PROGRAMME

4.1 The Client

4.2 Oral literature
   4.2.1 Introduction
   4.2.2 A definition of storytelling

4.3 Oral literature in Africa
   4.3.1 Different styles of oral literature
   4.3.2 The role of oral literature in the society
   4.3.3 The role of oral tradition in museums
   4.3.4 Precedents
   4.3.5 Conclusion

4.4 Programme
   4.4.1 The aim of the programme
   4.4.2 The influence of oral literature
   Structure
   Stylistic characteristics

chapter 4
The traditional practice of storytelling goes by a variety of names, such as oral tradition, oral literature, folklore or traditional literature. (Okpewho 1992:3) In this instance, the term oral literature is favoured because it simply implies the transmission of creative writing, literature,( wiktionary) by spoken word. This is important as there are many different methods of relating oral literature to the audience, such as narration, song and poetry that are all covered by the blanket term.

Africa has a rich history of the oral literature that developed in an environment void of written record-keeping. (Goodnow 2002) From the Xhosa ntsomi, to Zulu praisepoetry to the Afrikaans ‘staaltjie’, storytelling in some form or another has enriched the life of every South African. For this reason, the value of oral literature in this study lies in its universality. Oral literature has been practised by all human cultures at some point and is therefore a powerful and understandable interface between different cultures.
4.3.2 The role of oral literature in society

Although storytelling was practised by many people in one village, there are those individuals who possess a greater appreciation for the expression of images and idioms and who have the ability to capture an audience more effectively. In short, these are the oral artists. (Okpewho 1992:20)

The oral artist is not selected and trained, but simply absorbs stories and techniques from observing them from a young age. (Scheub1975:17) Repeating and adapting that which the young oral artist sees, their ability to build the complexity of nuances, stylistic devices, plot and body gestures grow and are honed by a critical audience. (Scheub1975:19) From this we can deduce that the oral artist is part of a wider cultural environment and that they develop alongside it. (Scheub 1975:4) When considering this, it would be impossible to discuss all the different forms of oral literature here. Reference will be limited to those forms that have been given due attention. (Groenewald 2003:87-88) The ntsomi is a dramatised Xhosa narrative. This is a good example of the flexible nature of African oral literature. The ntsomi consists of a single oral artist, or he may be backed by music, dance or vocals (Okpewho 1992:45). Additional to the function of entertainment, oral literature can be seen in the prominence of oral literature in political protest and work within the society. (Okpewho 1992:34) Duncan Brown states: ''The retrieval of oral literature plays a role in marking the course of an individual’s journey through life. (Okpewho 1992:19) The naming of a child, not only tells the story of the birth, but also serves as an encouragement and a reminder. (Okpewho 2003:10)"

Further, oral literature plays a role in marking the course of an individual’s journey through life. (Okpewho 1992:19) The naming of a child, not only tells the story of the birth, but also serves as an encouragement and a reminder. (Okpewho 2003:10) The ntsomi is a dramatised Xhosa narrative. This is a good example of the flexible nature of African oral literature. The ntsomi consists of a single oral artist, or he may be backed by music, dance or vocals (Okpewho 1992:45). Additional to the function of entertainment, oral literature can be seen in the prominence of oral literature in political protest and work within the society. (Okpewho 1992:34) Duncan Brown states: "The retrieval of oral literature plays a role in marking the course of an individual’s journey through life. (Okpewho 1992:19) The naming of a child, not only tells the story of the birth, but also serves as an encouragement and a reminder. (Okpewho 2003:10)"

Further, oral literature plays a role in marking the course of an individual’s journey through life. (Okpewho 1992:19) The naming of a child, not only tells the story of the birth, but also serves as an encouragement and a reminder. (Okpewho 2003:10) The ntsomi is a dramatised Xhosa narrative. This is a good example of the flexible nature of African oral literature. The ntsomi consists of a single oral artist, or he may be backed by music, dance or vocals (Okpewho 1992:45). Additional to the function of entertainment, oral literature can be seen in the prominence of oral literature in political protest and work within the society. (Okpewho 1992:34) Duncan Brown states: "The retrieval of oral literature plays a role in marking the course of an individual’s journey through life. (Okpewho 1992:19) The naming of a child, not only tells the story of the birth, but also serves as an encouragement and a reminder. (Okpewho 2003:10)"

Further, oral literature plays a role in marking the course of an individual’s journey through life. (Okpewho 1992:19) The naming of a child, not only tells the story of the birth, but also serves as an encouragement and a reminder. (Okpewho 2003:10) The ntsomi is a dramatised Xhosa narrative. This is a good example of the flexible nature of African oral literature. The ntsomi consists of a single oral artist, or he may be backed by music, dance or vocals (Okpewho 1992:45). Additional to the function of entertainment, oral literature can be seen in the prominence of oral literature in political protest and work within the society. (Okpewho 1992:34) Duncan Brown states: "The retrieval of oral literature plays a role in marking the course of an individual’s journey through life. (Okpewho 1992:19) The naming of a child, not only tells the story of the birth, but also serves as an encouragement and a reminder. (Okpewho 2003:10)"

Further, oral literature plays a role in marking the course of an individual’s journey through life. (Okpewho 1992:19) The naming of a child, not only tells the story of the birth, but also serves as an encouragement and a reminder. (Okpewho 2003:10) The ntsomi is a dramatised Xhosa narrative. This is a good example of the flexible nature of African oral literature. The ntsomi consists of a single oral artist, or he may be backed by music, dance or vocals (Okpewho 1992:45). Additional to the function of entertainment, oral literature can be seen in the prominence of oral literature in political protest and work within the society. (Okpewho 1992:34) Duncan Brown states: "The retrieval of oral literature plays a role in marking the course of an individual’s journey through life. (Okpewho 1992:19) The naming of a child, not only tells the story of the birth, but also serves as an encouragement and a reminder. (Okpewho 2003:10)"

Further, oral literature plays a role in marking the course of an individual’s journey through life. (Okpewho 1992:19) The naming of a child, not only tells the story of the birth, but also serves as an encouragement and a reminder. (Okpewho 2003:10) The ntsomi is a dramatised Xhosa narrative. This is a good example of the flexible nature of African oral literature. The ntsomi consists of a single oral artist, or he may be backed by music, dance or vocals (Okpewho 1992:45).
The programme thus aims at introducing the art of oral literature to the site, as well as to its surroundings. The interventions should serve to add to the experience of the place. For this purpose the audience is led through the site on a path that passes, crosses, goes through, goes under and in between different opportunities to be connected to and experience oral literature. The viewpoint remains the destination, and is anticipated as such, while remaining hidden throughout the journey.

Currently at Tswaing, the people who visit the site for spiritual reasons confine their activity to the crater floor and reach this by a direct route that does not afford the experience of descending into the crater. Christopher Alexander describes the ritual of reaching a truly sacred place as such: “...it requires layers of access, waiting, level of approach, a gradual unpeeling, gradual revelation. Passage towards the sacred space is a representation of the universe. Although this has been found true in many cases, he argues that this is not the entirety of the builder’s intentions. He claims these methods to be an invitation for the participation of interested parties that is then supplemented by a drawer of spiritual passage” (2000: 15). This is then conveyed by the architectural experience. (Jones 2002: 46)

The journey through the site changes perspective that this affords the visitors is of utmost importance. The path connecting all different gathering places leads the visitor through different layers of access that eventually renders the moment of revelation more meaningful.

The programme thus aims at introducing the art of oral literature to the site, as well as at establishing a reconnection to the environment and self.

Oral literature at Tswaing

Oral literature should remind us of our roots in our own culture, as well as the wealth of cultures that we have been fortunate enough to learn from every day. As we have seen, Tswaing is a place of inherent value. Thus, the interventions should serve to add to the experience of the place. For this purpose the audience is led through the site on a path that passes, crosses, goes through, goes under and in between different opportunities to be connected to and experience oral literature. The viewpoint remains the destination, and is anticipated as such, while remaining hidden throughout the journey.

Currently at Tswaing, the people who visit the site for spiritual reasons confine their activity to the crater floor and reach this by a direct route that does not afford the experience of descending into the crater. Christopher Alexander describes the ritual of reaching a truly sacred place as such: “...it requires layers of access, waiting, level of approach, a gradual unpeeling, gradual revelation. Passage towards the sacred space is a representation of the universe. Although this has been found true in many cases, he argues that this is not the entirety of the builder’s intentions. He claims these methods to be an invitation for the participation of interested parties that is then supplemented by a drawer of spiritual passage” (2000: 15). This is then conveyed by the architectural experience. (Jones 2002: 46)

The journey through the site changes perspective that this affords the visitors is of utmost importance. The path connecting all different gathering places leads the visitor through different layers of access that eventually renders the moment of revelation more meaningful.

The programme thus aims at introducing the art of oral literature to the site, as well as at establishing a reconnection to the environment and self.

Oral literature at Tswaing
4.4.2. The influence of oral literature

Although it has been discussed that the use of paths and gathering places can involve the visitor of the site in a more meaningful experience, the nature and structure of the journey is still unclear. The influence of storytelling on the project is not confined to that of function. Narrative structures can be seen as a possible framework within which to ground the physical experience of the site. Throughout the many forms, academics have identified a structure, and various stylistic characteristics that are discernible in African oral literature.

It is in the ways in which the words are organized and the resources within the words that ensure the effectiveness of the oral performance. (Okpewho 1992:70)

Structure

Oral literature is an art based on that of performance. The true artist can manipulate the reactions of the audience and adjust the course of the narrative according to their response. Because of the spontaneous nature of the narrative, storytelling is very seldom a linear process. (Olabade 2002) Despite the involvement of the audience, the framework and eventual outcome of the story is within the bounds set by the teller. The structure in a narrative is followed roughly as a method of effectively moving the story towards a point, as well as guiding the experience of the audience. In the same way, the path guides the visitor through the site and different activities towards the viewpoint.

Before the story begins, the performer is transported from the present world to the world in which the story is set. This is referred to as the ‘capturing’ of the audience and storyteller. (Okpewho 1992:222) A ‘crisis’ follows that throws the subject into turmoil. (Okpewho 1992:224) The enjoyment of the story is prolonged and enhanced by ‘stabilizing’ events that do not necessarily add any new information. (Okpewho 1992:224) The emotions of the audience is then ‘depressed’, or lulled, before the story ends with an ironic twist. (Okpewho 1992:224)

Finaly, a popular tool is that of the ideophone. These are nonsensical sounds that are repeated throughout the performance to convey certain impressions. (Okpewho 1992:92)

Stylistic characteristics

As this storyline will always be part of a performance, it is inseparable from the stylistic characteristics of a good performance. (Schulz, 1975:19) The stylistic tools aid the performer in keeping the interest of the audience, emphasizing a point, as well as linking together ideas. (Okpewho 1992:70–87) There are numerous such devices, but only a few will be discussed here.

Repetition is the main method of achieving these goals. The audience is delighted by elements that recur after intervals and their attention is gripped. (Okpewho 1992:84–92) Other stylistic characteristics are variations in repetition, such as the piling of meaning and parallelism. (Okpewho 1992:78, 83)

The main idea or storyline is sometimes abandoned for a while in order to address a related object or theme. This is called a digression. (Okpewho 1992:96)
4.4.3 Site programming and concept development

The programming of the site involves many encounters with storytelling as an art in different settings and forms. The diagram illustrates the conceptualisation of the programme as a complete experience, while only selected were fully developed.