

# I WANT TO TELL YOU MY NAME:

*Augmented Reality as conservation method for Between  
Words and Images by Ernestine White-Mifetu and Toni  
Giselle Stuart*

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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Full names of student: **San-Mari van der Merwe**

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Topic of work: **I Want to Tell You My Name: Augmented Reality as conservation method for *Between Words and Images* by Ernestine White-Mifetu and Toni Giselle Stuart**

### Declaration

1. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this **research proposal** (e.g. essay, report, project, assignment, dissertation, thesis, etc.) is my own original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, Internet or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements.
3. I have not used work previously produced by another student or any other person to hand in as my own.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

SIGNATURE: **San-Mari van der Merwe**

## Glossary of Terms and Definitions

### Activist Art

A term used to describe art that is grounded in the act of ‘doing’ and addresses political and social issues. The aim of activist art/ists is to create art that is a form of political or social currency, actively addressing cultural power structures rather than representing them or simply describing them.

### Anchor

An indicated ‘trackable’ point/area that can be used to position AR content.

### Archive

Specifically, in this case, an *artist’s archive* normally consists of documentation and ‘secondary material’. This includes material traditionally created alongside an artwork, which might include photographs, audio-visual material and sketches. It also includes practical records such as letters, financial papers or exhibition material. This material can be either physical or digital.

### Augmented Reality (AR)

The real-time use of information in the form of text, graphics, audio and other virtual enhancements integrated with real-world objects through the use of a smart device. This is accomplished through a ‘trigger’ – a real-world element objects or places that is used to connect the physical world to their virtual elements. Without this particular chosen physical item that exists in reality, the AR content wouldn’t be triggered to show. There are a variety of different kinds of triggers developers can choose to initialize their AR content. A static trigger, otherwise known as an AR marker, is a predetermined image that will launch the AR experience. These can be QR codes, an image or a logo.

### Beta

A version of a piece of software that is made available for testing before its general release.

## **Conservation**

The profession devoted to the preservation of cultural property for the future. Conservation activities include examination, documentation, treatment, and preventive care, supported by research and education.

## **Context-dependent**

Context consists of all the things about the artwork that might have influenced the artwork or maker. These would include when the work was made; where it was made (both culturally and geographically); why it was made.

## **Ephemeral Art**

All artistic expression conceived under a concept of transience in time, of non-permanence as a material and conservable work of art. Because of its perishable and transitory nature, ephemeral art does not leave a lasting work, or if it does, it is no longer representative of the moment in which it was created.

## **Geolocation**

The process/technique of identifying the geographical location of a person or device by means of digital information processed via the internet.

## **Geotag**

An electronic tag that assigns a geographical location to a photograph or video.

## **Installation Art**

The term is used to describe large-scale, mixed-media constructions, often designed for a specific place or for a temporary period of time. The focus on how the viewer experiences the work and the desire to provide an intense experience for them is a dominant theme in installation art.

## **Intangible**

An invisible, unseen, yet observable living heritage. It comprises a variety of topics ranging from concepts to rituals, lifestyles, behaviours, attitudes, and customs.

Specifically, Intangible art refers to the contemporary artworks that are mainly characterised by performativity and interactivity, such as installations and public performances, rather than a set of cultural practices.

### **Interactive Art**

Art that relies on the participation of a spectator. It is also computer-based, with the participant responding to the technology set up by the artist.

### **Plugin**

In computing, a plugin refers to a software add-on that is installed and aids in enhancing its capabilities through adding a specific feature to an existing computer programme.

### **Site-Specific**

A work of art designed for a specific location, if removed from that location it loses all or a substantial part of its meaning. The term site-specific is often used in relation to installation art, as in site-specific installation.

### **Tangible**

The constructed heritage that is visible or seen is tangible. It consists of actual objects, concrete materials, etc., such as coins, monuments, artefacts, paintings, inscriptions, and seals. Things accumulated over a long period can be seen and touched by artefacts in concrete structures stored in museums.

### **Time-Based Media**

Art that is dependent on technology and has a durational dimension. Usually time-based media are video, slide, film, audio or computer based. Part of what it means to experience the art is to watch it unfold over time according to the temporal logic of the medium as it is played back.

## Background to the Research(er)

I first began my studies at the University of Cape Town in 2015. I walked past the Rhodes statue the day the excrement was thrown. I lived in Graça Machel Hall residence when the university was shut down for the first time. I heard the protesters down the road at 6am every day. When it first began, I was confused. I failed to understand why it was happening. I was raised in a town where colonialism was a part of our lives. The name of the town is Newcastle, I grew up on a street called Rider Haggard, directly adjacent to Victoria Street. We weren't taught to challenge institutions. We weren't taught to question what we've been told to believe. We weren't told we could *ask* for what we deserve. By the time I finished my first year, I was different. It's what I love most about academia.

It is about being surrounded by people who are never afraid to make their voices heard. You learn as much outside of class as you do in them. You learn from not only the textbooks, but the experiences of the people standing in front of you. It was during my time there that I discovered I was a feminist, that I was queer, and that the side of the story that is often neglected, is the most worthwhile.

My undergraduate degree taught me to see these things, to embrace them. It was only during my honour's degree in Curatorship at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts that I learned it was something that could be creatively expressed. I was amazed to learn more about the power of the museum exhibition. I loved the technical things: making labels, setting up the space, trying very hard to align the words of the exhibition title while rubbing the vinyl onto the wall. But what made the biggest impact was the people we met – the curators of the exhibitions I so admired, and the immense stories that they held.

It was curators like Ingrid Masondo and her InterseXion exhibition where she allowed sex workers – in particular feminine identified transgender sex workers – to speak for themselves and their lives. It was Carine Zaayman who made the presence of the women under servitude known to anyone who would pass pillars of human height that were covered with their stories, so strategically placed. It was Ernestine White-Mifetu

who took a stand against the singular narrative that defines the identity of a woman who survives only in the closed archives of Parliament and returned her story back to her. It was my classmate who built an entire exhibition around a plug. It was the insight I admired, the way they could tell stories by putting them up onto walls.

I never thought I could contribute much to the narrative of curatorship, not when there are so many more important stories out there. And that's okay, I've always been very okay with this resolve. It did, however, mean that I was unsure what the role of my voice can be in relation to societal, political and historical challenges. I've realised since I've been working on this project, what I can do is provide an experience for these voices to be heard so that they aren't forgotten. Especially so when considering these stories, these intimate encounters with historical moments, are seldom able to be relived in the same set of circumstances. It is within the evocation of those moments where I begin to understand my place in history.

I'd like to summarise my research philosophy with the following quote by prose writer and poet, Audre Lorde: "I learned so much from listening to people. And all I knew was, the only thing I had was honesty and openness."

In saying that, I would like to give my most sincere thanks to Pippa Skotnes and the Centre for Curating the Archive where I completed my honours degree. Without the experience I had there, I would not have found my wonderful co-supervisor, Fabian Saptouw, and former senior lecturer of the course, and head curator of *Under Cover of Darkness*, Carine Zaayman who has taught me so much. But mostly, all of the brilliant artists, curators and conservators at Iziko and Michaelis, where I met Ernestine White-Mifetu who opened my eyes to the true power that a curator can possess.

Finally I would just like to extend a great thank you to Toni Giselle Stuart whose kindness equals her great talent. My mother, who's unfailing support is much of why I've been able to come so far. My father, who would have read this entire text cover to cover without being asked, singing my praises even if he did not really understand why I choose the subject matter that I do. Finally, the captains of our ship, Isabelle McGinn and Maggi Loubser for creating this course. We see your work, we appreciate all that you've done, and I truly hope that we can go out into the world and make you proud.

## **Abstract**

The conservation of time-based media is seldom straightforward. This is often because the key element in this form of art is not a physical object, but rather its character, message, or how the message is perceived and received by the visitor and their experience of it. Looking at site-specific artworks or exhibitions where the location is tied to a specific meaning, this essay discusses digital conservation options to ensure long-term availability and accessibility. This approach could be particularly significant for exhibitions that, as a result of their theme, content, or social commentary remain relevant today.

The approach of digital conservation discussed in the present research allows for the preservation of multiple component parts as a coherent whole as opposed to archival practice which would preserve the various elements separately as text, image, or recording in stasis. AR as a conservation method allows the presentation of both reality and an altered version side-by-side, adding to what the viewer can already see. AR may thus be a modern solution to the ephemerality of revolving exhibitions as it does not require altering a physical location, merely overlaying virtual content into a meaningful location.

## **Keywords**

Conservation; time-based media; augmented reality; exhibition; gender-based violence; protest; memory.

*Part One: your daughter's face is a small riot*

## *Preamble, The First Meeting, 2018*

**Date:** 18 September 2018

**Name of session and person running the session:** Uncovering forgotten voices in museum collections by Ernestine White-Mifetu

At the end of the session, we found ourselves seated on the floor. Our eyes were closed. I could hear someone crying softly, but none of us wanted to say a word. I don't think any of us could, it felt as if we didn't have the right. We had just heard the voice of a person who had been hidden from us for so long. The bodies we knew so well, the faces we could never recognise.

“Cover me please, ask the ocean to wash me clean ... Cover me please, ask the moon to bless my womb.”

We arrived at Parliament in high spirits. The horizontal rain of the winter had come to an end, and, in an hour, we could go home. Security was tight – very much resembling that of an airport. We had to make multiple stops – emptying our pockets, walking through metal detectors, filling in forms, and taking photos for our visitor's badges. We passed our badges among ourselves, laughing – it bore a striking resemblance to a mugshot. Our smiles not completely gone, we were taken through the building, into another, down the spiral stairs.

We were not told what we were there to do, or what we were there to see. We were simply told to not take photographs, but rather to make mental notes.

We were presented with an artwork titled “Hottentot with private parts,” created by French explorer François Levallant during his Cape travels in the 1780s. My first reaction was to look at her overly sexualised body, her drastically exaggerated genitals. Then, draped around her shoulders is what looked like a fur cape. It does not cover her body; she is exposed. Her face, however, is either covered or simply undetailed.

She was contrasted with the artwork of another woman, Narina. Narina, not only had a name but possessed beauty and kindness in her features. Lovingly replicated and respectfully covered by Levillant, we could confidently say that she was real. With regards to the first woman, there was some uncertainty.

“How would you feel if I told you she existed? How do you feel about these works now?” Ernestine White-Mifetu asked us. We were then led to the home where Levillant had once lived.

As we sat, side by side at a long table reminiscent of a boardroom, Ernestine read journal extracts written by Levillant to us. He describes the beauty of his beloved Narina, who he named after a flower. Narina, playing and dancing with her friends. Narina, enjoying her everyday life. He, too, documents his interaction with the nameless woman. This is when we discover that the woman, in fact, does exist. She is only identified as “Hottentot woman.” We discover that she was married, a mother, and advanced in her years. We learn that he is curious. She was confused and humiliated – she covers her face.

As a curator, Ernestine voices her struggles with approaching the experience of the nameless woman. This ultimately led to her planning her exhibition around this image, without *using* the image. She moved away from the explorer’s account – the only thing that, in a way, confirmed her existence to us. The collaborative poem that was performed by Toni Giselle Stuart in its place, was used to voice the woman’s experience, representing her in an intangible manner that made her present to everyone in the room. And, of course, at that point, it was all she was to us – a figure.

We exited Rust en Vreugd Museum with a collective feeling of shame. The sunlight felt harsh. As if we had seen something we shouldn’t and for that, we did not earn the warmth on our faces. And of course, that was the intention – to make us question our relationship with the meaning of the term ‘gaze.’

“You don’t hear her voice, but you *hear her voice*,” White-Mifetu told us.

## Chapter 1: her hands are a civil war

### Introduction

This chapter introduces the background, context and rationale for the research, as well as its aims and objectives. It explores the original 2013 exhibition; *Between Words and Images* and the various elements it contained. Considering these elements, a literature review is used to help determine the most effective method of conservation as well as the methodology that will be used going forward.

#### Background, Context and Rationale

From the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2013 to the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2014, and a brief hour-long window opened to just 12 honours students in August of 2018, a voice was heard. The exhibition at the Iziko Rust en Vreugd Museum in Cape Town dramatizes the experience of a woman, as illustrated in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by French explorer, François Levallant. Titled *Between Words and Images*, it was an interactive sound installation, a collaboration between curator Ernestine White-Mifetu<sup>1</sup> and poet, Toni Giselle Stuart<sup>2</sup>.

The exhibition is built around a series of four watercolour artworks on paper named *Hottentot with private parts*. These works formed part of the collection that was bought by South African Parliament in 1963. Speaker of the House of Parliament in South Africa, H.J. Klopper, authorized the purchase of the collection of 165 watercolour drawings which illustrated the South African travels of Levallant, advertised for sale at Sotheby's auction rooms in London (Hutchison, 2015: 127). Klopper recommended granting permission to the South African National Gallery to exhibit so that "as many

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<sup>1</sup> Ernestine White-Mifetu was born in Cape Town where she currently resides. She is both an artist and curator, her work investigating notions of place, identity and belonging in the context of South Africa's political and social history. When I met White-Mifetu in 2018, she was a curator at the Iziko National Gallery.

<sup>2</sup> Toni Giselle Stuart is a South African poet, performer and spoken word educator. Her work is published in anthologies, journals and non-fiction books globally. She is the founder of Athlone Young Poets at Belgravia High School in Cape Town, and the founding curator of Poetica at Open Book Festival.

of the general public as possible may have the opportunity of viewing them” (South African National Gallery, 1965, Foreword).

All acquired under the number 34340 in the Parliament art collection, then divided into 34340 (48), 34340 (49), 34340 (50) and 34340 (51). Number 48 (figure 1) is described as a woman with genitals that are a “natural size.” She stands, one foot on the ground and another on a rock, her legs spread open, and her knees bent. Her fur cape falls around her shoulders, behind her body. The majority of her face is hidden by the fur.

Number 49 (figure 2) is the image that was used as the exhibition template on the Iziko website of Rust en Vreugd and is consequently the image I associate most with *Between Words and Images*. The woman, again, stands in front of the same rocks, both feet on the ground this time. Her legs are closed, but her elongated genitals still draws the eye. She appears to be looking at the viewer, her hand covering the bottom half of her face.

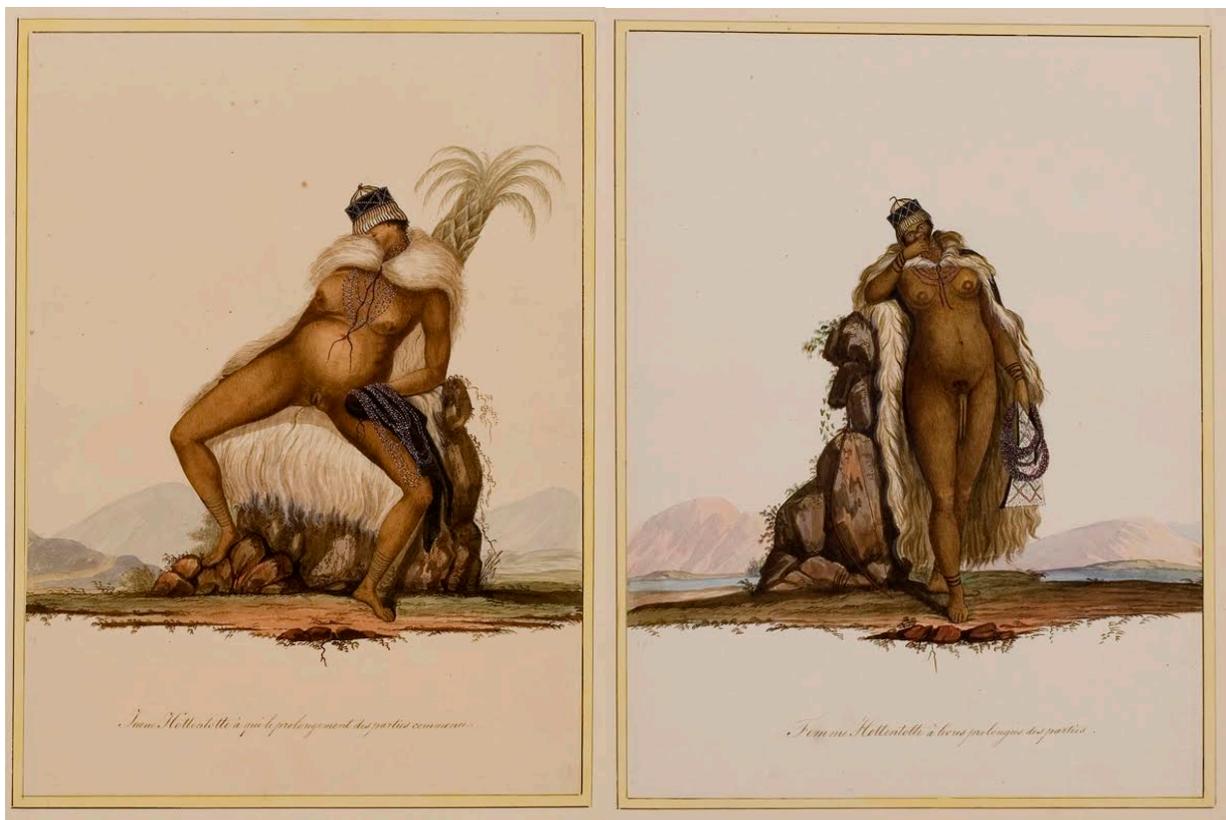


Figure 1: 34340 (48)  
 Levaillant, Francois (1753-1824). *Jeune Hottentotte à qui le prolongement des parties commence*. 1785-1795, 1811; watercolour on paper

Figure 2: 34340 (49)  
 Levaillant, Francois (1753-1824). *Femme Hottentotte à lèvres prolongées des parties*. 1785-1795, 1811; watercolour on paper

Number 50 (figure 3) reverts to a more unnatural pose, similar to that of figure 1. The woman, again with one foot on a, now taller, pile of rocks and the other on the ground. With the height of the rocks, the knee of the leg on them is bent, her legs open once again. Her exaggerated genitals are more prominent in front of the white cloak. Her head is turned away from the viewer, but not covered by hand or cloak. Her face, however, is undetailed. Her features are indiscernible. Ultimately, this proves indicative of the bias of Levailant. Even this action of creating a face without features serves as the dehumanisation that White-Mifetu addresses in her project. Finally, the image numbered 51 (figure 4) does not contain the face of the woman at all. It is purely a rendering of her exaggerated genitals in front of the fur cloak. This collection of works were temporarily taken to Rust en Vreugd.

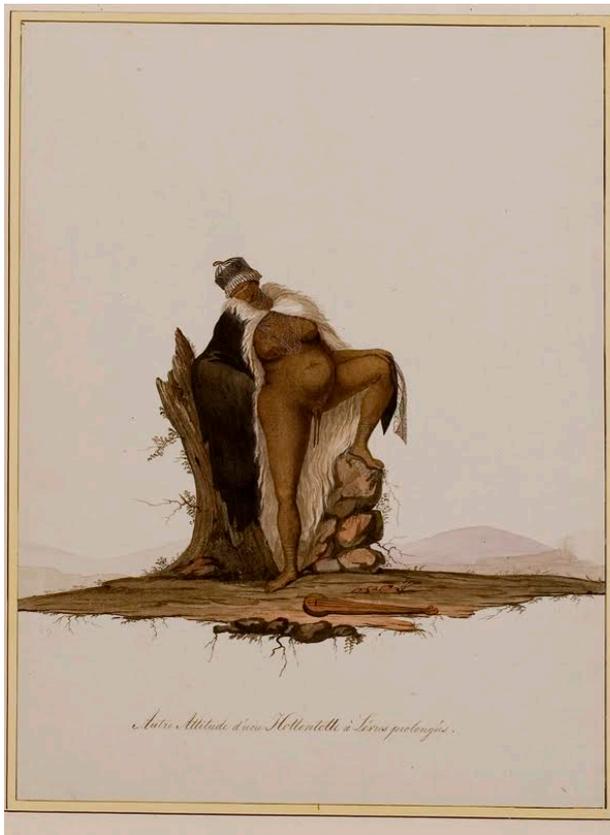


Figure 3: 34340 (50)  
 Levailant, Francois (1753-1824). *Autre Attitude d'une Hottentotte à Levres prolongées.* 1785-1795, 1811; watercolour on paper



Figure 4: 34340 (51)  
 Levailant, Francois (1753-1824). *Parties de grandeur naturelle d'une Hottentotte.* 1785-1795, 1811; watercolour on paper

Iziko's<sup>3</sup> Rust en Vreugd Museum currently houses the William Fehr Collection which consists of European artworks which date from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Much like the works of art that were brought to the house by White-Mifetu for *Between Words and Images*, the William Fehr Collection included ethnographic drawings of 'native' (Hutchison, 2015: 127) South Africans. Ian Glenn, curator of the 2012 Iziko South African Museum exhibition *The King's Map, Francois Levaillant in Southern Africa: 1781-1784*, argued that Levaillant played a pivotal role in the establishing of how Europeans viewed the Cape, and could thus be considered "a founding figure of South African culture" (Iziko, 2013). While this may be true in some respects, this does not take away from the way he chose to portray the people that he encountered and the divide that may have been (re)enforced. This is not something that was directly addressed at Rust en Vreugd before *Between Words and Images*.

The intended audience of Rust en Vreugd Museum (figure 5) would likely be European tourists who have come to see colonial furniture, and Africa through the eyes of a European settler (Hutchison, 2015: 128). It is this approach that White-Mifetu critiqued. She focused on a single room, just off the entrance of the house. She displayed the ethnographic prints one would expect, or even specifically look for in a colonial house that has been turned into a museum.



Figure 5: Rust en Vreugd Museum, Cape Town  
Photo by Nigel Pamplin, People's Post, 2022

<sup>3</sup> South African Museum was founded in 1825, the first in the country. In 1897 the Museum moved to where it is currently located in the historic Company's Garden. Since then, Iziko has opened a total of 11 museums including Rust en Vreugd, the Slave Lodge, the Social History Centre, the Planetarium and the South African National Gallery.

In a corner of the room where the exhibition was held, floor-to-ceiling extracts were placed. The travelogues of Levallant were described as “a mixture of truth, imagination and exaggeration, of scientific observation and anecdotes, impressions and feelings, including the pastoral and the erotic, commenting on fauna, flora, colonial life and tribal customs, political and social criticism, exposing settler brutality and abuse of indigenous people” (Mutton, 2016: 252).

In his writing, Levallant mentions the unnamed woman that White-Mifetu has built her exhibition around. The married, mature mother who had not been given a name, but reduced to ‘private parts’ which, tragically, can no longer be considered private. The woman, who returns the curious gaze of Levallant with confusion and shame.



Figure 6: Francois Levallant, *Narina, A Young Gonaquais*, 1790

Paradoxically, his view of the locals was not all mimicked by the description of the unnamed woman, as is seen in his descriptions of Narina (Figure 6). Levallant was unable to pronounce her name, he described it as “disagreeable to [his] ears, and it meant nothing to [his] spirit” (Gray, 1978: 49). Instead, he baptised her and named her Narina – meaning flower, a name Levallant said suited her in a thousand ways (Gray, 1978: 49). To Levallant, she was beloved Narina. To Narina, she agreed to carry this name for the rest of her life as evidence of their love. Though it should be noted that this itself served as an erasure of Narina’s identity. Given that the only remnant of her personhood is the representation in the colonial archive. Because he did not like how it sounded, we do not know her name.

This, of course, is not known by visitors as they first enter the house, then the room. Rather, they will admire the artworks and extracts from Levallant's travelogues, as one would expect to do in a traditional museum or gallery space. In the centre of the room were two chairs facing one another, one roped off and the other empty, inviting the guest to sit down. Once the visitor sits, the poem, *the woman* by Toni Giselle Stuart is triggered. If the visitor gets up, the poem stops.

The curator herself performed in the work. Clothed in red (Figure 7), present in the space but saying nothing, she was the embodiment of the solemn presence one was sure to feel when experiencing this exhibition. The ultimate goal of this exhibition is to be a listener, and a witness to an



Figure 7: Curator Ernestine White-Mifetu during "Between Words and Images"  
Photo by Odette Herbert, 2013

act of violation (White-Mifetu, 2013). Whether a violation of the privacy of the woman and her body or the violation of having witnessed similar works for generations, seldom thinking of the person that it is about. White-Mifetu and Stuart attempt to rewrite history as the narrative is taken from the artist, the observer, the settler, and the voice is returned to the subject, the object.

*the woman* is a poem that was commissioned for *Between Words and Images*, was recorded by Stuart and is about nine minutes long when played. The audio performance of this poem serves as the central part of the exhibition, Stuart's slightly cracked voice pleading, "cover me please ... ask the ocean to wash me clean<sup>4</sup>."

I came across *Between Words and Images* eight months into my honour's degree specialising in curatorship at the University of Cape Town. In our second-semester module, *Working with Museum Collections*, myself and my eleven classmates would

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<sup>4</sup> See full written and recorded poem in Appendix A.

meet every Tuesday morning. We would assemble at the Iziko Social History Centre, the Iziko National Gallery or the Iziko South African Museum. We were spoken to about the Winsor Chair collection held by the Social History Centre. We saw rows and rows of insect specimens, perfectly preserved and labelled. We learned that to become a fossil, you need to find the exact right place to die. We heard anecdotes about fake paintings in the gallery, how someone showed up claiming to possess an original Van Gogh. We were taught about ethical concerns in museum natural history collections, ethical concerns in museum art collections, the question of human remains in museum collections. And then, we met Ernestine.

Ernestine White-Mifetu allowed us a look into the project she devised for the degree that we were nearing the end of. It was just at the time when we had to begin to conceptualise ours. We were not taken to the familiar centre, the gallery, or the museum, but rather, to Parliament. As it has been four years since *Between Words and Images* concluded, Levillant's works were once again returned to their permanent residence. We were led from Parliament to a two-story house with long, uncut grass. On the second floor of the house that is now known as Rust en Vreugd, she read out loud from Levillant's writings. A woman's existence 'documented' in a way that was only engaged with from his own problematic perspective. These too were no longer on the wall of the exhibition space, as it was taken down when the exhibition had ended. White-Mifetu led us downstairs into a small room that could once have been a sitting room. As we were a group of twelve, there was no chair to be sat on for the poem to be triggered. We were asked to sit on the floor, in the darkness. We closed our eyes, and she played the recording of the poem.

What we were confronted with, was a representation of the unnamed woman that was not informed by Levillant, but by the woman's imagined experiences. The poem represented her in ways that were not physical, maybe not even visual. For me, White-Mifetu succeeded in revealing my own complicity in the viewing of the woman's body back in Parliament. It became apparent to me that I, as a post-1994 white woman, looked so easily upon this body that I was presented. It is simply what we are used to, a narrative I had not yet questioned. We were given an experience that went beyond only that moment, an experience that would be remembered.

This project holds personal significance to me as I was part of a class of twelve students invited into this exhibition that, for all intents and purposes, no longer exists. As presented to us by the mind that created it. After three and a half years as a university student, I was taught about past injustice. But when it comes from the mouth of a woman that has been so violated, it is difficult to even look at my own body in the same way. This is to say that I *experienced*, this is not something I had experienced before.

### Problem Statement

This exhibition is regrettably no longer accessible to the public. My classmate who cried during our session no longer remembers that she did. The artwork of the unnamed woman remains part of the collection in Parliament, Cape Town in a closed archive as they contain material considered to be “racially and gender-sensitive” (Hutchison, 2015: 127).

Still, Levallant's artworks are available online, or per request from the art department in Parliament. The exhibition, moreover, the experience of this exhibition, is not as easily located. Whether it be because the work is composed out of so many elements, and they are no longer united, or assembled, or simply the fact that time and space have rendered the exhibition difficult to discover or remember, we cannot be sure. This does not mean the work cannot be conserved. In fact, it might serve as the exact reason why this work *should* be conserved. Conservation in the context of the present research referring to the promotion of continued existence and accessibility of the exhibition, *Between Words and Images*, as a coherent whole.

When looking at a work that has so many intangible elements, we are faced with many questions. All that we can be sure of in this regard is the knowledge that most exhibitions are curated for a short time. When this time reaches its end, the exhibition will then disappear into history where it will only remain as recollections of those who have seen it, or in fragments of writing. This is even more difficult considering the fact that *Between Words and Images* contains a performance, fragments from an archive that is otherwise inaccessible, and a poem specifically composed for it. With so many elements needing to come together, it's not likely to be wholly experienced again in its

original form. This is already clear when considering my experience in 2018 did not mirror the experience of those who attended the exhibition in 2013. As for Ernestine White-Mifetu, she no longer lives in Cape Town. She is unable to take the next group of students into what this exhibition was, especially in a time where the work could have been of great importance.

*Between Words and Images* is part of a steady rise in efforts made in South Africa to restore the identity and dignity of previously silenced/marginalised groups. This is often coupled with the continuing pursuit of decolonisation. We as attendees of the original exhibition know that the poem written by Stuart is only an imagined narrative. Nevertheless, in the exhibition, the settler is portrayed as an intruder. The subject, who is predominantly represented through the eyes of a settler, is now a person with an identity, a family, and a name. This is a momentous switch from the colonial artworks and writings that occupy current mainstream historical narratives, and efforts can be traced throughout recent years.

This shift away from the colonial representation has taken the shape of representing not only marginalised people, but specifically, women and their bodies. In 2018, I served as an intern and translator for an exhibition titled *Under Cover of Darkness: Tracing stories of women in servitude under colonialism* at the Iziko Slave Lodge in Cape Town. This long-running exhibition aimed to give twelve women under servitude back their names and identities when they were previously only preserved within a colonial narrative, a colonial archive. The colonial archive, being almost completely one-sided. The agency and the chance to represent themselves is something that is taken away from the 'natives'. Based on this fact, curator Carine Zaayman made sure that the exhibition was about *them*, even though there was seldom more than a sentence or two to be found during research. She displayed their stories in English, IsiXhosa and Afrikaans. These stories were not simply blurbs on the walls, but on pillars, each designed according to the height of a member of the exhibition team (Figure 8). This created the feeling of the women themselves being present. *Under Cover of Darkness* closed in March of 2021 with a site-specific performance ritual by Toni Giselle Stuart named *Krotoa-Eva's Suite: A Cape Jazz Poem in Three*

*Movements*. This is the kind of exhibition that I believe has managed to continue on in the virtual domain after it physically has come to an end.



Figure 8: “Under Cover of Darkness” exhibition, Iziko Slave Lodge  
Photo by Vanessa Cowling, 2018

Just as Rust en Vreugd had an important role in the realisation and contextualisation of *Between Words and Images*, Zaayman’s exhibition did the same. According to the Iziko website, the Slave Lodge is the second oldest existing colonial structure of the Cape Colony and was used as a slave lodge until 1811. When considering its historical context, and even its physical presence, the decision to use the lodge as an exhibition space for these women and their stories proved powerful and effective. *Under Cover of Darkness* echoes what White-Mifetu and Stuart succeeded in achieving with their exhibition five years earlier.

While *Between Words and Images* is based on the artworks of Levaillant, they are not fundamental to its realisation. Rather, the heart of this exhibition is the poem, *the woman*, and of course, literally, the women. I do believe that the location, Rust en Vreugd Museum, aided in the final execution of what I’d like to refer to as the ‘complete experience’. Without being tied to this specific physical space, I question whether *Between Words and Images* can retain its poignant meaning and impact when placed

in another, but still meaningful, location. The act of using locations as tools to convey a message that so strongly contested their original purpose, emphasises the shifting of power and identity where the voices of these women are recognised. The challenge is considering this context, and as a conservator, finding a way for all of the elements of the work to coexist in a way that will be accessible in the future.

Conservation is still a rising field in South Africa. This essentially means that there are limited people with the skills needed to be able to provide the services required when caring for heritage. As an example, the UCT fire of April 2021 that destroyed the Jagger Reading Room required a team of conservators from the University of Pretoria to assist with the vast damage of books. It is just one example of how we as a country still focus, and perhaps justifiably so, on materiality and the preservation of tangible heritage forms (Cyr, 2008: 12). As such, the conservation of time-based media will be a challenge, and perhaps at this time, still a bit of an afterthought. A mentality shift away from traditional conservation values would be necessary. The focus should no longer be on a singular, authentic object and its care (Saaze, 2013: 16). Rather, the focus is on the experience of the viewer.

When considering the elements that form this interactive sound installation, *Between Words and Images* is to be categorised under the term “time-based media”. The essence of which is, essentially, time – a work that has a duration. The behaviour of such works has been described as both volatile and immersive (Viola, 1999: 88), characteristics which remain rather unprecedented in the history of visual art and, consequently, its conservation. This means that even now there is no clear-cut set of instructions to follow. What ultimately determines the value of time-based art is not necessarily its physical appearance, but its character. Therefore, the needs of each work that needs to be conserved, are unique and must be approached as such.

As *Between Words and Images* is an installation, what needs to be conserved is not only the tangible elements such as a physical location, but the intangible as well. The poem by Toni Giselle Stuart is not a corporeal object and therefore cannot physically decay. But without an anchor in the real world, and a body to represent, the full understanding of the poem can be lost. As the continued life of a work such as this

requires a space in which to function and a visitor to trigger the poem, an archive of the work in its impassive state would not do justice to the message it tries to convey.

To elaborate, an archive within this context is most often described as a space where things are hidden in a state of stasis (Breakwell, 2008). It is a compilation of everything that *is*, in this case, the exhibition, with no specificity as to what is significant and what is not. Ultimately, Sue Breakwell writes for Tate Papers, publication of the Tate Gallery: “an archive designates a territory – and not a particular narrative” (2008). It is not accompanied with, for example, the narrative as authored by the artist and curator. An archive, while able to contain each element and allow the visitor to view these separate components, it does not allow for it to come together to form what it was meant to be – an interactive<sup>5</sup> sound exhibition. Iwona Szmeltzer, professor of Conservation and Restoration of Movable Works of Arts at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, argues that to preserve “other” values (2012: 15), the replacement of its material substance may be permissible.

In *Back to the Future: Authenticity and Its Influence on the Conservation of Modern Art*, as part of the book *Innovative Approaches to the Complex Care of Contemporary Art*, conservator-restorer Monika Jadzińska refers back to the “Medieval cult of the relic” (2012: 84) where the material value of particular works was subordinate to its role in its cultural context. It was the fact that the object was offered to the gods that made it sacred, as opposed to the object itself. She continues by saying that in case the object was damaged, it was melted down and reworked – the authenticity of the substance was retained, though not necessarily in its original form (2012: 84). The value was determined by the authenticity of the experience, and this may well be the best way to approach the conservation of *Between Words and Images*.

### Aims & Objectives

Ernestine White-Mifetu and Toni Giselle Stuart aided in the return of a nameless woman’s identity and story. This is not what my project intends to do, it has already

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<sup>5</sup> Interactive can also be used to describe *Between Words and Images*. Interactive and immersive are technically different processes and under different circumstances, I would have described it as interactive. Iziko describes it as an “interactive sound exhibition”, and I wish to remain within the space created by the author of the experience.

been done. When choosing my topic, the main priority for me was choosing something that I've experienced, perhaps even someone that I know. And when it comes to *Between Words and Images*, my only goal was to make the work of these two women more widely accessible. It deviates from the one-sided narrative we have been presented with for many years, and it does so in a way is not as often explored. While the exhibition makes the viewer uncomfortable, I believe that it is a discomfort that is necessary if we wish to move forward as decolonialists.

I orientate my research as a conservation project, rather than an archival one, to determine whether this approach could be a feasible solution for the future conservation of time-based media in South Africa. I hope that not only will more exhibitions be available for longer periods, particularly for those that remain relevant in a changing context, but that by recreating them virtually, a broader audience may be reached.

Augmented Reality (AR) as conservation method may be a modern solution to the inevitability of revolving exhibitions. AR can show both reality and an altered version side by side, adding to what the user can already see (Coates, 2021). A work can be connected to its physical anchor and therefore keep the work fully accessible but will not necessarily be dependent on the space being set up in the form of an exhibition. It is not only the time-related elements that need to remain accessible, but also data connectivity for potential future viewers. As of August 2022, it has been reported that 78,66% of the South African population has access to the internet, this will reach 90,05% within the next 5 years (Galal, 2022).

I propose the usage of AR as a way for conservators to engage with a relatively 'new' tool for conservation. In my study, I proceeded by individually evaluating multiple databases and AR software to help me determine which was both sufficient for my project, and easily accessible for viewers wishing to (re)visit the exhibition in the future, which will be outlined in chapter 3.

Long-term access is only dependent on a smart device and a trigger to bring a library, a tree, or a post office<sup>6</sup>, to life in the hands of the visitor. A key requirement is the AR Trigger, which does not have to meet any specifications but needs to be relevant to the project. This image is scanned through a smart device like a barcode or QR code which acts as a gateway into the realm of augmented reality. This middle ground is a space where virtual aspects, in this case, predominantly audio, will interact with real-world surroundings.

It is simply not possible for every exhibition in a gallery or museum to remain permanently on display. Constantly changing exhibitions is a core part of what continues to bring patrons back to their much-loved cultural and educational spaces. But what of the exhibitions that make you question things you have been taught all your life, the ones that remain in the back of your mind three years and 1 456 kilometres later?

While *Under Cover of Darkness* is no longer exhibited at the Iziko Slave Lodge, a comprehensive website has been created to ensure the exhibition's lasting impact. The website contains a statement by the curator, individual pages for each of the twelve women, a gallery of all the rooms in which the exhibition took place and finally, a virtual tour. One might say that the exhibition has been successfully documented and closed.

Yet, the website has opened a window leading to the possible legacy of the exhibition, which can move forward. This extended project has been named *Uncovering: Women's Invisible Labour at the Cape* (Zaayman, 2021). A curated online symposium regarding the project took place in March 2021 where the legacies of women's labour in the Cape were considered – from colonialism to contemporary times. The symposium was divided into three parts: Women's labour in the shaping of public space, women's labour around food and sustenance and finally, women's labour in the fashion industry. As the research remains ongoing, this creates a shift from the

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<sup>6</sup> These are high priority sites for my research that will be further addressed in chapter 2.

past to the still very relevant issues of the present that I believe aids in the sense of continuity required to *conserve* an exhibition instead of simply *archiving* it.

To clarify, the presence of the website itself does not ensure its conservation in a case like this, but the symposiums that followed. The exhibition has ended, the walls are now presumably back to their less colourful state in the Slave Lodge, and the artefacts returned to the Social History Centre. It is this same group of curators who, in the name of these twelve women from the original exhibition, continue their work to create platforms for women to share their story, in their own language.

Currently, there is no complete online resource for *Between Words and Images*. On the Iziko website, there is only a summary under *Past Exhibitions* of Rust en Vreugd. The singular poem is available on Stuart's SoundCloud webpage<sup>7</sup>. One or two images of the performance, taken by Odette Herbert<sup>8</sup>, can be found on her Instagram page if you were to scroll down to 2013. Instead of a restricted performance or displaying some aspects of *Between Words and Images* along with documentation of past viewer experiences, the use of AR offers an alternative way to connect time-based, work-defining elements to their physical anchors (Arden, 2020) and keep original artworks fully accessible to viewers.

In art historian Anna Dezeuze's contribution to Tate Papers, publication of the Tate Gallery, *Blurring the Boundaries between Art and Life (in the Museum?)*, Dezeuze makes an interesting argument as to why relying predominantly on documentation of a work as a conservation method may not be successful. Even displayed alongside replicas, she argues that documentation (especially photographs, videos that relay information about the original audience's experience) can play an inhibiting role, as participants often feel compelled to copy what they see (Dezeuze, 2007), rather than engage with the works themselves. *Between Words and Images* cannot exist as an

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<sup>7</sup> Toni Giselle Stuart's SoundCloud page can be found here: <https://soundcloud.com/nomadpoet/the-woman-between-words-images>

<sup>8</sup> Odette Herbert was commissioned by Ernestine White-Mifetu to photographically document the exhibition and the space. Herbert's Instagram handle is odetteherbert and can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/odetteherbert/?hl=en>

interactive installation if there is no space for new visitors to experience the exhibition at their own pace, without the prompts of the people who were there before them.

In an interview with White-Mifetu in late 2021, she confirmed her belief that the exhibition may be successful if recreated in AR (S van der Merwe & E White-Mifetu, personal communication, 11 October 2021). Just as seen in *Under Cover of Darkness*, she believes that the context of the poem can speak to the circumstances of the present. Just as *the woman* is relevant to the artworks of Levillant, it may be just as relevant in the context of domestic violence or sexual assault survivors, whether in the museum space, gallery space, or an obscure street corner. The desire for trauma to be heard, for survivors to have their names known, is universal, says White-Mifetu. It creates a space where women can share their trauma, address it, and reclaim their bodies as they move towards healing. In moving the exhibition away from the physical location of Rust en Vreugd, one moves away from representing a specific, singular body. Instead, moving it into multiple different spaces and contexts, the exhibition may become a relatable space for contemporary women.

### **Research question/hypotheses**

As stated above, the research aims to understand whether the exhibition *Between Words and Images* by Ernestine White-Mifetu can be conserved/preserved as experienced by the author at the Rust en Vreugd Museum in 2018. The initial research question on how best to conserve this work rather than simply compile its parts into an archive, will require an understanding of the difference between the two. Both concepts will be explored to understand how *Between Words and Images* may either lose meaning or remain relevant when the dynamic created between all its component parts are altered. In other words, is the exhibition context-dependent, or will it remain relevant when taking place outside of the Rust en Vreugd Museum. If the relevance and meaning changes with a different spatial arrangement or disembodied presentation, the question needs to be asked whether the value of the exhibition is found within a singular object or the experience as a whole. Therefore, would there be

a need to remake/restage this piece, or is it perfectly acceptable as a captured history in an alternate format such as augmented reality?

If augmented reality allows the component parts to be assembled and experienced by the viewer in the same manner as the artist originally intended, there are a few sub-questions that guide the experimentation in Chapter 3. Specifically, understanding the relationship between the trigger, the location and the augmentation. Are there sufficient surviving archived components of the original exhibition that could be reassembled from the fragments that have been archived?

## Literature Review

My research for this project covered a multitude of fields to gain a broader understanding of the options I may have when attempting to conserve time-based media.

In *An Innovative Complex Approach to Visual Art Preservation* (2012), Iwona Szmelter likens the broadening scope of conservation to the paradigm shift in the care of heritage. This includes the incorporation of the material and non-material understanding of heritage, social changes, globalisation, the mutual interrelationship and influences of cultures on one another, and even the current revolution of civilisation which has been produced by the internet. Only having obtained the whole data package, i.e., performance, time-based media, conceptual areas, etc., are we able to design a conservation programme for a given object or complex artwork as part of visual heritage.

Humanistic and spiritual significance, according to Szmelter, provides some answers to questions such as: should the preservation of impermanent works focus on the original materials and idea of the artwork, or place more emphasis on the original appearance?

Mexican sculptor and installation artist, Helen Escobedo, reflects on works that have been preserved through history in *Work as Process or Work as Product: A Conceptual*

*Dilemma* (1999). She believes that it is often not only their physical evidence but the underlying meaning that is of importance as well. She notes that in her own experience, few of her works have survived in the way they were originally intended – whether this is site-specificity where the site changes, or rust, graffiti or discolouration of paint on the work itself.

For an artwork to endure, some aspect of it has to survive in a reasonably permanent material form, however integral ephemerality was to both its conception and how we might make sense of it at a later stage. In *The Enduringly Ephemeral* (2007), Alex Potts discusses our relationships with objects on exhibition in museums. It is argued that we are currently acutely aware that an object we see in a museum may not be the work of art as such, and that it can exist as a partly conceptual phenomenon that we as viewers need to reconstitute in our minds from the visual materials that have been put on show. This, in turn, means that as visitors to a museum, we feel we need to be made aware of the status of replicas of lost or degraded works, so we do not see these as being works of art in themselves, but as material from which we can project what some lost work might have been.

Where a work was conceived and realised largely as an event, and left behind no material object, it begins to take the form of the surviving traces and records we have of it. Whether visual or verbal, it becomes another constellation of material entities that are subjected to physical decay. These efforts need to recognise their paradoxical and contradictory status: that they can never actually reconstitute the work or make it fully present to us now. There was a consensus that replicas should be exhibited with a clear statement about their status and information about the evidence that guided their making. The object we see in a museum may not be the work of art as such, but it can exist as a partly conceptual phenomenon that we as viewers need to reconstitute in our minds from the visual material that has been put on show.

An interesting query regarding the conservation of time-based media is the fact that it is, as a medium, quite new. This means that the work we decide to conserve now, will determine what is viewed in future. Arthur Danto explores in his article, *Looking at the Future Looking at the Present as Past* (1999), that we simply cannot anticipate the

future's interests. All that we can do is present them with what we know and believe about the work and leave it for them to make sense of it on their terms. Boris Groys, on the other hand, explores what contemporary art means in a time of contemporaneity. In this case, our present has become a time of reconsidering, rewriting and recreating the past and the traditional historical narratives.

The Guggenheim has been one of the foremost institutions to support the conservation of time-based media. In *What is "Time-Based Media"? A Q&A with Guggenheim Conservator Joanna Phillips* (Dover, 2014), Phillips describes what it means to collect and conserve art in the age of new media. She clarifies that traditional conservation ethics are based on the notion of a unique original to be preserved whereas many contemporary artworks are lacking that originality because their artistic medium is reproducible, ephemeral or performative. Thus, what is needed is a conservation approach that identifies the importance of preserving the conceptual values of these types of media-based and performative works.

Similarly, the Tate Gallery in the United Kingdom has been one of the frontrunners in the field, collecting performance art since 2005, starting with *Good Feelings, Good Times* (2003) by Roman Ondak. This has given them a unique advantage of being able to assess both the short and long(er) term needs of each work and come up with strategies to serve the works accordingly. For the conservators of Tate, the strategy aims to retain the 'liveness' of a performance – the ability to activate it. They do not focus on capturing the "original", or the first performance, but rather on collecting information around the constant elements of what the performance is, or needs to be, to exist. The strategy aims to continuously capture the concept of the artwork – doing so permits the work to 'breathe' and develop with each activation (Lawson, et al., 2021). Working alongside time-based media conservation, existing documentation practices were analysed and reflected upon, along with speculation of future processes, which all fed into the shaping of the "performance specification."

In Mary Cyr's article *Conservation Issues: The Case of Time-Based Media Installations* (2008), she explores challenges conservators are faced when working with time-based media specifically. From a preservation point of view, media-based

artworks are to be viewed as sets of instructions, as opposed to precious originals. Cyr explores the intricacies that ultimately make time-based media time-based – this is to say, it is best understood in its installed state. If the installation elements were to be shut down, the work will be stripped of its meaning.

As a caution, Boris Groys (2011) warns that reformulation and rewriting in the face of time-based art transforms linear time into circular time, as he calls it, a “bad infinity.” Groys defines this as repetitive gestures and movements which have no beginning and no end, and ultimately no recognisable place on the axis of progress leading from the past to the future. The narrative can lose power over our imagination if we know that all the elements will keep returning to our field of attention.

Of course, this can prove challenging as it pertains to conservation through Augmented Reality. In *The Potential of Augmented Reality (AR) in the Virtual Performance of Time-Based Media Art* (2020), Sasha Arden explores the positive potential of augmented reality as a tool to preserve the experience of time-based artworks which are no longer able to function in their original space. Arden makes an important argument that AR has the potential to preserve performative aspects, allowing viewers to experience the meanings intended of the works that might otherwise be lost – possibly the most important aspect that I am trying to conserve. AR offers a unique method to connect time-based, work-defining elements to their physical anchors to keep artworks fully accessible to viewers.

In a practical sense, Brondi and Carrozzino (2015) describe how AR in a museum space can enhance the experience and understanding of its visitors. This marks a difference from traditional documentation of artworks that are available in the digital domain. When it comes to AR, this means that information will be available in real-time directly into the field of view of the person operating, and visible on the artwork they are related to.

Marinda Katz (2018) writes of a “virtual siege” that had taken place in April of 2018 at the Jackson Pollock gallery in New York. While the physical paintings remain unchanged, those who downloaded the MoMAR gallery app onto their smartphones, the viewer could watch the paintings become merely a point of reference that then

displays works by guerrilla artists. This project used AR to challenge MoMA's gatekeepers and museum curators at large, stating: "When you think that art defines our cultural values, you also have to accept that those values are defined by a certain part of society – call it the elite." The movement came to be relevant on a global scale as Damjan Pita and David Lobser, the people behind MoMAR, have been approached by artists in Los Angeles, China, Germany and Serbia. They are all hoping to use MoMAR's open-source software to enact virtual takeovers of major museums in their cities.

The article then switches to a different approach, mentioning the experience of Cuseum, a Boston-based start-up company that helps museums use technology to boost visitor engagement. CEO's Brendan Ciecko and Dan Sullivan used Apple's AR Kit within the walls of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. In 1990, thieves stole 14 works of art that have yet to be located, the empty frames remain on the wall. Ciecko and Sullivan sought to "restore" the missing paintings to their frames. The museum, however, did not wish to cooperate, and the project has since been placed on hold.

Another manner of practical expression of AR is seen in *New trends in art conservation, the use of lasers to clean as well as generate an augmented reality representation of an iconic public monument in bronze: The Alma Mater* (Dajnowski, et al., 2015). This article recalls the treatment and resulting AR presence of the outdoor sculpture, *The Alma Mater*, which is an iconic symbol of the University of Illinois and Urbana-Champaign. As the treatment involved removing the sculpture from its physical location, 3D scanning, and digital modelling techniques were used to create a new, temporary form of public interaction with the sculpture in AR. It is a longstanding tradition for students to have their pictures taken with the sculpture during graduation, and through AR technology, the students were able to get their pictures taken with the sculpture that was not physically present.

In *Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations* (2006), Pip Laurenson compares time-based media to a musical performance in the sense that both have work-determinative features. Performances

can occur at different times and different places with different performers and still be authentic instances of that performance.

Laurenson also mentions the philosopher Stephen Davies who introduces the idea that musical works can be ‘thinly’ or ‘thickly’ specified: if thin, the work’s determinative properties are comparatively few and most of the qualities of performance are aspects of the performer’s interpretation. Laurenson argues that the line between presentation and interpretation may be fine, it is like the time-based media installations that they allow, as part of their identity, the possibility of a bigger gap between what the artist can specify and the realisation of the work. The installation is richer than its specification.

## **Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology**

My research is qualitative as opposed to quantitative. I began by collecting all currently available information about the *Between Words and Images* exhibition. This includes the artworks by Levillant, the written and recorded poem, *the woman*, by Toni Giselle Stuart, photographs of the exhibition and photos and/or videos of Rust en Vreugd. This was used to create a clear understanding of the exhibition to generate a hypothesis to benefit the practical outcome of the project. Copyright permission has been given from both the curator and the poet as owners of the content to be used for the project as well as to make their material open access.

Research not directly related to information about the original exhibition was mainly sourced through conducting a literature review on subjects including contemporary art, time-based media, augmented reality and authenticity. In addition to a desktop survey on augmented reality, I tested out three different options for AR: Unity, Blippar and Adobe Aero, and is further discussed in chapter 3.

A typical exhibition with augmented reality begins with the AR trigger which is scanned, similar to a barcode and QR code, or through GPS tracking on the smart device. This leads the viewer to the poem, *the woman*. While I cannot specifically place myself or

my research in the Rust en Vreugd museum, an equally meaningful site for the augmentation to be triggered can be implemented. While the story that is told is not necessarily bound to Rust en Vreugd, it is concerning power, the presence of the body within a particular location that makes it so resonant. As such, I've chosen to assemble multiple scenarios, and multiple locations which all share the commonality of a meaningful place. This will be further explored in chapter 2.

### **Limitations, Significance and ethics**

I chose a singular exhibition to focus on, to allow myself to explore all the components of the exhibition. This included the technical, philosophical and ethical issues that may be attributed to the conservation of such an exhibition. Most importantly, I required and received permission to use the intellectual property of both Ernestine White-Mifetu and Toni Giselle Stuart in this Augmented Reality project which will be made publicly accessible.

I believe this study will contribute to the future conservation of previously temporary exhibitions. It will allow previous patrons to revisit the exhibition that they still remember years later and allow new visitors to have an experience that they would have missed otherwise. It may also aid in the continuation of exhibitions in the contemporary sense. I mean this in the way that *Under Cover of Darkness* has branched out into the stories of women today, I believe *Between Words and Images* can do the same. Some exhibitions do not cease to be impactful simply because they are no longer on display, especially if the subject matter remains relevant through multiple generations.

I realise that my chosen topic carries the weight of social responsibility as it addresses issues about gender-based violence which is in itself a constantly rising issue in South Africa. As the project takes the form of Augmented Reality, it proposes to be publicly accessible to anyone who has a smart device. Triggers are placed in open spaces and are therefore open to anyone who chooses to, or not to make use of them.

I hope that my research will promote the search and creation, conservation and transferring of knowledge in an ethical manner.

## Preliminary Outline of Chapters

Taking inspiration from Toni Giselle Stuart's *Krotoa-Eva's Suite: A Cape Jazz Poem in Three Movements*, I have elected to present my research in three movements. I have named the chapters according to the poem *Ugly*<sup>9</sup> by Somali poet Warsan Shire as published in her 2011 book, *Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth*. I selected this poem because I stumbled upon it during a re-read of the book in mid-2022, and I carried the message with me for a few days. Warsan Shire as a poet has been very consistent with her work, providing a fair balance of fierce feminism, and addressing her reality with so much truth that it makes the reader uncomfortable. It resonates with me as I believe this is an uncomfortable subject to write about, and similar to her and the other examples I've followed, I manoeuvre this by moving between formal academic text and creative writing. The chapters are as follows:

Part 1: *your daughter's face is a small riot* includes a preamble. *The First Meeting, 2018*, a recollection of my first encounter with *Between Words and Images*.

Chapter 1: *her hands are a civil war* focuses on the "what" section of this project. This includes information on the original exhibition as designed by Ernestine White-Mifetu, the social and historical context, as well as what time-based media is and what is required for it to be considered as a conservation project, as well as its significance.

Part 2: *a refugee camp behind each ear* is introduced through *Finding the Tree, 2022*, my search for anchors in a senseless world where an unmarked tree is the only witness to the death of a young woman and her unborn child.

Chapter 2: *a body littered with ugly things* focuses on the "why." Why is this project important enough to be remembered? Why does the voice of a woman from so many

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<sup>9</sup> See full poem in Appendix B.

years ago remain relevant to people of today? This chapter includes my exploration of why this project, with its message intact, should move forward into a contemporary space. This is where I research possible locations to move the project forward and the meanings these places will have.

Part 3: *but God* is introduced by what I hope the message of this project is – South African victims of gender-based violence. The list of women is so long, the list will continue to grow.

Chapter 3: *doesn't she wear* addresses the question of “how.” As I have discussed what it is I plan on doing to conserve this exhibition, and I have considered the meaning of multiple locations, chapter 3 recounts the practical aspect of this project. This chapter covers the exploration of AR software as a method of conservation – how it works, how it may fall short, and how it might aid us as museum professionals in the future.

Conclusion: *the world well?* reviews the results of the AR experiment – Did it work? How does it work? Does the exhibition work outside the context of Rust en Vreugd? Is this a feasibility for the future conservation of time-based media? A summary of what I have learned as well as what I wish to explore further.

*Part Two: a refugee camp behind each ear*

*“This tree told the story and the horror that Tshegofatso went through. This tree refused to keep quiet. The leaves that we walked upon rustled and refused to keep quiet. Why are men in South Africa quiet? This tree refused to keep quiet. This tree refused to close its eyes.”*

Patrick Shai, 2021

**Date:** 26 April 2022

It was a beautiful day. The sky was that kind of cloudless blue that only follows after a storm. We were all set for our 50-minute drive – juice boxes, chips, and a playlist of socially acceptable driving music.

We weren't all too sure of where we were going. After days of research, the information I could find was limited to – “At Florida Lake,” “near Florida Lake,” “in Durban Deep,” “in Roodepoort,” or simply just, “Johannesburg.” Occasionally this would be accompanied by a description: “open veld,” or “dumpsite,” sometimes “from a roadside tree for public display.” My compromise was to enter “Florida Lake” into my GPS, and once we arrived, we would drive from Florida Lake to Durban Deep.

Florida was not a suburb I knew existed, and it was not what I expected. It was green, and it was leafy. For all the time that I've lived in Gauteng, which is not all that long, I've never thought of it as green or leafy. Dusty? Yes. Dusty with purple splashes of Jacaranda trees? Yes, but even that felt like the exception. Florida Lake itself, or rather, that which we could see through the locked gates, was exquisite. We longed to enter the grounds and sit by the lake, but we turned around. We did not believe that this is where we would find the tree.

The tree. The tree where the life of Tshegofatso Pule would end, almost a year after the murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana, but not anywhere near the last death of its kind.

Tshegofatso Pule was 28 years old, and 8 months pregnant when she was found hanging from a tree on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 2020. Pule left her home in Meadowlands, Soweto, saying she was going to visit her boyfriend – her family never heard from her again. She was found shot, with knife wounds to her chest. Her death was paid for by

this boyfriend – the father of her unborn daughter – who did not want his wife to find out that he had impregnated Pule.

This is all the information I found that I can be sure of. I can also be certain that Tshegofatso, fondly referred to as Tshego by her friends and family, was deeply loved and will be forever missed. I say this with confidence as Tshegofatso's family can be seen on the news, and the internet, breaking down in tears at that very tree, on the first anniversary of her death.

During our search for Florida Lake, we passed a patch of land. At that time I called it a field, but now I call it a park. It didn't seem to have a name but ticked at least some of the boxes in our search for the tree. It was in Johannesburg. It was in Roodepoort. It was near Florida Lake. It was on the side of a road. It was not, however, in Durban Deep.

"I think this is it," I said to my friend, who nodded in agreement, "I really feel like it is."

The green hills, the stream trickling softly. The area reflected the bountiful months of rainfall we had experienced of late. It was a beautiful place.

8 seasons have come and gone, we could not be sure that the land we found, is the land we sought. We had only seen the tree in news coverage and photographs of the makeshift memorial. As we walked through the park, each tree we suspected had to be looked at from different directions, evaluated. Was the hill behind it visible? Is there a long stretch behind it where cars could parallel park? Is there a branch both low and strong enough to have had a rope, and a body, suspended from it?

Of course, the branch did not have to be so strong. Tshegofatso was not suspended in the air, but rather raised from her waist up. Her legs remained on the ground; her body curved convex. She was barefoot. Dressed in a white, sleeveless shirt and turquoise leggings. Tshepo Bodibe, who discovered the body, was also the one who took the pictures. The community did not recognise Tshegofatso as the person hanging from the tree, so pictures were circulated on social media to help identify her. They felt that the responsibility fell upon them and tried to remain respectful in the

wake of such a grim discovery. The photos were taken from the back – her pregnant belly not quite visible, her face in profile.

As it turns out, finding the photographs of the deceased Tshegofatso was easier than locating the tree where her body was left. Once again, the body of a woman, in one of its most intimate moments, belonged to someone, everyone, else.

The tree. The tree. The tree.

We walked around the park for more than an hour. We found some that *could* have been the tree. It was the same kind. It had branches low enough. Bark was peeling from its base, just like in the pictures. But I don't think any of them were, I don't think we found it. There were no flowers, no candles, and no photographs. I found it hard to believe that those who loved her would ever let that tree just be a tree ever again.

On our return home, I was driving slowly. I was suspicious of every tree that came across our path. I no longer saw them as I did before, and I'm not sure I ever will be again. They are no longer simply trees. Just as, after the murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana, post offices are no longer *just* post offices.

## *Chapter 2: a body littered with ugly things*

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the role that memory plays in how we as a society see ourselves and our culture, as well as how this is publicly expressed in forms such as art, sites of protest, or makeshift memorials. Specifically within the public sphere when we as a society are faced with a very public loss that we feel need to be remembered by creating sites of memory. It is these spaces that will be considered as a vehicle wherein *Between Words and Images* can move into the contemporary.

### **Thnks fr th Mmrs**

“Although memory allows us to put ourselves back into the past, we never really travel there,” says British Columbia professor of Law, Michelle LeBaron and Dr Paulette Regan, director of the research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2018: 217). Memory – according to them – is “unavoidably elective” (2018: 217), we cannot choose what, how or who, we remember. We have little say in the memories we have that are amplified, and the ones that are muted. More importantly, we are not always aware of the gaps in that which we can recall.

I remember that day, the day we met Ernestine, in pieces. I remember walking out of Parliament, making a sleep-related joke to her as she had an infant at the time. I remember walking to Rust en Vreugd, and like much of Cape Town, it was mostly uphill. More clearly than anything else, I remember the darkness, the floor, the poem, the silence, and my classmate crying into her hoodie. That was my experience. To me, everything else was background. I don't remember the pictures on the wall, I don't remember the content of the travelogues. I don't remember how or when we moved from the long table upstairs to the floor downstairs. I didn't even remember the artworks that Levailant had made. When I began this project and rediscovered the artworks, they were unfamiliar.

Much of what *Between Words and Images* addresses is memory. Fundamentally, our memory of the women within these kinds of colonial recollections. It, I believe, emphasises how fragmented our memory of the bodies we are so often presented with, are. What we remember about the woman in Levaillant's works is her nakedness. Perhaps we remember her attempt to cover her face or the cloak around her shoulders. More likely, we remember her exaggerated genitals. What we often don't remember is her name, her identity, a backstory we may have heard once, if we were lucky. But who chooses what we remember, and how we remember it? Why is it Levaillant's portrayal of the woman that is remembered?

### **Personal/Political**

Art is often a vehicle that is used to explore underrepresented narratives, as well as for possessing and releasing the rage, hurt, and trauma that would accompany these past injustices (LeBaron & Regan, 2018: 219). It aids in how we remember the past or, if powerful enough, change our view on an issue that the work represents. In the case of certain stories told through art, it can express both vivid details of events being recounted, and also the emotion that may have accompanied it. *Between Words and Images* does exactly this with the approach that White-Mifetu and Stuart have taken. They have incorporated the story of a woman who lived hundreds of years ago, with the personal experiences of contemporary women who still find themselves in similar situations of objection and violation.

Second-wave feminism<sup>10</sup> is often linked to the changes in more recent visual arts – specifically the idea that the personal is political. This refers to women artists who ultimately turn to their own lives as inspiration for their work, a step towards becoming the subject, rather than only an object of representation (Moore & Speck, 2019: 88). Perhaps most importantly, this idea challenged the divide between public and private

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<sup>10</sup> Second-wave feminism was a movement of the 1960s and '70s and focused on issues of equality and discrimination. Starting initially in the United States, this feminist liberation movement soon spread to other Western Countries.

realms – the idea of “behind closed doors” no longer being accepted as the domestic experience of women is moved to the foreground.

American scholar and activist bell hooks<sup>11</sup> credits this feminist movement with taking the personal as political as a process of raising critical consciousness – naming one’s oppressor, naming one’s pain. She captures this notion better than I ever could, writing; “revolution begins with the self and in the self” (hooks: 1988: 32). This allows for a space for the shared experiences of many women, which is how *Between Words and Images* can remain relevant in a colonial context, as well as in the contemporary.

As I say this, I do believe it is important to note that whilst her exhibition was inspired by artworks from the colonial era, White-Mifetu had already taken steps to modernise this project. hooks speaks of the work of liberation, the most important of our work, calls for the making of a new language (1988: 29). This new language, she calls “oppositional discourse” (hooks: 1988: 29), the person who has moved from object to subject now speaks to us. This can be seen as liberation; it can be seen as healing. Most importantly, it can be seen as the subject’s very own – it belongs to them. This is achieved through not only the use of the technology that is required for an interactive sound exhibition, but having the narrative imagined and performed by a contemporary poet – Toni Giselle Stuart. This is why I believe that the project can be moved further still away from the single figure as portrayed by Levillant. Its message remains particularly poignant, and this is the way I move forward in the conservation of this exhibition.

Taking this traditionally colonial narrative, the subject matter moved into the contemporary, creating a space to ask questions. How does a violent past affect us in the present, if at all? We are a combination of survivors, perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. We must ask ourselves what responsibility we bear in the face of personal and collective historical trauma. Are we spectators to the grief of our past, or is it our ethical duty to seek answers, to demand acknowledgement? Without necessarily

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<sup>11</sup> bell hooks is a pseudonym for the author’s name (Gloria Jean Watkins). She made the decision to not capitalise her name to place focus on her work and ideas rather than her name or personality.

providing answers, I believe we can start by questioning the recollection of history that is most widely available.

## **Sites of Memory**

It is difficult to know where to begin when reconsidering history but retracing our steps may be a good place to start, which is why I started with my own recollections of *Between Words and Images*. My approach is informed by the book *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* in which the term “sites of memory” is discussed. Sites of memory are defined as places where groups of people engage in public activity wherein they express a “collective shared knowledge” (Winter, 2010: 312). Such sites inherit meanings attached to a particular event but can be changed by adding new meanings to these sites of commemoration. Sites of memory materialise a history and a message – whether it be a tragedy or a victory, shared by a community of people. The critical point about sites of memory is that they exist as points of reference for not only those who experienced these events, but for generations to come.

Sites of memory do not strictly need to be formal sites which are allocated to the representation of an event. Rather, these sites can take the form of makeshift commemorations – often created during protests, or in the face of sudden, unexpected tragedy. These sites are not officially commemorated or certified and may not be in the ownership of any particular person or group. It is a place where something happened, and the meaning of this site has changed, deepened, and was acted on by people. It also comes with no guarantee that the site will remain as a memorial as there will often be no one to enforce or emphasise the events which are represented.

In thinking about space and place, I have decided to look at “unofficial” sites of memory. While these sites no longer physically exist in the way it was memorialised by the public, the impact within their communities, and the traces of what the space once was, remain present.

## Covering Sarah

I refer back to elective memory and its presence throughout history. This is especially prominent in previously colonised countries such as South Africa where remnants of its narrative still linger long after independence was gained. Traces of colonialism can be seen in the names of streets and buildings, in cultural institutions, and the internal structure of universities. It is worth noting that South African universities have, since their inception, adopted Western models of academic organisation (Le Grange, 2016). This means that the knowledge of colonised people had not been addressed, nor considered – it was not what the colonial model of academic organisation required. This has not fully been redressed and cannot be solved simply by adjusting the curriculum or the reading list. The changes come from within the very fundamentals – the ways of seeing, doing, learning and teaching, therefore addressing the formal curriculum and the informal “hidden” curriculum (Essop 2016). *Between Words and Images* manages to tackle not only the colonial presence in cultural institutions (in this case Rust en Vreugd, and Levillant’s art in Parliament’s art collection) but also the internal structure of higher education by challenging the domination of the still very Western curriculum while addressing the way her audience sees and hears.

White-Mifetu’s exhibition (2013-2014) was ahead of its time, but only just. It was little more than a year later that the view of UCT Upper Campus was permanently altered in 2015 following the removal of the statue of British colonialist Cecil John Rhodes. The movement leading up to this removal, #RhodesMustFall, marked the start of the protest sites South African universities were to become over the next three years. During these protests, students have addressed various issues present within the current university structure: prominent colonial symbols, fee structures, worker exploitation and sexual violence.

Same Mdluli reflects on the action of student activist Chumani Maxwele when he threw the bucket of excrement at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes. Mdluli refers to it as a “performative act” that “spiralled into a movement” (Mistry & Mabaso, 2021: 3). It played a major role in the generation of young South Africans challenging monuments and structures as representation of the past, and what that past represents. Perhaps

one of the lesser-known battles during these protests was the one fought inside the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library.

When you enter the library, you walk straight to the reception desk and scan your student card. On the left, stairs. At the top of this flight of stairs is a middle section of computers, both left and right are desks for students to work at. Library checkout, information centre, loans, televisions with video players, and couches I've fallen asleep on more than once. But this is not where you go. When you climb the first flight of stairs, you turn left and immediately climb the next. Here you find the 'good' study sections: isolated study rooms, the desks with plugs and tall dividers so you don't have to make eye contact with the students across from you. When you reach this landing, or at least, when I was there – a sculpture of Sarah Baartman stood, in front of the desks with the plugs and the tall dividers.

The sculpture physically stands just short of 200 centimetres and is put together with recycled metals, wires, springs, and chains. Professor of Gender studies at Queen's University, Katherine McKittrick, points out not only the physical but the physiological work that would have gone into the making of this sculpture (2010: 125). Artist Willie Bester 'reconstructed' Baartman using an amalgamation of mechanical and metallic objects. McKittrick argues that he has put her back together, he has 're-membered' her dismembered parts (2010: 126). She continues by arguing that at first glance, the work challenges the investigations that pulled her body apart – the scientific fascination, and public exhibition, that has shaped her legacy.

McKittrick suggests that Bester asks the viewer to return, to remember, and read her history as is informed by the recycled and found metals of our contemporary world (2010: 126). Bester's sculpture was not only constructed to address the racism and cruelty her life contained but is seen as Bester's opportunity to return the gaze, speaking for the dead (McKittrick, 2010: 126). This, of course, echoes what White-Mifetu and Stuart do with the unnamed woman in *Between Words and Images*. If we consider this as the main message the sculpture contains, the question of where and why it was exhibited, remains relevant. Why did Bester leave Baartman unclothed once again? Is it because we would not recognise her otherwise? It was not just the

portrayal of Baartman that was questioned, but where the sculpture was placed, as well as the lack of an extensive history to accompany the sculpture.

This work was acquired by the university in 2000 and located in the library for much of this time. Nomusa Makhubu, senior lecturer in art history at UCT's Michaelis School of Fine Art has commented on this peculiar choice of placement: "It was not only an inappropriate location, but a difficult sculpture to engage and deal with" (Cloete, 2018). She continues; "Art is not just the beautiful things we put on walls and in various spaces, but they themselves are the intellectual discourse we are looking for. This sculpture has become a very significant catalyst for that intellectual discourse, about a number of things, but also focusing on the narrative of Sarah Baartman."

I do not believe that we as South Africans can have a conversation about the female body through the eyes of colonialism without considering Sarah Baartman. And this is where I choose to begin. Sarah Baartman is a name many of us know, a body many are tired of objectifying. This, too, is reflected in the poem, *the woman*, as written by Stuart:

*and my sister, whose lusciousness you paraded  
at parties, her sacredness on show for entertainment,  
what of her?* (2013)

During the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall protests, students at the University of Cape Town clothed the sculpture in a kanga<sup>12</sup> and a headwrap to "give Baartman her dignity" (Cloete, 2018). This was hotly debated for many years, and her coverings were removed and reapplied multiple times. During one of these times, the sculpture was not only covered by cloth but pieces of paper (Figure 9). Pinned onto the cloth

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<sup>12</sup> The kanga is a colourful, rectangularly shaped cotton cloth. The cloth measures about 150 centimetres in length and 110 centimetres in width and features two or more usually vibrant, highly-saturated colours and bold patterns. Its basic design structure consists of a patterned border which surrounds a central motif and Swahili proverb or phrase. The kanga has become a medium of communication, as some women wear kangas so as to deliver a certain message through the sayings that are printed.

were notes written by students and supporters, as seen on the YouTube exhibition video *Sarah 'Saartjie' Baartman, A Call to Respond*<sup>13</sup> (2018), some of the notes read:

“Why would a white man see the need to re-robe a sculpture in order to expose a naked Sarah Baartman YET AGAIN?”

“The prerogative of looking but not being seen characterises imperialist power.”

“The psychopathy of colonialism – black women as permanent objects of display.”

“It is not just the sculpture; it is not just a piece of cloth – it is centuries of trauma.”

“The pathological obsession with naked black bodies in visual culture.”

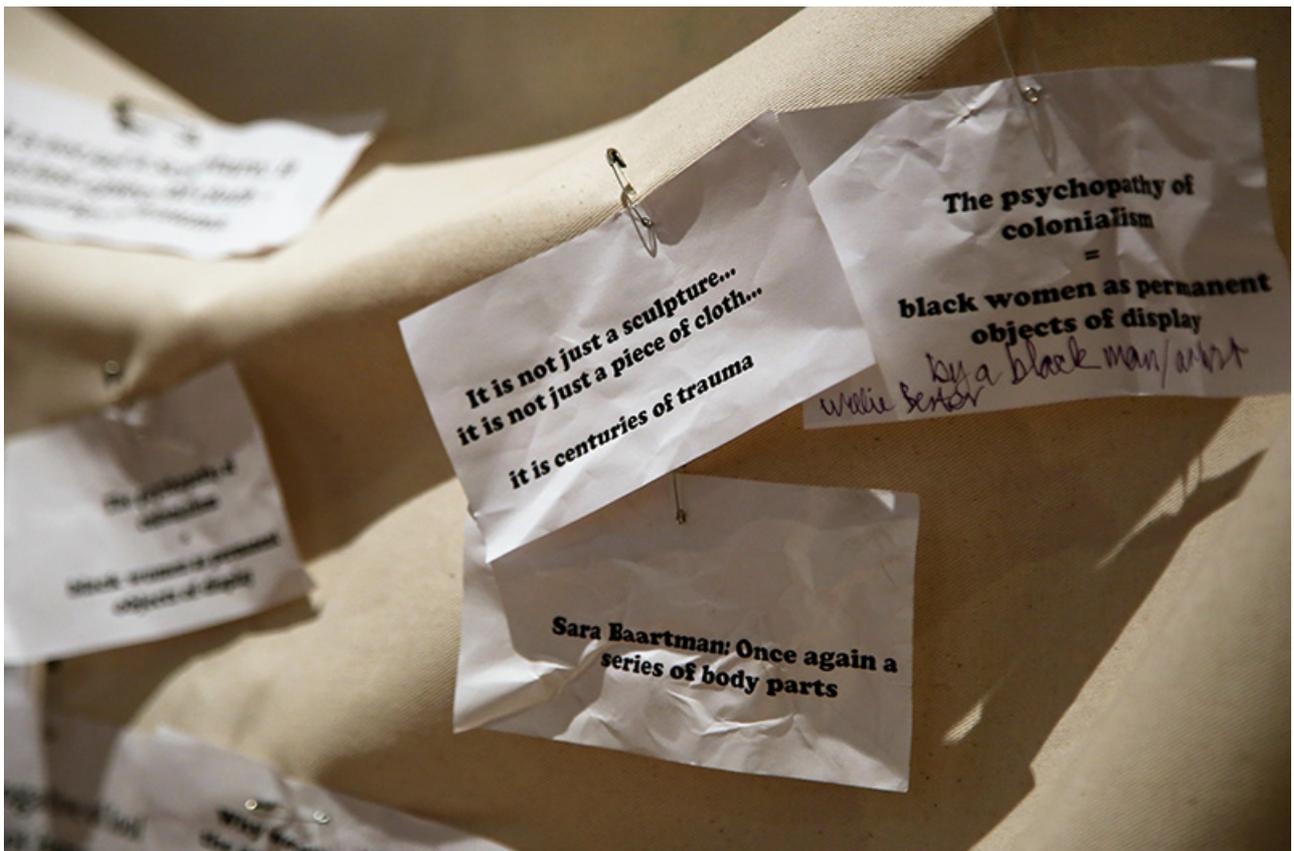


Figure 9: Some of the texts pinned to the cloth wrapped around the Baartman sculpture.  
Photo by Je'Nine May

<sup>13</sup> Available at <https://youtu.be/ID7Oc-X4Hy8>.

From March 2016 to March 2018 she remained covered until American librarian, William Daniels, once again disrobed her. This has brought up the question of art censorship, Bester himself speaking to GroundUp about the censorship of his sculpture in particular: “Head to toe, as though a shameful object, it was hidden under cloth” (Pertsovsky, 2018). It is worth noting, though, that it was never the entire sculpture that was covered, rather the parts of her that had controlled her life and determined her legacy. It was not her presence that was ‘hidden’ under cloth, it was simply her body (figure 10).



Figure 10: Willie Bester's sculpture of Sarah Baartman in the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library clothed and unclothed.

Photo by: GroundUp, 2018

Further critique emanated from the fact that the sculpture was being, almost literally, humanised by the students. The use of the word “disrobed” itself was a point of contention with Daniels himself, being quoted by GroundUp as saying; “The word ‘disrobed’ implies that a person was deprived of clothing. But the sculpture is not a person, and it was not clothed, but covered up with cloth (Pertsovsky, 2018).”

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2018, the University of Cape Town (UCT) announced that they will be changing the name of Jameson Memorial Hall on its Upper Campus, to

Sarah Baartman Hall. This renaming formed part of a succession of events that began with in #RhodesMustFall, followed by a change in the university fee funding model, #FeesMustFall. 2016 saw the protests known as #Shackville, where protesters erected a shack in Residence Road, UCT, between two residence halls, highlighting the pressing need for better accommodation for students<sup>14</sup>.

The burning of paintings and photographs during this protest brought to light the still very colonised structure of the university, a protester calling the artworks “symbols of the coloniser” (Furlong, 2016). The artworks on the campus itself were questioned. Not only the statistically uneven number of white artists versus artists of colour but the decision of *where* the works were displayed. One of these works particularly was the sculpture of Sarah Baartman. After consistent questioning and the form of protest that was dressing and undressing the sculpture, the work was removed from the library in 2018. The work was then exhibited alongside a sound installation featuring a poem by Diana Ferrus, *I’ve come to take you home*<sup>15</sup> as well as other images and artworks in the exhibition mentioned above, *Sarah ‘Saartjie’ Baartman, A Call to Respond* (2018). Since the end of the exhibition in October 2018, the sculpture is no longer on display.

The desire to cover up Sarah Baartman in present times is not new and will likely reoccur in the future. In the series *Under the Influence*, The Conversation asks academics to share what they believe are the most influential works of art or artists in their field. South African academic and artist Sharlene Khan chose to discuss the series of artworks by Senzeni Marasela, *Covering Sarah*. Starting in 2005, the series consists of works created in a variety of mediums: watercolour (Figure 11), linocut (Figure 12), and embroidery (Figure 13) – methods she notes as particularly labour intensive (Gresle, 2014). The works are based around Sarah Baartman – sometimes she is alone, sometimes she is surrounded by spectators, and most of the time, she is naked. But almost constantly, she is clothed, or about to be clothed. The series

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<sup>14</sup> UCT has a student population of more than 27 000, but only 6 800 beds. UCT has overallocated beds because of a certain number of students who turn down residence offers each year. At the same time, because of the high number of applicants, every year there are students on the residence waiting lists. This has students arriving at university and forced to sleep beds set up in dining halls/assembly halls on campus until unclaimed rooms are reallocated.

<sup>15</sup> See full poem in Appendix C

consistently possesses traits that are visually similar, but in each case there is a performance. The scene is almost always Baartman interacting with a specific set of people. The difference is that sometimes these moments are empowered, sometimes it addresses the disempowerment she may have felt.



Figure 11: Senzeni Marasela, *Covering the Venus Hottentot*, 2010

Photo by: *The Conversation*



Figure 12: Senzeni Marasela, *Covering Sarah*, 2005

Photo by: *Africanah.org*



Figure 13: Senzeni Marasela, *Covering Sarah IV*, 2011

Photo by: *The Conversation*

Marasela's work and the protests around the sculpture of Baartman in the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library highlight the idea of "bio mythography" – bell hooks draws on this idea by Audre Lorde in her book *Talking back: thinking feminist, thinking black* (1988). This is a kind of remembering that is limited to a "general outline of an incident" (hooks, 1988), specific details are different in each person's recollection. What a person remembers is dependent on their own identities, background and personal biases. My experience with *Between Words and Images* may reflect exactly this, as the way I remember it may not be accurate and may not reflect the memories of my

classmates. The event is then reconstructed as a piecing together of the different recollections, retelling that focuses on capturing the spirit (hooks, 1988), rather than accurate detail. Marasela negotiates the tension of Sarah Baartman’s objectification by reimagining the event, rewriting the story. The students of the UCT protests do the same, and this approach has followed young feminists in times of more contemporary, more personal peril.

### **Uyinene Came to Fetch a Parcel**

Four years after #RhodesMustFall first gained attention, Cape Town was once again plummeted into international news. I followed this case from my windowless office in the back of a storeroom in Bellville. I punched the words “Uyinene news” into google multiple times a day during the time that she was missing. I was living in Kenilworth at the time, I drove past Clareinch Post Office regularly. I laid down flowers at the makeshift memorial (figure 14). I watched them erase the makeshift memorial. I watched the makeshift memorial be recreated. I watched it being taken down again. And again. Until it no longer came back.



Figure 14: Clareinch Post Office makeshift memorial, 2019  
Photo by: San-Mari van der Merwe

Uyinene Mrwetyana was 19 years old and a first-year student at the University of Cape Town when she suddenly went missing on Saturday, the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2019. Before the trial, which was scheduled for November of the same year, the public was given a brief explanation of what happened to her on that fateful day. Mrwetyana went to Clareinch Post Office to pick up a parcel. According to a statement made by police, as Mrwetyana arrived, a man behind the counter told her the credit card machine was not working because the electricity was down. He told her to come back later, and she did. She returned to the post office after 2 pm when all the other employees had gone home – the post office was due to close at 1 pm.

During a pre-trial hearing that took place on Monday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2019, a packed courtroom – including friends and family of Mrwetyana – heard what happened next. The man brought her inside and locked the door behind her. He made multiple sexual advances which were rebuffed. He raped her, twice. And when she refused to stop screaming, he bludgeoned her to death with a set of post office scales. Her body was stored in a safe at the post office overnight. When she was removed the next day, she was set alight and buried in a shallow grave. She was ultimately found in Lingelethu West, Khayelitsha<sup>16</sup> nine days after she disappeared. At Mrwetyana's nationally televised funeral, her mother, Nomangwane, asked for forgiveness, saying: "I am sorry that I warned you about all other places, but not the Post Office. I am sorry I was not there to protect you and fight for you, my girl!" (Knight, 2019).

As is the case with a lot of what *Between Words and Images* stands for, I cannot in good conscience approach this topic without acknowledging the immensity of what happened. As much as we try to deny it, this is the event, the day, that defines her life. It is the reason we know her name. As much as we try to retroactively care for and protect the women of the past, like White-Mifetu and Stuart did, like the 2015 protesters did, and like I want to, in that defining moment of their lives, their bodies did not belong to them. I recount this event in as much detail as I can to convey the exposure of the

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<sup>16</sup> Khayelitsha Township forms a part of the Cape Flats which is located 25km south-east of the city of Cape Town.

final, terrifying moments of her life. I will only refer to him as “post office worker.” His name does not matter<sup>17</sup>.

What does matter, however, is the effect of Mrwetyana’s murder on the nation. Femicide and gender-based violence is not a new occurrence in South Africa, but this death, in particular, caused a shift in the collective consciousness of the country (Khan, 2019). A movement was ignited. As a direct result, protesters took to the streets (figures 15, 16 and 17). The widespread outcry led to a two-day campus shutdown, once again reminiscent of the events of the 2015 protests. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what caused this shift. Whether it was the loss of a life that was so young and brimming with potential or the fact that “post office” is now on the already long list of places for women to be afraid of.

Either way, through their mourning, people – predominantly black women and queer people (Khan, 2019) – took to the streets, and to social media, to demand an end to gender-based violence.



Figure 15: Protesters in the streets of Cape Town (1)

Photo: Instagram, @naledi.d



Figure 16: Protesters in the streets of Cape Town (2)

Photo: Instagram, @iamkaytea\_



Figure 17: Protesters in the streets of Cape Town (3)

Photo: Instagram, @\_qu.eenr.oli\_

<sup>17</sup> It is very often the name of the perpetrator that is remembered as time passes, while the victims are simply grouped together. Uyinene Mrwetyana is a victim of gender-based violence, but she is also Uyinene Mrwetyana.

In *The New Yorker*, Capetonian writer Rosa Lyster describes her experience of the protester’s march to Parliament that had taken place in early September of 2019. She noted the shift in the collective mood, the feeling that someone *should* do something has now turned into the conviction that someone is going to *have to*. She writes: “as if the flashover had occurred, the point when the fire in the room becomes the room on fire” (Lyster, 2019).



Figure 18: Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, pinning a ribbon to the makeshift memorial at Clareinch Post Office  
 Photo: Instagram, sussexroyal

These physical protests were mirrored in the hashtags of their online counterparts: #JusticeForNene, #AmINext, #IAmNotNext, #SayHerName and #ImWithHer, to name a few. I believe this contributed to the substantial press and international reaction that Uyinene’s death ultimately gathered. This of course is reflected in the visit that the Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle<sup>18</sup>, made to the site, stating: “I am here as a woman of colour and your sister” (Telegraph, 2019).

The Duchess wrote a message in the Xhosa language on a ribbon that she then pinned to the memorial (figure 18). The message said, “Simi kunye kulesisimo”, which means “We stand together in this moment” (Vincent, 2019).

The makeshift memorial seemed to evolve with time – with each removal. First, it consisted of mostly flowers. They were there for the longest amount of time, as when I placed my flowers, the ones surrounding it had already begun to wilt. When this was taken down, ribbons replaced flowers as its main component. Posters of support and apology were relatively constant. On the first anniversary, it was candles, along with ribbons and flowers, in an attempt to recapture the magnitude of the original memorial. The ribbons are no longer there. The flowers I placed were removed not long after I

<sup>18</sup> While Meghan Markle did not make the trip *specifically* to visit the site, it is important to note the way the news had traveled, leading to the fact that someone such as the Duchess of Sussex comes to pay her respects.

left them. There are no posters, no candles, no visual acknowledgement of what had happened.

Leaving up these memorials is painful. It is a daily reminder to those who work there, to those of us who drove past, that something has happened. This may be morbid, and this may serve as a harsh reminder in an equally harsh world, but I am also against removing all traces of what happened because there is no going back. Uyinene came to fetch a parcel, at a post office and never returned home. Who are we to pretend that this is normal?

### This Tree Refused to Keep Quiet



Figure 19: Protesters outside Roodepoort police station in Johannesburg in June 2020  
Photo by: Ngel Sibanda

It is common that the place of death, or even the place where the deceased was found, becomes somewhere friends and family go to find a connection with their loved one. In his 2018 article, *Decoding the 'new' culture of roadside memorialisation in South Africa*, Michael Eric Hagemann examines this

occurrence. He argues that accessing the 'shrine', as he calls it, becomes a conscious performative act. By this, he means that it involves a journey to the location, stepping into the space of the memorial, and re-engaging with the deceased and the circumstances of their death (Hagemann, 2018: 65). This is particularly prominent in spaces where a young life was so brutally, and unexpectedly taken from loved ones. Yes, the case of Uyinene Mrwetyana, but equally as important, and equally heart-breaking is the body of a pregnant woman found hanging from a tree.

The murder of Tshegofatso Pule did not gain international attention like the case of Mrwetyana and can be seen in the inconsistent reports on the manner of her death. It has been reported as both a stab wound and a gunshot to the chest. Despite this, locally the case had similar national media coverage and also resulted in protest (figure 19) action.



Figure 20: Wreaths, candles, flowers and stuffed animals at the tree in Durban Deep where Tshegofatso was found in 2020.  
Photo by: Itumeleng English

Pule was 28 years old and eight months pregnant and was last seen on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June visiting the father of her unborn daughter at his complex in the Florida suburb of Johannesburg. She was murdered by this man, who paid R70 000 to have her killed (Masilela, 2022). He did not want his wife to find out he had impregnated her. According to family friend Ntombi Zwane, revealed that they were planning a baby shower, but instead, they were to mourn her death. Her family also revealed that she was very excited about becoming a mother, already giving her baby the name Kamano, which means “relationship” in Sesotho (Dlamini, 2022).

As was the case with Mrwetyana, Pule’s funeral was widely available for viewing. Much like the former, it was the words of the family members that are most remembered. It is interesting how both families had asked for forgiveness, mirroring the words of Stuart herself asking the listener to “wash me clean”. In this case, forgiveness is multifaceted. It addresses being cleaned of both the transgression of, but also the violence inflicted upon the self. Pule’s aunt, Pricilla Tiwa sank to her knees and begged for forgiveness, saying:

I don’t know where I went wrong as a parent. What have I done to deserve this? Tshego was a pint-size, a defenceless child. She said spare my life because I’m carrying a baby. Guys, what have we done? To my son, to my brothers, if

my presence is not satisfying you, please be gentle. We are asking for forgiveness (Magubane, 2020).

The family remains very protective of the tree (figure 20) where Pule was found. It is important, I think, to explore the motivation and meaning behind makeshift memorials – this is to serve as markers for private grief in public spaces (Hagemann, 2018: 58). Hagemann reasons that the erection of these memorials serves as a way to contain loved ones' sense of loss (Hagemann, 2018: 61), a physical representation of what is gone, in the most physical way they can think of. Most importantly, monuments and memorials are not erected for the dead as much as it is for the living. It is erected to create a corporeal link with the dead (Marschall, 2009: 41).

As it is an unofficial memorial and is often erected quite suddenly in the wake of a tragedy, they have the ability to both commemorate the event and demand the attention of passers-by. These shrines carry a deep significance to loved ones, but similar feelings may not necessarily be reciprocated by those who have no direct connection with the deceased. Most objections are directed at the issue that the memorials are an “eyesore” (Hagemann, 2018: 62), as well as the rapid rate at which it accumulates. Also, because the memorials are often not maintained, damage may occur in the form of weathering, vandalism, theft, or even by accident.

The presence of memorials can also reinforce negative emotions – it can nurture bitterness and incite hatred (Marschall, 2004: 79) despite the fact that memorials are not necessarily erected for this reason. They facilitate mourning, as the physical presence or structure of an object serves as mediator between the past and the internal wounds of those affected by the trauma (Marschall, 2004: 82). Ultimately, the discomfort of its presence implies that the reconciliation, the peace that is desired, has not yet been achieved. This is difficult when considering that these types of (makeshift) memorials are more often than not, temporary.

This is my main fascination with these sites – their impermanence. This is something makeshift memorials have in common with exhibitions. Both the memorial and exhibition – while temporary – carry significance and are insufficient when being remembered simply in photographs. As it may be impractical, or rather, stagnant, to

keep these memorials, such as the exhibitions, in their original form, some alternatives will allow the site, as it was, to be revisited. These are the main reasons why I believe that the virtual may be an answer to the question of how to preserve, or conserve, the stories of these lost individuals, exhibitions, and sites of memory.

With AR, one might say that a compromise can be reached. Those who are bothered, or unaffected by the causes of these protests, memorials, sites of memory, no longer need to interact with them in the physical world. But still, those who remain connected to the space can view, and even visit, this location that still carries so much meaning. I believe that, in an archive, an exhibition such as *Between Words and Images* may still indicate the absence that is portrayed, but in AR, if you find yourself in the space of memorialisation, you feel the absence as a presence, the viewer remains connected. Is that not what museums are for? Is this not what we are striving to protect as conservators?

## **Conclusion**

Memory is an important aspect of both curation and conservation and plays a substantial role in what I believe makes *Between Words and Image* remarkable. It is not only our memory of historical narratives and events that are questioned, but what we remember and why is brought into question. Our desire to remember often takes a physical form. Not just art, or literature, but in more temporary but equally important ways such as makeshift memorials in locations where a traumatic event has occurred. Just as the revolving door of exhibitions is inevitable, the impermanent state of these memorials are as well. The problem, of course, is how to ensure these events, these people are remembered in a world where there is no guarantee that a site will remain the same, and the answer may be to keep these memories within a virtual space.

*Part Three: but God*

*“I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.”*

Audre Lorde, 1981

Let's do it for Agnes Mzisa  
Let's do it for Agnes Ndlovu (Dlamini)  
Let's do it for Alexa Viljoen  
Let's do it for Alice Lotter  
Let's do it for Allison Plaatjies  
Let's do it for Althea Spires  
Let's do it for Althena Malgas  
Let's do it for Alyssa Botha  
Let's do it for Amber Strydom  
Let's do it for Amy Biel  
Let's do it for Andiswa Zweni  
Let's do it for Aneeqah Fakier  
Let's do it for Anene Booyesen  
Let's do it for Angela Marinus  
Let's do it for Angelique Clarke-Abrahams  
Let's do it for Angelique Harmse  
Let's do it for Angelique Vanessa Pattenden  
Let's do it for Anika Smit  
Let's do it for Anisha van Niekerk  
Let's do it for Anna Francina Kruger  
Let's do it for Anna van der Merwe  
Let's do it for Annatjie Myburgh  
Let's do it for Annchen Ferreira  
Let's do it for Anne Marie Aylward  
Let's do it for Anne Fouche  
Let's do it for Anne Robert  
Let's do it for Annette Kennealy  
Let's do it for Anni Dewani  
Let's do it for Ann-Mari Wapenaar

Let's do it for Anthea Thopps  
Let's do it for Antoinette Botha  
Let's do it for Anzunette du Plessis  
Let's do it for Arina Muller  
Let's do it for Asemahle Philani  
Let's do it for Ashika Singh  
Let's do it for Aviwe JamJam  
Let's do it for Aviwe Wellem  
Let's do it for Ayakha Jiyane  
Let's do it for Babongile Nzama  
Let's do it for Baby C  
Let's do it for baby Jordan Leigh Norton  
Let's do it for Belinda Erika Werner  
Let's do it for Beryl Lamberth  
Let's do it for Beryl Morgan  
Let's do it for Beth Tomlinson  
Let's do it for Bianca Lino McGowan  
Let's do it for Boitumelo Matsekoleng  
Let's do it for Bongiswa Majikijela  
Let's do it for Brenda Fairhead  
Let's do it for Brenda Johannes  
Let's do it for Brenda Rwando  
Let's do it for Bukeka Singugqa  
Let's do it for Busisiwe Busy Ngwadla  
Let's do it for Cameron Britz  
Let's do it for Candice Bartman  
Let's do it for Cara Austen Jenkins  
Let's do it for Carmelitta Baatjies  
Let's do it for Carol Fabriek  
Let's do it for Carol Pienaar  
Let's do it for Caroline Jacobs  
Let's do it for Carolyn Frara

Let's do it for Catherine Krog  
Let's do it for Cathy Purdon  
Let's do it for Cecile Potgieter  
Let's do it for Cecile Smit  
Let's do it for Celeste Smith  
Let's do it for Celine Cowley  
Let's do it for Ceri Duvenhage McCrae  
Let's do it for Chanel de Toit  
Let's do it for Chanelle Henning  
Let's do it for Chantelle Borchers (Leendertz)  
Let's do it for Chantelle Matthysen  
Let's do it for Charmaine Cannings  
Let's do it for Charmaine Mare  
Let's do it for Charmaine Piers  
Let's do it for Christel Steenkamp  
Let's do it for Clarissa Lindoor  
Let's do it for Colleen Nesbit (Swart)  
Let's do it for Courtney Peterson  
Let's do it for Cytheria Rex  
Let's do it for Danel Rooskrans  
Let's do it for Tshagofatso Pule  
Let's do it for Uyinene Mrwetyana  
Let's do it for my neighbour  
Let's do it for my mother  
Let's do it for your mother  
Let's do it for your daughter  
Let's do it for you  
Let's do it for me

Let's do it for those who will be named tomorrow  
And the day after<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Expanded list available at: <https://www.sapeople.com/2019/08/20/sas-fallen-angels-list-honouring-females-murdered-in-south-africa/>

## Chapter 3: doesn't she wear

### Introduction

This chapter is formed around the exploration of AR and the possibility it holds in terms of being used as a conservation method. In terms of my project, it explores the role AR can play when conserving works that are site-specific, and the consequent differences between location-based and object-based augmentation. It also serves as a reflection on the practical experimentations I conducted with the various types of software I had chosen and how these augmentations may function in heritage as memorialisation and/or activism.

### The Container

In *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, Ursula K. Le Guin writes about the standard elements form the basis of storytelling, in particular, the 'hero' (1986: 4). The hero is the stick, the spear, the sword – the active object that we hit or hurt with. This is contrasted with what Le Guin believes to be the *other* story – the one that is new, elements that are newsworthy and capable of changing how we approach the telling and understanding of these stories as a whole (1986: 4). Moving away from the singular figure of the hero, the focus shifts to the people – moving away from the weapons, shifting the focus to the carrier. The thing that holds the story, but still being part of the story. This is the thing to put things in – the container for the thing contained (Le Guin, 1986: 4), the thing that makes sure that what we are holding can be accessed again later.

That is what I am trying to do with this project. What we are faced with is something unable to be held – it is intangible in the way it is displayed, as well as the way it is conserved. Even regarding its physical anchors, they too are susceptible to change, all I can hope to do is create a space where all of the elements can be brought together in a space that does not leave room for a singular hero – it is what I believe we as a postcolonial country are striving to move away from. And this, in terms of both AR and conservation, is the hope that it will result in the absolute exhibition, and perhaps the

legacy it can leave behind. Ultimately, what we as curators, conservators and heritage practitioners are trying to do is create a space for memorialisation, and a language for memory.

## **Remembering Exhibitions**

Memorials are created when a specific geographic location is reinscribed with significance. This is achieved through the addition of a symbolic referent of an object or action that aids in changing its previously defined meaning. Although there is the option of creating interventions within a virtual space, I believe it would be pertinent to start with the geo-spatial locus as my project is focused on the possibilities of augmented reality.

I am basing my research around the definition where memorialisation refers to the process of preserving memories, of both people and events. There is a specific element that requests that the viewers consider the space and memorial object as something that merges two separate strands in the space time continuum. These sites are rich in meaning that dislocates it from the contemporary and “whether a victory or a tragedy, it forms part of its community’s identity and consciousness” (Marschall, 2004: 78). The form of makeshift memorials, or makeshift sites of protest, consists of elements arranged to appeal to the senses or emotions. It exists to express an idea, an emotion, or a worldview (Maraviglia, 2010).

Based on this theory, I believe that the questions ‘why memorialise’ and ‘why conserve’ are related within the context of this project. While these two ideas are not identical; both are an attempt to make the past tangible within the present moment. Therefore by its logical extension, this can also be understood as an attempt to create a space in which the events can be remembered in the future. In this light there is a clear connection, in my mind, to the makeshift memorials and sites of protests that I discussed in the previous chapter. All these gestures are an attempt to create an anterior space within an alternative moment in time and can be considered to be a reconsideration of each moment – temporary, fragmented and fleeting. But, within all of these moments, we come across a few that are remarkable.

Up to this point I have hinted at the connection between memorialisation and artworks, but it may be useful to explain the specificity of my associations in more detail. In *'Remembering Exhibitions': From Point to Line to Web*, Reesa Greenberg discusses the notion of 'remembering exhibitions' (2009). In her text, she explores this theory. It is through the use of technology that exhibitions have the opportunity to deviate from being fixed in time, to becoming fluid constructs (Greenberg, 2009).

This has taken the form of exhibitions that remember past exhibitions. Greenberg credits the emergence of 'remembering exhibitions' with the contemporary fascination with memory as a tool to construct both individual and collective identities. It is echoed in contemporary pop-culture where we are currently in the golden age of revivals (series continuing on years after it had ended) requals (a movie which revisits the subject matter of an earlier film but is not a remake or linear continuation of its plot such as a prequel or sequel), reboots (series based on a successful, original show with the same premise with a new cast of actors), or simply reunions (where the cast of a popular show that has ended comes together for a televised event). This concept manages to intertwine the past and present, address seeming contradictions: "Remembering exhibitions' belong to the practice of spatialising memory, making memory concrete, tangible, actual and interactive" (Greenberg, 2009). In the case of the constant flow of memory-(re)making (Erós, 2017: 20), the ability of previous exhibitions to breathe, grow and develop, finds its place in the virtual sphere when its ties to its original, physical location, becomes altered, or inaccessible.

Greenberg divides 'remembering exhibitions' into three structures – the replica, the riff and the reprise (2009). The structures co-exist and do sometimes overlap despite their differences; which Greenberg formulates in this manner:

- Replica: Essentially remembering the exhibition by repetition. It includes all of the original contents which are reassembled in the same, unchanged space. If there is a deviation from the original, it is because the art is supplemented by archival documentation which ranges from photographs to documents relating to the reception of the exhibition.

- Riff: Can range from a reference to an elaborate variation. The importance of an exhibition or exhibition phenomenon is recognised and is rethought in a reconstruction. The exhibition riff is self-reflexive and performative, drawing attention to entities that deserve attention.
- Reprise: Most often an online archive. It takes the form of a basic exhibition on their website in a subcategory found under the exhibitions tab. The visitor is typically given a few images of featured artworks and a description. In the case where institutions and individuals do not fully utilise the potential of the web as a vehicle for remembrance, the exhibition will still no longer be present in active memory and remains in closed exhibition history. Other curators and institutions, however, have embraced web representations of their ‘remembering exhibitions’ as integral components of their documentation and remembering processes (Greenberg, 2009).

The most important thing to note when approaching the conservation of a time-based work or exhibition is that there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach (Ciolfi, 2021: 75). How the conservation plan is designed needs to be based on what the work requires from its audience – is it a work that evokes joy, pleasure? Is it meaningful, or is it meant to disturb those who come across its path? Each work is different and will have different needs. Understanding and responding to the context of the work (Ciolfi, 2021: 75), and the heritage that is being conserved, is essential. Much like how each painting is individually evaluated in terms of age, material and extent of the damage.

When considering the three sections discussed of ‘remembering exhibitions’ as discussed above, I believe my project falls predominantly under Greenberg's category of the ‘riff’ (2009). While I will be using the internet as a method of remembering, it will not be completely web-based. I will utilise the importance of space and place as was done in *Between Words and Images*, as well as the audio-visual narrative that has been crafted to impress a particular vision in the mind of the visitors. An entirely web-based project would require a website and an archive of audio-visual data that is presented as either a static or an interactive platform. What interested me from the start of this project was the possibility of working with a highly charged set of personal and cultural references in order to try and communicate something important about

the state of gender-based violence and the value of art that transgressed the boundaries of the museum space.

Thus my proposed project was a hybrid that comes together online, but through the use of a physical location. This is not something that can be virtually replicated. Rather, a relationship needs to be created between the viewer, the environment, and the augmentation to create a dynamic, multi-faceted interactive space (Lichty, 2014: 327). It is within this balance that you emphasise what is present – the meaningful location, but also very much what is absent – efforts to create a space for engagement to talk about things – in this case, forgotten voices and/or violated bodies – that should be remembered.

### **So, why choose AR to (re)create these memories?**

Upon structuring this ‘remembering exhibition’, I needed to determine which ‘entities’ should remain at the forefront in the conservation of *Between Words and Images*. In *Installation Art and the Museum: Presentation and Conservation of Changing Artworks*, Vivian Van Saaze states that the essence of works that fall under the umbrella term of time-based lies in spectator participation (Saaze, 2013: 18) and ultimately, contextualisation. In this case, contextualisation refers to a technique that allows visitors to imagine themselves within the original context of the location or event. Contextualisation is incredibly important as it allows viewers to transition from passive tourists to active players (Kee, et al., 2019: 214). This provides the foundation for my approach to conservation within the field of AR, but the technology itself needs some explanation and investigation before I can present the findings of my experiments with Augmented Reality.

The potential of AR that I am interested in is its ability to preserve performative aspects, as opposed to two-dimensional visuals. Stepping into the work allows viewers to experience its meaning and memorialise the past, not just bear witness to it. More than that, AR is a way to connect time-based elements to their physical anchors. This does not interfere with the possible changes the site may experience – makeshift memorials being removed, statues that are relocated, and exhibitions that are taken

down and replaced by new ones. Due to this overlay element I think that AR is more appropriate than Virtual Reality (VR). While VR can allow a visitor total immersion into a different reality, completely replacing what is seen (Charr, 2020), it takes away from the real environment. There is also a significant cost<sup>20</sup> attached to the software and hardware required for a fully immersive experience that high-end VR environments offer.

AR can aid as a virtual documentation of periods of change (Skwarek, 2018: 14) or serve as a reminder of the people and culture of the past. In this design approach, referred to as the 'virtual-physical overlay' (Ciolfi, 2021: 70), the virtual and material layers can overlap in real-time. It is with this thought that we can argue that no interactive installation is ever *fully* virtual. It will need to be approached and experienced by people with bodies and sensory capacities, with a smart device that needs to be manipulated (Ciolfi, 2021: 75). Rather than consider the virtual and material as two opposing sides, one might find it more prudent to think of them as existing as a continuum of embodied experience with virtual heritage (Ciolfi, 2021: 75).

AR has shown great potential for contributing to broad cultural shifts (Silva, et al., 2022: 3), and has consequently grown into a platform for activism. This serves as a connection to the current rise in internet-age networked student movements such as Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall within the local, contemporary context. In the article *Implications of Social Media on Student Activism: The South African Experience in a Digital Age*, Mthokozisi Emmanuel Ntuli and Damtew Teferra explore this phenomenon. These movements did not only take place within a physical space, but virtual as well – this allowed student activists to share, communicate, and amplify their experiences through the internet, while serving as a forum for solidarity, debate, and even strategizing (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017: 72). For the student protests that had taken place between the years of 2015 and 2017, Twitter proved to be very useful and perhaps the most popular amongst not only UCT students, but students from universities around South Africa. I believe this was because of Twitter's ability to provide information, images and videos in real time, while using hashtags to allow for

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<sup>20</sup> Upon consulting various South African retailers, VR headsets can range from R549 to R14 999.

easy discovery. This was especially helpful in tracking the movements of the students as they moved from between campuses or parts of the city.

AR is increasingly used by protestors and activists to virtually represent the body in ways that can create a space of evocation and experience. This takes the form of augmenting things such voting ballots to expose attempts to mislead voters, or providing additional, sometimes controversial, information in a space or on an object. An intimate encounter can be replicated by acts, specifically in the case of *Between Words and Images*, such as wearing headphones which allows the visitor to insert themselves into the augmented space to access the data. This is necessary because while the voice is disembodied, the project needs to be experienced in an embodied way to understand what it wishes to communicate. Technology is increasingly used by protestors and activists to virtually explore the traumas inflicted upon the body. *Between Words and Image*, does the same and in my opinion becomes a form or resistance against the oppression and abuse of the female body.

The main comparison that is drawn between activism and AR is that both AR creators and activists share a motivation to aid people in seeing the world in new ways (Silva, et al., 2022: 1). The low-cost tools that accompany the use of AR allows freedom to distribute activist messages that are rooted to the physical world (Skwarek, 2018: 7). The goal is to reach and mobilise the largest possible audience. Activism benefits from the immersive quality that accompanies AR – AR, if successful, can tell stories in more expressive ways. Instead of simply observing, the audience is transported into a new reality that is physically tied to the real world but with the intervention of virtual aspects such as stories related to specific objects and places. A form of intimacy is created in the sense that the augmentation will only be accessible to the person who chooses to activate and thus experience the AR.

It should be noted that while AR is more accessible than VR, it doesn't mean that AR will be instantly available to everyone – just a larger part of the population. This is largely due to the widespread availability of the smartphone or tablet – a trickle-down effect that has begun to reach developing countries as well (Skwarek, 2018: 8).

In the 2022 article *Understanding AR Activism: An Interview Study with Creators of Augmented Reality Experiences for Social Change*, Rafael M. L. Silva et al conducted 60-minute interviews with twenty people who participated in AR activism projects from 2009 to 2021. The analysis of these interviews determined the following: participants' decisions to use AR are motivated by the possibility to create multi-layered narratives while observing lower technical barriers and physical risks to convey those narratives in the physical world (Silva, et al., 2022: 2). The participants highlighted immersion as the main way they change people's perceptions due to its potential for "embodied storytelling" (Silva, et al., 2022: 2) which, according to the participants, elicited both a strong emotional and physical reaction among audiences. One of the interviewees, a history professor and author, only identified as P14, discusses the impact of immersing people in stories. They said:

By immersing themselves in the story, they become part of the story, the story becomes personal. It's not just something that happened to somebody else 200 years ago, it's something that, in a way, is sort of happening to them (Silva, et al., 2022; 7).

In terms of AR in museums, it is most often used as a way to add commentary to works of art or exhibitions as an alternative to extensive reading material that may accompany the work. Of course there are varying ways of using AR to achieve the goal of attracting wider audiences, as Charlotte Coates writes for *Museum Next* (2021). One example that is of particular interest to me is the National Gallery in London and their 2021 attempt to bring the collections into everyday locations (figures 21 and 22), as opposed to simply within the confines of a museum (Coates, 2021). This was done by placing a series of numbered QR

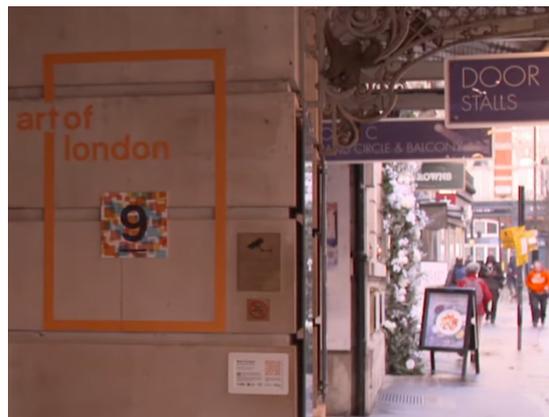


Figure 21: QR code placed on wall in street of London  
.Photo: YouTube, Art of London

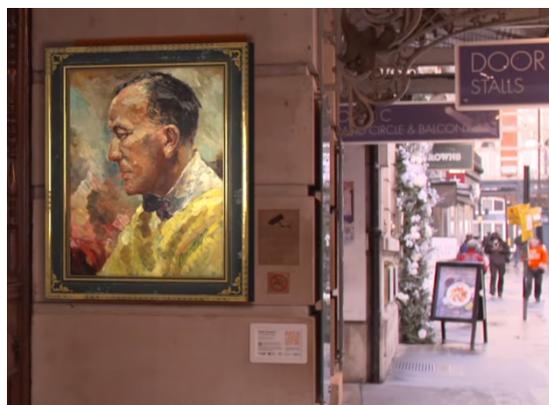


Figure 22: Artwork triggered by QR code in London  
Photo: YouTube, Art of London

codes throughout central London. When the QR code is scanned through a mobile phone, the artworks were “activated” (Coates, 2021).



Figure 23: *The Marchesa Casati (1919)* by Augustus Edwin John (1878 – 1961) was one of the paintings used in ReBlink

In 2017, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in Toronto also explored the possibilities of AR within the museum space by creating an installation called ReBlink (Coates, 2021). Using existing works in the collection, the goal was to give visitors the opportunity to view them in a new light – specifically, the subjects of the artworks reimagined as living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (figures 23 and 24) with modern technology cell phones, earphones and selfie sticks. Through the use of AR for ReBlink, the artist hoped to turn technology into a form engagement as opposed to a distraction. (Coates, 2021). According to the AGO’s Interpretive Planner Shiralee Hudson Hill, 84% of those who attended the exhibition felt engaged with the art (Coates, 2021).



Figure 24: The augmentation created for *The Marchesa Casati (1919)* in ReBlink  
Photo by: Impossible Things, available at <https://www.impossiblethings.co/project/reblink/>

This is not a claim that AR should replace the physical presence of people as attendees, protestors or mourners – but my argument was never that it is meant to replace reality. As the name of the technology implies, it is intended to augment reality - as a tool just like many others used by activists such as placards, signboards, graffiti, fliers and blogs (Skwarek, 2018: 8). My intention for this project comes down to providing access to the connection between a site that is loaded with meaning and a creative expression that allows the viewer to have an experiential encounter with that site. A site such as Rust en Vreugd with its heavily colonial history, the sculpture of Sarah Baartman where students try to reclaim a problematic narrative, the post office where a young woman was killed for fighting back, a tree where a pregnant woman was hung from after she was murdered.

It is not simply looking at photographs of a space. It is the ability to step onto a site, with the awareness of what has happened there. Deciding to trigger the poem by Stuart as the visitors of *Between Words and Images* did when they sat down in the chair at Rust en Vreugd. It is seeing the site as it was when the injustice of what had happened there was protested – by curators, by students, by loved ones. *the woman* emphasises this resistance; “... and when your final footprint is erased from the path, my voice finds its way back from the silence (Stuart, 2013).”

## **A Practical Reflection**

My plan for the augmentation was to present the viewer with one of the locations mentioned in Chapter 2, in the state in which they currently exist. In the case of the Sarah Baartman sculpture, the location in the library from where it was removed. Even now, this sculpture will not be accessible to view as it currently resides in storage in Roeland Street, Cape Town. The Post Office, as it is now, with no trace of Uyinene Mrwetyana or her life that was taken there. The tree where Tshegofatso Pule was found as the family tries to keep her memory alive, two years later. When the visitor enters each of these sites, I initially planned on leaving the space nearly completely unaltered. The exception being a small trigger image and short list of instructions for anyone who wishes to participate.

An important part of research and experimentation is to try and generate results in relation to specific criteria or boundaries that define the limits of the investigation. I decided that I would embark on the research process as an active participant interested in the capacity of augmented reality to present a possibility for conserving the past. This strategy meant that I limited the project to what I could learn independently from the resources available online, which has yielded different results than if I decide to employ a company, or commission a virtual environment. The final restriction on my study was the end of term submission for this research which was a hard-stop which would mean the end of the project. There were both positive and negative experiences linked to these choices, which I will elaborate on during the course of this chapter.



Figure 25: Image of the unnamed woman used to promote *Between Words and Images*  
Photo: Iziko website

As a trigger image, I planned to use the same close-up image used to advertise *Between Words and Images* (Figure 25) as I believe that it has the potential to be captivating in a public space – not just the facial structure of the woman, but the fact that

the woman seems to be looking directly at the viewer. It could also serve as an homage to the original exhibition. Though in retrospect, I believe a QR code would have been more effective as this act has been relatively well engraved into the minds of people over the years. I planned on using the same image in all three locations, namely the Jameson Hall at the UCT Campus, the post office in Cape Town and the tree in Florida. As much of AR in the world outside museums or galleries, these trigger images would take up little space, perhaps just accompanied by a small note encouraging a passer-by to trigger the image. Once the image is triggered by the viewer, the poem will automatically begin to play on their smart device. White-Mifetu used a roped-off chair to draw attention to what is missing, I wanted to use the augmentation to return the space to how it was in its time of trauma. This would be done by augmentation – adding

individual pieces of each protest or memorial to the location the image is connected to, as the poem continues to play. I hope that the poem, and the erased evidence of protest and trauma, will do the original exhibition justice while creating a place where this narrative cannot just survive, but thrive.

At the start of this research project, I experimented with 3 different types of applications to develop the augmentation:

- Unity
- Blippar
- Adobe Aero (desktop version),

I allocated three weeks to each application to explore the possibilities of their augmentation techniques. I considered the 9-week investment as part of the research not only in relation to my project, but also the feasibility of this as a way for students and researchers that come after me to view the results. Given my previous experience with software and creative practice in my honour's degree; I also knew that I needed some very specific deadlines as the range of possible plugins, projects and variations on a theme can seem endless if one is fully immersed in the software learning process. When I embarked on this process; I kept the transformative experience I had in the exhibition space in mind. This was something that I was very focussed on translating into this digital encounter. This is a crucial point to consider in light of my research as well as the fact that the user experience of someone else may differ. I am using the software to create a very specific pre-determined viewer experience, thus someone with an alternative set of goals may experience it differently.

Much of my initial research indicated that Unity would be a good place to start my conservation experiments, it is one of the most popular software platforms used for video game design<sup>21</sup>. Unity was indeed impressive and the output could be converted to other platforms – Android, iOS, Magic Leap and HoloLens. This range of potential

---

<sup>21</sup> Some of the top games produced using this platform are Fall Guys: Ultimate Knockout, Among Us, Untitled Goose Game, Monument Valley 2, Ori and the Will of the Wisps, Cuphead, Pokémon Go and Beat Saber

outputs required a certain level of programming complexity and adaptability to the UI interface.

A significant problem I encountered that made me not continue with Unity was the need for numerous external downloads for the augmentation program to be written. The creation of the required augmentation was thus significantly more complex than the time window allowed, and this indicated that it may not be feasible for a user with limited familiarity with these platforms. In addition the process of manually downloading plugins is cumbersome, and quite tricky for a novice to navigate. Most importantly, it requires the use of C# (C-Sharp) (figure 26), a programming language developed by Microsoft in 2002 which is a difficult feat on its own.

```

1 using UnityEngine;
2 using System.Collections;
3
4 [System.Serializable]
5 public class DataClass {
6     public int myInt;
7     public float myFloat;
8
9 }
10
11 public class DemoScript : MonoBehaviour {
12
13     public Light myLight;
14     public DataClass myClass;
15
16     void Awake () {
17         int myVar = AddTwo(9,2);
18         Debug.Log(myVar);
19     }
20
21
22     void Update () {
23         if (Input.GetKeyDown ("space")) {
24             MyFunction ();
25         }
26     }
27
28 }
29
30 void MyFunction () {
31     myLight.enabled = !myLight.enabled;
32 }

```

Figure 26: C# Programming language as seen in Unity

This language tells objects in the game or augmentation how to behave and determines how the objects interact with one another. Ultimately, for the amount of time I had, that meant that I could not create the augmentation that I had in mind.

While the 3-week time period was enough to gain a familiarity with the platform, the time required to effectively use it for creative practice exceeded the registration period for this degree. The length of the training period is dependent on the technical knowledge base of the individual and their familiarity with this type of software. According to the Unity website, it takes new users on average between 6-18 months to develop a high level of proficiency with the platform. Nonetheless, I do however believe that Unity remains a strong contender for AR in the museum world, but it may be subject to an opportunity for funded training, or a vacancy created for someone

with skills in that specific area. Unity Technologies has published a range of tutorials based on the individual user skill level and familiarity with coding and augmented reality.

After Unity, I went on to Blippar – which I was familiar with due to my Honours in Curatorship degree and found it to be the most straightforward. Blippar was perfect for the ‘point and shoot’ approach – all it requires from the user is the Blippar mobile app and a trigger image that leads into the augmentation. Blippar is a flexible application which is available on all mobile platforms such as iOS and Android, but also gives the option to create web-based augmentations. The biggest problem that I experienced during this trial phase is that the poem, *the woman*, would not play on the editing page or during its testing phase. I initially believed it might be the format – mp3 – and had it converted to wav, which still did not work. Upon further inspection, I determined that this version of Blippar cannot support audio files of approximately 10 minutes. In my previous augmentation on Blippar, I used two different audio files of shorter lengths to be played at the same time, both of which worked without issue. This was the main reason why I moved on from Blippar as the poem, in my opinion, is the most important element of *Between Words and Images*.

There are ways to split the project into different scenes, but I thought this would have compromised the viewer experience. This limitation may also be addressed in a future version of the software and could also have been influenced by the properties of the specific combination of technological assets I was using to create the project. This is part of what I noted in the project restrictions I set for myself as something that may have hampered the possibility of the project. I do want to note that although the application was not suited to the specificity of the encounter I wanted to create, this does not mean that Blippar cannot be useful for AR conservation strategies. If a conservator or an activist is interested in creating a memorial or an archive of a specific

site, the relative simplicity of Blippar will make it a significantly more accessible application than Unity.

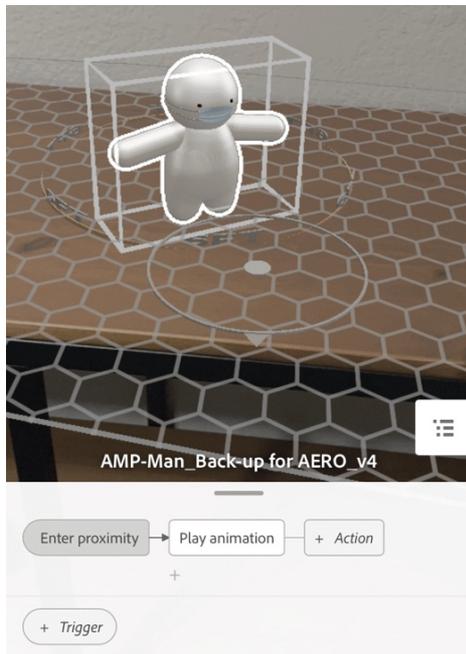


Figure 27: Adobe Aero Workspace  
Photo by: amp creative

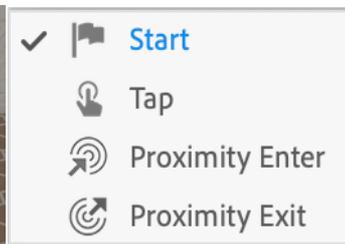


Figure 28: Trigger options on Adobe Aero  
Photo by: San-Mari van der Merwe

The last software application I experimented with was Adobe Aero's desktop beta, which is the AR software by Adobe and is still in its testing phase. I started this application experimentation process within the last few weeks of this project, and it was completely unfamiliar to me. I had experience with other Adobe products like Photoshop and InDesign, thus I thought the familiarity with the other applications would transfer to an easier acclimation period that with Unity. Comparatively the interface was fairly simple like Blippar. Aero also did not require the complex coding like Unity and allowed for more advanced ways of triggering an augmentation.

Out of the three applications that I've tried, I believe Aero would have come the closest to the augmentation I envisioned. The interface was more user-friendly than Unity and presented no audio problems, unlike Blippar. An appealing feature of Adobe Aero is the ability to select *how* you would want the augmentation to be triggered (Figure 27) – whether you just open the application, tap on an object on your smart device, or exiting or entering a certain geographic area. Some technical challenges did present in Aero when I tried to test out the augmentation. In its live view, the specific elements I isolated from the photographs of the memorials proved to have errors of their own.

By isolating specific elements, I mean this in a literal sense where I would choose a specific part of, for example, the makeshift memorial at the post office, like a placard or bouquet of flowers. I would remove the background of the entire image, leaving only the chosen object. I did this for most of the elements in available photographs of the



As I have described, it should be noted that AR is not a perfect solution and comes with its own set of complications. It is not, at least in this case, choosing a trigger image and simply having something happen when it's triggered. What AR should do, what I still hope to do, is do the original exhibition and the women behind it justice. Like all conservation efforts, it takes a significant amount of trial and error in order to create the iteration that captures the past and returns the focal point to the conservation attempt to its full glory. I went into this project with a specific idea of what I wanted, and how I wanted it to look. I struggled to let go of that particular image, but I did not expect to learn as much as I did as the project continued. While I did believe a trigger image is the best approach to this project as it was what I'm most familiar with; through more extensive research into the subject I realized there was an alternative option that encapsulates the project more accurately: Location-Based AR. This is something that I discovered while attempting to resolve the issues that I had experienced, and this discovery occurred quite late within my research process. While this late discovery meant that I did not have time to experiment with it in detail, I had time to research the applications and their usage in other contexts.

## **Everywhere To Me**

AR can be divided into two fundamentally different types of triggers – camera, and GPS (Global Positioning System), also known as marker based and markerless. Camera, or marker-based AR requires a static image on which to render the virtual objects (Kazmi, 2021). GPS, or markerless triggers are based on location – meaning that an AR app receives the location of the visitor and uses this location to trigger its augmentation without a static image – be it sounds, messages, displays, or a combination of the three (Charr, 2020). Location-based AR can display the virtual world freely as the user moves the camera, allowing more freedom for exploration of the space.

Initially, Location-Based AR was most often used to display content as labels or billboards that hover in front of the object that is visible through the camera display (Mann, 2011). More recently, these displays are used to present additional information

such as photos, reviews, contact information for public places such as restaurants or houses that are up for sale. More visually exciting AR with regards to entertainment is augmented projections or mapping where computer imagery is projected onto physical objects. In short, Location-Based AR is used to discover and learn more about the space or objects that surround the user.

How does it work? Geographic Information System (GIS) is a computer system used for capturing, storing, checking, and displaying data related to positions on Earth's surface. GIS information is fed directly to the user's mobile device. This essentially means that your phone knows where it is, it knows where the camera is facing, and knows the inclination of the device in your hand (Mann, 2011). Maps created through the use of GIS began in the 1960s and has thus formed the backbone of geographic science, including that of spatial analysis and visualisation (Kite-Powell, 2019).

The dynamic starts with the process of guiding the user to a location using navigation. The mechanism of location-based apps depends on real-time positioning systems (RTLS). Sensors are used to obtain data about the user's current location, as well as information with points of interest (POI) (Chabanovska, 2022) which determines the AR geolocation as well as how and where to add virtual overlay to the real world. Once there, the user triggers the AR content that interacts with the environment and can overlap the image seen on the camera.

Most modern devices come equipped with these sensors and allow devices to obtain data about the user's current location, making AR available for each owner of a smart device. The most important thing location-based AR requires is a good GPS signal, if this is available, GPS triggers make use of the complex image recognition of smart devices (Charr, 2020). GPS aids to the very important relationship between the user, the media linked to certain areas or landscapes, and the objective, live background upon which the media is augmented. The augmentation, thus, creates a double signification – both the overlay of what the site *was* and the location as it is at the moment the viewer visits it (Lichty, 2014: 332).

Location-Based AR has been implemented for heritage projects. WolfWalk is a location-aware mobile site and iPhone application built around the campus of North

Carolina State University in Raleigh (Farkas, 2010: 24). Individuals can use the application to see their location in relation to the map of the buildings, the buildings then being geotagged with historic images of the location. This allows people to see how the place where they are currently standing has changed over time, somewhat physically connecting them to the history of the campus (Farkas, 2010: 24). This layering of the additional information onto a specific site is something I think would have been a useful strategy to employ for my project, but due to the time dedicated to marker-based AR there was limited time to experiment with this option.

More recently, in 2019, the Israeli Special Forces used the AuGeo<sup>22</sup> application during search and rescue operations in Brazil after a flood. They created a virtual overlay of the terrain that allowed them to compare the images of the area before and after the flood damage. This significantly aided first responders to orient themselves and begin to search for survivors. It was especially useful in scenarios where streets and structures are covered by the flooding or resulting damage, the augmented view then allows a reconstruction of what is where, in the context of where the searcher is standing (Kite-Powell, 2019). With the augmented view, searchers can go directly to where buildings once stood, which was used to prioritise where to search for survivors (Kite-Powell, 2019). All that was needed was some data point of features (points of interest, the location of assets) and a mobile device.

My research into location-based AR has led me to taking an interest in ARCore. ARCore is the primary software as it is Google's platform for building AR experiences because of its close link to Google Maps. Likely, this is how I will choose to pursue this project after the examination process as I am very invested in trying to conserve the experiential quality of *Between Words and Images*. Google has been working towards location-based AR through the consistent build of its visual knowledge base, specifically Google Street View and its ability to allow the user to "walk" down the street, virtually by pressing on white arrows, as well as using it as a camera that you can move around and explore the virtual surroundings. Using AR, you can overlay

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<sup>22</sup> AuGeo is a mobile app specifically designed to display GIS data in an AR environment.

digital data over the real, physical space through the screen of a mobile device (Kazmi, 2021).



Figure 33: Google Maps Street View of University Road, University of Cape Town. Note the white arrow which allows you to continue further down the road.  
Photo by: San-Mari van der Merwe



Figure 34: Google Maps Street View as used on mobile device tilted towards the right, presenting a closer view of the wall.  
Photo by: San-Mari van der Merwe

Location-based AR has yet to be perfected and is still accompanied by its own set of technological issues that need to be considered when approaching this as conservation option. The main problem with this experience is a probable GPS error margin of 5 to 10 metres, which makes the signal, camera and GPS inaccurate. Google is currently working to address this issue by combining GPS signal with the direction and recognition of the visual elements in the space (González, 2022). To improve the accuracy of location-based AR, various sensors on the smart device must be queried correctly at the same time (Kazmi, 2021), this is crucial for the parameters to be properly considered. When scene recognition has been achieved, the mobile device can be angled in any direction and the virtual augmentations will appear. If location accuracy is not maintained, the experience for the user may be diminished.

Biztech essentially lays out a plan of what is required to build an AR GPS app, which comes down to 3 points:

Step 1: Prepare the [virtual] data you are looking to add to the real world.

Step 2: Choose a development tool, in this case, ARCore to choose the most efficient software.

Step 3: Integrating geolocation data into your app in order to determine the user's location.

As a conservator, it is not quite that simple. The experimentation forms part of the process, a collection of evidence that is gathered throughout the research that may not only help me with my project, but hopefully similar projects in the future. This relates to one of the most important aspects of location-based AR: connecting the dots (Chabanovska, 2022).

### ***Between Between Words and Images***

In my first chapter I considered the different kinds of approaches taken in the conservation of more contemporary, specifically time-based media. It is now seen as an engagement with materiality, rather than material. The focus is on the many factors that determine how an object or artwork's identity and meaning become entangled with time and space, the environment, values, politics, economy and culture (Hölling, 2017: 2). It is no longer just the object that matters, but conservators are now engaging with subjects, the transmission of tradition, memory, skill, technique, the conveyance of knowledge, whether tacit or explicit, embodied or non-embodied (Hölling, 2017: 2). Ultimately, this means that there are very seldom pre-established categories under which we can label a specific project, or artwork.

Associate Professor in the Department of History of Art, University College of London  
Hanna Hölling speaks of two types of conservation: science-based, which is oriented towards ocular and structural aspects, and object-based which focuses on objectivity with an epistemic of objects as conveyors-of-truth (2017: 4). The latter is what she

refers to as “humanistic conservation”, as it focuses on culture, people and established values from where the work originates. It is knowing that the answer may not lie under a microscope (Hölling, 2017: 4), but perhaps within its tradition, its history, its philosophy. Perhaps most prominently, it is the kind of conservation that is seen as a process, and will continue to evolve and change as time progresses (Hölling, 2017: 4). This is the type of conservation that I am interested in, and the type of conservation I formulated this project around. I feel this is appropriate, especially given the iterative process undertaken by the artists as the project shifted and changed over time when different audiences viewed it in different contexts.

Materiality has always been considered of high importance by heritage scholars and practitioners (Ciolfi, 2021: 68). Sandra Dudley (2013) defines materiality as ‘the summation of physical characteristics, sensory experience and meaning’ of heritage (Ciolfi, 2021: 68). This means not only the materiality of physical spaces and artefacts but the sense of bodily immersion concerning how works are experienced, understood and felt (Ciolfi, 2021: 68). Whilst the virtual is seen as a relatively visual medium, the stories, and thus the voices that I speak of are often disembodied in the most literal sense, it is not quite what it seems – the audio we hear is not a person that is directly speaking to us. This somewhat goes against what these memorials and protests stand for – the desire to reclaim their bodies. Rather, a reflection on how violence upon the body was perpetrated has taken its place, which is then enacted, documented, circulated, and represented through technology (Murray, 2018: 185). Hölling states that conservation produces knowledge by actively and creatively contributing to the materialisation of artworks (2017: 2). But, is this the role of the conservator, or the role of the curator?

In the OnCurating journal titled *CURATING in feminist thought*, Amelia Jones evaluates what curating means in the time of feminist art: through working with existing archives and (re)constructing histories (2016: 5). The act of curating, and this is directly visible in White-Mifetu’s work, involves looking at artworks and making choices about what to include. One might say, this is a similar role that needs to be filled as a conservator of time-based media. As curators make the decision to include, even emphasise what is important, how to see what, and how a space is encountered

(Jones, 2016: 5), we as conservators need to take this into account when starting a multifaceted project such as the interactive sound installation that is *Between Words and Images*. There is a mutual drive towards what is important, how and what to see, and what is encountered within its chosen space. Curating can make arguments regarding feminist art histories, but even more so, it constructs certain kinds of historical narratives, or greater yet, intervenes in existing narratives (Jones, 2016: 5). This may be the most important reason to conserve these exhibitions, these curations.

In the initial iteration of this idea White-Mifetu performed within the context of the Rust en Vreugd Museum. Her physical presence reclaimed something lost on the premises where Levillant so harshly erased the identities of individuals he claimed to regard with import. In the second iteration there was no performer, instead there was a seat that triggered the audio component. Within this iteration the absence of the body existed in a continuum, which made me query who has the right to speak for whom. Within the augmentation I envisioned there would be another body, the audience that stepped into the pace of my augmentation in order to hear the voice of a woman slowly reclaiming a sense of self. Each of these iterations create a space in which the viewer momentarily suspends their disbelief and entered the space of the performance, a state which lasts until the moment Stuart utters the final words of the poem.

Each iteration creates a performative space for the reception of Stuart's words of wisdom, which is deeply performative in its impact on the viewer. This performance, this time-based work comes with its own set of complexities which are required to coexist. This broadens our understanding of a performative curatorial practice. Its performativity lies not only within the raw content the viewer is presented with, but with specific social and political contexts wherein the work finds itself. This challenges the 'norms and conventions' (Garcia-Anton, 2013: 27) of an object-based art world, and consequently, the object-based conservation approach. Performances themselves are linked with the concepts of duration, change, and experience (Hölling, 2017: 6) – aspects that require a new set of tools for the conservation of a concept, as opposed to a physical thing.

Hölling continues by arguing that instead of focusing on the permanent versus impermanence, one might focus on change as a positive value (2016: 18). She notes that these performative works can be re-installed every time with the help of a different film projector and leader, in a different location, for the eyes of a different audience. This is what my conservation attempt was meant to embody, and although not successful in all areas I do think I have argued the effectiveness of this technology as a way to create experiential encounters with the core of time-based media.

Multifaceted performativity that has morphed into exhibitions such as this has transformed the relation between the artist, the curator and its audience. What is it that interests us so? These exhibitions, the protests, the memorials? Katya Garcia-Anton credits the notion of the society of the spectacle (2013: 24). I believe this is what led my work into the direction of not just AR, but activism as well. This was not my intention when entering this project, but it has become something I embraced.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter looked at various ways to answer the question of why we remember, and how we try to remember – whether it be through recreation, or conservation. Ultimately, what is addressed is how the acts of conservation and memorialisation can be explored through AR, through multiple experiments that I observed the potential of three different AR software: Unity, Blippar and Adobe Aero. I believe that a specific software should be chosen in terms of what is needed to be augmented, and important elements of each work that is to be conserved, should be individually evaluated. In summary, while AR cannot replace museums as a whole, it can serve as an interesting overlay of current reality and spaces that has the capability of being tailored to a specific work and its needs.

## *Conclusion: the world well?*

The exhibition, *Between Words and Images*, as curated by Ernestine White-Mifetu is a complex series of interlinked ideas regarding the presentation of ‘self’ with the contemporary moment as filtered through the scars inflicted by the colonial gaze. It forms part of the contemporary desire to question the one-sided narrative we are most often presented with in South Africa. It is something to be observed, experienced, and yes, conserved, as an expression of addressing injustice, but also demanding change. This exhibition, and the many that I am sure will be created in future, seeks to be, and needs to be cemented in heritage.

The annual exhibition cycle of galleries, museums and art fairs makes it almost inevitable that exhibitions will be replaced by new ones. There may be a permanent collection in place, but even those change over the course of a decade or two. These exhibitions, like the makeshift memorial disappears into your memory so does the exhibitions that make you cry, question who you are and why you are here. It doesn’t lessen the meaning that they held at the moment when they were most prominent. It does, however, take away from possibly moving people who have yet to see it. This is why I believe AR is an option as a preservation tool, especially with location-based works such as *Between Words and Images*. AR can serve the purpose of keeping the work tied to a physical location. This will, in the spirit of remembering, pay tribute to the ones affected by the site or events that had taken place on the site, and avoids that the work gets completely lost within the virtual sphere.

There are a range of opportunities available to the contemporary conservator, which I think provides creative opportunities for the way objects may be imagined or reimaged for the digital context. As I have outlined, the process is not completely straightforward and there are certain technical challenges. Within the context of the local museum-related perspective, some training and funding may be a requirement for a feasible usage of the technology available to conservators (this is subject to their level of experience and comfort with such applications). It may be useful to consider

that the range of applications that exist are all attempting to respond to a need of the user base or the vision of a group of programmers. This may therefore prove to be an interesting topic for future researchers as there are many potential avenues for exploration that lie beyond the scope of this specific investigation. In future, museums may need to establish a foundation or one specific platform or software which I believe would be efficient.

In the end, it becomes an interesting paradox for a conservator. We are trained to care for objects in the spirit of longevity, to keep them whole, accessible, and available to future generations. The major question to consider is the goal of the act of conservation. My argument is that the experience of the viewer is not limited to the constellation of objects and ideas set in direct spatial relation for a brief period of time, but rather the overall impact that has on an individual. It's a need to breathe, develop, and speak to its viewers as it relates to them in their time is most essential. I argue for the value of the moment of contact through my reflection on a specific artwork; and I think that this model can be adopted to great effect when engaging other time-based media experiences. Within the context of this mini-dissertation I have argued for the primacy of the intimate encounter with the creative vision of a specific set of individuals and the immersion into a tailored viewer experience.

I refer to Le Guin's *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* to conclude this project as I believe it to be a very fitting metaphor. There is no container in the museum, the exhibition itself does not contain it in a way that assures permanence. What I want to achieve is the creation of a space that can hold, contain these intangible experiences, moments and perceptions. In a work that has so many elements that constitutes its existence, the need for finding a place for things, being able to take things home is what should be considered by a conservator.

Notably, while these containers can aid in holding things, it does not mean it is not messy or conflicted. It has space to breathe, to move – which, as I discussed in chapter 3, is an important aspect of the conservation of time-based works. In her reflection of Le Guin's work, Siobhan Leddy states: "Like when you're trying to grab your sunglasses out of your bag, but those are stuck in your headphones which are also

tangled around your keys, and now the sunglasses have slipped into that hole in the lining” (2019).

Ultimately what we find is that Le Guin presents a version of history where everything does not need to be neatly tied together, in fact, this new outlook creates a space for complexity, contradiction, for both differences and similarities to coexist (Leddy, 2019). That is where storytelling sits, that is where archival practice and making a consolidated space for something as intangible as this, sits. There’s this myriad of emotions and complexities within the South African landscape: identity politics, gender-based violence, the complexity of trying to find a space of self. It is the creation of a space with all of these elements through AR, and through conservation where a new language for memory may be found.

The social theorist Donna Haraway, who has been deeply influenced by Le Guin’s writings, implores us to tell other stories about this ‘weird’, shared reality: “It matters what stories tell stories” (Haraway, 2016: 2).

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## Appendix A

### the woman (provided as is by Toni Giselle Stuart)

*Commissioned for Between Words & Images, a collaborative sound installation by Ernestine White, giving voice to a nameless Khoi woman and her experience with the French colonial explorer, Francois Le Vaillant. – June 2013. The installation took place at Rus en Vreugde (sic) Iziko Museum in October 2013.*

**Full recording of poem:** <https://soundcloud.com/nomadpoet/the-woman-between-words-images>

I

i want to tell you my name

i want to tell you my name

whose sounds sing in the dry sand of home  
whose letters are enfolded in the berg wind

i want to tell you my name

whose sounds you stripped and shattered  
whose letters you scraped from my skin

i want to tell you my name

speak it to you, in rhythm and chorus  
until my voice seeps under your skin like a shadow  
and its echoes trace a path up your neck  
to burn the unseeing from your eyes

you blow into our village on a deceitful wind  
they call you, *The Brave*. with your lies  
wrapped as gifts, at my feet,

- these gifts you bring not to honour me,  
but to beg for my humiliation -  
you ask me to unveil my nakedness

the hallowed space only my husband sees  
sacred, ancient, womanhood  
*no*. my voice echoes through your speaking

but my brothers' voices join with yours  
speaking words that betray their souls and mine  
your voices rise, knives against my flesh

*no*. but the weight of my voice is cut  
by the blades of your tongues  
and the first letters fall from my name

fall and bury themselves as land mines in our earth.  
*no* only has power when it is heard  
and a voice needs listening ears for it to exist

of a body, black, you speak  
of a body, black and exotic and curious  
there is no woman here

and the unravelling of my name begins

## II

i hide my face

i hide my face behind my hands  
as they pull open my kaross<sup>23</sup>  
as they shrug it off my shoulders  
i hide my face behind my hands  
trembling. i am muted by shame

your beseeching eyes pierce my flesh  
and peel back the sacredness from my skin  
as below my waist, you study my nakedness

your eyes are fire against my flesh  
long, hot tongs of iron that sear  
as they search the hallowed space only my husband sees

i hide my face behind my hands  
trembling shivering muted by shame

you speak again, your politeness masks your request  
as i shift and twist legs, contort my shape  
so your eyes can peer closer, deeper, further into me

and the letters of my name continue to fall  
splintered. digging themselves  
into the sand at my feet

you hold something in your hand  
you use it to make scratchings and etchings on paper  
scratchings and etchings of my nakedness

---

<sup>23</sup> A rug or blanket of sewn animal skins, formerly worn as a garment by African people, now used as a bed or floor covering.

of the hallowed space, only my husband sees

i hide my face behind my hands  
your science strips me of my sacredness  
your gaze desecrates my flesh

and the shattering of my name is complete

### III

you leave with the same wind that brought you here  
and when your final footprint is erased from the path  
my voice finds its way back from the silence

cover me please  
    ask the ocean to wash me clean  
cover me please  
    ask the moon to bless my womb  
cover me please

what have you done with my pictures?  
whose eyes pierce, sear and defile my flesh  
a second, a third, a hundredth time

do they search for my name  
in the pencil marks, in the brush strokes  
or do they cease at my face and move on?

and what of the other women's bodies  
- pulled apart in death, to unpack our sacredness -  
whose drawings of flesh

you printed in the name of science  
black women's bodies pulled apart  
to prove your prejudice. to justify your hate

and my sister, whose lusciousness you paraded  
at parties, her sacredness on show for entertainment,  
what of her?

you cannot see passed our flesh  
to you, we are only  
black. woman. Hottentot. defiled.

but no more. i call to the women  
who descend from me, they hear my voice  
cover me please

i am buried here now, with the letters  
only the land remembers  
the single word that is my name,  
enfolding in the dirt and sand  
and held up for the wind to catch it  
and carry its sound to you  
cover me please  
i am buried here now, with the letters  
ask the ocean to wash me clean  
ask the moon to bless my womb  
ask the moon to bless my womb

*Toni Stuart*

## Appendix B

### *Ugly* by Warsan Shire

*From the 2011 book by Warsan Shire titled 'teaching my mother how to give birth'*

Your daughter is ugly.  
She knows loss intimately,  
Carries whole cities in her belly.

As a child, relatives wouldn't hold her.  
She was splintered wood and sea water.  
She reminded them of war.

On her fifteenth birthday you taught her  
how to tie her hair like rope  
and smoke it over burning frankincense.

You made her gargle rosewater  
and while she coughed, said  
*macaanto*<sup>24</sup> *girls like you shouldn't smell  
of lonely and empty.*

You are her mother.  
Why did you not warn her,  
hold her like a rotting boat  
and tell her that men will not love her  
if she is covered in continents,  
if her teeth are small colonies,  
if her stomach is an island  
if her thighs are borders?

What man wants to lie down  
and watch the world burn  
in his bedroom?

Your daughter's face is a small riot,  
her hands are a civil war,  
a refugee camp behind each ear,  
a body littered with ugly things.

But God,  
doesn't she wear  
the world well?

---

<sup>24</sup> Somali term of endearment, meaning sweetness.

## Appendix C

### *I've come to take you home* by Diana Ferrus

*Written in 1998, by South African writer, poet and storyteller of Khoisan ancestry. Ferrus wrote the poem in the midst of the French reluctance to release Sarah Baartman's remains from the Musée de L'Homme. The popularity of the poem is widely believed to be responsible for the return of Baartman's remains to South Africa in 2002 (Kentake, 2020).*

**Full recording of poem:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pCmu4uyj5c>

I have come to take you home, home!

Remember the veld,  
the lush green grass beneath the big oak trees?  
The air is cool there and the sun does not burn.  
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,  
your blankets are covered in buchu<sup>25</sup> and mint,  
the proteas stand in yellow and white  
and the water in the stream chuckles sing-songs  
as it hobbles along over little stones.

I have come to wrench you away,  
away from the poking eyes of the man-made monster  
who lives in the dark with his clutches of imperialism  
who dissects your body bit by bit,  
who likens your soul to that of Satan  
and declares himself the ultimate God!

I have come to soothe your heavy heart,  
I offer my bosom to your weary soul.  
I will cover your face with the palms of my hands,  
I will run my lips over the lines in your neck,  
I will feast my eyes on the beauty of you  
and I will sing for you,  
for I have come to bring you peace.

I have come to take you home  
where the ancient mountains shout your name.  
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill.  
Your blankets are covered in buchu and mint.  
The proteas stand in yellow and white –

I have come to take you home  
where I will sing for you,  
for you have brought me peace,  
for you have brought us peace.

---

<sup>25</sup> A South African plant used to make medicine.