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Curating a Counter-Archive:

A Historical Examination of South African Film Festivals

BY

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Abstract

Film festivals globally are at the nexus of cinema, academic discourse and the cinema-viewing public. The structural framework of a festival allows multiple forms of engagement and development to take place, using discussion forums, curated film programmes and audience participation to drive this experience. The history of South African film festivals is an under-researched area of historical scholarship lacking a comparative historical analysis of the major festivals that were shaped and influenced by South African society from the late 1970s to the early 2000s. This study therefore aims to apply the established research on film festival frameworks to a South African context to examine how South African film festivals facilitated the shaping and evolution of the South African film canon.

Film festivals such as the Durban International Film Festival, the Encounters South African International Documentary Film Festival, the former Weekly Mail Film Festival and the Sithengi Film and Television Market and by extension the Cape Town World Cinema Festival provide a new visual repository for scholarly research. These events in a South African context act as alternative spaces and document a history of changing cinema culture, narrative, political agendas, and audience demographics. Subversion, resistance, representation and development are focal elements in evaluating how South African film festivals function as alternative or counter-archives, providing information that adds to and fills the lacunae in traditional archives. This study proposes that, to understand the current operational practices of South African film festivals, an understanding of the history of restrictions regionally and nationally regarding films and public spaces is necessary.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Title
AWB	Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
CCA	Centre for Creative Arts
DIFF	Durban International Film Festival
Encounters	Encounters South African International Documentary Festival
	Previously Swiss South African Documentary Film Festival
FESPACO	Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
NFVF	National Film and Video Foundation
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADF	South African Defence Force
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
	Previously University of Natal
Sithengi	Sithengi Film and Television Market
	Previously South African International Film and Television Market
Weekly Mail Film Festival	Additional titles:
	Weekly Mail Film Festival of S.A. Cinema
	Weekly Mail & Guardian Weekly Film Festival
	Mail & Guardian Film Festival
	South African International Film Festival
ZIFF	Zanzibar International Film Festival

Chapter 1 - Searching the Archives: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

South African film festivals hold a unique place in the South African film industry. Like their international and continental counterparts, these festivals are at the nexus of cinema, academic discourse and the cinema-viewing public for South Africans and individuals across the globe. These festivals do not solely screen the latest cinema or documentaries but host gatherings of intellectuals and the general public alike, blurring the line between causal and dedicated viewers of cinema, or cinephiles.

The history of South African film festivals is an under-researched area of historical scholarship lacking a comparative historical analysis of the major festivals that were shaped and influenced by South African society from the late 1970s to the early 2000s. Film festivals such as the Durban International Film Festival, the Encounters South African International Documentary Film Festival, the former *Weekly Mail* Film Festival and the Sithengi Film and Television Market and by extension the Cape Town World Cinema Festival are arguably the most notable and popular of the South African film festivals from the past and of those still running today. Each festival represents unique aims and ideologies, each fashioning itself to meet a demand in film culture, for example, focusing on documentary films versus showcasing independent international and African films or positioning itself as an intellectual oppositional realm challenging the dominant film culture of the time. While there have been numerous other festivals such as the Out in Africa South African Gay and Lesbian Film Festival (1994), the Cape Town International Film Market & Festival (2007), as well as several other post-1994 festivals, the four case studies selected for this research stand out for a number of reasons, most significantly because of the connecting thread that runs through them all. This connection is largely an institutional symbiosis centred on organisational support, marketing and promotion. Furthermore, in terms of programming, each festival feeds off the others, signaling another form of symbiosis.

A comparative analysis of these film festivals requires the research and study of film festivals in general, to highlight the common structures, aims and practices these film festivals represent. By focusing on these four film festivals the important contributions of these festivals to the South African film canon and film culture can be examined and evaluated.

Research Objective

This research investigates the historical development of South African film festivals and analyses their cultural significance to South African visual and media culture. Film festivals can help us engage with aspects of the past by examining the films selected for screening, the discussions following and the public engagement with South African, and African cinema more broadly, by scholars as well as general audiences. An examination of these three components will explore the cultural, social and political influences that shaped the characteristics, genres and methods of production within the South African film canon. Past and contemporary South African film festivals provide a new visual repository, a counter-archive, from which new primary and secondary research can be gathered. Four prominent festivals will therefore be discussed: the Durban International Film Festival, the Encounters documentary film festival, the former *Weekly Mail* Film Festival and the Sithengi film market and therefore by extension the Cape Town World Cinema Festival.

This research seeks to contribute to the analysis of how South African filmmaking is influenced by the larger context while simultaneously also influencing sociocultural spaces of artistic production, and popular rhetoric by spurring discussion and debate around popular practice, means of production and critique of the major role players within South African filmmaking. These film festivals are vital in constructing an identity for African and South African cinema, with this identity in turn influencing the international reception of African cinema. In order to examine this constructed identity, a study of the curation of these festivals, as well as the selection, financing and stated aims of each festival, is important in order to examine the historical, ideological, social, economic and political threads within South African film production, distribution and consumption.

Research Questions

The primary question this research aims to answer is:

How have South African film festivals facilitated the shaping and evolution of the South African film canon? Arising from this, can film festivals be designated as a counter-archive, providing a different visual repository?

Secondary research questions that arise from this are:

1. How has the changing social and political landscape of South Africa shaped the nature and production of South African film festivals?

2. Has the specific curation and selection of African and South African films, or lack thereof, affected the South African film industry, and if so, how?
3. How do South African film festivals cultivate a specific image of African cinema and aim to appeal to an international market?
4. How are festivals funded and how does funding affect the running of these festivals and influence the selection of films that are showcased?
5. How do round-table and open discussions at these festivals illustrate and emphasise a larger historical social discourse in South African society?
6. How does film as a visual medium contribute to the creation of a counter-archive by addressing the limitations of the traditional existing archive?

These questions aim to ground the study in understanding the role of South African film festivals in shaping not only the South African film industry but also in influencing popular social discourses and cinema culture. These questions aim to discuss how South African film and cinema contribute to our understanding of our social and political past while also illustrating the lingering effects of this history on the present. The presentation of this research and thus these research questions will form part of both a written dissertation and a film to incorporate these discussions into the creation of a visual counter-archive. The rationale behind this approach will be highlighted in the literature review.

Limitations of this study are largely confined to the exclusion of Afrikaans-language films, particularly in festival programming pre-1994. Afrikaans-language films occupy a paradoxical space in that the pre-1994 South African film canon was dominated by Afrikaner filmmakers and their productions but were marginal in festival spaces, in particular the four case studies selected for this research. A pre-1994 South African 'national' cinema was a segregated cinema dominated by Afrikaans- and English-language films for white audiences. This 'national' canon was state-sponsored by means of a state subsidy known as the A-scheme subsidy introduced in 1956.[1] A separate B-Scheme subsidy was introduced in 1972/73 specifically for the production of films in African languages, meant for a black audience.[2] The cinematic productions emerging from both these state subsidies falls outside the purview of this research by their exclusion from festival programmes. Based on this, the research question centred on festival impact on the larger industry, is limited in its engagement, especially pre-

[1] K. Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film,* pp. 30-31.
[2] G. Paleker, 'The B-Scheme subsidy and the 'black film industry' in apartheid South Africa, 1972–1990', *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 22(1), 2010, pp. 91-104.

1994. However, and despite this limited engagement, this underscores the importance of festivals as counter-archival in that these selected festivals arguably stood outside the apartheid 'national' film canon.

Methodology

The research approach of this dissertation includes engagement with, and analyses of, both primary sources as well as secondary sources. The primary sources and research comprise of mainly oral and video interviews with individuals who have organised, curated, attended, hosted and frequented these festivals. Select filmmakers whose films were featured in these festivals were also approached for interviews. The interviews covered the primary research material not available in newspaper articles, largely the personal attitudes and responses of these individuals and their role, and by extension, the film festival's role, in shaping, influencing and promoting cinema and filmmaking in South Africa and marketing South African cinema internationally.

Newspapers such as the *Mail & Guardian* (formerly the *Weekly Mail & Guardian*) as well as the *Independent Online* (IOL) and others are among the most significant primary sources. Both print and online editions were consulted. Sithengi and *Weekly Mail* programmes, provided by interview participant Freddy Ogterop, were an important resource as were the online databases of Encounters and posters of the Durban International Film Festival located at the Centre for Creative Arts at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Festival programmes are an important primary source for tracking thematic histories of the kinds of films a particular festival included in its programming. Festival marketing materials such as posters are another important primary source that can provide information about festival identity as well as the primary intended audience. Audience accounts, as well as personal interviews, provide further insight into reception and impact. This information is important in assessing and understanding the cultural placement, significance, and influence of particular festivals in shaping cinema culture as well as cultural and political discourses.

Furthermore, primary research including archival film and photographic footage were included as part of a short documentary feature in addition to this written dissertation. This short documentary includes footage captured from the oral and video interviews conducted. Attending these festivals in person also provided an opportunity to analyse and access the active role film festivals play at regional, national, and international levels, affecting both those in the film industry as well as casual movie-goers.

Secondary sources included primarily books and journal articles discussing South African cinema and film festivals. This secondary research covered the contextual material relating to the development of both South African filmmaking but also African and Third Cinema film production to assess the impact and influence of South African film festivals at the local and international level.

Literature Review

The existing body of research relating to film festivals is overwhelmingly dominated by case studies relating to western and European cinema, festivals, and film canons. While these sources are limited in their ability to showcase African and South African film canons, they are able to contextualise the basic structure and format of film festivals. More importantly, this body of scholarship charts the scholarly terrain with regard to conceptual and methodological approaches that would be useful to replicate or adapt to the current research. These areas of research are an important starting point from which comparisons can be made in assessing how South African film festivals have either embodied or challenged these aspects of screening, distribution, and critique in showcasing national and independent film media.

The book *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen* by Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong is an extensive piece of literature that provides key elements of focus for this dissertation. Hing-Yuk Wong's book chronicles a general history of film festivals by examining the common structure followed by discussions of numerous festivals as case studies and their role in society and cinema. A significant chapter in this book relates to "auteurs, critics and canons"[3] which highlights not only film canons and directors but also those who participate in the consumption and critique of cinema. This focus on festival (and more broadly, cinema) audiences and reviewers is relevant to this research as it provides insight into the reception of such films. Moreover, one of Hing-Yuk Wong's case studies is on the Hong Kong International Film Festival which is beneficial to this research as this festival is separate from that of the dominant, more established and well-known European and western film festivals.

The second piece of literature that provides contextual knowledge of film festivals is the article 'Film Festivals: An Empirical Study of Factors for Success' by Sandra Grunwell and Inhyuck 'Steve' Ha. This research evaluates "attendee characteristics and festival experiences"[4] and

[3] C. HY. Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, pp. 100-128.
[4] S. Grunwell, & I. S. Ha, 'Film Festivals: An Empirical Study of Factors for Success', *Event Management* 11(4), 2007, p. 201.

emphasises the ability of film festivals to generate economic benefits for communities as well as provide opportunities for filmmakers in marketing their films to buyers and distributors. This study was conducted in the United States of America (USA) and as such the data relating to specific financing statistics cannot be directly applied to a South African context. However, the discussions surrounding the economic benefits and connections between festivals and funding offer an alternative evaluation of film festivals as the research pool primarily focuses on the socio-cultural parameters.

'Rethinking the Canon: The Role of Film Festivals in Shaping Film History' by Aida Vallejo examines the role of film festivals in shaping popular film canons and film history. Vallejo highlights the unequal relationship between western and non-western cinemas and thus the often negative or deferred effect this has on a festival's opportunity for effective contribution and recognition in global film cinema and history. Furthermore, Vallejo discusses the categorisation that takes place when examining these festivals and the impact this has on film canons. An examination, and thus influence, of a film festival, can be assessed through the following: "(re)defining film genres– such as documentary… bolstering film movements and discovering cinemas and filmmakers from peripheral regions".[5] This literature demonstrates how a film festival can influence and shape a variety of thematical and abstract film elements oftentimes relating back to the historical or socio-political contexts out of which these films have emerged.

Research focusing on African film canons and festivals is crucial in understanding South African cinema and festivals and while the previously discussed literature does provide necessary research on the global nature of film festivals, a more focused analysis needs to be made pertaining to South African film festivals and the literature surrounding them. Lindiwe Dovey has focused on developing research on African cinema and film. Her two works 'Through the Eye of a Film Festival: Toward a Curatorial and Spectator-Centered Approach to the Study of African Screen Media' and 'African Film Festivals in Africa: Curating "African Audiences" for "African Films"' focus largely on the relationship between film festivals and their audiences. The first journal article 'Through the Eye of a Film Festival: Toward a Curatorial and Spectator-Centered Approach to the Study of African Screen Media' highlights how the distribution and thus spectatorship of African films through festivals creates opportunities for global reception. Dovey references African film festivals which have spurred

[5] A. Vallejo, 'Rethinking the Canon: The Role of Film Festivals in Shaping Film History', *Studies in European Cinema* 17(2), 2020, p. 155.

opportunities for global activism, emphasising the role festivals play in shaping not just the film industry but in influencing social movements. Moreover, Dovey critiques how African festivals can at times be locked into a stereotype by western spectators. This stereotype, centred on film tropes and genres primarily or solely relating to "social, political or historical dimensions",[6] is worth bearing in mind in relation to South African film festivals pre-1994. Her second journal article 'African Film Festivals in Africa: Curating "African Audiences" for "African Films"' foregrounds the role of film festivals as one of the only public spaces in which films can be showcased and discussed.[7] African film festivals, according to Dovey, are characterised by the role of the audience. While all festivals conform to a particular format, African film festivals, given a very specific historical dynamic and context, centre on a broader audience demographic much more than their European counterparts. This is consistent with the early framing of African cinema as explicitly political, decolonial and thus broadly categorised as Third Cinema. This understanding is important when examining South African film festivals as it highlights how African film festivals are more commonly associated with community gatherings and spaces of group discourse than their western counterparts. This public and group discourse is vital to acknowledge when discussing South African film festivals and their influence on the socio-cultural elements of South Africa's past.

Another significant piece of literature relating to African film and film festivals is the book of compiled essays edited by Winston Mano, Barbara Knorpp and Añulika Agina, *African Film Cultures: Contexts of Creation and Circulation*. The editors discuss the nature of African cinema as one of "plurality" rather than a "single African Cinema",[8] and acknowledge that African cinema is oftentimes a "hybrid" result of "regional, national, continental and global histories and practices"[9] and as such, no set definition can be used to describe nor fully encompass the complexities of each regional or national African cinema practice. This literature, therefore, emphasises the unique nature of African Cinema as one of diverse and multidimensional stories, genres, makers and audiences; there is no one, singular style, genre or method that can encompass African cinema as a whole. This source contextualises the global influences, like the cultural boycott and the global anti-apartheid movement, that also shaped

[6] L. Dovey, 'Through the Eye of a Film Festival: Toward A Curatorial and Spectator Centered Approach to The Study of African Screen Media', *Cinema Journal 54*(2), 2015, p.129.
[7] L. Dovey, 'African Film Festivals in Africa: Curating "African Audiences" for "African Films"', *Black Camera* 12(1), 2020, pp.13-47.
[8] A. Agina et al, 'Introduction', *in* A. Agina, B. Knorpp, & W. Mano(eds.), *African Film Cultures: Contexts of Creation and Circulation*, pp. 1-10.
[9] A. Agina et al, 'Introduction', *in* A. Agina, B. Knorpp, & W. Mano(eds.), *African Film Cultures: Contexts of Creation and Circulation*, p. 2.

South African festivals to reach beyond a domestic market. Furthermore, this source acknowledges the impact studies on reception, production and distribution have in understanding African films and cinema. However, this 'uniqueness' or 'hybridity' as discussed by the editors is not an exclusively African experience. Film and cinema in general often already encompass this 'hybridity' due to the methods of filmmaking, more specifically due to the multiple role players, functions and materials that go into the creation of cinema, such as producers, screenwriters, different shooting locations, methods of distribution, screening and individual thematic or artistic visual/auditory qualities, to name a few. It is the amalgamation of these multiple different elements that make cinema and film so hard to define into a definitive international, continental, national or regional subject.

Primary sources, in the form of marketing materials such as posters, festival programmes and other promotional materials are readily available. However, there is limited research scholarship, as secondary sources, on these festivals from both a historical and socio-cultural perspective. 'South African Short Filmmaking from 1980 to 1995: A Thematic Exploration' by Martin P. Botha examines the rise of short filmmaking during the later years of apartheid. Botha discusses the emerging role of black filmmakers during this time and the use of film as a tool in vocalising resistance rhetoric. Botha also acknowledges the censorship by the National Party government and the negative effect this had on filmmaking associated with traditional or more established organisations.[10] Botha further explains how film festivals such as the Cape Town and Durban International Film Festivals as well as the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival provided an alternate avenue for filmmakers who found themselves and their art being censored by mainstream industry institutions. Moreover, Botha discusses numerous significant films during this period, such as *Mapantsula* directed by Oliver Schmitz, to highlight the thematic trends he identified as arising from these conditions of censorship. Botha's research provides context to the earlier experiences during these festivals as well as the socio-political environment from which these festivals drew influence.

Martin P. Botha's later article published over a decade after the previously discussed literature is titled 'Post-Apartheid Cinema: A Thematic and Aesthetic Exploration of Selected Short and Feature Films' and is a more detailed extension of said literature.[11] This article discusses and

[10] M. P. Botha, 'South African Short Filmmaking From 1980 to 1995: A Thematic Exploration', *Communicatio* 22(2), 1996, p. 5.
[11] M. P. Botha, 'Post-Apartheid Cinema: A Thematic and Aesthetic Exploration of Selected Short and Feature Films', *Ilha do Desterro: A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies* (61), 2011, pp. 225-267.

further explores the use of aesthetics, themes and narration in curating and creating a unique story-telling device in South African cinema. Botha in this article extends his research to encapsulate more filmmaking post-1994 to highlight the shift that took place concerning distribution, themes and production. Furthermore, Botha provides more detail on the origins of South African filmmaking which can be explored further in this dissertation as oral traditions are a deeply entrenched cultural practice and historical device within this country. Is filmmaking merely a natural extension of this practice? And if so, is this practice important to unpack and understand when analysing elements of South Africa's history such as race, gender, economics, and politics?

'Gender and Race in the South African Film Industry: A Comparative Analysis of the Representation in South African Film Festivals' by Rozanne Engel focuses on DIFF and the Encounters and explores the ratio and opportunities of white and black, male and female directors and filmmakers. Engel investigates how gender is an influential factor in South African filmmaking with women directors being "coded as too feminine for the job",[12] illustrating the multiple layers of inequality that impact the South African film industry and thus the canon. Engel references other research by Lizelle Bisschoff which points out that "the majority of female directors in Africa work in documentary filmmaking".[13] This observation is vital when evaluating the role gender and race play in both the creation process but also the curation of a festival programme. Furthermore, Engel states that both DIFF and Encounters declined participation in the research which in Engel's words "suggests either that the research question was not of much importance to them, or that there is a lack of desire to address the clear gender and racial disparities officially".[14] This statement makes for an interesting comparative discussion regarding DIFF's more recent festivals which emphasised films by both women and people of colour. One could argue that despite declining participation in Engel's research, her research nonetheless could have influenced their more inclusionary approach.

'Governing Images: The Politics of Film and Video Distribution in Late-Apartheid and Post-Apartheid South Africa' by Patrick Lynn Rivers is a key source in connecting apartheid

[12] R. Engel, 'Gender and Race in The South African Film Industry: A Comparative Analysis of The Representation in South African Film Festivals', *Communicatio* 44(1), 2018, p. 17.
[13] R. Engel, 'Gender and Race in The South African Film Industry', p. 20.
[14] R. Engel, 'Gender and Race in The South African Film Industry', p. 29.

filmmaking and distribution with subsequent post-apartheid filmmaking.[15] Rivers discusses how late-apartheid filmmaking was heavily influenced by the politicisation of race as a result of the National Party's regulations and censorship of film and media. Rivers also discusses *Mapantsula* as it illustrates the points relating to the construction of racial identities by the apartheid government versus the racial identities created by filmmakers and screenwriters. Furthermore, Rivers highlights the techniques used by the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival to try and attract viewers by politicising the main character Panic in the film's description of the festival. This is an important example of how film festivals can shape, alter or emphasise both elements of a film but also tie into the socio-political current experience.

The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film by Keyan Tomaselli provides extensive research on South African cinema, particularly documentary works, as this book includes a list of documentary feature films about South Africa.[16] Tomaselli highlights a wide range of topics pertaining to the South African film industry during apartheid, namely the influences of government censorship, distribution of films, participation in the industry by international filmmakers and the nature and style of films created for different audiences (e.g. Afrikaans-language films, English-language films, films made for white people and films made for black people). While Tomaselli's book focuses on South African cinema and not primarily on South African film festivals, he includes an important chapter on independent cinema in South Africa. This more focused and specific examination of independent cinema links more closely with the methods and practices of film festivals than previously discussed literature solely focusing on the South African film industry at large. This book is beneficial to this research as it explores these multiple facets of filmmaking while still highlighting important topics of discussion relating to this dissertation.

South Africa's Renegade Reels by Litheko Modisane provides research highlighting black-centred films both during the apartheid period and post-1994.[17] While previous literature discussed highlights primarily the methods of production of films and documentaries, Modisane takes an alternative view, choosing to emphasise film's ability to influence and reflect socio-political debates and societal conversations or sentiments. Furthermore, Modisane explores the representation and construction of black identity through South African films, as

[15] P. L. Rivers, 'Governing Images: The Politics of Film and Video Distribution in Late-Apartheid and Post-Apartheid South Africa', *Journal of Film and Video* 59(1), 2007, pp.19-31.
[16] K. Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film,* pp. 1-304.
[17] L. Modisane, *South Africa's Renegade Reels: The Making and Public Lives of Black-Centered Films,* pp. XII-208.

well as the other themes relevant to the historical context of the time (namely the later apartheid era). Moreover, Modisane goes on to examine the South African film industry through its transition to post-apartheid cinema, and the implications and legacies endured and thus reflected in this cinema. This book is useful in exploring the more thematic and social elements that influence South African filmmaking and thus South African film festivals.

To Change Reels: Film and Film Culture in South Africa edited by Isabel Balseiro and Ntongela Masilela provides a review and examination of South African film culture and production through historical analysis and the unpacking of what constitutes South African cinema, films and culture.[18] The authors in this edited volume include a wide range of notable South African academics whose research expertise centres on film, culture and the visual arts. Each chapter focuses on a specific time period and intellectual cultural focus, with the first chapter highlighting the connections between South African black cinema and the New Negro Movement in the United States of America which is important in tracing the intellectual origins of black South African cinema culture in South Africa. Later chapters detail other significant periods of South African cinema either focusing on key time periods or examining the cultural or intellectual shifts that altered the nature of film production and culture. While this book focuses on South African film culture at large, it provides specific examinations into the roots of South African film culture beginning in the late 1800s and early 1900s, contextualising the period prior to and during which film societies and film festivals arose. When exploring the thematic and artistic qualities of the films discussed from this period, the editors place emphasis on the socio-cultural context from which these films arise, examining the historical underpinnings that offer further insight into the origins of South African cinema. While the book does not explicitly study film festivals it provides important elements of the history of filmmaking in South Africa and can be applied to the research focus of this dissertation. These elements include South Africa's long tradition of public and crowd screenings, the practice of curating the desired audience, examining the use of film as a nationalist tool and considering if there is a defined shift post-1994 in the style, production and thematic qualities of South African films. These questions are important to this research in a number of ways. Firstly, because the role of the audience and the physical spaces wherein film festivals take place are not random and themselves require analysis. Secondly, the post-1994 shift could arguably help

[18] I, Balseiro, *To Change Reels: Film and Culture in South Africa,* pp. IX -253.

evaluate the changing nature and role of film festivals in society as well as the potential vulnerability these festivals face during times of intense socio-political change.

'Towards Reframing FESPACO' by Imruh Bakari focuses on the Pan-African Film & TV Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO), examining the role of African filmmakers in the establishment and continued success of the festival. Bakari discusses how FESPACO is rooted in the historical context and significance of the continent and actively shaped by its politics, traditions and "sense of community or collectivity".[19] Bakari emphasises how the Pan-African nature of this festival allows people of the continent the opportunity to express their past and present experiences by reflecting on their aspirations and joys.[20] Bakari argues that this festival in its establishment and continued development is also linked to that of economic freedom, expressing how African filmmaking aims to move away from global economic markets and funding that caters to western and Eurocentric aesthetics and tastes. This argument demonstrates how film festivals provide the necessary tools to challenge economic monopolies on cultural production by giving African filmmakers the opportunities to acquire funding and resources during these festivals. Bakari does, however, critique this festival on the selection process of the films screened. Bakari argues that the festival has an "inability to change its rules in response to filmmakers' needs"[21] and needs to move away from accommodating European tourists and small bureaucrats, by providing a more balanced selection of African and African diaspora films.

'FESPACO Past and Future: Voices from the Archive' by June Givanni also analyses FESPACO with research touching on similar points to Bakari as well as examining new areas of focus relating to film festivals. Similar to Bakari, Givanni highlights the importance of examining the historical context that underpins this festival, this being the independence era of the late 1960s in Africa. Furthermore, Givanni is likewise critical of the festival's recent screening selections. Moreover, while Givanni is primarily examining FESPACO, attention is also paid to defining and emphasising the general aims and goals of film festivals as a whole. Givanni states that festivals such as FESPACO aim to promote, explore and celebrate Africa but also expand the tastes and expose audiences to politically significant cultural cinema.[22] To expand on this point further, Givanni also speaks to FESPACO as being an archive, stressing

[19] I. Bakari, 'Towards Reframing FESPACO', *Black Camera* 12(1), 2020, p. 297.
[20] I. Bakari, 'Towards Reframing FESPACO', p. 293.
[21] I. Bakari, 'Towards Reframing FESPACO', p. 297.
[22] J. Givanni, 'FESPACO Past and Future: Voices from the Archive', *Black Camera* 12(1), 2020, p. 302.

the significance of archives as permitting a "deeper and wider understanding"[23] of phenomena and events. This emphasis on the importance of the archive in relation to film festivals is something that will be expanded upon when reviewing literature relating to the idea of a 'Counter-Archive'. Furthermore, two notable points for consideration that Givanni raises are the emphasis of film festivals in appealing to and meeting the desires of the masses and the ability these festivals have in providing physical spaces of alternative discourses and conversations. Givanni makes this assessment relating to film festivals in general, but it can be argued that this idea of appealing to the masses or at least catering to a wider audience is not a common trend in the European or western film festival practices. While evidence suggests that European film festivals do not necessarily cater for mass audiences, African film festivals not only embrace this appeal to mass audiences but aim to foster it. Moreover, the argument can be made that this difference lies in the historical context of each continental region, with Africa not only trying to evolve the continent's film culture but is also having to awaken it. Givanni provides an example for the second point by highlighting the influence of the #MeToo movement which inspired formal discussions at FESPACO 2019, allowing female industry professionals to share and discuss their experiences and treatment in the industry and to better access how the industry can prevent the mistreatment and assault of women in its workplaces. What this demonstrates is a film festival's ability to create spaces of discourse and action. These festivals are not passive film screenings in theatres but multidimensional and dynamic spaces that are shaped by the socio-political environment, and they too can express the experiences of a specific group or sentiment in society.

'Before *Youtube* and *Indymedia*: Cultural Memory and Archive Video Collectives in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s' by Dagmar Brunow analyses collective filmmaking practices in Germany during the 1970s and 1980s.[24] Brunow in this research aims to illustrate how this documentary film practice is not only a form of archiving but the creation of a counter-memory. Expanding on this, Brunow defines this practice as "representing the hidden voices of those who are usually suppressed in dominant media"[25] and that the emergence of this alternative film culture often runs parallel to emerging social movements. And it is through this parallel emergence that these films come to "contain the cultural and collective memory of the social

[23] J. Givanni, 'FESPACO Past and Future: Voices from the Archive', p. 303.
[24] D. Brunow, 'Before YouTube and Indymedia: Cultural memory and the Archive of Video Collectives in Germany in the 1970s And 1980s', *Studies in European Cinema* 8(3), 2012, pp.171-181.
[25] D. Brunow, 'Before YouTube and Indymedia', p. 172.

movements"[26] of the previous decades. Brunow explains that these documentary film collectives go further by creating alternative views of political events, not merely documenting them passively, as each film is embedded with a complex web of influences from multiple participants. Brunow also discusses the choices made by the filmmaking collectives regarding the methods of filmmaking used, primarily focusing on exploring the use of video technology instead of film. Historical analysis of filmmaking, while acknowledging the technology used in creating films, does not explore how this technology ties into the ideological aims of the filmmakers nor how such technology has affected the distribution or reception of such films. This is an important consideration for this dissertation as the technological context is just as important in evaluating the festivals as is the historical context. In the South African context, access to technology and other tools of film production has to be linked to racial apartheid and its exclusionary practices which denied black people significant opportunities to own the technology as the means of production. Moreover, Brunow speaks to the counter-archive's ability to showcase marginalised gender, class and racial identities. In this way, the counter-archive provides an opportunity for filmmakers to re-examine the past through the portrayal of new or unknown experiences and this is something worth noting in the production of the documentary film accompanying this dissertation. What counter-archive will be created? How does this new counter-archive contrast the already existing archive? And why is it necessary to provide not only a written repository but also a visual one?

'Counter-Archive in Palimpsest of the Africa Museum' by Matthias De Groof addresses many of these questions. De Groof discusses the 2013 renovation of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium and the accompanying documentary film De Groof directed which documents the renovation process and deals with the question of creating a counter-archive. De Groof defines the archive "as a socio-political repository based on power mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion"[27] and discusses how a counter archive enables counter histories, historiographies and memories. In this manner, De Groof is acknowledging that archival selection, whether in the traditional archive or the counter-archive is a process of inclusion and exclusion, dictated by different principles and historical foundations. For example, De Groof describes the archive as a "very stubborn colonial"[28] construction, which raises the question of why the traditional archive has these connotations. Arguably these connotations arise from the

[26] D. Brunow, 'Before YouTube and Indymedia', p. 172.
[27] M. De Groof, 'Counter-Archive in Palimpsest of the Africa Museum', in *A Publication of the 2020 Inward Outward Symposium*, 2020, p 19.
[28] M. De Groof, 'Counter-Archive in Palimpsest of the Africa Museum', p 19.

types of information stored and representations of these bodies of knowledge; namely, documents, written and literature-based sources. In contrast, the creation of a counter-archive by De Groof embodies new ways of representing this knowledge while also including new sources of information. De Groof does this in two ways. Firstly, by documenting the renovation of this museum; the content is not unique from the already established archive but takes on a new perspective based on the filmmaker's interpretation, thematic and aesthetic choices. Secondly, by choosing to present said perspective through film, a visual medium, De Groof is challenging the stubbornness of the traditional archive by relating information through visual and oral methods. This visual and oral practice is closely linked to African and South African traditions previously overlooked by the traditional archive as highlighted in Botha's literature.[29] In summation, one is able to use "fragments of the archive"[30] to establish a new and counter-cultural memory of the past.

The book *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archive de la Planète* by Paula Amad provides a theoretical framework for the documentary portion of this research. Amad explores the intellectual debates and contemporary considerations regarding Kahn's archive project. This project attempted to capture the essence of everyday life for people around the world during the turn of the 20th century. The aim of this project was to challenge the hegemony of traditional text-based archives, by using film to preserve the past. Amad discusses how the preservation of the past through the use of film goes beyond the traditional confines of a text-based archive, allowing the history created to include multidimensional layers and elements. In other words, Amad argues that traditional archives presented a "positivist utopia of order, synthesis, and totality"[31] which may fail to fully document the complexities of the past or remain confined to a singular curated model representative of whichever dominant power structure is at play. Amad, therefore, argues that film can challenge this and as a result form new counter-archival traditions. This is because, as proposed by Kahn in his project, film offers complexity by not only recording the past or voices of those marginalised but also allowing opportunities for the active participation of these groups in archiving their realities. Film recordings not only document the participants' actions or words but also the non-verbal behaviours, body language and perceivably insignificant gestures or moments that piece together a broader more detailed tapestry of the past. With this in mind, the documentary

[29] M. P. Botha, 'Post-Apartheid Cinema: A Thematic and Aesthetic Exploration of Selected Short and Feature Films', pp. 225-267.
[30] M. De Groof, 'Counter-Archive in Palimpsest of the Africa Museum', p. 21.
[31] P. Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archive de la Planète*, p. 21.

portion of this research will attempt to implement such a practice, creating a counter-archival record of South African film festivals. By not only relying on a written component the engagement with primary sources relating to this past will be experienced in real-time by the audience as well, encouraging the viewer to absorb these previously undocumented accounts and begin to form their own understanding of this past.

'A Network Analysis of the Durban Film Industry Value Chain Case Study: *Attack of the Indian Wereworlf*' by Lynette Naidoo is an unpublished honours research project forming part of a larger research project titled 'The Media Cities Project: Is Durban 'film-friendly'?' by Nyasha Mboti.[32] This media cities project aimed to evaluate the 'film friendliness' of Durban as a city with a strong film industry and culture. Naidoo's contribution to the project used the film *Attack of the Indian Werewolf* (2010) by Masood Boomgaard as a case study to evaluate the limitations and challenges faced by South African filmmakers in Durban. David Clarke, cited by Naidoo, states that "it is unthinkable that the cinema could have developed without the city",[33] emphasising how film is closely linked to physical geographical locations. In relation to film festivals, this is significant as the festivals need to be examined in relation to the cities that host them and as such the social, cultural and political influences that arise from this are important considerations. Naidoo, like previous authors, briefly discusses the history of filmmaking and cinema in South Africa, closely linking film to culture, social movements and agendas and shifting political environments. Naidoo compliments the assessment that film is both influenced by and influential in social and political changes in society. Naidoo raises two significant points for consideration that are beneficial to this dissertation. Firstly, South African filmmakers face funding challenges when trying to source revenue from organisations such as the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF). This lack of funding is not isolated to independent films but is seen to have affected the Sithengi Film and Television Market and the Cape Town World Cinema Festival, arguably leading to its closure. Secondly, Naidoo provides an important example of the role of film festivals in addressing the lack of national and regional support for South African filmmakers. Naidoo explains how the film *Attack of the Indian Werewolf*, despite evidence of great public interest, failed to be picked up by Sker Kinekor (the leading public movie theatre company in South Africa).[34] The film's subsequent acquisition by

[32] N. Mboti, 'The Media Cities Project: Is Durban 'Film Friendly?'', *in* M. Maxwell(ed.), *The Media Cities Project 2011,* pp. 1-8.
[33] D. Clarke, *The Cinematic City*, pp. 1-262.
[34] Ster Kinekor, 2022, https://www.sterkinekor.com/content/about-ster-kinekor/about-sk, Accessed: 17 November 2022.

Videovison and screening at DIFF highlighted the significant role of film festivals in showcasing local and national cinema.[35] This illustrates how film festivals not only aim to depict changing socio-political sentiments but also provide South African filmmakers with exhibition opportunities not found elsewhere in a post-1994 context.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1 – Searching the Archives: Introduction to the Study

This chapter outlines the focus of this research, providing the research objectives, questions, methodology, literature review and film treatment for the visual component of this research.

Chapter 2 – Defining & Defying: Origins of South African Film Festivals & Apartheid Censorship

This chapter focuses on defining a film festival in a South African context. Exploring the scholarly definitions of a film festival, this chapter also highlights the broader historical context that shaped South African film festivals pre-1994, namely state censorship and the effects of cultural boycotts of South African cultural products.

Chapter 3 –Methadone Treatment: Durban International Film Festival

This chapter focuses on the Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) by examining the historical influence and role this festival has played during the apartheid and post-1994 periods, highlighting the influential nature of the festival's environment as a space of discursive conversation and critiques.

Chapter 4 - Crossing the Line: Weekly Mail Film Festival

This chapter focuses on the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival, examining its origins, the films screened and its identity as an oppositional film festival showcasing oppositional cinema during apartheid.

Ster Kinekor states on their website that they hold 60-65% of the South African film market and that they are the "biggest movie exhibitor by far (more than double the size of its nearest competitor)".

[35] L Naidoo, 'A Network Analysis of the Durban Film Festival Industry Value Chain Case Study: Attack of the Indian Werewolf', *Research Project: Media in the Global World,* 2011, p. 18.

Chapter 5 – A Market with a Mission: Sithengi Film and Television Market

This chapter focuses on the Sithengi Film Festival, discussing its history and significantly also, its funding challenges which created financial instability. The chapter also focuses on its unique festival identity emerging in the transitional post-apartheid environment.

Chapter 6 – Shifting Narratives: Encounters South African International Documentary Festival

This chapter focuses on the Encounters documentary film festival to analyse the role of festivals in showcasing documentary films, not just from South Africa but also international productions.

Chapter 7 – A Festival of Archives: Conclusion of Study

This chapter draws together the various threads of the research argument into a summative conclusion.

Film Treatment

Introduction

The proposed documentary film is an accompanying research output for the Coursework MA. It focuses on the history of South African Film Festivals, in particular the Durban International Film Festival, Encounters South African International Documentary Film Festival *Weekly Mail* Film Festival and Sithengi Film and Television Market. This documentary examines how film festivals have shaped South African film canons, methods of production and viewership as well as how the historical context of festivals impacts the curation of films showcased.

Film festivals are unique spaces for the sharing of artistic methods and creations. These festivals act as archives of visual media, showcasing elements of history through the choice of films screened and the conversations sparked by discussion panels. These discussion panels allow festival attendees to participate in the elements of filmmaking and review, by incorporating the economic, artistic and social themes into discussions available to not just academics or critics but the general audience and thus the public.

Each South African film festival has curated a unique identity for itself through its programmes, participants and aims. These elements are influenced by a variety of different factors ranging from economic pressures and incentives to socio-political challenges or trends. Festivals such as the Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) position themselves as a pioneer festival for an international market and as such focus on not just promoting South African films to South

African audiences but promoting these films internationally as well as showcasing foreign independent films. Festivals such as Encounters, while similar to DIFF in their inclusion of both South African and international filmmakers, choose to showcase documentaries rather than fiction films.

Festival programming, curation and organisational practices are constantly evolving because of changing contexts. Festivals during apartheid such as earlier DIFF events and the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival had different viewership, films and venues as opposed to the more recent Encounters, DIFF and Sithengi festivals. Post-1994 filmmaking, and by extension, film festivals, face their own challenges, but the legacies of apartheid can still be examined through the festivals themselves.

Working Title

The working title of the film is *Curating a Counter-Archive: A Historical Examination of South African Film Festivals.*

Logline

Curating a Counter-Archive is a documentary capturing the complex landscape of South African Film Festivals, showcasing their history and impact on society through the voices of its curators.

Genre

This film is envisaged as a composite of genres, namely that of reportage, expository and interview documentary styles.

The reportage genre focuses on capturing these film festivals in action, reporting on the films showcased, those who participated, and the conversations sparked by panels and reviews of the films and the festival itself. Both past and current footage of these festivals was used per this genre to create a clear narrative history and critique of these festivals and their place in the South African film industry as both an archive and visual source of the past.

The expository genre was used in an attempt to educate and inform the audience of the significance these film festivals have in the South African and African film canon by recording and creating a visual documentation of the past. This use of this genre emphasises how film festivals are an important social space and generator of conversation and critique within the film industry but also in society at large.

The interview genre highlights those who have actively curated, participated in and attended these festivals, acknowledging the more personal nature of these festivals in both their influences on and by such individuals. Interviews throughout the documentary serve as the driving narrative force in this documentary and thus the documentary will in turn archive these voices and memories.

Duration

The total duration of the film is 52 minutes.

Purpose of the Film

The primary purpose of this documentary film is to complete the requirements for a Coursework Masters in conjunction with a mini-written dissertation. The further purpose of this film is to examine the history of South African film festivals as an important feature in South Africa's film history. A basic overview of the history of film festivals is necessary for completing this research and documentary. This history focuses on the history and development of the selected film festivals, the history of the African and South African film canons and the influences of key historical events on shaping South African film festivals and subsequent films produced and showcased.

Target Audience

This film will be screened to the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies and therefore is intended for a primarily academic audience. Considering that this film focuses on South African film festivals, it is necessary to consider that this film may be screened for those participating in the interviews. This audience comprises of academics, film producers, directors, writers and festival attendees.

Narrative Summary

The narrative summary focuses on the history of the festivals and their current operations while also examining the historical context during which these festivals ran and during which films were produced. The narration of the documentary is constructed from oral testimonies, in an attempt to empathise that this counter-archive is constructed from multiple diverse voices as opposed to a singular or anonymous record keeper. While the film documents the interviewees' experiences for the audience, the interviewees themselves present this version of history to the audience through their voices.

Act Breakdown

Introduction – 00:00

The introduction portion of the documentary defines the concepts of an archive and a counter-archive while also briefly referring to the power of visual media as a new source of repository for counter-archival practices.

Act 1 – 02:50

Act 1 explores the definition of a film festival and contextualises for the viewer the methods and practices of this type of event. International, continental and local examples of film festivals are displayed during this act to signify to the viewer the broader network of cultural and artistic exchange occurring through these events. This act introduces the majority of the interviewees to the audience, with each participant providing their own unique addition to the definition.

Act 2 – 11:05

Act 2 provides a brief history of South African film festivals and the origin of festivals as successors of the film society movement in South Africa. The degree and effect of state censorship during apartheid are also included in this act to preface the challenges and environment under which South African film festivals operated pre-1994. This act expands on the pre-1994 South African film festival experience through case studies of the Durban International Film Festival and the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival. Interviews with festival attendees during this period are included as well as visual footage of some of the films screened at these two festivals during this period. This act aims to highlight how South African film festivals engaged with censorship laws and cultural boycotts, documenting how each festival curated its film programme in relation to its audience's needs.

Act 3 – 30:05

The final Act addresses the more contemporary examples of South African film festivals, the Durban Film Festival (post-1994), the Encounters South African International Documentary Film Festival and the Sithengi Film and Television Market. This act discusses the negative legacies of previous apartheid decades and thus the influence of these legacies on broader national film policies and funding practices in South Africa.

Conclusion – 48:00

The conclusion of this documentary refers back to the introductory remarks regarding the use of film as an archive and the effective use of visual methods of recording and engaging with the past.

Character Breakdown

The primary focus of this documentary is to capture the individual nature of each festival and how each curates a unique identity through either divergent or convergent elements. To do this, interviews with the festival's founders, directors and participants are an essential element of the film.

Individuals Interviewed

- Andrea Voges: Festival Manager & Head of Programming at the DIFF.
- Anthony Moipolai: South African film industry professional and filmmaker.
- Clynton Clarke: South African film industry professional, filmmaker and Director at Hive Entertainment.
- Dr Ria van der Merwe: Assistant Archivist at the University of Pretoria
- Fanney Tsimong: South African industry professional, filmmaker and Creative Director at Doti-Producxionz.
- Freddy Ogterop: Retired librarian and archivist and current programmer for Encounters South African International Documentary Festival.
- Jacqueline Binedell-Rey: DIFF festival attendee during the 1980s and early 1990s.
- Mandisa Zitha: Current Festival Director at the Encounters South African International Documentary Festival.
- Nodi Murphy: Founder of numerous South African film festivals. Co-founding director of the Encounters South African International Documentary Festival.
- Okuhle Dyosopu: South African filmmaker
- Sakhile Gumede: Project Officer at the Centre for Creative Arts at the University of KwaZulu-Natal which organises DIFF.
- Trevor Moses: Retired Archivist at the National Film, Video and Sound Archives of South Africa.
- Verity Engels-Thornycroft: Former SABC journalist, writer and news broadcaster. DIFF festival attendee during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Visual Elements

The visual elements of this film include footage of the selected South African film festivals: Sithengi, *Weekly Mail* Film Festival, the Durban International Film Festival and Encounters. General footage and images of the audience, premier evenings and venues of these festivals have therefore been used. Footage from other more prominent international film festivals such as the Cannes Film Festival and FESPACO, to name only two, have been used in the opening sequence of the documentary in order to contextualise both the continental and more global connections of this research topic.

Multiple camera angles have been used to frame the festivals in line with the narrative vision for this film. These multiple camera angles have been used to capture interviews and have been framed in a visually pleasing way in order to contextualise and highlight each participant's relevance to their participation in the documentary. For example, filmmakers attending film festivals were framed and interviewed at the event against the backdrop of the festival crowd. Additionally, film festival organisers and directors where possible were interviewed at their places of work or leisure, in an attempt to embody the practices of Albert Kahn in presenting this footage as capturing the 'ordinary' and less overt moments of this history.

Natural light was primarily used, when possible, with additional artificial lighting and colour grading used where natural light changed during filming. Flashing imagery layered film footage and interview footage were used to create an interesting visual experience for the viewer to coincide with narrative elements throughout the documentary. Snippets of the films screened at the film festivals discussed during the narration were also included. The opening and closing sequences of the documentary focused on montaging footage of several film festivals globally through television news report footage and festival posters. This imagery and footage were sourced from online archives, the public domain and the researcher's own captured footage.

Text and labels used during the documentary served to inform the viewer of relevant information. The style and imagery accompanying these labels and text represent the amalgamation of traditional archiving methods and the now alternative practice of counter-archiving through filmmaking. The film makes use of common visual symbols to represent specific objects, ideas or occurrences. For example, text and title labels created from paper allude to the traditional archive made up of documents and paper trails, whereas the digitised text of computer typing represents the shift towards counter-archival methods.

Moreover, additional text has been layered over film and photograph footage to emphasise the layered nature of a visual archive and by extension the multidimensional style of filmmaking and film festival spaces. This text includes additional information relevant to the imagery on screen. The display and structure of this text are not uniform nor at times fully digestible for the viewer. The rationale behind this style is to highlight how a visual archive and thus counter-archive is disruptive to our traditionally held beliefs of the past and the information presented to us as factual.

The documentary has been portioned into three acts in addition to an introduction and conclusion. These acts are visually signalled to the viewer on screen through titling and the inclusion of a quote from Paula Amad's work *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archive de la Planète* attempting to contextualise to the viewer brief snippets and characteristics of a counter-archive.

Audio Elements

This documentary included no third-person narration and instead used the audio from recorded interviews as the narrative catalyst of the film. Additional sounds of paper were also during the opening sequence to symbolise the physical nature of the traditional archive. The backing track of the documentary is a compilation of South African music and film soundtracks. Songs by primarily South African artists that were banned during apartheid under the strict censorship legislation were used during Acts 1 and 2 to provide the audience with additional examples of censorship during the apartheid period. Act 3 included soundtracks from notable South African films during the transitional period of the 1990s to highlight how the style of South African filmmaking and the nature of South African film festivals had begun to shift during this period. While this symbolism may not be immediately recognised nor obvious to all viewers, the aim of including such music as opposed to unrelated instrumental backtracking, is to briefly allude to how a counter-archive can provide additional references and avenues that can be later explored and built upon.

Primary Research

The primary research for this film included videos and photographs (archival and captured footage), and interviews conducted with individuals from these festivals. Newspaper articles reporting on these film festivals were also used in conjunction with these recorded interviews and film festival posters.

Secondary Research

The secondary research for this film included a combination of journal articles, dissertations, articles and books relating broadly to the topic of film festivals as discussed in the literature review earlier in this chapter. This secondary research primarily provides historical contextualisation of film festivals and the broader industry of filmmaking in South Africa as well as previous research conducted on the specific festivals this research is focusing on.

Legal & Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the ethics guidelines of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria, the research, and especially the filmed interviews, commenced once ethical clearance had been received from the REC. This included obtaining written consent from the interviewees as well as permission from the Ethics Committee to approve said interviews and questions. Each interviewee received a letter of informed consent which detailed the nature and theme of this research and emphasised the voluntary nature of these interviews. Participants were informed that should they so wish, their faces would either be blurred, their audio recordings distorted, or their filmed interviews would not be used at all in order to ensure their anonymity. Where necessary and applicable letters of approval were sourced from relevant organisations prior to engaging with their employees. Where photographs or film footage by other photographers or videographers were used, then permission or consent for their use in this production was obtained unless this footage was already available in the public domain. Any sources that were used in the creation of this film were referenced in the credits of the production. COVID-19 regulations and guidelines where necessary were also followed when filming and conducting interviews so as not to put the filmmakers or participants at risk.

Chapter 2 - Defining & Defying: Origins of South African Film Festivals & Apartheid Censorship

Introduction

The framework and physical structures of film festivals remain varied and diverse. The ideological aims and ethos of a film festival are constructed through a variety of different mechanisms, each in turn, emphasising a unique aspect that the film festival then embodies. It is therefore important to note that while a general definition can be proposed for what exactly a film festival is, this definition will lack the particular and distinctive elements that make each film festival unique.

These distinctive elements can further be examined by situating a film festival within its global, continental or national context, with a specific focus in this research on examining the national context that underpins these film festivals. This is not to say that global and continental influences are non-existent, but rather to acknowledge these as secondary to the national filmmaking frameworks through which South African film festivals have operated and may continue to operate. Thus, an analysis of South African film festivals requires the contextualising of South African film festivals and their practices through a historical examination of the national and legislative structures that shaped and altered film and video traditions nationally.

Therefore, a brief foundational examination of film societies as the predecessors to film festivals will be included to examine how South African film festivals continually developed as a result of changing socio-cultural spaces. Additionally, apartheid legislation pertaining to visual media censorship and public gatherings therefore needs to be examined to establish the context which film festivals navigated pre-1994. Moreover, this will also provide context to later post-1994 developments as it relates to the creation of national film organisations and commissions.

Defining a Film Festival

The assumption surrounding film festivals is that "they are all the same but they're actually very different"[36] according to South African film festival managers and directors, as seen in the film component of this research. While all festivals show films, some also include markets such

[36] *Curating a Counter-Archive: A Historical Examination of South African Film Festivals*, Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 2024, Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=529JRCBdVHY, 08:17.

as Sithengi.[37] Festivals facilitate the "cultural exchange of content"[38] and provide an opportunity to "focus on this beautiful art form that is cinema from all over the world".[39] Defined by many South African festival organisers as a community of cinephiles, with festivals creating space for "shared interest"[40] and catering to "like-minded people",[41] these events are described as transformative experiences through film.[42] Uniquely offering an intersectional environment where filmmakers and the audiences can connect and interact "through Q&A's, workshops, panel discussions",[43] these events give filmmakers a voice to express their methods of creation directly with their audience.[44]

More abstractly, "festivals are a selection, they're curated, they're a choice",[45] they offer a space and platform for social discourse, as Nodi Murphy states in the film. Murphy, founder of multiple South African film festivals, emphasises that purposeful audience engagement is necessary for a festival to be focused, and to avoid being no more than a passing season of film screenings.[46] Murphy further explains how festivals build themselves reputations based on their film selection, this reputation challenges audiences to "come and see something they wouldn't normally see"[47] according to Murphy, thus, transforming community thinking around particular issues or topics that are documented on screen.[48]

It is this transformative power that offers audiences time to reflect and grow a sense of socio-cultural awareness.[49] The film component of this research highlights how active members of the South African film industry engage with this discourse surrounding the socio-cultural influences festivals possess. South African filmmaker Okhule Dyosopu discusses how film festivals play a role in showcasing voices to audiences that they otherwise would not engage with in the mainstream.[50] Doing more than just showcasing an alternative view, festivals "push

[37] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 07:59.
[38] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 10:00.
[39] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 08:06.
[40] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 08:58.
[41] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 08:22.
[42] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 08:29.
[43] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 09:04.
[44] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 09:18.
[45] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 10:18.
[46] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 09:16.
[47] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 10:26.
[48] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 07:04.
[49] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 29:58.
[50] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 10:54.

the boundaries"[51] and "force people to interrogate"[52] themselves and society at large by seeing themselves and those in their community on screen.

From a scholarly perspective, film festivals are defined by the specific elements unique to each. Through a global research approach Cindy Wong associates film festivals with that of a live museum. Wong states that festival directors and curators, much like an art curator, select specific films for screening to adhere to the visions, themes and motifs of the overall festival image.[53] As a "microcosm of industry professionals",[54] a film festival acts as a site of critique, conversation and review, largely presenting current films and cinema, often catering as the first site of viewing for a newly produced work. Wong highlights how film festivals tend to adopt a "survival of the fittest attitude",[55] toeing the line between relevance and distinction by selecting films that both interest industry professionals and align with the festival's corporate image while also attempting to facilitate engagement with new socially and culturally impactful cinema not necessarily available commercially.[56] Moreover, Wong places key emphasis on the alterability of film festivals.[57] This 'alterable' quality is necessary for the success of a film festival as a film festival needs to continually adapt, change and grow in the socio-cultural environment it occupies in order for the festival to not just set itself apart from others of its kind but also provide new and engaging experiences from year to year.[58]

Additionally, Lindiwe Dovey highlights the significant value film festivals possess in shaping and rethinking a national film canon.[59] Dovey discusses, through examples, how films at these festivals open the door to critique, engagement and discussion on African cinema, and further emphasises the idea of film festivals as a gathering, creating spaces that include a diverse range of genders, races and socio-economic groups.[60] Dovey furthers this definition of film festivals by examining festivals through an African lens, attempting to observe African film festivals not solely as global sites of cinema but as pockets of historical, cultural and political representation of the continent. Dovey most simply defines a film festival as the bringing together of "lives audiences at specific moments to watch and sometimes discuss films";[61] this

[51] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 07:32.
[52] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 10:47.
[53] C. H. Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, p. 68.
[54] C. H. Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, p. 69.
[55] C. H. Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, p. 69.
[56] C. H. Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, p. 70.
[57] C. H. Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, p. 69.
[58] C. H. Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, p. 69.
[59] L. Dovey, 'Through the Eye of a Film Festival', p.127.
[60] L. Dovey, 'Through the Eye of a Film Festival', p.127.
[61] L. Dovey, 'African Film Festivals in Africa: Curating "African Audiences" for "African Films"', p. 14.

definition places emphasis on the screening of films and the audiences that attend. Dovey discusses how attendance at a film festival is varied and motivated by a variety of different factors depending on each attendee, motivated by either personal or professional interests.[62] African film festivals, according to Dovey, moved away from showcasing colonial media, instead aiming to attract a largely African audience in a contemporary context, with the success of African film festivals largely dependent on addressing the tastes and desires of African audiences. Additionally, Dovey draws on her own experience at African film festivals, such as FESPACO, concluding that it is in the informal spaces of festivals that meaningful and fruitful discussion takes place.[63] While film festivals host organised meetings, discussions and speeches, it is during informal social gatherings that attendees connect and exchange on a deeper level. South African choreographer, filmmaker and producer, Fanney Tsimong, exemplifies this by describing how festivals provide this singular space of connection, allowing international stars, filmmakers and producers to mingle undisturbed, network and share ideas.[64] In this way, the discursive space of a festival is extended to include the informal exchanges, chance encounters and new connections being forged or old connections being renewed.

Dovey characterises the 1990s as a new wave in African film festivals across the continent and globally. The popularisation of film festivals in the west and Europe centred on showcasing African cinema and topics as well as the increased inclusion of African curators and directors in festivals catering to a largely western audience. This enabled African cinema and industry professionals to expand their reach globally.[65] While generally film festivals allow for the distribution of primarily non-commercial cinema by providing avenues of "alternative distribution",[66] Dovey argues that African film festivals offer "discrete exhibition"[67] opportunities for African filmmakers within their localities. This in conjunction with points made by Wong, suggests that one cannot define a film festival as "solely non-commercial",[68] emphasising that a study of South African film festivals requires one to move beyond cataloguing South African film festivals as primarily spaces of alternative distribution.

Moreover, Dovey discusses how any focus on African film studies or African film festivals should not be positioned as an exceptional case, but rather just one examination studied within

[62] L. Dovey, 'African Film Festivals in Africa: Curating "African Audiences" for "African Films"', p. 15.
[63] L. Dovey, 'African Film Festivals in Africa: Curating "African Audiences" for "African Films"', p. 37.
[64] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 40:19.
[65] L. Dovey, *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals,* p. 2.
[66] L. Dovey, *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals,* p. 3.
[67] L. Dovey, *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals,* p. 3.
[68] L. Dovey, *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals,* p. 5.

the context of all marginalised cinema.[69] In this way, the historical examination of South African film festivals in this study is not positioning South African film festivals as wholly unique in the ways in which they encounter challenges in distribution, economics and attendance. Rather this study aims to unpack the unique historical context and circumstances from which these South African film festivals have combatted this experience of marginalisation not only globally but at a national level.

Liz Czach expounds on this national element, focusing her research analysis on the role film festivals play in forming a national film canon.[70] For Czach, festival programming is a key element in this relationship between a festival and the nation, shaping, confirming and contesting national film canons.[71] Czach characterises this as the "politics of selection"[72] and considers the histories of film festivals in relation to the broader cultural nationalism and national identity of its locality.[73] A conclusion of this research highlights the categorisation of a "national spotlight"[74] in festival programming, with these types of programmes "conforming to a political or national agenda".[75] A national spotlight form of programming is particularly relevant when historically engaging with the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival, with its programmes downplaying personal taste and value judgments in favour of the larger national and political agenda of apartheid resistance.[76] This national element is thus complicated in the South African context because of apartheid and how its sought to influence and shaped not just a 'national' canon, but also the festivals themselves, especially DIFF and the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival.

The work of Marijke de Valck provides a practical framework through which one can examine and define film festivals. This framework includes the following four categories; the size of a festival, a festival's outreach, curated programming selected for a festival and the manner in which films are screened at film festivals.[77] These four categories can be applied when identifying overlapping characteristics of South African film festivals, thus allowing us to attempt to define 'What is a South African film festival?'. Subsequent chapters relating to the

[69] L. Dovey, *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals,* p. 3.
[70] L. Czach, 'Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema', *The Moving Image* 4(1), 2004, pp. 76-88.
[71] L. Czach, 'Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema', p. 78.
[72] L. Czach, 'Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema', p. 78.
[73] L. Czach, 'Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema', p. 82.
[74] L. Czach, 'Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema', p. 84.
[75] L. Czach, 'Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema', p. 84.
[76] L. Czach, 'Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema', p. 84.
[77] M. de Valck, 'Introduction: What Is a Film Festival? How To Study Festivals and Why You Should', *in* M. de Valck, B. Kredell & S. Loist(eds.), *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, pp. 1-5.

specific South African film festivals included in this dissertation will provide examples of these four factors in practice.

Size as the first category of distinction for a film festival is accounted for not only by recording the number of attendees at a festival but is also illustrative of the number of films screened and the budget allocated for the festival.[78] These three elements work in tandem in relation to the size of a film festival and as such, one needs to examine these three elements to attempt to define the 'size' of a film festival. De Valck acknowledges that bigger in the case of film festivals is not always better as it is not solely the 'size' of a film festival that denotes its worth, value and impact. However, de Valck does acknowledge that for a film festival to gain international validation, a festival's size is often the first marker of success provided as evidence which subsequently increases monetary gain and external funding.[79] In a Southern African context, film festivals do not deem 'size' as symbolic of success, but rather evaluate their success based on attendee engagement and resulting socio-cultural change or development. A South African film festival's prominence is therefore evaluated more effectively through the other three categories de Valck provides.

The second category relates to a festival's outreach and is defined as a film festival's target audience. What types of attendees do festivals attract through the types of films screened and the additional services they provide?[80] A festival's outreach can be most simply defined through two focuses. 'Does a film festival focus on attracting an international or local audience? (The term local encompassing both regional and national)' and 'Does this film festival focus on showcasing a specific genre of films thus attracting a specific audience?'. Thus, when reviewing festivals such as DIFF, the *Weekly Mail*, Sithengi and Encounters, this notion of audience attraction is what distinguishes each South African film festival. DIFF pre-1994 and the *Weekly Mail* film festival primarily attracted national attendees programming predominantly from the genre of resistance and protest-style films. In contrast, DIFF post-1994, Sithengi and Encounters aim to attract both national and international attendees with genre focuses broadly encompassing more global topics relating to identity and culture. However, these are not two opposing approaches but rather a singular progressive one developed as a result of specific national climates, which can be summarised as a national oppositional approach which evolves into an international identity-explorative approach.

[78] M. de Valck, 'Introduction: What Is a Film Festival? How To Study Festivals and Why You Should', p. 2.
[79] M. de Valck, 'Introduction: What Is a Film Festival? How To Study Festivals and Why You Should', p. 2.
[80] M. de Valck, 'Introduction: What Is a Film Festival? How To Study Festivals and Why You Should', p. 2.

The third category in assessing film festivals is to examine the films selected as a starting point in differentiating and comparing film festivals to one another. De Valck states that many film festivals choose to showcase one genre, with documentary film festivals being arguably the most popular form.[81] The process of selecting films for a festival is no longer a linear process of selecting films and then selecting an audience to view said films but rather a cyclical process of film selection, festival event curation and audience selection. De Valck argues that festival curators go back and forth between these considerations and as such it may be increasingly difficult to clearly define how a festival's professional image and aims manifest themselves if examined in isolation. Consequently, de Valck, therefore, emphasises that a festival's outreach and a festival's film selection often intersect one another and cannot always be clearly defined separately.[82]

The last category is "the variety of different ways in which films may be screened at festivals"[83] and the subsequent unique experiential environment that is created. How and where films are screened at film festivals highlights two other commonalities of South African festivals, namely, the inclusion of retrospective film programmes and decentralised film screenings aimed at reaching multiple socioeconomic and ethnic communities within the country. de Valck discusses the example of screening of analogue formats at film festivals as an attempt to create "nostalgic attraction"[84] and examples of South African film festivals also include the screening of these analogue films, but the rationale is not for nostalgic purposes but related to encouraging social discourse and reflection. The second commonality is the venues and spaces South African film festivals gravitate toward, these being urban locations including ethnically diverse social hubs and township theatres in an attempt to counteract economic limitations as experienced largely by black South Africans.

Historical Overview of South African Film Societies

Film festivals draw inspiration from earlier film groups such as those formed during the film society movement of the 1920s and 1930s. These societies were initially created because society members desired to not only view films but discuss their contents and other elements

[81] M. de Valck, 'Introduction: What Is a Film Festival? How To Study Festivals and Why You Should', pp. 3-4.
[82] M. de Valck, 'Introduction: What Is a Film Festival? How To Study Festivals and Why You Should', p. 4.
[83] M. de Valck, 'Introduction: What Is a Film Festival? How To Study Festivals and Why You Should', p. 5.
[84] M. de Valck, 'Introduction: What Is a Film Festival? How To Study Festivals and Why You Should', p. 5.

and thus "assumed there were other like-minded souls who would also be interested"[85] Film societies can be considered analogous to book clubs, emphasising a shared cinephilia.

Some of the first established film societies existed in London and were later picked up in South Africa in the 1940s, post-World War II.[86] Film societies started in South Africa because "people read about films they couldn't see and tried by all means possible to import these films"[87] from Europe, hosting society viewings of the films in urban locations. The first film society in South Africa was "formed in Cape Town"[88] in 1931 and hosted screenings at the Labia Theatre on a Sunday afternoon.[89] Film societies in South Africa encountered similar problems to their later successors, needing to acquire special clearance from the government to screen films on a Sunday as well as abiding by censorship policies.[90] Ogterop recalls the security police confiscating the membership list of the Cape Town Film Society under suspicion of activity deemed harmful to the state. Ogterop theorises that a number of those arrested for activity that was deemed harmful to the political welfare of the state possessed membership cards for the Society.[91] Thus, the assumption was made that this organisation was supported by members who either encouraged or participated in anti-government/state behaviour. This monitoring of film groups by state authorities is also evident during the advent of film festivals, illustrating a link between the non-commercial film screening spaces and challenges to authoritative government censorship and control practices.

Moreover, the constitution of the Cape Town Film Society outlined that any individual regardless of race was permitted to join which went against newly introduced segregation laws by the apartheid government.[92] As Ogterop explains, the theoretically multiracial character of film societies did not actualise in practice because of the limitations on the freedom of movement that apartheid created for black people.[93] This was particularly acute after work

[85] J. Moat, *The Film Society 1925 – 1939: A Guide to Collections*, Available at: https://www2.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-the-film-society-1925-1939-a-guide-to-collections.pdf, Access: 23 September 2023, p. 3.
[86] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 11:29.
[87] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 11:49.
[88] SAHO, 2021, https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-south-african-film-industry-timeline-1895-2003, Access: 23 September 2023.
[89] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 12:08.
[90] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 12:22.
[91] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 12:37.
[92] Union of South Africa, *Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953*, 1953, Available at: https://blogs.loc.gov/law/files/2015/11/Reservation-of-Separate-Amenities-Act-49-of-1953.pdf, Access: 23 September 2023.
[93] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 14:55.

hours when black people were expected to exit white suburbia and thus found it challenging to attend evening screenings. Apartheid legislation such as the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 which limited the use of public premises and transport for those categorised as black South Africans were among the key constraints on the freedom of movement of black people.[94] Consequently, in later decades South African film festivals actively sought to change this, focusing on hosting festival events out of the city both pre and post-1994, attempting to combat the legacy effects of such acts and their restrictions.

Additionally, film societies encountered various degrees of censorship in South Africa and were required to submit each film for review before screening, as was the case for South African festivals pre-1994. During the 1930s, these film societies used legislative loopholes and continued to privately exhibit films to their members that had either been censored or banned by the National Board of Censors.[95] In later years, once these loopholes had been amended, film societies continued to engage in subversive action. As discussed in the film, Ogterop describes how members of the Cape Town Film Society subverted this censorship system. Individuals belonging to the Cape Town Film Society also gained positions on the Publications Control Board, "working within the framework"[96] in order to prevent films from being banned or censored. However, political appointees to the Censor Board made this particularly challenging and as a result film societies became increasingly antagonistic to the status quo and sought ways to challenge it. This intellectual challenge was further increased through film festival spaces and frameworks with the establishment of festivals in the 1970s and 1980s against a backdrop of increasingly restrictive censorship and control.

Censorship of Films, Television and Visual Media pre-1994

Censorship was not only a by-product of the repressive practices of the apartheid state but a significant tool to entrench the ideology and segregationist rhetoric on which the National Party had founded its government.[97] Considered the "first major censorship law"[98] in South Africa's Pre-Union history, the "Obscene Publications Act 31 of 1892 (C)"[99] was passed in the British Cape Colony before the turn of the century. This form of censorship was closely tied to the

[94] Union of South Africa, *Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953*.
[95] G. Paleker, 'Creating a 'Black Film Industry': State Intervention and Films for African Audiences in South Africa, 1956–1990', *PhD Thesis*, 2009, p. 39.
[96] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 13:36.
[97] M. de Lange, *The Muzzled Muse: Literature and Censorship in South Africa,* p. 13.
[98] P. L. Rivers, 'A Genealogy of Media Regulation in South Africa Since 1892', *South African Law Journal* 123(3), 2007, p. 492.
[99] P. L. Rivers, 'A Genealogy of Media Regulation in South Africa Since 1892', p. 492.

regulation precedent set in London and set a legislative precedent in later decades as the Cape region formed part of the Union of South Africa in 1931.

Firstly, this Act did not include mention of film or moving pictures because public exhibition and interest in motion pictures would only become commonplace from 1895 to 1898 after the invention of the Kinetoscope and its use in South Africa.[100] Secondly, before 1930, South African provinces independently regulated media and material distributed to the public, meaning this legislation was specific to the Cape Province.[101] This lack of a consolidated national agenda relating to censorship policies was altered in the 1930s when "centralised policy was introduced"[102] through the creation of a National Board of Censors.

Proposed as a Bill by Dr DF Malan in 1930, the Entertainments Censorship Act 28 of 1931 "sought to establish a national censorship board"[103] and was "introduced especially to regulate 'cinematograph films and film advertisement"[104] that was distributed publicly across the nation. Any film that wished to be distributed in the Union of South Africa needed to gain a certificate of approval from the Board of Censors.[105] However, as highlighted previously, film societies "did not exhibit to the general public"[106] and thus were not legally required to abide by these exhibition regulations. As a result, this legislation was amended in 1934 to prevent private societies from exhibiting censored media.[107] Additionally, this legislation introduced an element of racial segregation as it relates to film exhibitions in South Africa. Individuals of African race or identity were described and categorised under this legislation as intellectually immature and thus prohibited from viewing most films.[108] Moreover, films depicting the "intermingling"[109] between 'Europeans' and 'non-Europeans' were also censored or banned under this Act. The Entertainments Act 28 of 1931 and its 1934 amendment therefore established not only a prerequisite for censorship in apartheid South Africa but also introduced the legalised regulations over racial representations in film.

The Publication and Entertainments Act of 1963 was the first censorship legislation passed by the apartheid government. This act provided an extensive list of criteria under which any form

[100] N. M. Ssali, 'Apartheid and Cinema', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 13(1), 1983, p. 109.
[101] G. Paleker, 'Creating a 'Black Film Industry', p. 39.
[102] G. Paleker, 'Creating a 'Black Film Industry', p. 39.
[103] N. M. Ssali, 'Apartheid and Cinema', p. 116.
[104] P. L. Rivers, 'A Genealogy of Media Regulation in South Africa Since 1892', p. 493.
[105] P. L. Rivers, 'A Genealogy of Media Regulation in South Africa Since 1892', p. 493.
[106] G. Paleker, 'Creating a 'Black Film Industry', p. 40.
[107] G. Paleker, 'Creating a 'Black Film Industry', p. 40.
[108] N. M. Ssali, 'Apartheid and Cinema', p. 118.
[109] N. M. Ssali, 'Apartheid and Cinema', p. 118.

of publication or entertainment media could be deemed as "undesirable"[110] and thus banned. However, under this act, there was a provision for an appeal process, unlike later forms of censorship legislation. Two key changes from previous legislation were made in this Act, changing the title of the Board of Censors to the Publication Control Board and the banning of "representations of controversial political issues",[111] demonstrating that apartheid censorship aimed to repress forms of free political expression in films.

The most notable form of censorship legislation under the apartheid government was the Publications Act of 1974. In a 1991 publication, Jacobus van Rooyen (the former Director of the Publications Appeal Board) wrote a reflection on the application of the Publications Act of 1974 and its implementation.[112] In it he criticised the accusations that this censorship board was yet another arm of the government, instead asserting its independence by comparing it to that of the court of law.[113] While van Rooyen's arguably biased assessment of this legislation does acknowledge the vagueness of the 1974 Act, his comparison of the Publications Appeal Board to that of the Court of Law consequently highlights the irony that the Court of Law under apartheid South Africa was neither independent nor separate from the government, as in many instances defying apartheid legislation was considered a criminal offence. With this in mind, we can assert that the Publications Act of 1974 and its Publications Appeal Board not only operated within the apartheid system but upheld the segregationist practices of apartheid.

Hatchen and Giffard provide an extensive overview of the 1974 Publications Act's aims, policies and censorship practices as they relate to various forms of literature, media and publications. One of the key aims of this new act was to "improve the image of the censors"[114] and as such three changes were made. First, the right to appeal to the courts was removed to avoid contradictory findings by different apartheid state bodies. Secondly, attempts were made to get English-speaking intellectuals on censorship boards and lastly, it was deemed an offence to insult or belittle the new appeal board.[115] As with the Publication and Entertainments Act of 1963, this 1974 Act censored any publications it deemed as 'undesirable'.

[110] C. Merrett, 'A Tale of Two Paradoxes: Media Censorship in South Africa, Pre-Liberation and Post-Apartheid', *Critical Arts* 15(1-2), 2001, p. 60.
[111] P. L. Rivers, 'A Genealogy of Media Regulation in South Africa Since 1892', p. 494.
[112] M. de Lange, *The Muzzled Muse: Literature and Censorship in South Africa,* p. 18.
[113] J.C.W van Rooyen, 'Practical Reflections on the Applications of the "Criteria" Provision of the Publications Act 1974', *South African Public Law* 6(2), 1991, p. 243.
[114] W.A. Hachten, & C.A. Giffard, *The Press and Apartheid: Repression and Propaganda in South Africa*, p. 161.
[115] W.A. Hachten, & C.A. Giffard, *The Press and Apartheid*, p. 161.

In chapter 2 of *The Muzzled Muse: Literature and Censorship in South Africa,* Margreet de Lange reviews the applications of the Publications Act of 1974 through the writing and publications of van Rooyen. Van Rooyen published a number of works between the years 1978 and 1991 pertaining to censorship and the Publications Act of 1974. De Lange highlights how van Rooyen uses terms such as 'the South African community' and 'law-abiding citizen' to emphasise how the Act aims to protect these groups.[116] However, as stated by de Lange, this use of language is contradictory and presumptuous as it uses identities such as community and citizen interchangeably with terms such as white South Africans, Afrikaans community and Afrikaner Calvinism.[117] This highlights how the censorship of media deemed 'undesirable' is defined within the confines of the segregationist ideology of the apartheid state, and strongly influenced by Calvinist values as understood from an apartheid perspective.

South African Film Festivals in Focus

South African films pre-1994 had to be submitted to apartheid censors for classification and certification. The aim behind such censorship was to pre-empt any threat posed against the state or the security of the state.[118] Films that included themes or stories relating to race, identity or merely the depiction of apartheid South Africa were scrutinised and evaluated before distribution. The aim was to restrict the distribution of films to the public, both black and white, that were deemed to be challenging, criticising or in the view of censors misrepresenting the apartheid state and thus potentially inciting violence or resistance against the state.[119]

Identified by Anant Singh as some of "the worst years in South African history",[120] the 1980s were underpinned by political and economic instability which resulted in "a dramatic collapse in the video industry", with a large majority of "national video distributors either liquidated or closed down" during this period.[121] This lack of national commercial distribution channels was further compounded by state censorship and the international cultural boycott of South African cultural products. South African film festivals therefore provided filmmakers and audiences with two alternative methods to combat the lack of national distribution curtailed by censorship and the isolation resulting from the international cultural boycott. These festivals provided alternative distribution channels but also encouraged the creation of alternative content that

[116] M. de Lange, *The Muzzled Muse: Literature and Censorship in South Africa,* p. 21.
[117] M. de Lange, *The Muzzled Muse: Literature and Censorship in South Africa,* p. 22.
[118] P. L. Rivers, 'Governing Images', p.21.
[119] P. L. Rivers, 'Governing Images', p.23.
[120] A. Singh, *In Black and White: A Memoir*, p. 110.
[121] A. Singh, *In Black and White: A Memoir*, p. 110.

represented the "socio-political realities of the majority of South Africans"[122] through the films showcased at festivals.

Distribution

Film festivals facilitated a 'word-of-mouth' method of advertising for independent South African films during this period. This "creeping distribution"[123] approach used film festival events to build public interest in a film through word-of-mouth, monopolising the use of festival spaces as a site of social interaction and public discourse.[124] However, critique has been levelled against this style of distribution, citing its lack of organisation, due to dispersed distribution patterns, in producing a consolidated central catalogue of films.[125] This concern raises the question; 'To what extent did SA film festivals during the 1970s and 1980s facilitate the creation of one national channel of oppositional distribution?', or alternatively, 'Did this lack of consolidation allow for multiple forms of oppositional distribution to occur?'. In short, South African film festivals pre-1994 did facilitate multiple sites of oppositional distribution due to the unique curation style and audience focus of each festival. The clearest examples that illustrate this are the Durban International Film Festival and the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival, with each of these festivals pre-1994 exhibiting varying styles of film curation and audience engagement. This uniqueness resulted in two different distribution outcomes, one primarily providing alternative spaces to combat the cultural boycott and the other more nationally directed encouraging the distribution of media that opposed censorship laws and apartheid racial segregation.

Response to Censorship

As defined earlier by Freddy Ogterop, most film festivals respond to what was happening around them, socially, politically or environmentally and as a result of this, these festivals screened films relating to their socio-cultural environment.[126] South African film festivals pre-1994 therefore responded in various ways to the lived reality of state censorship. This had a profound effect on each festival's ability to express artistic or socio-cultural views that did not align with the apartheid regime. In the context of the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival, this suppression of free speech and creative expression led South African filmmakers attending

[122] M. Botha, *South African Cinema 1896-2010*, p. 147.
[123] K. Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film*, p. 175.
[124] K. Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film,* p. 175.
[125] K. Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film*, p. 200.
[126] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 05:48.

these festivals to see "themselves first and foremost as political activists",[127] submitting their films to national spotlight programmes such as the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival. As a result of this, South African filmmakers experienced degrees of surveillance by state authorities due to their involvement in creating and distributing non-censored material at film festivals.[128] For audiences viewing such material, these films "provided an escape from the turmoil"[129] that was a reality for black South Africans, allowing non-censored films and politically challenging media to be exhibited.

In contrast, the Durban International Film Festival did not take this national spotlight approach but instead employed a degree of passive resistance to state censorship by centring their programme primarily around foreign, and especially European, films. While South African films were included, these were not extensive as DIFF envisioned itself as largely international in its orientation. As discussed by Ogterop and Murphy in the film, the apartheid government was aware of this resistance form of programming against state ideologies at film festivals but did not reinforce these censorship policies stringently if the dissension manifested itself as conversational or remained confined to festival spaces. The belief was that while a section of society may not be "satisfied by the broad rules and regulations that governed"[130] the apartheid state, these individuals did not pose a threat. Murphy compares this stance to the "Methadone Maintenance Therapy"[131] of the United States of America, which during the 1960s attempted to treat opiate addiction in patients by administrating small doses of Methadone, a synthetic opioid.[132] The results of this therapy reported that patients remained calm and functional between treatments, described by scholars as a disciplinary mechanism used to control the "hearts, minds, and bodies of deviants".[133] What Murphy is therefore referring to in this comparison is the perspective that those who were perceived by the apartheid government as "lost anyway",[134] deviants engaging in resistance action could receive their 'fix' by engaging in smaller acts of passive or ideological resistance instead of violently resisting or engaging in physical action. Therefore, as will be further explored and highlighted through a historical

[127] M. Botha, *South African Cinema 1896-2010*, p. 149.
[128] K. Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film*, p. 201
[129] A. Singh, *In Black and White: A Memoir*, p. 82.
[130] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 15:47.
[131] M. Raz, 'Treating Addiction or Reducing Crime? Methadone Maintenance and Drug Policy Under the Nixon Administration', *Journal of Policy History* 29(1), 2017, p. 58.
[132] M. Raz, 'Treating Addiction or Reducing Crime?', p. 58.
[133] M. Raz, 'Treating Addiction or Reducing Crime?', p. 62.
[134] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 16:38.

examination of DIFF, this festival was able to subvert censorship regulations due to its perceived passive form of resistance.

Cultural Boycott

However, while film festivals provided this national avenue of distribution, "globally, the creative community… participated in the cultural boycott of South Africa"[135] which meant distribution of SA films was confined to local engagement. "South African academics and filmmakers were excluded from the major African film festivals",[136] alongside African and international filmmakers who rejected offers to participate in South African film festivals during this period of the late 1970s and 1980s. For example, it was only in the 1990s that the constraints of this cultural boycott lessened with *Sarafina!* (1992), directed by Darrell Roodt, becoming "the first South African film to make the Official Selection"[137] of the Cannes Film Festival in France. Some South African film festivals responded to this cultural boycott by providing audiences with international media and films in an attempt to combat this isolation. The most notable example of this is the Durban International Film Festival.

Conclusion

Film festivals through their diverse frameworks and physical structures, embody unique ideological aims. These individual aims are developed through various mechanisms, within a national context and thus shape the practices of South African film festivals. In a pre- and post-1994 context, festivals provided and continue to provide a platform for cultural exchange, audience engagement, and transformative experiences through film, ultimately creating spaces for social discourse. South African film festivals, in particular, are underpinned by their unique historical context and have as a result combatted marginalisation both globally and at a national level. Censorship of film and visual media in South Africa pre-1994 played a significant role in entrenching apartheid ideology and the state's segregationist rhetoric. The origins of national censorship illustrate the subversive nature of film societies and film festivals, as highlighted by the increasingly apartheid-centric legislation that attempted to curb the perceived disruptive force of cultural productions on society. Providing alternative distribution channels and platforms for oppositional voices, South African film festivals offer themselves as a new case study for engaging with apartheid censorship and the cultural boycott of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

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[135] A. Singh, *In Black and White: A Memoir*, p. 110.
[136] M. Botha, *South African Cinema 1896-2010*, p. 154.
[137] A. Singh, *In Black and White: A Memoir*, p. 193.

Chapter 3: The Durban International Film Festival as Methadone Treatment

Introduction

The Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) is one of the oldest and longest-running film festivals in South Africa. Founded in 1979 by Ros Sarkin, the festival came out of a collective made up of representatives from four Natal and Durban-Westville University film societies, with the local Durban film society group, the Durban Film Circle, primarily organising the festival in its first few years.[138] The festival has been colloquially referred to by past attendees as the Natal Film Festival, in reference to its province of origin, Natal, later renamed KwaZulu-Natal post-1994. The film festival has always promoted and established itself as an international festival with small alterations to its title over the years.[139] These include either an emphasis on the "international"[140] portion of the festival's name or a reference to the primary financial sponsor of that year, such as the 11th and 12th Durban International Film Festivals being advertised as "The Standard Bank Durban International Film Festival".[141] By 1984, the festival became directly associated with the University of Natal (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal) and remains affiliated to this day.

Now held annually in July, DIFF primarily took place over the months of April and May pre-1994 as indicated on the festival posters from 1984 up until 1992. During the early 2000s the festival dates ranged from June, September and October, with July being introduced in 2007.[142] Additionally, the festival has remained active since 1979, bar one year, with the 22nd Durban International Film Festival taking place in 2001 as opposed to 2000.[143]

In 1996 the Durban Film Office, the film industry development arm within the eThekwini Municipality that facilitates location shooting in and around Durban primarily for international productions but also local filmmakers, began working in association with the festival,

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[138] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', *South African Film and Television Technicians Association* 4(1-2), 1984, p. 17.
[139] J. Binedell, *Fifth Durban International Film Festival Poster 1983*, [Photograph], 2023.
[140] J. Binedell, *8th International Durban Film Festival Poster 1986*, [Photograph], 2023.
[141] Anon, *The Standard Bank 11th Durban International Film Festival Poster 1989*, Available at https://creativefeel.co.za/2019/07/diff-where-innovative-film-voices-are-discovered-and-born/, Access: 15 March 2023.
Anon, *The Standard Bank 12th Durban International Film Festival Poster 1990*, Available at https://creativefeel.co.za/2019/07/diff-where-innovative-film-voices-are-discovered-and-born/, Access: 15 March 2023.
[142] J. Binedell, *28th Durban International Film Festival Poster 2007*, [Photograph], 2023.
[143] J. Binedell, *22nd Durban International Film Festival Poster 2001*, [Photograph], 2023.

providing more practical assistance for DIFF by hosting the Durban FilmMart, a branch of the festival that hosts seminars, workshops and social events for attendees and filmmakers, focusing on networking, fundraising and establishing relationships within the national and international film industry.

DIFF has established itself as a significant cultural event both nationally and internationally, screening over 100 films each year. DIFF prides itself on promoting filmmakers from across the globe, showcasing a variety of film genres and styles from documentaries to short films to feature films.[144] Funded and sponsored by a number of public entities and private groups, the most notable supporters of DIFF include the National Film and Video Foundation and the Avalon Group. Co-ordinated and organised by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) Centre for Creative Arts (CCA), national and international support for the festival has continued to grow steadily over the decades. With the origins of this film festival deeply rooted in the historical context of 1980s, South Africa, DIFF defines itself as a "safe space for intellectual and creative dialogue"[145] with the films it showcases providing a lens through which history can be portrayed during times of conflict and extreme racial tensions.[146]

The early history of film festivals is largely documented through oral accounts, as such, the documentary component of this research provides a more in-depth examination of these oral histories. For example, DIFF's official website does not provide an electronic record of early festival programmes or information, only cataloguing the last three to five years. Moreover the physical archives located at the CCA only hold physical copies of festival programmes from around 2003, missing out on two decades of previous archival information on the festival's early history before it was associated with the CCA. Besides oral accounts, DIFF's history is primarily documented through news broadcasts and newspaper articles recounting the festival's opening to closing dates and notable themes or attendees of that year. This chapter focusing on DIFF examines the festival's role and impact during the nearly two decades under the apartheid state, compiling a history of DIFF through oral testimonies, newspaper reports and financial sponsors. This historical evaluation is then used to highlight the festival's current role and the historical legacies that root its current practices.

[144] A. Voges, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 23 October 2023, Durban.
[145] University of KwaZulu-Natal, N/A. https://ccadiff.ukzn.ac.za/, Access: 13 March 2023.
[146] University of KwaZulu-Natal, N/A. https://ccadiff.ukzn.ac.za/, Access: 13 March 2023.

Pre-1994

Established in 1979, DIFF found itself on the one hand, on the cusp of the revitalised 1970s anti-apartheid resistance action and on the other, a fragmenting apartheid state in the emerging 1980s. A historical analysis of DIFF therefore needs to take into account the significant socio-cultural and political climate that characterised the 1970s and 1980s. The late 1970s and early 1980s had come to be defined by the increasing violence and repression experienced by those opposing the apartheid state, whether through physical protest action or ideological opposition.[147] Additionally, the 1980s intensified the existing international pressures against the apartheid state in the form of the cultural boycott against South Africa, which, as it relates to the focus of this research, included the boycotting of South African films as well as the refusal by international filmmakers to attend events in the country or in having their work screened in South Africa.

The impact of state repression and censorship as well as the cultural boycott experienced during this period can be re-examined through the lens of DIFF by evaluating three elements of the film festival. Firstly, through the use of oral testimonies, this research analyses audience experiences at DIFF and the resulting ideological impact of their experiences viewing DIFF's film programmes. Secondly, the chapter examines the influence of the cultural boycott on DIFF, and the festival's response to these external factors which ultimately shaped DIFF's aim to provide an alternative space for showcasing international film productions. And a third point focuses on how the funding and sponsorship structures of DIFF opposed apartheid legislation and moreover, influenced the current financial structures of the festival.

Audience Experience

As previously stated, the Durban International Film Festival primarily took place during April and May prior to 1994. This is contrary to audience recollections by those who attended DIFF during these pre-1994 years, with a journalist from the Independent Online recalling attending the festival in July during the 1980s not April or May as the posters of the decade indicate.[148] This contrary recollection also presented itself during interviews with Verity Engels-Thornycroft[149] and Jacqueline Binedell-Rey.[150] Engels-Thornycroft initially recalled attending

[147] A. Singh, *In Black and White: A Memoir*, p. 110.
[148] T. Owen, 'Brave Woman Who Started Film Fest', *IOL,* 2014, Available at: https://www.iol.co.za/entertainment/movies/brave-woman-who-started-film-fest-1725757, Accessed: 13 March 2023.
[149] V. Engels-Thornycroft, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 11 July 2023, Durban.
[150] J. Binedell-Rey, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 11 July 2023, Durban.

the festival in the summertime during the 1980s and 1990s but corrected herself, recalling attending the festival instead in July, during winter.[151] This contradiction points to a lack of correspondence between the traditional archive, comprised of festival posters, and popular memory. In this instance, popular memory of the period during which the pre-1994 festivals were held, is imprinted by DIFF's recently fixed festival period in July. This seeming lack of correspondence is not simply an issue of inaccurate memory recall but can be argued to showcase the significant experiential impact of DIFF on audiences who, in this case, seem to have merged dates and periods. It is entirely possible that the presence of the camera and filmmaker also played a role in this seeming historical inaccuracy. During the course of the interview, the filmmaker's insistence of interviewees periodising their experiences led to the elicitation of these inaccurate dates. The filmmaker's insistence also disrupted the affective recall of personal experiences of attending DIFF before 1994. This underscores the interventionist role of the historian/filmmaker in the construction of historical memory. It also speaks to the argument to broaden our conceptions of the archive and find corroboration for audience recall in festival programmes and posters.

It was not until 2007 that DIFF included July dates in its festival calendar.[152] This is important to note when considering how to approach examining a film festival as an archival source. With particular focus on DIFF, we can see how festival attendees' recollections have been altered by more recent festival information. A film festival like DIFF represents the advantage of using film festival posters as an archival source of information in supplementing oral sources. While DIFF posters from the 1980s and 1990s are sparse in text, they still catalogue the venues, funding partners and, as already stated, the dates of the festival which can act as a foundational document of archival information when reviewing the history of a film festival. The value of oral testimony, however 'faulty', lies in the amplification of the festival as a counter-archive, precisely for its affective impact which may not necessarily come from more traditional archival sources. This approach begins to address some of the lacunae in film audience research in South Africa.

All three of the previously mentioned parties in their recollections of the film festival provide additional insight into the power DIFF held as a space existing outside of the apartheid confines of information dissemination and social cultural interaction. Described as a "temporary pocket

[151] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 23:58.
[152] J. Binedell, 28th Durban International Film Festival Poster 2007.

of absolute creative freedom"[153] by journalist Therese Owen, DIFF came to be associated with a form of cultural resistance that indirectly subverted the apartheid state. To elaborate, unlike the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival which, was more brazenly anti-apartheid, as evident in its festival programmes, DIFF took a less blatant approach as indicated by historical audiences. The critical difference of comparing DIFF and the *Weekly Mail* Festival is the abundance of festival programmes which function as an extensive catalogue of anti-apartheid films, whereas the lack of DIFF programmes from this time period means the extent of anti-apartheid films showcased cannot be effectively reviewed. Oral evidence from individuals who attended the festival at this time attest to the curation as including "subversive movies"[154] and films of "substance"[155] that inspired, highlighting how the information on films screened during underdocumented periods can be primarily sourced from oral interviews and newspaper reports. The only additional written source that documents some of the more South African specific films screened at the festival are included in a journal article by Tomaselli in 1984.[156] These examples will be examined when highlighting their specific relevance to the Umlazi festival screenings later in this chapter.

Engels-Thornycroft and Binedell-Rey recalled the films they viewed as foreign European-language films. Additionally, Owen in her article provides a detailed recollection of some of the films screened over the years. These include Andrew Worsdale's *Shot Down* (1987), *Sid and Nancy* by Alex Cox (1986), Pedro Almodovar's film *Woman on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988) and *The Decline of the American Empire* (1986) by Denys Arcand.[157] While South African director Worsdale's film does focus on the depiction of South African experience of the 1980s, this focal point is from the perspective of a white South African Defence Force (SADF) solider speaking largely to the white minority experience rather than the wider realities of black people. However, as with the other three films listed by Owen, these films nonetheless were considered challenging to the dominant apartheid discourse. Therefore, what the oral testimonies do provide in relation to DIFF at this time, is evidence of a festival experience that functioned as a discursive space in a highly censored society. It remained a racially limited space; this however does not detract from its discursive function. Rather it requires analysis that is historically contextual. Owen, Engels-Thornycroft and Binedell-Rey all recall DIFF

[153] T. Owen, 'Brave Woman Who Started Film Fest'.
[154] T. Owen, 'Brave Woman Who Started Film Fest'.
[155] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 24:34.
[156] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 21.
[157] T. Owen, 'Brave Woman Who Started Film Fest'.

screening a larger array of foreign films, mainly European films. This inclination towards foreign films highlights the festival's role of indirectly undermining the apartheid state's ideological agenda of 'preserving' what it deemed distinctly 'South African' cultural authenticity. It also speaks to the inclinations and tastes of a specific group of white South Africans who were eager audiences for European film productions.

More specifically Nodi Murphy summarises the necessity of this form of apartheid resistance and catalogues this form of film festival curation as "important in expanding the minds"[158] of their audiences at this time. As highlighted in Chapter 2, apartheid policies of censorship aimed to restrict perceived subversive material not only of media that represented forms of physical resistance but also the depiction of ideologically oppositional ideas to that of the apartheid nationalist state.[159] Depictions of "undesirable political messages"[160] in films intended for "primarily white audiences"[161] threatened the apartheid regime's rhetoric that "no other political [policies were] politically feasible".[162] Murphy states in her interview that the attempt by festivals at this time to introduce "other political systems that were not based on the fear of communism and black people"[163] created a potential challenge to the dominant apartheid discourse that perpetuated politically liberal ideologies of racial integration as "the voice of Communism".[164] Hence, films that depicted, or from the view of the Publications Board, had the potential to incite and encourage this 'liberal' perspective, were considered harmful to the continuation of the National Party government and the apartheid project. The desire to ideologically 'protect', through isolation, the white minority and thus secure the longevity of the apartheid project, informed film censorship and thereby significantly influenced festival programming. Film festivals like DIFF threatened this isolation by screening foreign people, experiences and "the rest of the world"[165] to South African, white audiences fed a steady diet of racially restricted and controlled daily life. These types of films therefore offered a form of "cultural relief"[166] for white film festival audiences.

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[158] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 20:22.
[159] W.A. Hachten, & C.A. Giffard, *The Press and Apartheid*, p. 177.
[160] W.A. Hachten, & C.A. Giffard, *The Press and Apartheid*, p. 168.
[161] W.A. Hachten, & C.A. Giffard, *The Press and Apartheid*, p. 168.
[162] E. P. Dvorin, 'The Theory of Apartheid: Nationalist Racial Policy in the Union of South Africa', *The Western Political Quarterly* 4(1), 1951, p. 34.
[163] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 20:29.
[164] E. P. Dvorin, 'The Theory of Apartheid: Nationalist Racial Policy in the Union of South Africa', p. 35.
[165] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 21:48.
[166] N. Murphy, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 13 October 2023, Cape Town.

While politically oppositional films were banned or censored on the commercial film circuit in South Africa, festivals such as DIFF were able to provide an exhibition loophole for such films. Commercial distributors during the early 1980s described this loophole as discrimination by the Directorate of Publications for allowing film festivals to screen, uncensored, the very same films commercial distributors later screened in public movie theatres, but now censored.[167] Sarkin commented that because DIFF had dedicated its programme to "showing films of an artistic and cultural nature",[168] the Directorate of Publications allowed certain exceptions.[169] These exemptions were allowed on the "basis that they [film festivals] were working for an exclusive select audience",[170] tying back to the oral testimony discussed in Chapter 2 by Murphy. The belief held by the apartheid government was that film festivals were confined spaces and arguably necessary tools for preventing already deviant individuals from disseminating their views elsewhere.[171] Film festivals like DIFF were therefore able to receive "special dispensation"[172] to screen the uncut, uncensored versions of a film. Furthermore, given the predominantly white audience of a festival like DIFF in its early years, it is reasonable to assume that the apartheid government did not feel as threatened as it would have had DIFF attracted a larger black audience.

Both Engels-Thornycroft and Binedell-Rey describe their experience as a liberating one, providing cultural relief in attending an event advertised as "international",[173] during a period when the international community was actively boycotting South Africa. The result of this international isolation of South Africa meant South African audiences were rarely exposed to "debates on film aesthetics, distribution and other important issues on the African continent"[174] and film festivals therefore attempted to provide such missing elements at their events. Engels-Thornycroft describes the programming of the national broadcaster, the South African Broadcast Company (SABC), as "boring, technically brilliant but the subject matter was boring".[175] Additionally, Binedell-Rey comments that her recollection of television programmes as being mainly "religious".[176] These two examples therefore illustrate the dissatisfaction of white liberals at this time, and film festivals like DIFF were perceived as one

[167] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 19.
[168] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 18.
[169] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 18.
[170] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 19.
[171] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 16:12.
[172] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 19.
[173] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 22:06.
[174] M. Botha, *South African Cinema 1896-2010,* p. 154.
[175] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 23:34.
[176] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 23:40.

of the few spaces to consume content that was ideologically different to that of the state. More importantly, Engels-Thornycroft dissects the impact this form of curating had on her socio-political awareness at the time. Acknowledging that the white liberal experience from her perspective was still one of ignorance and separation from that of black South Africans, she describes the films she viewed as "shocking in that you realized there was another world".[177] Engels-Thornycroft concludes that the films intensified an "uncomfortable feeling"[178] by challenging her with another normality, catalysing a desire to action on the physical injustices witnessed outside of the cinema.

Binedell-Rey recalls the festival audience being majority white at the time of her attendance.[179] Film critic Derek Malcolm substantiated this, saying that the 1984 festival was "mostly attended by card-carrying liberals".[180] Imram Moosa, of the Azarian People's Organisation (AZAPO), in an article in the *Weekly Mail* of that same year, criticised the festival for not meeting the needs of the broader masses.[181] This acknowledges one of the key struggles faced by DIFF in its earlier years, in not adequately meeting the cinema-going needs of black, coloured and Indian South Africans.

However, Murphy proposed a contrary view, that if "that is your seed bed, a bunch of white liberals… then that's where you start",[182] arguing instead that these criticisms should be raised but should not be the sole lens through which we evaluate DIFF's socio-cultural impact. In this manner, DIFF provided a space for these more ideological and passive forms of apartheid resistance by promoting films that challenged concepts of race, identity and belonging in screening foreign films. While this may appear counter-intuitive, this targeting of the white liberal base of Durban's predominately English-speaking whites attempted to establish an additional form of apartheid resistance that chipped away at the white minority's political affiliation with National Party ideologies of racial segregation.

By using the financial contributions provided to the event by its white liberal audience, the festival was able to re-invest its revenue and focus towards funding and catering to black audiences where facilities were underfunded and not maintained effectively. The primary examples of this are DIFF's financial partnership with the Avalon Group and the mandate by

[177] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 24:56.
[178] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 26:04.
[179] J. Binedell-Rey, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 11 July 2023, Durban.
[180] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 21.
[181] C. Bauer & I. Powell, 'Hacking Through the Cultural Boycott Tangle', *the Weekly Mail*, 1985, p. 14.
[182] N. Murphy, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 13 October 2023, Cape Town.

Ros Sarkin to work with and screen portions of the festival each year in townships across the city, wanting not only to screen to white audiences but actively seeking out black audiences.

Funding & Partners

Of the numerous partners of the Durban International Film Festival pre-1994, the most prominent was the Avalon Group.[183] Stated to be the festival's "first and only supporter"[184] during its early years, the Avalon Group represents the film festival's reliance not just on the participation of independent filmmakers, but on private businesses that could supplement funding in the absence of public funding from the state.

The Avalon Group is a South African "independent cinema exhibition, distribution and entertainment business" founded by the Indian-South African Moosa family in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.[185] The business originated in the 1940s with the establishment of the Avalon Theatre in the Durban central business district and largely served as a cinema catering to the Durban Indian community.[186] In the decade of the 1940s, and prior to the establishment of the apartheid state, Avalon theatres (or bioscopes as they were colloquially known) opened around South Africa, attracting a wide audience demographic. Arguably, the most notably located and documented of these was the District Six Avalon Bioscope, which catered to the multi-ethnic residents of District Six.[187] Described by residents of District Six as a "cultural hub",[188] the culture of bioscopes and cinema-going experiences during pre-apartheid South Africa was described as a significant part of everyday life for those in the community. Residents describe the popularity of American and British films at this time and describe how these films were popular topics of conversation in the community, spurring conversation not only in the confines of the theatre but in home and workspaces as well. Residents recall how bioscopes such as the

[183] University of KwaZulu-Natal, N/A. https://ccadiff.ukzn.ac.za/, Access: 13 March 2023.
[184] Knowledge at Wharton, 2011, https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/avalon-groups-aboobaker-moosa-on-growth-and-entrepreneurship-in-south-africa/, Access: 12 March 2023.
[185] Knowledge at Wharton, 2011, https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/avalon-groups-aboobaker-moosa-on-growth-and-entrepreneurship-in-south-africa/, Access: 12 March 2023.
[186] F. Chemaly, 'One Man's Dream of Owning a Cinema', *IOL,* Available at: *https://www.iol.co.za/ios/behindthenews/one-mans-dream-of-owning-a-cinema-c649217c-595d-4a08-974e-e623176614ba,* 2023, Accessed: 20 October 2023.
[187] Vibes Scout, 2019, 'Avalon Returns to Cape Town After Almost Half a Century', https://www.vibescout.com/za/city/cape-town/post/cinecentre-opening-grand-west, Access: 13 March 2023.
[188] A. Mpono, 'This Podcast Looks at the Famous Bioscopes of District Six, From the Avalon Bioscope to the National Bioscope', *District Six Museum Oral History Project,* [Podcast], 2022, Available at https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=846047093237773. Access: 20 March 2023.

Avalon served as communal social spaces beyond just a cinema screening, where individuals adopted the latest fashion trends and exchanged socio-political views.[189]

With the election of the National Party in 1948 and the resulting apartheid legislation, the Avalon Bioscopes and Theatres were severely negatively impacted, predominantly due to the Group Areas Act of 1950 which effectively reduced the Avalon Group's theatre locations down to the single cinema location in Durban.[190] Locations of already established cinemas, such as the Avalon Bioscope in District Six, were reclassified, forcing the removal of coloured communities from the area. The Avalon Group's land was either expropriated or sold at a loss.[191] This, coupled with the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act No. 49 of 1953, meant that communities of colour, such as those in the Cape and Durban, not only had the cinemas in their areas removed or reclassified but also were unable to attend cinemas classified as 'white only' spaces. This effectively diminished or attempted to disperse the communal cultural spaces for black people. Thus, communities deemed 'non-white' by the apartheid state lost both their socio-cultural hubs and legal opportunities to consume foreign media.

The current CEO of the business, AB Moosa Sayani, commented in an interview in 2011 that his grandfather and father, as a result of this oppression by the apartheid state, began supporting anti-apartheid rhetoric and action through their business and cinema practices - most overtly, by financially supporting the Durban International Film Festival.[192] In this way, DIFF as a film festival provided a new space for what had been lost to these communities, a social space of racial integration and a cultural exchange of international and national content. The Avalon Theatre in Durban hosted the inaugural event in 1979, screening seven films to a mixed-race audience.[193]

By choosing to support the Durban International Film Festival during this period, the Avalon Group was able counteract the lack of physical cinema locations and instead invested financially in an ideologically aligned event. AB Moosa Sayani states in this interview that DIFF "screened films on liberation" and that under normal circumstances these films would

[189] A. Mpono, 'This Podcast Looks at the Famous Bioscopes of District Six'.
[190] Vibes Scout, 2019, 'Avalon Returns to Cape Town After Almost Half a Century'.
[191] Knowledge at Wharton, 2011, https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/avalon-groups-aboobaker-moosa-on-growth-and-entrepreneurship-in-south-africa/, Access: 12 March 2023.
[192] Knowledge at Wharton, 2011, https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/avalon-groups-aboobaker-moosa-on-growth-and-entrepreneurship-in-south-africa/, Access: 12 March 2023.
[193] C. Vourlias, 'Durban Fest Hails Film as 'Conscience of Our Nation', *Variety,* 2019*,* Available at: https://variety.com/2019/film/festivals/durban-fest-hails-film-conscience-of-our-nation-1203272892/, Access: 20 September 2023.

have been banned but "under the auspices of the film festival, they slipped through",[194] highlighting the unique structural nature of a film festival and its ability to act outside of the traditional structures of distribution and screening. DIFF, as a film festival, was therefore able to circumvent the challenges faced by more traditional cinemas such as the Avalon Theatre under apartheid rule. By examining the funding partnerships and sponsors of a film festival we can evaluate how DIFF pre-1994 provides greater historical focus on economic autonomy as it relates to the experiences of black people during apartheid.

Boycotts & Township Screenings

The two key challenges that faced DIFF in the 1980s impact how we engage with the festival in its effectiveness as a counter-archival tool when studying this period of South African film history. The first of these challenges was the negative results of the cultural boycott on festivals that attempted to challenge the dominant national discourse, and the second was the initial lack of engagement with black film goers. Can film festivals be a counter-archival source if the dominant social group of this period is the primary festival audience? In attempting to answer this question, the festival's effectiveness cannot be assessed purely by reviewing attendance numbers but in reviewing the audience responses to the material screened. Did the DIFF provide avenues for the exploration of alternative ideas, discussions on contrary political ideologies or exposure to experimental national and international media? These are the markers of counter-archival consideration. Did the festival, as a site of interaction for South Africans at this time, offer what was stated above?

The first major setback for DIFF being able to provide such alternative spaces and conversations, was the cultural boycott. While the cultural boycott was "understandable… the results weren't always what was intended"[195] with festival organisers receiving "rude refusals"[196] from international filmmakers, according to Nodi Murphy. Murphy comments that the intention behind inviting these international filmmakers and showcasing such films was an attempt to change the hearts and minds of its festival audience.[197] St Claire Bourne was one such international filmmaker who rejected an invitation by Sarkin in 1983 to attend DIFF. While Sarkin attested to the festival's audience being racially integrated, a representative of the

[194] Knowledge at Wharton, 2011, https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/avalon-groups-aboobaker-moosa-on-growth-and-entrepreneurship-in-south-africa/, Access: 12 March 2023.
[195] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 19:23.
[196] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 19:52.
[197] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 26:32.

African National Congress (ANC) emphasised the lack of "facilities or opportunities for blacks to develop their talents",[198] leading Bourne to reject the offer due to this lack of equal development. This links closely with the second challenge faced by DIFF, namely, the lack of black festival goers and the dysfunctional spaces that at times prevented these audiences from equally consuming this alternative media. However, director Robert Mugge argues that festivals such as DIFF appeared to be "among the few places in South Africa where black and whites [could] sit together, view progressive works from outside the country and discuss the radical implications of many of those works".[199] Mugge illustrates that while these spaces were limited as a result of apartheid legislation, the festival organisers of DIFF, unlike the Johannesburg Film Festival which Mugge stated "did not appear to have a commitment to multiracial racial audiences",[200] did attempt to address these limitations.

This commitment is evident when evaluating the relationship between Sarkin, the festival and oppositional political parties during this period of the 1980s. Filmmaker St Claire Bourne, in his response to Sarkin's request in 1983, also suggested "she dialogue with the African National Congress if she wanted to put an end to apartheid".[201] While Bourne's comment appears to be informed by the ANC's descriptions of the unequal racial hierarchy that still existed at this time, Bourne fails to realize that the ANC's response to his query did not contradict the festival as oppositional in nature but rather acknowledged the larger socio-economic disadvantages black filmmakers faced. This is important as Sarkin was a highly active member of the Durban City Council and reported as a progressive candidate opposing conservative National Party council members.[202] Moreover, Sarkin is recorded as the "first woman Councillor in South Africa to join the African National Congress"[203] and described as "implacably opposed to apartheid as it is possible to be".[204] As recalled by Murphy in the film, Sarkin is speculated to have received unofficial funding from the ANC during DIFF's apartheid years, with this support either financially or verbally continuing post-1994. The following evidence therefore draws into question the accuracy of Bourne's statement as Sarkin is documented to have

[198] C. Haysom, 'ANC Blocks Natal Film Fest Plan', *The Argus,* 1983, p. 12.
[199] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 16.
[200] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 16.
[201] C Haysom, 'ANC No to Festival Participation', *The Star,* 1983, p. 7.
[202] Citizen Reporter, 'Bid by Conservatives to Win Control. Women to fight nine Durban Council Seats', *The Citizen, 1984,* p. 10.
[203] Ulwazi Programmeme, 2023, https://www.ulwaziprogrammeme.org/durban-living-legend-ros-sarkin/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[204] London Bureau, 'Row Over SA Threatens London Film Festival', *The Argus*, 1985, p. 12.

actively expressed anti-apartheid views and action through DIFF but also through her personal political affiliations.

The evidence of this attempt is documented in interviews with Sarkin in 1984, in which she comments on the struggles of the festival in finding a balance between audiences.[205] Initially taking the festival films to the areas of Umlazi, Clermont, Lamontville and KwaMashu in Natal, Sarkin acknowledged the need for a film festival to go beyond mere entertainment by providing spaces of conversation but having to tread carefully so as not to impose.[206] In 1981, DIFF held screenings at the Umlazi Cinema but found the space too far removed from the social hub of the township and thus relocated to the Mangosuthu Technikon.[207] While films focusing on socio-cultural issues that highlighted the cultural isolation of South Africans seemed to appeal more directly to white audiences at this time, the same can be said for politically driven, anti-apartheid films with black audiences.

Black university students who were initially hesitant about the festival presence on their campus, are documented to have reacted with greater intrigue and excitement than their white liberal counterparts when encountering films such as Tomas Gutierrez Alea's *The Last Supper* 'La Ultima Cena' (1976).[208] Cuban filmmaker Gutierrez Alea's critically acclaimed film is a thought-provoking historical socio-political commentary tackling themes of religion, slavery and the construction of black Cuban identity.[209] The depiction of exploitation experienced by the black slaves is furthered by the renegade actions of their white master, followed then by ensuing scenes of rebellion.[210] The film conveys the "capability of Christians in the time of slavery"[211] and draws parallels with the religious ideologies used to justify racial segregation under the apartheid system.[212] This parallel was "instantly recognized"[213] by the black South African students who are reported to have related scenes depicted in the movie back to their own lived experiences.[214] Other such examples of politically resistant or opposing material at DIFF include films based on the writing of Nadine Gordimer and *Black Wax* by Robert Mugge

[205] C. Bauer & I. Powell, 'Hacking Through the Cultural Boycott Tangle', p. 14.
[206] Ulwazi Programmeme, 2023, https://www.ulwaziprogrammeme.org/durban-living-legend-ros-sarkin/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[207] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 17.
[208] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 21.
[209] K. Jaehne, 'Reviewed Work: The Last Supper by Tomas Gutiérrez Alea', *Film Quarterly* 33(1), 1979, p. 48.
[210] Sundt, C. 'Religion and Power: The Appropriation of da Vinci's "The Last Supper in Viridiana" and "L'ultima Cena"', *Romance Notes* 49(1), 2009, p. 72.
[211] Sundt, C. 'Religion and Power', p. 78.
[212] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 21.
[213] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 21.
[214] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 21.

(1983). DIFF's role in showcasing independent media that otherwise would not be broadcast on "state-controlled television"[215] is evident and, was vital in providing alternative spaces of film consumption not only for white audiences but also black South African audiences.

How the Past Refocuses the Present

The Durban International Film Festival's current aims highlight the link to the festival's cultural and historical context. The DIFF website states that "DIFF upholds Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Creativity as guaranteed in Section 16 of the South African Constitution"[216] especially when selecting the films they choose to screen, the filmmakers they extend invitations to and the individuals they accept as participants in festival workshops. This is reiterated in the interview with Andrea Voges, the current DIFF Festival Manager and Head of Programming. As seen in the film, Voges emphasises the complex web DIFF finds itself in, drawing its mandate not solely from its festival team but from the CCA, UKZN and the South African constitution, illustrating how DIFF is no longer independently focused but aligned with national and state initiatives.[217]

Furthermore, as a main sponsor of DIFF, the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF), as a major state funding agency, stipulates that DIFF aligns with the Foundation's transformation objectives of developing the skills, talent and knowledge of black South African filmmakers, with special emphasis on the previously disadvantaged groups (which can include but not limited to female and queer filmmakers).[218] These objectives illustrate how DIFF as a film festival has built upon its original mandate to screen films to the masses, with the difference now being that government institutions are also aligned with this ethos.

Films Showcased Today

The film *Attack of the Indian Werewolf* (2011) by Masood Boomgaard is an example of a festival's ability to address the current limitations South African filmmakers face. The film was originally pitched to Ster Kinekor with a screen-testing but despite positive feedback and interest from the audience, Ster Kinekor declined to pick up the film for national distribution.[219] The film was later acquired by Videovision, an independent South African entertainment company primarily involved in film production and distribution.[220] The film was subsequently

[215] K. Tomaselli, 'SAFTTA Journal Vol 4, 1-2', p. 21.
[216] University of KwaZulu-Natal, N/A. https://ccadiff.ukzn.ac.za/, Access: 13 March 2023.
[217] A. Voges, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 23 October 2023, Durban.
[218] NFVF, 2024, https://www.nfvf.co.za/national-festivals-and-markets/, Access: 13 March 2023.
[219] L Naidoo, 'A Network Analysis of the Durban Film Festival Industry Value Chain Case Study', p. 17.
[220] Videovision Entertainment, 2022, https://www.videovision.co.za/, Access: 13 March 2023.

submitted to the Durban International Film Festival by Videovison and was screened to sold-out audiences.[221] This case study highlights how DIFF provided an opportunity for a film to be screened when other avenues had been closed. While the screening of a film at a film festival does have its limitations, one of these being a smaller national viewership, a film festival such as DIFF which encompasses an international component to its festival allows exposure of South African films to an international audience.

Addressing Historical Legacies

An analysis of festival attendance by female filmmakers who had their films selected for the Encounters South African International Documentary Festival and the Durban International Film Festival between 2006 and 2016 was conducted by Rozanne Engel. Engel's study explores how gender and race shape the experiences of South African filmmakers, especially within the domain of festival programming. Engel was primarily focused on determining whether black filmmakers and in particular black female filmmakers, still faced disadvantages in gaining access to film and festival spaces to produce and showcase their work.[222]

The analysis of the data concluded that female filmmakers remain largely within the documentary film space and faced limitations accessing new methods of filmmaking due to gender stereotypes and lack of financial resources.[223] An interview with female filmmakers at Encounters in 2023 aligned with these findings. Okuhle Dyosopu, a black South African female documentary filmmaker, expressed her personal challenges navigating race and gender identities in post-1994 South Africa.[224] Dyosopu expressed the challenge of developing a wide range of film-related skills due to the lack of adequate funding for young filmmakers but stated that film festivals provided a space for her as a filmmaker to exhibit her work in a professional environment.[225] Similarly, Engels also acknowledges in this research how festivals such as DIFF and funding by the NFVF do attempt to bridge these gaps faced by women, and particularly women of colour.

Conclusion

The documentation of DIFF through oral testimonies of attendees in the 1980s provides an alternative lens through which we can engage with the historical origins and national backdrop

[221] L Naidoo, 'A Network Analysis of the Durban Film Festival Industry Value Chain Case Study', p. 18.
[222] R. Engel, 'Gender and Race in The South African Film Industry', p. 16.
[223] R. Engel, 'Gender and Race in The South African Film Industry', p. 20.
[224] O. Dyosopu, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 23 June 2023, Johannesburg.
[225] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 38:18.

that contextualises the festival to this day. Heavily influenced by state censorship and the international cultural boycott, DIFF represents one method of passive socio-cultural resistance, evident when examining documented audience demographics and financing structures during the pre-1994 period. Effectively balancing this form of resistance, and curtailing apartheid government retaliation, DIFF actively sought to create spaces of multiracial exchange. This foundational ethos underpins DIFF's current mandate for national film development, highlighting the historical legacies that resulted in socio-economic inequalities for primarily black South African filmmakers. In a post-1994 South Africa DIFF provides an independent avenue of film distribution and screening. Promotional and marketing material, as well as festival programming and audience responses, also underscore DIFF's counter-archival function, in particular the way in which DIFF carved out a seemingly innocuous resistance space. The fact that DIFF was allowed to screen films that were deemed unsuitable for wider commercial distribution by apartheid censors, points to a degree of tolerance towards DIFF, possibly based on the assumption that the festival catered to a liberal niche audience who did not pose a significant threat to the apartheid project. Through an examination of this festival we get glimpses of resistance spaces that were not framed as resistant to dominant ideology, once again underscoring the counter-archival nature of a festival like DIFF.

A study of DIFF also begins to address the research question of how South African festivals represented South African cinema to the world and world cinema to South Africans. To address the second point first, oral testimonies indicate that a largely white, liberal South African audience was starved of exposure to global cinema by strict apartheid censorship. DIFF provided an important platform where these audiences could access global cinema that was more art cinema rather than commercial cinema. With regard to the first point, DIFF seems to have had mixed reactions internationally, especially during the period of cultural boycotts when international filmmakers refused to showcase their films or to attend. In this sense, the global image of South African cinema under apartheid appears to have been firmly established as segregationist and unequal and DIFF does not appear to have changed this global image significantly.

Chapter 4 – Crossing the Line: *Weekly Mail* Film Festival

Introduction

The *Weekly Mail* Film Festival was first held in 1986, one year after the establishment of the newspaper by the same name, the *Weekly Mail*. Based on archival evidence, the second festival in 1987 was significantly expanded in terms of screenings and discussion fora. The *Weekly Mail* Film Festival ran for nearly a decade until 1994. When the newspaper became the *Weekly Mail & Guardian* in 1993 another associate film festival was held titled 'Limits of Liberty'. In 1994 the film festival renamed itself the South African International Film Festival.[226] The newspaper changed its name once again in 1995 to the *Mail & Guardian*, merging with the London *Guardian* tabloid. With Liza Key operating as Festival Manager and Trevor Steele Taylor as Co-director, the festival gained a "cultish"[227] notoriety for agitprop.

Contextualising the *Weekly Mail* Newspaper

Considered by journalists and scholars as a direct successor of the *Rand Daily Mail*, the *Weekly Mail* newspaper was founded in response to the 1985 closure of its predecessor by the NP government due to its leftist ideologies and journalism reporting that was critical of the apartheid state. Ismail Lagardien, commenting on his experience as a junior reporter and photographer with the *Rand Daily Mail* and then *Weekly Mail*, attests that the *Weekly Mail* filled a "yawning gap" in the market by providing "critical alternative journalism"[228] during a time of censorship and repression by the apartheid state, which intimidated other newspaper publications into self-censored or conservative reporting. Records in the *Mail & Guardian* online recount the introductory messaging in the newspaper's first publication in June 1985. This first publication documents the methods through which this newspaper envisioned a new manner of reporting which was to independently avoid government or "big capital"[229] influence. The newly established *Weekly Mail* aimed to avoid appealing to what they termed "popular taste",[230] deeming 'popular' as that which was "dictated by interests outside of journalism".[231]

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[226] Not to be confused with the film festival of the same name currently run by Rapid Lion.
[227] M. Krouse, 'The Key to Tsafendas', *Mail & Guardian* 15(25), 1999, p.3.
[228] I. Lagardien, 'The Path Carved Out by the Weekly Mail', *Daily Maverick,* 2015, p. 2.
[229] J. Frederikse, 'South Africa's Media: The Commercial Press and the Seedlings of the Future', *Third World Quarterly,* 9(2), 1987, p. 642.
[230] Mail Guardian Online Reporter, '1985: The Year It All Started', *Mail & Guardian*, 2020, Available at: https://mg.co.za/from-the-archives/2020-08-13-1985-the-year-it-all-started/, Access: 12 December 2023.
[231] Anon, 'Welcome to the Weekly Mail', *Weekly Mail,* 1985, p. 2.

The argument made by *Weekly Mail* journalists at this time was that these 'popular tastes' were in fact isolated to white South African readers and unrepresentative of the broader diverse demographic of South Africans who consumed print media at the time.[232] Describing its readership as "thirsty for information",[233] the *Weekly Mail* quickly established itself as a newspaper unwilling to bow to censorship and the expectations of the apartheid state. Instead of removing articles that were censored or banned outright, the *Weekly Mail* began to publish the articles with the redacted sections included, thus creating a new degree of transparency with their readers. This style of reporting allowed the *Weekly Mail* to be more outspoken and critical of apartheid, with the majority of their news articles centring on resistance action and reporting negatively on the activities of the apartheid state and its entities.[234] Dissatisfied with the lack of coverage of major events taking place in South Africa, the newspaper dedicated a number of weekly columns to apartheid-related content, such as the 'Apartheid Barometer' which transcribed updates on political detainees, murdered resistance fighters and other acts of violence by the NP government.[235] This form of subversion and rebellion is heavily mirrored in the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival.

Film Festival Component

Unlike the three other film festivals discussed in this dissertation, which were founded by an individual or a small collective of people from the film industry, the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival was an extension of the newspaper itself. One can argue that film, and the festival itself, became another platform by which the newspaper extended its critical and subversive role within the South African mediascape. It can further be argued that the legal and financial backing of the film festival allowed the *Weekly Mail* to further exert degrees of opposition and resistance, whereas other film festivals such as DIFF were more constrained to walking a fine line between less overt subversion and resistance.

It could be argued that the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival is the first clear example of establishing a counter-archive through a film festival, as its thematic and structural considerations revolved solely around opposing the apartheid state by providing an alternative to the dominant forms of cinema and media that were promoted by the state at this time. By providing a space for

[232] T. Feinberg, 2018, https://www.sajr.co.za/the-weekly-mail-the-most-jewish-newspaper-ever-produced/, 20 September 2023.
[233] Mail Guardian Online Reporter, '1985: The Year It All Started'.
[234] C. Wren, 'Anti-Apartheid paper: A Scandal Is Its Trophy', p. 4.
[235] B. Trabold, 'Hiding Our Snickers: Weekly Mail Journalists' Indirect Resistance in Apartheid South Africa', *College English* 68(4), 2006, p. 389.

films and media that recorded current events, conversations and actions this film festival can be viewed as a capsule of its time, representing an alternative view of South African cinema and film media during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

An example of this is the title and theme of the film festival each year. Each title and theme highlighted current sentiments of that year and included films the programmers felt reflected this. Not only did this festival aim to oppose the apartheid regime through politically radical films but it also aimed to incite reaction, even if this turned out to be negative or volatile responses. This was primarily achieved through the curation of the film festival focusing on showcasing primarily South African films with socio-cultural and political themes but also visually experimental cinema, with the most explicit example of these two practices being the 1993 film festival. The *Weekly Mail* Film Festival can be divided into two phases. The first was concerned with the past and contemporaneous acts of oppression by the apartheid state during the 1980s. The second phase of *Weekly Mail* Film Festivals concerned itself with topics surrounding the present and future experiences of South Africans politically, socially and economically as the country moved towards democratic dispensation in the early 1990s.

The First Phase

The festival programming of the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival during the 1980s included a focus on films depicting political action and resistance. This phase dealt with issues relating to censorship by the state and argued for the use of film as a means of challenging this censorship. The prominent film festivals of the period are those of 1986, 1987 and 1989. What these three festivals represent is the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival's approach of using a film festival as a means of passive but unyielding form of social commentary and resistance.

1986

The first *Weekly Mail* Film Festival in 1986 was held in Stellenbosch in association with the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA).[236] Framing this film festival as a programme of South African cinema, the films screened were primarily by South African directors and filmmaking collectives. While programmes in later years would include a foreword by the festival director, biographies of the filmmakers attending and additional industry information, this first year included only a schedule of the screenings, titles of the films and their directors and a brief synopsis of the plot of each film.[237]

[236] IDS, 2021, https://eldis.org/organisation/A2443, Access: 12 December 2023.
[237] B. Ludman, (ed.) & Weekly Mail, *The Weekly Mail Film Festival of S.A. Cinema,* pp. 1-4.

The 1986 programme included films such as *Witness to Apartheid* by Sharon Sopher and Kevin Harris (1986), *Dear Grandfather your right root is missing* by Yunus Ahmed, *Sharpeville Spirit* by Elaine Proctor (1986) and *And Now We Have No Land* (1986) by Hannie Serfontein, to list but a few.[238] As with other films not mentioned but included in the 1986 festival programme, these four films centre around topics and themes of displacement, oppression and violence perpetrated by the apartheid state. The topics and subject matter of these films focused on exploring the lives and realities of black South Africans at the time from a variety of thematic angles. This included but was not limited to forced removals, exploring the intersection of church, religion and the state and personal documentations of key events such as the Sharpeville Massacre (1960) and the Soweto Uprising (1976).

With the primary focus of these films being the recent major socio-political events that had come to define the injustices of racial segregation, the festival encountered censorship restrictions before the event took place. IDASA, a think-tank on democracy in South Africa, had been founded to "encourage white South Africans to talk and engage with black South Africans"[239] with the aim of challenging the apartheid system through racial collaboration. As a result of this politically integrated agenda, the festival was advertised on the Stellenbosch University Campus with the assistance of its Film Society to encourage white students to attend the film festival. In a response that was labelled as "reeking of blatant censorship",[240] university authorities confiscated the festival advertising brochures and removed the entire video programme from the campus grounds. While the film festival still took place, this occurrence was the first example of censorship encountered by the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival and arguably solidified its stance of screening media and curating the festival to directly violate censorship policies of the 1980s. With the types of films being screened at the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival described as "indictments of the obnoxious system of apartheid [that would] not see the light of day"[241] under normal cinema-going conditions due to "unashamedly idiotic censorship laws"[242] the film festival the next year chose censorship as the thematic focus.

[238] B. Ludman, (ed.) & Weekly Mail, *The Weekly Mail Film Festival of S.A. Cinema,* pp. 2-3.
[239] Policy Commons, N/A, https://policycommons.net/orgs/institute-for-democratic-alternatives-in-south-africa/, Access: 12 December 2023.
[240] C. Bauer. 'Weekly Mail Film Festival Censored', *Mail & Guardian,* 1987*,* Available at: https://mg.co.za/article/1987-08-21-00-weekly-mail-film-festival-censored/, Access: 12 December 2023.
[241] Anon, 'Festival movies show the destructiveness of system', *New Nation*, 3(33), 1988.
[242] Anon, 'Festival movies show the destructiveness of system'.

1987

Titled "Cinema Under Siege",[243] the 1987 *Weekly Mail* Film Festival increased its social and political commentary by expanding its programme to include articles explaining the festival's reasoning and motivation behind the event. An emotive and militaristically evocative phrase which directly referenced the previous, and at the time, ongoing state of emergencies, 'Cinema Under Siege' encapsulated the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival's drive as not only an organisation providing unsegregated spaces of cultural exchange but as an organisation that was politically conscious and invested in spurring active responses to these restrictions.

The ideological manifesto behind this theme is documented in the newspaper publications of the preliminary festival programme. A review of the archival records of *Weekly Mail* newspapers suggests that normal weekly publications and film festival publications were printed and distributed separately from one another. Newspaper prints solely containing festival information were distributed as a festival programme and used to promote the event. This festival promotion includes opinion piece articles relating to the year's theme, with an opening commentary contextualising the rationale behind the theme and thus the films selected. The author of this piece, Charlotte Bauer, states that "most of the films gathered for this festival [had] been made under conditions of official repression",[244] highlighting how the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival aimed at providing South African filmmakers with a space of unrestricted interaction, facilitating continual creative expression and documentation of the history and lives of their subject matter that was being increasingly suppressed by the state.

However, many of the films selected in the festival programme, as of the 12th of August of that year, were still awaiting submission to and approval from the South African Directorate of Publications, with the festival's opening night being the 15th of August.[245] Gavshon comments on the unpredictability of this censorship process, explaining that, of the films already submitted for that year's festival, those disapproved (banned) had included *Witness to Apartheid* and *Sharpeville Spirit*, both of which had been screened at the 1986 film festival the previous year. The concern, documented by Gavshon in this article, records the subjectivity of this censorship process, emphasising the need to review censorship history during apartheid as multilayered and influenced by political contingencies as evident in the larger apartheid project

[243] B. Ludman, (ed.), 'The Weekly Mail Film Festival - Cinema Under Siege', *The Weekly Mail Film Festival* (Festival Programme - Supplement to the *Weekly Mail* 12 August 1987), 1987, pp. 1-4.
[244] C. Bauer, 'Moving Images Under Siege', *The Weekly Mail Film Festival* (Festival Programme - Supplement to the *Weekly Mail* 12 August 1987), 1987, p. 1.
[245] C. Bauer, 'Moving Images Under Siege', p. 1.

which similarly revised, reiterated and amended policies and legislation based on shifting contingencies.

With 1986 marked as a particularly turbulent year, a nationwide state of emergency was imposed by the apartheid government in June of that year ahead of the 10th anniversary of the Soweto Uprising (16 June 1976).[246] Described as "effectively paving the way for a blood bath in the country",[247] the state of emergency was extended in 1987 and included "severe reporting restrictions on local and foreign journalists".[248] The mounting international pressure at the end of 1986 further intensified a sense of government control and surveillance.[249] This greatly impacted the degree to which the National Party implemented its censorship policies, with President P.W. Botha on the 18th of August of 1987, three days after the festival's opening, accusing the "'so-called alternative media"[250] as "out to urge the spirit of revolution along",[251] condemning left-wing newspapers and news agencies for inciting and encouraging anti-apartheid sentiments. Films such as *Witness to Apartheid* and *Sharpeville Spirit* were now banned from festival screenings by the South African Directorate of Publications because of this belief that "alternative media and alternative news agencies"[252] posed an active threat to the apartheid regime. Therefore, this illustrates the degree to which the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival and its material came to be viewed as a political threat, destabilising NP control through its use of media dissemination through film festival spaces. The festival thus became a space of resistance, subversion and rebellion. This festival perhaps best exemplifies the way in which a festival can be framed as a counter-archive. The film festival, as a 'special' cinematic space, was consciously designed to showcase the complex relationship between a politically oppressive regime and freedom of expression, resistance and subversion through cultural media production.

The parent publication to the festival, the *Weekly Mail* newspaper was "very involved"[253] in the running of and continued success of the film event. Three *Weekly Mail* journalists - Matthew Krouse, Charl Blignaut and Charlotte Bauer - also wrote articles for the festival programmes

[246] A, Cowell, 'State of Emergency Imposed Throughout South Africa; More Than 1,000 Rounded Up', *The New York Times* (A), 1986, p. 1.
[247] A, Cowell, 'State of Emergency Imposed Throughout South Africa; More Than 1,000 Rounded Up', p. 1.
[248] J. D. Battersby, 'Botha Criticizes Leftist Journalists in South Africa', *The New York Times* (A), 1987, p. 5.
[249] W. P. Nagan, 'An Appraisal of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986', *Journal of Law and Religion* 5(2), 1987, p. 331.
[250] J. D. Battersby, 'Botha Criticizes Leftist Journalists in South Africa', p. 5.
[251] J. D. Battersby, 'Botha Criticizes Leftist Journalists in South Africa', p. 5.
[252] J. D. Battersby, 'Botha Criticizes Leftist Journalists in South Africa', p. 5.
[253] T. S. Taylor, *Email correspondence with Justine Binedell*, 2023, [Email].

and advertising publications.[254] As a result, the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival programmes included a greater number of written articles in comparison to a traditional film festival programme which primarily consisted of film catalogues and associated information. These articles revolved around the annual themes, expanding on the meanings behind each, and thus contextualised the films to be shown within a larger socio-political context as opposed to a singular festival programme. This greater degree of journalistic participation also meant that the newspaper provided the festival with legal advice and support as well as providing space at the newspaper's offices for the festival organisers to work.[255] Steele-Taylor recalls an encounter with the Security Police at these offices, stating that Liza Key and himself were the only two to receive this "distinction",[256] highlighting the perceived threat the festival posed to the apartheid government. This once again emphasises the role this festival played in disseminating alternative media and information.

Moreover, this increased censorship impacted black communities to a greater degree, with Gavshon commenting on the screening conditions of the more 'political' films being restricted to white festival audiences.[257] While the film festival did not practice the racial segregation of its audiences, the Alexandra location of the festival screenings would be impacted by this type of censorship. As noted in the film, Freddy Ogterop describes the event as a "Joburg-based film festival",[258] with screenings in 1987 taking place at the Market Theatre, "South Africa's theatre of Struggle"[259] according to Anant Singh, and Alexandra Art Centre in the township of Alexandra. The rationale behind these censorship requirements was the racist thinking that "the poorer, less-educated 'masses' might take celluloid matters more seriously",[260] fearing that black audiences may respond physically to films of a violent nature or imagery. Despite this, the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival defied this attempted selective censorship by screening these films at both locations.[261] With films being viewed as powerful tools of influence, the apartheid government's fear of a physically violent response was unfounded but ironically meant there was a failure by the apartheid government to acknowledge the ideological impact films at festivals had on black audiences regardless of socioeconomic class. While there is little

[254] T. S. Taylor, *Email correspondence with Justine Binedell*, 2023, [Email].
[255] T. S. Taylor, *Email correspondence with Justine Binedell*, 2023, [Email].
[256] T. S. Taylor, *Email correspondence with Justine Binedell*, 2023, [Email].
[257] C. Bauer, 'Moving Images Under Siege', p. 1.
[258] F. Ogterop, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 11 October 2023, Cape Town.
[259] A. Singh, *In Black and White: A Memoir*, p. 177.
[260] C. Bauer, 'Moving Images Under Siege', p. 4.
[261] B. Ludman, (ed.), 'The Weekly Mail Film Festival of SA Cinema - Cinema Under Siege', *The Weekly Mail Film Festival* (Festival Programme - Supplement to the *Weekly Mail* 10-16 April 1987), 1987, pp. 2-3.

information to document the responses of *Weekly Mail* Film Festival audiences, the previous discussion on DIFF could apply. While white and black audiences both responded positively to material that challenged racial segregation, it was black audiences who related more directly to the subject matter of South African oppositional cinema, with films at festivals serving more as a confirmation of one's own reality rather than an instigation of protest action. This style of oppositional cinema resonates with Third Cinema characteristics and aims. The *Weekly Mail* film festival screened films of "subversive culture"[262] and thus facilitated the production of films that "directly and explicitly set out to fight the system",[263] this system being apartheid. Furthermore, Jacqueline Maingard proposes that the 1970s and 1980s "entrenched the documentary 'movement' against apartheid"[264] in South Africa. This highlights how the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival challenged both the status quo and reflected how certain groups were coping with oppression.[265]

1989

The next film festival analyzed during this phase is the 1989 festival titled "Cinema: Crossing the line".[266] The rationale behind this theme built directly upon that of the previous years and can be linked to similar ideas discussed in the 1987 film festival programme. The idea of 'crossing the line' alludes to acts of conscious rebellion and 'unlawfulness' against the apartheid regime, thematically and physically encouraging their audiences and viewership to cross over these restrictions by engaging in the festival space, watching state-condemned films, and discussing politically restricted topics. In choosing films the festival organisers knew they were going to "wind people up, especially the authorities".[267] The festival illustrates its role in not only providing spaces for alternative media but also being an active political participant in the resistance struggle, akin to the explicitly political agenda of Third Cinema.

An example of this physical crossing of the line is the statement by the festival organisers that the venues selected for screenings were not strange but reasonable choices for the following reasons.[268] Firstly, promoting screenings in the Alexandra Township Art Centre and the Joseph

[262] F. Solanas, & O. Getino, 'Toward a Third Cinema', *Cinéaste* 4(3), 1970-71, p. 1.
[263] F. Solanas, & O. Getino, 'Toward a Third Cinema', p. 4.
[264] J. Maingard, 'Trends in South African Documentary Film and Video: Questions of Identity and Subjectivity', *Special Issue on South African Literature: Paradigms Forming and Reinformed* 21(4), 1995, p. 658.
[265] K. Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film*, p. 208.
[266] B. Ludman (ed.), 'The Weekly Mail Film Festival - Cinema: Crossing the Line - Full Programme and Synopses of all Films', *The Weekly Mail Film Festival* (Festival Programme - Supplement to the *Weekly Mail* week of 8-14 September 1989*)*, 1989, pp. 1-8.
[267] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 28:43.
[268] Anon, 'Strange Venues? No, sensible', *The Weekly Mail Film Festival* (Festival Programme - Supplement to the *Weekly Mail* week of 8-14 September 1989*)*, 1989, p. 1.

Stone Auditorium in Athlone framed these spaces as places representing the intersection of South African society and communities. Both venues and their communities were situated next to, or in close proximity to, white-designated communities, and as emphasised by the *Weekly Mail*, was an attempt to reach audiences across racial barriers put in place by the NP government.[269]

In going "out of their way to rock the boat",[270] the *Weekly Mail* as a film festival did not shy away from political engagement outside of its own festival space. Joining talks in Paris in 1989 with the ANC on the political future of South Africa, the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival illustrates how a film festival could go beyond the confines of its own event.[271] Described by the ANC as "an appropriate forum for the screening"[272] of international films, the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival was able to avoid the same challenges faced by DIFF during the cultural boycott. This is illustrative of a working relationship developed between the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival and the political organisations this film festival in particular was showcasing either directly or indirectly in their films.

Additionally, the thematic encouragements to cross the line in the festival's own words refer "to breaking rules, smashing cinematic conventions, ignoring the tradition which says that cinema must look smooth and seamless, without artifice, without confusion, without effort".[273] This rationale is further emphasised in the goal of this film festival, to address "issues of privilege",[274] that resources in the South African film industry were still more greatly accessible to white filmmakers. These comments therefore represent a key ethos of this film festival which was not just the promotion of resistance by South African media but the development of black, coloured and Indian filmmakers. The festival was attempting instead to move away from traditional, white-dominated film traditions and toward a more experimental form of filmmaking that allowed a greater number of South Africans to document their racially, economically and politically influenced experiences. In this way the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival is a valuable source for tracing the development of an oppositional South African film tradition during apartheid, but also as a foundation for the practices implemented post-1994. This

[269] Anon, 'Strange Venues? No, sensible', p. 2.
[270] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 29:19.
[271] Sapa Reuter & Own Correspondent, '25 ANC officials to join talks on SA', *The Cape Times*, 1989, p. 9.
[272] Anon, 'Festival Not ANC backed', *The Citizen*, 1990, p.9.
[273] H. Gavshon, & L. Key, 'Crossing the Line That Divides Audiences', *The Weekly Mail Film Festival* (Festival Programme - Supplement to the *Weekly Mail* 8-14 September 1989), 1989, p. 2.
[274] H. Gavshon, & L. Key, 'Crossing the Line That Divides Audiences', p. 2.

development is illustrated heavily in the second phase of the *Weekly Mail* Film Festivals, primarily taking place in the early 1990s.

The Second Phase

"Transitions"[275] in 1990 was arguably an extremely pivotal festival in the timeline of the *Weekly Mail*. The 1990 festival's promotional programme was far more extensive than the previous festival events, averaging over forty pages as opposed to the previous years' newspaper programmes averaging less than ten. Published as a festival booklet and not as a newspaper segment, this preliminary programme includes additional abstracts on each film, the invited guests attending that year as well as a greater number of sponsorships. These three additional and extended inclusions illustrate the changing socio-economic landscape of 1990s South Africa. Liza Key, in her thanks and acknowledgements as Festival Director, highlights the involvement of the Allied Workers Organisation, and the theme of 'Transitions' that embedded itself in the film selection and festival planning process.[276]

Moreover, there is an emphasis in this programme on the act of transitioning, not just politically but also in culture and film.[277] This shift in the role of filmmaking is also explored in the preliminary programme, with increased commentary on each film's technical elements such as cinematography, sound and use of colour, rather than a synopsis rooted heavily in the subject matter of the film. No longer solely a tool of apartheid resistance, the *Weekly Mail* acknowledged how film can assist in building a non-racial democracy, choosing to encourage its audience to engage and critique the use of these film elements. It ironically appears to be this shift that ultimately contributed to its demise in the mid-1990s, as the transitional nature of South African filmmaking at this time no longer called for radical politicized cinema but instead for introspective explorations as we see developing during Encounters.

Extending its film programme to include a greater number of films, the selection was described as a "dusting the shelf"[278] approach. The festival featured archived South African films not previously seen in South Africa due to censorship and marketed this retrospective as a "weekend of resistance",[279] linking directly back to the previous film festivals and their topics relating to censorship. "In these times of transition"[280] the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival (of 1990)

[275] B. Ludman, (ed.) & Weekly Mail Film Festival, *Transitions*, pp. 1-49.
[276] B. Ludman, (ed.) & Weekly Mail Film Festival, *Transitions*, p. 2.
[277] B. Ludman, (ed.) & Weekly Mail Film Festival, *Transitions*, p. 4.
[278] B. Ludman, (ed.) & Weekly Mail Film Festival, *Transitions*, p. 2.
[279] B. Ludman, (ed.) & Weekly Mail Film Festival, *Transitions*, p. 2.
[280] B. Ludman, (ed.) & Weekly Mail Film Festival, *Transitions*, p. 2.

aimed to reflect and acknowledge the work from previous years that developed new audiences and methods of South African filmmaking. The retrospective approach, however, was combined with degrees of exploration, as the film curation of 1990 also focused on including a new style of filmmaking, slightly uncharacteristic of the *Weekly Mail's* previous programmes.

This new focus expanded the selection of films to include more international films and filmmakers, while still aligned with the socio-cultural political style of cinema that the *Weekly Mail* had come to be associated with. These films represented the changing landscape of South Africa's relationship with its international peers. The early 1990s saw the elimination of many apartheid laws, as well as the releasing of political prisoners, legalisation of oppositional political organisations and the end of the state of emergency rule.[281] As a result of this increasing reform the international community described what they saw happening in the country as the "legal pillars of apartheid crumbl[ing]",[282] and discussed the feasibility of lifting sanctions. The *Weekly Mail* Film Festival selection of 1990 was therefore not uncharacteristic of the broader national and global shifts taking place. The inclusion of an international selection of films and filmmakers only further expanded in 1991 and 1992.

1991 & 1992

The film festivals of 1991 and 1992 further illustrate this increasing international focus. The 1991 *Weekly Mail* Film Festival was titled "Politics & Pleasure"[283] and expanded its film selection to not only include international films but additionally included documentaries depicting subject matter and topics relating to music and pop culture, featuring Alek Keshishian's film *In Bed with Madonna (Truth or Dare)* (1991). Key prefaces these forms of inclusion in her directorial forward, as embracing the freedom of cinema.[284] Moreover, the 1992 film festival built upon this by foregrounding discussions and fora on the South African, African and global cinema industry at large. Articles titled "Who Keeps Killing the SA film industry?"[285] and "Kaborè Finds a Voice for African Cinema",[286] littered the marketing publications for the film festival, speaking to the need for South Africa and Africa to engage audiences and develop industries that represent their own on screen. This rationale allows us

[281] Anon, 'The Crumbling of Apartheid', *The New York Times* (A), 1991, p. 22.
[282] Anon, 'The Last Days of Apartheid', *The New York Times* (A), 1991, p. 24.
[283] B. Ludman, (ed.) & Weekly Mail Film Festival, *Weekly Mail's 5th Film Festival: Politics & Pleasure*, pp. 1-49.
[284] B. Ludman, (ed.) & Weekly Mail Film Festival, *Weekly Mail's 5th Film Festival: Politics & Pleasure*, p. 5.
[285] P. Lee, 'Who Keeps Killing the SA Film Industry?', *The Weekly Mail & The Guardian Weekly Film Festival* (Festival Programme - Supplement to the *Weekly Mail* 16-22 October 1992),1992, p. 2.
[286] M. Gevisser, 'Kaborè Finds a Voice for African Cinema', *The Weekly Mail & The Guardian Weekly Film Festival* (Festival Programme - Supplement to the *Weekly Mail* 16-22 October 1992),1992, p. 4.

to trace the roots of later South African film festivals and the grounding of audience development back to this period of film festivals. While the 1991 and 1992 *Weekly Mail* Film Festivals document the beginnings of these conversations, film festivals such as Encounters and film markets like Sithengi are heavily connected to these considerations.

1993

While the selection of films shown at the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival had changed in style and content beyond normal annual changes, their reputation for challenging conventions and creating "publicity and controversy about the films that they showed"[287] was still greatly evident during the 1993 film festival titled "Limits of Liberty".[288] Similar considerations were stated as in previous years, largely revolving around the issue of censorship, but this time emphasising the need to consider the impact of censorship practices in a democratic state. The *Weekly Mail* attempted, with the 1993 festival, to present a more experimental film selection grounded in the past but juxtaposed with the future. They did this by screening films that South African audiences, for reasons of censorship and cultural boycott, may not have seen or been familiar with in relation to style and subject matter. The *Weekly Mail* here attempted to buttress its position as a premier, local oppositional platform for exposing the injustices of apartheid through film. It can be argued that this 1993 festival illustrates the *Weekly Mail*'s hesitation and discernment that transition towards democracy cannot be a simple process but one where all questions must be considered.

In Trevor Steele Taylor's own words, the film festival "contextualised notions of Pornography, Hate Speech, Political Interference, Blasphemy, Sexual Preference and Military Control of Marginalized Communities",[289] in a response to the lack of conversations surrounding censorship during this transitional period. Encouraging audiences to evaluate their role as "moral arbiter[s] in the new South Africa",[290] the film festival argued that "to confront hate speech was to present it for all to see".[291] The film and artistic selection for 1993 included more visually evocative and jarring imagery and ignited fervent responses from the public.

[287] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 29:31.
[288] B. Ludman, (ed.), 'Limits of Liberty', *Mail & Guardian Film Festival* (Festival Programme - Supplement to the *Weekly Mail* July 1993), 1993, pp. I-IV.
[289] T. Taylor, 'On Censorship and Film Festivals', *Daily Maverick*, 2021, Available at: https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-03-on-censorship-and-film-festivals/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[290] L. Key, 'Shooting the Projectionist', *Mail & Guardian Film Festival* (Festival Programme - Supplement to the *Weekly Mail* July 1993), 1993, p. I.
[291] T. Taylor, 'On Censorship and Film Festivals'.

Recounted as a "strange reversal of fortune"[292] police were in place to protect attendees of the festival from members of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), who were protesting the screening of *De Voortrekkers* (1985), a satirical short film (based on the 1916 film of the same name) written by Matthew Krouse, produced by Jeremy Nathan, and with cinematography by Giulio Biccari. Furthermore, an additional silent vigil was held by a group of feminists in protest against the screening of pornography at the festival.[293] This extreme juxtaposition highlighted the festival's new leaning towards experimentation, exploring new ways of instigating conversation and capturing public interest through film. This is illustrative of the *Weekly Mail's* move towards promoting new genres of filmmaking while still occupying themselves with modes of political resistance and socio-cultural exchange.

Perhaps, in what could be a clearly defining characteristic of this new brand of *Weekly Mail* Film Festival is the choice of posters for the festival. While the most popular posters of the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival include the ones from 1987 and 1990 by William Kentridge, the poster in 1993 was created by controversial artist Steven Cohen. Each South African artist worked within a different medium. Kentridge, while unconventional in his combination of drawing and film, is not necessarily controversial, while Cohen, as a performance artist, is known for his use of eccentric heterogeneous costumes (or lack thereof), controversially using his body as a canvas to deconstruct issues of identity and history. Through this comparison we could argue that the *Weekly Mail's* evolution from Kentridge to Cohen is illustrative of the festival's evolution from a platform for resistance to a platform for introspection and reflection on the changes in the broader context.

1994

The 1994 film festival was renamed the "South African International Film Festival"[294] and was now hosted under the combined auspices of the *Weekly Mail and Guardian*. The festival's change of title and increased support from its international parent, the *Guardian*, categorised this iteration of the festival as internationally focused. As discussed previously, prior years had increasingly included a selection of foreign films but had always remained South African focused. This, however, is in stark contrast to 1994 which included programming of notable international independent filmmakers and Hollywood director Quentin Tarantino.[295] The film

[292] T. Taylor, 'On Censorship and Film Festivals'.
[293] T. Taylor, 'On Censorship and Film Festivals'.
[294] B. Ludman, (ed.), *The South African International Film Festival - The Full Programme*, pp. 1-49.
[295] B. Ludman, (ed.), *The South African International Film Festival - The Full Programme*, p. 1.

selection, and invited guests and directors of this year, was specifically curated to be an international exposition. Encouraging South African audiences to attend and experience these international films, the *Weekly Mail and Guardian* provides an example of the new direction being taken in the South African film industry. No longer remaining inwardly occupied, intentionally or unintendedly as was the historical context which defines the industry pre-1994, it was now occupied with new global trends and cinema-making styles.

Conclusion

The *Weekly Mail* Film Festival represented a radical leftist oppositional ideology during the 1980s and 1990s in South Africa. The festival's thematic focus on challenging censorship and showcasing politically radical films opposing apartheid reflected the *Weekly Mail* newspaper's broader commitment to providing an alternative source of information during the 1980s and early 1990s. The 1990s *Weekly Mail* Film Festivals watered the roots of new cinematic traditions in South Africa, showcasing film and festivals themed around gender, identity and democratic censorship. Characterised by themes of resistance and representation, this festival unapologetically documented the living realities of most South Africans, providing a historical record through which these sentiments can be examined outside of a traditional archival framework.

Chapter 5 – A Market with a Mission: Sithengi Film and Television Market

Introduction

The Sithengi Film and Television Market was established in 1996 and was held annually in Cape Town over November. Sithengi also had a festival component which was known as Cape Town World Cinema Festival. Later referred to as Sithengi in 1997, meaning 'market' in Nguni, was adapted to emphasise the event's main aims which was to facilitate the buying, selling and distribution of film and television media in Southern Africa.[296] In the accompanying documentary, Fanney Tsimong describes Sithengi as "one of the best international film festivals we had in South Africa",[297] exclaiming that "Sithengi was amazing, the networks there were proper!",[298] providing evidence of the events continued notoriety to this day.

Marketed by event organisers as the "first international film and television event ever to be held in southern Africa",[299] this description was not an entirely accurate one because as previously discussed, a number of South African events including an international element in the form of film festivals had and were taking place at this time. Sithengi however, was the first of its kind in two ways, the first being its specific inclusion and marketing of television and not just film, as well as the event primarily being held as a film market not just a film festival. Sithengi thus positioned itself as forging international linkages through a business and economic approach rather than first introducing a socio-cultural attraction for potential event attendees. While the degree to which Sithengi was able to solidify these international linkages is debatable, the event's inception and decade of existence did contribute to what could arguably be termed world cinemas, and more specifically to the South African film and television industry.

Film and Television Market

With planning beginning in 1994, Sithengi's focus on advertising and promoting itself as a film market can be understood by contextualising its professed aims.[300] Creators and staff at

[296] M. Krouse, 'Mirroring the Movie Biz', *Weekly Mail & Guardian* 6, 2004, p. 7.
[297] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 45:23.
[298] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 45:35.
[299] Southern African Film & Television Market, *Official Guide Southern African Film & Television Market '96,* p. 1.
[300] Southern African Film & Television Market, *Official Guide Southern African Film & Television Market '96,* p. 6.

Sithengi viewed this event as "South Africa's attempt to transform its public television and film industry to cater for the diverse group of people"[301] of the country, an aim attempting to counteract the negative effects of cultural isolation and lack of representation for black people in South Africa, pre-1994.

As such, South African filmmakers experienced a newfound freedom in exploring new avenues of filmmaking, looking to branch out, develop new techniques and ways of making films and telling stories.[302] Criticised as initially too white during its first year, Sithengi in 1999 stated that "Africa is our selling point",[303] that the event aimed not just to attract filmmakers, screenwriters and actors but also distributors, producers and financers in an attempt to establish a film network in Africa for Africans.[304]

Furthermore, it argued that South African filmmakers needed to not only hone new experimental filmmaking practices but also develop business skills and learn how to raise finances for their projects.[305] These comments highlight how important both economic and creative elements of Sithengi were in a post-1994 South Africa. An important consideration for Sithengi was its ability to create a space for business, with its focus remaining primarily on the needs of the filmmakers rather than on the audiences.

The most "glaring obstacle"[306] for these filmmakers was the financing of their products and projects. South African investors did not yet regard film as a lucrative investment opportunity as local audiences were "not yet attuned to film and television programmes reflecting their own lifestyles"[307] and the challenge for South African filmmakers was therefore creating products that reflected all South Africans, thus attracting investors. Sithengi therefore positioned itself at the nexus of this exchange, wanting to cultivate a South African film and television industry that was successful both in Southern Africa but also exportable globally.[308] In this regard, one can argue that Sithengi was actively pursuing an agenda that sought to develop an inclusively

[301] Southern African Film & Television Market, *Official Guide Southern African Film & Television Market '96,* p. 6.
[302] Y. Manjoo, 'Too Few Good Films Out of Africa', *Sunday Tribune,* 1998, p. 3.
[303] Anon, 'Sithengi Makes Strides For African Film Industry', *IOL*, 1999, Available at: https://www.iol.co.za/business-report/companies/sithengi-makes-strides-for-african-film-industry-790589, Access: 20 September 2023.
[304] Anon, 'Sithengi Makes Strides for African Film Industry'.
[305] J. Viall, 'It's A Wrap for Sithengi's Mastermind', *Cape Argus,* 2006, p. 13.
[306] Y. Manjoo, 'Too Few Good Films Out of Africa', p. 3.
[307] Anon, 'Sithengi Makes Strides for African Film Industry'.
[308] Southern African Film & Television Market, *Official Guide Southern African Film & Television Market '96,* p. 3.

national industry in contradistinction to the narrowly racialised 'national' industry envisaged and supported by the apartheid government.

Cape Town World Cinema Festival

The film festival portion of Sithengi first began in 1999. Titled the 'Cape Town Film Week', this event featured 50 African films.[309] This event was included in the 1999 Sithengi guide but not advertised as a film festival; instead, it was advertised as a screening event of a broad selection of films. In this guide, it is also stated that no stringent selection process was followed, with the aim instead being to "show the world that Africa is a source of boundless inventiveness, creativity and talent".[310] This selection process illustrates a lack of traditional film festival structures and processes of curation but displays a foundational consideration by Sithengi to incorporate film screenings into their overall event, even if the films chosen were curated in a non-traditional manner.

Further refined, more specifically in the 1999 guide, are three clear aims for the Cape Town Film Week event. Firstly, the festival aimed to encourage the buying and selling of African films to the world; secondly promoting the ethos of 'local is lekker', emphasising that the films included in the event were "by Africans; for Africans; about Africans"[311] and lastly that a new generation of filmmakers should feel inspired to create by attending such an event.[312] The first aim of encouraging an international export of African and South African films is explained by Sithengi as directly addressing the cultural isolation experienced as a result of apartheid.[313] The second aim, as previously discussed, was necessary for cultivating an independent and thriving national film economy. The third aim illustrated the post-1994 rationale of creatives attempting to explore new avenues of film productions outside the restrictive bounds of censorship but also expressing a "need to move away from the tried and tested themes of "*Cry Freedom* and *Cry the Beloved Country*".[314] This can be summarised by the notion that "Africa is tired of crying",[315] with African and South African filmmakers moving away from stories of resistance against the state and more towards individual stories reflecting complex lived realities,

[309] Anon, 'Sithengi Makes Strides for African Film Industry'.
[310] Sithengi, *Southern African Film & Television Market Official Guide '99,* pp. 1-85.
[311] Sithengi, *Southern African Film & Television Market Official Guide '99,* p. 43.
[312] Sithengi, *Southern African Film & Television Market Official Guide '99,* p. 43.
[313] Southern African Film & Television Market, *Official Guide Southern African Film & Television Market '96,* pp. 1 - 26.
[314] Y. Manjoo, 'Too Few Good Films Out of Africa', p. 3.
[315] Y. Manjoo, 'Too Few Good Films Out of Africa', p. 3.

examples of which can also be seen at Encounters and the second phase of the *Weekly Mail* Film Festivals.

During what was termed the 'honeymoon' period post-1994 "the decision was made to host only a market, with no festival component"[316] but as seen in 1999, film screenings began to be incorporated into the event. The film festival portion of Sithengi was more commercially established as the Cape Town World Cinema Festival in 2003.[317] At this stage, Michael Auret was the Chief Executive Officer of Sithengi and is largely credited with the success of the Cape Town World Cinema Festival and with promoting it as the public face of Sithengi.[318] In interviews promoting Sithengi in 2003, Auret discussed the benefits and considerations in expanding Sithengi into the film festival arena. Auret proposed that Sithengi not only filled a gap in southern Africa but one felt across the continent, that film festivals such as FESPACO had not yet firmly established a film market to meet the needs of the African film industry.[319] Concerns over a possible split focus of Sithengi were raised at this time but Auret argued that the film festival portion was necessary for greater public engagement with African films, to encourage national and international investment in the film industry.[320] Auret made the suggestion that the film festival component actually needed to "become bigger than the market" component of Sithengi, that the "public needs to be engaged with African films locally"[321] to create investment opportunities and a market for the films traded and exchanged at Sithengi.

Moreover, the Cape Town World Cinema Festival and Sithengi market the next year in 2004 were described by journalists as being "more closely linked than ever before through branding and marketing and ran concurrently".[322] This highlights how the film festival component was vital in linking both the social, cultural and economic elements of the South African film industry post-1994. By using the film festival as the public face of the event, an "international profile as an arts-friendly destination"[323] was created for South Africa. As seen in the film, Tsimong reflects on his own experience at Sithengi events, stating that "You didn't want to go to Cannes if you came to Sithengi",[324] further going on to express that Sithengi offered an

[316] W. Thornley, 'Sithengi: Marketing the Market', *Leadership SA*, 2004, p. 38.
[317] T. Okoli, 'Sithengi Is Not a South African Affair', *This Day*, 2003, p. 13.
[318] J. Viall, 'It's A Wrap for Sithengi's Mastermind', p. 13.
[319] T. Okoli, 'Sithengi Is Not a South African Affair', p. 13.
[320] T. Okoli, 'Sithengi Is Not a South African Affair', p. 13.
[321] T. Okoli, 'Sithengi Is Not a South African Affair', p. 13.
[322] Anon, 'Sithengi Tells It On The Mountain', *IOL,* 2004, Available at: https://www.iol.co.za/entertainment/whats-on/sithengi-tells-it-on-the-mountain-925062, Access: 20 September 2023.
[323] Anon, 'Spotlight on The Film Industry', *Business Day*, 2001, p. 20.
[324] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 45:16.

international networking experience with foreign investors, filmmakers and distributors. By creating a social space centred around a shared cultural experience of watching films, Sithengi through the Cape Town World Cinema Festival was able to generate greater international appeal and engagement for South African participants.

Moreover, it was through these festival and market spaces that connections and consciousness with the past were emphasised. In what can be termed a reclamation of apartheid spaces, the business proceedings for the 2003 event were located at the Artscape Theatre. Described as an "apartheid era-monstrosity",[325] the event held in this space displayed a desire to reframe a space in juxtaposition to its past, reclaiming the functionality of an area as a space for all. As the festival portion of Sithengi grew, so too did its structural emphasis and connection to South Africa's past. The theme of the 2004 film festival was "celebrating 10 years of democracy".[326] During Sithengi 2004, SABC 2 launched a documentary series with the condition that the project be used to offer opportunities to black female directors.[327]

Additionally, a film festival's consciousness with the space it occupies and therefore the implications its presence has on not only its attendees but those in the surrounding communities of the city that hosts a festival, was not lost on Sithengi. In 2001, there was expressed interest from Sithengi to incorporate the Molweni Township Film Festival into the larger Sithengi event.[328] However, it was not until 2004 when, as part of their Cape Town World Cinema Festival, that these ambitions were implemented and Sithengi branched out further than the immediate socio-economic business environment that had become a staple of the market. Auret discussed how Sithengi aimed to incorporate "all echelons of society", [329] and for the first time in 2004, Sithengi held screenings in townships across Cape Town.[330] While recorded attendance was low, this speaks to the festival's attempt to enlarge its footprint by reaching out to multiple socio-economic communities through film, thus seeking to break the previous divisions actively encouraged by a racialised 'national' South African cinema.[331]

[325] M. O'Connor, 'South African Filmmakers Learn Valuable Lessons In Sunny Cape Town', *Indiewire*, 2003, Available at: https://www.indiewire.com/news/general-news/south-african-filmmakers-learn-valuable-lessons-in-sunny-cape-town-79317/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[326] Sithengi Film & Television Market, *The 9th Southern African International Film and Television Market,* p. 13.
[327] Anon, 'SABC2 Showcase Open to Discussion', *Star*, 2004, p. 9.
[328] X. Nkosi, & W. Grobler, 'Sithengi Celebrates Star Dust and Bull Dust', *Weekly Mail & Guardian,* 2001, p. 4
[329] M. Krouse, 'Mirroring the Movie Biz', p. 7.
[330] W. Thornley, 'Sithengi: Marketing the Market', p. 38.
[331] W. Thornley, 'Sithengi: Marketing the Market', p. 38.

Sithengi not only attempted to do this through the venues it occupied but also through the types of films it promoted in its product catalogue and the type of films screened at the festival portion of the event. The post-1994 South African film industry is described as moving away from "old conventions" and instead towards "open-ended narratives multiple viewpoints and hybrid identities",[332] and this is evident when examining the product advertised at Sithengi. For example, there are a high number of films depicting content and themes relating to the constructions of black South African identity, illustrating a shift of focus towards previously marginalised film voices.[333] However, these films not only explored concepts of black identity but also included elements of hybridity tackling themes of gender and culture in combination with racial identity.[334] Films such as *Definition of Freedom* produced by Sharmin Mackay and Kurt Orderson exemplify this, tying together black youth experiences of life in South African 'ghettos' and cultural expressions through Hip Hop music, as these youths began to redefine their music as a tool for socio-political engagement.[335] By incorporating such films in its product catalogue, Sithengi as a film event exhibited the key characteristics of post-apartheid cinema and in turn contributed to the creation of these new characteristics.

As previously stated, while the Cape Town World Cinema Festival was only firmly established in 2003, the previous several years had included a film screening aspect to the event. For example, in 2001 Sithengi included what it termed a "World Cinema Selection" programme of "top quality international films" to promote cinema from around the world that was "not rooted in the mainstream (i.e. Hollywood)".[336] This demonstrates the consciousness of this event in positioning itself as outside of dominant global power structures, attempting to showcase what Sithengi viewed as peripheral and alternative narratives.[337] Grunwell and Ha discuss the relationship that is formed and often reinforced at film festivals between peripheral film entities and their opposing western participants, commenting that many unequal or exploitative financing practices can be unconsciously reinforced in these festival spaces.[338] While Grunwell and Ha referred to the use of western funding as a neocolonial tool of control, the structures

[332] M. Botha, *South African Cinema 1896-2010,* p. 151.
[333] L. Modisane, *South Africa's Renegade Reels: The Making and Public Lives of Black-Centered Films,* pp. XII – 208.
[334] Sithengi Film & Television Market, *The 8th Southern African International Film and Television Market,* p. 92.
[335] Sithengi Film & Television Market, *10th Anniversary Product Catalogue Sithengi Film and Television Market,* p. 4.
[336] Sithengi Film & Television Market, *SITHENGI 2001 Southern African International Film and Television Market,* p. 95.
[337] A. Vallejo, 'Rethinking the canon: the role of film festivals in shaping film history', p. 155.
[338] S. Grunwell, & I. S. Ha, 'Film Festivals: An Empirical Study of Factors for Success', p. 156.

created by Sithengi with regards to funding cannot be overlooked regardless of its 'non-mainstream' stance on film screenings. The 2002 product catalogue of Sithengi explains that for films to be screened at Sithengi, distributors would need to finance this screening themselves.[339] This potentially meant that while Sithengi advertised its market screenings as showcasing non-mainstream content, this curation was susceptible to economic influence. This economic influence is evident during Sithengi's run and will be further discussed when examining the marketing and partnership structures of the event.

Marketing and Structural Approach

A section 21 company, Sithengi as an event structure incorporating both a market element and a film festival component, acted as a 'middleman' in the exchange of films and media. [340] Sithengi as a company, therefore, did not technically benefit financially from these film market purchases and characterised its involvement as facilitating and developing the production and distribution channels of the South African film industry. The film festival portion of the event was used as a screening platform to showcase a selection of films on offer for purchase. The market component of Sithengi, therefore, included a catalogue of both these festival films and additional films on offer. This catalogue of films was available for purchase by independent distributors, producers, and film companies attending the market.[341] The board of directors of Sithengi included a large number of independent South African producers, filmmakers and film-related businessmen and women.[342] This underscores Sithengi's aim to be as inclusive as possible. The inclusion of filmmakers is particularly important in that it afforded the industry a voice in setting the agenda for Sithengi and beyond that for the larger South African film industry.

As highlighted in the original aims of the South African International Film and Television Market and Cape Town World Cinema Festival, Sithengi aimed to promote global exchange and international participation, predominantly through the Market, for South Africa's film and television industry.[343] South Africa's global policy of the last years of the 1990s and early 2000s can be traced through the various discussions surrounding the foreign policy agenda. With

[339] Sithengi Film & Television Market, *The 7th Southern African International Film and Television Market Product Catalogue,* p. 1.
[340] Section 21 of the Companies Act 61 of 1973 allows for a 'not-for-profit company' or 'association incorporated not for gain'.
[341] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 41:42.
[342] O. Ondego, 'Sithengi Film and Television Market Faces Uncertain Future', *Artmatters.Info,* 2006, Available at: https://artmatters.info/2008/09/22/sithengi-film-and-television-market-faces-uncertain-future/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[343] Sithengi, 2005, http://sithengi.co.za/about/about_us/, Access: 20 September 2023.

President Nelson Mandela's geo-political policy focusing on an "agenda for sustained engagement with Africa"[344] and President Thabo Mbeki's geo-political policies pursuing "grand diplomatic ambitions on the continent"[345] it is clear that South Africa's focus at this time revolved around Africa and more pan-Africanist ideals. This illustrates the socio-cultural context which shaped Sithengi's aims, the thematic focus and film selection processes.

As seen with Sithengi, this move towards film as borderless, tied in with Third Cinema ropes of filmmaking, South Africa was attempting to reinsert itself into the global conversation of developing world nations, attempting to participate more actively in creating new traditions outside of the western and European legacy framework that was the foundation of the South African film industry. In 2003 this connection was emphasised in newspaper articles advertising the catalogue of films for purchase at Sithengi as "cinema from the developing world", and cinema unbound from "western cinematic language"[346] that explored new ways of creating films and showcasing narratives outside of traditional scopes. This marketing illustrates an African-centred identity the event aimed to embody, proposing to its potential attendees that Sithengi was encouraging further connections between South Africa and other African nations.

Auret discussed how South African audiences were "still attuned to American fare"[347] and that the aim of shifting audience perceptions and tastes was a slow progressing one but necessary to establish South Africa as a key exporter of films and media globally by foregrounding African products first. Moreover, this global and international agenda is illustrated through the various co-production treaties established through Sithengi.[348] These co-production treaties included the pledging of assistance financially, socially and creatively to South Africa and vice versa from South Africa towards its international partners.[349] Additionally, the film festival component allowed Sithengi to incorporate these international relationships without compromising the economic payoff for South African participants in the market portion of Sithengi. The film festival was able to include films in the programme selection with a "strong

[344] B. Kraxberger, & P. McClaughry, 'South Africa in Africa: A Geo-Political Perspective', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 47(1), 2013, p. 22.
[345] B. Kraxberger, & P. McClaughry, 'South Africa in Africa: A Geo-Political Perspective', p. 22.
[346] Anon, 'Sithengi's Fury of Film Festivals', *IOL,* 2003, Available at: https://www.iol.co.za/entertainment/whats-on/sithengis-fury-of-film-festivals-915577, Access: 20 September 2023.
[347] J. Viall, 'It's A Wrap for Sithengi's Mastermind', p. 13.
[348] W. Thornley, 'Sithengi: Marketing the Market', p. 38.
[349] B. Letlhabane, 'Events Galore at Sithengi Film Market', *Weekly Mail & Guardian,* 2003, p. 2.

focus on films from Africa and the Middle East"[350] and films "from other developing regions like Asia and Southern America".[351] By including these films and extending partnerships to these regions Sithengi was able to foster relationships with nations from these regions while still maintaining a monopoly in the business sector of Sithengi, choosing to first promote South African products. This illustrates the "regional, national, continental"[352] nature of this event, as Sithengi, unlike previous South African film festivals, was able to form a hybrid identity in both national and international cinema spaces.

The reality, however, of Sithengi's effectiveness in impacting a sustained change fell short due to its heavy reliance on western co-production partnerships, as opposed to developing new African structures. Sithengi's 'Africanness' was therefore heavily contested, with local South African industry professionals citing these co-productions with western nations as "arrogant or really stupid".[353] In response to this critique, Auret argued that the large western presence was due to the nearly one million rand these countries generated for the market through their exhibition stands.[354] However, it was still argued that South Africa was "fooling itself"[355] in not sourcing film partnerships from the continent first before expanding elsewhere, accusing Sithengi of failing to cultivate sustained continental links in the industry. It was suggested that Sithengi needed to specialise instead "in African documentary, African experimental film, or commercial African cinema"[356] by making this the curated focus of the event and leaving "issues of market and aesthetics"[357] to be considered after this had been established. This proposal in theory is more akin to that of a traditional film festival structure than that of a film market, arguably, highlighting how Sithengi's approach of 'business first' may have consequently diluted the original manifesto of the event. An interesting consideration and comparison can therefore be made when examining the Encounters South African International Documentary Festival in the following chapter, with this event first establishing itself as a film festival before developing its film market aspects more rigidly.

[350] Anon, 'Sithengi's Fury of Film Festivals'.
[351] T. Okoli, 'Sithengi Is Not a South African Affair', p. 13.
[352] A. Agina et al, 'Introduction', *in* A. Agina, B. Knorpp, & W. Mano(eds.), p. 2.
[353] X. Nkosi, & W. Grobler, 'Sithengi Celebrates Star Dust and Bull Dust', *Weekly Mail & Guardian,* 2001, p. 4
[354] X. Nkosi, & W. Grobler, 'Sithengi Celebrates Star Dust and Bull Dust', p. 4
[355] X. Nkosi, & W. Grobler, 'Sithengi Celebrates Star Dust and Bull Dust', p. 4
[356] O. Ondego, 'Sithengi's Fight for Supremacy in Africa Could Cost It Its Identity', *African Film Festival New York*, 2014, Available at: https://africanfilmny.org/articles/sithengis-fight-for-supremacy-in-africa-could-cost-it-its-identity-2/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[357] O. Ondego, 'Sithengi's Fight for Supremacy in Africa Could Cost It Its Identity'.

Government Financing and Funding Structures

Additionally, the lack of sustained government funding and investment in Sithengi and thus the South African film industry only furthered this dissatisfaction with Sithengi's perceived inability to achieve the aims put forth. In 2001, South African actor Timi Kwebulana commented on the lack of government support for the South African film industry when asked to comment on his experience at that year's market.[358]

"The arts was the only avenue people had during apartheid when all the other avenues were silenced. Now it's left on the sidelines. It used to be termed the 'guerrilla arts' and it had the biggest voice. Now it seems that everybody has forgotten about it."[359]

Sithengi's ability to effectively curate a space that connected South African filmmakers with funding and government film structures is therefore called into question. Members of Sithengi's board of directors included representatives from the SABC, NFVF and the Department of Arts and Culture, three key film-related organisations with government affiliation, which at face value should counteract this grievance given the direct involvement in the running of such an event. "South Africa's film industry could be accused of failing to capitalise on the global interest"[360] post-1994. With this in mind, Kwebulana's statement highlights how the changing socio-cultural spaces within South Africa shifted the public and economic value attached to film. Pre-1994 film and its related media represented a necessary form of expression for South African society, but its economic value was either unrecognised or restricted. Alternatively in a post-1994 South Africa Sithengi as a film market emphasised how the economic value of film and media increased, now deeming the socio-cultural value of film as peripheral.

Closure

The events surrounding Sithengi's lasting success and legacy are varied, with many citing maladministration and financial mismanagement as a key contributor to Sithengi's eventual decline.[361] Sithengi "eventually didn't go anywhere, probably because there wasn't the funding to do it and it couldn't be sustained",[362] with the event being reported on widely during the early 2000s until its closure during the years 2007/8. As theorised by Nodi Murphy in the film, the market and festival were too large, showcasing "too many films for the small cinema-going

[358] X. Nkosi, & W. Grobler, 'Sithengi Celebrates Star Dust and Bull Dust', p. 4
[359] X. Nkosi, & W. Grobler, 'Sithengi Celebrates Star Dust and Bull Dust', p. 4
[360] Staff Reporter, 'Local Movies' Busy Bodies', *Mail & Guardian*, 2008, Available at: https://mg.co.za/article/2008-01-25-local-movies-busy-bodies/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[361] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 43:46.
[362] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 43:25.

audience that we have to support properly"[363] in South Africa. Considering this perspective from someone who had worked with the event consecutively over a number of years, the argument can be made that Sithengi was unable to capture an audience base willing to financially re-invest into the industry once the international or national films were bought and then distributed to South African audiences.

One of Sithengi's key issues was the relationship between public and private South African business sectors. Accusations were made that public institutions were unwilling to continue to finance the event in Cape Town, with "not-so-silent whispers"[364] stating that plans were in the works to find a new provincial location, with Johannesburg and Gauteng as the front runners.[365] The rationale behind this proposal was to separate the business and social interests of the event, keeping the Cape Town World Cinema Festival based in Cape Town but moving the market activities to Johannesburg to allow the "Place of Gold [to take] over its business arm".[366] While reports vary surrounding the intent of this decision, accusations were launched against Sithengi's Board of Directors with journalists reporting that "powerful individuals on the Sithengi board had deliberately frustrated the 11th Sithengi financially, to discredit Cape Town from hosting Sithengi so it could be moved to Johannesburg",[367] drawing attention back to Sithengi's closer link to the economic sector than that of a standard film festival structure.

By October 2007 newspapers reported that Sithengi was facing closure, and "had been suffering financially for at least the last two years"[368] with a debt of over R2.6 million and as such the 2007 event that year had been postponed, with auditors wanting to dissolve Sithengi permanently.[369] Although a new Board of Directors had been elected in 2007 to run Sithengi in anticipation of the next event in 2008, the suspension brought local productions to a virtual halt and is reported to have strained relationships between national film and television distributors such as the SABC and independent filmmakers.[370] These strained relationships, as documented through the newspaper reports on Sithengi during this period, contextualise later experiences of the Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, with the SABC withdrawing funding from this film festival in 2009. Sithengi's economic constraints during

[363] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 44:32.
[364] O. Ondego, 'Sithengi Film and Television Market Faces Uncertain Future'.
[365] E. Smook, 'City Fights to Retain Sithengi Film Festival', *Saturday Weekend Argus*, 2007, p. 5.
[366] O. Ondego, 'Sithengi Film and Television Market Faces Uncertain Future'.
[367] O. Ondego, 'Sithengi Film and Television Market Faces Uncertain Future'.
[368] E. Smook, 'City Fights to Retain Sithengi Film Festival', p. 5.
[369] B. Barber, 'Film Body Seeking Unpaid Lotto Instalment', *Cape Times*, 2007, p. 7.
[370] Staff Reporter, 'Local Movies' Busy Bodies'.

this period are emblematic of the broader national economic climate which culminated in the 2008 economic recession. The "Great Recession that began in 2008 [had] clearly diverted [South Africa's] attention from grand pan-African"[371] geo-political focus as internal national politics had a greater influence on Sithengi's eventual overall functioning.

Conclusion

Established in post-apartheid South Africa, Sithengi aimed to revitalize the film industry by facilitating the exchange of film and television in a Southern African film economy. It promoted itself as an event where filmmakers could explore new avenues and counteract the historical legacies of lack of representation and unequal development. The film market portion of Sithengi focused on connecting South African filmmakers with international partners, nurturing business skills, and attracting investment to the country. However, this focus was critiqued for its initial lack of racial diversity and over-reliance on western co-productions, prioritising economic gain over cultural impact and inclusion of African media. The establishment of the Cape Town World Cinema Festival attempted to counteract this, aiming to provide another space to export African films, celebrate national identity and revitalise a cinema-going audience in South Africa. Sithengi's inability to secure sustained government funding, its financial mismanagement, strained public-private sector relationships, and the 2008 recession led to its eventual closure in 2007/8, over a decade since its first event. While the characterisation of Sithengi remained varied, its contributions to the newly developing post-1994 South African film industry cannot be overlooked. Although its overall effectiveness is debatable, this event is the first example of a business-orientated film event in South Africa and contextualises the new thematic shift taking place in South African filmmaking.

[371] B. Kraxberger, & P. McClaughry, 'South Africa in Africa: A Geo-Political Perspective', p. 23.

Chapter 6 – Shifting Narratives: Encounters South African International Documentary Festival

Introduction

Established in 1999, the Encounters South African International Documentary Film Festival (hereafter referred to as Encounters), was originally titled the Swiss South African Documentary Film Festival. This first iteration of the festival aimed to facilitate a cultural exchange between Swiss and South African filmmakers. The first festival programme included 24 South African documentaries that had been created in the previous two years as well as "four quaint South African documentaries made in the fifties and sixties"[372] which were included to highlight and explore the construction of apartheid mythology through film. In a post-1994 context, Encounters as a festival represents the increasingly close relationship between state financing structures and South African creative sectors. Representing the evolving desires of festival-attending creatives, Encounters provides a lens through which we can examine the socio-cultural impact of apartheid policies on the film industry by examining how film festivals attempt to navigate and address its lasting socio-economic legacies.

In the early years of Encounters, founders Steven Markovitz and Nodi Murphy, operated as the festival directors, acting as the primary links between the South African film industry and its foreign festival financiers. The primary financier of the festival at this time was Pro Helvetia, a foundation run by the Swiss Arts Council.[373] This foundation focuses on the promotion and encouragement of the consumption of Swiss art and culture in South Africa. Encounters' inception and original mandate naturally aligned itself more closely with this ethos, advertising this festival as a means of promoting the exchange between Swiss and South African filmmakers.[374]

Steven Markovitz and Nodi Murphy conceptualised the film festival after Markovitz attended the Locarno International Film Festival in Switzerland in 1998. Murphy recalls that the Swiss Arts Council expressed an interest in partnering with Markovitz and Murphy in hosting a film festival in South Africa. While the expressed interest that this partnership be a collaboration between Swiss and South African creatives, the style of the festival and organisational handling of the event was given to the South Africans with the Swiss funding the project. Murphy

[372] M. Krouse, 'Doccies Get Their Due', *Mail & Guardian* 15(25), 1999, p. 2.
[373] Pro Helvetia, 2024, https://prohelvetia.ch/en/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[374] Anon, 1999, https://1999.encounters.co.za/, Access: 20 September 2023.

expressed her initial hesitation as she did not wish to organise or partner with another "subtitled European festival",[375] referencing the negative implications of such a film festival in an African country.

After consideration, Murphy proposed a documentary-centred film festival due to the Swiss proficiency in the genre, believing that South African documentary filmmakers could benefit from this collaboration. As is the case with film festivals generally, Encounters focused not only on screening films from each nation but on fostering collaborative relationships between filmmakers. For Markovitz and Murphy, the primary goal was not to solely foster a cultural exchange but to create a space for South African filmmakers to learn new documentary-making skills while also sharing their storytelling narrative styles with their Swiss counterparts who expressed a lack of inspiration and narrative avenues to explore in Europe. For Markovitz and Murphy the thematic underpinnings of this festival, while financially linked to the Swiss, were still primarily concerned with the realities and experiences of South African filmmakers and audiences.

1999 and Early 2000s

This thematic rationale behind the first Encounters film festival can be further examined by distinguishing between the international promotion versus the national promotion of the festival within the festival programme. As previously stated, this festival's conception as a site of international collaboration therefore meant the promotion of Swiss arts and culture, motivated by the wishes of the financiers, Pro Helvetia. Moreover, Murphy expressed that it was important for South African audiences to be exposed to foreign methods of storytelling and filmmaking which they had been deprived of because of South Africa's international isolation during the apartheid era resulting from the cultural boycotts.[376]

The festival programme of 1999 implies an increased effort by festival organisers to expand the socio-political ties between South Africa and its foreign counterparts, arguably due to the previous cultural isolation experienced during the apartheid period. This is displayed by the prominence of the Swiss filmmakers and their advertised engagement with the festival, with Swiss filmmakers appearing first in the programme followed only then by the participating South African filmmakers.[377] While the Encounters programmes in later years shifted focus to

[375] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 30:38.
[376] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 30:22.
[377] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *Encounters Swiss South African Documentary Film Festival*, p. 2.

foregrounding South African filmmakers as the primary focus of this festival, the first iteration of Encounters does perhaps illustrate the lack of a specific South African audience attuned to South African films with audiences potentially being invested in international or foreign cinema as opposed to a familiar South African film canon. Aptly put by Fanney Tsimong, South African audiences needed to be "re-introduced to the culture of the cinema",[378] and this can be noted when examining Encounters programmes during the following years. After the first few years of the film festival, this foregrounding of foreign partnerships slowly decreased, with the festival now foregrounding its South African collaborators first and foremost before highlighting its foreign participants.[379]

This shift in the Encounters programming focusing on promoting South African films and filmmakers emphasises a significant change in the types of films promoted and consumed by audiences at South African film festivals pre-1994 and post-1994. As discussed in Chapter 3, South African audiences pre-1994 are recorded as attending film festivals, such as DIFF, not to consume only artistic or experimental cinema but to consume foreign cinema they did not regularly have access to due to censorship and state intervention by the National Party government. As expressed by festival attendees such as Engels-Thornycroft and Binedell-Rey, the motivation behind audiences attending South African film festivals during the apartheid period was partially driven by a desire to consume foreign media and cultural products. Consequently, we can understand that the first Encounters festival was attempting to appeal to this already established market and interest in foreign films. The 1999 festival programme illustrates this by showcasing the foreign directors and films of the festival first in the document as well as the title of the first festival including 'Swiss' in its moniker.[380] Arguably, this first Encounters festival therefore marketed this international element in an attempt to encourage South African audiences to attend.

This lack of initial engagement with South African films, could arguably be attributed to a lack of a representative or broad national film canon post-1994. As previously established in chapters 3 and 4, film festivals pre-1994 functioned against the national film canon which served the interests of a white audience and was created as a result of apartheid funding schemes. This national film canon did not automatically fall away, nor did additional film

[378] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 31:53.
[379] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *Encounters South African Documentary Film Festival 2009,* pp. 1-65.
[380] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *Encounters Swiss South African Documentary Film Festival*, pp. 4-9.

canons, such as those developed as a result of subversive and oppositional film festivals, disappear. The early post-1994 period therefore required the national film canon to shift, change or evolve, potentially moulding these varying film canons together or adopting new practices and avenues to develop a new national film canon. While Encounters cannot, in isolation, represent a broad national film canon, it does allow engagement and examination of the development of new film canons post-1994.

However, there is evidence to suggest this promotion of foreign films was also an attempt by the festival directors to revitalize the South African documentary industry and increase the financial success of South African documentaries entering foreign markets by using these foreign partnerships to their advantage. As already expressed, Encounters aimed to develop the production side of South African documentary-making by providing spaces for international cultural collaboration and exchange, in an attempt to better equip South African filmmakers with technical filmmaking skills. It was argued that documentaries were the "ideal vehicle for South African filmmakers to break into international film marts",[381] illustrating the need for South African filmmakers to develop their documentary skills further.

Likewise, Encounters also identified the need to develop a South African audience that would grow and change along with evolving South African documentarians which would in turn encourage national investment into this industry thus making it financially viable.[382] As evident in early 2000s newspaper reports, the lack of national funding of South African documentaries was serving to "strangle the desires of those who would wish to document the many stories of South Africa's unfolding transformation",[383] expressing the dissatisfaction of filmmakers at this time with the lack of national financial support for the industry. The television programming on offer for South Africans by the SABC and ETV during the early 2000s was described as a "pop psychology dream world",[384] lacking depth and discernment of its audience's need for narratives that depicted their own identities. South African filmmaker Rehad Desai commented on this, noting that as a result of these audience desires South African filmmakers had shifted towards "subjective filmmaking"[385] practices and also towards an auteur-driven filmmaking style that focused on personal reflections.

[381] R. Fortune, 'Progressive Vision for SA Films', *The Cape Times*, 2000, p. 7.
[382] N. Sonnekus, 'Reality Gets Reel Life', *Weekly Mail & Guardian,* 2001, p. 3.
[383] R. Fortune, 'Progressive Vision for SA Films', p. 7.
[384] R. Fortune, 'Progressive Vision for SA Films', p. 7.
[385] M. Krouse, 'Human Stories', *Weekly Mail & Guardian*, 2003, p. 3.

What is evident at this time is how effectively Encounters identified and responded to these shifting desires when putting together its first festival. This shift can be seen when reviewing the original Encounters webpage as the opening welcome message advertised the festival as an opportunity for South African audiences to engage with exceptional "auteur-driven documentaries"[386] from foreign filmmakers. "They needed to know that they were participating in this festival to work, not just to screen their films",[387] was Murphy's condition for the Swiss filmmakers participating in the festival. Encounters therefore established film laboratories and workshops with the aim of skilling South African filmmakers with practical skills and providing opportunities rather than just theoretical knowledge of documentary making. This highlights how the first Encounters film festival responded clearly to the South African filmmaking needs as the new millennium started.

The effectiveness and success of Encounters is evident as early as 2000, with a shift in Encounters programming and additional investiture of national funding illustrating this. This year saw the festival facilitating the creation of "two films as a result of the Close Encounters Laboratory"[388] which were commissioned for SABC 1. Moreover, ETV became a "full media partner of the festival"[389] this same year, highlighting the growing relationship between national broadcasters and independent film festivals. Consequently, by 2004 the SABC had committed itself as an active sponsorship partner for the festival.[390] Murphy elaborates on this partnership explaining that filmmakers attending these festival laboratories and workshops had the opportunity to pitch their projects to the broadcaster, who in turn committed to funding half of the projects presented and showcasing them on television.[391] This new investment by national broadcasters had a noted positive impact, with selected South African documentaries going on to win various awards and acclaim at other international film festivals around the world.[392] Encounters therefore provided South African filmmakers with a platform that met their immediate financial and creative needs.

Moreover, festival programmes from 2000 onwards display a greater prominence of South African filmmakers attending and screening their films at the festival rather than other

[386] Anon, 1999, https://1999.encounters.co.za/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[387] N. Murphy, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 13 October 2023, Cape Town.
[388] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 3*, p. 2.
[389] N. Sonnekus, 'Swiss Family South Africa', *Weekly Mail & Guardian,* 2001, p. 4.
[390] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *6th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 6*, p. 1.
[391] N. Murphy, Interviewed by Justine Binedell, 13 October 2023, Cape Town.
[392] R. Fortune, 'Family Forces SABC to Cancel Screening of Acclaimed Film', *This Day*, 2004, p. 3.

international participants. While the festival programmes of 2000 to 2002 continued to first introduce its international participants, 2003 saw the programme reduce its coverage of these international guest filmmakers, covering all biographies in two pages as opposed to two pages each in previous years.[393] In 2004, the programme altered its structure, marketing its various film laboratories and workshops first before highlighting the South African documentaries that would be making their world premiere at the festival.[394] This structure continued into 2007 with the SABC and NFVF each occupying a significant portion of the programme, each expressing the institutional objectives in funding Encounters, summarised as the desire to continue funding spaces that encouraged industry development and facilitating co-production opportunities between filmmakers and broadcasters.[395] This progress showcases the changing economic landscape of the South African film industry, highlighting how Encounters as a film festival facilitated these developments by bridging the gap between broadcasters and filmmakers.

2008 and Onwards

South Africa's transition to a democracy can be traced through the history of South African film festivals. By examining festival programmes such as those curated for Encounters, we can explore the various thematic considerations during the early post-apartheid years. In 2008, the Encounters festival themed its event a 'Decade of Democracy' and curated its film festival programme around this theme.[396] The ideological ethos of this year's festival was summarised as the reflection of three key questions: "where we are as a society, where we have come and where we are going?",[397] proposing to its audience a film programme spanning multiple decades, deeply rooted in South Africa's film history. The festival screened a selection of films from the National Film, Video and Sound Archives, under the heading "Our national archives are our collective memory",[398] implying a connection between film, archives and national memory or heritage.

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[393] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *5th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 5*, pp. 4-5.
[394] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *6th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 6*, pp. 5-9.
[395] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *Encounters South African Documentary Film Festival 9*, pp. 8-13.
[396] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *6th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 6*, p. 1.
[397] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *6th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 6*, p. 11.
[398] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *6th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 6*, p. 11.

The programme brochure for 2008 states that the purpose of this apartheid-era selection was to show "how an unequal and distorted society perceived and projected itself",[399] further emphasising the need for South African audiences and filmmakers to reflect on such projections. Additionally, workshops such as "History is Contemporary"[400] furthered these previously mentioned associations, proposing to audiences and filmmakers questions regarding the relevance of history in documentary films and the importance of historical documentaries. It is therefore evident that the social and political landscape of South Africa has influenced the structures of film festivals nationally, as is the case with the 2008 Encounters festival. Encounters, through its programming and additional proceedings, came to represent not only topical film industry developments but a larger socio-political conversation that addressed national and public interests.

Another example of Encounters as a historical lens is the festival's aim to address existing social, political and economic legacies of the past. As noted by the NFVF, Encounters works closely with various organisations in "growing the festival and making it more accessible to a majority of South Africans who do not have access to the film industry",[401] with the mandate of inclusivity and transformation being of primary consideration. Mandisa Zitha, current festival director, explains the challenges South African film festivals face in hosting a creative event in primarily urban areas when the legacy of apartheid is still felt through the spatial geography. "Designed in a very discriminatory way",[402] this spatial geography negatively impacts black communities as a result of the Group Areas Act of 1950, limiting the access of previously marginalised groups to urban areas.[403] Access to affordable transportation and ticket prices are, therefore, vital considerations for festivals such as Encounters, and Zitha states that the government places inclusivity and diversity objectives as a strategic imperative when allocating funding.

Murphy acknowledges this as a primary concern for the festival during its inception and early years; tickets and transportation were provided to black township communities in an attempt

[399] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *6th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 6*, p. 7.
[400] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *6th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 6*, p. 6.
[401] S. Smit, 'NFVF Says 'Abrupt' Encounters Fest Funding Withdrawal Was Due Process', *Mail & Guardian,* 2018, Available at: https://mg.co.za/article/2018-06-05-nfvf-says-abrupt-encounters-fest-funding-withdrawal-was-due-process/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[402] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 32:06.
[403] Union of South Africa, *Group Areas Act of 1950,* 1950, Available at: https://blogs.loc.gov/law/files/2014/01/Group-Areas-Act-1950.pdf, Access: 23 September 2023.

to cultivate a cinema-going audience across all of South Africa's populace.[404] Murphy, however, explains in the film that these attempts did not meet black audiences in their immediate social environments, elaborating that the challenge faced by festival organisers was the lack of suitable cinema venues for black audiences in township areas. Murphy explains that Encounters instead chose to focus on connecting directly with black township filmmakers to develop sustained audience engagement rather than providing a subpar cinema experience for black audiences.[405] Encounters in more recent years has built upon this partnership and continues to try to decentralise its event as much as possible. In the film, Zitha explains that current South African audiences, particularly black audiences, face economic and transportation limitations as a result of apartheid legislation and thus Encounters hosts itsevent across multiple locations.[406]

Another example is the Close Encounters Documentary Laboratory that started in 2003, which provided a space for South African filmmakers to discuss the legacy and impact apartheid racial classifications have had on the industry today and the available opportunities or lack thereof for filmmakers as a result of this.[407] As highlighted by Brunow, film and video workshops are under-researched despite the acknowledged impact these forms of collective engagement have on understanding filmmaking trends.[408]

Through this laboratory, Encounters facilitated the creation and commissioning of new films under the title "Black on White"[409] in response to the apartheid slogan "whites only - slegs blankes",[410] attempting to counteract the dominant social discourse that saw white filmmakers making films about black identities but not the other way around. This laboratory thus screened a series of documentaries "made by black filmmakers about whites",[411] providing not only a theorical space of discussion but a practical implementation of these discussions, screening the results of workshop conversations.

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[404] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 33:17.
[405] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 33:32.
[406] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 32:35.
[407] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *5th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 5*, p. 10.
[408] D. Brunow, 'Before YouTube and Indymedia', p. 172.
[409] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *6th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 6*, p. 4.
[410] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *6th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 6*, p. 4.
[411] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *6th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 6*, p. 4.

Festival Funding in a Post-1994 South Africa

While film festivals such as DIFF existed prior to democratic governance and operated largely independently, Encounters has only ever existed within a democratic national framework. Funding of documentaries by the state, bar propaganda films produced by the National Film Broad during apartheid, was non-existent up until 1978.[412] And, as previously acknowledged in chapter 1, later state subsidies did not provide funding for the types of films showcased at culturally resistant film festivals. Post-1994, film festivals were no longer viewed as sites of contentious political opposition against the state but as spaces for filmmakers to evolve and mature in their craft.[413]

Documentaries were now viewed as offering "a rare and important glimpse into the soul of our nation".[414] Post-1994, South African directors described documentaries as going "hand in hand with democracy",[415] presenting film festival spaces such as Encounters as sites facilitating this democratic interest and exploration. Zitha elaborated on this further, explaining that during the early years of the post-apartheid period, "there were more structural frameworks being built around the creative sector"[416] with foundations such as the NFVF and broadcasters such as the SABC considering supporting film festivals, which "immediately recognised a need to fund film festivals".[417] This highlights the development of new links between film festival structures and national entities during this post-1994 period as the introduction of democratic policies greatly increased national funding incentives and opportunities for South African filmmakers.

The Swiss Arts Council was the initial financier of the festival and has continued to contribute each year, with other foreign film councils such as The British Council and Holland Film contributing financially during the festival's earlier years.[418] The 2004 festival programme provides the first official documented evidence of the NFVF and SABC's financial sponsorship of the event, with the SABC's inclusion now going beyond just commissioning for SABC 1. Zitha assessed Encounters' experience with funding and sponsorships as subject to "micro and macro influences",[419] expressing that the landscape of South African funding had changed significantly in the last 15 years. These two economic partnerships are key in understanding

[412] K. Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film,* p. 198.
[413] N. Sonnekus, 'Reality Gets Reel Life', p. 3.
[414] K. Whitty, 'Group Therapy', *Weekly Mail & Guardian,* 2004, p. 13.
[415] K. Whitty, 'Group Therapy', p. 13.
[416] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 36:37.
[417] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 37:05.
[418] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters 2*, p. 1.
[419] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 36:30.

Encounters as an event through which we can examine the historical and current aspirations and experiences of South African filmmakers.

SABC

During the mid to late 2000s the SABC sustained the South African documentary industry by commissioning and screening independent documentaries while working closely with film festivals to further increase the number of South African productions being produced each year.[420] The year 2007 was important for Encounters with the Gauteng Film Commission reporting "a record number of over 500 films from around the world"[421] screened at the festival that year. That year also saw an increase in national and local programming by the SABC due to larger national influences and directives by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA). The ICASA was established under the auspices of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa Amendment Act of 2000, later amended in 2005. ICASA is responsible for regulating telecommunications, broadcasting and postal industries in South Africa under the guise of public interest and to ensure high quality affordable services are provided for all South Africans.[422] In compliance with high local content quotas set by ICASA, the SABC during its financial year of 2006/07 "released its largest number of commissioning briefs yet"[423] and this increased commissioning is reported to have had a substantially positive effect on the national independent filmmaking industry. Moreover, the SABC and NFVF hosted a number of industry masterclasses at the 9th Encounters festival, working closely with the film festival to further increase commissioning opportunities.[424] The SABC's increased commissioning in 2007 and its partnership with Encounters under the influence of the ICASA highlight the growing public interest in local productions and content.[425]

However, this increased commissioning did not necessarily translate to financial success nor increased broadcasting for South African films. This is due to the alleged influence of national government interests. In this same year, 2007, the SABC faced allegations of "repeatedly

[420] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 37:19.
[421] Webmaster, 2007, http://gautengfilm.org.za/2007/07/encounters-back-in-town/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[422] Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, N/A, https://www.icasa.org.za/pages/our-mandate, Access: 20 September 2023.
[423] C. de Jager, 'SABC Ups Local Programme Spending', *Variety*, 2007, Available at: https://variety.com/2007/tv/news/sabc-ups-local-programme-spending-1117956864/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[424] Webmaster, 2007, http://gautengfilm.org.za/2007/07/encounters-back-in-town/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[425] M. Botha, *South African Cinema 1896-2010,* p. 151.

refusing to run a mildly critical documentary"[426] about then-current South African President Thabo Mbeki "even though it had commissioned the programme",[427] illustrating a key contradiction in the broadcaster's mandate; by failing to uphold their financing commissions and distribute South African independent documentaries on its channels the SABC was acceding to government agenda and pressure. This, as well as the example of Sithengi, highlights that festivals were not immune to political pressures. It further entrenches the point that festivals are contextually bound to economic, political as well as industry agendas and objectives.

Yet, by 2008, the SABC was encountering major financial crises. By August 2008 the SABC was forced to end its SABC Africa programming broadcasts which included the broadcasting of South African and African documentaries, effectively reducing the spaces available for documentarians to screen their films nationally.[428] Still, the SABC was an active partner and sponsor of the 10th Encounters festival in 2008, participating in both debate discussions and roundtable meetings with filmmakers attending the festival, which provided the opportunity for filmmakers to attend one-on-one meetings with commissioning editors from the broadcaster.[429] However, later reports in 2009 alleged that due to a "general lack of prudential financial management"[430] the SABC over a period of four years from 2004 to 2008 had doubled its yearly expenditure from R797 million to R1.35 billion. In addition to this, the end of the financial year 2008/09 saw the broadcaster reporting a loss of R910 million, forcing the broadcaster to seek government bailout.[431] While "the economic downturn inevitably impacted the SABC's revenue",[432] the broadcaster's financial situation was largely blamed on national and interpersonal conflicts within the company. This led to the SABC withdrawing as a major funder of the festival, neither sponsoring nor participating in the event in 2009.[433]

[426] Staff Reporter, 'SABC Under Fire After Breaking Ranks', *Mail & Guardian,* 2007, Available at: https://mg.co.za/article/2007-09-05-sabc-under-fire-after-breaking-ranks/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[427] Staff Reporter, 'SABC Under Fire After Breaking Ranks'.
[428] Staff Reporter, 'SABC Africa To Go Off Air For Now', *Mail & Guardian*, 2008, Available at: http://mg.co.za/article/2008-07-14-sabc-africa-to-go-off-air-for-now/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[429] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *10th South African Documentary Film Festival Encounters,* pp. 8 -9.
[430] ANON, 'SABC Driven Off a Cliff', *News24*, 2009, Available at: http://www.news24.com/news24/sabc-driven-off-a-cliff-20090623, Access: 20 September 2023.
[431] Staff Reporter, 'SABC Loses R910-Million in 2008/09 Financial Year', *Mail & Guardian*, 2009, Available at: https://mg.co.za/article/2009-12-18-sabc-loses-r910million-in-200809-finacial-year/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[432] Staff Reporter, 'SABC Loses R910-Million in 2008/09 Financial Year'.
[433] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *Encounters South African Documentary Film Festival 2009,* p. 62.

Zitha points to this withdrawal of funding by the SABC as a key turning point for the festival as it lost its institutional support, going further to reason that the festival still hasn't fully recovered from this loss.[434] Describing the experience of planning the 2009 festival as "challenging and enlightening",[435] Zitha, who was also the festival director during this time, refers to the negative impact of the global financial recession on Encounters and the film industry at large, also acknowledging the substantial loss of funding due to the SABC's withdrawal.[436]

NFVF

Another key national funding and development agency established during the post-1994 period was the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF). It was founded in 1997 and became the "festival's largest funder".[437] An agency within the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture, the NFVF was established to encourage the growth and development of the South African film industry.[438] The NFVF's sponsorship and partnership with Encounters illustrates this close relationship between the state and the film industry, consequently highlighting the complex nature of such a relationship.

In addition to hosting masterclasses and discussion forums at the festival, the NFVF has remained a financial partner with Encounters from 2004 until the most recent festival in 2023.[439] The only year the NFVF failed to sponsor the event was in 2018 as a result of internal leadership issues in the foundation. The abrupt withdrawal of this funding attracted extensive media coverage, exposing key institutional failings by the foundation to fulfil its mandate. Allegations of political failings relating to activities of corruption and mismanagement of funds, in addition to the resignation of the NFVF's Chief Executive Officer at the time, Zama Mkosi, days prior to the opening night of Encounters, led to speculation that the withdrawal of funding was due to the inadequacy of available funds as a result of leadership corruption.[440] Furthermore, the NFVF was accused of claiming it "doesn't have money to support South

[434] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 37:58.
[435] M. Zitha, Interviewed by Justine Binedell via Zoom, 12 July 2023, Durban & Cape Town.
[436] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, *Encounters South African Documentary Film Festival 2009,* p. 1.
[437] S. Smit, 'NFVF Says 'Abrupt' Encounters Fest Funding Withdrawal Was Due Process'.
[438] NFVF, 2024, https://www.nfvf.co.za/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[439] Encounters South African International Documentary Festival, 2023, https://2023.encounters.co.za/, Access: 20 September 2023.
[440] P. Bambalele, 'Reasons for Zama Mkosi's NFVF Resignation Under Wraps', *Sowetanlive*, 2018, Available at: https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2018-06-04-reasons-for-zama-mkosis-nfvf-resignation-under-wraps/, Access: 19 September 2023.

Africa's own local film festivals and documentary filmmakers";[441] investigations accused the foundation of squandering "money on luxury trips to different film festivals"[442] such at the 71st Cannes Film Festival in France. Describing festival funding as a "tightrope",[443] Freddy Ogterop (Programmer for Encounters) attests that funding in recent years for South African film festivals such as Encounters has been increasingly unstable, with festival organisers only receiving confirmation near to or on opening night that funding had been approved.[444] While DIFF and the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival were able to operate largely independently through private financing structures, the experience of Encounters, and Sithengi illustrates how South African film festivals in a post-1994 context increasingly found themselves beholden to national financing structures, and thus subject to economic crisis when these structures faced management and corruption disputes.

Conclusion

The evolution of Encounters as a festival reflects the lasting socio-cultural impact of apartheid and the changing relationship between state funding and South African cinema. Initially catering to audiences accustomed to foreign films due to the censorship of domestic content during apartheid, the festival recognized the need to cultivate a local audience. The Encounters film festival illustrates this through its programming, particularly with its focus in earlier years on showcasing apartheid-era films and historical documentaries, stimulating reflection and engagement with a film past previously hidden. The establishment of this festival coincided with a post-1994 desire to revitalize the film industry, provide new platforms for black filmmakers and attract national broadcasters like the SABC and ETV to invest in domestic film media. Unlike pre-1994 independent festivals like DIFF, Encounters thrived in a democratic framework that showed an increase in national funding structures. While funding structures such as the SABC and NFVF initially provided crucial support, the SABC particularly emphasised the economic and political influences and constraints of a festival's larger national environment. This highlights the vulnerability of film festivals and the economic vulnerability of independent South African filmmakers post-1994. Encounters serves as a lens through which we can examine the apartheid's lingering effects, the rise of a post-apartheid film industry, and the complex relationship between state funding and South African creative expression.

[441] T. Ferreira, 'Beleaguered NFVF Abruptly Pulls Funding of Encounters Documentary Festival', *News 24,* 2018, Available at: https://www.news24.com/life/beleaguered-nfvf-abruptly-pulls-funding-of-encounters-documentary-festival-20180604, Access: 20 September 2023.
[442] P. Bambalele, 'Reasons for Zama Mkosi's NFVF Resignation Under Wraps'.
[443] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 38:57.
[444] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 38:46.

Chapter 7 - A Festival of Archives: Conclusion of Study

South African film festivals provide a new visual repository for scholarly research. Film festivals at large provide individuals with opportunities for creative, social and political engagement. The structural framework of a festival allows this engagement and development to take place, employing the use of discussion forums, curated film programmes and audience participation to drive this experience. The diverse nature of film festivals internationally embodies this principle, each aiming to address the demands of its cinema-going audience. Film festivals also, however, set agendas for audiences, not just reflecting audience tastes and demands but also shaping them as evident in the information provided by Nodi Murphy, one of the co-founders of the Encounters festival.

The historical context of South Africa and its relationship with film and visual media are vital in understanding the core characteristics of a South African film festival and the evolution of these events pre- and post-1994. Considering the last of Marijke de Valck's four categories of evaluating and defining a film festival, it has been highlighted that in order to understand the current operational practices of South African film festivals, an understanding of the history of restrictions regionally and nationally regarding films and public spaces is necessary.[445] Lindiwe Dovey's argument that African film festivals are commonly associated with community gatherings and spaces is evidenced when examining this historical context of state censorship during apartheid.[446] The origins of film societies and film festivals as a result of increasing state censorship and film regulation legislation significantly shaped the role film festivals played in showcasing visual material to those denied access to public film venues and media deemed 'undesirable' by the state during apartheid.

As illustrated in the accompanying film, film festivals, especially pre-1994, provided not just an alternative experience to that of commercial cinema, but also alternative spaces for engaging with issues that may have been deemed subversive by a repressive apartheid government. DIFF and the *Weekly Mail* festivals illustrate this aspect of festivals as spaces of subversion, and in the case of the *Weekly Mail*, more overt resistance. Apart from festivals as alternative spaces, festivals also function as alternative or counter-archives, providing information that adds to and fills the lacunae in traditional archives. To illustrate this, one can consider the list of banned film titles that are to be found in the National Film, Video and Sound Archives which tells us a

[445] M. de Valck, 'Introduction: What Is a Film Festival? How To Study Festivals and Why You Should', p. 2.
[446] L. Dovey, 'African Film Festivals in Africa: Curating "African Audiences" for "African Films"', p.13.

part of the censorship history but there is little information about the non-commercial circulation of media that escaped the censor board.[447] We can derive this information from, for example, the DIFF screening programme. Film festivals allow one to pivot away from, instead of centring analysis on what was not shown to the public and thus archiving the position of state power structures. An analysis centring on public response and engagement is foregrounded, hence the voice of the marginalised, non-dominant and everyday man/woman is documented.[448] However, in the case of especially DIFF, one has to bear in mind that the common, everyday man/woman was of a particular racial and social demographic, largely middle class, liberal white South Africans. This changes with later festivals, especially the *Weekly Mail*, and the two post-1994 festivals. Given this, a study of film festivals, especially in the South African context, also documents a history of changing audience demographics. This is another way in which film festivals function as counter-archives, particularly in the domain of reception studies and histories. The record of film festival programmes and the reflection of festival attendees on the types of films showcased at film festivals further illustrate this counter-archival practice by documenting the films distributed and viewed by the public during this period. Therefore, South African film festivals like DIFF document the engagement of predominantly white South Africans, under conditions of cultural isolation, with South African and foreign film media. DIFF audiences pre-1994 were largely white, and black engagement with this festival remained constrained by spatial apartheid up until the advent of democracy in 1994.

Evident, when analysing South African film festivals such as the Durban International Film Festival and the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival, these events arose because of the larger national socio-political environment of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. While each responded to apartheid restrictions and censorship differently, these responses profoundly impacted how South African audiences engaged not only with film but socio-cultural and political ideologies. In view of this one cannot say that film festivals accurately reflected a national film canon, particularly not during the apartheid era. Apartheid era 'national' cinema was narrowly defined as films for white audiences with films for black audiences defined as ethnic cinema which belonged to the ethnic homelands.[449] The two festivals which were established in the post-1994 period, namely Sithengi and Encounters, were attempts to counteract this absence of a national

[447] *Curating a Counter-Archive,* Directed by J. Binedell, [Documentary], 13:09.
[448] M. De Groof, 'Counter-Archive in Palimpsest of the Africa Museum', p. 19.
[449] G. Paleker, ''Ethnic Films' for Ethnic Homelands: 'Black Films' and Separate Development in Apartheid South Africa, 1972–1979', *South African Historical Journal* 63(1), 2011, p. 130.

film canon and foster cinematic inclusivity not only in representations of black people on screen but also in developing opportunities for filmmaking. It is arguably with these two later festivals and post-1994 DIFF that Vallejo's point about a national film canon reflecting national interests, and the larger social political discourses, becomes more relevant.[450] A film festival's engagement with a national film canon therefore only becomes a possibility in post-1994 South Africa when 'national' is not racially defined in terms of apartheid racial ideology.

The *Weekly Mail* Film Festival arguably illustrates this conceptualisation more clearly but the impact of the Durban International Film Festival during this time cannot be understated. By incorporating the historical understanding of the cultural boycott and its impact on South Africa, it can be argued that foreign cinema and media restricted and banned by the apartheid government had, because of this exclusion, acquired the characterisation of a 'marginal' cinema which was contradictory to the dominant media cultural landscape sanctified by the state. Furthermore, DIFF today continues to promote itself as an internationally focused festival, demonstrating the impact of the festival's pre-1994 curation as a result of its reaction to the international cultural boycott of South African cultural products.

As documented in the film and in Chapter 3, DIFF showcased a variety of films but is largely remembered for its curation of foreign European films. This provided a cinematically starved white audience with opportunities to consume and engage with films that were not commercially available on the mainstream cinema circuits. Many of these films were highly censored for commercial distribution but not for festival screening. This firstly illustrates that censorship was not all-encompassing. Secondly, it illustrates, as argued in Chapter 3, that the apartheid governement possibly viewed limited circulation of 'undesirable' films to liberal whites as a form of methadone treatment. As a result of this, one can further argue, as evident in Chapter 3, that pre-1994 DIFF functioned as a 'quietly' subversive space, permitting liberal white South Africans a glimpse of different worlds not defined by apartheid. Consequently, the inclusion of media challenging or merely depicting an alternative reality to that of apartheid was introduced and consumed by this audience and arguably contributed to the dismantling of the ideological framework that entrenched apartheid segregationist practices physically. This festival created a global link for South Africans to a broader international film discourse by exposing attendees to content contrary to the status quo. This content proved to be a less overt

[450] A. Vallejo, 'Rethinking the canon: the role of film festivals in shaping film history', p. 155.

challenge, subverting state control under the auspices of only showcasing films to a select audience.

This subversion of censorship policies in reality did not remain confined to a select audience. As made evident in Chapter 3, the inclusion of black university and township audiences was also a vital focus of the festival. The types of films screened at these venues are documented as politically influential, promoting response and discussion from these viewers. Moreover, DIFF's partnership with black communities, university students and businesses at this time highlights the multidimensional elements that allow a film festival to contribute to the creation of a counter-archive knowledge base. These historic relationships have been foundational in the festival's current development mandates, with the festival attempting to provide greater opportunities for black South African filmmakers, facilitating the development of skills and providing avenues for non-commercial distribution. In essence, the current foci and mandates of South African film festivals can be understood as consequential of apartheid regulations around screenings, multiracial audiences and the increased skilling of more black filmmakers. This contemporary desire, to not only facilitate but contribute to the growth of a multiracial audience and new national filmmaking traditions, illustrates the value of festivals as a new source of information in analysing the historical changes of the broader South African film industry.

The *Weekly Mail* Film Festival further disrupted apartheid's grip on film consumption by unapologetically screening films of resistance. The social and political landscape of a racially segregated South Africa greatly impacted the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival and the event framework it adopted. This festival used film and its event as a tool to vocalise resistance discourses, providing an avenue for filmmakers and attendees alike to participate actively in forming these discourses, arguably, laying a foundation for later post-1994 festivals and the active role South African film festivals play in providing previously marginalised groups with access and skills development.[451] The programmes of the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival illustrate the politicised nature of this festival, recording an active and rebellious consumption of oppositional media, which highlights alternative documentation relating to censorship in South Africa pre-1994.

The first phase of the festival's events provided a new form of social commentary and resistance for South African journalists and creatives, politically curating its film programme

[451] M.P. Botha, 'South African Short Filmmaking From 1980 To 1995: A Thematic Exploration', p. 5.

themes each year. With film programmes including mainly South African filmmakers, the W*eekly Mail* Film Festival quickly established itself as a radical media outlet and encountered increased retaliation from the NP government as a result. The festival however continued to showcase oppositional media, screening films to white and black audiences, regardless of censorship restrictions. The *Weekly Mail* Film Festival is therefore a valuable source for tracing the development of an oppositional South African film tradition during apartheid.

The second phase of the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival contextualises the contemporary South African film festival framework. Structured along themes of freedom - politically, socially and ideologically - this phase of festivals began to introduce more individually driven narratives and content that didn't revolve solely around the socio-political climate of apartheid South Africa. While issues of censorship and state control were still largely present at the festival, these themes were presented to audiences for future reflection. The festival's final iteration for the first time occupied itself chiefly with international cinema, promoting itself as a site of global exchange where previous years had only incorporated this element peripherally. This shift by the *Weekly Mail* Film Festival documents the changing South African film canon of the early 1990s and provides a new source of enquiry for this period.

The presence of national funding structures at Encounters and Sithengi provides vital documentation of the early 2000s period of economic, social and political transition. The increased sponsorship of film festivals by state-affiliated entities highlights the broader economic and political policies being implemented in South Africa, attempting to increase the export of South African cultural products internationally. These two festivals have played a key role in shaping the South African film industry's post-apartheid trajectory.

The Sithengi Film and Television Market was a significant factor in this international push. While Sithengi marketed itself as an African-centred event, critics argued the event was still largely beholden to Western and European film aesthetics and financing structures. In a post-1994 context of 'righting past wrongs', Sithengi's vision of African-centredness and inclusivity generated significant interest and support. As evident in the film, this interest and excitement centred on the opening up of a national discourse on the future direction of South African cinema, aesthetically, narratively and ideologically. However, given the funding model Sithengi adopted, it was forced to tread a fine line between fulfilling its African-centred cinematic vision and financial viability, hence the critiques about its financing structure.

Financial constraints along with an enlarged, and possibly unwieldy, vision, contributed to its ultimate demise.

However, despite its short lifespan, Sithengi achieved a modicum of success in broadening its reach, combining local audience experiences with those of international film producers, distributors and businesses. In contrast to festivals pre-1994, Sithengi's festival component, the Cape Town World Cinema Festival, was only incorporated formally into the event in later years. However, despite this, Sithengi prior to 2003 incorporated festival elements into its event by creating a product screening event, a World Cinema Screening event and participating in the Cape Town Film Week. Sithengi therefore did not function solely as a film market but employed some of the structural frameworks of a festival in order to promote its economic agendas. It is through these festival elements that one can trace the thematic shift in South African cinema post-1994. This shift can be described as the shifts in film narratives that explored themes of identity, belonging and cultural complexities, examining new voices and identities that were marginalised during apartheid.

The Encounters South African International Documentary Festival allows us to reflect on the post-apartheid development of South Africa's national film industry and its relationship with audiences, state funding, and international collaboration. By prioritising South African filmmakers and documentaries, Encounters addressed the growing need to cultivate a local documentary film industry and cater to an audience that had been culturally and cinematically isolated for decades. Encounters represents the increased focus of film festivals, in post-1994 South Africa, on the development of skills for South African filmmakers, illustrating a move away from highly content- and thematic-driven festivals such as the *Weekly Mail* towards an event focused on working and developing within the national film industry framework.

A counter-archive has been conceived as an alternate source of historical information distinct from the dominant archive. Traditionally archives have been established to preserve written documents that reflected the elite classes and their narratives, either marginalizing or ignoring subaltern voices. Consequently, they have remained inaccessible to the general public due to either social, political or economic hindrances and at times limited due to preservation constraints. A counter-archive provides us with new methods and sources through which we can engage with the past but also assist in constructing new historiographies of said past by highlighting marginalized voices. By using film festivals as a counter-archival source an alternative narrative of the past is constructed. Instead of focusing on power structures of the

state and the 'nation', a closer examination of marginal experiences can be highlighted. This is perhaps best illustrated by the way in which this research has permitted a more complex reading of apartheid film censorship. Furthermore, the research has elucidated the gaps film festivals filled in connecting South Africa, both during and after apartheid, to global cinema. The use of film as a tool of resistance and opposition is illustrated overwhelmingly when viewing a film festival as an archival source. Social, economic and political influences regionally, nationally and internationally can be re-examined through film festival records, visual records and oral history and not only through written sources. The incorporation of oral traditions and the presentation of information visually ties into this counter-archival practice, attempting to allow the voices of those behind festival frameworks to record their past and document the multidimensional elements that make up their experiences.

Documentary

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Documentary Link

The documentary component of this research is viewable via the link and/or the video below:

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