

Stigma, crime and money in South African art exhibition

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Abstract

The paper engages with the politics inherent in the exhibition of artworks in post-apartheid South Africa, an environment tainted by socio-political conflict, xenophobia and survival strategies.

Art exhibition in South Africa is complex due to several factors: Ongoing socio-political turmoil, lingering political stigma around certain cities, raging violence and crime, unemployment, rapidly rising living costs and financial instabilities. On one hand, being in a developing third-world country, South African artists have relatively few choices when it comes to the exhibition of their work, since it is mostly in the major cities that museums and contemporary art galleries are found. These artists also tend to go where the cultural and fiscal contexts are more conducive to art production, exhibition and reception, since South Africans have become nomadic and tend to move to where it is perceived to be safer and where there are more job opportunities. On the other hand South African galleries and museums are crippled by continual increasing costs, fewer visitors due to urban violence and more politically and financially induced decision-making. They are thus faced with the ongoing task to devise ways in which to speak to artists and audiences alike and to entice them into their spaces.

Introduction

Challenging new conceptual horizons have emerged in the context of post-apartheid South African art production and exhibition. The shadows of past and current socio-political histories and conditions cast dark silhouettes over museums and galleries, which are now facing critical times in terms of exhibition strategies and financial survival.

This paper aims to demonstrate that although conceptually and technically South African art production and exhibition continue to be dynamic and progressive, the conditions for such production are tough, complex and volatile. As such the generic principles and objectives of informing, producing new knowledge and changing attitudes inherent in museum and gallery practice cannot be easily sustained.

In the first part of the paper the country's history in terms of socio-political instability and the current high incidence of crime are briefly sketched. In the second part of the paper the notion of political and cultural stigma as well as the impact of the afore-mentioned factors on exhibition strategies of both artists and exhibition institutions will be considered.

South Africa's socio-political histories and conditions

For centuries South Africa has been a country inflicted and tainted by political domination, conflict and survival strategies. Ongoing socio-political turmoil, raging violence, crime, xenophobia, unemployment, threats of poverty and unemployment due to rapidly rising living costs and financial instabilities increasingly contribute to instability and nomadic activities of finding better and safer alternatives.

The high incidence of crime and the recent spates of xenophobia (Figure 1) in South Africa testify to the fact that the South African government has failed to control, inhibit and punish criminals. In media reports (Figure 2), crime in South Africa has often been interpreted as deviant, therefore as a reaction to government's failure to alleviate poverty and create jobs. Jock Young (1998:23) maintains that crime and deviance is of necessity dyadic since they consist of action and reaction, but in the end are inseparable since they give rise to one another and profoundly affect each other.

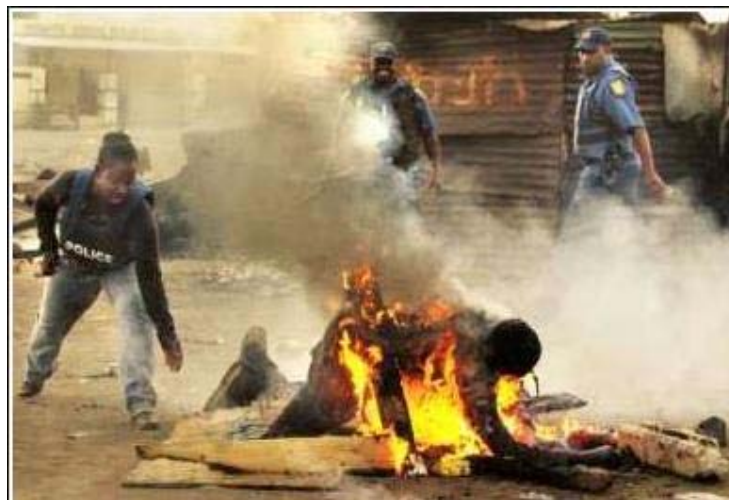


Figure 1. Xenophobia in South Africa, May 2008. Photo credit and source: News 24.com. [O]
Available: <http://www.24.com/media/news/xenophobia/index.html> Accessed 25 May 2008.

Crime Category	April 2001 to March 2002	April 2002 to March 2003	April 2003 to March 2004	April 2004 to March 2005	April 2005 to March 2006	April 2006 to March 2007
Murder	24	23	15	18	20	17
Attempted murder	20	13	7	8	5	0
Rape	75	70	69	93	63	59
Indecent assault	14	29	20	28	31	27
Assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm	318	319	278	269	257	247
Common assault	564	598	636	714	495	481
Common robbery	121	72	54	68	54	39
Robbery with aggravating circumstances	41	48	39	22	24	27
General aggravated robbery (subcategory of aggravated robbery)	38	46	37	21	21	26
Carjacking (subcategory of aggravated robbery)	1	1	1	1	2	1
Truck hijacking (subcategory of aggravated robbery)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery at residential premises (subcategory of aggravated robbery)	-	1	0	0	0	0
Robbery at business premises (subcategory of aggravated robbery)	-	0	1	0	1	0
Robbery of cash in transit (subcategory of aggravated robbery)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bank robbery (subcategory of aggravated robbery)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Arson	15	15	7	6	5	5
Malicious damage to property	370	342	404	416	407	424
Burglary at residential premises	695	736	707	623	725	601
Burglary at business premises	422	416	416	304	261	280
Theft of motor vehicle and motorcycle	59	133	153	136	146	82
Theft out of or from motor vehicle	667	755	625	640	525	461
Stock-theft	89	54	45	32	18	5
Illegal possession of firearms and ammunition	5	10	3	12	13	9
Drug-related crime	145	201	212	305	366	467
Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs	187	178	151	153	242	333
All theft not mentioned elsewhere	1,790	2,278	2,085	2,246	1,513	1,828
Commercial crime	200	185	232	239	162	159
Shoplifting	417	430	519	505	523	593
Culpable homicide	23	23	25	20	25	27
Kidnapping	1	3	2	1	0	7
Abduction	4	5	3	2	0	2
Neglect and ill-treatment of children	3	10	18	17	13	7
Public violence	1	1	0	1	2	4
Crimen injuria	126	159	170	193	162	198

Figure 2. SA Crime Statistics, 2001-2007 Source: Information Management - South African Police Service. Crime for the RSA National Total for April to September 2001 to 2007. [O] Available: www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2007/_pdf/rsa_total.pdf Accessed on 13 April 2008.

Yet, it is important to consider what has happened before the crime occurred, since the question of what precedes crime is far more significant than the act of crime itself (Quinney 2000:21). According to Polly Radosh (Anderson and Quinney 2000:65), “The existence of crime in any society is a reflection of a variety of social structural factors. Poverty, alienation from economic opportunity, lack of moral restraint, anomie resulting from structural strain, and sheer frustration are all among the myriad causes of ... crime.” The high incidence of crime in South Africa has led to an orchestration and mobilisation of panic and anxiety in the country to the extent that a migration from the north to the south has occurred, that is, to

where it is perceived to be safer. Recent crime statistics reveal that crime has also spread south to the Cape, so that people are moving back north again.

This volatile and unstable situation is not new. Over the past three centuries, the development and deployment of South African culture in all its diversity has been subject to major political and imperial interception. Firstly, the country's political histories of several intervals of colonial infiltration stretching from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries led to impediment to the natural advancement of indigenous cultures. The result hereof was the linguistic, sexual, racial and socio-cultural intermingling of disparate cultures leading to the formation of new languages (Afrikaans, for instance); a large population of 'in-betweeners', so-called 'coloureds' that are a genetic blend between Europeans, Africans and other genetic types; and a range of art products that show the fusing of different cultural legacies and practices.

Yet, a second major influence -- diametrically opposed to the amalgamating impact of colonial permeation -- was the utopian cultivation of a racially segregated nation under apartheid during the second half of the twentieth century. Fuelled by the rapidly increasing birth rate of black babies especially and the accompanying fear of domination by black majority, the white minority created apartheid policies which forcefully impeded the integration of new generations of indigenous Africans of nuanced colour. After the change of political power in 1994, such segregation was constitutionally terminated, yet racism -- mostly premised in perception and stereotype -- is still rife in the country and is manifesting in various forms, from dislike of foreigners to ethnic violence and the ostracisation of minorities.

Since the 1990s a new power paradigm emerged in the arena of globalising cities where the patterns of the changing morphology of late modernism and a new sociology of space are playing out. Bob Jessop (2008:180) argues that:

Globalisation is part of a proliferation of scales and temporalities as narrated, institutionalized objects of action, regularization, and governance. ... The degree to which this happens depends on the prevailing technologies of power -- material, social, and spatio-temporal -- that enable the identification and institutionalization of specific scales of action and temporalities.

The international giants have been invited into the country and infiltrated local South African culture to such an extent that cities have become radically cosmopolitan. Jessop (2008:191)

argues further that the pressure of reorganisation of state forms and capacities under the influence of globalisation results in the acceleration of economic decision-making and the compression of significant economic events relative to the time required for political decision-making. South African cities are rapidly being transformed into global entities and new technologies are increasingly made part of the effective functioning of the city as, for instance, in high-crime areas such as downtown Jo'burg where security cameras have been installed on street corners to combat crime. Yet, most of these cities remain amalgams of diasporic migrating individuals, first-world business sectors and third-world¹ informal settlements and economies.

In general South Africans have become nomadic and tend to move to where it is perceived to be safer and where there are more job opportunities. Similarly, artists also tend to go where the cultural and fiscal contexts are more conducive to art production, exhibition and reception. In addition, due to the volatile political situation, many South African citizens opposed to the apartheid served jail sentences have suffered severed domestic uprooting, just as those in temporary housing facilities were subjected to forced removals. An example of such an artist is Churchill Madikida who for many years lived a nomadic existence in the Eastern Cape by being continually in and out of jail. Yet it was not solely his dire economic situation that suggested a life of crime, but it was mostly because of his identity crisis within the community: his mother is coloured, his father black. "I am just in between, I'm not coloured, I'm not black. My community in Butterworth didn't accept me as black. They used to call me all these different names. ... Drawing became one of the ways I communicated my feelings" (O'Toole 2004). Madikida is a typical example of the new generation of rebel artist who rejects the old regime and celebrates his Xhosa cultural heritage through autobiographical works resonating personal experience and history.

¹ At the *Johannesburg and Megacity Phenomena* colloquium (9 - 11 April, University of Johannesburg, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture), Mike Featherstone argued that Johannesburg is *not* a megacity when measured against megacities such as Beijing.

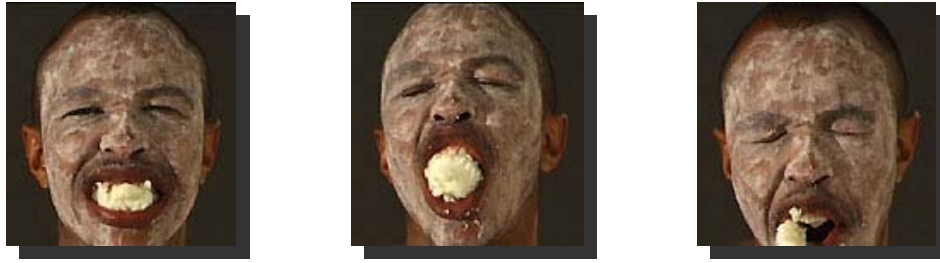


Figure 3. Churchill Madikida, *Liminal States*, 2003. Video stills. [O] Available: www.artthrob.co.za/04may/artbio.html Accessed on 18 March 2008.

In Madikida's satirical *Liminal States* (2003), Figure 3, the constructs of xenophobia, omnivorous cannibalism and the abject provide potent commentary on the polemics surrounding identity, nomadism and cultural conditions in South Africa, but is not the kind of work that will be received in any comfortable way by the South African public since it blatantly voices racism.

Impact on artists and institutions

The afore-mentioned political histories, utopian residues and current dystopian conditions have left indelible scars on art production and exhibition. Exhibition practice has become thorny due to the entanglement of criminology with general exhibition ideologies of producing ways of knowing, thinking and acting (Hogg 1998:145). Theorists such as Baudrillard, Lyotard, Kristeva, and others elaborate on the polluting discourses about evil (such as racism and crime) that cast gloom over ethical systems and that occur in the act of classification itself, and therefore in the creation of stigma. If conscience has become disconnected from reality and operates in a subjective reductionist space, the projection of stigma occurs. In *The will to meaning*, Victor Frankl (1969:18) wrote that:

... being conscientious presupposes the uniquely human capacity to rise above oneself, to judge and evaluate one's own deeds in moral and ethical terms. Of course one may rob a uniquely human phenomenon such as conscience of its humanness. One may conceive of conscience merely in terms of the result of the conditioning process. ... Reducing conscience to the mere result of conditioning processes is but one instance of reductionism.

Political instability, crime and stigmatisation seem to influence South African artists' choice of venue for exhibition. A new hierarchy of preferential venues has emerged in which Johannesburg would be top of the list, simply because it is perceived to have more money, or Cape Town, since, although the local buying market is small, it is a first destination for international tourists. A city such as Pretoria which is still stigmatised as a result of its having

been the centre of apartheid legislation and practice, revisionistically perceived as ‘evil’. The ‘spoiled’ identity of Pretoria, that is, of being the bastion of racists and conservative Afrikaners, is mainly premised in the assumption that the rest of the country has adopted and transformed to new ways of thinking, but not Pretoria.

Certain artists refuse to exhibit in Pretoria, concerned that they might not be perceived as ‘progressive’ enough by being associated with a venue in a stigmatised locality. As a result, many galleries in Pretoria such as Fried Contemporary Art Gallery make a concerted effort to eradicate stigma and leftovers of past political regimes by exhibiting politically outspoken and deconstructive work such as that of Jan van der Merwe (Figure 4). This work depicts ‘power failure’ in a figurative sense by referring to political collapse and cultural dystopia as well as literally to load shedding in the use of electricity.



Figure 4. Jan van der Merwe, *Power failure*, 2007. Installation. Fried Contemporary Art Gallery, Pretoria. Photo: Elfriede Dreyer.

The impact of the afore-mentioned destabilising and continually changing socio-political scenarios is similarly being felt and observed in the domain of the distribution of wealth and economic empowerment in South Africa. According to Stewart and Fitzgerald, 2001 (in Ramsbotham et al 2005:73),

... conflict has catastrophic effects on the economic development of affected countries, generally leading to falling production, falling exports, greater indebtedness and falling social expenditure. ... Cultural costs arise from deliberate or unintended damage to the cultural heritage, and intergenerational costs include the scars of war, abuse flight and genocide which continue to traumatize the next generation.

Post-apartheid transformation is manifesting in new policies and strategies being adopted by governmental institutions with poverty alleviation and education as first priorities in state funding objectives. Most institutions have had to radically adjust museum policies and exhibition itineraries to include political redress and community oriented programmes, such as the recent decision by the Johannesburg metropolitan council to direct funding more towards the development of the craft and tourism industries probably as an effort to create more jobs and wealth. Coming from a leading metropolitan council such as Johannesburg, this will dramatically affect the visual arts in South Africa since it is indicative of new ideologies that are emerging and replacing Western-European models of art.

In general the arts and culture are seriously under-funded and an institution such as the Pretoria Art Museum has been battling for years now to survive financially, due to low budgeting for the arts by the metropolitan council of Tshwane (Figures 5 -7). The latter council's current stated priorities are: managing and developing infrastructure; developing the economy; ensuring community safety; building and sustaining communities; developing and enhancing our natural resources; building their institution and governing well; and enhancing their image as the capital city. The word "culture" is found three times in the document: under priorities, "Well governed city to enhance investor confidence, customer responsiveness and building a high performance organisation and culture" (City of Tshwane 2006/07:27); "Reverse the so called culture of non or slow payment" (City of Tshwane 2006/07:33); and under the tariff increases for the financial year, "Culture facilities, museums and related matters (City of Tshwane 2006/07:72). The word "arts" is not found in the document. Similarly, the city address of 14 March 2008, delivered by the executive mayor, Dr Gwen Ramokgopa, does not once mention the words "arts" and "culture" (State of the city address 2008).

Table 3 - Capital Expenditure by Vote

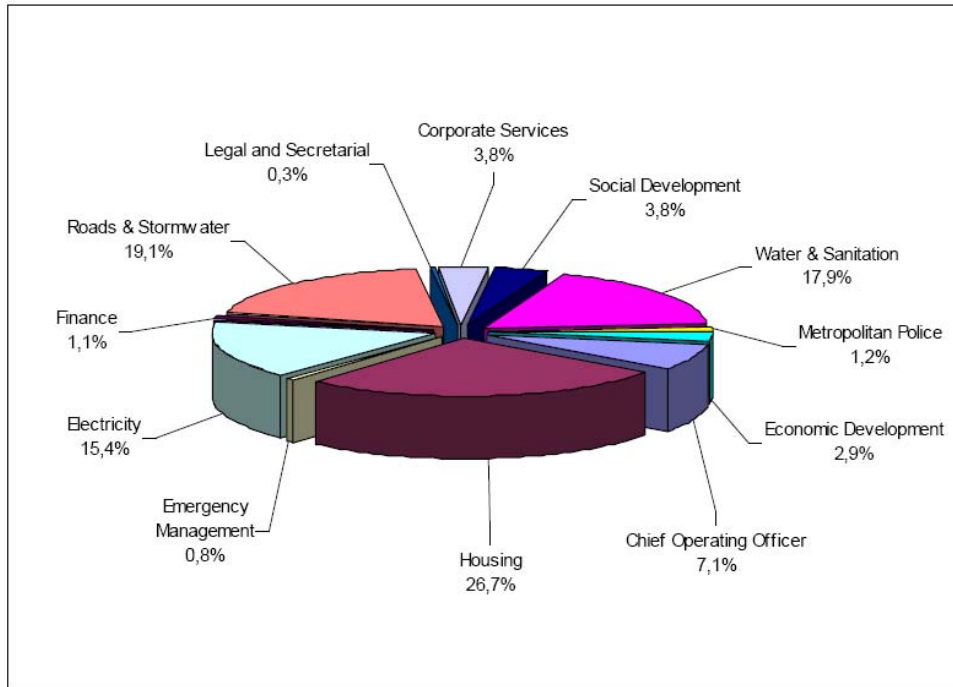


Fig. 8: Capital Expenditure by Vote

Figure 5. Tshwane Metropolitan Council Draft Budget 2006-2007. Capital expenditure 2006-2007.
[O] Available: http://www.tshwane.gov.za/draftBudget2006_7.cfm Accessed on 2 April 2008.

Tshwane Development Management Cycle

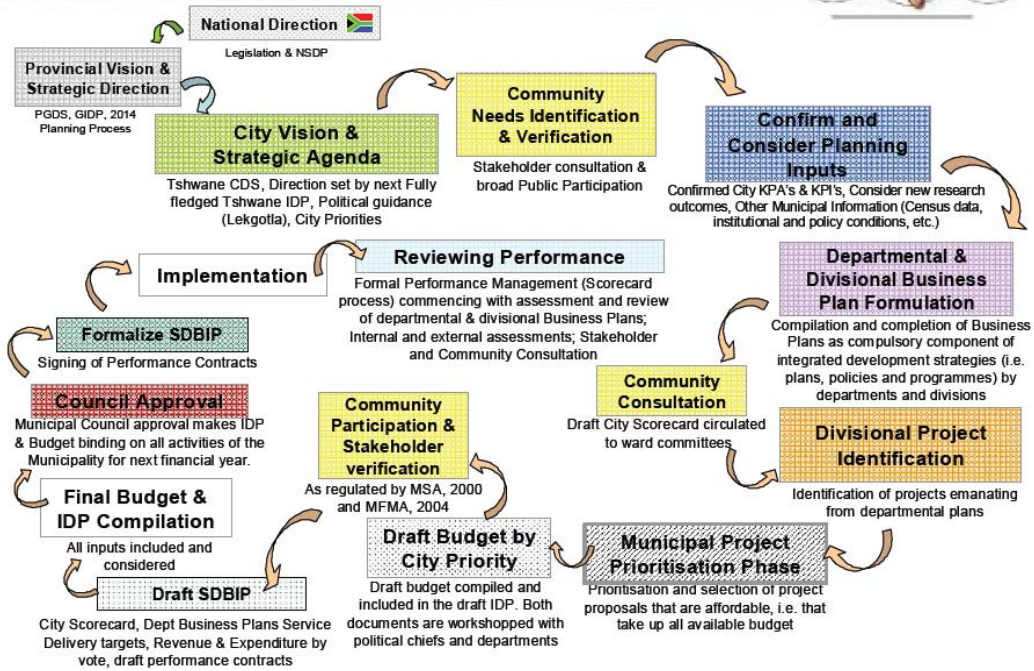


Fig. 2: Tshwane Development Management Cycle

Figure 6. Tshwane Metropolitan Council development plan 2006-2007. [O] Available: http://www.tshwane.gov.za/draftBudget2006_7.cfm Accessed on 2 April 2008.

Arts and Culture

Budget summary

R thousand	2008/09				2009/10	2010/11
	Total to be appropriated	Current payments	Transfers and subsidies	Payments for capital assets	Total	Total
MTEF allocation						
Administration	119 742	118 902	-	2 840	128 319	138 767
Arts and Culture in Society	333 800	16 288	317 270	242	377 843	320 021
National Language Service	102 050	49 136	52 049	865	107 729	114 052
Cultural Development and International Co-operation	215 298	28 379	186 496	421	227 365	241 063
Heritage Promotion	885 871	23 188	862 431	252	985 809	836 354
National Archives, Records, Libraries and Heraldic Services	460 323	52 540	406 994	789	575 466	638 717
Total expenditure estimates	2 117 082	286 433	1 825 240	5 409	2 412 531	2 288 974
Executive authority	Minister of Arts and Culture					
Accounting officer	Director-General of Arts and Culture					
Website address	www.dac.gov.za					

Figure 7. Budget of Department of Arts and Culture, 2008-2009. [O] Available: http://www.tshwane.gov.za/draftBudget2006_7.cfm Accessed on 2 April 2008.

The afore-mentioned situation could be taken as representative of the orientation of most of the city councils of South Africa and moreover as a compulsory implementation of cultural policy of the governmental department of arts and culture. The art institutions of Johannesburg -- the political vanguard city with its more cosmopolitan population and higher percentage of black ethnic groups -- adopted policies of cultural inclusivity long before other cities and as such, especially during the 1990s, acquired a reputation of being a sub-cultural nucleus of political and cultural transformation. An example thereof are the 1995 and 1997 Johannesburg Biennials that included artworks previously labeled as 'craft' in a high-art context. This seemed vanguard at the time, but as often happens, once the sub-culture becomes public and institutionalised it seems to lose some of its deviant character and is subsumed by another upcoming sub-culture.²

Although the Johannesburg Art Gallery and its collection are of major significance to the world, it is like most of the other South African galleries and museums crippled by continual increasing costs, more politically and financially induced decision-making and fewer visitors due to urban violence, its position in the degenerating inner city area and its close proximity to Hillbrow. Being a government institution, the JAG like many other institutions has been forced to seek private sponsorship for larger exhibitions, such as the internationally traveling *Africa Remix* that was hosted by JAG had to be funded by several external patrons, inter alia, the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, the Goethe-Institut, the Southern African-German Cultural Fund, the Mondriaan Foundation, IFAS Institut Francais d'Afrique du Sud, Alliance Francaise, Internationale de la Francophonie, the National Arts Council and the Ford Foundation.

Although remaining conscious of the continually changing ideologies and art market, the only way for museums and galleries to deal with this situation is to continue to fulfil their

² The Johannesburg Art Gallery is the biggest in the sub-continent, with a collection that is arguably larger than that of the South African National Art Gallery in Cape Town. It is a national monument housed in a three-storey building boasting fifteen exhibition halls and some sculpture gardens on the grounds of Joubert Park and is home to some of the most prized works, not just in the country but also in the world. The collection includes seventeenth-century Dutch paintings and more contemporary South African and international arts. Their comprehensive South African collection includes works by South African 'old' masters, contemporary South African artists as well as traditional African pieces. Some of the pre-eminent artists on the gallery's collection list are Pablo Picasso, Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet, and Edgar Degas. The museum also houses some of the most highly valued paintings, antiques, sculptures, drawings, prints and laceworks in the country.

role of providing a public space and platform for interpretation, comment, protest and community involvement. As argued earlier in the paper, the high incidence of crime and xenophobia in South Africa could justifiably be interpreted as a result of political instability and arguably as a lack of governmental policing and control. Therefore museums and galleries need to reflect an understanding of its changing and volatile socio-political environment and deploy strategies and policies accordingly.

The answer obviously lies in stepping up security systems in institutions in order to safeguard people, artefacts and artworks, but far more in the conscious decision to accept multiculturalism, cultivate cultural pluralism and promote tolerance for the Other. In planning exhibition programmes strategies should constantly be developed and rethought with the objective to devise activities aimed at specific target groups where there are diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. The biggest problem remain the accommodation of as many as possible sub-cultures that would include for instance ethnic and cultural allegiances such as an Afrikaans sub-culture that revisits Afrikaans language, history and sentiment in an international idiom of technology, humanistic values and world citizenship; and a new African elitist aesthetic that corroborates ethnic origins and roots but revisits these in a slick idiom that marries design, commercialism and tradition.

What is needed in this regard is that a discursive space be set up in the museum or gallery in terms of for instance the interface of tradition with contemporary modes of living, or of the anthropological with the psychological dimensions of being, as exemplified in Churchill Madikida's work, *Status* (Figure 8), an installation that deals with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and formed part of a solo exhibition in 2005 at Michael Stevenson Gallery in Cape Town as well as the Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany, in 2007. The revisionist nature of the work provides a platform for a dialogical presentation of ritualistic objects – found objects that become art through their displacement and reinvention – installed together with video works. Madikida (Churchill Madikida, *Status*. 26 October - 3 December 2005. [s.a.]) believes his work can play a role in breaking the silence about the pandemic and creating a climate of greater tolerance: "Art played a critical role in the fight against apartheid and I feel that it can play an even bigger role in the war against HIV/AIDS," he says.



Figure 8. Churchill Madikida *Status*, 2005. Installation with caskets, curtains, candles, crosses, ribbons and flowers, dimensions variable. Installation view. Photo credit: Michael Stevenson Gallery. [O] Available: <http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/churchill/status2.htm> Accessed on 18 March 2008.

Madikida's work is posthistorical in the reconstructive presentation of ritualistic objects, producing an aura of authenticity, African anthropological identity and a sense of belonging. Yet in very different way the work refers to the diseases, violence and crime entrenched in South African societies today, a condition that seems to have become generic and fundamental. In the local as well as the international contexts it is the museum's task to be able to accommodate major cultural differences in terms of historical perceptions regarding the function of the art object, for instance, decorative and metaphoric versus ritualistic.

Politically speaking, museums and galleries should be open-minded enough to accommodate deconstructive viewpoints and even aggressive political criticism. An example hereof is Brett Murray's satirical exhibition entitled *Crocodile tears* that took place in April 2008 at Goodman Gallery in Cape Town (Figure 11). In this exhibition the artist parodies colonial power through the similarities he draws between the wigs worn by the nineteenth-century colonialists, the furry manes of chimpanzees and the cultured, manicured hair of poodles. As

such he plays with the Foucaultian idea of power as constantly changing and renders political power in South Africa as shifting from the oppressor to the oppressed as such suggesting, in a way, that there is currently a replacement of the earlier white fascism with black dictatorship and tyranny. Murray ignores political correctness and opts for vehement social criticism, suggesting that human beings and animals have much in common in that they follow the leaders 'blindly' and impulsively without much contemplation or understanding.



Figure 11. Brett Murray. Left: *Crocodile tears I*, 2008. Mild steel, acrylic and fools gold, 214.5 x 121 x 6 cm. Right: *Seven Deadly sins: Gluttony*, 2008. Mild steel, acrylic and fools gold, 89.5 x 79 x 6cm. [O] Available: <http://www.goodmangallerycape.com/bmex.html>. Photographs by Elfriede Dreyer.

Museums will have to reconsider and refurbish their displays in an attempt to provide a more balanced history of South Africa. Hitherto neglected topics have to be addressed and are increasingly being done by, for instance, the Robben Island Museum (RIM), Figure 9, which manages a collection of artefacts, historical documents, photographs, art works and audio-visual material. These materials are housed in the UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, the official collections management unit of RIM. The Archives provide a unique and often fragile documentary record of South African history and culture, particularly with regard to the apartheid period, the freedom struggle and political imprisonment in South Africa. The Archives are vast, comprising more than 100 000 photographs, 10 000 film and video

recordings, 5 000 artefacts from the Island and elsewhere, 2 000 oral history tapes, 2 000 posters from the struggle, more than 300 collections of historical documents and an extensive art collection, including the UN-sponsored International Artists Against Apartheid Exhibition, and 10 000 political cartoons (Apartheid Museum [s.a.]).



Figure 9. The old prison buildings which serve as the Robben Island Museum. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robben_Island

MuseumAfrica in Johannesburg, which opened in the Market Precinct in Johannesburg city centre in August 1994, has collections of African material culture from across the continent, including noted collections of tokens, musical instruments and head-rests. The Museum received most of its artifacts from the Johannesburg Public Library and its change of name to 'MuseumAfrica' was a way of redesigning the museum. A main aim of the museum is to revisionistically look at South African history and especially to include black history by, for instance, exhibiting previously occupied shacks from Tokoza and Alexandra. Aspects of history, previously not discussed, such as the material on the 1956-1961 Treason Trial (Mlangeni 1996), Sharpeville Day and the 1976 student uprisings are on view in the museum.

An interesting fact is that many of the museums that are involved with redress and revisioning of history are located in areas that are either remote or difficult to access, or in locations where there are presently urban deterioration (such as Newtown in Johannesburg) or have been neglect in the historical context. Another neglected and important development in the South African context is emergence of environmental museums, which, in most cases

are set up in consultation and in collaboration with surrounding communities. Such museums include the Tswaing/Soutpan museum (Figure 10) north-west of Pretoria, which relates to a meteorite impact crater with a saline lake. The museum's function is to preserve the site, provide local people with jobs and involve them in the project (Levitz 1996). However, given the current situation of infiltrating crime and the settling of illegal immigrants and xenophobia in an area such as this, the preservation of cultural and environmental artifacts in a museum have low cultural value and priority. Shelter and physical survival are far more important on the global scale of things.



Figure 10. The Tswaing/Soutpan crater. Photo credit: M J Gaylard. Source: <http://www.hartrao.ac.za/other/tswaing/tswaing.html>.

Conclusion

Due to lack of resources and fiscal clout, South African museums and galleries cannot compete with their international peers. The conditions for South African art production and exhibition continue to be complex and tough, but museums and galleries need to address the very causes and impact of such ailing circumstances through innovative strategies to remain culturally, socially and politically inclusive, relevant and informative.

Social problems that are specific to South Africa such as the impact and consequences of HIV/Aids, abuse of women and children and the effects of crime should be presented not

only in conceptual and aesthetic form, but also in a way that will contribute educationally to the alleviation of these ills. Museums and galleries operating in conditions of diasporic activity and increased levels of cosmopolitanism should continue to create and promote heteronational culture (Huysen 1995:28) in order to foster better understanding of third-world cultures and promote communication about and support for the prevention of potential human catastrophes. In addition, it is necessary to act subversively in a time of socio-political unrest and dystopia such as in the current crime-ridden South Africa and through exhibitions and other activities engage in radical thinking that will engender real change (McGee in Marstine 2006:178).

As long as art exhibition is connected to structures of power and authority, answers cannot be easily generated; it will remain a survival game. In the end, all museums can hope to do in a country such as South Africa embroiled in financial and ideological crises, is to continue to articulate the trauma, dilemmas and joys of the human condition. As Richard Brilliant (2002:192) argues, museums (and galleries) remain the repository of culture's materials "that form the objective basis for the constitution of an ongoing, participatory, humanistic tradition. Without it, we are truly lost in 'once upon time'."

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