Archaeology and Authenticity in South African Heritage Locales and Public Spaces

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This article investigates the construction, display and consumption of archaeological authenticity at two museums and two heritage-themed entertainment locales in South Africa. I consider authenticity not simply as intrinsic, but as strongly framed by physical and conceptual locations, before audience experiences and post-colonial priorities. I use as case studies the Maropeng visitor centre at the Cradle of Humankind, the Origins Centre Museum at the University of the Witwatersrand, Sun City's Lost City, and the Monte Casino entertainment complex in northern Johannesburg.

When Walter Benjamin wrote about authenticity in the early 20th century, he observed laconically that the mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses towards art (Benjamin, 1975: 236, Oxford English translation). His certitude that the aura of an object was sufficient to convey tangible proof of an artefact's authenticity to an apprehender has been eroded — and even inverted — less than a hundred years later. In his acerbic and insightful comment on US consumer culture, Umberto Eco notes, in contradiction to Benjamin, that the creation of a copy aims to establish itself as a substitution for reality, as something even more real (Eco, 1986: 8). These, then, are the two poles of a slippery continuum along which judgements about the nature and value of artefacts range.

Eco argues that the contemporary obsession with what is real and authentic is based on a diffusion and confusion of thought precisely because the techniques of mechanical production have become so powerful, and pander so sycophantically to their audiences, that an aura can only be discerned in hyper-real objects, copies so good that they are considered better than the original artefact. Thus, a hologram of a c. 77,000-year-old piece of engraved ochre displayed at Wits University's Origins Centre conveniently transports a wondrous artefact from a remote location where land meets sea at Blombos Cave, via similarly wondrous technology, to an urban locale more easily accessible to most of South Africa's citizens (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1   c. 77,000-year-old engraved ochre, Blombos Cave, South Africa.
Image courtesy Christopher Henshilwood

Indeed, from the points of view both of archaeological theory and of a post-colonial public, the Blombos ochre is arguably better represented as a hologram than as a tangible object. The inability to grasp the otherwise clear, high-resolution projected image is a powerful metaphor for our imperfect means of apprehending and studying the past. This is especially so in the Blombos case. Some commentators have suggested this marked ochre represents the beginnings of art (Henshilwood and Marean, 2003), and its artful representation is in keeping with this large but difficult to verify claim. Critics would mutter about smoke and mirrors. Museologists may praise the accuracy of the scan obviating the need to handle the artefact and allowing non-destructive study by proxy (cf. Caple, 2006). And there is little visitor feedback to suggest they are pining for the real Blombos ochre, being more than content with having seen its hyper-real incarnation. Indeed, this copy makes the aura easier to observe; a hologram is quite literally the glow radiated by the reproductive technology and not some arcane artefact best apprehended by connoisseurs.

Many purists lament this state of affairs but it is here that archaeology, with its ability to play with multiple scales of time and its expertise in dealing with materiality, may be able to place our evolving appreciations of objects, copies and technologies of reproduction in a perspective of necessary flux. Paradoxically, writing or talking about objects achieves this. The incommensurability of text and objects, and the inability of the former properly to describe or explain the latter, places us at an ontological and epistemological impasse. How can we write or talk about things?

Impasse or not, we do talk and write about things and their thingliness, so it behoves us regularly to excavate words, origins and their ameliorating or deteriorating meanings in order to see how these filter and alter our apprehension of those fragments that survive from the past. The following table presents a set of words, with etymology and meaning from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), that create a useful lexical web for my discussion of authenticity as presented and played within my four South African case studies.

TABLE 1
DEFINITION OF AUTHENTIC AND COGNATE WORDS

Authentic

13th c. Greek origin
1. Of authority, authoritative (properly as possessing original or inherent authority, but also as duly authorized).
2. Legally valid having legal force.
3. Entitled to acceptance or belief, as being in accordance with fact, or as stating fact; reliable, trustworthy, of established credit.
4. Original, first hand, prototypical; as opposed to copied.
5. Real, actual, genuine.
6. Really proceeding from its reputed source or author; of undisputed origin, genuine (opposed to counterfeit, forged, apocryphal).

Aura

Greek origin
1. Subtle emanation or exhalation from any substance, e.g. aroma of blood.
2. Also a distinct impression of character or aspect.

Copy

13th c. Latin origin
1. A transcript or reproduction of an original.
2. Fig. Something made or formed, or regarded as made or formed, in imitation of something else; a reproduction, image, or imitation.

Fake

Of obscure origin
1. An act of faking; contrivance, dodge, trick, invention; a faked or cooked report.
   Passing from slang to colloq. In the sense of a counterfeit person or thing.
2. To tamper with for the purpose of deception.

Forgery

From forge -- 14th c. Spanish, Portuguese and Italian.
1. Invention, ex cogitation; fictitious invention, fiction. Formerly also with more reproachful sense: deception, lying; a fraudulent artifice, a deceit.
2. The making of a thing in fraudulent imitation of something; also esp. the forging, counterfeiting, or falsifying of a document.

Genuine

15th c. Latin origin
1. Natural, not foreign or acquired, proper or peculiar to a person or thing; native.
2. Pertaining to the original stock; pure-bred.
3. Really proceeding from its reputed source or author; not spurious.
   The distinction which the 18th c. apologists attempted to establish between genuine and authentic does not agree with the etymology of the latter word, and is not now recognised. A genuine book, is that which was written by the person whose name it bears, as the author of it. An authentic book is that which relates matters of fact, as they really happened.

TABLE 1
CONTINUED

Original

13th c. French
1. Of or pertaining to the origin, beginning, or earliest stage of something; that belonged at the beginning to the person or thing in question; that existed at first, or has existed from the first; primary, primitive, innate; initial, first, earliest.
2. Produced by or proceeding from some thing or person directly; not derivative or dependent: having its source in itself; not arising from or depending on any other thing of the kind; underived, independent.
3. Made, composed, or done by the person himself (not imitated from another); first hand.
4. An image or impression produced during an actual photographing or recording session from which copies may subsequently be made.

Replica

19th c. Greek origin
1. A copy, duplicate, or reproduction of a work of art; properly, one made by the original artist.
2. Transf. A copy, reproduction, facsimile.

Reproduction

17th c. French
1. The action or process of forming, creating or bringing into existence again.
2. The action or process of bringing again before the mind in the same form.

Representation

Greek origin
1. Presence, bearing an air.
2. Appearance; impression of the site.
3. An image, likeness, or reproduction in some manner of a thing.
4. A material image or figure, a reproduction in some material or tangible form; in later use esp. a drawing or painting.

The denotations, connotations, interrelationships and slippages in the above definitions are ample demonstration of the power of words to hide, misdirect and delude.

For the purposes of this paper, a brief description of what 'heritage' means in terms of both culture and as an international understanding between governments and scientific institutions, is necessary, as well as the term 'museum' with regard to the protection of aforementioned 'heritage'.

UNESCO has defined 'cultural heritage' in its Draft Medium Term Plan 1990–1995, a section of which is reproduced below.

The cultural heritage may be defined as the entire corpus of material signs — either artistic or symbolic — handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind. As a constituent part of the affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities, as a legacy belonging to all humankind, the cultural heritage gives each particular place its recognizable features and is the storehouse of human experience. The preservation and the presentation of the cultural heritage are therefore a corner-stone of any cultural policy. (UNESCO, 1989: 57)

The same organization describes 'museums' as follows:

the term 'museum' shall be taken to mean any permanent establishment administered in the general interest for the purpose of preserving, studying, enhancing by various means and, in particular, exhibiting to the public for its delectation and instruction, groups of objects and specimens of cultural value: artistic, historical, scientific and technological collections, botanical and zoological gardens and aquariums. (Paris 1960)

Before proceeding to my four case studies, it is necessary to make a few observations on the definitions of three key terms — original, replica, and fake.

'Original'

According to Benjamin, 'The presence of the original is a pre-condition of authenticity' (Benjamin, 1975: 222). The original is thus the object from which Benjaminesque aura emanates. But an original may also simply be an object that existed first and from which copies can be made by technologies that are anything but passive and which, it can be argued, exude their own aura. For example, Eco speaks of the way American hyperrealism sucks you in as you encounter some of the many copies of the *Last Supper* in places across the USA (Eco, 1986: 17–18).

'Replica'

A replica is almost parasitic: a visually exact reproduction of an original — but one that does not need to draw on especially deep reserves of genius or context. Often, the replica's material is thoroughly modern and bears no relation to an original. Casts of fossil Hominids such as the Taung Child and Mrs Ples are examples of such simulacra. The Taung Child was found north of Kimberley in South Africa in 1924. The fossil is indicated to be around 2.5 million years old (Deacon and Deacon, 1999: 64–65). The juvenile skull was subsequently described and named by Professor Raymond Dart in 1925 as *Australopithecus africanus* — southern ape of Africa (Clarke, 2006: 33). This explosive fossil find, which Dart described as the inter-mediate between apes and humans, unfortunately was ignored by British scientists who, at the time, concentrated on what they believed was the missing link find of the century, namely the Piltdown skull (see below as one of the biggest forgeries of our time). Another reason that the Taung fossil find was perceived as secondary to that of the Piltdown find was the poor cast (replica) that Dart had made to show scientific bodies and the doubt that surrounded the dating of the fossil (Deacon and Deacon, 1999: 53). Mrs Ples, which is believed to be around 2.4 million years old, is one of the most well-known Australopithecus cranial finds found in the Sterkfontein area in South Africa (Clarke, 2006: 33–38). Discovered on 18 April 1947 by Dr Robert Broom, he nicknamed it 'Ples' in an abbreviation of the species name *Plesianthropus* (Thackeray, 2007: 4).

But are these fossils not themselves replicas in that the original creature's bone skull is now petrified, a perfect cast created by a natural technology of reproduction, preserving very closely the ghost of what would otherwise have been lost? This is an original casting technology, but that which is cast is necessarily derivative, yet still capable of moving palaeoanthropologists and the lay public to reverence.

'Fake'

Although defined as something that is made to deceive (Table 1), fakes and forgeries matter (see Jones, 1992). They represent the seams that bind words to objects. They are points of rupture that allow ingress beneath a surface, exposing a productive underbelly of knowledge and its reproduction. Fakes are often far more alluring, and radiate (or are made to radiate) a far more powerful aura than authentic objects (see Lovata, 2007). One of the most spectacular archaeological forgeries was the Piltdown skull hoax (Spencer, 1990:10). In 1912 Charles Dawson found a skull that confirmed the then current but erroneous hypothesis that humanity's early ancestors would have had large brains, high foreheads and an ape-like jaw (Spencer, 1990:10). The find was also a more than useful nationalistic counter to Germany's Neanderthal discovery in 1856, in that it suggested a British origin for humanity. Some scientists remained sceptical, but another skull and mandible find was reported in 1917, as well as bric-a-brac of associated fauna and tools, including the notorious cricket bat (Spencer, 1990:67–70). The two skulls drew on all the fervour and deception surrounding them, to validate each other (Spencer, 1990: 33). However, in 1949, fluorine testing showed the Piltdown skulls to be not of a c. 2–5 million-year-old Pliocene era, but of the last millennium (Weiner, 1955: 60).

In 1953 a relatively rudimentary palaeoanthropological study showed that the Piltdown molars had been crudely filed down with a metal rasp to fit the upper jawbone into place. Furthermore, the bones were deliberately stained in an iron solution so as to appear old. In fact, the jawbone was of orang-utan origin whereas the skull was of a recent, probably medieval human (Deacon and Deacon, 1999: 53). This fakery has now, in itself, become a cause célèbre and a useful warning for teaching how archaeology should go about its business. The Taung Child, therefore, was the significant find in relation to evolutionary concepts. Ironically, Taung — although a genuine fossil find — remains in a remote part of South Africa, as does a replica of it housed at the Sterkfontein Caves, and both receive far fewer visitors than the Piltdown skull does.

Almost authentic?

Piltdown provides a caution for academic hubris and shows the inadequacy of simple terms like 'fake' fully to convey how objects function or how people wish to perceive

FIGURE 2   The original and replica gold rhino at Mapungubwe Museum (can you tell which is which?). *Photograph courtesy Mapungubwe Museum.*

them. Take, for example, the celebrated c. 1000-year-old golden rhinoceros from the South African Iron Age or Farmer site of Mapungubwe (Figure 2). Illegally excavated as a series of gold leaf fragments in 1933 (Meyer, 1998: 19), the gold rhino was assembled in a best-guess reconstruction that was redone by experts at the British Museum in 1999 and then cleaned to a visually pristine state. Described by former President Thabo Mbeki as a quintessential symbol of the African Renaissance, this object is visited by around 30,000 people each year in its home in the Mapungubwe Museum on the University of Pretoria's Hatfield campus. The original is sometimes replaced with a replica while it is being cleaned or photographed. The restorative interventions post-excavation led to a series of questions of degree: Is the rhino totally authentic, mostly authentic (though is this not like being a little bit pregnant?) or inauthentic? Where, here, are the lines distinguishing replica, fantasy, and the real thing? The conservator's zeal in cleaning presents us with an artefact as it never looked during its time of use. But the museum space framing this object seems to confirm that in the transition between authentic and copy we seem to have a space for the almost authentic. Does the cleaning not remove elements of authenticity? We are, in all respects, cleaning away the molecules of time, valuable residues that can tell us more about Mapungubwe. By enhancing the aesthetics of the rhino are we taking away its originality? In terms of materials the rhino weighs 42.8 grams (1.37 fine troy ounces) which, at today's gold price, values it at R10,313.30; yet it is insured for ZAR 500 million.

Would a dirty rhino exude more authenticity or less? Does a clean rhino mean there is no aura? I do not believe this is necessarily the case. A clean rhino shows that the artefact has been carefully excavated and professionally curated — visible proof to a viewing public of professional care for this object based on scientific reasons for establishing the rhino's authenticity. This comes back to the presentation versus perception philosophy and the scientists versus the public's knowledge dichotomy: the restoration of objects and places versus their conservation, versus their development. This is a battle that has been raging in archaeology circles for some time (Holtorf, 2005: 113). The resultant artefact is no longer the original, though it morphs into another period in the life of the artefact that has a certain originality and authenticity (Lavin, 1997: 222–223). This rhino is a perfect example of restoration having triumphed, as it brings the public an object that is revered for being the only one of its kind. In South Africa, the fervour and desire for a rainbow nation often mean that museums project the wished-for cultural and political representations of a nation. These places of the past do not reside only in formal, government-funded locales, but occur throughout the country.

Places of the past are perceived as important heritage resources and visitor attractions for locals and foreigners. But it was not always so. Ever since the South African Museum was created in 1825, museums neglected black history and promoted white colonial history (Davison, 1998: 150). During Apartheid, the state divided museums into own affairs (whites) and general affairs (all other races) institutions (Coombes, 2003:150). Democracy is no less interesting, and rich insights flow from examining how places of the past function in a post-1994 democratic South Africa (see also Gore, 2005: 76). One immediate change was in the framing of a variety of authentic but undervalued and misrepresented objects. For example, many traditional African

collections were moved from natural history displays to collections and displays showing human history and culture; some were even moved to art museums, though retaining scars of their former incarcerations in the form of inked-on accession numbers. For example the Albany Museum in Grahamstown moved its Xhosa anthropological collection from the Natural Sciences Museum to the History Museum (Gore, 2005: 77).

The migration of places of the past to places at the far reach of the state's grasp is crucial. New explorations into the past are being conducted both with government as partner and, increasingly, by commercial concerns who are very specific about the public they target and the way in which they think the public wishes the past to be packaged, with no more than lip service to the desires of the state. In order to begin to triangulate original and evolved meanings, a locational and material reality is useful in dealing with a subject in which subterfuge, sleight of hand and wilful misunderstandings are standard practices. I now examine four heritage locales in and around Johannesburg (Figure 3).

First is Maropeng, a disembedded site museum (or exhibition centre as they like to call themselves) designed by government and industry to tell the story of human origins. By disembbeded I mean that the location of this museum was not considered, as it is outside the area known as the 'Cradle of Humankind' despite being all about the palaeontological sites therein. It seems that in today's small world, objects and things can be moved out of context, miles from their origin, and yet through some obscure abstract can still convey their meaning. Maropeng is described as being the Cradle of Humankind and yet not only is this centre not an archaeological site, it is positioned outside the area known as the cradle area! Second is Wits University's Origins Centre, in reality a rock art and evolutionary museum. Third is Sun City's Lost City, a hotel and casino complex that forges a mythical and ancient Africa.

FIGURE 3   Location of sites mentioned in text.

Finally, Montecasino is an upmarket entertainment complex notionally modelled on ancient Tuscany. My analysis of each place is based on interviews with curators or managers, site visits, and limited visitor reception study.

Case study 1: Maropeng

Maropeng means 'returning to the place of origin in SeTswana', and is situated 65 km north-east of Johannesburg as a central hub for the larger and somewhat mislead-ingly named Cradle of Humankind (Esterhuysen, 2007: 5). Notwithstanding earlier hominin specimens found in East and North Africa, the Cradle is a UNESCO World Heritage Site (inscribed 1999 and 2005) that consists of 15 fossil hominin sites spread over three provinces. Maropeng is not a palaeoanthropological or archaeological site per se, but a large information centre that references these 15 sites, only one of which, Sterkfontein, is open to the public. Maropeng is a public–private partnership between the Gauteng Provincial government and private industry, and was built at a cost of ZAR189 million for the roads and infrastructure, and ZAR163 million for the buildings. It does house a few original and authentic archaeological, palaeontological and palaeoanthropological artefacts on a rotating basis, but relies more on interactive and visually alluring displays to bring across an evolutionary account of humanity's origins, development, and future.

This may sound normative, but the majority of South Africans do not believe in evolution, having other originary accounts such as Christianity, ancestral sites and beings to account for the human condition. These views are not necessarily hostile to an evolutionary world view, but they do not attribute any generative power to evolution. Therefore the information in Maropeng can be considered in one way prejudiced but in another, informative. People bring to the centre their prior knowl-edge and experience. Without true consciousness, they then project their ideas into the mix of information displayed, the result of which could only be learnt through extensive research on the visitors through a visitor survey. Few of these are con-ducted. As Falk and Dierking state in their book *Learning from museums: visitor experiences and the making of meaning*, these visitor studies are few and far between and are neither comprehensive nor focused enough to gain insight into people's experiences, attitudes, and beliefs (Falk and Dierking, 2000: 83).

Maropeng is also strikingly un-African in design, concept, and operation. Figure 4 shows the mound-like entrance to Maropeng (much of which is located underground). This mound represents a tumulus according to GAPP, the European firm awarded the contract for Maropeng's design, and is meant to represent the death and rebirth of humanity. Drawing on an archaeology familiar to them, the European Neolithic, they have imposed a tumulus in a doubly false move. First, despite some disputed exam-ples in northern Africa, tumuli are unknown in Africa, especially southern Africa. Even then, tumuli post-date the Cradle of Humankind's target period by hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of years. Second, tumuli are places of death which do not accord with the story of the origin and development of the human species that is meant to be Maropeng's message. Maropeng is also expensive to visit — R95 per adult (approx. US$12), R55 per child aged 4–14, and R10 for parking. The site is beyond the peri-urban edge, necessitating own transport or expensive vehicle hire (buses and trains do not pass there).

FIGURE 4   Maropeng: The Tumulus. *Courtesy of Dr Sven Ouzman.*

Once inside the 'deathly mound', visitors go on a 'journey' that starts with a subterranean boat ride through the elements of our planet, such as wind, fire, earth, and water, that symbolize the big bang theory (Moodley, 2006). You then enter a small auditorium that has a giant-sized hologram of the earth with a voiceover explaining the movement of the plate tectonics and the emergence of our planet as it is today. From here you move into one large room that houses audio-visual stations. The stations are as follows: beginning of the world, the path to humanity, what it means to be human, bipedalism, development of the jaw and diet, development and growth of the brain, stone tools, control and use of fire, development of language, living with others, peopling the world, creative explosion, sustainability, and the original fossil display. At the end of the linear tour through the interactive and other exhibits (Figure 5) there is an oval room adjoining the main exhibition hall in which original fossils and artefacts are displayed.

After 90 minutes to two hours, visitors emerge from the tumulus and can either have a meal or go via the shop and African market (semi-functional) on the way back to the car park. In the shop there is the usual Afro-kitsch for sale. Ninety per cent of the shops sell curios, clothes and suchlike, with only a tiny section for books and products archaeological. But one such product is insightful — you can purchase what initially looks like an Acheulean stone tool packaged in a small wooden box (Figure 6). The box has a stamp on the outside that says 'South African Hand Axe', with another word underneath that is unreadable as the stamp is smudged on every box because the wood grain is too large and the ink too runny. The only clue that it is not an original stone tool is the bar code, which says in tiny letters — replica. The tool is a technically sound polyurethane cast made from original stone tools

FIGURE 5   Exhibits at Maropeng. *Courtesy Sven Ouzman.*

FIGURE 6   Replica Acheulean hand axe.

excavated from the Cradle, and their pristine, uniform surfaces and light weight make clear to most visitors that these are not originals. The sale of real stone tools or any other archaeological artefacts in South Africa is illegal (National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999, sections 32(13) and 32(19)).

When I visited the centre in 2006 in order to ascertain information for my Honours dissertation, I took along family and friends. One of the questions posed to them was what they thought of the presentation of the artefacts and the representation of the history of the earth and mankind. Their answer was informative in that they had learnt concepts and ideologies that were previously unknown to them. Interestingly, they asked me if all the information presented there was factual. Offering their own answer, they believed that surely educational centres of this magnitude only displayed information deemed scientifically factual. Perception of a place, like Maropeng, is based on the belief that the educated people who create centres and museums like this one, are experts in their field and are correct in their findings. This may be so, but the process is not democratic; there are, for example as mentioned above, no non-evolutionary concepts explained here. Tellingly, authentic artefacts are few. To place this strategy in perspective, I now move from human physical origins, supported by few authentic artefacts, to human artistic origins supported by fragments of larger authentic ensembles at Wits University's Origins Centre.

Case study 2: Origins Centre Museum, University of the Witwatersrand

The University of the Witwatersrand opened its on-campus Origins Centre in March 2006 at a cost of R40 million (Figure 7). This funding was obtained as follows: one third from industry, one third from international donors, and one third from government (Blundell, 2006; personal comments 1 March 2009). Interestingly, both the Cradle and Origins Centre have resulted from a government interest in archaeology not seen since the 1940s (Dubow, 1995:13–14). The Origins Centre is based on a traditional museum structure, with high-tech interventions such as a hologram of the Blombos ochre (Figure 7), 180-degree movie clips, pull-out drawers of stone tools and, primarily, actual and copied San rock art as well as certain cultural beliefs from southern Africa are explained. Entry costs R60 per adult and R35 per child, and parking is free after negotiating access to the University. The centre received 10,000 visitors in 2007 (Blundell, interview 27 October 2008) and is a non-profit organization and section 21 company. It receives no funding either from government or from Wits University.

The Centre's lighting and contextual materials, such as the installation by artist Walter Oltmann of a 9 m map of Africa and the other continents, constructed from steel wire and suspended in the entrance, give it a contemporary Africanized feel. The first part of the Centre (the so-called Genesis) is dedicated to explaining the southern African Stone Age, with the exhibition of tools and upright glass cases housing stratigraphic soil peels made from soil samples taken from continents such as Africa, the Americas and Asia to lend the display authenticity, even of a disembedded kind. The holographic display, as mentioned above, of the Blombos ochre piece is a highlight for visitors, young and old. There is something to be said about touching something that is present in sight but not in sense! There is a brief display of fossil hominins used to explain evolution from ancient Australopithecus through to

FIGURE 7   The outside of the Origins Centre, Wits University, Johannesburg.

modern *Homo sapiens sapiens*, with the corresponding drawer of stone tools used by these groups. A display card tells visitors these are casts and not original fossils, and people are encouraged to handle the casts. You then enter a corner room with benches to view the first of five films on offer in this Centre, namely, the evolutionary story. This digitally pictorial display of our ancestors' journey through humanity is a visually stimulating and captivating way of representing knowledge. Younger visitors to the Centre, who outweigh adult visitors by two to one, prefer this method of information to the endless reading of panels and texts (visitor numbers taken on average over January to June 2009, excluding preferential visitors such as pensioners).

The first corridor then gives way to displays of southern African rock art. A number of original fragments of rock art are displayed in the Centre (e.g. Figure 8). I use the word fragments in order to highlight the fact that this art was removed from its place of origin. Conservation reasons are mainly cited as the explanation for this and this was a common practice until the 1970s. Presently, rock art is only removed if threatened with damage or destruction. The art that is in the museum is, however, no longer in its place of origin. Nor is the sarcophagus of Tutankhamun, but does this shift in location render the art work or artefact inauthentic? These fragments are literally part of a bigger picture which can only be seen out in the field, although obviously not at the sites from which these fragments have come. Perhaps there could be some kind of reunion of fragment with place in the future. This shift in location neither excludes authenticity nor takes away originality; what it may do for the audience is project a perception that the art has changed its meaning through the

FIGURE 8   Rock art fragment and framing, Origins Centre.

change of site, a view held by the Origin Centre's curator (Blundell, personal comments 25 February 2009).

One of the five films on offer at the Centre is footage of the rarely seen in practice, trance-dance or 'dance of death', practised among the shamans or medicine men of the San culture. The dance is captured in a seven-minute piece of extraordinary cinematography, demonstrating through high graphic detail how the dancers enter into an altered state of consciousness. The authenticity you experience, or the edutainment value you take away from this film clip, can be viewed as an opposing belief to that which Walter Benjamin felt took away the 'aura' or 'authenticity' of a product through movie reproduction (Hall, 2006: 90).

Feedback from visitors about their experience at the Centre is limited due to a number of factors, one being that the Centre does not hand out visitor surveys and only has a visitor book. The responses in this book are limited to a column (it is more of a visitor signing book) but the overall response ranges between excellent, informative, very well presented and fantastic. The education section of the Centre has recently handed out a survey sheet to teachers accompanying scholars on guided tours. The questions range from whether the visitor thinks the Centre is well priced to whether the information is informative, and the overall response has been very positive.

My next two examples break decisively with this situation of expertise in that they are academically unfettered commercial appropriations and presentations of imagined

pasts. They are neither heritage locales nor museums, but merely public entertainment spaces consisting of architecture based on historical pasts.

Case study 3: Sun City's Lost City

The Sun City complex was built by Sol Kerzner and Sun International in 1979 in the apartheid-era homeland of Bophuthatswana, 165 km north of Johannesburg (Figures 1 and 9). Sun City was an unethically legal way of allowing international golfers and entertainers to perform without technically breaking international sanctions against apartheid South Africa (Hall, 1995: 197). This very successful casino, hotel and entertainment complex is located within an ancient volcano and is next to a game park. In 1992, as apartheid and sanctions waned, Sun International decided to expand the complex in order to make a strong case for attracting one of the few gambling licences that the new post-apartheid government was to insist on (gambling was not legal in South Africa until then, only in independent homelands). This expansion took the form of the Lost City complex (Figure 9).

   This lost city is based on a bricolage of myths and misperceptions of Africa by Europeans, expressed in such books as the Book of Kings in the Bible (Kings 1. 9,10, 2005: 377. The backstory to the Lost City is a re-creation or re-assembly of these myths by architect Gerald Allison and partners, who are quite clear that the myth is based on European ideas of African possession and conquest (Hall, 1995: 180). This Lost City is in fact the realization of a childhood dream by Gerald Allison. When asked in a video whether he was in fact reinforcing the colonial stereotypes of Africa, he replied that he was not, but was just reflecting the stereotype, portraying Africa for the visitor. According to this architectural translation, the Lost City is a 3000-year-old mythical African city built by a nomadic tribe from northern Africa seeking a new place to settle (Hall, 1995: 179). They found a valley nestled in the hills of

FIGURE 9   The Palace Hotel at Sun City's Lost City. *Courtesy of Edie Cross.*

Bophuthatswana and embarked on a new life. This tribe discovered gold and platinum in their valley and this mineral discovery led to wealth, knowledge, and the creation of a rich civilization ruled by a king and his family. An earthquake destroyed their great city and 3000 years later an explorer found the ruins and was determined to restore it to its original splendour, complete with majestic palace and roaming wild animals.

Despite the simulated ravages of time, the ruins are still structurally sound enough to house or frame restaurants, lounge bars, swimming pools, false beaches, wave pools and 338 Africa-themed rooms (the Palace Hotel at the Lost City, one of four hotels at this complex). Around the hotel there are vast swimming pools encircled by great broken columns as testament to time and how long the architecture has been there. Something that intrigues me about these places is that this kind of architecture is synonymous with ancient Roman and Greek cities with their great bathhouses, monumental buildings, and gladiator arenas (Jones, 1966: 357). Surely these are not symbols of forgotten African tribes. Copies of rock art adorn many of the walls and perform functions such as indicating the female and male toilets. The Lost City receives 2,394,036 visitors per year, made up of 635,145 adult hotel guests, 101,824 children under 12 hotel guests, 619,221 Vacation club guests, and 1,037,846 day visitors. In other words, visitors to the Lost City outnumber visitors to both Maropeng (which has a boutique hotel) and the Origins Centre (which is centrally located in Johannesburg) by a factor of 7.5 to 1.

In a video interview with a South African Indian family, Henry Louis Gates Jnr was told by them that the Lost City was the real thing — a very real archaeological site portraying a real tribe with a real history. One man even called it the eighth wonder of the world! (Gates, 1999: part 3). There is thus a dichotomy between the knowing archaeologists and architects and — at least some of — the unknowing public. There is no signage or on-site museum to disabuse people of their fantasies. Perhaps people want to believe in two things: one is the big fantasy of a lost world and the other, possibly due to our racialized past, is the glory of the past.

The earnest and correct accounts of human evolution and rock art given at Maropeng and the Origins Centre come a poor second to the Lost City's invention of tradition. But it is an invention that strikes a deep chord among visitors for a complex nexus of reasons that include old prejudices, stereotypes of Africa, desire for a golden age, and so forth, that has had several previous incarnations. Since the 17th century, these myths and legends have led to a popular belief that ancient ruins with their secret treasures of gold mines and diamonds existed in the African interior, and therefore launched the many expeditions into southern Africa in search of Prester John, the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, among others (Brown-Lowe, 2003:44–46). In 1871 tangible evidence finally came to light with Carl Mauch's rediscovery of Great Zimbabwe (Brown-Lowe, 2003: 42). These ruins and their associated gold, soapstone and exotic bead finds seemingly confirmed old beliefs in lost tribes and justified the colonial enterprise. Mauch now gave these rumours a landscape (Hall, 1995: 186). Further books and movies, such as *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887) by Henry Rider Haggard, spurred further belief that treasures lay in Africa awaiting discovery by explorers.

In the Lost City, the constructed passage of time is simulated through the 'bridge of time', a bridge constructed from real stone and replicated stone. This bridge is set to rumble and shake through controlled timers, creating a special effects scene more usually seen at theme parks (Hall, 1995: 196). The Lost City is a simulacrum, not to be confused with a replica which is based on the reproduction of an original. There was no original to start with. Archaeology is based on excavation of material culture, all of which comes out of the ground as authentic objects. The Lost City, however, rose out of the ground as a construction based on fantasy. The complex is authentic in its own context, just not within the context of an archaeological framework.

In Hall's essay 'The reappearance of the authentic' he states that he understands why theme park places not dissimilar to Sun City are drawn to the authenticity of their own product, be it real or not. He feels that the commoditization of products render their value overused. Therefore the injection of simulation seems somehow to recreate the experience and make it 'real'. Aligning your product with a cultural identity, be it far removed from its place of originality, seems to somehow recreate value in the simulacrum (Hall, 2006: 93–94).

My final example is only notionally archaeological but it does document how a certain set of mostly white and wealthy South Africans likes to 'have its pasta and eat it'. This is not 'their' past, but one created in the affluent northern suburbs of Johannesburg to pander to a perception of Tuscan Italy.

Case study 4: Montecasino

Montecasino is situated in the middle of Johannesburg's northern suburbs and is advertised as an all-out dining, gambling and entertainment experience (Figure 10). It

FIGURE 10   Interior of Montecasino mall, casino and entertainment complex.

is a monumental complex of 85,000m², which was commissioned by Tsogo Sun, designed by Creative Kingdom, and opened in December 2000 (Page, personal comments, 22 November 2006). The architecture and backdrop to this complex is incorrectly claimed to be based on a composite ancient Tuscan village (Architect & Builder, 2001: 33). The appeal of Tuscany and all it offers is currently popular with South African middle-class suburbia (Manning, 2004: 531), along with similar fantasies about Bali. This Tuscan architecture could be due to South Africans wanting their buildings to display their wealth and yet keep out those who want to take it away. Jonathan Manning points out that it could also be due to the ideology of white superiority (Manning, 2004: 531). The majority of the 625,000 visitors who come to the centre each month live in Tuscan homes.

The design teams initially travelled to Tuscany in Italy to research authentic designs and materials for their construction (Architect & Builder, 2001: 33) but found the architecture, materials and conditions at odds with their preconceived designs and so relocated to nearby Lombardy for more malleable materials and designs. This sleight of hand pales into insignificance when compared with the blasé attitude towards the complex's name. The Abbey of Monte Cassino is situated in the Italian province of Lazio; bombed to ruins, it was the site of one of the longest and bloodiest battles in Western Europe during World War II. When asked about this, Development Director Kevin Page sent the following to me via email:

> There is no connection to the Abbey, apart from a colloquialisation of the name. We actually wanted to disassociate ourselves from this area in Italy where a major battle took place during the 2nd World War and many thousands of allied servicemen, including South Africans, died. The name was conceived as a South Africanism of the Italian word 'Monte', meaning mound or hill, where the ground on which Montecasino is built slopes substantially from south to north. In addition the word Monte is a connotation of a fortress or village. Using the word Casino in the English way was a play on this, derived from the known Italian name 'MonteCassino' it was also felt for marketing reasons that the word Montecasino would be shortened and, as we know, the complex is normally referred to as 'Monte' which creates a sense of belonging, being a nickname with our customer base. It is interesting to note that what was begun by ourselves has been followed by numerous other developers in the area and around South Africa, where copies of Italian vernacular architecture have been perpetrated. One must bear in mind that casinos and related entertainment venues are successful when they adopt escapist or travel architecture where the complex transports a person from their normal environment into a different environment. Much has been written about plagiarising other architectural styles, particularly Italian, in SA and not using a 'SA style'. We make no excuses in the entertainment and casino environment for adopting a fantasy or transported style, which is easy to copy and non-dating. (Page, personal comment, 22 November 2006)

Montecasino is a great example of taking places from the past and recreating them for use in the present. The authentic past or source of inspiration becomes no more than a gesture, a prompt to more florid imaginings. I doubt if any of the more than half a million visitors per month really know or care about the history of the building or on what it is based. Montecasino is both a fake and a copy. The simulated brook, under the roofed and painted sky, the cobbled streets and the pseudo apartments that

line them are all guilty of being representations of a 'thought of' architecture. Although Montecasino is neither a museum nor an ancient Tuscan ruin, it is a simulated environment exploring its show business alter-ego. Martin Hall sums up the composition of these types of spaces in his essay 'The reappearance of the authentic':

> strange mixing of registers, with the trivia of destination entertainment rubbing shoulders with the deadly seriousness of ethnic identity politics, and long-established ways of exhibiting cultural capital, juxtaposed with the razzmatazz of new destination museums. (Hall, 2006: 96)

Archaeology and authenticity

Today, authenticity seems to be achieved if a copy has a quality finish. If something looks cheap or fragmentary, it is perceived as a copy or as a fake (Eco, 1986: 8). Sometimes such simulation goes over the top as is the case in the USA with the recreated full-scale model of the Oval Office (Eco, 1986: 6). But in a traditional, normative understanding, if something is to be authentic, it must also be original or, in Benjamin's words, have the presence of an original (Benjamin, 1975: 222). Do these remain necessary and sufficient criteria for an aura to be transmitted? Or is mimesis capable of emanating its own aura, which can be perceived as authentic? What change is made to this debate by moving from authentic as adjective to authenticate as verb?

Authenticating evidence such as the material remains found in archaeological sites is a vital component of archaeology. The people involved in the process are archaeologists, scientists, historians, law-makers, government officials, and heritage practitioners qualified to carry out the task. From the time an artefact leaves the site where it was found to the time it reaches the laboratory or place where it will be dated, analysed and curated, its provenance has to be established as a primary means of proving or demonstrating to an external audience that object's authenticity. Some of the ways we can do this are through scientific expertise dating, materials analysis, and so on. Other ways are less precise 'stylistic analysis' and 'connoisseurship' and rely very much on the expert's ability to detect the right kind of aura. The experience of this aura can ebb and flow dependent on time and place (Holtorf, 2005: 115). The places where the objects are housed once their authenticity has been proven are usually museums, archives and university collections, which present information about identity and past civilizations. Museologists, archaeologists and the like are seen as professional embodiments of educational sciences and history.

The understanding and perception of the viewer is based on the intersection of authenticated information and the social and educational understanding of the visitor. But even expert opinion is divided. On the one hand, the 1964 Charter of Venice insists on a narrow preservationist view in which authentic artefacts and places must be kept in an imagined original state and context. Yet there is also the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity, a result of UNESCO-sponsored conferences, in which authenticity judgements may be linked to the worth of a great variety of sources of information, including function, traditions, techniques (McKercher and du Cros, 2002: 65–82), and something that complies sufficiently with the spirit of the original can be considered authentic. In other words, a genuflection to Benjamin's notion of

the authentic as something that holds a distinct impression of character or aspect. This extension of the aura either exacerbates the difficulty in determining what is authentic, or it makes of it a more democratic process. The past, provenance, and an object's original and final resting places are all co-dependent on the authenticity of the object. But in a post-colony like South Africa, what roles do the authentic and its authenticators play?

Perhaps simulated environments or those based on myths, such as Montecasino and the Lost City, create an experience of complete transportation to mythical and fabricated lands — a type of escapism rather than education or even edutainment, to escape the pressing priorities of post-colonial life. But this is perhaps too facile a reading; one that condescends to most of the southern African public, who are more than conversant with notions of authenticity and copy. They know too well the attempts by the state and others to hoodwink, misdirect attention, and misrepresent the past. For example, millions are spent on counterfeit brand products each year. Many people have San rock paintings decorating their curtains, knowing this is a transported set of copies but nonetheless insisting it helps their home capture the spirit of Africa. The inauthentic is very much part of the fabric of people's lives, perhaps as a grass-roots resistance to elitist notions of connoisseurship based on the exclusive possession of rare authentic artefacts. And even such a public/state duality breaks down when the state and the heritage industry are every bit as complicit in elasticizing the boundaries of the authentic. In other words, if the audience experiences a place or artefact as authentic, then it is so.

Julian Thomas has opined that archaeology provides useful meta-language and concepts for people to think and act through their everyday lives (Thomas, 2004: 161–175). The price of such an opening up of an academic discipline is a necessary roughness and disturbance to the hard edges of concepts such as authenticity and, especially, our position as arbiters of an object or place's status. Whether this constitutes the beginnings of what Nick Shepherd calls a people's archaeology (Shepherd, 1998: 264–269) or whether it simply means more transparency and public scrutiny of the discipline is as yet unclear. But ultimately, a democratic archaeology will not rely solely on mediated representations of the past, but on people journeying to archaeological sites and places of memory, where they will weave together the topoi, the artefactual, belief, memory, and bias, and come to a personalized understanding that may or may not mesh with orthodox, disciplinary views.

Edutainment is a word used to explain education and entertainment together but in the case of museums and the way they can display their information or package it, these two words conjoin to form that package (Macdonald, 1992: 160).

Acknowledgements

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