Symbolic Restitution: Post-Apartheid Changes to the South African Heritage Sector, 1994-2012

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Symbolic Restitution:  
Post-Apartheid Changes to the South African Heritage Sector, 1994-2012

Ashley Sheriff, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

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Introduction and Scope

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) defines a museum as a public, non-profit, and permanent institution that serves a society in that it “acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.” According to the South African Museums Association’s (SAMA) web site, museums are public institutions that “shape and manifest the consciousness, identities and understanding of communities and individuals in relation to their natural, historical and cultural environments, through collection, documentation, conservation, research and education programmes that are responsive to the needs of society.” SAMA lists a non-comprehensive number of monuments and museums in South Africa that ascribe to this definition. This bibliography will consider both definitions of museums: the ICOM’s overarching, technical definition that to some extent represents the “old museology” of museum methods, practices and standards, and SAMA’s definition that acknowledges the “new museology” that addresses the political and ideological considerations of museums as institutions that can shape public opinions and identities through subjective display arrangements, privileged narratives, re-contextualized artifacts, and by assigning disproportionate values to cultural objects and intangible cultural heritage. South African museums as well as monuments have a long legacy of reaffirming the dominant status of Europeans over indigenous Africans.

South African monuments and memorials, which will be used interchangeably as structures that commemorate famous or noteworthy events and people, are equally important to this compilation of sources since they have served to preserve the collective, or disparate memories of heroes and struggles throughout South Africa’s history. For instance, the imposing, granite Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria is a poignant colonial site; its stone frieze depicts war scenes between the early Voortrekker settlers and indigenous Africans, symbolizing the settlers’ and thus white civilization’s triumph over barbarism. South African colonial museums began to flourish in the mid-18th century as edifying institutions that reaffirmed the colonies’ sociocultural advancement over indigenous populations with ahistorical displays. In fact, black Africans were (re)presented in natural history museum spaces as lower species of early humans not quite ontologically separate from indigenous flora and fauna. During the era of apartheid, which officially began in 1948, many South African museum exhibitions fervently codified the status quo of white privilege and power under the colonial regime. After the fall of apartheid and with the rise of the democratic government in accordance with the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), South African museums were presented with an opportunity to re-assess their responsibility to serve a multicultural constituency by addressing diversity, amending collection development policies and exhibition practices as well as confronting an uncomfortable public memory and creating a new post-apartheid national identity. Under the Legacy Project, the African National Congress (ANC)-headed democratic government also encouraged the founding of post-apartheid heritage institutions such as the Apartheid Museum, District Six Museum and Freedom Park – sites of memory that would challenge dominant perspectives and serve as forums for formerly marginalized voices. These newer institutions played a major role in the new South Africa’s goal for reconciliation and recognizing a shared national identity for collectively dismantling apartheid and moving forward. My research suggests that many South African heritage sites and their exhibits and installations placed a strong emphasis on reconciliation, correcting historical imbalances, national unity and a post-
apartheid future by retiring prejudiced displays (in the case of the South African Museum’s bushman dioramas), including works produced by black artists such as the South African National Gallery; and by directly confronting and engaging an uncomfortable legacy of apartheid – most notably, the Apartheid Museum, which opened its doors to South African and international visitors in 2001.

This bibliography is a compilation of scholarly articles, book chapters and complete monographs written in English about South African cultural heritage sites, permanent and traveling exhibits and installments, and institutional decisions within the heritage sector that contributed to the process of constructing post-apartheid national South African identities, heritages, and collective memories. It includes materials about exhibitions that contributed to a new formation of nationhood by engaging or omitting vestiges of apartheid and colonialism, or by including formerly marginalized voices. This compilation of bibliographic sources encompasses materials published worldwide, dating from the beginning of Nelson Mandela’s inauguration as President of a democratic South Africa on May 10, 1994 to December 11, 2012. Sources are organized in four sections, beginning with an introduction to the Post-Apartheid Transformation of the South African Heritage Sector. This section encompasses materials about an over-arching idea of South African museums’ contributions to creating a ‘new’ national identity and addressing a national, yet many times conflicting, memory of apartheid. Moreover, this section includes sources that connect South Africa’s process of nation (re)building with general models and specific examples of changing practices of acquisitions, collections, and display by heritage institutions that reflect the nation’s commitment to inclusivity, redressing past representations, and including formerly silenced voices. Museums covered in this section are wide-ranging, including, but not limited to institutions within the consortium of South African national “Iziko” museums such as the South African Museum (SAM) – famous for its discontinued diorama of Khoisan ethnic groups.

The next section, entitled Art Museum Exhibits and Johannesburg Biennales, covers sources that address both trends in South Africa’s post-apartheid art museums and concrete examples of installations and art exhibitions that reflect and strengthen the country’s multicultural and inclusive identity. This section includes sources about the Johannesburg Biennales that were held in 1995 and 1997 to restore the South African presence in the international art circuit. The exhibits and installments held during the biennales are at the center of the discussion about the post-apartheid, multicultural identities because these events showcased the nation’s political transition and commitment to multiculturalism. Moreover, this section on art exhibitions covers materials on art museums and counter-narratives as expressed through post-apartheid artworks within museum spaces.

Selected Post-Apartheid Museums and Commemorative Sites contains sources that discuss commemorative sites, memorials, and museums that were either inaugurated, or completely refurbished (in the case of MuseumAfrica) since the 1994 democratic elections to remember the nation’s painful history of apartheid, colonialism, and struggle; commemorate heroes in the counter-movements against apartheid; and provide forums for marginalized narratives that were previously omitted from official history under the National Party controlled government. Well known government sanctioned legacy projects, and memory projects that arose from the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions’ demand for symbolic reparations are demarcated by capital letters. These sites include the Apartheid Museum, District Six Museum, and the Robben Island
Museum. This bibliography concludes with *Apartheid-era and Colonial Monuments*, which encompasses materials about contested apartheid- and colonial-era monuments that remain contested, but continually (re)interpreted sites in the new South Africa. Sources in this bibliography are arranged in alphabetical order by author and were cited according to *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th ed., 2010). The last section comprises a *Museum, Monument and Commemorative Site Index* to assist readers in locating specific sites.

This endeavor will benefit scholars and professionals in African studies, heritage studies, museology, and similar subject areas who are interested in topics including: the South African heritage sector’s contributions to post-apartheid nation building, museum exhibitions and installations that address legacies of apartheid and colonialism, confronting and engaging the politics of representation within South African sites of memory and lastly, South African museums and memorials’ connection and contribution to global conversations about identity formation and marginalized narratives.

**Post-Apartheid Transformation of the South African Heritage Sector**


   Abrahams-Willis charges South African museums with the task of representing their multicultural audiences by dramatically changing the way Khoisan identity and heritage are interpreted. The author reports that “heritage and identity are highly emotional and sensitive issues” (290) to indigenous people in southern Africa and advocates for partnerships between museums and indigenous communities to renegotiate the ways they are (re)presented. She asserts that museums are obligated to unite the South African society and encourage community; although Abrahams-Willis writes that the national South African identity supersedes group identities, addressing the politics of representing Khoisans will better position museums to become democratizing institutions.


   Policies in South African heritage institutions such as national monuments and museums, that concern the provision of intangible heritage as defined by UNESCO, have been restructured in accordance with the new agenda to encourage South African heritage institutions to acknowledge and exhibit indigenous knowledge and intangible heritage in ways that transcend Eurocentric systems of classification. Bredekamp addresses the Iziko museums’ incorporation of intangible heritage into exhibitions and public programs.

This extensive catalogue accompanied the *New Identities* exhibition that was held at Museum Bochum, the Pretoria Art Museum, and the Johannesburg Art Gallery to celebrate 10 years of democratic elections in South Africa and multicultural peace and cohabitation. The exhibit engages the post-democracy freedom to construct and reconstruct identities and acknowledge untold stories in addition to South Africa’s “aspiration towards a new national identity” (12) and the need to face history and foster reconciliation. The exhibition was originally hosted at Museum Bochum in Germany hopes that, with the parallels between the racism of Nazi Germany and the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the exhibit would demonstrate methods on acknowledging and coping with a difficult national past.


Coombes explores the challenges South African museums faced with the task of confronting apartheid under the direction of Mandela’s strong emphasis on reconciliation. Adopting the Reconstruction and Development Programme’s plan was a convenient tactic for South African museums to garner support and funding from the new African National Congress-led democratic government. Coombes asserts that the National Cultural History Museum in Pretoria made a connection between its work and the RDP explicit early on as a convenient tactic for RDP funding.


Corsane examines changes in South African museum practices within the framework of political processes of the post-apartheid era. During apartheid, the primary role of museums was to support the status quo of white privilege, but Mandela emphasized that with the new democracy that began in 1994 South Africans have an opportunity to ensure that institutions reflect the nation’s contested history in a way that respects the heritages of all South Africans. For example, greater emphasis was placed on intangible cultural heritage and community-based management of cultural heritage resources instead of traditional, Eurocentric methods of presenting information with dioramas within the confines of brick and mortar museum buildings.


Crooke emphasizes the South African heritage sector’s post-apartheid transformation and subsequent role in dealing with and representing the legacy of conflict and contested histories, addresses exclusion from dominant narratives and ongoing tensions, and promotes reconciliation and inclusiveness. The rebranding of heritage sites in Cape Town, in accordance with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, can serve as a paradigm for museums in Northern Ireland in dealing with “themes of identity, diversity and equality” (133) amongst a range of stakeholders who have conflicting relationships
with Irish heritage. The article refers to museums such as District Six, the South African Museum (SAM), The Robben Island Museum, and the Slave Lodge.


Davidson examines issues around the Bushman exhibition, which was on public display from 1911 to 2001 at Cape Town’s South African Museum. The longstanding exhibit displayed early 19th century dioramas of plaster casts depicting phenotypical characteristics of the Khoisan ethnic groups that are more commonly known as ‘Bushmen’, and exemplified by the ‘Hottentot Venus’, Saartje Bartman. The diorama was alienating to black museum visitors and was eventually closed in April 2001 after failed attempts to reframe the exhibit as a commentary on past sentiments.


Davidson asserts that museums, galleries, and heritage sites are capable of shaping collective memories by choosing which memories to preserve and which to omit. Since these heritage sites are perceived to present authoritative, official accounts of history, they can re-shape public memories. According to Davidson, “they are often used in the construction of identities in nation-building exercises” (184). Davidson acknowledges that museum displays, dioramas and installations are subjective and recounts a number of heritage institutions such as the Castle of Good Hope, South African National Gallery (SANG), District Six Museum, and the Robben Island Museum that have hosted exhibits to help re-shape South African memories, notably Pippa Skotnes’ contested 1996 exhibit *Miscast: negotiating Khoisan History and Material Culture* at the SANG, with the mission of redressing humiliation suffered by the Khoisans and their descendants.


The New South Africa must come to terms with how collective identity and history have been presented in the past, especially in museums, monuments, and archives – contested sites that have historically touted colonial progress. The pivotal change for South African museums, as Dubin explains, occurred on Heritage Day in 1997 when President Nelson Mandela inaugurated the Robben Island Museum and on the same day criticized the South African museums as a collective set of institutions that for the most part reflected colonialist and apartheid points of view. For many museum staff his criticism was a wake-up-call that spurred a transformation in museum policies. Themes that reflect these changes are repeated throughout the chapters in the book: politics of representation and collective memory are amongst the key ideas that are examined through a broad range of museum types including national history, community, and art museums, along with historic houses and monuments.

Enwezor focuses on South African museums such as the Apartheid Museum, District Six Museum and Robben Island which were created for the purpose of revising the past to engage the country’s history of colonialism, slavery, and apartheid. He discusses how the museum, as a heritage institution, serves as an archive to document the events of the apartheid and colonial past. Similarly, monuments commemorate the histories of specific groups such as the Voortrekker Monument, which symbolizes Afrikaner heroism and nationalism. Enwezor also focuses on specific museum exhibitions that engage identity politics and the post-apartheid body such as Jane Alexander’s *Butcher Boys* installation at the South African National Gallery.


Golding emphasizes the representations of marginalized voices at post-apartheid sites of memory including the District Six Museum (D6M) in the chapter “Control: Shifting Relationships in the Whole Museum.” In the same chapter, she also mentions post-apartheid transformations of older institutions such the Iziko Museums of Cape Town. The chapter also covers themes of addressing painful histories, post-apartheid citizenship and identity, land restitution, and memory politics with examples of programs and exhibitions facilitated at that D6M.


Gore explains that restructuring museums to be more meaningful for an increasingly integrated post-apartheid society by engaging and revisiting an uncomfortable history became a priority since 1994. South African museums such as the South African Cultural History Museum have been notorious for unabashedly collecting artifacts and specimens from indigenous African populations, essentially placing them on par with natural history and zoological exhibits. The article addresses changes in exhibiting strategies, museum names, and collection practices by multiple South African museums as an effort to respond to the needs of a democratic South Africa and the resulting challenges faced in an effort to display contested, conflicting histories in balanced and fair ways.


Hall critiques the state of South African museums after the end of apartheid and examines how the political transition changed the heritage sector. Hall notes that educators in South Africa have integrated museum content into lessons on multicultural perspectives since the end of apartheid signaled a new era for museums to include formerly excluded voices. Hall challenges each museum to update their formerly hegemonic practices and
Eurocentric perceptions to embrace “the unbiased interpretation of a nation in change” (176). The chapter enumerates four concepts by which museums can integrate cultural diversity into their missions – namely, fostering partnerships to become more inclusive and welcoming to diverse audiences.


The New South Africa’s nation-building project constructed new national narratives and official histories, partly through the revision of the country’s museums and monuments, “sites of contestation where national identity is both constructed and, often, deconstructed” (102). Hill explores the extent to which the new identity of South Africa as a rainbow nation has shaped historical narratives in a post-apartheid era. Hill argues that South Africa’s political shift is reflected in the displays of heritage site’s effort to include previously marginalized voices. Hill includes an anecdote about the curator, Pippa Skotnes’s 1998 exhibit Miscast: Negotiating Khoisan history and material culture.


Hughes chapter explores the changes undergone by the South African heritage sector and tourism since 1994, which marked the beginning of an ANC inspired national effort to construct a post-apartheid heritage by establishing and recreating museums, many of which were “still weighted down by apartheid baggage (267). Museums had to engage the politics of (re)representing heritage, not only to mirror the multicultural constituency in the rebranded rainbow nation, but to appeal to overseas tourists as well. According to Hughes, tourist consumption plays an important role in the increased celebration of ethnic identities and new histories.


This article describes a collaborative art exhibition entitled ‘Dis Nag – The Cape’s Hidden Roots in Slavery’ that ran from September to early October 2008 at the Slave Lodge in Cape Town. The exhibition aimed to collect and display, bridge, and share the often conflicting and disproportionately privileged histories (in the form of artwork and intangible culture) from multiple South African cultural groups in an effort to move closer to a “collectively owned” and shared national identity.

Grobler explores how the white minority’s “foundation myth”, whereby white settlers founded and developed South Africa, was commemorated in popular South African statues, “memorials, monuments, museums and historic sites” affected tourism and the presentation of South African cultural property before and after 1994, the year the apartheid system fell. According to Grobler, the foundation myth is formed by the need for people to “identify their origins” (164) and form their unique identities separate from other groups, but South African heritage has been defined by conflict and oppression. For example, the Voortrekker Monument that was erected strictly to celebrate Afrikaner nationalist identity and foundation myth, which portrays in the panels of its famous frieze the struggle of Voortrekkers against indigenous Africans. Grobler asserts that these pre-1994 representations of blacks have not been condoned by the democratic government, and writes that museum displays such as those in the National Military Museum and Slave Lodge and monuments including the Voortrekker monument have been altered since 1994 to reflect the government’s goal of transforming the heritage sector.


   The authors write that South African heritage sites such as memorials and museums in intangible heritage practices such as music, dance, and performance can be therapeutic settings and vessels for reconciling traumatic memories of conflict and addressing histories that were formerly silenced – both are important tasks for the post-apartheid rainbow nation since, as Meskell and Scheermeyer recounted, “identities forged out of half memories or false memories easily lead to future transgressions” (156).


   The authors address the steady transformation of South African museums of becoming more inclusive and propose that South African museums must challenge the museum’s former role as a colonial institution and a domain of whites only if they intend to include new narratives. The chapter identifies a number of changes that characterize this transformation. The authors discuss the process of democratizing the museum profession by opening its ranks to marginalized groups through initiatives including the Postgraduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies and its section, the Robben Island Training Programme, which has a strong affirmative action stance to diversity the museum profession. The authors also point out that there had not been a cohesive, national effort to restructure museums. Museums have changed their displays and exhibits on an individual level. In addition to changing museum policies, new museums and monuments such as the Robben Island Museum have been established through the 1996 Legacy Project; community-driven museums such as the Nelson Mandela Museum and the District Six Museum were also established during this transformation.

This multidisciplinary collection of essays focuses on national identities, landscapes, and disputed memories within the politics of representing South Africa’s apartheid and colonial past. The unifying theme is the interplay between contested, public spaces in post-apartheid South Africa and “identity, heritage, memory and community projects” (2). The text posits and provides insight into the question of how the transition to democracy in 1994 has transformed South Africa’s physical and social landscapes as well as the nation’s heritage sector through architectural projects, refurbished and new museums, and heritage projects.


This article reviews selected South African museums’ significant contributions to the process of accurately (re)presenting the past and (re)constructing national narratives in an effort to be meaningful institutions to an increasingly integrated society. The following museums revisited, engaged and exposed the narratives silenced under the Apartheid regime: the Robben Island Prison Museum, the District Six Museum, and the Kwa Muhle local history museum.


After the fall of apartheid and Afrikaner political control, many South Africans were encouraged to let go of the painful past and look towards a new future within the Rainbow Nation. This text investigated “the ways in which memory [was] being negotiated in South Africa” (1) during the long period of reconciliation and of settling into a new democratic, multicultural national identity. The compilation of essays explore, within four parts, themes of memory production, privileged narratives, post-apartheid narratives, oral histories, and public history and the reshaping of memory in “official” heritage sites including, but not limited to the Robben Island Museum, the South African Museum, and the South African Cultural History Museum.


The post-apartheid South African government was charged with the responsibility to establish an inclusive nation with new national narratives and symbols that represented the transition to democracy and a collective struggle against the apartheid regime. The country’s post-apartheid museums, such as the Apartheid Museum and the Constitution Hill Precinct, are an important component to this memory-making process that commemorates the anti-apartheid struggle and recreates a national narrative of “victory of equality over discrimination” (14).

After the fall of apartheid and as part of implementing the new museology of acknowledging that museums ideologies and values, South African museums and national parks were repurposed to represent a more complete and balanced heritage- what Prosalendis and Kolbe describe to be a complete picture that was lost through representations that were “carefully selected and mediated through the prism of racism” (131).


Legacy projects, museums and new monuments reflect the post-apartheid reframing of South Africa as a rainbow nation. Rassool writes that local heritage initiatives and community museums have pushed for the inclusion marginalized voices beyond dominant narratives. Rassool examines heritage construction and identity formation during South Africa’s democratic political transformation, focusing on the burgeoning heritage sector, cultural tourism, the reframing of the legacy of apartheid by programs initiated by National Monument Council (NMC) and the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology to campaign for new inclusive heritage sites.


Ross recounts the art installations held at the transformed MuseumAfrica and those that accompanied the Johannesburg Biennale Africus, which was organized around themes of identity, issues of race, and confronting the experiences of colonization. Ross uses the aforementioned examples of counter-culture art exhibitions to make the case that post-apartheid art and visual culture play an “active role in defining South African identity and culture of the late twentieth century” (7).


This review of post-apartheid museum exhibits emphasizes two exhibitions in particular: Personal Affects and A Decade of Democracy, both of which were hosted in North American heritage institutions and commemorate the 1994 transition from the apartheid system to a democratic government and rebranding of South Africa as the Rainbow Nation. Rovine uses these exhibits to examine themes of South African identity, South African representation of visual arts in the United States; she also explores the broader topic of South African representations to international audiences since art has played a significant role in South Africa’s international image. Rovine explains that the theme of identity is the crux of both exhibitions. She states that “Diverse works of art…provide insights into a wide range of South African identities, both individual and collective”
The freedom to engage the uncomfortable history of apartheid through visual arts is another central theme to both exhibitions.


According to Skotnes, the end of the apartheid allowed persons classified as “coloured” or “other coloured” to question their pre-colonial identities: Bushmen. This claim to a shared identity and heritage was complicated by museum’s ahistorical depictions of Bushmen. The figures are reminiscent of fossils, frozen in an ethnographic present. The article refers to the Bushman diorama at the South African Museum (SAM)’s natural history wing, which shaped many visitors’ views of the /Xam by presenting them as uncivilized and unlike white South Africans. Skotnes also refers to the history of settlers removing /Xam from their land, slaughtering them and their livestock, re-presenting them in colonial museums as a disappearing primitive racial type (311) and even taking their heads to Europe as trophies. Skotnes asserts that this history and subsequent representation in museums inspired her to author the 1996 *Miscast* exhibit to emphasize their untold narratives.


Post-colonial South African museums, that once reaffirmed the colonial state, are in a state of transformation to reflect the new, inclusive South African national identity. Engaging the politics of representation and memory are key to amending exhibiting practices. Soudien argues that museums employed two dominant forms of multiculturalism in exhibitions: empirical multiculturalism and triumphalist multiculturalism, which expose formerly hidden narratives and places the New South Africa in a narrative of good conquering evil, respectively. Another exhibiting approach that allows museum visitors to ‘experience’ the past is a primary exhibiting technique at museums like the District Six Museum and the Robben Island Museum.


Swanepoel recounts that after South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994, new symbols of nationhood were recognized, such as the renaming of institutions, geographical areas, and place-names; she asserts that the changing of names is interlinked “with notions of identity, history and heritage; and place names, like monuments and museums…are sites of struggle during pivotal moments of the nation’s history” (95). Swanepoel writes about the increase of inclusive monuments and the transformation of existing heritage sites to appeal to communities outside of the white minority. She makes special reference to Freedom Park, the Ncome Museum, the Voortrekker Monument, and the statue of Chief Tshwane in Pretoria.
After the African National Congress (ANC) assumed power in 1994 to head a newly democratic nation, the party pledged a commitment to an inclusive, representative heritage sector that strongly emphasized the goal to correct museums’ historical portrayal of racial types. Local governments provided financial assistance to refurbish museums under their jurisdiction such as the Apartheid Museum, District Six, the Gold Museum, MuseumAfrica, and Robben Island; many museums also relied on international funding agencies to promote the change in their collection and display policies. Witz brings attention to the transformation of pre-democracy heritage sites’ efforts to represent the new South Africa’s multicultural society – most notably the South African Museum’s dismantlement of the bushman dioramas. These changes appealed to international tourists and local communities alike.

Art Museum Exhibitions and Johannesburg Biennales


Baderoon explores themes of difference and identities in South African art since 1990. The author also explains that the period between 1990 and 1996 was an important period of transition from apartheid to an egalitarian society; how art is displayed in galleries and public spaces and who curates these artistic expressions represents “a national conversation” (77) about who South African are. Baderoon examines artworks from the South African National Gallery to explore themes of invisibility, hyper-visibility, and South Africa’s visual history.


Becker recounts the first and second Johannesburg Biennale conferences and accompanying exhibitions, installations, and performances at cultural institutions including the South African National Gallery in 1995 and 1997, which were organized by curators and South African artists to commemorate South Africa’s democracy and reentry into the world as a New South Africa. The first biennale was fraught with controversy and as Becker indicates, somehow fell short of “exploring post-apartheid South Africa” (103) and South Africa’s new, but prematurely developed sense of nationhood. The second biennale celebrated a post-apartheid future and revisited the colonial past of Africa, but in many ways didn’t fully engage South Africa’s history and progress as it,
Symbolic Restitution

like the first biennale, was dominated by international artists and curators, emotionally displaced from South Africa by diaspora.


Carman’s chapter maintains that museums are indicators of national identities because they reflect “how communities understand themselves, what ideals they identity with, how they regard those beyond their familiar groups… (21) as expressed through their institutional collection and display policies. This chapter is concerned with South African art in the early 1900s, but gives insight on the early treatment of indigenous black art in art museums as ethnographic artifacts instead of high art displayed in art museums. This chapter also reveals that although black South Africans had access to almost all the heritage sites, but, according to a 1932 South African museums survey, they rarely entered these spaces.


Campton questions the possibility for South African art museums to be adequately inclusive within the New South Africa in his examination of the South African National Gallery’s exhibition ‘Contemporary South African art 1985-1995’, which tracked changes in South African political transitions and corresponding changes in national identity through artworks. This paper broadly addresses “the relationship between museums and representations of national identity in South Africa”. (218).


Martin was the co-curator for the Coexistence: Contemporary Cultural Production in South Africa exhibition held at the South African National Museum Gallery (SANG). Martin contributed a chapter to the exhibition’s accompanying text about the transformation of South African heritage institutions in the democratic South Africa. Since 1994, new acquisitions policies and display techniques in South African art museums that celebrates the country’s multiethnic cultural contributions. She emphasizes the SANG’s transformation and its role as a heritage institution in reflecting the values of a changing South Africa by interrogating and re-representing the past (19) despite the residual challenges left by the apartheid regime, including the lack of black art and museum professionals. Martin lists and describes a number of collection changes and exhibitions at the SANG that reinforce the New South Africa’s mission of inclusivity.

Symbolic Restitution


Martin states the South African National Gallery’s (SANG) 1990 catalogue _Contemporary South African Art 1985-1995 from the South African National Gallery Permanent Collection_ reflected the SANG’s transformation into a national institution within the decade during political transition. The SANG joined 14 other heritage institutions under the consortium of the Iziko Museums of Cape Town. The SANG was charged with the task of acquiring a more inclusive collection, but the institution fell short when faced with financial constraints, competitive funding, and the call for “the privatisation of museums” (60). Martin argues that the SANG cannot effectively be a public institution that serves its constituency when faced with the need to be a self-sustaining business. The chapter implies that resisting Eurocentric acquisitions is difficult because of biased funding that privilege these artworks and maintains Western hegemonic art practices. Martin asks that the government supports museums so that they can be relevant in post-apartheid South Africa.


In this chapter, McGee asserts that South American museum staff are reevaluating the museum’s audience, collections, and purpose within the democratic nation that reflect its multicultural constituency by revising dominant Western narratives that reflect colonial values. McGee argues that the South African National Gallery’s (SANG) failed to fully embrace the transformation from Eurocentric policies, ascribing to Western canons of art and European viewpoints, since the first democratic election in 1994. The author asserts that even though the museum boasts exhibitions on indigenous South African artists, there is still no permanent, historical collection that addresses the “legacy” of all South African artists. [WOS]


Minty asserts that post-apartheid visual culture has turned physical and virtual public urban spaces in the New South Africa into sites that engage post-apartheid identity and challenge dominant narratives in conventional museums. These counter-narratives in murals, graffiti, performances, and digital productions are deemed an important to make art accessible to the majority, who are not acclimated to visiting imposing and formerly exclusionary institutions such as galleries and museums.

Minty examines public art practices in a post-apartheid Cape Town, which engage symbolic reparation and challenge popular narratives in the national memory of a country in the process of reinventing itself. Minty also describes artists’ engaging the politicized landscape, which bears the scars of forced removal and liberation struggles. The author asserts that public spaces are symbolic in reimagining the past, as in the case of The District Six Museum as a public space and community museum. The author highlights artists’ attempts to challenge historical narratives and celebrations of founding colonial fathers with acts of artistic rebellion. Minty expresses that these counter-culture projects are important forms of symbolic restitution since they allow the insertion of histories and narratives in public spaces.


This article examines the extent to which South African contemporary “transitional” artworks played a role in constructing a national collective memory of apartheid, negotiates the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and contributed to the transformation of South Africa into a post-conflict, democratic nation. Mosely highlights several art exhibitions including Jane Alexander’s *Butcher Boys* exhibit at the South African National Gallery – a poignant commentary on Apartheid. Since South African art galleries have become more inclusive and “in keeping with the nation-building objectives of South Africa’s transition to democracy” (99) have allowed formerly silenced artists and counter-culture artworks to openly contest official memories and retell the uncomfortable legacy of apartheid. Mosely belabors the importance of these counter-narratives in gallery spaces and museums, which function as sites of memory.


Mosely recounts South African art’s engagement of difficult memory and post-apartheid reconciliation and artists civic function as memory makers; artists supply alternative histories to juxtapose the dominant apartheid narratives through their activism, cultural protests against apartheid, and reinterpretation of apartheid’s legacy. Mosley focuses on artists such as Jane Alexander and her *Butcher Boys* exhibition at the South African National Gallery.


Rankin acknowledges the subjectivity of art exhibitions and that South African art galleries in particular have mirrored social and educational inequalities; the exclusive collections and art displays are shaped by the legacy of apartheid, colonialism, and the persistence of dominant narratives. Rankin focuses her research on attempts to rectify the exclusion of works by black artists and include them in the South African art canons in
both pre-democratic and post-apartheid South Africa; she maintains that the transformation of art collections in South African galleries were linked to, but not singularly driven by political reform. Rankin includes several anecdotes of inclusive, collaborative apartheid-era exhibitions that recognized black artists in addition to post-apartheid initiatives to redress the neglect of black heritage in South African art galleries.


This text accompanied the South African National Gallery’s (SANG) exhibition ‘Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen’. The curator of the exhibition and editor of the text, Skotnes revisits a painful legacy of horrific treatment and purely unethical exploitation of indigenous populations in Southern Africa, including San groups in Botswana and Namibia; Pippa periodically focuses on Saartje Baartman to illustrate the humiliating fate of many Khoisans under the examining eyes of their captors. The exhibition featured contested photographs and materials that highlighted the history of the Khoisan groups upon their encounter with European colonists as well as their identity in modern South Africa. This text is a multidisciplinary approach to constructing a poignant alternative-narrative to the social construction of South Africa’s ‘Bushmen’.


Mgcineni asserts that the fall of apartheid in South Africa opened avenues of expressing art through the body that were formerly closed, which serve to critique colonialism and Eurocentrism in art, bringing attention to marginalization of black bodies in art. The author engages sculptures, photographs, performance, etchings, paintings and other artworks from a variety of museums that engage politics of representing black and colored bodies and unearth and confront cultural issues of identity.


This text is a compilation of essays on Jane Alexander in addition to pictures and interpretations of her installations, sculptures, and texts about her jarring exhibitions of ‘humanimals’ in the South African National Gallery. A poignant example is the Butcher Boys. These animalistic, humanoid sculptures are interpreted to represent the grotesque, illogical nature of the Apartheid regime in addition to the representation of human typographies through the hybrid of humans and animal forms.


Catalog of Johannesburg Biennale from February 28th – April 30th, 1995. Catalog covers exhibitions and essays on contemporary art and the post-Apartheid South Africa’s place
in the world that accompanied the international conference of artists, curators, museum directors, etc. during the Biennale. The Biennale celebrated South Africa’s emergence into the realm of international art since the nation was, prior to 1994 democratic elections, isolated by the apartheid regime from the international cultural arena. The catalog covers themes encompassing arts, culture, memory, national identity, and diaspora.


This chapter directly addresses identity politics and apartheid’s politics as expressed through two artworks: a video by Minnette Vari, entitled Chimera about the Voortrekker monument’s marble frieze that implies European triumph over barbarism and the commemoration of ‘the great civilizing deed’ (122). Berni Searle’s exhibition entitled Traces revisits her prior categorization under the coloured identity during the apartheid regime. She uses spices and powders in various colors to represent the typographies of humans based on skin-color and the notion of being marked and unmarked (visible vs. invisible) during apartheid.


This chapter focuses on the installations and exhibits of Berni Searle, Doreen Southwood, Thembinkosi Goniwe, Senzeni Marasela, Zwelethu Mthethwa, and Thando Mama that celebrated their new identities and status as citizens in a Democratic South Africa, from one defined by the system of apartheid to one that is in flux as South Africa transforms over time. Artists and curators also explore politics of representation, racial frictions, uncertainty, and trepidation for the nation’s political transformation. These artworks were displayed as Biennale exhibitions, at various art galleries, and public spaces.


Yoshiara explores the possibility for South African art museums to engage a multicultural audience, and more specifically to attract and cultivate positive relationships with historically excluded groups. The author examines themes of constructing a national identity, social exclusion, and politics of representation in the South African National Gallery’s (SANG) exhibition ‘Co-existence’, which was open from September 2003-March 2004. The exhibition’s vision was to celebrate the co-existence and equal representation of artworks by ethnically and culturally diverse South African artists and to “nurture a culturally diverse but shared national identity” (281).
Selected Post-Apartheid Museums and Commemorative Sites


Delmont states that by the year 1994 ninety-eight percent of South Africa’s 4,000 monuments represented colonial history. The 1999 National Heritage Resources Act strove to counter the dominant colonial narrative with counter archives including the District Six Museum that emphasize alternative as well as indigenous tangible and intangible heritage. Delmont writes that South Africa “is reimagining its community and affirming its sense of national identity” (30). The nation-building project during the era of post-apartheid transformation is defined by reconciliation and providing heritage institutions for formerly marginalized groups under the apartheid system. This article emphasizes a number of post-apartheid heritage projects, museums and monuments including the Apartheid Museum, Freedom Park, the Nelson Mandela Museum, and the Robben Island Museum.


Article examines how post-apartheid memorials and commemorative projects, and most notably the Emlotheni Memorial in Port Elizabeth, were intended to be inclusive as a part of a larger nation-building project by fostering opportunities for South Africans to create shared identities in contrast to the former system of separateness. Hansen writes that these projects tend to alienate important political groups and community members by concentrating their narratives on a few heroic ANC activists – “a symbolic few” (44). The article refers to other sites of memory such as Freedom Park and how they follow a similar process of privileging the stories of a few individuals over collective voices. According to Hansen, the physical placement of the Emlotheni Memorial in an area historically inaccessible to marginalized South Africans including the Xhosa reproduces inequalities and physical segregation.


This article discusses South African post-apartheid monuments, memorials, statues and other sites of memory in terms of their purpose as symbolic gestures of repatriation for the pain caused to victims and their descendants by the repressive system apartheid. Sabine explains that these poignant symbols compensate for the lack of monetary repatriation as well as create a new past that disguises the real, uncomfortable past. According to Sabine sites of public memory facilitate reconciliation and assert shared group values – and in this case new national values.

Marschall examines how South African public memorials, monuments, museums and statues that flourished after the democratic elections to display the histories of formerly marginalized populations, have contributed to constructing post-apartheid new identities. Marschall asserts that defining a national identity rests on shared memories and explores how the commemoration of anti-apartheid heroes associated with these sites of memories contribute to the construction of a more preferable national identity and a new heritage that emphasizes the struggle against the apartheid system.


Marschall focuses on the Umkhonto memorial that commemorates victims of the 1985 Mamelodi Massacre in addition to the Sharpeville memorial that commemorates those who died in the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre to argue that the establishment of post-apartheid heritage sites is a strategic appropriation of memorial-worthy heroes and public memories. Marschall suggests that these new monuments enable the ANC to lay claim to the past to “legitimate the emergence of a new socio-political order” (103). Marschall suggests that both monuments are contested as “attempts by the ANC to lay claim to the sacrifices and achievements of liberation struggle” (120) and accompanying sites and symbols associated with resistance to apartheid.


The Phoenix Settlement was founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1904 north of Durban, South Africa - the largest city in the KwaZulu-Natal province. According to Marschall, the Phoenix Settlement fell into disrepair, but was eventually restored and transformed into a heritage site in February 2000 that symbolized the new South Africa’s theme of reconciliation. The article focuses on the intangible symbolism of this site, emphasizing its principles, memories, and oral histories. Most notably, this heritage site is revered for having been the place that Gandhi developed his non-violent method of passive resistance and “emerged as a leader of non-violent protest against oppression and defender of human rights and dignity” (355). Marschall challenges the site’s universalism by arguing that local communities that collectively identity with the 1985 riots that nearly destroyed the site do not consider this site as part of their heritage, but rather a place for wealthy politicians and tourists.


Marschall asserts that monuments can facilitate the process of nation-building as well as empower and reaffirm the identities of marginalized and previously silenced groups, but can also be contested, divisive sites in the new South Africa because they lay claim to
certain heritages and “versions of the past” (151), thereby privileging the narratives and identity of a single group over others; monuments also provide exclusive economic benefits to represented groups. Marschall indicates that the democratic South African government has capitalized on resistance narratives to create new narratives that form the basis for a democratic “non-racial” national identity – as evidenced by the National Legacy Project which established post-apartheid heritage institutions such as Freedom Park.


This article acknowledges the contested and “emotionally charged” (365) nature of post-apartheid sites of memory such as Robben Island. A number of state initiated museums, memorials, and statues to commemorate victims of apartheid and colonial rule and foster reconciliation. Marschall examines some of the problems associated with these sites of memory such as how they fall short in the memorialization of history. Marschall explains that these sites “do not have an integral capacity to preserve memory for the future” (362) on their own; retaining memories requires active participation such as willingly visiting heritage sites. In addition, the article suggests that post-apartheid sites create group cohesion and identity formation based on traumatic memories instead of reconciliation.


The concept of heritage is used to evoke feelings of empowerment, a shared past, and cultural identity and according to Marschall, it is often used within a state to “fulfill the social needs of the electorate, while simultaneously fostering the political goals of nationbuilding...” (1). This text contains ten chapters centered on post-apartheid heritage sites of memory such as museums, monuments, and memorials – sites of memory instituted by the 1994 democratic government, in the hope of creating a new national identity and public history (2). Marschall’s text investigates ways the political shift influenced the shaping of collective memory at sites of memory through themes of identity, nation-building, and the contradictions in reconciliation by commemorating traumatic, divisive memories.


Marschall investigates official narratives in post-apartheid memorials and state-sponsored heritage initiatives through this case study on the Trojan Horse Massacre memorial in Athlone, Cape Town, which memorializes three victims of the 1985 attack by the South African security forces on community members. She explains that memory and heritage are buzzwords used in the process of acknowledging South Africa’s “repressive past and fostering a new sense of national identity” (135). According to Marschall, South Africa’s heritage is being re-written as a struggle history since neglected counter-narratives
(formerly acknowledged merely as popular memories) have shifted into dominant national histories and now form a major part of the nation’s identity formation.


Marschall’s article explores intangible cultural heritage in post-apartheid memorials and commemorative monuments in the New South Africa. She makes reference to the 2008 Duncan Village Massacre memorial, claiming that this site is not only a reminder of anti-apartheid struggles, but also “a symbol of the contradictions that characterize the post-apartheid nation” (190). Among several critiques that question whose needs the monuments serve (202), Marschall writes that democratic government creates monuments to create a sense of reconciliation and foster collective identities (202), but many marginalized groups care more about meeting daily needs such as employment and subsistence; in many cases, these groups do not receive anticipated monetary compensation from sites of memory.


Newbury’s chapter describes a number of museums including the Apartheid Museum, the District Six Museum, Kliptown Open Air Museum and the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication as sites of national memory within the post-apartheid landscape. The chapter focuses on the Kliptown museum’s focus on “difficult knowledge” (94) in the form of photographs that captured the conflict, humiliation, and oppression of apartheid as well as photographs and information panels on national reconciliation narratives.

### Apartheid Museum


Bonner examines the Apartheid Museum’s role as a supplemental medium to teach new generations of South Africans about the uncomfortable and nuanced history of apartheid that is often difficult to capture in history text books. Bonner asserts that the Apartheid Museum helps to remedy the shortcomings of classroom instructions by utilizing dioramas, rare photographs and moving pictures, within heavily researched exhibits, to tell multiple narratives about apartheid.
This article refers to the Apartheid Museum’s strategy for “consensually” commemorating a difficult, painful past as being different from both multi-vocal and fragmented commemoration – the authors write that neither technique emphasizes reconciliation, but rather reemphasize the conflicts. The authors write that the Apartheid museum employs interpretive themes of “divorcing the past [and] legitimizing the future” (73) and thereby moving forward. The authors contend that this strategy is important because visitors use the museum to construct their identities, but do not wish to leave feeling guilty or divided. The article implies that the apartheid museum’s consensus and non-confrontational message aligns with the new South Africa’s “Rainbow Nation identity” (74).

The Apartheid museum, described by Verbeeck as a mirror for the new nation, is fraught with many criticisms. Verbeeck anecdotally describes several in chapter 11. The museum confines the history of apartheid in the confines of a physical building that encapsulates the claustrophobic feeling of being caught in a discriminatory system. Although the museum describes itself as an accurate reconstruction of the twentieth century South Africa, critiques note that narratives of progressive white resistance to the apartheid regime and counter movements beyond the African National Congress (ANC) are neglected. Other criticisms include the naïve idea that the Apartheid museum concludes the legacy of racism in South Africa by placing its history firmly in a museum – presenting the illusion of a definite conclusion to apartheid’s legacy and a completely reconciled New South Africa.

**District Six Museum**


This publication reflects on the four-day conference on engaging the District Six museum and neighborhood, including the surrounding communities of Langa, Manenberg and Protea Village. Although it is not the full conference proceedings, the document’s anecdotes, excerpts and transcripts summarize the conference’s performances, programs, tours, and events that were organized in collaboration with the District Six Museum. Themes included community museums, contested memories, nation building, symbolic reparation, and memorialization in the post-apartheid South Africa.

Field’s book is based on oral history research for doctoral and post-doctoral work between 1992 and 2010; he explores the intersection between oral history, memories and identity in post-apartheid South Africa by examining oral history’s contributions to apartheid accounts of forced community displacement from areas including District Six and Langa, and examines oral history’s contributions to post-apartheid developments in the heritage sector. Field asserts that oral history was “essential to the popular utilization of people’s history as a cultural tool of struggle (5). He explores interviewees’ memories of identity formation during periods of humiliation, reclassification into racial categories, and forced removal from communities under the apartheid regime. This text was an avenue for apartheid victims to tell their stories since it privileged oral history, not as a supplement to written history, but as vital, standalone historical accounts.


According to Geschier, South Africa’s history is has been renegotiated since the nation’s transition into democracy and the museums document this process of change and help build the future. Geschier notes that educators facilitate lessons on both the totalitarian regimes such as Nazism and the apartheid system so she compares the educational tactics of the District Six Museum to the Holocaust Centre in Cape Town – both are post-apartheid museums. Geschier examines how these regimes reshaped collective memories and identities based on traumatic experiences such as forced removals in the case of Jews in Nazi Germany and District Six neighborhood residents in apartheid South Africa. The author explores how these processes and subsequent narratives are analyzed and presented by museum facilitators of the District Six Museum and the Holocaust Centre.


Julius examines the role of oral histories of ex-residents of ‘The District’ in the decoding and interpretation of the District Six Museum’s photographic exhibitions ‘Digging Deeper’ in 2000 and ‘Streets: Retracing District Six’ in 1994 along with the ‘Hands Off’ conference and accompanying performances of poetry, AV presentations, and music in 1992. Julius asserts that oral history interviews, excerpts of radio programs and ambient city sounds helped to evoke memories of The District, which was declared a White Group Area in 1966 and eventually demolished over a thirty-year timespan.


catalogue was a collaborative effort between the District Six Museum Foundation and the South African National Gallery (SANG) that focused on drawings, prints, paintings, and sculptures that portray District Six and provide different narratives that engage struggles of class, class, race, and power that oppose official, privileged stories and official memory.


This chapter explains that the post-apartheid ‘New South Africa’ is a name for the new identity that accompanied political change. This identity is intertwined with national memory – an uncomfortable memory of segregation and suffering. McEachern suggests that The District Six Museum serves as a space that not only engages, demystifies and critiques this history but also as a site of performing the memories and constructing meaning.


McEachern writes that the District Six Museum, as a postcolonial memory site, tells formerly ignored narratives of apartheid – the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) version of apartheid – and challenges official accounts of history. The museum was established in the same year of the country’s democratic elections and adopted the TRC’s mantle of “empowerment, representation and reconciliation” (69). McEachern describes in detail the museum’s inaugural exhibitions, its narratives of community, and themes expressed within the museum that comprise a unique District Six identity.


Rassool details the history of District Six from its founding, the mass evacuation of the non-white residents in the 1970s and subsequent destruction of the neighborhood, the area’s revival, and the opening of the District Six Museum in December 1994 after the democratic elections. The museum opened with the goal to act as a forum, or space for discussing the politics of culture and urban renewal. The first exhibition, Streets: Retracing District Six, commemorated the memories of former residents by allowing them to contribute to the floor-length map of District Six and a memory cloth. Rassool recounts the museum’s evolution throughout the years as a community museum and emphasizes other noteworthy exhibits such as Tramway Road and Digging Deeper.
Rassool begins by recounting the transformation of South African ethnographic museum displays from reflecting the dominant narratives of European ethnic superiority to the multicultural values of the Rainbow Nation – exemplified by the contested removal of the Khoisan diorama at the South African Museum (SAM) in accord with the Khoisan Legacy Project’s national initiative to respect indigenous heritage and as a move away from Apartheid and colonialism, which placed indigenous cultures within natural history and separate from European history. Rassool then introduces the District Six Museum in contrast to the museum institutional model represented by the SAM – a community museum as an inclusive, hybrid space that encourages community engagement, participation, and empowerment. He asserts that the District Six Museum is “a site where postapartheid identities are being imagined and self-fashioned and not simply being imbibed passively from those that have been produced by colonialism and apartheid” (122).

Freedom Park

Baines engages the politics of memory in the process of nation-building. He discusses the hotly debated intentions of Freedom Park as either a divisive or inclusive commemoration to South African conflicts. Baines notes that some activists and academics claim Freedom Park is a subjective monument dedicated to the African National Congress’s (ANC) historical narrative. This assertion is provoked, in part, by the omission of South African Defense Force (SADF) names from the Freedom Park’s Wall of Names, thereby silencing one side of the Liberation Struggle. In his concluding statements, Baines acknowledges the difficulty in creating an inclusive monument that commemorates recent strife and honors the dead on both sides of the fray.

Freedom Park is a memorial and museum inaugurated in Pretoria under the Legacy Project to contribute to the process of nation-building after the end of apartheid. This memorial commemorates the neglected heritage and memories of the heroes that fought in seven major South African conflicts including genocide, slavery, and apartheid. Freedom Park aims to be inclusive of all South African people and narrative. The Project represents symbolic reparation, reconciliation, national unity, and reflections on pain.
caused by the nation’s apartheid and colonial past to safeguard against future abuses (269).

Hector Pieterson Memorial and Museum


This article details the commemoration of the Soweto student uprisings on June 16, 1976 against apartheid and colonialism. Hlongwane contends that commemorating the uprisings was contested before 1994 because the apartheid government strove to erase the legacy and memories of the 1976 uprisings, but after 1994, the nation was swept up in a “memory boom” and stressed the importance of collective memory and public history by establishing new memorials, museums, and national holidays to commemorate the past and “legitimize the post-1994 political landscape” (138). These sites and holidays emerged in accord with the national interest to develop a heritage commemorating the liberation struggle and its heroes. Hlongwane explores themes of collective memory and the re-representations of the past through Hector Pieterson Memorial and Museum exhibitions.


Marschall presents the Hector Pieterson Memorial as a significant heritage institution and commemoration site established after the end of apartheid, dedicated to the overarching theme of reconciliation and remembering those who suffered during the 1976 Soweto Uprising. Marschall recognizes the power of monuments, as well as the act of commemoration, to shape national identity; nations concretely select and ‘construct’ which memories and myths to memorialize within brick and mortar heritage institutions and shape “national or group identity” (149). The author recognizes that memorials “commemorate an interpretation of the past” (165) rather than the past itself and deduces that the Hector Pieterson Memorial falls within that category because it leaves stories untold by focusing on a singular viewpoint – the story of Hector Pieterson.


Nieves examines two heritage sites: the Langa Pass Court and Office Building and the Hector Pieterson Memorial and Museum within the larger picture of nation-building in a relatively new South African democracy. He argues for the preservation of these
community-based heritage sites to enhance civic engagement and political inclusion so that South African citizens can become engaged in political discourses. Nieves claims that despite an effort by the democratic government to create an inclusive national identity, but communities are vital to creating counter narratives that expose human rights violations and take a different stance than the official museums – although Nieves points out that museum professionals have critiqued their own practices in the contemporary South Africa, which are a product of colonialism.


Nieves explains that after the end of apartheid, professionals in South Africa’s heritage sector took part in the process of embracing the “new museology” by challenging and changing exhibitions and curatorial practices that upheld the minority’s hegemonic narratives and to represent a balanced history, including the uncomfortable legacy of apartheid. Nieves claims that one of the characteristics of post-Apartheid South Africa was the transformation of heritage institutions and their aim to represent multicultural audiences. Another hallmark was the Truth and Reconciliation’s (TRC) commitment to establishing post-apartheid cultural institutions that would address reconciliation. “The Hector Pieterson Memorial and Museum…can be seen as a direct result of the TRC’s mission of promoting healing through redemptive public acts” (354). This institution focuses on narratives surrounding the 1976 Uprisings in Soweto.

**MuseumAfrica**


The authors explored the similarities in the missions of the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis Tennessee and MuseumAfrica in that they both serve as forums for discussing race and collective memories, and commemorating the struggles that overturned separatist regimes. The authors describe the definition of collective memory as “an exploration of a shared identity that unites a social group, be it a family or nation” (16). According to Atwater and Herndon, these sites exemplify contested and collective memories.


This article presents MuseumAfrica as still relevant in the post-apartheid South Africa. The article engages its early history as the former Africana Museum that upheld the apartheid regime by exhibiting and celebrating white conquest and progress separate from indigenous African objects – objects that at one time represented tribalism and
backwardness (14). After apartheid, the museum rebranded itself to showcase themes of reconciliation that foster the ideals of a democratic South Africa and “counteract the legacy of division and exploitation…expressed in apartheid institutions and legislation” (17). The transformed museum sought to include “neglected history” (18) and reach out to black South Africans as a new constituency. The article portrays MuseumAfrica as an ‘archive’ of material culture because the current museum space disseminates information about the past through the narratives of Africana objects. Byala writes that these objects “have the potential to assist in…the creation of a unified national identity” (21).


Hamilton refers to MuseumAfrica as a chameleon to fit the ideal of a true “people’s museum” (186) and forum for initiating debates, exploring identity, and hosting performances. She states that the renaming of Africana Museum to MuseumAfrica and its relocation and transformed its image to appeal to a wider multicultural audience, and most notably the black South African majority, marks “the beginning of a new era in the public (re)presentation of South African history (184) where museums reevaluated their display practices and collections that condoned colonial rule and the apartheid regime.


This article focuses on the MuseumAfrica exhibition entitled ‘Johannesburg Transformations’, which reflects its mission to refurbish itself as an inclusive community space and distance itself from its former reputation as a Eurocentric static repository for colonial artifacts. The museum changed in accordance with the South African Museums Association’s (SAMA) goal to democratize museums so they would remain relevant in the New South Africa that transitioned to a democracy in 1994 and retain their credibility and funding (169).

Ncome Monument and Museum


This article examines the Battle of Ncome project, a commemoration monument under the support of The Legacy Project, within the backdrop of a post-apartheid South Africa that emphasizes inclusivity, reconciliation, and unity. Dlamini argues that although the project intended to promote reconciliation between Voortrekker and Zulu descendants (131) and correct the representation of the battle, the result was divisive in that this heritage site retold history to benefit Zulu nationalism. The 1838 battle between the Zulu army and Voortrekkers is also called the Battle of Blood River, and remains a contested reminder of racial conflict in South Africa. Dlamini asserts that the added Zulu
perspective revived ethnic nationalism and an exclusive heritage, which “contradicted the aim of the Legacy Project” (132).


Dlamini recounts Zulu nationalist representations of the Zulu history and identity at heritage sites and institutions such as South African museums, monuments, and the KwaZulu Monuments Council. The author emphasizes the Ncome Project, one of several government initiated Legacy Projects “to redress public representations of South Africa’s past in the interests of nationbuilding” (388); the Ncome Museum and Monument, which opened in November 1999, was established to commemorate Zulus that fell to Voortrekker settlers and correct misrepresentations of the Zulu.


Girshick writes that proposals for museums and monuments poured into the newly elected president’s office after the 1994 democratic elections, presenting opportunities to create a monument at Blood River, celebrated by the Voortrekker descendants each year on the anniversary of the battle as a victory over the Zulu warriors (25). The Ncome Museum was viewed as an important project of the African National Congress’s (ANC) National Legacy Project for reconciliation, redress, and nation-building. Girshick argues that the monument stands for Zulu nationalism and resistance to Afrikaner dominance rather than a symbol of reconciliation and a sense of shared history (34).


The Ncome monument and museum in KwaZulu-Natal was built after the 1994 democratic elections, as one of the heritage institutions approved by the National Legacy project, to commemorate the previously ignored Zulu warriors that fell to the Voortrekkers during the Battle of Blood River in 1838. Blood River was renamed Ncome in 1998, the same year the museum was inaugurated “in the interest of reconciliation and nation-building” (88). Marschall argues that the Ncome monument and museum was erected as part of a larger, emerging trend of creating post-apartheid monuments that would counter monuments that privileged white heritage with those that celebrated black heritage (90) and in this case, Zulu heritage and collective identity.

The author explores how Zulu identities are (re)presented at the Ncome monument, a post-apartheid monument that promotes Zulu identity and nationalism. The Ncome monument juxtaposed the former commemoration of the December 16th battle between the Voortrekkers and Zulus; the Voortrekkers victory was celebrated by the Afrikaner minority as holiday and remembered as a victory over savagery during the Great Trek. Sixty-four bronze wagons and oxen represented Afrikaner heritage and nationalism. The Ncome monument, established in 1998, challenged the Afrikaner heritage and representations of the Zulu by presenting an alternate narrative, thereby attempting to reshape national memories and fix as well as un-fix Zulu identities in the public imagination (230).

**Robben Island Museum**


Galla writes that South African heritage institutions have made a significant transformation after the nation’s 1994 democratic elections, and in accordance with the National Heritage Bill of 1998 – especially in terms of examining the past, constructing heritage and identities, and engaging questions of representation and creating more inclusive heritage management strategies. Galla enumerates several problems within heritage institutions that were addressed in the Arts and Culture Task Group’s documentation such as persistent inequalities in participation and access to heritage resources, and not fully integrating pre-colonial heritage into collections. Galla pays particular attention to the Robben Island Museum.


According to Riouful, collective representation and memorialization of important past events is integral to the imagining of a community. In the case of the new South Africa’s national community, the representation of a contested past has been reshaped by the shift to a democratic government and a theme of reconciliation. Riouful identifies several characteristics of the newly refurbished “common past”, including a positive perspective on the struggle to overturn apartheid’s oppression, inclusive integration of formerly marginalized voices, downplaying contestation and still-present divisions between ethnic groups, and the emphasis on national cohesion and democracy. Riouful asserts that Robben Island Museum is a highly symbolic site of resistance that embodies these characteristics since it was recast as universal testament “to the victory of the human spirit” (24) as opposed to the suffering of political prisoners.

An exhibit created by the collaboration between the Mayibuye Centre and the South African Museum with the objectives to compile a timeline and present the history of Island, bring the debate about the Island’s future to the forefront, and to exhibit former political prisoners’ personal possessions for the first time that revisited the Island’s difficult past and reveal the hardships of prison life. Nelson Mandela was one of the many prisoners with poignant narratives to commemorate the past. The text includes the exhibition’s opening address in 1993 by Mr. Ahmed K. Kathrada and a timeline of Robben Island from 900 million years ago to 1995 when it was declared a national monument.


Robben Island is notorious as a prison to house political prisoners who opposed the system of apartheid – and most famously, Nelson Mandela. The purpose of this institution was to instill a sense of hopelessness. The inauguration of the Robben Island Museum marked a repurposing of this space to instill hope and a new ethic of the refusal to be separate along lines of ‘imaginary’ differences in a New South Africa and to cultivate a sense of “ubuntu” or community. The underlying message of the Robben Island Museum is that the sense of connectedness and hope for a newly defined South Africa that sustained the former political prisoners should be harnessed by every South African. The authors posit the question of to what degree the government should endorse this optimism since the authenticity of the connected identities felt by the Robben Island prisoners is challenged.


This chapter recounts the pre-colonial, colonial, and Apartheid-era history of Robben Island in addition to the site’s role as a museum and World Heritage Site to teach lessons of tolerance, reconciliation and equality in the New South Africa and as a space for South Africans to revisit and contemplate the legacy of Apartheid on South Africa’s landscape.

### Apartheid-era and Colonial Monuments


The Voortrekker monument is the Afrikaner nationalist symbol most closely identified with the apartheid regime and remains highly contested in the democratic South Africa.
According to Coombes, arguments in favor of keeping the monument attest to its historical value as a vestige of a separatist system; others argue for its removal. The chapter explores the possibilities for “rehabilitating” this monument, which represents the former apartheid state and the myth that South Africa belongs to the Voortrekkers and their descendants. Coombes enumerates several ways the monument has been transformed and its narratives challenged.


Crampton examines the role of the Voortrekker Monument in constructing a heroic Voortrekker identity in the 1940’s as well as reinforcing an apartheid political identity; he discusses current debates about the Voortrekker’s presence in the contemporary South Africa’s landscape and situates the Voortrekker Monument within the discussion of South African nation building and the construction of a post-apartheid national identity (222).


This article explores the changing symbolism of the Voortrekker monument as a powerful expression of Afrikaner nationalism in post-apartheid South Africa. According to Grundlingh, the ‘Great Trek’ that led to colonization of South Africa is eternalized in the monument’s series of twenty-seven marble panels, along with dated portrayals of black, indigenous Africans as savages and the Voortrekkers as heroic civilizers. The monument is construed as insensitive by some South Africans as a remaining symbol of Apartheid, but its current role as a tourist site and a vestige of apartheid and colonial rule are still being negotiated in the now democratic nation.


A critical analysis of the imagery and symbolism in the Voortrekker Monument’s frieze; early settlers were portrayed to have been a civilizing force in Southern Africa, chosen by God to spread religion into the African interior. Leslie infers the monument is a shrine to Afrikaner history and provides anecdotes to support his assertion that some conservative Afrikaners see the Voortrekker Monument as a rallying point to confirm their identities and to oppose the New South Africa, headed by President Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC).

Herwitz writes, “South Africa is a country in search of a national narrative that can articulate and bind together official state culture and citizenry” (80). This chapter recounts several dynamic South African heritage movements starting with the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument to celebrate Afrikaaner identity and heritage the year that the apartheid state was formed and the National Party came to power (95). According to Herwitz, this monument established the Voortrekker identity as separate from that of the British, indigenous Africans, and other immigrant groups. After the fall of apartheid, Thabko Mbeki sought to re-present black African heritage and “generate a national ideology” (100) through the post-apartheid African Renaissance. Vestiges of Afrikanner Heritage including the Voortrekker Monument were repurposed as records of apartheid in the greater process of “demonumentalization” in the under the democratic government. Other heritage projects such as the District Six Museum and the Apartheid Museum emphasized memories of injustices redress from colonialism and apartheid, and open participation by formerly marginalized groups.


Kros uses the history of the Voortrekker Monument as an engine to discuss larger debates about heritage and contemporary Afrikaner identity. Kros suggests that the Voortrekker Monument, a stable fixture on the South African historical landscape, justifies ethnic and gender inequalities and presents Afrikaners as victims of British imperialism, having suffered in concentration camps during the South African War. Localized heritage projects, according to Kros, have been translated into museum and heritage site, and oral history narratives.


Monuments are defined as public structures that serve as “a memory aid for a specific community or group” (16). Mare discusses the purposes of monuments and the meanings ascribed to their architecture even in states of neglect, appropriation and transition. The new South Africa’s monuments have been heavily criticized for their singular narratives and, as Mare describes, the African National Congress (ANC) discussed transforming the Voortrekker Monument’s first floor to commemorate the party’s struggle against the white minority rule before deciding to create a separate monument called Freedom Park (19-20). Mare compares the plans for erecting Freedom Park to the proposed Holocaust Museum in Berlin in terms of the difficulty of representing the past.


Marschall examines the Dick King Memorial in Durban, a city within the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The Dick King equestrian memorial is a colonial statue that was left in place after South Africa’s post-apartheid transformation. Its modifications or removal is still a contested subject since it represents the values associated with apartheid and
colonial heritage to many. Marschall does not take a stand on whether the statue should be left in place (81), but rather engages the changing significance and interpretations of monuments and statues as societal values shift. Marschall contends that the Dick King memorial may be re-contextualized to reinforce “the democratic values of the post-apartheid society” (98) as was the case with the Voortrekker Monument’s changes to its guided tours since 1994 to include narratives of black South Africans.


The Castle of Good Hope has been a symbol of colonial and apartheid history for much of its 338 year history. After the fall of apartheid, The Castle opened its doors to larger constituency of South Africans, many of whom struggled with its legacy of oppression. The Castle was re-appropriated in 2004 to “mark the decade of democracy” (70) of the nation. Meltzer’s chapter briefly covers The Castle’s history up to South Africa’s new era of democracy; exhibitions and events recount the site’s uncomfortable history, namely the national exhibition Democracy X, which exhibited historical artifacts and artworks.


This chapter details the process of creating the Democracy X exhibition at the Castle of Good Hope. The exhibit celebrated South Africa’s democracy through a series of themes such as national intangible and tangible history expressed through a number of artworks and artifacts in a transformed structure that once represented colonial power and militarism. A number of exhibition rooms used artworks to engage audiences in discussions of identity, freedom and democracy since the 1994 elections. The exhibition served to re-present an uncomfortable past to consider the future of the New South Africa.


This article focuses on how the two exhibitions Democracy X at the Cape of Good Hope and Decade of Democracy at the South African National Gallery reflected the role of visual culture in constructing a new South African cultural identity, negotiating a national heritage, and celebrating the nation’s political transformation to a democratic society. Neither exhibition claims to be objective and in fact, Democracy X emphasizes that “both history and nation are narration” (43) and focuses on retelling stories of historical events from the viewpoints of marginalized groups such as women and black South African ethnic groups. Likewise, Decade of Democracy focuses on racial politics, identities, and the politics of representing artworks from black artists despite the institution’s longstanding Eurocentric legacy.
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