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The Politics of Representation in South African Museums

Ayanda Ngcobo

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“Most people have little or no say in the depiction of their own history in textbook, libraries and research institutions [museums]. The meaning portrayed about Africans is painful to recall. Our museums represented the kind of heritage which glorified whites’ activities and colonial history.”
(Nelson Mandela, 1997)

ABSTRACT

Politics are an integral part of our museums, and, in light of the question of power this paper aims to unpack the politics of representation in South African museums in the post-apartheid era. I argue that the politics of the colonial era and apartheid era still prevail in South African museums today. In South African politics during apartheid, certain race groups had privileges over the others, and museums and public commemorations were affected. Museums represented the power holders, their concepts of museology, of public commemoration and society. In apartheid South Africa, the focus was on white control and Afrikaner Nationalism. Following the first democratic elections

of 1994, the focus in representations in the heritage sector, thus in museums, shifted to reconciliation (as the country was divided in a way that certain groups were deprived of basic human rights) and nation building. There were major policy changes to enforce transformation. McGregor & Schumaker (2006) pointed out that state-led commemorations were selective, liable to elevate the ruling party ignoring the youth and women. Kratz (2011) placed emphasis on the importance of rhetorics of value in museums. Rhetorics of value invoke a range of experiences, deal with thematic content, thread throughout an exhibition or museum conveying ways objects are treated and presented, and are also related to visitors' own identities, judgments and perceptions of worth (Kratz, 2011). There are a number of techniques that one can apply to study the politics of museums. I will use this concept to analyse the museums within eThekweni Municipality and unpack the politics of representation. This paper pays attention to the emphasis on representing settler histories and male leaders and questions how women and Africans are represented in museums.

Key words: Representation, politics, settler, museums.

RÉSUMÉ

Les politiques de représentation dans les musées sud-africains

La politique fait partie intégrante de nos musées et, à la lumière de la question du pouvoir, cet article vise à explorer les politiques de représentation dans les musées sud-africains à l'ère de l'apartheid. Je soutiens que les politiques de l'époque coloniale et de l'apartheid prévalent encore dans les musées sud-africains aujourd'hui. Durant l'apartheid, certains groupes raciaux avaient des privilèges sur les autres, cette politique affectant les musées ainsi que les commémorations publiques. Les musées représentaient les détenteurs du pouvoir mais aussi leurs conceptions de la muséologie, des commémorations publiques et de la société. En Afrique du Sud au temps de l'apartheid, l'accent était mis sur le contrôle par les blancs et le nationalisme afrikaner. À la suite des premières élections démocratiques de 1994, les représentations dans le secteur du patrimoine, donc dans les musées, se sont concentrées sur la réconciliation (le pays étant divisé de manière à priver certains groupes des droits humains fondamentaux) et à édifier la nation. Des changements majeurs ont été apportés à la politique pour imposer cette transformation. McGregor & Schumaker (2006) ont souligné que les commémorations dirigées alors par l'État étaient sélectives, susceptibles d'élever le parti au pouvoir en ignorant les jeunes et les femmes. Kratz (2011) a mis l'accent sur l'importance de la rhétorique utilisée dans les musées. Ces rhétoriques se déclinent en une gamme d'expériences, de contenus thématiques, illustrant tout au long des

expositions ou des musées des manières de traiter et de présenter les objets. Elles sont également liées à l'identité, aux jugements et aux perceptions des visiteurs (Kratz, 2011). Il existe un certain nombre de techniques que l'on peut appliquer pour étudier la politique des musées. J'utilise ce concept pour analyser les musées de la municipalité d'eThekweni et révéler leur politique de représentation. Cet article met l'accent sur la représentation de l'histoire de colons et des leaders masculins et s'interroge sur la représentation des femmes et des Africains dans les musées.

Mots-clés : représentation, politique, colon, musée.



Introduction

It is important to note that history chronicles past events as they unfolded, and, on the other hand, heritage encompasses our past that is worth celebrating. It is a historical fact that black South Africans were oppressed for decades under colonial rule and apartheid, and it is heritage worth celebrating that they were able to overcome oppression and the country became democratic. History and heritage are interlinked and museum professionals mainly consist of historians. Museums are public heritage and seek to present public memories and are also places of public engagement. The hegemony of European dominated museum exhibition dates from when the first museum was established in South Africa. Attention is paid to settler histories and male leaders, and the representation of women and Africans as a society is in question. To understand this, it is imperative to look at the politics of representation from a global perspective, then look at the background of South African museums and some of the changes in the post-apartheid era. It is important to note that efforts have been made to transform museums, however the museums established during apartheid have not been drastically transformed to represent the people of South Africa and the status quo has not been adequately changed. The efforts can be seen in policy changes and the establishment of new museums, but it is questionable how much transformation has been applied in museums that existed in the pre-democratic era and what informs representations of history and society in museums.

The politics of representation

This paper is concerned with the politics of representation in South African museums; it studies exhibitions in two museums that represent national history. Debate on the politics of representation has been welcomed by scholars from different parts of the world. It is important to note that the politics of

representation is about power dynamics in what is represented, by whom, and the purpose for which it is represented. It embodies different aspects that include language, context, perspective, social meanings and the political atmosphere of a place. The museums that are the focus of this study opened during apartheid and represent the hegemony of European rule. There are a number of other countries in different parts of the world that also were colonised by Europeans. Museums were established in those countries and also represent the hegemony of European rule, disregarding or misinterpreting other groups. It is also apparent that patriarchy is a global phenomenon and museums also represented the power of men; women fell under the marginalised groups, and even European women were marginalised. This section offers a discussion of the politics of representation from different parts of the world with emphasis on groups that were marginalised by colonial authorities. Pre-colonial societies, mostly in Africa, relied on oral tradition to pass on history and heritage from generation to generation. Europeans wrote books; these books were based on their interpretations of the people they encountered, and they were at liberty about how to chronicle events of the past. As Africans participated in formal education, schools administered by Europeans, the books that were used were written by Europeans, and other forms of transferring knowledge were dominated by them. After decades of colonisation, post-colonial societies suffered with the hegemony trap and South Africa is not an exception to that. Gender, race and culture remain dominant in the study of museum representations.

Politics of representation and the non-Europeans

Society in general treats museums and archives as barriers of knowledge and what they see in museum displays as unquestionable facts. Desai (2000) outlines that representation can be understood as a historically determined construction that is mediated by social, ideological and cultural processes; however many forms of representation are presented as facts using selective processes that define, order, classify, and name social reality. Power holders and, in most cases, government structures are able to make decisions about what aspects of history are represented in museums and what is celebrated as public heritage. Museums arose as complements to the formation of European nation states, and in the rest of the world they developed as a colonist phenomenon (De Gorgas, 2016). Methods of analysis of culture and heritage were imposed by European countries upon non-European countries (De Gorgas, 2016). This is why one would find statues and museum displays in India, for instance, that look the same as those you would find in South Africa. These statues and museum displays would not be representative of Indians nor Africans but rather of colonial power. For example, in the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata, India, one found statues that are identical to the ones found in the city centre of Durban, South Africa. The notion of European imposition on non-European identities has been expanded in various debates.

Desai (2000) argues that the marginalised criticize dominant modes of representation as they produce and perpetuate stereotypes. They also represent what those with power think of them and how they interpret their history and cultural heritage. Dos Santos (2005) in her paper on the representation of black people in Brazil argued that museum narratives either silence or exaggerate the race issue and operate by means of denial and the use of stereotypes. In her paper, she found it critical to unpack the concept of race and stated, 'The concept of race is a social construction that supposes differences between groups of human beings to be fixed and natural (biological and hereditary), limiting each individual member or group of a fundamental type. The concept has mostly served dominant groups who wish to mark off other groups as inferior' (Dos Santos, 2005, p. 52). It is also critical in the South African discourse, as race has been used to define people and for apartheid's divide and rule strategy that still poses a challenge in the country today. De Gorgas (2016) further argues, 'The museum that arises from a hegemonic political project remembers 'Black' identities solely to place them in the frame of the past history, thereby crystallizing their figures in history as subaltern people and slaves in the public imagination' (p. 298). This paper is mainly concerned about the representation of black people and women in South African museums, and De Gorgas' analysis is imperative in understanding the politics of representation, especially of the previously marginalised and neglected. White supremacy continues to be supported in museums from the early beginning of African slavery to the present day (De Gorgas, 2016). It is therefore not surprising for the racially and culturally marginalised to have deep concerns about meanings produced with regards to their history, culture and experience (Desai, 2000). Even though white supremacy continues, it does not go unchallenged; different parts of the world, including South Africa, have criticised how museums support the superiority of white people.

In Brazil, like other parts of the Americas and Africa, black movements have been influenced by political actions against racial inequality in the United States of America (Dos Santos, 2005). Initiatives on the black history of Afro-Brazilians led to the creation of the Afro-Brazilian Museum, which opened only in 1982, and another in 1988 through an agreement between Brazil and several African nations (Dos Santos, 2005). The politics of the time, the growth of black movements in that part of the world, influenced the changes in heritage projects. In the post-colonial era of different states, multiculturalism emerged as a way of promoting and representing diversity and to redress imbalances of representation. It was adopted in South Africa and promoted both in policies and through the media. However, Desai (2000) argues that multiculturalism needs to address complex relationships between subjectivity and power in relation to culture. Desai further asserts that it has been criticised for often speaking for entire groups of subordinate people and thereby positions them in relation to the dominant group; additionally, she states that representations in multiculturalism are positioned in relation to unequal power dynamics (Desai, 2000). What is exhibited as history, values, beliefs and identities of the

community in major museums are in fact representations of certain powerful groups in society (Desai, 2000). However, there are exceptional cases where the experiences of ordinary people are presented in exhibitions, but the process is guided by powerful groups in most cases. Desai suggests that the relationship between representation and power be analysed in terms of historical moments, locales and subject positions that arise out of the complex network of domination and subordination. However, there is a question of how the previously marginalized are presented when these changes are being made, who informs what is represented, and what happens to the existing representations. In the case of South Africa, there are notable developments, however, previous exhibitions have not been adequately challenged and transformed. In emerging multicultural nations like South Africa, cultural identity, social justice, productive diversity and civic engagement are fundamental for their diverse citizenship (Galla, 2016). Galla also analyses problematic issues that are in the way of redressing past imbalances of biased representation. In addition, gender needs to be addressed. The predominance of academic publication has a profound impact on the erosion of intangible heritage elements and living cultures (Galla, 2016). The majority of museum exhibitions are informed by the institution's archives and published work. Galla also recognises that heritage institutions have transformed and makes an example of the Arts of Islam Gallery at the Louvre. Galla (2016) argues that museums focusing on the identities of other racial or cultural groups have inadequately addressed the centrality of gender equality in museums, the issue being a space of sharing authority, power and quality of life.

Politics of representation and gender

Public history has excluded the domestic world and focused on prominent figures (Daniels, 2012). The domestic world often involves women and youth. However, it is important to note that the work of women has been beyond domestic constraints and has made a great contribution to building the nation, much of which has been unrecognised. Anna Reading (2014), with reference to the Parramatta Female Factory site in Australia, which served as a workers factory for women and girls and as a mental asylum and later as a Catholic girls' orphanage, explored how women have been featured in heritage and critically analysed the history of gendered heritage. The project involved former inmates, academics and artists interested in the site from a feminist perspective; they took tours, conducted oral history interviews and documented the site, producing online content (Reading, 2014). This paper is also concerned about gendered presentations as a feature of the politics of representations in museums. According to Reading (2014), this project produced hidden aspects of women's lives as part of the larger stories of forgotten Australians. The Female Factory Memory Project is used to show one of the current ways in which gender and feminism have come to engage with heritage campaigns, practices and studies in ways that are increasingly international and digital (Reading, 2014). The way that women's histories have been featured in recent

heritage projects has also been described by scholars as a way of producing previously neglected heritage. In support of this view, Reading states that heritage structures have turned a blind eye on the issue of gender and it is only recently heritage has expressed interest in gender and women's histories. Such sites have started being interested in finding ways for heritage to be inclusive of the empowerment of women and gender equality.

Reading (2014) suggests that attentiveness to gendered curation, protection, and preservation of the past are some of the ways in which a feminist approach to heritage and heritage studies can be used to illuminate particular gendered processes. Reading argues that gendered processes are structured around four broad areas of enquiry, which are heritage representation, consumption, production and policies. These areas were used to examine gendered heritage and developments in this sector. There has also been a critique on how men and women relate to exhibits differently, or in the same ways, and how masculinities and femininities are constructed through heritage sites in relation to visitors (Reading, 2014). This also indicates how issues of gender come to play in the heritage sector and how visitors encounter heritage with a gendered perspective. By 2013, there were new heritage policies that entered a new phase responding to gender inequality within heritage and culture, and they have been acknowledged as key drivers to developing international policies (Vinson, 2007, cited in Reading, 2014). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) mentions the significance of women's involvement in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. The heritage sector has shown a shift in the way heritage is presented, as academics find pieces of history that were not recognized as having heritage significance but the worthiness of such heritage representation has been challenged and pushed to recognize the neglected parts of history and heritage.

Background of South African museums

Dlamini (2001) looked at the concept of heritage and argued that sites can be understood to represent an individual's or group's inheritance from ancestors; however, it is not always inherited but can be presented by created relics of the past. From the late nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, southern Africa experienced major heritage transformation (McGregor & Schumaker, 2006). That was a period of heightened political control for colonial authorities, where they marked their territories and passed segregation laws. Heritage during that era was categorised as colonial and settler state nation building and national pride for the white minority. Politics played a role in how identity was shaped; heritage sites represented British expansion while African heritage was undermined, there was a lack of cultural representation for Africans and major racial division (McGregor and Schumaker, 2006). Those in power had control over how heritage was represented, and which racial and cultural groups were represented. In that period, there was a focus on white control, Afrikaner nationalism and the achievements of colonial authorities.

An example would be the Voortrekker Monument in South Africa's capital city, Pretoria, which is a representation of Afrikaner nationalism and pride. The monument still stands today and there are differing views on what it represents in present-day South Africa.

Dlamuka (2003) asserts that museums played an instrumental role in fostering myths about whites' land ownership. This was not a challenging task as it is not easy to find archival records by South African societies before the arrival of Europeans. These societies relied on oral tradition to pass on history and heritage to different generations. It is mainly in the 1980s that histories paid attention to oral history, using it to tell histories of the marginalised. Museums were an integral part of the colonial and apartheid systems and the government dictated what was represented in museums. Museums have been segregated as a result of white supremacist influences that deterred other groups; this also applied in Durban, as displays in their museums attempted to improve on white seniority and heroism (Dlamuka, 2003).

Dlamuka argues that local history museums have been manipulated to become political arenas, in which definitions of identity, presentation and culture are asserted, becoming sites of contestation. The power holders decide on what is suited to be public heritage and how history is represented in museums. In the early 1900s, museums entered a terrain that was influenced by racism, segregation and then apartheid, thus becoming centres of both historical and political discourse and mirrors of white domination in South Africa (Dlamuka, 2003). Dlamuka points out how museums were concerned about the conservation and collection of biased history that only registered the triumph of whites and marginalisation of indigenous knowledge. Much of this still prevails in our museums today, in the post-apartheid era. According to an interview with Paul Tichmann, former researcher of Durban Local History Museums (by Dlamuka), pre-colonial knowledge systems and history were not well recorded thus history became relevant only when there was contact with white people. The politics of the day often played a role in how monuments and museums represented the past and what the emphasis should be on. The year 1924 marked the centenary of the arrival of Europeans in Port Natal (present-day Durban). Museums, including the Durban Museum, were mounted with the theme of the 1824-1924 centenary (Dlamuka, 2003). Museum collections of that time period served an ideological purpose of enriching the idea that Afrikaners were noble and innocent migrants in pursuit of civilization and Christianization (Dlamuka, 2003). Dlamuka's main argument is 'Museums always involve the cultural, social, and political business of negotiations and value judgements and they always have cultural, social and political implications' (p.1).

Following the victory of the National Party and the institutionalisation of apartheid in 1948, the segregation laws of the colonial government were strengthened. The official discourse during apartheid resulted from affirmed racist beliefs about black inferiority and lack of civilization, as commonly held by whites from the time of their first contact with the indigenous people of South

Africa (Marschall, 2009). Museums represented history from the perspectives of whites and the representation of Afrikaner struggle for self-determination dominated. Exhibitions on South African wars represented African participation as peripheral and not worthy of being exhibited. There has been a biased representation of war or military history in museums, where Africans were shown as being barbaric and standing in the way of civilization. The Old House Museum was opened in 1953 with the emphasis on how it would be a useful resource for the 1924 centenary of the Borough of Durban, and that was a reflection of the ideological view of the white settlers (Dlamuka, 2003).

The 1980s had a number of political events such as violence in the townships but the end of the decade marked the collapse of apartheid as major laws were reversed. Dlamuka argued that exhibitions established in KwaZulu-Natal in this period were influenced by the nature of political instability following the establishment of the KwaZulu Monument Council. The KwaZulu Cultural Museum was established in 1985; according to Dlamuka this museum overlooked certain aspects of history and downgraded the history of Zululand. As the apartheid system enforced segregation, museums were divided into 'own affairs' (whites) and 'other affairs' (others); the segregation policies applied in museums were opposed by the South African Museum Association of South Africa (SAMA) in the 1980s (Coombes, 2003). Rassool (2000) points out that it was during the 1980s that in South African scholarship, history 'from below', emerged as a counter-narrative to power and domination, seeking to incorporate subaltern, ordinary voices in an approach to resistance that was understood as founded upon ordinary experience. New content was being produced for museums to use. SAMA opposed segregation in museums in different forms; at their 1988 conference, the participants challenged heritage institutions and representations of heritage, arguing for dynamic and interactive cultural representation (Coombes, 2003). Coombes points out that the conference outlined four major areas that needed to be addressed in museums; culture – represented settler history; cultural and social history of the working environment; black labour – virtually hidden histories of slavery's contribution to white settler wealth; and natural environment.

Museums in apartheid South Africa were discriminative just like the apartheid laws. The politics of apartheid prevailed in museums; they did not fairly represent the diversity of the country. They focused on political power, domination and superiority. The post-apartheid era sought to transform this.

Museums in post-apartheid South Africa

In 1994, South Africa had its first democratic elections after decades of racial segregation that ensured unequal distribution of the country's wealth and public services. It became necessary for the country to be reconstructed and find new meanings of being South African. As a country that was racially divided for decades, South Africa had to undergo reconciliation; there was a need for the country to be rebuilt and create a space where people belong to

this one nation that is not racially divided and nobody experiences discrimination. Nation building and rainbow nation – due to diversity in culture and language – became the major themes of the democratic dispensation of the new South Africa. The new notions of nation building were centred on inclusivity, reconstructing public institutions and adding black history and heritage to build new nations with a focus on black nationalists and liberation struggles.

Museums in democratic South Africa claimed to redress past imbalances and offer representations of previously marginalised groups. There is an aspect that these new museums and new exhibitions continued to neglect, which is the issue of gender. According to Dlamuka:

The realities of male dominance that museum professionals, regardless of gender, contribute to those gender notions with judgement and decisions on how and what to display... The act of collecting and interpreting women's history is subject to an acceptance that history is a discourse about the past. The past itself has gone and only being brought back again by historians in books, not as actual memoirs. The challenge, then, is to establish the right of women to share in the past in such a way as to reinforce their state of the present. (Dlamuka, 2003, p. 94-95)

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‘Controversy over public representations of the past has fostered a range of self-conscious efforts to create displays and experiences more suited to postcolonial and post-apartheid contexts. Such initiatives can provide insights into postcolonial identity politics, cultures of state power, and the configuration of transnational interests and flows of ideas that have, in some contexts, allowed for innovative changes and in others have perpetuated old exclusions and division.’ (McGregor & Schumaker, 2006, p. 649). In South Africa, this controversy can be traced back to the late 1980s when museum officials started discussing ways in which museums could be more inclusive and not one-sided. The 1980s was also when major apartheid laws collapsed and there were major talks on the possibility of political transition in South Africa. However, it was only in the late 1990s that policies of heritage transformation were passed. McGregor and Schumaker (2006) argued that the construction is closely linked to identity politics thus has a close relationship with nation and state building projects. Ideas of national identity and shared history are likely to influence how the past is represented in heritage institutions. They point out that, even in the post-colonial era, particular views of the African past are promoted. African history, to a large extent, has not been reinterpreted in ways that move away from the colonist state of writing. Themes like ‘Rainbow Nation’ are state monopolized definitions of national culture and are similar to pre-democracy (McGregor and Schumaker, 2006). ‘State-led commemorations of nationalist

achievements and struggle histories have been highly selective, liable to elevated ruling party histories and heroes often ignoring unions, youth or women and dealing with violence selectively or not at all' (McGregor & Schumaker, 2006, p. 654).

Rankin (2013), in her study on post-apartheid museums and monuments, points out that the challenge that equals redistribution of wealth is the need to transfer cultural capital to give recognition to those who were long marginalised. She argues that the ruling party has chosen not to obliterate all signifiers of white culture as it vaunted a policy of inclusivity. This resulted in new sculptures and new museums joining those that have long existed and praised the achievement of white people as black people were barbarically fighting against civilisation. Statues of South African Nobel Peace Prize awardees (Luthuli, Tutu, De Klerk and Mandela) were erected in Cape Town in 2005, and Rankin (2013) argues that they project an appealing sense of vulnerability rather than authority. However, in post-apartheid South Africa, there have been projects to rename institutions and roads, replacing colonial heroes with struggle heroes. The Museum of Military History still focuses greatly on European wars and white heroes; the changes that have been made in this museum are the elimination of offensive terms in the inscriptions (Rankin, 2003). A number of other exhibitions and museums that represent military history still focus on white heroes, like the Fort Durnford Museum, Talana Museum and Fort Schanskop. At the Museum of Military History, there is only one display on Umkhonto We Sizwe, the military arm of the African National Congress, and it focuses on the uniform (Rankin, 2013). She further states, 'It is no easy take for museums to change ideological focus when their collections and exhibitions were initiated under colonial rule and shaped under apartheid' (Rankin, 2013, p.76). There is a slight shift in newly formed museums, however the bulk of old representations have not changed.

Approaches to studying exhibitions

The ways in which museum exhibitions are set up and presented to the public or intended audiences influences the different meanings of the exhibitions. In Crooke's study on the Northern Ireland Museum and museums in Cape Town townships, he argues that exhibitions in museums have a role to play in engaging the complex and contested history of a region (Crooke, 2005). I aim to unpack the politics of representation in two selected South African museums with emphasis on the dominance of settler history and the way in which men dominate the representation of history of society. Corinne Kratz worked on a travelling photographic exhibition entitled 'The Okiek Portraits', with photographs taken in Kenya. In exhibiting these photographs, Kratz (2002) aimed at eradicating stereotypes attached to the people of Kenya and African people. She discussed issues of representation and explained how certain groups may have been represented in a particular way on previous occasions and were attached to particular stereotypes that are difficult to change. A trend that

can be noticed in past colonies is that the colonisers presented themselves as powerful groups that sought to bring civilisation to people they considered inferior. This was done in such a way that even written material had that same thinking which was represented in different spaces. In analysing the Okiek Portraits, Kratz looked at the text placements, photograph order and the manner in which they were hung, and described distinctive features and the type of captions. She argued, "... exhibition texts are more than a source of information. They are also design elements whose placement, order and typography might signal beginnings and endings, differential emphases, sectional shifts and appropriate paths through an exhibition" (p. 196).

In order to understand how museums and exhibitions shape values and identities, one has to consider how museums were developed as institutions, their embedding within cultural and political economic dynamics (Kratz, 2011). Kratz also notes the importance of considering political economic histories and their changing relations to other cultural institutions. In the sections that follow, I will give great details of how the study sites were developed as heritage institutions. Kratz placed emphasis on the importance of rhetoric of values in museum exhibitions. The concept of rhetoric is described as a concept that addresses processes of circulation, re-contextualisation, exhibition production and interpretation, seeking to illuminate how social meanings and judgments are constituted and understood through persuasion from exhibition, combining poetics and politics. In examining how rhetoric of value is produced in relation to framework and processes of exhibition communication, she considers lighting and texts as critical media that are part of exhibitions. Lighting and texts have both practical and rhetorical aspects (Kratz; 2011). They convey intercultural messages about exhibitions and museum contribution to exhibitory values (Kratz; 2011). Texts are important to understand the messages that are presented to museum patrons through the exhibition. The font of texts, the language used and style of writing are factors that play a role in the visitors' understanding of an exhibition and what it stands for. It is then important to give a description of the museums and its exhibitions.

The Old Court House Museum

As Kratz notes the importance of understanding how museums became heritage institutions and why, this section starts with a brief history of Old Court House Museum. The Old Court House Museum is housed at the oldest public building in Durban, which served as a court from 1866 to 1911, when a new Court House was erected (Bevis, 1962). During the Zulu War in 1879, it was used to store ammunition, and then at a later stage it was taken over for use as Corporation Offices (Bevis, 1962). It became a museum in 1965, incorporating exhibitions and artefacts of the Durban Museum, which was housed in another building and founded in 1887, then became the Local History Museum, and today is the Old Court House Museum.

The museum has three exhibition rooms for temporary exhibitions, and the permanent exhibitions are found in the passages, open space and in the Durban Room, which has a combination of different aspects of history. The temporary exhibitions consider events of historical significance and national anniversaries. The main focus is on the early history of the region. Dlamuka points out that this museum registered white settlement only and legitimised and justified whites' domination in Natal. When debates on South African museology occurred in the 1980s, Indian representation emerged. The artefacts that represented Indians were taken from the Phoenix Settlement, dedicated to the life of Mahatma Gandhi, after the site was destroyed in 1985. Over time, they have been part of temporary exhibitions but remain part of the museum collections in the storerooms.

Gender representation and African males in an attempt to redress past imbalances

In post-apartheid South Africa, as instructed by government, museums had to be more inclusive and embrace multiculturalism. This was expressed in the Constitution of 1996 and policies such as the 1996 White Paper on Arts, Heritage and Culture, which clearly stated that heritage institutions should represent the different citizens of South Africa and cater to the previously marginalized; also supported was the use of oral history and nation building through arts, culture and heritage. Displays in this museum added different components in an attempt to be inclusive and redress past imbalances. However, I have determined that the patriarchy of settler representations has not been questioned or reinterpreted. The museum is about the history of the city of Durban and links it with other parts of the province of KZN. The additions in the democratic era include the Lembede Tombstone, for the first president of the African National Congress Youth League. The African National Congress has been the ruling party since the first democratic elections of 1994; it has been recognised as the main organisation that delivered the country from the evils of apartheid. Formed in 1912, the party was banned by the apartheid government and its leaders, with other political activists belonging to various movements, were greatly harassed and killed by the apartheid government and labelled as terrorists. The party has been celebrated in varying public engagements and heritage institutions. A photographic exhibition of the Bambatha Rebellion, with small texts that can easily be ignored by visitors, is found in the staircase. The Bambatha Rebellion resulted from opposition to the 'Poll tax' imposed by the colonial government in 1906, which led to war, with Africans against the white government. Chief Bambatha kaMancinza Zondi is recognised as the hero in texts written about this war; this exhibition ignores the involvement of individuals in this war such as Gandhi, who was believed to be a stretcher bearer for British soldiers. There is a focus on the heroic act of a male leader. A display labelled as 'The Movers and Shakers' recognises historical figures who contributed to the political history of Durban. This display consists of

50 three-dimensional figurines that represent these people, with a name label under each one. This display was created in the late 1980s, the period when historians were producing histories of the marginalised and agitating for multicultural and inclusive representations of South African societies. Tichman (1999) described this period as the time when Africans were soon to be recognised as producers of history rather than victims of circumstances; the time for African experiences to gain momentum in museum exhibitions had come. The figurines represent a variety of individuals; religious leaders, black political activists, colonists, traditional leaders, and other individuals who became prominent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The lighting in this space places emphasis on this display and suggests that one must move close to see who are the people being represented. Out of 50 figurines, only 3 represent women, and these 3 women are white. This display represents history as being pioneered by men, men being the forefront of the nation. An opportunity was missed to recognise communities that made Durban what it is, women who were at the forefront of the liberation struggle, and activists in societal issues. For instance, there is a figurine of Dr. John Langalibalele Dube, who was the first president of the ANC and highly recognised as the founder of the first school established by a black person in South Africa, Ohlange Institute. He has also been recognised for his attempts to fight against the Native Land Act of 1913. His first wife, Nokutela Dube, co-founded Ohlange Institute and equally worked for the community but she is not represented in this display.

Museum exhibitions do not represent women as leaders or producers of history. This museum should be about the history of Durban; there is also more that can be exhibited as the history of Durban and preserved as public heritage. Women are not being represented, considered as having inferior roles or restricted to domestic work, as is the case with African women. They are either represented in domestic settings or they are left out. An exhibition on Henry Francis Fynn can be found in the Durban Room; Fynn was one of the settlers who, according to history books, encountered King Shaka Zulu. The history of this Zulu king is recorded in his diary which becomes the main source when studying this leader. Just outside the house is a mannequin of Fynn seated and covered in a blanket. Inside are artefacts relating to a Zulu home. As one approaches the cottage, one notices that inside there is a black woman also covered in a blanket; in front of her is a table filled with kitchen utensils. The cottage inside and outside is filled with artefacts and figurines that can be described as items belonging to a Zulu or African home in rural areas. Fynn is represented as a white man who adapted to the ways of living in KwaZulu-Natal during the 1800s. The woman in the cottage is said to have been married to Fynn. He is presented as one who is not racist, willing to understanding the way of living of the people he settled amongst, and not one who considered them barbaric. The woman is seated in the house with kitchen utensils as if she were making food or just made food, creating an image that the woman's place is in the kitchen or is only related to looking after the home. Fynn, together with the black woman, had coloured children. In the presentation of Fynn, the history

of coloured people of KwaZulu-Natal is left out. There are also other opportunities for the stories of coloured people to be told. Even in the democratic dispensation, coloured people are not represented in museums, especially in KwaZulu-Natal. The Pinetown Museum is the only museum within eThekweni Municipality that has information on display about the coloured community. The representation of women does not recognise their contribution in the public history of Durban. It ignores the activism of women such as Bertha Mkhize. In addition to the issue with regards to the representation of women, certain groups get left out such as the coloured communities.

Domination of European settler history and heritage

I have determined that the dominant history represented in this museum has not reinterpreted settler history, and their heritage remains one of the main themes of the museum. It does not recognise that there was life and human activity prior to the arrival of European settlers. Exhibitions such as Harvey Greenacres and Co., Miss Fann's Fancy Repository and the David Anderson Apothecary chemist represent the development of Durban city centre by settlers. These exhibitions were considered important as they preserved some of the 'precious' elements that contributed to the growth of the city. African people have been part of the area long before the arrival of the settlers; even after the arrival of the settlers, they became part of communities that make up Durban and they still are. Their contribution in all activities that took place is not well represented. The addition of the 'Movers and Shakers' display is a positive one as it recognised individuals who were active in different fields. My argument is that colonists remain recognised as the pioneers in the development of Durban, while different aspects of the past are ignored. The city centre is vibrant and diverse in culture and language thus there are various ways of looking at the development of Durban. Durban has been diverse for centuries, thus the domination of settlers and their businesses is not a true reflection of Durban, its past and its people. The city also witnessed major political activities that shaped the country and produced leaders. There is minimal reinterpretation of the knowledge produced during apartheid and also of what constituted public heritage during apartheid. However, I do recognise that there have been attempts to recognise new national heroes and to have new museum displays with different representations. Another positive addition to this museum are the temporary exhibitions that present histories that could never be found in museums during apartheid.

Bergtheil Museum

Bergtheil Museum is located in the Westville suburb of Durban and named after Jonas Bergtheil, who is recognised as the founder of Westville. He was a German Jew who came to Natal from the Cape in 1843; he left his hometown in the period of industrial revolution and due to a crisis of unemployment in Europe (Peters, 1992). In 1847, Bergtheil was granted permission by the governor

of Natal. Martin West, to establish a village and settle German immigrants as a business man who owned a cotton company (Peters, 1992). People from Bavaria (his hometown) did not take Bergtheil's proposal as it was a frightening experience for women and children to occupy the same space as near-naked Africans (Peters, 1992). This is the way in which Europeans perceived the Africans and this perception became part of museum exhibitions. People from Bremen did come to his farm and work for the cotton business. The cotton business was not successful and they moved over to food production. Indians started occupying Westville in 1870 and joined the business. The German immigrants then 'established' New Germany not far away from Westville and later incorporated into eThekweni Municipality.

The Westville Cultural History Society, formed in 1983, established the museum under the auspices of the Borough of Westville. The 1986 Restoration Plan shows that the museum was to take on a Victorian (late nineteenth century) design typical of Westville dwellings of the era. According to the report of the curator, dated 6 October 1987, 'It was decided that the museum was entitled to adopt early German settlement as its main theme.' First donations for the museum were received in 1987 and the museum was officially opened in 1990. The museum was opened in the oldest house of Westville, built circa 1840s but altered and extended over time. The museum has six exhibition rooms, namely: Bedroom, Kitchen, Dairy, Early Inhabitants Room, Main Room, the Indian Room, and three storage rooms.

Dominant representations of the past

The dominant representation of the past is still centred on the German settlers and European settlers in general. The aim of this museum, as stated above, has not been adequately reinterpreted to align for the heritage policies of democratic South Africa. The museum is a house museum, understandably the exhibitions have the settings of a home. However the home is representative of the period when the settlers first arrived until the early 1900s. There is an opportunity for continuity, as the homes of white people were taken care of by black domestic workers until the present day; they became part of the area and were part of non-European social societies during apartheid. Black people were not allowed to own housing in areas that were classified through the Group Areas Act of 1952 as white areas. The Act compelled black people when moving around white areas; there were certain conditions attached, such as carrying passbooks. Westville was also classified a white area. The museum missed the opportunity to present the experiences of black domestic workers when travelling to work in Westville with their passbooks. It misses the opportunity to represent the experiences of black domestic workers when taking care of white households. The dairy room and the kitchen exhibitions have industrial revolution equipment showing the life when people worked hard in farming to sustain a living. It does not show the farming techniques that existed before settlers arrived and some of the shared skills. The history

of white males as leaders, settler families, and the Christian religion dominates the museum through exhibitions found in the main room. There are postcards of Durban streets in the early 1900s and black workers with labels such as 'wash boy'. The use of 'boy' to refer to a black male adult is insulting and a sign of great disrespect. However this section is not the most notable display, the writing is small, and can easily be missed by visitors. Exhibitions are informed by museum archives, the information recorded in the archives has not been questioned, and new knowledge has not been adequately added in the archives. The exhibition on Indians has a strong focus on wedding rituals; there is a small section with some of the Indian business that is in the corner and can easily be missed by visitors. Presented in this museum are medals of German settlers when they participated in World War II, these were presented to them for their bravery and heroic acts. This representation of them remains.

Attempts to redress imbalances of the past

The early inhabitants exhibition was added in 2014 to represent different aspects of the history of Westville. This exhibition is an exception to what has been argued above. It does contribute to redressing imbalances of the past. This room has an exhibition on archaeological findings from Palmiet Nature Reserve in Westville, and early people of Westville from the early Stone Age to arrival of European settlers and some short information on the Indian market. Some of the artefacts exhibited became part of the museum collection in the late 1990s but have not been used in this manner. This exhibition challenges the myth of the empty land; archaeology proved that there were human activities before the arrival of the settlers. The archaeological items discovered, dated from the early 1900s, include glass and a bullet cartridge. The panel at the front is entitled 'Protecting the Settlement' and the text below explains that Bergtheil was concerned about the possible attack by King Mpande Zulu. It is explained that this led to Bergtheil being the commandant of the settlement, and later the defence rifles were formed. The bullets might have been linked to settlers' plans to protect themselves. The contact between settlers and the people from surrounding communities is not told. Even if the settlers found the land of Westville empty, there are other surrounding communities, and contact with those communities is not presented. Just before the text on European settlers, marked by the portrait of Bergtheil, there are texts that explain the pottery found in iGwalagwala shelter was near glass bottles, and this is possible evidence that the modern-day Zulu people did have contact with the European. This exhibition was an attempt to give a different perspective of the history of Westville and also represents some of the histories that post-apartheid South Africa aims to represent in our museums.

Possible ways of moving forward

The museums analysed in this paper are mirrors of museums that were established under apartheid and continue to exist as institutions of public heritage

in the post-apartheid area. Thus this phenomenon is not unique or an issue of only these two museums. There have been attempts to be inclusive in both museums; the display on early inhabitants at Bergtheil Museum is a good example. Perhaps this was a start of new ways of thinking about our history and representation of our heritage. However, much more needs to be done. There is a need to challenge the dominant discourse in old museums and question what is exhibited. It is important to note that Africans prior to European schools relied greatly on oral traditions. Indigenous knowledge systems need to be utilised. Indigenous knowledge has contributed positively to different fields such as health, but it has not been recognised and given due credit. The history of apartheid has been discussed in the public sphere, however we cannot ignore that it is part of the history of the areas covered by these museums. It should not be ignored, as the fact that South Africans fought greatly against the evils of apartheid and achieved democratic rights is part of our heritage. Communities, the social life of people, should be included, as they made South Africa what it is today and should be visible in our museum exhibitions. There is a need for new ways of thinking about our history, museums and society as people of South Africa, regardless of race and culture. South Africans need to instill new ways of thinking to free themselves from the hegemony trap. As new knowledge is produced through upcoming researchers in institutions of higher education, this research needs to be incorporated in museum research. There is a need for a link between museums and institutions of higher education.

Conclusion

In this paper, the background of South African museums was discussed. It is clear that the history of European settlement was initially the dominant discourse in the representation of history in our museums. Political powers manipulated history for their own gratification; the misconceptions and undermining mentality that European settlers had about Africans when they came to Africa prevailed in museum exhibitions. The politics of the time had a great influence on which history was represented and how. This was the only perspective that was represented in museums. This also meant that archives are filled with accounts of European settlers, which makes it a challenging task to completely change the status quo. In the apartheid era (1948-1994), anniversaries of events that the power holders found important became major themes of museums and public commemorations. The manner in which history was represented included exhibits that legitimised white ownership of land.

As apartheid was coming to an end, the 1980s were the beginning of a new era that led to the foundation of present day museums. The democratic era came up with their own themes that would inform representations in museums. The plan was to address past imbalances, for museums to be inclusive and multicultural. As a result of our political history, the history of men as the main leaders dominated. Museums built in the apartheid era were not well transformed, and representations were not effectively transformed. Yes, there

have been some changes and attempts to be inclusive. However, alterations were made in museum exhibitions to accommodate new ways of representation in the new South Africa. Generally, the history of coloured people, Indian people, communities as a whole, and the contributions of non-whites in the development of Durban and surrounding towns has not been represented. The representations that dominated in museums of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries still prevail today. As heritage institutions of the twenty-first century, we need to reinterpret the history that was a colonial product. We need to be inclusive, in a sense that power holders do not determine every aspect of society but people have a sense of ownership in such institutions so they can relate to what is represented and how. The efforts that have been made in building new museums cannot be ignored. On the other hand, there is a need to question archives and museum exhibitions that have existed for decades and during the years of oppression. There is a need to produce new knowledge in museums, creating a link between heritage scholars in the different institutions of higher education and museums, as they have critiqued these representations and may have solutions. The way of thinking needs to change in order to change old representations. There need to be new ways of thinking and more recognition of indigenous knowledge.

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