitution of the post-apartheid nation-state" (Comaroff 1997: 138), the Rhodes Must Fall students embraced "a politics of difference that recalls the most divisive features of colonial rule" (Comaroff 1997: 120). The essentialism expressed in the Rhodes Must Fall discussions likewise celebrated "cultural particularity" (Comaroff 1997: 136) when they rejected the humanist universals of the *Rainbow Nation*. The heavy focus on and celebration of race within the movement can be seen as a continuation not only of the ethno-nationalist movements examined by Comaroff (1997), but also of the racial particularity celebrated by the apartheid regime. In their opposition to the humanist universals hailed by their parents' generation, the Rhodes Must Fall students accused the politics of non-racism and common humanity of protecting neo-colonial interests, but by constantly focusing on "the politics of identity" (Comaroff 1997: 138) they simultaneously took "separation and difference as the prime mover of […] modern history, thereby neglecting the very (general) forces that separate and differentiate in the first place: the forces of economic exploitation and political disempowerment inflected in gender and generation, race and ethnicity, culture and class". The individualisation of the Rhodes Must Fall movement thus became focused on identity and subjective experiences to such an extent that it broke into sections divided into race, gender and sexual orientation. Consequently, the movement was no longer able to confront the system they were fighting as a diverse group, but ended up in smaller sections increasingly fighting each other.

The Rhodes Must Fall movement was thus different from the major emancipatory movements of the last two centuries, such as the women's and civil rights movement in the United States. These movements fought for equal respect and rights, while the Rhodes Must Fall students demanded recognition of specific aspects of their identity, which they felt were neglected or demeaned by the dominant value and norm system of contemporary South Africa. By pointing to differences that they felt were disregarded by the UCT in particular and by South African society in general, they attempted to show that the allegedly "neutral" state of South Africa is by no means neutral, but rather based on a partial, male-dominated, neo-colonial, white and heterosexual interpretation, which constantly privileges specific groups over others. Through their protests, therefore, the Rhodes Must Fall students attempted to emphasise that members who do not fit into this hegemonic understanding of society do not fit into it at all. In the words of Charles Taylor (1994: 42), the students' "demand for equal recognition extends beyond an acknowledgment of the equal value of all humans potentially, and comes to include the equal value of what they have made of this potential in fact".

Both Mandela and Tutu's politics of non-racism and common humanity, and the politics of identity favoured by the Rhodes Must Fall students, are based on "the notion of equal respect" (Taylor 1994: 43). The reason why they come into conflict is because the former "requires that we treat people in a difference-blind fashion", while the latter "recognize and even foster particularity" (Taylor 1994: 43). The reproach that the first mode of politics – that of the Rainbow Nation – makes to the second is that it "violates the principle of non-discrimination" (Taylor 1994: 43). The reproach that the second mode of politics – that of the Rhodes Must Fall students – makes to the first is that it "negates identity by forcing people into a homogeneous mould that is untrue to them" (Taylor 1994: 43). The Rhodes Must Fall students further emphasise that "the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture" (Taylor 1994: 43). It is thus only the already suppressed parts of South Africa, in this case the large majority of citizens, whose "cultures are being forced to take alien form" (Taylor 1994: 43). Consequently, "the supposedly fair and difference-blind society" that Mandela and Tutu advocated for in the 1990s, the Rhodes Must Fall students argue, was not only inhuman, because of its subtle and unconscious way of suppressing identities, but also itself highly discriminatory (Taylor 1994: 43).

The Rhodes Must Fall movement's severe focus on race highlights that even movements that reject humanist universals "rely on certain de facto commonalties" (Comaroff 1997: 120). The idea of group mentalities like these has been highly contested, and the fact that the Rhodes Must Fall movement ended up in smaller sections shows the difficulties at work when groups want to reaffirm the particularity of their specific identities. When sections within the Rhodes Must Fall movement, like the Trans Collective described above, wanted to leave, it became clear that the Rhodes Must Fall students' homogeneous reading of identity failed to take proper account of intersecting axes of identification such as being female, mixed race, gay, lesbian or gender nonconforming. With their critique of the movement, the Trans Collective thus showed that the Rhodes Must Fall students' failure to admit the heterogeneity of the movement legitimised its internal oppression.

Nowhere did the lock-outs of academic staff members and the shutdown of campuses last longer than in the departments of art and humanities. Researchers at the Michaelis School of Fine Art whom I spoke with during my fieldwork were not surprised that this had been the case. In conflicts where demands for recognition through representation are central, institutions that work on the representation of self and others are likely to become the targets of severe criticism, just as my analysis of the conflicts surrounding the *Our Lady* exhibition at the Iziko SANG below will show. As in the case of the empty plinth on the UCT campus where the statue of Rhodes once stood, the gallery walls at Iziko SANG, left empty by the controversies over an artwork by the South African artist

Zwelethu Mthethwa, were not left empty for long. In the case of the plinth at UCT, the actual location of the Rhodes statue might still be empty, but right beside it rose the statue of Chapungu. At the Iziko SANG the gallery walls were similarly hung with an alternative, which, like the statue of Chapungu, symbolised the replacement of an oppressive male with that of an until then unrecognised, black woman, whose name was Nokuphila Kumalo.

Representing the Art of a Nation

How do you curate the art of a divided nation? The right to define something as art, especially within the context of a *national* gallery, is an "important attribute of those dominant in society at a given moment" (Clunas 1994: 325). In South Africa this right has for many years belonged to a small white minority, whose assumed authority to represent what constitutes the art of the nation is now being challenged. At the Iziko SANG, the curators are struggling to meet the demands for recognition from members of the South African public, who challenge their choices to an extent where artworks have to be removed and exhibitions closed down. In the following paragraphs, I examine how curators in an institution, which for decades has been "a window of high culture in the neo-colonial mood" (Comaroff 1997: 119), attempt to curate and represent art from a nation as divided and diverse as South Africa. Using the *Our Lady* exhibition as my starting point, I explore the different viewpoints presented in the public discussion of the exhibition. While the demands for recognition with which the predominantly white curators are confronted can be seen as a desire to challenge their privilege to decide what qualifies as the art of the nation, they can also be seen as a way *other* white curators and artists try to secure a place for themselves and assume the moral high ground in this environment. As such, the often hostile debates I experienced between white curators, artists and feminists during the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition can be seen as an example of a situation in which the voices of the subalterns (Spivak 1988) – in this case the contemporary black artists exhibited in the *Our Lady* exhibition and sex-workers from SWEAT – were mostly heard through a number of (self-appointed) white spokeswomen.

As I will show, one of the main accusations made against the curators of the Iziko SANG was that the institution they work in and the way they choose to curate its collections is elitist. I will explore this accusation in relation to Pierre Bourdieu's (1984; et al. 1991) ideas about distinction and exclusivity in the museum space. I argue that, although much has been done in recent years to turn the Iziko SANG into a more inclusive space, the gallery is still a place where not everyone feels welcome or at ease. The rituals that visitors to the gallery are still expected to perform thus retain the Iziko SANG as a

stronghold of exclusivity that continuously reinforces class, gender, race and other distinctions in society. For this reason, the curatorial practices performed there can easily become ”objects of fierce struggle and impassioned debate” (Duncan 2004: 8), as the events during the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition confirm.

The curation of the Iziko SANG is in many ways made almost impossible by the history and location of the gallery. Built to exclude the large majority of South Africans, and situated in the Company’s Garden established by the Dutch Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie as their first established vegetable garden and way station in the 1650s, the very location of the gallery is for many a symbol of oppression. The gallery was founded in 1871 through an initial bequest of forty-five oil paintings donated by the English agriculturalist and veterinarian Thomas Butterworth Bayley (1810-1871) to the South African Fine Arts Association (Lilla 2017). The collection was from its outset a very Eurocentric affair, and for most of the twentieth century it continued as such. Reflecting existing European classification practices, artworks by black South Africans were mostly classified as ethnographic specimens and kept alongside objects of natural history at the South African Museum around the corner. It was not until the 1960s, when the later Deputy Director of the gallery Bruce Arnott’s (1938-2018) interest in sculptural work outside the Western mainstream led to the acquisition of a small selection of sculptures from Central and West Africa, that the collection started to include what was perceived as African *art* (Lewis 2019; Tietze 2017: 127). According to Andrea Lewis (2019), curator of prints and drawings at the Iziko SANG, the late entry into the collection of objects such as beadwork, textiles and sculptures made by artists from Africa resulted in a situation in which important aspects of South Africa’s visual traditions were excluded:

> Europe’s modernist frenzy and interest in African art did not impact on our collections until almost a century later. In this regard the [South African] National Gallery lagged behind the example set by both global art museums – much influenced by modernism and its interest in African art – and local institutions such as the Johannesburg Art Gallery and Wits [who by the 1970s] had developed rich collections of African art including sculpture, beadwork, personal and ritual objects and regalia (Lewis 2019).

When apartheid came to an end at the beginning of the 1990s and South Africa began its long process towards transformation, the National Gallery in Cape Town followed suit. The new director, Marylyn Martin, who took up the position in 1990 just as the political landscape in South Africa began to change drastically, noted that the gallery was ”challenged about what is suitable and appropriate for the collection of a national art museum” (Martin in Bedford 1996: 18). But the name change of the institution – the Xhosa-term for ”hearth”, *Iziko*, was added in 1999 as a way of emphasising the much sought-after transformation of the gallery and its sister institutions – was not enough to remove it from its discriminating history. The CEO of the Iziko Museums, Rooksana Omar (2014), acknowledged

this in her address celebrating fifteen years of Iziko: ”despite significant transformation since amalgamation [the Iziko Museums still struggle with] the bias of a ‘pre-democracy’ worldview [which] continues to be reflected in both the buildings and the presentation of our collections”.

The Iziko SANG’s long and strong ties to South Africa’s colonial past and its historical focus on European art are highlighted in a headline on the gallery’s website. ”[The Iziko] South African National Gallery [is] South Africa’s premier art museum [which] houses outstanding collections of South African, African, British, French, Dutch and Flemish art” (Iziko 2019a). While the European nations have been divided as such, and even as regions in the case of the Netherlands, African nations beyond South Africa are simply grouped as *African*. This indicates a Eurocentric view of Africa as a unity, a continent whose nations – even in the context of a national gallery *in* Africa – are not found worthy of individual listings, unlike the European nations that are represented. Examples of this kind of Eurocentrism are manifold and not only occur in South African galleries. In her autobiographic book *Swing Time*, the British writer Zadie Smith describes a situation in which the narrator of the book similarly groups all African nations into one without even considering it:

> ‘What’s it like?’ I’d asked, leaning over him, looking out of the porthole window, and meaning, I must admit, ‘Africa’. ‘I have not been’ he said coldly, without turning round. ‘But you practically live here – I read your resumé’. ‘No. Senegal, Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Sudan, Ethiopia, yes – Togo, never’. He’d turned to me, red-faced, and asked: ‘If we were flying to Europe and you wanted to know what France was like, would it help if I described Germany?’ (Smith 2016: 194).

The narrator in *Swing Time*, like the curators of the Iziko SANG, is met with a sarcastic response highlighting the demand for recognition often heard in South African debates about representation: the obviousness with which Europe is divided into nations, while Africa is not, is confronted and ridiculed by turning the example upside down. Similarly, the opponents of the *Our Lady* exhibition, whose criticisms I will describe below, confronted the curators’ Eurocentric assumptions by highlighting the obviousness with which they had juxtaposed contemporary South African artworks with historical European artworks.

While the Iziko SANG’s focus on art from Europe has changed over the past few decades, much of its collection is still linked to the gallery’s colonial past. Although the curators are now highlighting the importance of establishing ”a collection that acknowledges and celebrates the expressive cultures of the African continent” (Iziko 2019b), the colonial legacy is continuously a challenge with which they are confronted on a daily basis. As I will show below, the Iziko SANG’s curators are challenged by demands for recognition that sometimes come in the form of such heavy criticism that exhibitions have to be shut down and artworks removed from the gallery walls, just as the statue of Rhodes described above had to be removed in response to the demands for recognition expressed by the

Rhodes Must Fall movement. The demands expressed in this case highlight the shadow that the history of the gallery still casts over it. As an art gallery like the Iziko SANG is in its very nature a European construct (Tietze 2017), and as it has excluded a large majority of the South African public since its foundation, many people still associate the gallery with oppression and exclusion: a white institution not only in literary terms.

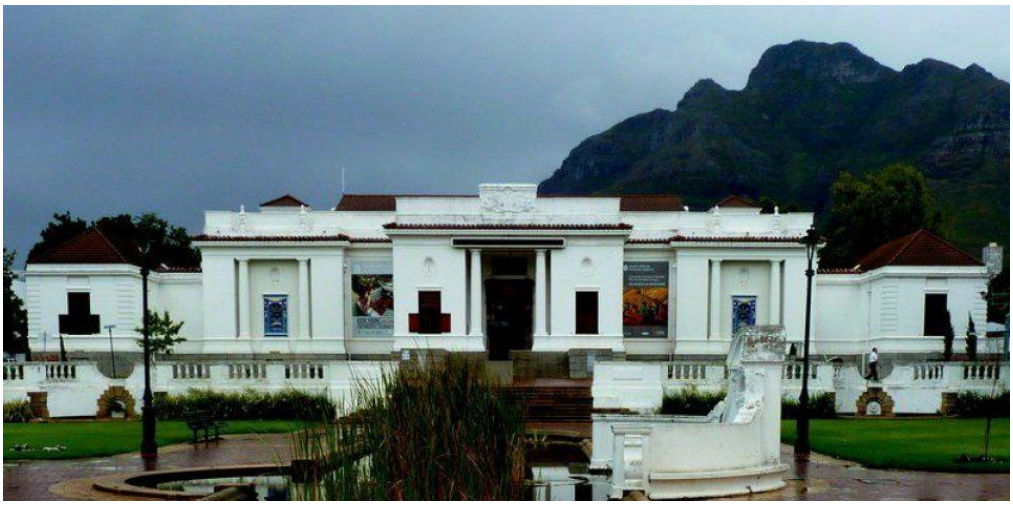

Figure 32. The Iziko SANG, which since 1930 has been housed in a purpose-built building centrally located in Cape Town's Company's Garden. Photo from McConnell 2019.

"The Public Has Come Back"

The afternoon of the 15th December 2016 was a warm and sunny summer day with clear blue skies. I was walking through the Company's Garden and passing the centrally located Delville Wood Memorial commemorating South Africa's fallen in the First and Second World Wars, in which South African soldiers fought alongside other members of the British Empire and Commonwealth. Walking past the abstract sculpture of South Africa's former Prime Minister Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870-1950), who, like Rhodes, thought of black Africans as people with the "psychology and outlook" of children (Mamdani 1996: 4) and had been one of the authors of the policy of segregation (MacDonald 2006: 8), I caught a glimpse of a group of homeless people lying in the grass under the tall trees of the park. Here, in the historic city centre of Cape Town among the material remnants of colonialism and apartheid, the contrasts are stark. Homeless people struggling to make ends meet, living alongside wealthy tourists and local Capetonians, who spend their afternoons feeding birds and catching the falling clouds above Table Mountain on their expensive cameras. As I walked up the stairs to the grand park entrance of

the Iziko SANG, I noticed the latest addition to the exhibitions, which now continued all the way out of the gallery and into the park: a water cannon truck, similar to those used against protesters in demonstrations across South Africa during the apartheid years. From a symbol of the brutality of the apartheid regime, the truck was in the process of being turned into a symbol of survival and resistance. Covered in millions of colourful glass beads, the artist was determined to turn a traumatic relic from the past into an inspiring hope for the future. The truck was in many ways undergoing a similar transformation as that which was taking place inside the Iziko SANG, where the curators I spoke with were constantly struggling to find new ways to turn the gallery's associations with South Africa's traumatic past into a creative and constructive gallery of the future.

On this particular day, this sought-after transformation came in the form of a public discussion. When I entered the gallery, I saw a group of museum employees putting out chairs in the central room of the *Our Lady* exhibition. The temporary exhibition, which until this day had shown contemporary and historical artworks depicting women of various backgrounds, was designed to ”interrupt the typical traditional moral attitudes and male-dominated stereotypes that surround imagery of the female form” (Iziko 2016). Spanning more than five hundred years of art history, from the Flemish painter Joos van der Beke's *Virgin with Saviour* from 1510 to the Nigerian-born visual artist Njideka Akunyili Crosby's *Mama, Mummy and Mamma* from 2014, the curators had put together artworks which in their opinion celebrated ”empowered female capacity” (Iziko 2016). The curators had set out to ”counter and contextualise the current status quo” (Iziko 2016) and introduced the exhibition on the Iziko SANG's website as a challenge to ”patriarchal objectivity of the female form” (Iziko 2016). The curators wanted to counter-represent ”feminine identity [as] one-dimensional” by challenging what they called ”the age old visual perception of the female form as an idealised, mythical and sexual object” (Iziko 2016). But since the opening of the exhibition in November 2016 representatives from SWEAT had strongly opposed the inclusion of an artwork by an artist who was on trial for murdering a young black sex-worker in an exhibition aimed at celebrating ”empowered female capacity” (Iziko 2016).

Two weeks before the public discussion, representatives from SWEAT had gathered in front of the gallery in orange T-shirts and with white masks covering their faces. In and around the gallery, which was open late for the monthly reoccurring *First Thursdays* event, protesters with banners reading ”My name is Nokuphila Kumalo” walked around showing their support of the deceased sex-worker whose alleged murderer's artwork was then still on display in the *Our Lady* exhibition. In a letter to the Iziko SANG, a representative from SWEAT stated that in her view the inclusion of the artwork by Zwelethu Mthethwa, who was found guilty of the murder a few months later after a trial lasting nearly four

years (Koyana and Malgas 2017), was not only bad taste but ”deeply offensive” (Lakhani in Rice 2016). Calling for the work to be removed, the Human Rights and Advocacy Manager from SWEAT, Ishtar Lakhani (quoted in Rice 2016), wrote: ”[T]he irony of promoting the work of a man accused of murdering a woman as part of an exhibition aimed at empowering woman is not wasted on us”. In response to the criticism, the Iziko SANG decided to open its doors and invite members of SWEAT and the public in to give their opponents a chance to openly discuss their discontent with the exhibition. By that time, however, criticism of the exhibition had become so substantial that the gallery and its co-organiser, the New Church Museum, had decided to remove not only the artwork by Mthethwa, but also all other contemporary artworks in the exhibition.

Figure 33. The much-debated artwork by the South African artist Zwelethu Mthethwa, *Untitled* (2012), on display in the *Our Lady* exhibition at the Iziko SANG, next to the British artist George Henry’s (1858-1943) painting *The Blue Gown* (undated), which is part of the Iziko Museums’ Historical Paintings and Sculpture Collection. Photo from Cockeril 2017.

The female artists whose works had been displayed in the *Our Lady* exhibition had not wanted to be part of an exhibition where works by Mthethwa were being shown, as the South African-born artist and Professor of Fine Art Candice Breitz informed the audience at the discussion. Reading out their open letter to the curatorial team, Breitz presented the artists’ ”urgent response to the exceptionally problematic nature of the exhibition” (Contemporary And 2016b: 1). Listing the artists’ reasons for having their artworks withdrawn, Breitz announced:

> [We find it] shocking – (indeed appalling, considering the demographics of our society) – […] that only three Black Women are represented [in the *Our Lady* exhibition]. Given the history and present of our country, we cannot accept how disastrously short the exhibition falls, particularly in terms of creating space for artistic statements from a wider and richer range of identities, a range that might come closer to reflecting the lived reality of South Africa. Furthermore, given the curatorial premise of the exhibition, we are outraged by the curators' decision to include the work of Zwelethu Mthethwa [who] is currently being tried for the violent murder of Nokuphila Kumalo [whose] worth and memory […] are brutally undermined by the curators' decision to showcase a work by her alleged murderer (Contemporary And 2016b: 1-2).

The artists' criticism of the exhibition for not reflecting the lived reality of South Africa shows the level of importance they attach to the biographies of the exhibited artists. Stressing the lack of diversity in the group of artists selected for the exhibition, the point of view of the artists behind the open letter reflects the increased attention that art galleries and museums around the world are giving to the background of the artists they exhibit. Within the last few decades the demands for recognition and diversity in museum practices, emphasised by civil rights and women's movements, as well as lesbian, gay and queer movements, have resulted in a situation in which the race, class, gender, sexual orientation and, in the case of Mthethwa, criminal record of the artists selected receive more attention than hitherto (Duncan 1995: 128).

Longstanding assumptions about the superiority of western civilisation and white male dominance are no longer taken for granted, although the number of female artists in most art galleries and museums is still well below the point at which they might effectively challenge the dominance of male artists, whose works still make up the majority of most art collections (Duncan 1995: 115-133).[21] This development follows advice from the International Council of Museums, which, in its *Report on Cross Cultural Issues* in 1997, emphasised the importance of an "inclusive museology which has the capacity to address different contextual frameworks of cultural diversity including […] race, ethnicity, colour, gender, class, age, physical ability, regions, location, language, faith, creed, economic status [and] sexual preference" (Galla et al. 1997). Opponents of this advice argue that the attention comes at the expense of the appreciation of the exhibited artworks, while its supporters highlight the importance of not only seeing the world through the eyes of white, male artists.

According to Carol Duncan (1995: 116), who has studied the civilizing rituals of the art museum, it is not only the domination of male *artists* in art galleries and museums that make the institutions masculine in their essence. It is also the domination of artworks, which, through their objects of study

[21] In their large-scale study of artist diversity in US-based art museums, Topaz et al. (2018: 1) found that 85% of artists in eighteen major US museums are white and 87% are men. A *Report on the Acquisition Policy at Seven Danish Art Museums 1983-2003* similarly found that 80% of the artworks acquired by living artists in the period were produced by male artists, while the percentage of male artists was 95% in terms of deceased artists (Christensen 2016).

and the ways they are presented, ”forcefully [assert] to both men and women the privileged status of male viewers – the only acknowledged invitees”. Given the large number of sculptures and paintings depicting ”female bodies, or parts of bodies, with no identity beyond their female anatomy” (Duncan 1995: 111), artists like Picasso and Matisse have, through their ever-present *reclining nudes*, consigned ”women to a place where they may watch but not enter the central arena of public high culture – at least not as visible, self-aware subjects” (Duncan 1995: 116). Duncan’s (1995: 116) critique of Picasso’s *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907) as a monumentalisation of ”the ultimate truth of art [as] a phallic moment *par excellence*” parallels the critique of the *Our Lady* exhibition, whose opponents similarly problematized the continuous representation of women in art as either madonnas or whores.

One of the most pacesetting art collectives to support greater diversity among artists exhibited in art galleries and museums is the Guerrilla Girls, who since the 1980s have fought for ”social justice within the art world [and] within the wider world” (Stein 2011: 93). Through a series of anonymously presented posters and events, the gorilla-masked feminist artists have combined statistics and humour to expose gender and ethnic bias, as well as corruption in the art world (Guerrilla Girls 2019). In one of their most famous works, *The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist* (1988), the Guerrilla Girls state as one of their thirteen points: ”Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labelled feminine” (Stein 2011: 90). Paradoxically, it is the exact same labelling of femininity that protesters like the female artists in the *Our Lady* exhibition and the Guerrilla Girls alike are emphasising in their fight for more diversity. Wanting the art world to recognise its disproportionately large focus on white male artists, the feminist opponents indirectly label themselves *female* artists.

A similar mechanism as that described in Chapter I is thus taking place: female artists are ”offered an alternative of either being the ‘other’ as constituted by man […] or, if she is to avoid this, of being an absolute ‘other’ […] confined to inarticulate expressions of mysticism or *jouissance*” (Young 1990: 6). As Robert Young (1990: 6) has argued, there is only one way ”to side-step these alternatives [which is] to reject the other altogether and become the same, that is, equal to man – but then with no difference from them”. In the case of the female artists in the *Our Lady* exhibition, they chose another way than Ayanda, the black Johannesburg-based curator whose offence in seeing Zulu headrests on display at the Johannesburg Art Gallery made her abandon her own differences from the coloniser in order to become his equal. Rather than becoming *like* the coloniser – that is, adapting to the system of patriarchy and white domination that they experience in the art world – the female artists in the *Our Lady* exhibition chose to become his *absolute other* (Cixous 1986: 71). By highlighting their art as different from the art of the (white) men in the exhibition, they applied to themselves the very same label given to them by the patriarchy they were trying to oppose. As such, they are left in a similar

vicious circle as the Rhodes Must Fall students examined above: using the language of their oppressors to fight for their recognition, they end up confirming the stereotypical assumptions that the system they are so fervently fighting against has of them.

According to Kirsty Cockerill, one of the three curators behind the *Our Lady* exhibition, the contemporary male artists in the exhibition, who had not been part of the open letter to the curatorial team, had felt bullied by the representatives from SWEAT. As a result, they too had demanded their artworks be removed from the exhibition. The result of the controversy was thus a highly truncated exhibition, which almost solely showed historical artworks made by white male artists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The outcome showcased the complexities in the debate: by refusing to be part of the existing exhibition, the withdrawal by the contemporary artists resulted in an even more homogeneous, male-dominated and white Eurocentric exhibition than the *Our Lady* exhibition the female artists had criticised in the first place. As the exhibition no longer reflected the curators' intention to showcase the historical and primarily European works of the Iziko collection in opposition to the contemporary and primarily African works from the New Church Museum, shortly after the public discussion it was decided to close down the exhibition altogether.

The reduced state the exhibition ended up in did not, however, prevent the Iziko SANG from hosting a public discussion in the gallery space, where only artworks by deceased artists were now left on display. According to the curators, it was important for them to understand why the *Our Lady* exhibition had created such a stir. They wanted to invite the discussion into the gallery itself and to open its doors to the members of the public who had found the exhibition both shameful and insulting. As people gathered and sat on the blue plastic chairs that had been put up in what remained of the exhibition, the situation became more and more tense. The hostile and angry atmosphere in the room was emphasised by the sounds of protests from people with banners with statements like ”Iziko building male artists' careers at the cost of women's lives” and from members of the audience who regularly directed personal attacks against the exhibition's three curators, Candice Allison and Kirsty Cockerill from the New Church Museum, and Andrea Lewis from the Iziko SANG. One of the most frequently expressed accusations against the curators was aimed at their ethnicity: a woman in the audience told Cockerill that she hoped she would someday ”recognise [her] own privilege” and be able to understand how it feels to be an unrecognised black sex-worker like Nokuphila Kumalo. Another member of the audience asked: ”How can we even *begin* to wonder why there are so few black women in the art world when we keep artists on trial for murder in our galleries?” With reference to the Oscar Pistorius case, where the leading South African runner had not been allowed to run for South Africa as long as he was on trial for murdering his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp (1983-

2013), Breitz asked whether Mthethwa's artwork would also have been included had his victim been white and middle class.

The questions kept centring around the issue of race, and several expressed their amazement that an exhibition at the National Gallery of a country with a demography like South Africa's could be curated by a curatorial team consisting solely of white women. However, having three white curators curating an exhibition in South Africa is not unusual in a museum landscape that is still dominated by white curators, art historians and museum practitioners. This can partly be explained by the exposure to art and culture subjects in South African schools: a survey conducted by the National Arts Council of South Africa (NACSA 2010) found that, while almost two-thirds of the respondents had some exposure to arts and culture subjects at school, the extent and quality of this exposure varied enormously:

> In some schools, and notably former white schools, learners are privileged to have dedicated arts facilities and qualified teachers able to familiarize learners with a wide range of art forms and disciplines. In others, exposure was at best rudimentary, typically to local craft forms. Art history is almost entirely the preserve of former white […] and private schools (NACSA 2010: 14).

As a result, schoolchildren from public schools in poorer and most often black neighbourhoods are less exposed to art education and thus less likely to pursue an academic education in art later in life. Those who choose to do so anyway are likely to feel they are far behind their fellow students, who, through their schooling in former white schools, have been more exposed to art and culture subjects. This was the case for the Lerato mentioned earlier, a black Zulu-speaking art graduate from the Michaelis School of Fine Art who had to fight her way through her bachelor's degree, feeling insufficiently trained compared to her white classmates, who, with their appropriate cultural capital, felt much more at ease in the art school environment.

Before the public discussion was opened up for comments and questions from the audience, the acting director of the Iziko SANG, Ernestine White, welcomed the audience to the discussion by reading a statement from the Iziko Museums, which stated that the inclusion of the artwork by Mthethwa had taken place "in a spirit of dialogue" between the two collaborating museums. White asked in her speech whether art is supposed to make us feel comfortable or uncomfortable and invited the audience to participate in a discussion about what the role of national institutions in South Africa should be. Cockerill told the audience that the exhibition was not about empowering men or about violence against women and children, but about debating the representation of women through time. While she was talking there were several interruptions and a few people laughed, especially when Cockerill revealed that some of the artworks in the exhibition had been removed, as the artists behind them had felt bullied by representatives of SWEAT. "Oh, the white boys feel bullied now?" Breitz remarked to the cheering and laughter of people around her. Breitz was one of the most engaged

participants in the public discussion. Sitting in the front line on the edge of her chair, she continuously interrupted the curators when they attempted to explain their curatorial decisions and stirred up the crowd behind her with laughter or loud sighs. While taking the unequal treatment of black female sex-workers upon her shoulders and expressing her discontent with the exhibition, Breitz made it clear that she felt ”odd and awkward” (Contemporary And 2016b) about reading out the letter from the female artists:

> In an ideal scenario, this letter would not be read to you by a white voice, and certainly not by one like mine, which exudes privilege. White voices continue to take up too much space in our own public sphere. However, after considerable discussion of the circumstances – between the six women artists and myself – it was agreed that it would be inappropriate to ask an ally from outside the group of signatories to deliver a letter that expresses opinions that belong to us (Contemporary And 2016b).

Breitz’s discomfort in reading out a letter she herself had edited shows how carefully she and others in her position have to tread in discussions like these: in an environment where accusations of racism are often heard, Breitz could easily become the next scapegoat of her own accusations. Stating her discomfort with her own white privilege, as she has also done through her work, where the ”isolation among some white South Africans” (Giblin and Spring 2016: 222) has been a reoccurring topic, Breitz anticipated those potential accusations. However, with or without feelings of discomfort, she took it upon her to speak on behalf of others, less privileged than herself, during the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition. Lerato, who did not attend the public discussion at the Iziko SANG, had on other occasions been encouraged by Breitz to engage in similar debates. Tagging Lerato and other black South African artists in posts on Facebook, Breitz had attempted to include what she had perceived as the unheard voices in the debate. But Lerato did not feel comfortable with this kind of engagement: ”Who is she to tell me what debates to engage with?”

Lerato’s comment highlights a reoccurring problem, also emphasised by Spivak (1988): *subalterns* – in this case the black South African artists who had been encouraged to take part in the debate by a well-meaning white South African artist, as well as the black sex-workers from SWEAT participating in the *Our Lady* discussion – *can* and *do* speak, but are simply not heard by the privileged society that surrounds them. Although the latter group *was* present at the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition, and although black sex-workers in the audience *did* raise their voices and let their opinions be heard, their speaking time was limited by white women like Breitz, who, despite continuously voicing their discomfort, simply kept talking. As in Spivak’s (1988) analysis, the situation was not only an example of a group of subalterns whose voices were not being heard: it was also a situation in which the voices of the privileged never went silent. In the academic environment of the discussion, which the curators continuously attempted to bring back to questions about the purpose of art, the

white, academically trained artists and curators in the audience felt at ease. With their cultural capital, achieved partly from their academic backgrounds, they knew the unwritten rules of discussions of this kind and thus felt more inclined – and perhaps more entitled – to speak.

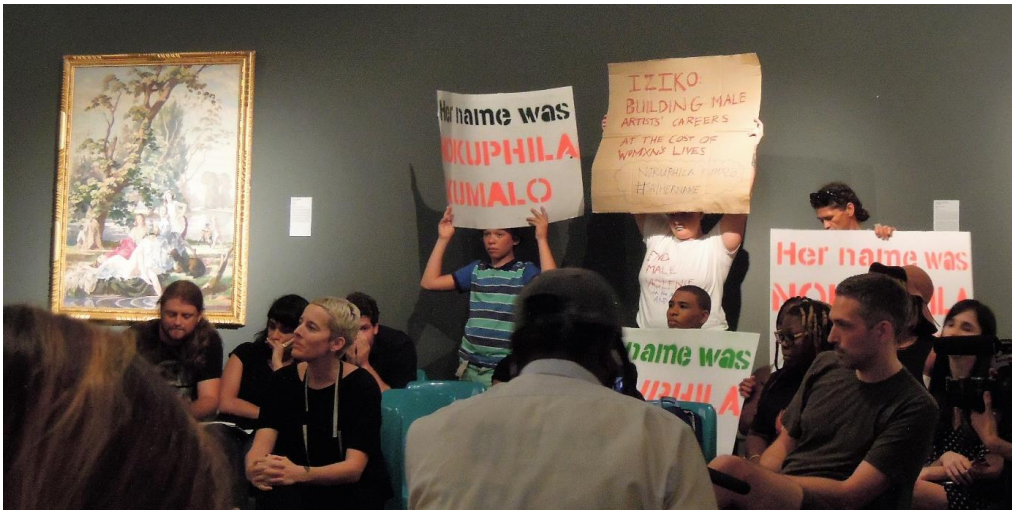

Figure 34. The South African-born artist Candice Breitz in the front row at the public discussion of the half-empty *Our Lady* exhibition at the Iziko SANG. Photo by author December 2016.

That the public discussion at the Iziko SANG quickly developed into a verbal fight between mostly white women like Breitz and the three curators of the exhibition shows how threatened in their livelihoods many white curators and artists in South Africa feel. Situations where art historical positions in universities are left vacant, even though several suitable white candidates are available, were spoken of in a worried manner by several of the white curators and art historians I spoke with during my fieldwork. Due to South Africa's diversity policies, which were introduced in the aftermath of apartheid in order to secure a more diverse workforce in public institutions, some white curators and academics feel discriminated against on the basis of their race. In a situation where for many the colour of their skin is reminiscent of the trauma of apartheid, an increasing number of white South Africans have chosen to leave the country altogether and settle elsewhere. Over the course of the past three decades, more than half a million white South Africans have chosen to leave the country (SSA 2018: 4). Combined with lower fertility rates than in other South African population groups, this means that white South Africans now account for only 7.8% of the total population (SSA 2018: 9), compared to 16.9% in 1988 (DAFF 2013: 1).

While there may be as many reasons for this decline as there are people choosing to emigrate, quite a few of the white South Africans I spoke with during my fieldwork felt uneasy about their futures. Melanie, a curator from the Wits Art Museum in Johannesburg, told me about the criticism she had

been met with during the recent Fees Must Fall protests at Wits University: ”This is so sensitive… It is the colour of your skin! You cannot escape it”. Her feelings of discomfort echoed those of the Europeans described by Sartre (2001: 21) at the beginning of the 1960s, who, through the process of decolonisation were forced to savagely root the inner settler within them. Like them, Melanie had no option but to look at herself through the eyes of the colonised in order to see what was becoming of her, a white South African descendant of colonial settlers. The sight was not pretty: in her own skin and through her own privilege, she saw what Sartre (2001: 21) described as the coloniser’s ”ideology of lies, a perfect justification for pillage; its honeyed words, its affection of sensibility [which] were only alibis for [the] aggressions”. During the Fees Must Fall protests, the confrontation with the colonialism her skin represented had at times been too much for her, and she too had considered leaving South Africa.

The narrative often heard among white South Africans, that ”everything has changed”, can be seen as a narrative related to the pain involved in the loss of privilege, which might *feel* more real than it actually is. As Jonathan Jansen (2016: 188) has argued, the ”projection of whites as victims [is an] exaggeration in a country that still remains highly unequal along racial lines and in which there has been no wholesale transformation of anything – whites still own their own land and property, white schools still operate as before and white persons are five times more likely to find a job after graduation than any black student”. The feelings of being trapped and estranged in the country she had been born and grown up in, felt by Melanie and other white curators like her, were nevertheless very real. In that sense her situation was similar to that of the three white curators of the *Our Lady* exhibition at the Iziko SANG: eager to engage in the debate and to transform the institutions they worked for, the curators often experienced the level of public demands for recognition as both demand*ing* and at the same time much needed. However, at the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition, the demands for recognition they were met with were to a large extent not expressed by black South Africans: the discussion was primarily driven by other white South African women speaking for the black South African women on whose behalf they felt offended. The need to be ”on the right side” in order to secure oneself a place in an art environment that was increasingly closing its doors to white curators was thus a driving force in a debate in which most of the participants (including those who were white themselves) agreed that the skin colour of the three curators was highly problematic.

When Cockerill attempted to explain the intended purpose of the *Our Lady* exhibition to the audience in the public discussion, she was met with allegations of being elitist: ”Exhibitions should not only be for the well-educated”, a member of the audience stated; ”the National Gallery should be free for all

to enter". Raising the issue of free entrance to public art institutions in a debate aimed at opening up the Iziko SANG to a larger audience linked the discussion to a greater debate about inequality in accessing arts and culture in South Africa: in the survey mentioned above about public participation in the arts, close to a fourth of the respondents gave the price of arts and culture events as their main reason not to attend (NACSA 2010: 21). But when it comes to equal access to arts and culture, simply removing the entrance fee will not be sufficient. As Pierre Bourdieu et al. (1991: 19) have argued in their large-scale study of European art museums and their publics, "a budgetary curb may still operate, even in the theory of free admission". The location of the Iziko SANG is in itself enough to prevent the great majority of South Africans from entering the gallery: situated in a predominantly white and wealthy neighbourhood in Cape Town's city bowl, which most black South Africans, due to apartheid engineering, live far away from (McGee 2010: 187), the Iziko SANG remains an institution mainly visited by a white, English-speaking and well-educated audience.[22]

Starting at five South African Rand per person, the minibus taxi-ride into the city centre alone is too expensive for many in South Africa, where close to a third of the population is unemployed.[23] Adding to this, is the list of other costs incurred in a family outing (Bourdieu et al. 2002: 19), but not least the social conditions, making the appreciation of art more easily accessible to those who, through habits and exercise, have learned how to appreciate it (Bourdieu et al. 2002 : 109). It is these social conditions that make the "cultivated pleasure" (Bourdieu et al. 2002: 109) of perceiving art possible and that often prevent people with little or no education from entering museums and art galleries. Since "[m]useum visiting increases very strongly with increasing level of education [it is] almost exclusively the domain of the cultivated classes" (Bourdieu et al. 2002: 14).

At the Iziko SANG, 68% of the visitors in a survey conducted in 2001 held a diploma or higher degree (Dolby 2001: 2-3), a situation not much different from that of France in the 1960s, when Bourdieu et al. (2002: 15) found that 55% of museum visitors held either a *baccalauréat* or a diploma equivalent or superior to a degree. A more recent study found that art museums are still today primarily for "[t]hose who are best prepared to perform its ritual – those who are most able to respond to its various cues – [and] those whose identities (social, sexual, racial, etc.) the museum ritual most fully

[22] According to a demographic survey compiled by J. Dolby (2001: 2-3), 66% of visitors to the Iziko SANG were white, followed by 12% of so-called *coloureds*. A clear majority of 59% were English-speaking, followed by Afrikaans-speaking visitors, who made up 23%. Only 2% of the visitors were Xhosa-speaking. The majority of visitors were well educated, with 35% holding a diploma or other degree and 33% holding a higher diploma or other degree.

[23] The official unemployment rate in South Africa was 25% in 2011 (SSA 2011: 2), but this excludes the so-called "discouraged unemployed" (Tregenna 2011). The expanded unemployment rate, which includes the discouraged unemployed and which can be considered a better indicator of South Africa's full unemployment, is 33% (derived from figures in SSA 2011 by Tregenna 2011).

confirms" (Duncan 2004: 8). As such, art museums can be seen as strongholds of exclusivity that continuously reinforce class, gender, race and other distinctions in society (Jensen 2003: 145).

But although many longstanding criticisms of art museums' conventional approaches still exist, another recent study focusing on the increasing efforts being made by museums to reach out beyond their conventional audiences found that "carefully designed outreach activities can overcome such limitations and enhance cultural engagement" (Jensen 2013: 144). At the Iziko SANG, Andrea Lewis, one of the three curators behind the *Our Lady* exhibition whom I met with a few weeks after the public discussion, told me that the gallery would very much like to be able to open its doors to a more general public. However, the admission fee of thirty South African Rand, a third more than the national minimum wage for an hour's work (Kumwenda-Mtambo 2018), as well as the social barriers that exclude members of the public with little or no education, are not the only obstacles preventing a more diverse composition of visitors at the Iziko SANG. During our conversation, Lewis highlighted how the gallery's main language, used in museum texts and object descriptions, works as yet another exclusionary mechanism: despite the museum's Xhosa name, a tribute to the main Bantu language of the Western Cape, most of the exhibition texts are only in English. While English has been the dominant language in South Africa for more than two centuries (Mesthrie 2002a: 1), it is the mother tongue of only around 8.6% of the population (Mesthrie 2002b: 13). Lewis told me that the curators of the Iziko SANG would like to increase access to their exhibitions with an app displaying exhibition texts in all of South Africa's eleven official languages.[24] However, this had not yet been possible due to a lack of funds and technical obstacles such as not having sufficient internet access in the museum: "We have lots of ideas, but not the means to fulfil them", said Lewis, explaining to me that in her view art is seen as a luxury in South Africa: "It is not a priority, but could be part of the solution", she suggested, referring to the gallery's vision to be a National Gallery for all South Africans.

Being aware of the need to open up museum institutions and create access for a greater part of the public is something that characterises most museums in the twenty-first century. The idea that

[24] Since South Africa's new constitution was passed in 1996, nine African languages were added to the two previously official languages, Afrikaans and English. These were the Nguni group of Xhosa, Zulu, Swati and Ndebele, the Sotho group of Sotho (previously known as South Sotho), Pedi (previously known as North Sotho) and Tswana, as well as Tsonga and Venda, which fall outside the Sotho and Nguni grouping (Mesthrie 2002b: 23). In the text of the constitution they are listed as follows: "The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu" (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2019). The constitution further recognises the "historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages" of South Africa and emphasises the need to "take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages" (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2019).

museums can develop and function ”in isolation from other social and cultural institutions […] is no longer sufficient to sustain museums”, as Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2006: 557) has phrased it:

> Today, we are witnessing an enormous cultural change, which shifts the ground on which art museums have stood so firmly for so long. Changes in social structures, in cultural allegiances and in personal identities go hand in hand with changes in the nature, control and functions of knowledge. Today, museums are subject to diverse demands to enable them to play valid roles in new worlds. Art museums must demonstrate their viability and argue their value in new contexts where former values are no longer taken for granted (Hooper-Greenhill 2006: 557).

The need to engage with the public was made very clear during the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition. ”The public has come back”, as one of the participants put it; ”the curator no longer just sends out a message”. In that sense, the public discussion at the Iziko SANG can be seen as part of a much larger discussion taking place in museums all over the world, a discussion that aims to face up to the many challenges of the late modern or post-modern world of today, where ”paradigmatic change [...] is affecting all social structures, relationships and values” (Hooper-Greenhill 2006: 557).

Figure 35, 36, 37 and 38. The *Our Lady* exhibition at the Iziko SANG as it looked in November 2016 shortly after its opening (above), and the exhibition as it looked the morning after the public discussion in December 2016, just before the exhibition space was closed for further curatorial action. The banner leaning against the wall on the right reads: ”My name was Nokuphila Kumalo”. Photos by author November and December 2016.

The day after the public discussion, I returned to the Iziko SANG to examine the empty gallery walls and observe how the heated debate had changed the atmosphere in the place. I was greeted by one of the museum hosts at the reception desk, who remembered seeing me among the participants the day before. Referring to the many participants who had loudly interrupted the different elements of the debate, whereas I, as one of the few, had sat quietly and listened to what was going on, she said: ”It is good that you did not do anything wrong”. The remark made it clear that a certain way of behaving in a gallery space like the Iziko SANG was still considered ”proper”, despite the gallery’s declared wish to be ”a platform for discussions”, as one of the curators put it during our meeting later the same day: ”It is extremely important that the gallery provides value also to parts of the public that do not have an art education,” the curator said, explaining that in her view ”the Iziko SANG is required to engage with the public”. But the fact that there were certain expected ways of behaving in the gallery space, even during a public discussion, show that the Iziko SANG is not yet as open and inclusive as its curators would like it to be.

The comment I was met with in the gallery the day after the public discussion confirms Carol Duncan’s (2004) idea of the museum as a ritual site. Duncan (2004: 12) argues that the museum, like any kind of ritual site, is a place ”programmed for the enactment of something”, and she describes the museum as a place ”designed for some kind of performance”. In accordance with Bourdieu’s (1984; et al. 1991) view of the museum as an exclusive space, but without understanding the rituals performed by museum visitors as a product of habitual or routinised behaviour, Duncan (2004: 12) highlights how the museum has a structure with cues that only some visitors are able to read: “some individuals may use a ritual site more knowledgeably than others – they may be more educationally prepared to respond to its symbolic cues” (Duncan 2004: 12). The consequence of the expected ways of behaviour in the museum is a situation that ”reinforce[s] for some the feeling of belonging and for others the feeling of exclusion” (Bourdieu et al. 2002: 112). The comment thus acknowledged that I, with my academic background and in this context appropriate cultural capital, understood the unwritten rituals of museum practice that I was expected to perform. However, the staff member’s comment also revealed something else: it showed the kind of appreciation a white woman can receive when she, unlike Breitz and other participants in the public discussion, keeps quiet and listens. My silent presence in the room was thus interpreted as an acknowledgement of the demands for recognition expressed by the black sex-workers. The black staff member had noticed that at no point had I attempted to speak on her or others’ behalf, and she showed her appreciation of this by acknowledging my behaviour: ”It is good that you did not do anything wrong”, she said. But she might just as well have said: ”Thank you for not speaking”.

When I met one of the three curators behind the *Our Lady* exhibition, she explained to me how the historical view of women presented in the exhibition had been ”misunderstood by the public” and that the exhibition had created much more stir than any of the curators had imagined. The level of criticism they had been met with had reminded her of how much the Iziko SANG is ”a public institution with power” with the responsibility for engaging with and catering to a public whom the curators at

times find it almost impossible to please: ”Whatever we do, the public will be emotional about it”, she said, noting that the stir the exhibition had created most likely was a result of what she called ”the angry times South Africa is experiencing these years”. However, the difficulties the curators at the Iziko SANG experienced in relation to the *Our Lady* exhibition and the allegations they were met with for being elitist challenge not only curators in South Africa.

When Tony Bennett et al. (2009) recreated Bourdieu’s (1984) study of the role of cultural taste in constructing social distinctions in 1960s France, they found that the relationship between social class and culture was re-emphasised in post-millennial Britain. Concluding that their investigation ”beyond question [demonstrated] the existence of systematic patterns of cultural taste and practice”, Bennett et al. (2009: 251) emphasised that although so-called ”’[g]ood taste’ probably matters less directly than before, and less than in France in the 1960s […] it continues to create, mark and consolidate social divisions” (Bennett et al. 2009: 259). The authors found (2009: 8) that the prime cultural division in contemporary Britain does not lie between so-called high and popular culture. Rather, the primary tension lies between what they refer to as *engaged* consumers of cultural activities in both so-called ”legitimate” and popular forms and *disengaged* consumers, who rarely, if ever, participate in cultural activities (Bennett et al. 2009: 49).

While the authors (2009) confirmed that the relationship between social class and culture still exists and that different groups in society continuously consume cultural activities in different ways, they also made it clear that, although members of the British working class do not go extensively to art galleries and museums, they do not necessarily feel excluded from so-called ”legitimate culture” (Bennett et al. 2009: 254). They do, however, feel aggrieved at the thought that *other* people might look down upon them because of their disengaged consumption of cultural activities such as museum-going (Bennett et al. 2009: 254). In this way, a similar situation as that I observed during my fieldwork at the Iziko SANG occurs: some members of the public who felt outraged by the curatorial choices behind the *Our Lady* exhibition were provoked by the feeling of being talked down to by what they considered a group of elitist curators. Like the working-class interlocutors in Bennett et al.’s (2009) study, they might not have felt excluded from the ”legitimate culture” of the gallery, but they *did* feel looked down upon by the curatorial choices made by curators who had included Mthethwa’s painting without consulting them first.

Despite attempts at inclusivity, some structures of exclusion thus still persist, making the codes of art museums and other institutions more accessible for some than for others. As Eric A. Jensen (2013: 157) has highlighted, these structures *can* be challenged, but the ”question of whether resources will be invested and mainstream museum practices shifted to reduce exclusivity remains unanswered in

most […] contexts globally". The lack of funding for public museums during South Africa's post-apartheid attempts to foster a more inclusive and equal society shows that art museums' ability to diversify their audiences and collections do not have the highest political priority. Government officials have repeatedly highlighted the close association that many museums in South Africa have to colonialism and apartheid as the reason for their lack of financial support (Kros and Mehnert 2018: 104). In so doing, they have ignored what Cynthia Kros and Annelise Mehnert (2018: 104) call "the vast potential that [South African museums] have to serve communities and expand knowledge". But, as my conversations with the curators of the Iziko SANG highlight, there is a hope within the institution that their attempts to contribute to social and cultural inclusion will potentially be "part of the solution" of securing more equal access to the art of the South African nation. In response to the demands for recognition they were confronted with during the *Our Lady* controversies, the curators decided to not only remove the artwork by Mthethwa, but also to replace it with a painting of his victim, the until then faceless and unrecognised Nokuphila Kumalo. By so doing, they showed their willingness to adapt and change the institution they were working in and emphasised that, although decolonisation can seem slow and almost impossible, it is a process in which changes *do* happen.

Concluding Remarks

The demands for recognition heard in debates about representation in South African universities and museums emphasise that decolonisation is an extremely difficult and often violent phenomenon (Fanon 2001: 27). The struggles to decolonise UCT and the Iziko SANG both highlight that the process of decolonisation rarely happens overnight. It is a long and often painful process, which sometimes end up re-introducing the very same racialized categories of the oppressive system they have set out to replace. The process of rethinking and replacing old thought systems and structures in society is difficult, and the removal of statues, curricula and museum objects found to be derogatory or humiliating is only one part of the change demanded. What should replace the empty spaces left behind, when the dust of the initial conflicts has settled? The empty plinth on the UCT campus, like the empty gallery walls of the Iziko SANG, both stand as material reminders of the difficulties involved in decolonising South Africa, but they can also be seen as clean slates upon which the future of South Africa can be painted anew. The absences on and around the vacant plinth on the UCT campus and the gallery walls of Iziko SANG were not lasting absences. With her bird-like figure of Chapungu, Sethembile Msezane showed that other public celebrations than that of colonial heroes like Rhodes are possible. Similarly, the conflict at the Iziko SANG over the inclusion of the artwork by Zwelethu Mthethwa did not end in the empty state of nothingness described by Mbembe (2015a: 4), but with

a curatorial decision to replace Mthethwa's photographic artwork with a painting of his until then faceless, invisible, black female victim.

In this way, the absent spaces materialised by the empty plinth and the empty gallery walls are not only reminders of the difficulties involved in decolonising South Africa, they are also clean slates upon which new stories about South Africa are being told, ones that represent a more diverse group of South Africans and that include the (previously) marginalised. But it is nonetheless important to note that the institutional racism and very real legacies of colonial and apartheid-era oppression make these processes of change extremely difficult. Privileges are not passed over without a fight, and the engagement with which white artists and curators participated in the discussion about the *Our Lady* exhibition at Iziko SANG and spoke on behalf of others shows that the assumed authority to represent is not easily given away. Similarly, it is noteworthy that the statue of Rhodes at UCT was kept rather than crushed and that Msezane expressed herself in a language which, despite its African references to Egyptian mythology and Xhosa diviners, mimicked the European or Western material language of statues. This highlights the difficulties the students, artists and sex workers presented in this chapter experience in finding an alternative to the existing Western or European curricula and material culture surrounding them, and emphasises the universal spread of ideas originating from Europe (Herzfeld 2004: 2): not only of notions of art, but also of the ways in which it is performed.

At the Iziko SANG the institution's strong links to its colonial past still echo in contemporary debates about art and representation. Public discussions, like the one I attended in the *Our Lady* exhibition, highlight how the gallery's curators are still struggling to meet the demands for recognition from members of the South African public, who challenge their choices to an extent where artworks have to be removed and exhibitions closed down. As I have shown, the demands for recognition that the predominantly white curators are met with can be seen as a desire to challenge their privilege to decide what qualifies as the art of the nation. But the demands can also be seen as a way *other* white curators and artists try to secure a place for themselves and assume the moral high ground in an environment where the viewpoints of white curators are increasingly being challenged. While the controversies surrounding the *Our Lady* exhibition enabled the curators of the Iziko SANG to reach out to a broader public, they also revealed the tensions at play between white South Africans within the art world: in order to secure their own positions in the field, the discussion at times became a fight over who had the right to speak on others' behalf. In this way, the subalterns (Spivak 1988) of the debate – young black sex-workers like Nokuphila Kumalo or black South African artists who had been encouraged to take part in the debate by well-meaning white South African artists – were silenced by white artists and curators, who eagerly and confidently spoke their minds.

As I have shown, one of the main accusations made against the curators of the Iziko SANG was that the institution they work in and the way they choose to curate its collection is elitist. Although much has been done in recent years to turn the Iziko SANG into a more inclusive space, the gallery is still not a place where everyone feels welcome or at ease. The rituals that visitors to the gallery are still expected to perform preserve the Iziko SANG as a stronghold of exclusivity that continuously reinforces class, gender, race and other distinctions in society. But the controversies about the inclusion of Mthethwa's artwork speaks further to the reoccurring question of how much an artist's biography should influence the way we perceive the art thus created. In their demands for diversity, the female artists who required their artworks be removed from the exhibition were caught in a vicious circle. By highlighting their art as different from the art of the (white) men in the exhibition, they took upon themselves the very same label given to them by the patriarchy they were trying to oppose. As such, though unwillingly, they ended up confirming the stereotypical assumptions of their art as *feminine* and different from that produced by the male artists in the exhibition.

By means of the protests created by the members of the public who were discontented with the curatorial choices of the *Our Lady* exhibition, the curators at the Iziko SANG managed to reach their goal of activating and engaging the public, although very differently than they had expected. The exhibition generated feelings of outrage and anger in response to what was seen as a continuation of institutional oppression, as well as a tense and ambivalent environment during the public discussion, in which no one seemed to feel completely at ease. But the way the audience at the Iziko SANG chose to engage with the *Our Lady* exhibition and the students at UCT chose to protest the colonial remnants on their campus can be seen as examples among others of how South Africans are trying to challenge their colonial institutions. As I have demonstrated, the process of decolonisation is rarely a quiet and introspective recollection of times gone by (Chambers et al. 2014: 2), and the struggles I have examined in this chapter are clear examples that navigating in institutions linked to a painful past is not easy. However, through these kinds of engagement, protesters like the Rhodes Must Fall students and the contemporary artists on display in the *Our Lady* exhibition forcefully demonstrate their willingness to find alternatives to the existing structures. Through this engagement, they inspire institutions like the UCT and the Iziko SANG to remove themselves from their strongly colonial legacies and remove statues, artworks and other material symbols of oppression. As such, the demands for recognition examined in this chapter might be demand*ing* for the curators and academics who have to deal with them, but they also have the potential to change the status quo and provide alternative public narratives representative of a more diverse South Africa.

Chapter III: Searching for Global Recognition

”Madiba says: YES!” Archbishop Desmond Tutu pointed his finger towards the sky and paused in his speech to make room for the cheers of the audience, which became louder following the reassurance that the late Nelson Mandela was sending his blessings from above. The newest addition to the museum landscape of South Africa, the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa was officially open, bringing with it a great amount of hope for a better and more inclusive future for South Africa, which was channelled into the old grain silo walls on the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town. In this chapter I explore the demands for global recognition expressed by the team behind the new museum. I argue that the branding of the Zeitz MOCAA is aimed more at the Global North than at Africa. The Zeitz MOCAA team’s attempts to attribute value to Cape Town and to Africa as an overlooked continent through the exhibition of contemporary art are primarily targeted at audiences in Europe and North America. The expected receivers of the V&A Waterfront’s expressed wish to bring ”the world to [the] shores [of Africa]” (V&A Waterfront 2016) are from the wealthy Global North, just as the expected recognition of art from (South) Africa is imagined as coming from Europe or the West. By primarily addressing their messages about the greatness of Africa and African art to audiences from the Global North, the Zeitz MOCAA team are continuing a long-established tradition of fitting exhibitions to European or Western epistemological frameworks. The greatness of the art they want to emphasise is thus made dependent on its imagined recognition from international visitors. As I will show, this approach excludes the great majority of (South) Africans for whom the museum claims to exist.

Through its exclusivity and branding, which is aimed at international visitors, the Zeitz MOCAA is more of a luxurious playground for white Capetonians and foreign tourists than the ”open and shared space for all” (Heatherwick in Frearson 2017) it set out to be. Its curators’ reluctance to discuss *what* they consider Africa and African art to be further emphasises the exclusivity of the new museum, where some of the exhibited artists feel caught between the curators’ wish to highlight African art as *global* art (Belting 2009) and the place-specifics or locality they would have liked to express through their artworks. Their artworks are presented in a setting constructed according to the same modernist principles as museums from anywhere, in sterile rooms reminiscent of the white cube gallery, with white walls and grey floors, no windows and cold lighting. The surroundings are made to provide “a blank container in which artworks (and potentially those who make and view them) can be pushed into high relief” (Harris 2012: 153). But like the South African museums and universities criticised by artists, students, curators and sex-workers who did not find them nearly as neutral and accessible as they deemed themselves to be, the white cube interior of the Zeitz MOCAA is neither neutral nor accessible. Although the museum, like most institutions within the art world, is branded as a place of

democratisation and accessibility, the curators of the Zeitz MOCAA "continue to apply strict criteria for inclusion and exclusion" just like the "international coterie of critics, dealers, curators, and collectors" examined by Clare Harris (2012: 153). Despite its name, the Zeitz MOCAA is presenting itself in the lingua franca of the art world as a space that is immune from any place-specifics, though it is, as I will demonstrate, a hybrid place where the global and local constantly intersect.

By examining the discursive and curatorial practices of the Zeitz MOCAA, I highlight who the people capable of finding a place within the institution are. In agreement with Clare Harris (2012: 153), I argue that the "global cultural flows" examined by Arjun Appadurai (1990: 296) are "not entirely liquid [but] pick up deposits along the way and solidify at particular points". The attempts made by the Zeitz MOCAA team to present the museum as neutral and immune from discussions about representation elsewhere in South Africa are thus complicated by the artists exhibited in the institution, who strongly object to this presumed neutrality and demand to have their locality recognised. The conflicts between the African "locality" hinted at in its name and its sought-after "globality" through its catering for international visitors places the Zeitz MOCAA as a liminal museum "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967: 97) Africa and the world. Much like the supporters of the now neglected extension of the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern in Valencia examined by Jens Sejrup (2019: 14-15), the curators of the Zeitz MOCAA seek to "uplift" what they perceive as the particularities of African art to the sphere of "the global". However, in the process of "allegedly 'rejuvenating'" (Sejrup 2019: 15) the exhibited artworks, as well as Cape Town, and perhaps all of Africa, the curators let go of elements of the exact same particularity as they seek to uplift. In order to fit in as an artist, one has to adjust to certain limitations and make the artworks fit under the sellable label known as "global art" (Belting 2009). This conflicts with the ideas of some of the artists on display at the Zeitz MOCAA, who feel limited by the white cube frame in which their artworks have to fit. They feel ambivalent about presenting their works in a museum created by "the very same people who oppressed [them]" (Petersen 2018), but simultaneously feel obliged to follow the rules of the market.

On the day of its opening, schoolchildren from a wide range of social and racial backgrounds gathered on a staircase opposite the main stage in front of the Zeitz MOCAA. They were among those who had been especially invited for the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the new museum and were addressed directly by Mark Coetzee, the then Executive Director and Chief Curator during his welcome speech: "This museum is for you! We built this museum so you can feel proud of who you are". For a moment the lingering dream about the Rainbow Nation almost seemed to have come true. But as I turned to take a closer look at the group of children behind me, I realised that their school uniforms were not alike. In fact, the children were clearly divided into groups based on their racial and social

backgrounds, the result of a school system that, as in many other parts of South Africa, has not changed much since the ending of apartheid. Most white children go to expensive private schools, which during apartheid were labelled ”Whites Only”, while a large majority of black children still attend schools in poorer neighbourhoods, where their parents and grandparents were forced to live due to apartheid regulations. On this particular day in September 2017 the different groups of children, separated though their school uniforms made them appear, nevertheless contributed to the feeling of standing in one big happy crowd of school groups, reporters, members of the municipality, curators and researchers like me, who had been lucky enough to be given an invitation to attend the opening ceremony of what quickly became known as Africa’s ”rival to the likes of the Tate Modern in London and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City” (Clemson 2019).


Figure 39 and 40. Schoolchildren gathered for the grand public opening of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (left) and Archbishop Desmond Tutu addressing the public (with Founder Jochen Zeitz seen standing in the front). Photos by author September 2017.

The opening speeches at the grand public opening repeatedly highlighted the Zeitz MOCAA as a significant turning point for the art scene in South Africa. The museum was presented as ”a first for our beautiful continent” by the Executive Mayor of Cape Town, Patricia de Lille (2017), while V&A Waterfront’s Chairperson Elias Masilela (2017) referred to the opening as a ”new chapter in South Africa’s history book” (Masilela 2017). According to Thomas Heatherwick (2018), the London-based British designer behind the new museum, the Zeitz MOCAA was ”Africa’s first place for contemporary African artists”. In fact, for many years private galleries like the Goodman Gallery (established in Johannesburg in 1966) and public institutions like the Iziko SANG (founded in 1875) and the Johannesburg Art Gallery (opened in 1910) have played significant roles in exhibiting and promoting South African and African artists on and beyond the continent. Thus, the Zeitz MOCAA is not exactly the *first* museum of contemporary art in Africa, and perhaps not the biggest either: JAG is often

referred to as the home of ”Africa’s largest art collection” (Waweru 2018), while the newly opened Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden in Marrakesh may soon have a matching collection. Nonetheless, the Zeitz MOCAA managed to get itself promoted by a long list of international newspapers and magazines as ”the world’s largest museum dedicated to contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora” (Baan 2017; Butler 2017; Kromberg 2019; Leaf 2017a; Private Edition 2019).

In this chapter I show how these statements about the new museum emphasise a demand for global recognition in the sense that they are designed to gain international attention not only for the museum, but also for Cape Town, South Africa and Africa. With its continuous emphasis on being the world’s first and largest museum of contemporary art from Africa, the Zeitz MOCAA team is making a demand for global recognition directed at the Global North. Focused on Africa as its branding may imply, the Zeitz MOCAA is to a large extent speaking to and attracting visitors from Europe and North America, rather than visitors from the African continent it claims to exist for. My analysis of interviews and observations conducted in and around the museum from its opening in September 2017 to six months into its existence in March 2018 demonstrates that the discourses used by the museum’s curators, founder and chief designer extend rather than oppose stereotypical myths of ”white saviours” in Africa. The stereotypes are upheld by announcements of the Zeitz MOCAA as ”Africa’s first place for contemporary African artists” (Heatherwick 2018), a statement that neglects the substantial work in the field made by already existing South African museums and art galleries. In this way, Zeitz MOCAA’s narrative of its German founder Jochen Zeitz, its British designer Thomas Heatherwick and its South African former chief curator Mark Coetzee as the saviours of an old, derelict grain silo on Cape Town’s V&A Waterfront copies that of Africa’s former colonisers, who similarly claimed to be the first inhabitants of an otherwise ”empty [and] wasted land whose history [had] to be begun” by European colonisers (Bhabha 1994: 352). In this case, the history that the “colonised” presumably need help to begin is the history of contemporary art from Africa, which audiences now, for the “first time” according to the Zeitz MOCAA team, can see displayed in Africa.

I argue that the so-called ”not-for-profit” (Masilela 2017) museum is not solely the philanthropic initiative which it has been described as by its founder, designer and former chief curator (Coetzee 2017; Heatherwick in Frearson 2017; Zeitz in Meiring 2017: 46) – it is also an institution evolving around money. The range of expensive hotels – Silo One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six – surrounding the museum have been built ”to be the most profitable investment the V&A has undertaken so far” (Masilela 2017). In his welcome speech, Masilela (2017) presented the new museum as an attempt to let art bring value to the area, much like the Guggenheim Museum had done in Bilbao in the late 1990s (Heidenreich and Plaza 2015). By emphasising the hope of the Zeitz MOCAA team that the re-designed

silo would bring value to the area, Masilela (2017) expressed his belief in the idea that iconic architecture and art museums can make a city gain global recognition. According to Leslie Sklair (2005: 492) this idea has made "cities that would not normally be considered global cities [such as Barcelona, Glasgow, Los Angeles, Berlin and many others] set out deliberately to establish global credentials through promotion of iconic architecture". Similarly, the Zeitz MOCAA team attempted to create an internationally recognised icon, which would "drum up that 'something different'" (Sklair 2005: 492) and turn Cape Town into a global city.

Aisha, one of the artists whose work was exhibited in Zeitz MOCAA's inaugural exhibitions, was also accepting the idea that a museum like the Zeitz MOCAA could bring value to the area in which it was built, but disagreed with the final location of the new museum. She found it surprising that the so-called philanthropic "gift to the people" (Masilela 2017) had been built in an already fully financially developed area of Cape Town, rather than in an area further afield, where a new museum could have made another kind of impact: "Why did they not built it in the Power Station in [the Cape Town suburb of] Athlone?" she said; "*there* it could have created jobs and gentrification. Instead, they built it in a tourist area". The "jewel that [the V&A Waterfront] strongly believe[s] will […] grow the economy and generate new jobs" (Masilela 2017) is not only based in an already wealthy part of Cape Town, it is also located in a wealthy corner of the African continent that is shaped more by its historical connections to the Atlantic and Indian Oceans than to the rest of Africa.

Other African metropolises had been considered for the location of the new museum, but "the final choice fell on Cape Town […] since Nairobi [according to Mark Coetzee (quoted in Franzoni 2019)] has very high pollution rates, Bamako is increasingly dangerous and a museum in Soweto would engage only with the local population but would lack international attention". The importance placed on the Zeitz MOCAA drawing *international* attention is not only evident in this statement by Coetzee: it was mentioned on several occasions in the speeches at the grand public opening, and is also visible in the museum's marketing strategy, which around the opening reached out to international media, whose journalists were quick to dub the new museum the "Tate Modern of Africa" (Andres 2017; Guardian 2017; Jamal 2017a). At the grand public opening ceremony several speakers mentioned that "the twenty-first century will be African", but did so in a setting primarily catering for wealthy international tourists from the Global North. Not many South Africans living beyond the expensive city centre would be able to pay the museum's high entrance fee, let alone the fare of the mini-taxi ride from the suburbs and townships.

The highly corporate location of the Zeitz MOCAA thus emphasises the exclusivity of the museum, which is further highlighted by the curators' lack of engagement with the public in debates about their

curatorial choices. Without engaging in critical curatorial debates about how they classify and exhibit African art, which curators in public institutions like the Iziko SANG are forced to deal with on an everyday basis, the curators of the Zeitz MOCAA continue to exclude the people they claim to represent. Without opening themselves up to debates like those I examined in Chapter II in describing the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition, the Zeitz MOCAA continues to be an exclusive institution with no room for questions about what Africa or African art is. The need for international attention expressed by the Zeitz MOCAA team and highlighted by Coetzee (quoted in Franzoni 2019) and David Green, the CEO of the V&A Waterfront, who in the promotion video of the new museum calls the Zeitz MOCAA ”a real international tourist drawcard” (V&A Waterfront 2016), not only excludes large parts of the South African public with whom the museum fails to engage. It also shows that it is audiences from the Global North whom the claim to be ”the world’s largest museum dedicated to contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora” (Zeitz MOCAA 2019e) is targeted at. In Zeitz MOCAA’s (2019f) press release celebrating its first month since opening, this was emphasised in the following statement: ”The museum has […] hosted special interest groups from leading global museums such as the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the TATE in London and MOMA in New York, reaffirming the importance of Zeitz MOCAA’s role in promoting art from Africa and its Diaspora across the globe”. The three museums mentioned were listed in order to show the global significance of the Zeitz MOCAA, something which highlights not only its own status but also those of the Centre Pompidou, the Tate and MoMA as global sources of recognition – not only of art, but also (quoted in this context) of new museums on the African continent.

A Corporate Adventure

”Next customer please!” – the words were shouted, again and again, by one of the four staff members sitting at the information desk by the entrance of the Zeitz MOCAA. A group of visitors smiled at the choice of expression, which seemed more suitable for one of the shops in the expensive V&A shopping mall nearby than for a museum. But odd though the expression might have appeared at first, it was actually quite fitting for an institution located in a setting as corporate as the Zeitz MOCAA. From the entrance area, where a long list of private sponsors is displayed, to the Afrisam Audio Tour, named after the ”proud sponsor of concrete” that built the new museum (CBN 2016), it is clear that both the Zeitz MOCAA and its surroundings revolve around money. The museum shop, through which all visitors must exit, sells high-class designer items at a price almost three times as high as in most other shops in Cape Town, and the entrance fee makes it difficult for most South Africans to go there.

Around and even on top of the Zeitz MOCAA, a line of brand new hotels make up the new Silo District of the V&A Waterfront, emphasising the expensive locality of the museum.

The five hundred million South African Rand described by Masilela (2017) as ”an invaluable gift to the people of Cape Town” is not just a donation, but also an investment made to draw in crowds of tourists to a new attraction aimed at gentrifying and commercialising the new Silo District. A local heritage consultant who worked with the management of the V&A Waterfront in the late 2000s confirmed this and told me how they had realised that they could ”never get the building to pay for itself [but] understood that it could add value to the buildings around it”. Pointing at the high-ceilinged and grain-shaped atrium, sponsored by and bearing the name of BMW, he added: ”Which it has!”. The grain silo had once been one of the tallest buildings in South Africa, as well as an important physical marker of South Africa’s industrial history. Connected by railway to thirty-two feeder silos as far away as Kroonstad in the Free State and Ventersdorp in the North West province, and shipping large quantities of grain across the globe, the silo had once played an important role in the national scheme to diversify the country’s export economy. However, with changes in shipping technology, the grain silo had become outdated and since the 1990s had been left in an increasing state of decay.

Despite the important history of the building as part of South Africa’s industrial past, the management of the V&A Waterfront has not been interested in making much use of it in advertising the Zeitz MOCAA. On the contrary, large parts of the area around the silo were demolished in the making of the museum, and the industrial elements exposed on the ground floor have not been preserved. In that sense, the Zeitz MOCAA differs from the Tate Modern in London, with which it is often compared (Andres 2017; Guardian 2017; Jamal 2017a). The story of what was here before is not told, unlike at the Tate Modern, where the building’s past as the main power station on London’s south bank is a significant part of its branding. In this way, the severe contemporary focus of the Zeitz MOCAA is emphasised: the pre-millennial past of South Africa on this site is not considered important, the focus being firmly on the present and the future. In what seems to be an attempt to put the contested past of South Africa behind them, the Zeitz MOCAA team thus hang on to the policy of forgiveness and reconciliation, relevant to the Rainbow Nation of the 1990s (Posel 2008). They want to let contemporary African artists ”breathe life into [the] building” (Masilela 2017), rather than dwell on and preserve the contested past associated with a grain silo build to secure the incomes of primarily white South African farmers.

Entering the lobby of the Silo Hotel on top of the Zeitz MOCAA, the commercial aspects of the V&A Waterfront initiative become particularly visible. Here well-paying visitors, who have made reservations a long time in advance, can take the lift up to a roof-top terrace and swim in an elaborate

infinity pool with clean blue waters while overlooking Table Mountain and the city below. Up here, all efforts are made to create an atmosphere of no concern for people who are capable of paying the entrance fee to extreme luxury: not even the diminishing water supplies in the drought-ridden city below seem to be a concern here, as endless supplies of clean water seem to run freely. The upstairs neighbour of an institution branding itself as open and accessible to all is as exclusive as it can be: a hide-away for the extremely well-off guests of a hotel starting at twenty thousand South African Rand for a double room in a city which still, more than two decades after apartheid remains glaringly unequal. While some bathe on top of "global" art in an internationally celebrated new art museum, others strive to make a living in the townships on the outskirts of the city.

Figure 41, 42, 43 and 44. The Zeitz MOCAA on the V&A Waterfront with the Silo Hotel on top (top left). The hotel takes up the top six floors of the building and has a roof-top terrace, which overlooks Cape Town's City Bowl and Table Mountain (below right). Inside the museum parts of the original industrial labelling are visible, but have not been preserved (top right). In the BMW atrium of the museum, the dragon-like artwork *Iimpundulu Zonke Ziyandilandela* (2011) by the South African artist Nicholas Hlobo greets arriving visitors (below left). Photos by author September 2017 and February 2018.

In his speech at the public opening Masilela (2017) agreed that the Silo District surrounding the museum can be seen as a ”deliberate and glaring contradiction” to a museum aiming to ”cater for all types of business and peoples of all races”. But he stressed that the ”museum is built purely for the preservation of culture – not profit maximization”. In other words, the Zeitz MOCAA was presented as a philanthropic goodwill project for the benefit of all of Africa, situated ”at the heart of commerce”, but built as a ”risk-free platform” for African artists to perform their ”magic” (Masilela 2017). In their work leading up to the opening of the Zeitz MOCAA, the Board of the V&A Waterfront had tried to ”define art and understand how it fits within our investment philosophy” (Masilela 2017). While Masilela (2017) did not reveal the outcome of these discussions, it was clear from his speech that the Board of the V&A Waterfront hoped that the Silo District would benefit financially from the art being exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA. Presented as a ”duty to the city and the country to be creating more than just shops” (Heatherwick in Frearson 2017), the primary audience targeted by the new museum was, as I will demonstrate below, not the (South) African public whom the museum claims to exist for, but wealthy museum-going tourists from the Global North.

A Museum for Africa?

When Mark Coetzee, who was the Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Zeitz MOCAA until an ”inquiry into [his] professional conduct” (Blackman 2018a) forced him to resign in May 2018, told the schoolchildren invited for the public opening that the museum had been built for them, he implied that the museum’s primary audience was the youth of (South) Africa. On the windy and chilly opening day of the museum, all efforts were put into the creation of the image of a museum in a unified South Africa, representing a continent with a prosperous and bright future ahead. Many of the speakers at the ribbon-cutting ceremony described the museum along the lines of Patricia de Lille (2017), who announced that: ”Today we are celebrating […] a symbol of the confidence we have in being African”. Thomas Heatherwick, who, aside from the restructured grain silo on the V&A Waterfront, is famous for designing the UK Pavilion in Shanghai during the World Expo in 2010 and the vast Google building at King’s Cross in London, highlighted how even his work with the silo cylinders could be seen as a ”journey from separate[ion] to one open and shared space for all”. Heatherwick (quoted in Frearson 2017) has described how he found it ”very motivating – working out how […] [to] compel people to come inside […] to get over the inertia of a threshold, and the apprehension of a contemporary art museum”. The aim to bring South Africa’s non-museum-goers over the threshold of the museum and to create a museum with ”access for all” is something Coetzee (2017b; in Franzoni 2019; Zeitz MOCAA

2017a) has also highlighted on several occasions. In an interview given to the *New York Times* shortly after the opening of the museum, he said:

> Our public museums, through no fault of their own – they have no money – have not been accessible to people, even post-apartheid […] What we have decided to do is to think very carefully about work that is experiential and evocative and really engages a broad spectrum of society. I do believe it's possible to do that and still have brilliant work (Coetzee quoted in Sulcas 2017).

According to Coetzee, this engagement with "a broad spectrum of society" was to be achieved by "supporting educational and enrichment programmes; […] intercultural understanding; and […] access for all" (Coetzee quoted in Zeitz MOCAA 2017a). More than a year and a half after its opening, however, the Zeitz MOCAA team has yet to explain how it will facilitate access for all, other than by providing free entrance for African nationals on Wednesday mornings. The high daily admission fee of 180 South African Rand is nine times as high as the national minimum wage for an hour's work (Kumwenda-Mtambo 2018), and the Zeitz MOCAA Centre for Art Education is yet to establish its full school programme (Zeitz MOCAA 2019b). More than a year after its opening, less than two hundred schoolchildren had participated in an education programme at the Zeitz MOCAA, and only 1.4% of Cape Town's more than 650,000 registered school learners had visited the museum (Blackman 2018b).

When I visited the Zeitz MOCAA a few months after the opening, it became clear that most of the visitors were not Africans, but international tourists mostly from Western countries. On a warm summer's day at the beginning of February, the impression of the museum was very different from what it had been during the opening festivities five months earlier. Gone were the crowds, leaving more space to take in the artworks, but also revealing that the visitors on a normal Friday, when the cameras had been switched off and the specially invited marginalised groups of society had dispersed, were much less diverse than the promising welcome statements had implied. On my visits in February and March 2018, very few black South Africans were present, except for those working behind the counters and guarding the rooms. Almost all visitors were white and/or tourists taking in the new sight of Cape Town as part of their tour around the city. My impression was confirmed by one of the museum's assistant curators, whom I spoke with after a curator-led tour at the museum. Neil, who had worked at the Zeitz MOCAA since its opening as part of the museum's Curatorial Training Programme (Zeitz MOCAA 2019a), agreed that "that is the idea one gets" when I asked whether it was mostly international tourists who visited. On other occasions I noticed the daily visitor statistics reported by museum staff, who asked visitors upon arrival where they came from. These too confirmed the tendency that was clearly visible when walking around the gallery space: that there were around three to four times as many international visitors as South Africans. One of the front of house staff members explained to me that in his experience South Africans far outnumbered other

Africans and that, of them, the great majority were Capetonians and people living in the Western Cape province.

My impression of the museum's visitor groups was confirmed when I went to the Zeitz MOCAA on a Wednesday morning, when African nationals are allowed in for free. The free access created queues by the museum entrance, where front of house staff members, with stacks of free tickets in their hands, checked the nationality of every museum visitor. They checked IDs and passports for identification purposes and asked each visitor whether he or she was "local". If the visitor looked confused by the question, as I did the first time I was asked, the employee would ask "are you an African national or international?". At first the term "local" appeared to refer to the entire African continent, but later I realised that most Africans visiting were neither Zimbabweans or Ghanaians, but indeed *local* Capetonians, curious to see the new museum in their city. Another explanation for the "local or international" question I was asked could be a result of the white colour of my skin: in the eyes of the museum employees I was most likely either a white Capetonian or an international tourist from Europe or North America. The high numbers of international tourists seemed to contradict the museum's vision of creating "stories by Africans, for Africans, exhibited in Africa" as Sakhisizwe Gcina (quoted in Leibbrandt 2017: 31), AKO Foundation Assistant Curator of Special Projects of the Curatorial Lab at the Zeitz MOCAA, put it in an interview published shortly after the opening of the museum. The stories told are thus not (primarily) for Africans, but for white, middle-class Capetonians and international tourists who can comfortably pay the high entrance fees and are familiar with the "cultural code[s]" (Bourdieu 1984: xxvi) of the otherwise exclusionary galleries. So far the Zeitz MOCAA has mostly catered to the same group of people, who, as members of the capital-heavy Global North, pay frequent visits to museums like the MoMA in New York and the Tate Modern in London. In that sense the museum has not been *for* Africans in any primary sense – at least not in terms of visitors.

The large number of international tourists visiting the Zeitz MOCAA is linked with the location of the museum on the V&A Waterfront in the old industrial harbour of a city with strong international ties. Located right where the first Dutch ships arrived in 1652, when Jan van Riebeeck (1619-1677) fortified the future Cape Town as a way station on the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie's trade route between the Netherlands and the East Indies, the location's historical links to the first European settlement are strong. Railway tracks, once leading inland and connecting the harbour to larger parts of the African continent, are still visible in the concrete ground, and across the canal opposite the museum, Victorian warehouses from the late-nineteenth century stand as material reminders of South Africa's past as a British colony. Having linked the Atlantic and Indian Oceans as a working harbour for more than 350 years, Cape Town has strong international ties. This is also visible in the

city's population, where a majority are so-called *coloured* or mixed race. Another visibly large group inhabiting Cape Town are white South Africans, who today make up 20% of the city's overall population (SSA 2011), but for many years were the dominant ethnic group on the Cape Peninsula.[25] The descendants of white European settlers still make up the majority of the citizens in Cape Town's wealthy neighbourhoods such as Gardens and Tamberskloof in the leafy and wealthy city centre, where the European influence can be seen in the streets lined with houses that are significantly Victorian in style. Suburban neighbourhoods like Wynberg and Constantia similarly reveal Cape Town's strong historical links to Europe, with their old, white-walled farmhouses famous for their particular Cape Dutch style.

A multitude of languages are spoken on the newly established square in front of the Zeitz MOCAA, on the V&A Waterfront, named after the British Queen Victoria (1819-1901) and her second son Prince Alfred (1844-1900), who visited the then British Cape Colony in 1860.[26] Here, tourists take a break in deck chairs under parasols between parked coffee trucks and take in the sight of the new museum. In 2016 around 1.56 million foreign tourists visited Cape Town, mostly from the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany (Deutsche Welle 2017). The significant presence of tourists is evident in most of the city, but especially on the V&A Waterfront, where the Zeitz MOCAA is based, a mixed-use development of residential and commercial property, hotels, retail, dining, leisure and entertainment facilities, located in what the corporation itself calls "the oldest working harbour in the southern hemisphere" (V&A Waterfront 2019a). Defining their location in this way ignores important trade ports on the Swahili Coast of East Africa, where city states functioned as important trade centres from early in the second millennium AD onwards (Connah 2015: 221-259). The definition thus highlights the Eurocentrism at play in Cape Town's tourism industry, which often refers to Cape Town as "the Mother City" of South Africa (Breathnach 2016; Monkeyland Primate Sanctuary 2011; South African Tourism 2019). The label emphasises the city's historic ties to Europe by promoting it as the first (European) city in South Africa, but Cape Town was far from the first settlement in what is today known as South Africa: unlike what the apartheid regime would have their citizens believe, indigenous

[25] Pal Ahluwalia and Abebe Zegeye (2003: 275) have described how white and later so-called *coloured* people dominated Cape Town's population in the period from 1865 to 1947: from 1947 to 1975 the *coloured* population doubled in proportion to the white population, whilst black Africans continued to remain a minority. It is only within the last few decades that the "[c]oloured demographic dominance" has come to an end due to the immigration of black Africans into the Western Cape.

[26] As a sixteen-year-old Royal Navy midshipman on the warship HMS Euryalus, "little sailor Prince Alfred" (Morning Post quoted in Schneider 2017: 162-163) was the first member of the British Royal family to visit the Cape Colony (Levine 2010). In his honour, the first basin of Cape Town's new harbour construction was named *The Alfred Basin*, while the second basin, completed in response to the discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa in the late nineteenth century, was named after his mother, Queen Victoria (V&A Waterfront 2019b). In 1988, when the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront was established, the name was derived from these two basins and is today commonly known as the V&A Waterfront (2019b).

communities had settled and built permanent villages there long before the arrival of Dutch settlers (Laburn-Peart 2002: 267).

The ”Mother City” label is highly Eurocentric in its continuation of the colonial concept of *terra nullius* – the myth of the empty land, invoked by the apartheid state to justify its forced removals of black Bantu-speaking South Africans. Like the history of colonial occupation elsewhere on the African continent, that which took place in South Africa was told in a version claiming that the land occupied by Europeans belonged to no one before them. The colonial space was considered a *terra incognita* or *terra nullius*, an ”empty or wasted land whose history [had] to be begun, whose archives [had to] be filled out; whose future [had to] be secured [by the] modernity” (Bhabha 1994: 352) provided to it by European colonial powers. By the colonial powers that occupied it, the territory that became South Africa was thus regarded and presented (quoted in school books and elsewhere) as a *terra nullius* that had been acquired and occupied without it being alienated to them (Mbembe 2015: 183). In this way segregation and forced removals during the apartheid years were legitimised by the myth that the migration of black Bantu-speaking peoples into South Africa occurred at the same time as the Dutch colonial settlers arrived at the Cape Peninsula in the mid-seventeenth century (Esterhuysen 2000: 160). While South Africa’s official curriculum has been changed in order to correct this apartheid-friendly version of history,[27] the myth still lives on in the ”Mother City” label so often heard in and around Cape Town.

[27] South African students are today presented with a national curriculum which encourage them to look at archaeology and history ”not as bodies of knowledge but as processes of interpretation and enactment. History textbooks have incorporated these changes and now reflect more contemporary attitudes toward the South African past [which] reject previous suggestions of *terra nullius*, acknowledge the early migration of black African populations, and confront the tensions between these peoples and Dutch settlers” (King 2012: 92).

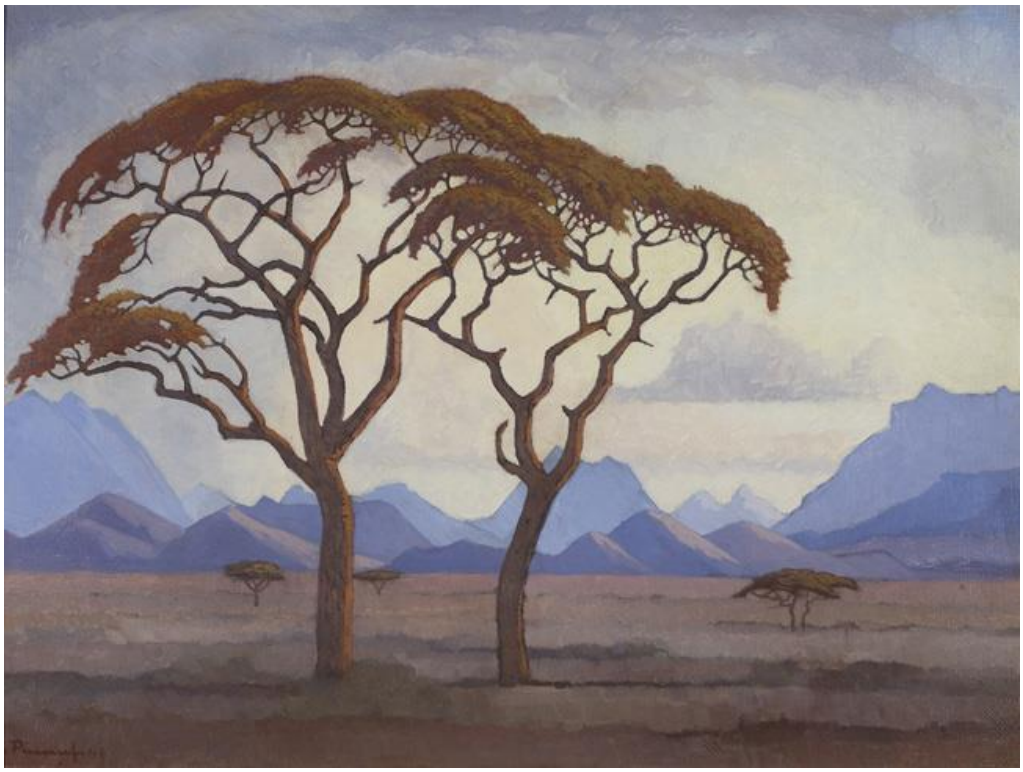

Figure 45. *Bushveld* (1942) by the South African landscape painter Jacob Hendrik Pierneef (1886-1957), famous for his artworks, which are almost devoid of human life. While it is still debated whether his empty landscapes were a deliberate attempt to support the ideology of segregation and apartheid, his paintings have been seen as supporting the concept of *terra nullius* – the myth of the empty land (Giblin and Spring 2016: 175). Photo from Johans Borman Fine Art 2017.

Placing a museum of contemporary African art in one of the most touristy areas of a continuously divided city, with strong historical links to Europe, was met with criticism early on. The former editor of the South African art publication *ArtThrob*, Matthew Blackman (2015), was one of the first to criticize the Zeitz MOCAA for ”looking like the West”. In an open letter to Jochen Zeitz and Mark Coetzee, he wrote:

> This desire to replicate Western museum practices must be well thought out and not merely be a weak and diminished attempt to show ‘we can do it too’. If there is a replication it must lie in its strength to do so, competing on equal terms and with equal academic interest and not an unsuccessful pale copy of the West (Blackman 2015).

In his criticism Blackman touches upon an issue that was also raised by a South African artist whom I spoke with at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in the old city centre of Cape Town. Sitting in the shade of an oak tree in between the colonial buildings that make up the oldest part of the UCT, with a group of young drama students practicing for a performance nearby, the issue of ”being as good as” was brought up. Eve, whose work had recently been bought by the Zeitz MOCAA, explained how she found

that many visitors to Cape Town seemed "surprised that Africa is not far behind". Eve thought that many "South Africans [are] playing into the notion of being as good as Europe" and described how "many things are working in straight up-down lines" between Africa and its former colonial powers. She linked this to what she called South Africa's "colonial headache", implying that colonial structures – including a continuous comparison with Europe and the Global North – continue to influence South Africa's art world. She thought the way the Zeitz MOCAA spoke to an international rather than a (South) African audience in terms of location, marketing and visitors might be related to this.

Eve's description of South Africa's close links to Europe is related to the uneven financial relationship between the Global North and the Global South. Andrea, a teacher of art history at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, whom I met at the art school a few days before my meeting with Eve, explained to me how many of the art students she came across through her work are looking to pursue their careers in Europe or the United States: "They might be highlighting their African roots in their work and make strong statements about their African connections, but the future for them is where the money is, and that is still in the so-called Western world, where they would go instantly if given the chance". In other words, the "colonial headache" described by Eve is not just a structural legacy of times gone by, but also, according to Andrea, a very real reflection of a market in which the buyers of contemporary art from (South) Africa are based in the Global North.

The issue of "being as good as" Europe or the West is linked to a discussion I often came across in the art circles of Cape Town and Johannesburg, revolving around the question of which of the two cities is most representative of Africa. The Zeitz MOCAA was thus criticised for not being based in Nairobi, Lagos or Johannesburg or another city "more representative of modern Africa than Cape Town" (Twigg 2018), as one journalist put it in her review of the museum. What being more "representative of modern Africa" meant was rarely specified, but seemed to have something to do with race. With its large populations of European and Asian origin, Cape Town is often considered not "African enough". An independent art journalist who moderated a talk at the Cape Town Art Fair in February 2018 revealed that Cape Town was not quite the Africa of her imagination. Explaining to the audience that this was the first time she had visited Africa, she said: "I am happy to be in Cape Town, in Africa, although Cape Town is a *different* kind of Africa" (Mandrini 2018). Her reference to Cape Town as "semi-African" reveals an understanding of the city as less African due to its deep historical connections to Europe and its close connections to both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Other parts of Africa that do not match certain ideas of what Africa is, such as North Africa, are also "often perceived as being separate from the rest of 'sub-Saharan' Africa, and at worst described as 'not really Africa'" (Spring 2015: 6). Simon Njami (2007: 13), the curator of the touring exhibition *Africa Remix*

(2004-07), has called this kind of revisionism ”pathological” due to the ways in which ”it seeks to negate the common history that united the destinies of nations colonised by the same powers and their ensuring struggles for liberation”. In relation to the Zeitz MOCAA, Mark Coetzee (quoted in Agnew 2017: 96) has strongly opposed assumptions like these:

> I think we’re making certain assumptions about what ‘Africanness’ is – if you’re in a city like Cape Town, does that preclude you from being African? I don’t like it when people prescribe what African is. I am African – I have no claim to Europe, I have inheritance from Europe because of my skin colour and because of colonialism, but I’m self-identified as an African from this place (Coetzee in Agnew 2017: 96).

Opposing the idea that Cape Town’s historical links to Europe should make the city any less African than the rest of the continent, Coetzee has on the contrary emphasised the city’s international connections as beneficial for the Zeitz MOCAA. As previously mentioned, he has explained that, while other African metropolises had been considered for the location of the new museum, Cape Town was chosen in order to secure international attention (Coetzee quoted in Franzoni 2019). Coetzee’s statement can be seen as contradicting his own welcome speech at the grand public opening of the Zeitz MOCAA, since it indicates that the primary audience for the new museum is international, rather than local. Coetzee has on several occasions stressed that ”the [Zeitz MOCAA] will be very public” (Coetzee in Franzoni 2019) and provide ”access for all” (Coetzee 2017b, Zeitz MOCAA 2017a), but the location of the museum in ”one of Africa’s most visited destinations” (V&A Waterfront 2019a) by international visitors, in a city that is often accused of not being ”African enough”, as well as Coetzee’s stress on the need of international attention, reveals that another group of audiences is in fact the museum’s primary target: wealthy museum-going tourists from the Global North.

Zeitz MOCAA’s links to Europe and the Global North were evident from the very beginning of the museum project, with its founding team being predominantly white and European. The German-born founder and former CEO of Puma, Jochen Zeitz, from whom the museum took its name, started his collection of contemporary African art in collaboration with the South African curator Mark Coetzee, whom Zeitz hired in 2008 to help him form the collection that is now displayed at the Zeitz MOCAA. The Zeitz collection is on a so-called life-time loan, ending with the life of Zeitz himself or in 2038, whichever comes first. Zeitz (quoted in Sulcas 2017: 14) has explained how the establishment of his collection came about as a result of him wondering ”why artists from Africa are so little represented and why there is no significant cultural institution in Africa”. He thus set out ”to find a home in Africa for his art collection” (Zeitz in Meiring 2017: 46), and as Coetzee (quoted in Sulcas: 19) has explained, the agreement with the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town provided a ”ready-made” solution: ”They had a building and an architect; we had a collection”.

The architect chosen to lead the project was the British designer Thomas Heatherwick, who joined the process to turn the derelict Silo building on the V&A Waterfront into a museum. Heatherwick (2018) has since described his enthusiasm for the Zeitz MOCAA on several occasions. In the AfriSam Audio Tour for visitors to the museum, he calls it ”a glowing beacon of the harbour, a lantern looking out, not only to the sea, but to Africa [and] to the World”. Both Zeitz’s and Heatherwick’s enthusiasm over their participation in creating ”a platform bringing [contemporary African artists] together” (Heatherwick 2018) speaks to the myth of ”white saviours” in Africa: a white, German investor, donating an art collection to a museum bearing his name, and a white, British designer “saving” an old, derelict building in Africa by turning it into a ”glowing beacon” for the continent. Like Cecil John Rhodes and many other Europeans before him, with the Zeitz MOCAA Jochen Zeitz has raised a memorial to himself and his family on foreign ground. This was heavily criticised by several of my interlocutors, who wondered how he had been able to convince the V&A Waterfront about the sustainability of letting the new museum bear his name. In light of the current climate of re-naming streets with colonial connotations in Durban and changing the colonial name of Pretoria to Tshwane, the Zeitz MOCAA too might one day be met with demands to change its name to something with less direct European connotations.



Figure 46, 47 and 48. From left: the German-born founder of the Zeitz Collection and former CEO of Puma, Jochen Zeitz; the South African former Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Zeitz MOCAA, Mark Coetzee, and the British designer Thomas Heatherwick, who led the restructuring of the old silo on the V&A Waterfront to turn it into the Zeitz MOCAA. Photos from Squire 2016, Zeitz MOCAA 2018d and Hancock 2016.

The term ”white saviour” is closely linked to the ideas about colonialism expressed by Rudyard Kipling (1994 [1899]: 334) in his poem *The White Man’s Burden*, in which he encourages American colonisation of the Philippine Islands, then colonised by the Spanish Empire (Hitchens 2004). *The White Man’s Burden* was used by European and American imperialists who considered it their moral obligation to ”civilise” non-white peoples (Mahmud 1999: 1221; Monroe 2018: 93; Tricoire 2017: 33). It thus justified empire with reference to notions of racial inferiority or superiority (Murphy 2010: 1). While most of the colonies ruled by Europe around the turn of the century are now independent states, white people of European or North American decent are still present in many former colonies

on what could be labelled ”civilising missions”. Western volunteers and workers often enter international development work seeking what Teju Cole (2012) has called a ”big emotional experience that validates privilege”. According to Cole (2012), contemporary ”white saviours” think of the world as ”nothing but a problem to be solved by enthusiasm”. Zeitz’s strong emphasis (quoted in Meiring 2017: 46) on the importance of providing ”a platform where artists from Africa tell their story” can thus be seen as a well-intended philanthropic gesture, but is also an example of what Marcel Mauss (1990 [1954]: 89) early on defined as a system of reciprocity:

> [T]he joy of public giving; the pleasure in generous expenditure on the arts, the hospitality, and in the private and public festival. Social security, the solicitude arising from reciprocity and cooperation […] are of greater value […] than the skimpy life that is given through the daily wages doled out by employers, and even better than capitalist saving – which is only based on a changing form of credit (Mauss 1990 [1954]: 89).

In the case of Jochen Zeitz, the expected reciprocity of his ”gift” to (South) Africa, might be found in ”immaterial forms, such as in good karma, appreciation and curiosity among family and friends, “paying it forward”, or other sense of investment in (one’s own) well-being” (Frey 2016: 187). Seeing the ways in which Zeitz promoted his participation in the opening of the museum bearing his name to his more than 22,000 followers on Facebook, appreciation and curiosity could very well be one of his expected take backs. Acts of giving, whether in the context of development work or in the “donation” of an art museum, furthermore ”rarely challenge the structure that produced the conditions that have historically created the ‘white saviour’” (Frey 2016: 187). The philanthropic narrative with which the ”invaluable gift” (Masilela 2017) from Jochen Zeitz is presented thus reproduces stereotypical ideas about Africa as a *terra nullius* ready to ”be filled out” (Bhabha 1994: 352) by well-meaning Europeans. As Frey (2016: 188) argues, the need to challenge the historical structures that created the ”white saviour” in the first place requires efforts on the part of the Western subject based on a critical understanding of the history of Western colonialism and imperialism, as well as an integration of this history into one’s own world-view. But so far, the lack of engagement in curatorial debates about what Africa and African art is has prevented the Zeitz MOCAA from challenging historical structures of Western domination. Instead the founders reproduce it by continuously emphasising their own philanthropic gestures on a continent that supposedly lacked significant art institutions before their arrival.

Jochen Zeitz er her: Zeitz MOCAA.
22. september 2017 · Cape Town, Sydafrika ·

Wow! What an incredibly emotional day. The official Public Opening of Zeitz MOCAA with Archbishop Desmond Tutu coming out of retirement to celebrate and bless the museum. Only he could call Madiba to have him say that he is very happy and proud. No words can describe this moment... #zeitzmocaa #opening #archbishop #desmondtutu #zeitz #museum #contemporary #art #africa #culture #capetown #electric #atmosphere #vandawaterfront

Figure 49. Facebook-update posted by Jochen Zeitz on the day of the grand public opening of the Zeitz MOCAA. Retrieved by author September 2017.

The Invisible Curatorial Voice

As previously shown, the Zeitz MOCAA attracts more international visitors from the Global North than members of the (South) African public. In the section below, I will demonstrate how the museum's lack of engagement with the public it claims to exist for is not only evident in respect of its comparatively small numbers of (South) African visitors, but also in the ways in which its curators do not engage in public debates about what they believe Africa and African art is. Until recently the Zeitz MOCAA's curatorial choices were primarily the result of one man's taste in contemporary art. Curatorial selections were made "without broader consultation" (Blackman 2015), and although by the end of his directorship in the first half of 2018 Mark Coetzee was supported by a large group of assistant curators from all over Africa, most of them were in the very beginning of their careers, working on one-year contracts as part of the Zeitz MOCAA Curatorial Training Programme (Zeitz MOCAA 2019a). None of them were willing to meet for an interview during my fieldwork, and one revealed feeling "uncomfortable" speaking to me on issues related to the curatorial choices of the museum. The curator in question told me that it had "better go through Mark" if I wanted to speak to the assistant curators. He was clearly worried that it might influence his career if a wrong statement about the museum's curatorial choices were to be made. As later events showed, the assistant curator I spoke with was not alone in feeling uncomfortable in the shadow of his powerful director. In May 2018 Coetzee was forced to resign with immediate effect due to what became known as the "Art museum's #MeToo scandal" (Blackman 2018a). The details of the accusations remain cloudy, but journalists and art commentators reported that "some of the assistant curators had been gathering evidence over several months to confirm Coetzee's inappropriate and allegedly abusive behaviour towards them in one-on-one situations" (Blackman 2018a).

While I was not able to obtain interviews with any of the assistant curators, nor with Coetzee, who was not willing to meet with me to talk about his curatorial choices, I attended the curator-led tours that were provided by the Zeitz MOCAA three times daily. Here, I was able to talk more freely with the assistant curators and acquire a glimpse into their work behind the scenes. Through my informal conversations with the assistant curators during and after the curator-led tours, I heard their views on aspects such as the selection of artists and other curatorial choices. One of the things I had noticed during my visits to the museum was the emphasis on the names and nationalities of the curators. At the beginning of the inaugural exhibition *All Things Being Equal*, not only were the artists and their nationalities mentioned, so too, by name and nationality, were the curators who had worked on the exhibition. This emphasised the fact that a large majority of the assistant curators were from South Africa (85%) and two from North America, but none from other African countries. Asking one of the

assistant curators about this, I was told that the Zeitz MOCAA is ”very transparent about representation – it is in our ethos”, while another assistant curator acknowledged that there is a need for diversity at the museum, which is ”very South Africa-heavy at the moment”. As such the practice of mentioning nationalities was a tool used to highlight the ”Africanness” of the Zeitz MOCAA by emphasising the large number of ”African voices” behind the scenes.

The female assistant curator who explained to me that the Zeitz MOCAA is “very transparent about representation” was white and South African. Like Coetzee, who on numerous occasions emphasised the “Africanness” of the Zeitz MOCAA, as well as his own self-identification as African (Coetzee in Agnew 2017: 96), she found it important to highlight the many attempts being made by the new museum to be transparent and to represent both South Africa and Africa’s diversity. Her eagerness to emphasise this showed her ambivalent feelings about working in a liminal museum like the Zeitz MOCAA: in light of the many demands for recognition that white curators of art from South Africa are met with, she found it necessary to highlight that she *is* aware of the importance of representation and that she and the other curators *are* conscious about the importance of transparency in the museum.

The emphasis on the seeming multitude of ”African voices” in the Zeitz MOCAA, expressed by the assistant curator above, was also adopted in respect of the employment of other members of staff. The front of house staff, who worked behind the counter in the entrance area or as cleaners, guards, shop assistants and baristas in the café, were mostly black or mixed race. To what extent their voices were actually heard in the curatorial decisions is, however, questionable, as few if any of the front of house staff members or assistant curators were likely to oppose the decisions of their then chief curator. Being young (most in their twenties or early thirties) and at the beginning of their careers, many of the latter group of assistant curators saw their year-long employment at the Zeitz MOCAA as a stepping stone towards a career within the museum or elsewhere. This was the case for one assistant curator I spoke with, who told me that she would like to move on to other possibilities, while others in the group of assistant curators were hoping to get their contracts extended. In a situation like that, the balance of power between a well-established curator like Coetzee and young and up-coming assistant curators at the beginning of their careers was unlikely to challenge the curatorial choices behind the ”one-man selection system” (Blackman 2015) of the Zeitz MOCAA.

Figure 50. Nine of the Zeitz MOCAA's assistant curators photographed for *Elle Decoration South*'s October 2017 issue by the Seppis. Standing from the left: African Arts Trust Assistant Curator for the Moving Image Michaela Limberis (born in Johannesburg, South Africa); Mikael Kamras and Fredrik Oweson Assistant Curator of Sculpture Marijke Tymbios (born in Cape Town, South Africa); Adrienne Iann Assistant Curator of Books and Works on Paper Sven Christian (born in Durban, South Africa); AKO Foundation Assistant Curator Costume at the Costume Institute Githan Coopoo (born in Cape Town, South Africa); AKO Foundation Assistant Curator of Photography at the Roger Ballen Foundation Centre for Photography Gcotyelwa Mashiqa (born in Johannesburg, South Africa) and AKO foundation Assistant Curator of Painting Xola Mlwandle (born in the Eastern Cape, South Africa). Seated from left: AKO Foundation Assistant Curator of Special Projects of the Curatorial Lab Sakhisizwe Gcina (born in Queenstown, South Africa), SAIFM Assistant Curator of Photography at the Roger Ballen Foundation Centre for Photography Bafana Zembe (born in Lagos, Nigeria) and Wendy Fischer Assistant Curator of Performance Tammy Langtry (born in Cape Town, South Africa).

The seemingly inclusive curatorial approach, with many assistant curators of (black) African descent, can be seen as the Zeitz MOCAA team attempting to "Africanise" an otherwise white-dominated team consisting of a white German founder, a white British designer and a white South African chief curator. The concern that I often heard expressed among South African artists and curators that, although a large group of assistant curators had been employed, until recently it was still Coetzee who was in sole charge of the curatorial choices of the Zeitz MOCAA confirms this. However, unless the museum allows the invited curators some substantial influence on its curatorial choices, it risks receiving the same kinds of criticism that the Wits Art Museum in Johannesburg was faced with in relation to their *Black Modernisms in South Africa (1940-1990)* exhibition, held in 2016.

At the WAM, the museum was heavily criticised by the exhibition's black assistant curators, Same Mdlilu and Bongani Mahlangu, who felt they had been side-lined by their white senior curator, Anitra Nettleton (Blignaut 2016; Fikeni 2016): ”The only thing I was asked to do was the biographies of [the] artists” said Mdlilu (quoted in Fikeni 2016), who experienced being ”treated as a black token in South Africa's predominantly white art world” (Fikeni 2016). In the cases of both the WAM and the Zeitz MOCAA, white senior curators have collaborated on exhibitions with junior black or mixed race assistant curators. In this way the curatorial teams reflect the situation in much of South Africa's art world, in which, until recently, only a very small number of black or so-called *coloured* students have graduated from art schools in South Africa, due to the continued limited access these groups have to art education. Since art history is still ”almost entirely the preserve of former white […] and private schools” (NACSA 2010: 14), unequal access to the subject is perpetuating an art environment in which many of those in charge are white. In contemporary South Africa this creates tensions like those described in Chapter II, where white voices are criticised for continuously taking up too much space in the public sphere.

In the following I will examine the curatorial choices made by Mark Coetzee, who until recently defined the curatorial line of the Zeitz MOCAA with what appeared to be a deliberately ”invisible” hand. His choices were not subject to discussion or debate, neither in the media, nor within the museum. With regard to both the unused history of the silo building housing the museum and the undiscussed content of the exhibitions, Coetzee tread carefully so as not to politicise. In light of the demands for recognition targeted at institutions like the UCT, WAM and the Iziko SANG, Coetzee's lack of engagement in potentially explosive topics about representation and decolonisation can be seen as an attempt to avoid similar criticism. As a white South African, the colour of his skin is a living reminder of his European ancestry and thus a reminder of Europe's colonisation of South Africa. In ways similar to the other white curators presented in this thesis, Coetzee finds himself in an ambivalent situation, where, as a person born and bred in South Africa, he might *feel* African, but constantly has to justify being so. As in the case of the writers of the ”white writing” described by John M. Coetzee (1988: 11), white South African curators like Mark Coetzee are ”no longer European, not yet African”. Ambivalent about this state of being in-between, as “neither this nor that […] yet […] both” (Turner 1967: 99), Coetzee (quoted in Agnew 2017: 96) does not ”like it when people prescribe what African is”. However, as I will show in the following analysis of some of Coetzee's curatorial choices, to curate a museum of contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora is to do precisely that – trying to define what Africa and African art is.

African Art as Global Art

As Chris Spring (2009: 6), who recently co-curated the *South Africa: the Art of a Nation* (2016-17) exhibition at the British Museum, has argued, ”Africa is, and [has] always […] been, a diverse, global phenomenon”. The very idea of a specific phenomenon labelled ”African art” can thus be seen as redundant (Spring 2009: 6). Art from Africa is naturally a lot more diverse than what is exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA, where some artists are included at the expense of others, and not everyone agrees with the selections Mark Coetzee has made. The Swazi-born artist Nandipha Mntambo, who had a whole solo exhibition dedicated to her work at the time of the opening, has expressed her disappointment that ”[n]ot every artwork is related to the continent and its cultural heritage” (Mntambo in Putsch 2017). In her own work, Mntambo explores ”the liminal boundaries between human and animal, femininity and masculinity, attraction and repulsion, life and death” (Zeitz MOCAA 2019d). Her sculptures are sculpted using the shape of her own body and are made of ”cowhide as a means to subvert expected associations with corporeal presence, femininity, sexuality and vulnerability” (Mntambo in Jepchumba 2014). Other artworks on display at the Zeitz MOCAA similarly make use of materials often found in so-called ”traditional” artworks from Africa. An example of this is *The Waves* (2013-2017) by the New York-born American artist Liza Lou. *The Waves* consists of white glass beads woven together into rectangular pieces covering all four walls of one of the exhibition rooms. Through their materials these artworks may appear ”African” to some, although cowhide could just as well be considered European, and the beads used in artworks from Africa are in many cases imported from Europe (Nettleton 2018; Phillips 1996: 18).

Figure 51 and 52. Sculptures made of cowhide by the Swazi-born artist Nandipha Mntambo in her solo exhibition *Material Value* (left) and *The Waves* (2013-2017) by the New York-born American artist Liza Lou, which consists of white glass beads woven together into rectangular pieces covering all four walls of one of the exhibition rooms. Both artworks were part of the inaugural exhibitions at the Zeitz MOCAA. Photos by author February 2018.

Mntambo’s critique of the Zeitz MOCAA collection as not being entirely related to ”the continent and its cultural heritage” (Mntambo in Putsch 2017) reveals an essentialist understanding of Africa as a

unity with a specific cultural heritage – a heritage distinguished from the non-African and shared, despite it being the world's most diverse continent in terms of language and culture (Parker and Rathbone 2007: 1). As such Mntambo's comment can be seen as Africanist, but it is also possibly anti-global in its implication that a specific African cultural heritage exists and should be displayed in museums like the Zeitz MOCAA. Mntambo does not specify what kind of artworks she thinks the Zeitz MOCAA is missing in its collection, but her comment implies that she thinks the collection is not *local* enough or perhaps that it is not ethnographically grounded.

Sethembile Msezane, the South African artist who let the birdlike-figure of Chapungu rise when the statue of Rhodes came down on the UCT campus in 2015, has expressed a similar ambivalence regarding the Zeitz MOCAA. In her work *Signal Her Return I* (2016), consisting of an eighteenth-century bell, hair and candles, Msezane would have liked more candles to be lit: ”They were supposed to stand burning directly on the ground” she explained to me, as we sat together on her couch in her Rondebosch-based studio on the outskirts of Cape Town. ”They stand like that in most Zulu homes and do not burn down the house!”. However, the museum's health and safety regulations would not allow the amount of lit candles Msezane wanted to be burned straight from the floor in the new museum. Nor did the curators support her request to have the electric light in the exhibition room lowered to mimic the often dim lighting of a township house. Instead, only a few of the hundreds of candles in the artwork, which was exhibited as part of the Zeitz MOCAA's inaugural exhibitions, were lit at the same time, with a guard observing the room constantly present. The electric lighting was the same industrial-looking white light that covered the rest of the exhibition rooms: coming from fluorescent lamps attached in a square along the edges of the ceiling, it emphasised the white-cube like atmosphere of the museum. In Msezane's opinion, the Zeitz MOCAA's health and safety regulations restricted her artistic creativity and prevented the place-specifics of her artwork from being made evident. Consequently, in order to have her artwork exhibited at the museum at all, she felt that she had to make compromises and to ”Westernise” the ”African” or ”local” elements in her work.

Figure 53 and 54. *Signal Her Return I* (2016) by the South African artist Sethembile Msezane exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA as part of the museum's inaugural exhibitions. Photos by author February 2018.

Mntambo and Msezane's comments both emphasise an ambivalence regarding the local adequacy of what Msezane describes as the "Eurocentric exhibition practices" of the Zeitz MOCAA. Like the Bulgarian consumer rights activists described by Yuson Jung (2010), Mntambo and Msezane are "*unable not to follow* the [Western or Eurocentric] hegemonic model and discourse" of the Zeitz MOCAA: "[T]hey feel *compelled* to follow the Western hegemonic discourse despite their growing ambivalence regarding its local adequacy" (Jung 2010: 321). Should they decide to resist following the Western hegemonic discourses of the Zeitz MOCAA – the set of rules that Msezane finds limiting and Eurocentric – it would likely have consequences for their careers: the artists exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA whom I interviewed during my fieldwork saw the new museum as an important stepping stone for a (continuous) international career. As Keith, a Soweto-born artist at the beginning of his career told me on a Skype-connection from his Johannesburg-based studio, being exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA means that his work is seen by tourists: "It is a platform where I can refer people to go and see my work on display. This gave me the opportunity to sell two of my works recently". The ambivalence felt by Mntambo and Msezane shows that the price paid for the desire to be recognised on the international scene of "global art" (Belting 2009) often involves what Herzfeld called the "concealment of the most intimate dimensions of everyday sociability and cultural form" (Herzfeld 2012: 49). In order to be accepted, they have to adapt and let go of any place-specifics, in similar ways to Ayanda, whose opposition to the inclusion of her grandmother's headrests into the realm of the aesthetics I described in Chapter I.

But resisting what Msezane describes as "the Eurocentric exhibition practices" of the Zeitz MOCAA would not only have consequences for the individual careers of the artists on display there. As Michael Herzfeld (2004: 209-210) highlights in relation to local artisans and craftsmen on the Greek island of Crete, "resistance [to Westernisation] entails a considerable risk of further marginalising the country within the neoliberal ecumene". While "[t]his is a risk that some are not altogether sorry to entertain, as they weigh it against the loss of spirituality, dignity, and autonomy that they attribute to modernization" (Herzfeld 2004: 210), it is a risk that neither of the artists interviewed for this thesis felt prepared to take. Like the students of the Rhodes Must Fall movement who felt compelled to accept Rhodes Scholarships at the University of Oxford, despite having fought fervently against the imperial legacy of its founder (Henderson 2017; Yorke 2017), the artists exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA with whom I spoke during my fieldwork felt compelled to accept having their artworks exhibited in what some of them considered a Eurocentric setting.

However, while being "*unable not to follow*" (Jung 2010: 321) the Western or Eurocentric hegemonic model and discourses in which some of them found their artworks displayed, the artists featured at the Zeitz MOCAA can to a certain degree oppose the system from within. Like Joshua Nott, one of the Rhodes Must Fall students awarded a Rhodes Scholarship who in his own words accepted it in order to "defeat the very ideals of what it originally stood for" (Yorke 2017), the artists on display at the Zeitz MOCAA can use the platform to speak against colonial and apartheid-era oppression. Several of them do this, for example the South African artist Kendell Geers, who with his *Hanging Piece* (1993) made by a labyrinth of hanging bricks, makes associations with anti-apartheid activists, who similarly hung bricks from highway bridges to smash the windshields of passing cars. Another example is the *Runaways* (1993) series by the New York-born American artist Glenn Ligon, which "began with an investigation into the life of Henry 'Box' Brown, a slave who fled captivity in 1849" (Zeitz MOCAA 2019i).[28]

[28] The escape of the enslaved Henry "Box" Brown "captured the imaginations of nineteenth-century readers and audiences [and] became almost immediately one of the most celebrated stories of liberation in the history of American enslavement. Inspired, according to Brown, by God's response to his prayers, Brown placed himself in a crate and had himself shipped by Adams Express from Richmond to Philadelphia, where he was received on March 24, 1849, in the office of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. Upon his emergence from the box, Brown sang a song to celebrate the divine inspiration and protection that he believed was central to his success [and] became famous almost immediately. Brown's dramatic escape was a regular presence in antislavery oratory; images of his emergence from the shipping crate were widely circulated and reprinted; his story was soon related in a children's book, *Cousin Ann's Stories for Children* (1849); and reportedly his name was even invoked by a U.S. senator to refer to legislative measures surreptitiously inserted (hidden like Henry Box Brown) into the Compromise of 1850" (Ernest 2008: 1-3).

Figure 55 and 56. A female visitor taking in part of the South African artist Kendell Geers' *Hanging Piece* (1993) (left) and the *Runaways* (1993) series by the New York-born American artist Glenn Ligon. Both artworks were part of Zeitz MOCAA's inaugural exhibitions. Photos by author February 2019 and Zeitz MOCAA 2019j.

In their works dealing with colonial and apartheid-era oppression, the artists exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA are thus given the space and freedom to engage artistically with the traumas of both past and present. However, for the South African artist Thania Petersen, whose photographic artworks were also exhibited in Zeitz MOCAA's inaugural exhibitions, her protests against the system through her art seemed somewhat muted by the setting in which it was displayed. In a conversation between herself and Ashraf Jamal, held at the Zeitz MOCAA during the 2018 Cape Town Art Fair, she put it this way:

> The system forces us to do things which are not halal – like having a bank account. You fight the same fights growing up, and it is the society that dictates. You try to protect your kids, but they want to dress up like Spiderman anyway! The market is a tricky place […] Your voice is only as loud as [the museum curators and gallery owners] want it to be. The Art Fair is like a shopping mall, and you cannot shut it up! They will just find another voice. But if I was not part of a commercial gallery, no one would see my work […] Am I selling myself out? I am putting what is sacred to me on the walls, selling it to the very same people who oppressed us (Petersen 2018).

As Petersen was determined not to let the system get the better of her, she decided to "stop talking about oppression and break free". She would not let colonialism shape either herself or South Africa, but tried instead to focus on the present: "We need to take charge, redefine and move on", she said. But at the same time she felt trapped by a society which left her with an ambivalent feeling of being in-between. As a Capetonian with a mixed race background, Petersen carries within her the legacy of Cape Town's historical connections to both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and to Africa, Arabia, Asia and Europe. This legacy, she explained, sometimes results in a feeling of a loss or a lack of belonging: "Whites have a belonging, because they own everything, blacks have a spiritual connection to the land, but 'mixed' people do not belong". Petersen sometimes found herself confronted with "not being black enough [by] people [with] fantasy-versions of Africa" (Petersen 2018). She realised that "what we are now is not what we think we are" and she created the *I am Royal* (2015) series, now exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA, in acknowledgement of not knowing exactly who she is. Through

ceremonial clothing and stages with historical and Cape Malay references, Petersen (2018) set out to dignify herself, but also to create ”visibility for people who feel invisible”. Through her engagement with her ambivalent state of being in-between, Petersen tried to create a sense of belonging for herself and others in her situation in an environment that was shaped by contrasts. As such, she *did* manage to fight back, not by resisting Westernisation altogether (she *did* choose to let her works be exhibited at and sold to the Zeitz MOCAA), but nor in a way which made her lose all ”spirituality, dignity, and autonomy” (Herzfeld 2004: 210) in the process.

By portraying herself as royalty surrounded by and dressed in symbols emphasising her ancestral connections to Southeast Asia, Petersen takes advantage of the liminal position that growing up in a postcolonial reality has placed her in: refusing to accept the dichotomy between being African or not being African enough, she embraces the ambivalent position her background as “Cape Coloured” gives her. Rather than continuing to live in a “betwixt and between” (Turner 1967: 97) environment, where she cannot be either black or white, she claims the Cape Coastline with a pride similar to that of Queen Victoria who once ruled the Cape Colony from afar. Just as Sethembile Msezane, who rose like a phoenix from the ashes of the statue of Rhodes, Petersen takes charge of her own story and re-claims public spaces in South Africa. By portraying herself as royalty, she mimics “a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history [and] quite simply mocks its power” (Bhabha 1994: 125). Petersen’s use of references to the historical practice of portrait photography – a medium, which in similar ways used props and backdrops to emphasise the identity and status of the depicted – emphasises this mimicry, which is closely linked to mockery, but simultaneously adopts its monumental language.

Her use of the photographic image and its particular form of *Verfremdung* challenges the viewers of her art “to reflect critically upon the fact that what they are witnessing is not real but constructed” (Vium 2018: 368). Like the Chinese artist described by Bertolt Brecht (quoted in Vium 2018: 372), Petersen “expresses [her] awareness of being watched” and takes the opportunity of her artwork to gaze back at her viewer. Her expression is unsettlingly pensive: she invites her viewer “to gaze upon her whilst confounding that very act of looking” (Jamal 2017b: 196). In this way, Petersen takes control over the otherwise ambivalent situation created by her mixed ancestry: “I am Royal” she claims, mimicking the same kind of obviousness with which the former colonial powers of South Africa once claimed the Cape Peninsula as theirs. Playing on her connections not only to Africa, but also to Arabia, Asia and Europe, Petersen highlights, rather than hides, her *Arafrasianness* (Jamal 2017b: 195). Standing at the tip of the continent, where the Indian and the Atlantic Oceans meet, Petersen directs the attention of her viewers towards “a historically charged locus, a place in which a very peculiar

geographical, sociological, economic, and collective psychology is forged" (Jamal 2017b: 195). Her staging and performance of stories linked to selfhood, community, place and placelessness embrace the ambivalent state of being in-between that her mixed ancestry has brought her (Jamal 2017b: 196). She is neither connected nor dislocated, but "finds […] meaning [in the] permeability" of her life in a littoral society (Jan C. Heesterman quoted in Pearson 1998: 38).

Petersen engages with these issues not only in *Location 1: Cape Coastline* (2015), where the foaming Atlantic waters meet the rocky shore she is standing on and surrounds the curving stone wall at her back, but in her entire *I am Royal* series. Repeatedly, she returns to ambivalent points of location linking her own story to that of South Africa: the ground zero of District Six, the now gentrified neighbourhood of Bo Kaap, which once was the home of a thriving Cape Malay community, or a settlement for people who during apartheid were classified as neither "white" nor "native" but as "coloured" (Jamal 2017b: 199). Living in an environment that is so occupied with race as contemporary South Africa (Posel 2001: 51), Petersen finds herself in a society "where racist, nationalist [and] ethnically absolutist discourses orchestrate political relationships [to an extent] that these identities appear to be mutually exclusive" (Gilroy 1993: 1). But Petersen strives to be neither European nor black: she is not caught in a state of "double consciousness" like that identified by W.E.B. Du Bois (2007 [1903]) and adopted by Paul Gilroy (1993: 111-145). Rather than being split between different essential identities, Petersen's artworks represent a "liquid indeterminacy" combining a multitude of identities (Jamal 2017: 199). By emphasising her personal links to colonialism, slavery, Africa, Arabia, Asia and Europe, Petersen confronts the dichotomy between black and white, and directs the attention of her viewers towards the ambivalence of being "Cape Coloured".

Figure 57. *Location 1: Cape Coastline, Cape Coast* (2015) from Thania Petersen's *I am Royal* series exhibited as part of the Zeitz MOCAA's inaugural exhibitions. Photo from What if the World 2019.

In a society that is constantly occupied with racial essentials, the ambiguity of being caught in-between can be both disabling and enabling (Jamal 2017: 201). The effect of the ambivalence performed by Petersen lies in its double vision, which – like the *menace* of mimicry – discloses and disturbs the authority of "colonial discourse" (Bhabha 1994: 126). Through her repetitive *partial presence*, Petersen "articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority" (Bhabha 1994: 126). She looks back at her viewer and uses her gaze actively in order to reverse "the colonial appropriation by […] producing a partial vision of the colonizer's presence; a gaze of otherness, that shares the acuity of the genealogical gaze which […] liberates marginal elements and shatters the unity of man's being through which he extends his sovereignty" (Bhabha 1994: 126-127). In doing so, Petersen (2018) uses her artworks to reflect on what she calls South Africa's "maniac focus on different identities". She alienates the notion of *identity* from essence (Bhabha 1994: 127) by defying the idea that only clear-cut essentials, such as black or white, African or European, can claim a sense of belonging.

For Sakhisizwe Gcina, one of the assistant curators at the Zeitz MOCAA mentioned above, it is important that the Zeitz MOCAA shows "the evolution of African artworks from the 'tribalistic' […] to something that's aligned with current affairs on a global scale" (Gcina in Leibbrandt 2017: 31). Unlike Nandipha Mntambo, Gcina opposes the idea of contemporary African art as something that is

significantly different from non-African contemporary art. Instead, he stresses the *alignment* of African art with what he calls ”current affairs on a global scale”. Contemporary African art in his understanding should be considered as global as non-African art and should be highlighted accordingly. In this statement, Gcina stresses that African art is no longer ”tribalistic” but has ”evolved” to become an equal member of “the global art world” (Belting and Buddensieg 2009). In this way, he is opposing Mntambo’s understanding of African art as something fixed that can be defined in opposition to non-African Art. Meanwhile, by emphasising contemporary African art as modern and ”aligned with current affairs on a global scale” (Gcina in Leibbrandt 2017: 31), the place-specifics of art from Africa is discarded, in similar ways as it was by Ayanda and Avigail presented in Chapter I.

Whether the Zeitz collection is considered ”African” because of the materials chosen for its production, or ”global” through its alignment with current affairs, the museum’s inaugural exhibitions were significant in having a “definite post-2010 bias” (O’Toole 2017a), with most of the artworks on display having been made in the twenty-first century. By focusing on *contemporary* art and calling it that, rather than *modern* art, the Zeitz MOCAA is following a trend in the global art world in which art museums increasingly have chosen to call themselves museums of *contemporary* art rather than museums of *modern* art (Belting 2009: 48). Museums of contemporary art have a global connotation, which celebrates contemporary production as an art without borders and history, unlike museums of modern art, which have strong connotations of Western modernism (Belting 2009: 48-49). The severe focus on art produced within the last decade could thus be a way that the curatorial team of the Zeitz MOCAA try to avoid the strong connotations of apartheid and colonialism that other South African museums are dealing with. As I showed in Chapter II, curators of museums like the Iziko SANG are constantly struggling to renew and decolonise their practices. By focusing solely on contemporary art that is produced *after* South African curators more broadly started to classify objects of black African origin as art, the curators of the Zeitz MOCAA avoid the kind of criticism galleries like the JAG and the Standard Bank Gallery are exposed to from curators like Ayanda and Avigail, who oppose their inclusion of so-called “traditional” African artworks.

At the Zeitz MOCAA, there are no objects with problematic histories of reclassification. There are no objects like the Zulu headrests in the heritage collection of the JAG and no objects like the snuff containers and pipe bowls of the Standard Bank Gallery. The inaugural exhibitions of the Zeitz MOCAA thus confirm the “End of an Age” of historical African objects announced by Susan Vogel (2005: 12). By focusing solely on *contemporary* art, rather than on *modern* or pre-modern art, the curators constitute African art as “global art” (Belting 2009). But just like Ayanda, Avigail and artists like Lerato,

whom I described in Chapter I, the curators of the Zeitz MOCAA let go of an important part of the artistic traditions of Africa in their eagerness to prove to the world that African art *is* global art. The curators' heavy focus on contemporary art produced by artists who are trained in the same artistic tradition as contemporary artists from elsewhere can be seen as a counter-reaction to exhibitions like *Magiciens de la Terre*, as well as being an attempt to avoid the kind of discussions that museums with older, and thus potentially more "problematic", collections are often confronted with in and beyond South Africa. In this way, the curators of the Zeitz MOCAA avoid the conflicts that museums like the Iziko SANG deal with on an everyday basis, but simultaneously sacrifices the opportunity to exhibit the kinds of African art, which cannot necessarily be labelled *global* due to its strong local connotations. Even in a museum of *African* art based on the *African* continent, the art it exhibits thus has to be produced similarly to art produced anywhere else in the world. There is little room for locality in a museum where "the desire to measure up to [the global hierarchy of value]" has to be fulfilled (Herzfeld 2012: 49).

The post-2010 bias of Zeitz MOCAA's inaugural exhibitions has been criticised for its "crucial blind spots in the collection" in leaving out esteemed, pace-setting South African artists such as Robin Rhode, Tracey Rose and Berni Searle (O'Toole 2017a). Mark Coetzee (quoted in O'Toole 2017a) has emphasised that his mission is to collect "the most important, seminal objects, installations, moments that are happening right now" but chose to leave out other important artists in the process. The heavy emphasis on young, contemporary artists – some, like the South African artists Lungiswa Gqunta and Sethembile Msezane, have only just finished university (Zeitz MOCAA 2019c; 2018k) – was highlighted by one of my interlocutors as an attempt to secure the work of upcoming artists at a time when their art is less expensive than it might become at a later stage. An example of what *could* turn out to be an investment for the Zeitz Foundation, is the photographic works by the South African artist Zanele Muholi, whose works have been collected in depth (Williamson 2017).

While Muholi's works form a significant part of Zeitz MOCAA's inaugural exhibitions, the artist herself "preferred not to take part in the artist group presentation" (Leaf 2017b). Aaron Leaf (2017b), the managing editor of the online magazine *Okay Africa* who interviewed Muholi on the occasion of the museum's opening, interpreted this as a "conscious decision not to be used as a prop for the museum's marketing". Not wanting to take part in the marketing strategies of the Zeitz MOCAA, Muholi and other artists on display there often find themselves in a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, being exhibited in a major museum with strong international ties can mean exposure to a large audience and provide a stepping stone for their careers. On the other hand, as in the example of Thania Petersen (2018) above, artists find themselves in the midst of a highly commercialised

business, where their works will potentially profit the system their artworks are in many cases trying to speak out against.

Figure 58, 59 and 60. Silver gelatine prints from the *Somnyama Ngonyama* (Hail the Dark Lioness) self-portrait photographic series by South African artist Zanele Muholi on display at the Zeitz MOCAA. Photos from D'Aliesio 2017.

The large focus on photographic works at the Zeitz MOCAA reflects the international attention South African photographers have received in the past decade: a large number of South African photographers have received international attention and won praise and awards.[29] According to Mark Coetzee (quoted in O'Toole 2017b), the works were chosen in order to offer "millennials [and other] black museumgoers work that they might identify with". In an age dominated by "the fetish value of 'selfies and the photographic image'" (Coetzee quoted in O'Toole 2017b), works like the South African artist Athi-Patra Ruga's *The Night of the Long Knives III* (2014) and the Zimbabwean artist Kudzanai Chiurai's *Genesis [Je n'isi isi] I* (2016) were selected as centrepieces in the museum's inaugural exhibitions. Significant for the almost invisible curatorial choices in these exhibitions, the introductory text of the exhibition *All Things Being Equal* simply reads: "Numerous questions have been passed around our opening exhibition, the most evocative of these being, 'How will I be represented in the museum?' See for yourself. All things being equal…" (Zeitz MOCAA 2017b).

[29] These includes Mikhael Subotsky, who, together with the English designer Patrick Waterhouse, won the 2015 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize for their collaborative book project *Ponte City*; Zanele Muholi, who in 2013 received a Prince Claus Award for achievements in the field of culture and development and exhibited at Documenta 13 in Kassel in 2012; Pieter Hugo, Gideon Mendel and Brent Stirton, who were all short-listed for the Prix Pictet; Mohau Modisakeng, who exhibited his works in the South African Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 2017; and David Goldblatt (1930-2018), whose photographic documentation of the racial divide of his home country has been exhibited all over the world, including MoMA in New York, London's Barbican and the Centre Pompidou in Paris (Jonze 2018; O'Toole 2017c; SA Pavilion 2019).

Leaving the interpretation to the visitors like this avoids there being a clear curatorial voice in the museum. This choice presents the Zeitz MOCAA as a museum that is open to different interpretations. As such, the curators encourage and support visitor involvement with the artworks in their exhibitions, a practice that is significant for art museums in the twenty-first century. But rather than demonstrate the "viability [of the museum] and argue [its] value in new contexts where former values are no longer taken for granted" (Hooper-Greenhill 2006: 557), the curators of the Zeitz MOCAA rarely engage in debates about their curatorial choices. Just as in the memoirs of white farmers who lost their farms in Zimbabwe's land reforms post-1980 (Pilossof 2009), complex issues like what Africa and being African means are topics that are neither explored nor questioned in any form at the Zeitz MOCAA. On the contrary, a vocabulary reminiscent of that of Mandela and Tutu in the early post-apartheid years was used in the opening speeches by Coetzee, Heatherwick, Zeitz and Tutu himself, as well as in the title of the inaugural exhibition *All Things Being Equal*. Like Mandela and Tutu's dream about the Rainbow Nation, this title emphasises an equality which in South Africa – the country branded the financially *least* equal in the world (OECD 2019) – is still no more than a dream. A reason for this language and for the lack of a curatorial voice in the inaugural exhibitions can be seen as an attempt to avoid the kind of criticism that curators in South African museums and art galleries often experience. By avoiding engagement with the more challenging and political aspects of building a museum of contemporary African art in Africa, no room for discussion is allowed.

Concluding Remarks

In light of the accusations other curators in South Africa are dealing with on an everyday basis, the lack of curatorial engagement at the Zeitz MOCAA shows the discomfort of curators who feel a need to emphasise their "Africanness" (Coetzee in Agnew 2017: 96), and stress that "representation […] is in [the] ethos" of the Zeitz MOCAA. Like Thania Petersen (2018), who felt uncomfortable exhibiting her works on the walls of an institution founded by "the very same people who oppressed" South Africa during colonialism and apartheid, the curators feel uncomfortable in a role that constitutes them as "white promoters [of] black [art]" (Blackman 2015). As such they all feel ambivalent in a museum which itself is "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha 1994: 127). Like the artists exhibited there, and the curators working there, the Zeitz MOCAA is itself "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967: 97): placed in Cape Town, at the tip of the African continent, in a city which many deem less *African* due to its strong links to the Atlantic and Indian Oceans that shaped it, and whose population clearly indicates its historical bonds to Europe and Asia, the Zeitz MOCAA is less representative of (black)

Africa than cities like Johannesburg, Nairobi or Lagos would have been. At the same time, the artists exhibited there praise the museum as "really significant" (Chiurai in Burke 2017), but they feel ambivalent in a space where they cannot necessarily express themselves with the same "local" links as they would have liked.

Only in the global art community is the Zeitz MOCAA able to present itself as a representative of Africa: in South Africa, the great majority stays away, although *they* are the people for whom the museum claims to exist. With the new museum on the V&A Waterfront, the team behind the Zeitz MOCAA wanted to show to the world that "We can do it too! This is the time for Africa!" They were looking for recognition from an international audience who would uplift not only the museum, but also Cape Town, South Africa, and perhaps all of Africa, to the *global*. As I have shown, this recognition was sought by an audience that primarily came from the Global North. With its exclusive location and expensive entrance fee, the Zeitz MOCAA is catering more for a predominantly white Capetonian and foreign audience than the African public it claims to exist for.

In the future, it might be possible for the Zeitz MOCAA, with its sheer volume and more than 350,000 visitors in its inaugural year – making it "the most highly attended art museum on the African continent" (Zeitz MOCAA 2019h) – to live up to its promises to develop a new cultural infrastructure in South Africa. But as *Art Africa* writer Ellen Agnew (2017: 96) stresses, "we must be careful not to let Zeitz MOCAA become yet another platform for the post-colonial gaze to dictate over Africa, as if collectors, gallery owners and gallerists are the only ones capable of 'saving' and 'salvaging' Africa". Agnew (2017: 97) highlights her difficulties in ignoring "the overarching amount of white male voices in the construction of the museum", but thinks that in light of "the global uncertainty that we are currently facing, society is in [such] need of an alternative perspective of the world [that] perhaps we should reconsider our critique of Zeitz MOCAA". Agnew's words can be seen in relation to the impatience for change I described in Chapter II on the Rhodes Must Fall movement at UCT and the *Our Lady* exhibition at the Iziko SANG. But when the Zeitz MOCAA team sets out to "contribute to the transformation and decolonisation of institutions that the 'Fallists' [fought] for so fervently" (Agnew 2017: 97), without critically engaging with its own curatorial choices, they overlook the fact that the privilege of being white comes at the expense of those who are not (López 2005: 13). The power to exclude – or, as Jean-Paul Sartre (1964: 13) famously put it, to enjoy "the privilege of seeing without being seen" – is being kept in the hands of a white minority, when curators like Coetzee and collectors like Zeitz insist on being the ones defining what contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora is.

In being unwilling to engage in debates about their curatorial choices or practices of collecting, presumably out of fear of the level of criticism they could be faced with, the Zeitz MOCAA team is

upholding a hierarchy between themselves and the artists and continent they claim to be bringing ”the world to [the] shores [of]” (V&A Waterfront 2016). Their support of artists and their employment of assistant curators from a diverse though largely South African background can thus be seen as solidifying the historical structure of ”white promoters and black practitioners” (Blackman 2015). Their continuation of this hierarchy makes the white curators feel ambivalent and uncomfortable to such an extent that they feel pressured to emphasise their own “Africanness” (Coetzee in Agnew 2017: 96). In this way, a double demand for recognition is established: one targeted at the global art world, which I have called a demand for global recognition, and one targeted at local South African audiences, who are expected to consolidate the curators’ assumed authority to represent the art of the continent by recognising their “Africanness”. Sensing that this latter kind of local recognition might be difficult to achieve, the curators justify their positions by emphasising their awareness of the importance of representation.

The exclusivity of the Zeitz MOCAA emphasises that, while the international art market has turned its attention towards contemporary art from Africa, most of its buyers and viewers are still European or otherwise Western. By primarily addressing their messages about the greatness of Africa and African art to European or Western audiences, the Zeitz MOCAA team are continuing a long-established tradition of fitting exhibitions to European or Western epistemological frameworks. However, with renewed leadership in the aftermath of Coetzee’s resignation, the Zeitz MOCAA might be heading towards a future that is more in tune with the museum’s vision of being an ”open and shared space for all” (Heatherwick in Frearson 2017). Coetzee’s directorship has been split into three positions: Executive Director and Chief Curator (Koyo Kouoh), Director of Institutional Advancement (Brooke Minto) and Director of Operations (Fawaz Mustapha). Kouoh, who has specialised in photography, video and art in the public space, has curated a number of exhibitions internationally, and sees her appointment as ”an unprecedented opportunity to create a strong home for the production, exhibition, discussion and collection of contemporary art in Africa” (Kouoh quoted in IOL 2019). Mustapha came from a position as Director of Business Management at UCT and is currently overseeing the operations and day-to-day management of the museum, while Minto was appointed from the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York and is now overseeing the museum’s communications and publications and its relations with its patrons and members (Zeitz MOCAA 2019h). She has emphasised that the museum’s new leadership will participate in “many public conversations” (Minto in Torchia 2018) and has thus highlighted the importance of further linking the museum to local audiences.

Under its new leadership, the Zeitz MOCAA has taken steps towards a shift in curatorial policies. In October 2018, it announced the formation of a new curatorial advisory group chaired by the South African artist Gavin Jantjes and consisting of the South African curator Gabi Ngcobo and the British artist and filmmaker Isaac Julien (Zeitz MOCAA 2019g). Azu Nwagbogu, who was the acting chief curator until Kouoh took over in March 2019, has further stated that the Zeitz MOCAA will move away from the founding collection of Jochen Zeitz, with external loans bringing more curatorial balance to future exhibitions (Blackman 2018b). Whether the new curatorial advisory board and a more balanced collection will open up discussions about what Africa and African art is remains to be seen. The Zeitz MOCAA's ability to be the accessible and open space it set out to be depends on whether or not it will manage to open its doors to its targeted visitors and welcome more schoolchildren and non-wealthy (South) Africans over its threshold. So far, however, the museum for all of Africa that was announced in the speeches at the grand public opening has not materialised. The demand for global recognition of Africa and African art museums as institutions in the same league as the MoMA and Tate Modern shows how demands for recognition do not only occur locally in South Africa, but are also directed to an international audience that mainly comes from the Global North.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored how demands for recognition influence debates about curation and decolonisation in contemporary South Africa. I have argued that these demands, which often seem demand*ing* for the curators who must deal with them, are provoked by the continuous domination of Eurocentric classificatory and exhibition practices. Although curators are trying to include, diversify and incorporate other ideas and world-views into their exhibitions, the thesis has demonstrated that the museological practices of the institutions they represent are changing only slowly. Museums constantly mimic classificatory practices based on European epistemological frameworks that highlight objects produced by Europeans or white Africans as either "high art" or objects of cultural historical value, while objects produced by black Africans tend to be classified as either art or "ethnographica". Objects of black African origin are thus still treated differently than objects of white African or European origin. Although since the ending of apartheid the former have largely been removed from the museums of natural history in which they had often been exhibited until then, their exhibition in art museums and galleries has not spared them from certain kinds of othering or exoticisation. Objects like the Zulu headrests displayed at the Johannesburg Art Gallery are still to some extent treated as curiosities presented in an art gallery as art, while at the same time belonging to a "heritage collection" exhibited for its historical significance. Similar objects of white African or European origin are still mostly displayed in museums focusing on cultural history or design qualities. As such, a significant distinction between objects, depending on the ethnicity of their maker, remains.

Throughout the thesis I have explored how curators deal with competing demands for recognition by looking at how they choose to classify and exhibit art from South Africa, but also how they engage with the public and showcase themselves as promoters of a global and united South Africa. By looking at exhibition and classification practices in museums and art galleries in South Africa, I have examined how my interlocutors deal with the legacy of colonialism and highlighted how South African museums and art galleries are working to reach broader audiences in an attempt to undo colonial and apartheid-era structures. In order to analyse these phenomena, I have engaged with Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) concept of ambivalence in order to show the ambivalent state of being in-between in which many of my interlocutors find themselves. The "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967: 97) situation that artists and curators are caught up in is a result of feelings of inadequacy, of being "almost the same but not quite […] Almost the same but not white" (Bhabha 1994: 127-128). As I have shown, it is not only black artists and curators who feel ambivalent in contemporary South Africa: the Rhodes Must Fall students' attempts to decolonise UCT resulted in a re-racialisation that led to a situation in which people of mixed race who self-identified as black were met with accusations of not being black enough. Similarly,

the former chief curator of the Zeitz MOCAA, Mark Coetzee (quoted in Agnew 2017: 96), did not "like it when people prescribe what African is". As a person born and bred in South Africa, he *felt* African, but constantly had to justify being so, due to the white colour of his skin, which put him in an ambivalent position where he was "no longer European, not yet African" (Coetzee 1988: 11).

I have shown how curatorial practices continuously mimic those from the Global North and reaffirm "the global hierarchy of value" (Herzfeld 2004) by adopting notions of art and culture originating from Europe. The way in which the curators in the Zeitz MOCAA speak more to audiences from the Global North than to the (South) African public for whom they claim to exist emphasises that the global recognition sought after by the museum team is imagined as coming from Europe or the West. By primarily addressing their messages about the greatness of Africa and African art to European or Western audiences, the Zeitz MOCAA team are continuing a long-established tradition of fitting exhibitions to European or Western epistemological frameworks. The greatness of the art they want to emphasise is thus made dependent on its imagined recognition from the Global North. As I have shown, this approach excludes the large majority of (South) Africans: by aiming its exclusivity and branding at international visitors, the Zeitz MOCAA has become more of a luxurious playground for white Capetonians and foreign tourists than the accessible museum it set out to be. Its curators' reluctance to discuss *what* they consider Africa and African art to be further emphasises the exclusivity of the new museum, where some of the exhibited artists feel caught up in an ambivalent position between the curators' wish to highlight African art as *global* art (Belting 2009) and the place-specifics or locality they would have liked to express through their art.

The inaccessible museum space is upheld by structures of exclusion, in which white curators are constantly distinguishing themselves by turning debates about representation into debates they, through their academic training and fitting cultural capital, feel superior in. This was the case in the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition I examined in Chapter II. However, "good taste" matters less directly today than it did, when Bourdieu (1984) carried out his research on distinction in 1960s France (Bennett et al. 2009: 259). This is evident at the Iziko SANG, where the curators' assumed authority to represent the art of the nation is constantly challenged by artists, other curators, sex-workers and students who, through their demands for recognition, are forcing institutions with strong colonial and apartheid ties to rethink their curatorial approaches. In this process, which has been ongoing since the end of apartheid, curators are adjusting the collections they exhibit and attempt to include more art of black African origin in order to "cover the holes in the collection", as Alva put it in relation to the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Curators can no longer justify solely exhibiting objects of European "high art". During the last three decades, South African curators have increasingly

incorporated objects formerly known as “ethnographica” and artworks made by contemporary black (South) African artists into their collections.

The incorporation of artworks by black (South) African artists reflects an international tendency for curators and art collectors to turn their attention to Africa as “the new hot thing” (Enwezor quoted in Klein 2015: 21). This attention can be seen as a continuation of the attention European colonisers, artists, collectors and curators have directed towards Africa since the so-called *Scramble for Africa*. However, their present-day attention is significantly different in its approach towards African artists who produce the sought-after artworks. Although things are only changing slowly, contemporary exhibitions of African art illustrate a very different attitude towards artists from Africa than that expressed in exhibitions of African art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As I have shown, this change results from years of demands for recognition through which it has become clear to white curators the world over that their assumed authority to represent is no longer a given. Their choices are being questioned, sometimes to the extent where artworks have to be removed and exhibitions closed down, in order – for example – to make room for artworks recognising a black, female sex worker.

In the process of curatorial changes, I have showed how contemporary South African curators like Ayanda and Avigail oppose the assumed valorisation that objects formerly known as “ethnographica” supposedly acquire when they are exhibited in art galleries. These two curators object to the inclusion of material culture from Zulu- or Xhosa-speaking South Africans in places where the material culture of English- or Afrikaans-speaking South Africans is not included. Their argument is that *all* South Africans are capable of expressing themselves artistically in “global art forms” (Harris 2017: 87) similar to those exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA. However, by highlighting the modernism of contemporary South Africans, the two curators are letting go of an important part of South Africa’s artistic history: if objects like the Zulu headrests are not to be displayed in an art gallery, but alongside the cultural historical objects of white South Africans in history museums, there is no room for more traditional African artworks that are *not* solely printed, painted or sculpted for aesthetic contemplation. In the process of being respected and recognised on the global art scene as modern artists in their own right, South African curators like Ayanda and Avigail and artists like Lerato are thus letting go of any place-specifics of art from Africa and thus of an important part of the artistic tradition of Africa in the process.

In analysing the ambivalent situation in which these three interlocutors found themselves, I adopted Bhabha’s (1994) concept of ambivalence, as it corresponds well with the experiences of curators like Ayanda who had been schooled in a system shaped by colonialism and thus saw her own material

culture through the eyes of the coloniser. Refusing to be considered an "other" in her own country, Ayanda chose instead to reject the specifics of historical art from Africa in her attempt to become equal to her former but still ever-present coloniser. Ayanda was thus trapped in an ambivalent situation, as she could not establish any difference for herself from the coloniser, but could not fully become his equal either (Cixous 1986: 71; Young 1990: 6). Similarly, Lerato found herself caught between how she would *like* to express herself visually and how people around her *expect* her to express herself as a black, Zulu-speaking South African artist. Producing art based on history, spirituality, gender, etc. resulted in a categorisation of her art as *African*, although artists who base their work on these themes can be found in most places. Lerato thus found herself in an ambivalent situation in which the colour of her skin constantly made her experience being considered "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha 1994: 127): as an individual being thrown from side to side in a constant internal negotiation forced upon her by a colonial system which continuously forced her to ask herself: "'In reality, who am I?'" (Fanon 2001: 200).

In this thesis, I have explored how the opposition to the continued dominance of European or other Western epistemological frameworks sometimes leads to intense struggles. Student activists, artists, sex-workers and others demand recognition in universities, museums and other public spaces to a degree that constitutes decolonisation as not only an extremely difficult, but also an often violent phenomenon (Fanon 2001: 27). The struggles to decolonise UCT and the Iziko SANG both emphasise that solutions will not "come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding" (Fanon 2001: 27). However, the conflicts examined also stress that the process of decolonisation rarely happens overnight but is a long and often painful process, in which attempts to replace one "'species' of men by another" (Fanon 2001: 27) sometimes end up re-introducing the very same racialized categories of the oppressive system they have set out to replace. The process of rethinking and replacing old thought-systems and structures in society is difficult, and the removal of statues, curricula and museum objects found to be derogatory or humiliating is only one of the changes being demanded. As I have shown, although the empty plinth on the UCT campus and the empty gallery walls of the Iziko SANG both stand as material reminders of the difficulties involved in decolonising cultural institutions in South Africa, they can also be seen as clean slates upon which the country's future can be painted anew. The absences on and around the plinth on the UCT campus and the gallery walls of Iziko SANG were not lasting absences but were reclaimed, for example, by Sethembile Msezane's bird-like figure of Chapungu, who majestically replaced the statue of Cecil John Rhodes and thereby showed that other public celebrations than that of colonial heroes are possible.

Similarly, the conflict at the Iziko SANG in relation to the inclusion of the artwork by Zwelethu Mthethwa did not end with the empty state of nothingness described by Mbembe (2015a: 4) but with a curatorial decision to replace Mthethwa's photographic artwork with a painting of his until then faceless, invisible, black, female victim. However, privileges are rarely removed without a fight, and the involvement of white artists and curators in the discussion about the *Our Lady* exhibition at the Iziko SANG and how they spoke on behalf of others shows that the assumed authority to represent is not easily given away. It is noteworthy that the statue of Rhodes at UCT was kept rather than crushed and that Msezane expressed herself in a language that, despite its African references to Egyptian mythology and Xhosa diviners, mimicked the European or Western material language of statues. This highlights the difficulties the students, artists and sex-workers whose struggles I have presented in this thesis experience in finding an alternative to the existing Eurocentric curricula and material culture that surrounds them. The demands for recognition I have examined in this thesis are clear examples of the difficulties involved in navigating in institutions linked to a painful past. However, it is through these kinds of engagement that protesters like the Rhodes Must Fall students and the contemporary artists on display in the *Our Lady* exhibition forcefully show their willingness to find alternatives to the existing structures. Through this engagement, they inspire institutions to rid themselves of their strong colonial legacies and to remove statues, artworks and other material symbols of oppression. As such, the demands for recognition I have examined might be demand*ing* for the curators who must deal with them, but they also have the potential to change the status quo and provide alternative public narratives that represent a more diverse South Africa.

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39. School children gathered for the grand public opening of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa. Photo by author September 2017.

40. Archbishop Desmond Tutu addressing the public (with founder Jochen Zeitz seen standing in the front) at the opening of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa. Photo by author September 2017.

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49. Facebook-update posted by Jochen Zeitz on the day of the grand public opening of the Zeitz MOCAA. Retrieved by author September 2017.

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53 and 54. *Signal Her Return I* (2016) by the South African artist Sethembile Msezane exhibited at the Zeitz MOCAA as part of the museum's inaugural exhibitions. Photos by author February 2018.

55. A female visitor taking in part of the South African artist Kendell Geers" *Hanging Piece* (1993) artwork exhibited as part of the Zeitz MOCAA's inaugural exhibitions. The artwork consists of bricks hanging from ropes in the ceiling in similar ways as the bricks hung from highway bridges by anti-apartheid activists during their struggle against apartheid. The bricks were hung at the height at which cars would have their windshield crushed when driving into them. Photo by author February 2019.

56. The *Runaways* (1993) series by the New York-born American artist Glenn Ligon, which was part of Zeitz MOCAA's inaugural exhibitions. The series "began with an investigation into the life of Henry "Box" Brown, a slave who fled captivity in 1849" (Zeitz MOCAA 2019i) and is, like Geers" *Hanging Piece* (1993), an example of how artworks on display at the Zeitz MOCAA speak against colonial and apartheid-era oppression. Photo from Zeitz MOCAA 2019j: https://zeitzmocaa.museum/art-artists/ [Accessed 28th February 2019].

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Appendix One: Fieldwork Cases and Applied Field Methods

Applied Field Methods						
Case	Locality	Time of fieldwork	Interviews	Participant observation	Photos	Written materials
Africa Worlds Gallery at the Horniman Museums & Gardens	London, United Kingdom	February 2016	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Artist & Empire – Facing Britain's Imperial Past at Tate Britain	London, United Kingdom	February 2016	One (01)	Visiting exhibition, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition catalogue and labels, online resources, articles
Sainsbury Africa Galleries at the British Museum	London, United Kingdom	February 2016	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
District Six Museum	Cape Town, South Africa	April 2016	None	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Iziko South African National Gallery	Cape Town, South Africa	April 2016	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition catalogue (*Moses Tladi Un-earthed*) exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Iziko Castle of Good Hope	Cape Town, South Africa	April 2016	None	Visiting castle and on-site exhibitions, taking notes of visitor interactions, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Iziko South African Museum	Cape Town, South Africa	April 2016	None	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Robben Island Museum	Cape Town, South Africa	April 2016	None	Visiting island, taking notes of visitor interactions, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Zeitz MOCAA Pavilion	Cape Town, South Africa	April 2016	None	Visiting gallery space	Yes	Exhibition labels, online

						resources, articles
Museum Volkenkunde	Leiden, the Netherlands	October 2016	None	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Rijksmuseum	Amsterdam, the Netherlands	October 2016	Two (02, 03)	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Tropen Museum	Amsterdam, the Netherlands	October 2016	One (04)	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Ditsong Museum of South Africa	Pretoria, South Africa	October 2016	None	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Freedom Park	Pretoria, South Africa	October 2016	None	Visiting museum and outdoor exhibition spaces, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Kruger House Museum	Pretoria, South Africa	October 2016	None	Visiting museum and garden, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Pretoria Art Museum	Pretoria, South Africa	October 2016	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Voortrekker Monument	Pretoria, South Africa	October 2016	None	Visiting monument, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Apartheid Museum	Johannes-burg, South Africa	November 2016	None	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Constitution Hill	Johannes-burg, South Africa	November 2016	None	Visiting the former prison and military fort, which now houses the constitutional court, taking notes of exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Goodman Gallery	Johannes-burg, South Africa	November 2016	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions	Yes	Exhibition labels, online

				and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors		resources, articles
Johannes-burg Art Gallery	Johannes-burg, South Africa	November 2016	One (06)	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Maboneng	Johannes-burg, South Africa	November 2016	None	Visiting the private galleries, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Museum Africa	Johannes-burg, South Africa	November 2016	None	Visiting museum and gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Standard Bank Gallery	Johannes-burg, South Africa	November 2016	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Stevenson	Johannes-burg, South Africa	November 2016	One (07)	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Wits Art Museum	Johannes-burg, South Africa	November 2016	Two (05, 09)	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Durban Art Gallery	Durban, South Africa	November 2016	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Durban Natural Science Museum	Durban, South Africa	November 2016	None	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Kwazulu-Natal Society of Arts	Durban, South Africa	November 2016	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Goodman Gallery	Cape Town, South Africa	December 2016-January 2017	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Iziko South African National Gallery	Cape Town, South Africa	November 2016-January 2017	Four (17, 19,	Attending the exhibition opening of *Women's Work – Crafting stories, subverting narratives* taking place during	Yes	Exhibition labels, online

			21, 22)	a First Thursdays event, attending the public discussion of the *Our Lady* exhibition, visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors		resources, articles
Iziko Castle of Good Hope	Cape Town, South Africa	November 2016-January 2017	None	Visiting castle and on-site exhibitions, taking notes of visitor interactions, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Iziko Slave Lodge	Cape Town, South Africa	November 2016-January 2017	None	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Iziko South African Museum	Cape Town, South Africa	November 2016-January 2017	None	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Stevenson	Cape Town, South Africa	November 2016-January 2017	One (15)	Attending the exhibition opening of Nicholas Hlobo's *Sewing Saw*, visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Goodman Gallery	Cape Town, South Africa	November 2016-January 2017	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum	Port Elizabeth, South Africa	December 2016	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Cradle of Humankind	Maropeng and Sterkfontein, South Africa	January 2017	None	Attending guided tour of archaeological sites, visiting exhibition space, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Johannesburg Art Gallery	Johannes-burg, South Africa	January 2017	One (12)	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Pitt Rivers Museum	Oxford, United Kingdom	February 2017	None	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles

Sainsbury Africa Galleries at the British Museum	London, United Kingdom	February 2017	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
South Africa: the Art of a Nation at the British Museum	London, United Kingdom	February 2017	One (23)	Visiting exhibition, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition catalogue and labels, online resources, articles
Tate Modern	London, United Kingdom	February 2017	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Good Hope: South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600 at the Rijksmuseum	Amsterdam, the Netherlands	February and April 2017	Three (02, 03, 24, 25)	Attending exhibition opening and symposium, visiting the gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition catalogue and labels, online resources, articles
Museum Volkenkunde	Amsterdam, the Netherlands	February and April 2017	One (25)	Visiting museum, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Picasso Primitif at Musée du Quai Branly	Paris, France	July 2017	None	Visiting exhibition, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Joburg Art Fair	Johannes-burg, South Africa	September 2017	None	Visiting art fair, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, participating in talks and panel discussions and talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Art Fair catalogue, exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Maboneng	Johannes-burg, South Africa	September 2017	None	Visiting the private galleries, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Iziko South African National Gallery	Cape Town, South Africa	September 2017	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Zeitz MOCAA	Cape Town, South Africa	September 2017	None	Attending exhibition opening, visiting the gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles

L'Afrique des Routes at Musée du Quai Branly	Paris, France	November 2017	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition catalogue and labels, online resources, articles
Also Known as African Art Fair (AKAA)	Paris, France	November 2017	None	Visiting the art fair, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, participating in talks and panel discussions and talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Art Fair catalogue, exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Dada d'Afrique at Musée de l'Orangerie	Paris, France	November 2017	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition catalogue and labels, online resources, articles
Cape Town Art Fair	Cape Town, South Africa	February 2018	None	Attending talks and panel discussions while visiting the art fair, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, and talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Art Fair catalogue, exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Iziko South African National Gallery	Cape Town, South Africa	February 2018	One (28)	Attending talk during the Cape Town Art Fair with Bisi Silva and Sean O'Toole, visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Maitland Institute	Cape Town, South Africa	February 2018	None	Attending exhibition opening of Nicholas Hlobo and Clnga Samson's *Umthamo*, visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Rhodes Memorial and UCT main campus	Cape Town, South Africa	February 2018	None	Visiting memorial and the empty plinth on the UCT main campus, where the statue of Rhodes once stood	Yes	Online resources, articles
Zeitz MOCAA	Cape Town, South Africa	February 2018	Seven (26, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 35)	Attending talks during the Cape Town Art Fair with Thania Petersen and Ashraf Jamal, participating in curator-led tours, visiting the gallery space with and without audio-guide, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Beyond Compare: Art	Berlin, Germany	April 2018	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions	Yes	Exhibition catalogue

from Africa in the Bode-Museum at the Bode Museum				and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors		and labels, online resources, articles
Ashmolean Museum	Oxford, United Kingdom	April-June 2018	None	Participating in guided tours, visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Pitt Rivers Museum	Oxford, United Kingdom	April-June 2018	None	Participating in guided tours, visiting gallery space and library, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Museum catalogue and exhibition labels, online resources, articles
British Museum	London, United Kingdom	June 2018	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles
Victoria and Albert Museum	London, United Kingdom	June 2018	None	Visiting gallery space, taking notes of visitor interactions and exhibited objects, talking with staff and visitors	Yes	Exhibition labels, online resources, articles

<u>In total:</u>	63	
Cases in South Africa:	42 (67%):	20 (48%) in Cape Town
		12 (29%) in Johannesburg
		5 (12%) in Pretoria
		3 (7%) in Durban
		1 (2%) in Port Elizabeth
		1 (2%) Maropeng and Sterkfontein
Cases in the UK:	11 (17%):	8 (73%) in London
		3 (27%) in Oxford
Cases in the Netherlands:	5 (8%):	4 (80%) in Amsterdam
		1 (20%) in Leiden
Cases in Paris, France:	4 (6%)	
Cases in Berlin, Germany:	1 (2%)	

Appendix Two: Interviews

Interviews conducted during fieldwork								
Inter-locutor	AKA	Date	Profession	Place of Employ-ment	Gender	Race	Mother Tongue	Location of Interview
London, February 2016								
01		19.02.2016	Curator	British art gallery	Male	White	English	Museum café
Amsterdam October 2016								
02		05.10.2016	Curator	Dutch museum	Female	White	Dutch	Office
03		05.10.2016	Researcher	Dutch museum	Male	White	Dutch	Office
04		07.10.2016	Researcher	Dutch research centre	Male	Black		Museum Café
Johannesburg, November 2016 and January 2017								
05		01.11.2016	Curator	South African museum	Female	White		Office
06	Alva	04.11.2016	Curator	South African art gallery	Female	White		Office and Gallery Space
07		07.11.2016	Curator	South African art gallery	Female	Black		Gallery Space
08		09.11.2016	Researcher	South African research centre	Female	Black		Café in Bloem-fontein
09		11.11.2016	Curator	South African museum	Female	White		Office
10			Researcher	British university	Female	White	Danish	Garden of her house in Melville
11			Researcher	South African university	Male	White		Café in Melville
12	Ayanda	18.01.2017	Curator	South African art gallery	Female	Black	Zulu	Gallery Space
Cape Town, December 2016 and January 2017								
13		06.12.2016	Researcher	South African university	Male	Mixed		Café in Rose-bank
14		08.12.2016	Researcher	South African university	Female	White		Office
15		14.12.2016	Curator	South African art gallery	Male	White		Gallery Space

16	Tho-mas	15.12.2016	Researcher	South African university	Male	Mixed		Office
17		20.12.2016	Curator	South African museum	Female	Black		Office
18		03.01.2017	Researcher	South African university	Female	White		Office
19		03.01.2017	Curator	South African museum	Male	Mixed		Office
20		04.01.2017	Researcher	South African university	Male	Mixed		Café in Obser-vatory
21		06.01.2017	Curator	South African museum	Male	Black	Xhosa	Café in Gardens
22	Anna	06.01.2017	Curator	South African museum	Female	White		Office and Gallery Space
London, February 2017								
23			Curator	British museum	Male	White	English	Museum Café
Amsterdam, April 2017								
24		06.04.2017	Curator	Dutch museum	Female	Black		Museum Café
02		06.04.2017	Curator	Dutch museum	Female	White	Dutch	Office
03		06.04.2017	Researcher	Dutch museum	Male	White	Dutch	Office
25		08.04.2017	Researcher	Dutch university	Male	White	Dutch	
Cape Town, February and March 2018								
26		02.02.2018	Artist		Male	White	English	In Absentia via Email
27		04.02.2018	Artist		Female	White		In Absentia via Email
28	Andrea	14.02.2018	Researcher	South African university	Female	White	English	Office
29		17.02.2018 and 18.02.2018	Artist		Female	Mixed		Zeitz MOCAA and Blank and Steven-son After Party at Babylon
30		20.02.2018	Researcher	South African university	Female	Mixed		Café in Clare-mont
31			Researcher	South African university	Male	White		Zeitz MOCAA
32	Lerato	22.02.2018	Artist		Female	Black	Zulu	Studio in Rose-bank

33		22.02.2018	Artist		Female	Mixed		Michaelis School of Fine Art
34		27.02.2019	Researcher	American university	Female	White	English	Café in Kenilworth
35		02.03.2018	Artist		Male	Black		In Absentia via Skype

In total: 35

Curators: 15 (43%)

Researchers: 14 (40%)

Artists: 6 (17%)

19 white (54%), 9 black (26%) and 7 mixed (20%)

20 women (57%) and 15 (43%) men

Location of interview: 14 in office (40%), 11 in cafés (31%), 5 in gallery space (14%), 3 in absentia via Skype or email (9%), 1 in artist studio (3%), 1 in private garden (3%)

Total in SA: 28 (80% of total amount of interviews)

Curators: 11 (39%)

Researchers: 11 (39%)

Artists: 6 (21%)

14 white (50%), 7 black (25%) and 7 mixed (25%)

18 women (64%) and 10 (36%) men

English Summary

This thesis explores how demands for recognition are influencing debates about curation and decolonisation in contemporary South Africa, where a wish to be recognised on the international art scene was constantly present in the museum settings, art fairs and exhibitions in which I conducted my fieldwork. These demands were voiced by curators, artists, students and sex-workers, who demanded to be heard in a world which they felt for many years had neglected Africa and African artists and not given them the attention they deserved. The demands for recognition they raised were sometimes demand*ing* for the often white curators expected to deal with them: despite or because of their often privileged backgrounds, they too experienced their lives in an ambivalent and "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967: 97) environment as challenging. The demands for recognition targeted at them and audiences in the Global North can be seen as a wish to be ascribed a *positive* status in a society in which black South Africans continuously are marginalised. The demands show that the legacies of centuries of colonialism, followed by half a century of apartheid rule, has not disappeared overnight. Justice demands more than a fair distribution of material opportunities (Honneth 1995: 137) and even if conflicts over interests had been resolved in accordance with the wishes of, for example, the Rhodes Must Fall movement, in the years following apartheid, people who feel deprived of recognition are likely to remain normatively deficient until the systematically denial of the recognition they demand has been corrected. As Charles Taylor (1994: 26) has emphasised, "recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need". As such, demands for recognition are often the driving force behind political movements and social struggle (Honneth 1995: 137; Taylor 1994: 25). As this thesis shows, they can also be one of the driving forces behind the establishment of a new museum: at the Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town, attempts to direct international attention toward the South African art market is not just a corporate adventure, but also an example of an institution that demands global recognition for Africa as a continent that for long has been overlooked in the global art world.

Danish Summary

Denne afhandling undersøger hvordan krav om anerkendelse påvirker museale kurateringer og kampe for dekolonisering i Sydafrika, hvor et ønske om at blive anerkendt på den internationale kunstscene ofte blev udtrykt i de museumsmiljøer og udstillinger, jeg befandt mig i, under mit feltarbejde. Kravene blev stillet af kuratorer, kunstnere, studerende og sex-arbejdere, der krævede at blive hørt i en verden, de ikke mente havde tildelt Afrika og afrikanske kunstnere den anerkendelse, de fortjente. Kravene om anerkendelse var af og til krævende for de ofte hvide kuratorer, der forventedes at ændre deres praksisser: På trods eller på grund af deres ofte privilegerede opvækst, var også de udfordrede i et ambivalent samfund, midt i en brydningstid. Kravene om anerkendelse, der var rettet mod dem og museumsbesøgende i det Globale Nord, kan ses som et ønske om at få tilskrevet positiv status i et samfund, hvor sorte sydafrikanere fortsat føler sig tilsidesat. Kravene viser, at arven efter århundreders kolonialisme, efterfulgt af et halvt århundrede med apartheid, ikke forsvinder fra den ene dag til den anden. Retfærdighed kræver mere end lige fordeling af materielle goder (Honneth 1995: 137) og selv hvis konflikterne, der fulgte i kølvandet på apartheid, havde været løst i overensstemmelse med for eksempel Rhodes Must Fall-bevægelsens ønsker, ville mennesker, der føler sig frarøvet anerkendelse, fortsat kæmpe for den, indtil den dag, hvor den var opnået. Som Charles Taylor (1994: 26) har understreget, er anerkendelse ikke blot noget, vi skylder mennesker, men et basalt menneskeligt behov. Som sådan, er krav om anerkendelse ofte en af drivkræfterne bag politiske bevægelser og sociale kampe (Honneth 1995: 137; Taylor 1994: 25). Som denne afhandling viser, kan de også være en af bevæggrundene for at etablere et nyt museum: På Zeitz MOCCA i Cape Town er kuratorer og andre museumsansattes forsøg på at tiltrække international opmærksomhed mod det sydafrikanske kunstmarked ikke blot et forretningseventyr, men også et eksempel på en institution, der kræver global anerkendelse for Afrika, som et kontinent, der længe har været overset i den globale kunstverden.