

THE LEFTOVERS, REIMAGINED:

AN EXPLORATION OF PERCEPTIONS AND
REPRESENTATION OF RACE AND GENDER
WITHIN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT, IN
THE WORK OF SELECTED ARTISTS

In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Fine Art (MFA) in the Faculty of Arts and Design

at the Durban University of Technology

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DECLARATION

I, Ashleigh Danielle Ruiters, declare that *The Left Overs, Reimagined: An exploration of perceptions and representation of race and gender within a South African context in the work of selected artists* is my work. I also declare that I have not previously submitted this dissertation in whole, or part, for the award of any degree at any University. Suffice to add that any significant contribution made to this dissertation has been cited through complete references. This practice-based research was conducted at the Durban University of Technology under the supervision of Dr Folasayo Enoch Olalere and Ismail Farouk.

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ABSTRACT

This study uses my artistic practice to explore and critique my own lived experiences as a person of colour (POC) in South Africa, specifically focusing on being a woman within this context. In exploring this in my practice, I draw from contemporary artists that use reimagination, reclamation and re-representation in their work and contemporary artists that implement archival methods in their practice. The criteria used to select contemporary artists used in this study was based on the conceptual and practical nature of the artists' works. Consequently, the chosen artists explore themes of POC experiences and address representation.

Reflecting on my personal lived experiences as a South African woman, POC plays a significant role in my practical work. As a politically Black, culturally Coloured¹ South African woman, I artistically explore the formation of my intersectional identity, how I navigate acceptance and belonging in this context and how my identity can be reclaimed or reimagined through my art practice. I also analyse and explore other contemporary artists who use re-imagination and reclamation of identity as central themes in their work.

As a study that employs a practice-based research methodology with an emergent design, this Fine Art study centres on my art practice. In this study, I used theoretical research to inform my art practice. The output of this research is a physical exhibition, consisting of photographs that form part of my counter-archive, *The Left Overs*,

¹ "It instead alludes to a phenotypically diverse group of people descended largely from Cape slaves, the indigenous Khoisan population and other people of African and Asian descent who had been assimilated into Cape colonial society by the late nineteenth century. Being also partly descended from European settlers, coloured people have popularly been regarded as being of 'mixed race' and have held an intermediate status in the South African racial hierarchy, distinct from the historically dominant white minority and the numerically preponderant African population. There are approximately three-and-a-half million coloured people in South Africa today. Constituting no more than 9 per cent of the population throughout the twentieth century and lacking significant political or economic power, coloured people have always formed a marginal group in South African society" (Adhikari 2006b: 144-145).

Reimagined as well as installations, and this dissertation. This study argues that various forms of media often misrepresent or overlook people, women and communities of colour and their lived experiences. Through this study, I hope to re-imagine, challenge, and re-present perceptions of POC lived experience through my own lived experiences and my family archive. The outcomes of this research are a virtual online archive and physical exhibition of the photographs, installations and videos, and this dissertation.

In my thesis, I have moved away from the conventional terminology used in traditional thesis structures. Thus, I have exchanged the word 'chapter' for the word 'part'. In addition, I have also given each part of my dissertation a title that corresponds with a dining course (meal). I got this inspiration from the title of my thesis, *The Left Overs, Reimagined*. It insinuates that my master's thesis is a five-course meal.

PREFACE

I have included definitions in the footnotes in this document, where I found they were required.

I also have indented quotes longer than three lines in this document.

I used apostrophes to quote terms used by persons that I have referred to.

I used the DUT Harvard referencing style for this study. Therefore, there is a reference list and an image reference list at the end of this document.

I have also ensured consecutive numbering of illustrations. Additionally, I have provided a list of figures at the beginning of this document.

Throughout this document, I used italics to acknowledge titles, books, articles and artworks etc.

I have divided this document into Parts: One – Hors D'oeuvre, Two - Appetizer, Three - Salad, Four - Main Course and Five - Dessert, referring to the introduction, literature review, research methodology, analysis and conclusion. I have labelled the different sections to reference my title, which is *The Leftovers Reimagined*. I will explain the title further in Part One – Hors D'oeuvre.

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PART ONE/ HORS D'OEUVRE

INTRODUCTION

The composition of my dissertation includes an analysis of my artistic practice. The dissertation is a supporting document that expands upon the conceptual underpinnings of the practical component of this study as a study that employs a practice-based research (PBR) methodology with an emergent design. This Fine Art research centres on my practice.

Within this chapter, I will discuss the background and context of the research. Subsequently, I will cover the historical and theoretical context of my research. Next, I will discuss the aims and objectives of the study. Finally, I will also explore the influences behind my study and the significance to me as a visual artist. I will then conclude by introducing the methodology and give a summary of the chapters to follow.

Using my artistic practice in the study, I explore and critique my lived experiences² as a woman and person of colour (POC³) in South Africa and the creation of my family archive. My practice explores reimagination, reclamation, re-presentation, and the work of other selected artists who explore the same ideas. I based the criteria used to choose the contemporary artists included in this study on the artists' works' conceptual and practical nature. The selected artists explore themes such as POC and gender experiences or implement archival practices to create their work. These artists include Lady Skollie, Bronwyn Katz, Santu Mofokeng, Adrian Piper and Thando Mama.

Reflecting on my own lived experiences and my family's lived experiences plays a significant role in the practical component of this study. In addition, storytelling is also

² "Lived experience speaks to the personal and unique perspective of researchers and how their experiences are shaped by subjective factors of their identity including race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, political associations, and other roles and characteristics that determine how people live their daily lives" (Boylorn 2012: 490).

³ From this point onwards POC will refer to person / people of colour.

applied and is a substantial part of this study's practical component. Through my practice, the stories I told consist of factual and fictional concepts based on my experiential knowledge or my family's. As a politically broad-based Black, culturally Coloured⁴ South African woman, I artistically explore how my intersectional identity is formed through my navigation and search for acceptance and belonging in this context. Exploring my intersectional identity and navigation of acceptance and belonging takes place in the study's practical component by creating my counter-archive that collects my and my family's experiences. The archive I have created comprises photographs collected from my grandparents that have not been dated or set out in an album. The process of creating my counter-archive entailed finding the dates, places and names of the people in the photographs; along with this information came narratives. This archive will be posted online but for the purpose of the dissertation it will also be presented as a physical exhibition.

Within this study, I argue that people, women and communities of colour are often misrepresented in various forms of media (social media, TV and print media) and their lived experiences often overlooked. Through this study, I hope to reclaim, re-imagine, challenge and re-present perceptions of POC's lived experience through using my own lived experiences by collecting, archiving and using images and stories of my family as a politically Black-culturally Coloured woman of colour.

⁴ "A phenotypically diverse group of people descended largely from Cape slaves, the indigenous Khoisan population and other people of African and Asian descent who had been assimilated into Cape colonial society by the late nineteenth century. Being also partly descended from European settlers, coloured people have popularly been regarded as being of 'mixed race' and have held an intermediate status in the South African racial hierarchy, distinct from the historically dominant white minority and the numerically preponderant African population. There are approximately three-and-a-half million coloured people in South Africa today. Constituting no more than 9 percent of the population throughout the twentieth century and lacking significant political or economic power, coloured people have always formed a marginal group in South African society" (Adhikari 2006a: 468).

I also explore how my identity can be reclaimed or re-imagined through my art practice. I reclaim my identity by reconstructing the stories I have been told and the images I have collected from my family.

THE BACKGROUND

The Left Overs, Reimagined, started as an examination of Coloured identity in general. Exploring the destructive essentialist⁵ view of Coloured identity was essential to the study. I initially wanted to explore the overt and covert power dynamics that maintain and perpetuate this view. The hegemonic white minority established this power in South Africa, and its legacies continue to persist.

Initially, the study left out the most critical element of my current art practice, the exploration of self and my lived experiences in my work. Eventually, I began focusing on my own experiences, which now plays a more central role thematically in my artistic practice. This shift was brought about through the nature of the practice, as this study is an emergent design.

I explore my own lived experiences as a Coloured woman within a post-apartheid South African context. Understanding the intersections⁶ of multiple identities⁷ that I bear has been my interest for a long time, especially in terms of race and gender. This interest has led me to use my own lived experiences as a woman of colour and explore these experiences through my artistic practice.

⁵ This study primarily aligns itself with Adhikari's critique of this essentialist standpoint which is the perception that coloured identity is "given and portrays it as fixed" (Adhikari 2009: 14). "Essentialism is over-generalizations or unstated reference points implicitly attributed to all members of a group the characteristics of a dominant subset of that group" (Bartlett and Harris 1998: para. 1 line 2).

⁶ Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989: 140), in the field of Law, in an effort to explain the discrimination that women of colour face and their experiences. It refers to the intersection of factors such as race, gender and class that contribute to oppression and the experience of people in society (Crenshaw 1989: 140).

⁷ "Identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is. Identities can be focused on the past-what used to be true of one, the present-what is true of one now, or the future-the person one expects or wishes to become, the person one feels obligated to try to become, or the person one fears one may become. Identities are orienting, they provide a meaning-making lens and focus one's attention on some but not other features of the immediate context." (Oyserman 2007 cited in Oyserman *et al.* 2012: 69).

The focus of this research was initially on Coloured identity in general. Through introspection and observation, my field of interest moved towards exploring Coloured identity from the lens of my lived experiences and Coloured identity concerning the dominant notions of Coloured identity that I saw in visual re-presentations within my context. In exploring my lived experiences as a South African Coloured woman visually, I seek to re-imagine and reclaim this identity through my art practice.

In my observation, there are countless pressures that women in our society face, especially women of colour, regarding their identity and how they are represented. Historically, women have been misrepresented in images through the objectification and sexualisation of their bodies (Chadwick 1990: 279), especially women of colour. These misrepresentations are still present today; according to Garcia (2012: 14), film, for example, is “a form of cultural production that create images, many of which become a dominant narrative of the ‘other’”. These narratives are firmly rooted in historical contexts closely linked to the surrounding political climate.” These misrepresentations persist and are perpetuated in many forms of media outside of film, like literature, advertising, journalistic photography and music. These dominant narratives affect the real world lived experiences of women of colour, myself included. These misrepresentations of women of colour have profoundly affected my sense of self as a Coloured woman within a South African context. The visual and textual images that we are often presented with are singular, and this informs how people view you and how you view yourself.

One of the biggest proponents of misrepresentations, which has also been a source of propaganda, and a tool for stereotyping is film. It is effective because it is multisensory⁸ as it is an encapsulated experience; visual, audio, linguistic, body

⁸ Multisensory “is the use of strategies involving human senses including visual (what we see), auditory (what we hear), kinaesthetic and tactile (what we do or feel)” (Sarudin *et al.* 2019: 3187).

language and music all at once. For example, *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith 1915), a racist film, was the source of protests in 1915 (McEwan 2007: 98).

The film advanced the narrative of the savage negro⁹ out to ravage, devour and rape the white woman using one of the first Black face¹⁰ actors. The *Birth of a Nation* was used as a Ku Klux Klan¹¹ (KKK) recruitment film in the 1910s and 1920s (Simcovitch 1972 cited in McEwan 2007: 99). This film makes the subtleties of race and gender representations obvious and shows how films and television programmes can propagate messages and maintain destructive narratives (McEwan 2007: 100).

As a 25-year-old Coloured woman living in post-apartheid South Africa, navigating and gaining ownership of my identity is challenging. Living in post-apartheid South Africa makes me particularly mindful of issues about identity such as race and gender. As a young woman of colour in South Africa, I face many injustices. The dominant social constructs of race and gender often inform how I navigate both personal and social settings. The marginalisation is double intersecting, the racial marginalisation of being Coloured, a racial minority that is often pushed to the periphery of racial dialogue within South Africa, and the gender marginalisation that I experience both inside and outside of the Coloured community. The marginalisation faced is both racial and

⁹ Negro is a derogatory term used in the United States to describe a black person. According to Agyemang *et al.* (2005) "The term Negro means the colour black in Spanish. The term Negro was widely used by White Europeans as a shortened form of the racial classification Negroid to describe people of sub-Saharan African heritage. Until the mid-20th century the term Negro was widely used for African Americans, but fell out of favour in the late 20th century".

¹⁰ Black face is a racist and offensive act that originated 200 years ago in the United States of America, where a white person paints their "faces black to mock enslaved Africans" (Kaur 2019).

¹¹ "From 1868 through the early 1870s the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) functioned as a loosely organized group of political and social terrorists. The Klan's goals included the political defeat of the Republican Party and the maintenance of absolute white supremacy in response to newly gained civil and political rights by southern Blacks after the Civil war (1861-65)" (Bryant 2002).

gender-based and is therefore intersectional. This theoretical phenomenon is referred to as Intersectionality and will be discussed further in Part Two – Appetiser.

The research will explore and challenge given and accepted socially constructed rigid dichotomies of racial identities, specifically Coloured identities. Through my art practice, this study reinterprets and reclaims my Coloured identity through challenging white hegemonic heteronormative regimes prevalent in my own lived experiences as a labelled female Coloured person living in post-apartheid South Africa. Highlighting this issue should not be seen as Coloured exceptionalism but rather an acknowledgement of marginalisation that I, as a South African Coloured female and the Coloured community, have faced from more culturally dominant groups.

There is still a paper-thin understanding of these racial concepts, particularly within the South African context. Very few Coloured narratives are documented and exhibited in mainstream media (Dannhauser 2006). Additionally, the lived experiences of POC are under-represented in the arts. Therefore, this research intends to artistically contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the Coloured archive, narratives, and experiences through this study and my art practice. This study will further challenge and expose other possibilities for Counter-Narratives and open the debate to a much-needed discussion.

Drawn from my own lived experiences to inform my research, as a politically Black-culturally Coloured¹² South African woman, I aim to locate myself and my family within the post-apartheid South African context. I will do this by exploring the reimagination,

¹² "It instead alludes to a phenotypically diverse group of people descended largely from Cape slaves, the indigenous Khoisan population and other people of African and Asian descent who had been assimilated into Cape colonial society by the late nineteenth century. Being also partly descended from European settlers, coloured people have popularly been regarded as being of 'mixed race' and have held an intermediate status in the South African racial hierarchy, distinct from the historically dominant white minority and the numerically preponderant African population. There are approximately three-and-a-half million coloured people in South Africa today. Constituting no more than 9 percent of the population throughout the twentieth century and lacking significant political or economic power, coloured people have always formed a marginal group in South African society." (Adhikari 2006a: 468)

reclamation, re-presentation of my identity/archive through my art practice. Exploring my identity through my lived experiences, I locate my history and my place within my family through creating my counter-archive of images. My counter-archive addresses the lack of public and accessible archives that serve the Coloured community, contributing to marginalised Coloured identities.

I will artistically experiment with photography, collected photographs and stories from my family to form my counter-archive. The virtual online repository, photographic installations and video work – will be used to subvert¹³ conventional hegemonic visual representations of South African people of colour, especially Coloured women. Although I use video in my practice, I use the same tool used to misrepresent POC ideas. So, I will be leveraging those multisensory qualities. If it was powerful enough to create such devastating stereotypes, dismantling and challenging these perceptions should be compelling enough.

As South Africans, I argue that we are still deeply wounded by our political past and are always endeavouring to re-imagine and reclaim ourselves. I contend that the various legacies of institutionalised hierarchal racial segregation and oppression persist to this day. I argue that we need to review alternative reimaginings of these identities. We also need to engage in reclamation to mend these essentialist views of identity. I postulate that art can play a role in this reimagination process and is already creating a space for discourse evident in selected artists' work.

Through the subversion of the role of women in images, it is possible to “reclaim” the female body (Chadwick 1990: 279). Marginalised groups should have control over the presentation of their bodies and identities. However, this control is never relinquished and is always fought for and negotiated. “Autobiography enables women to represent

¹³ Subvert is to mean “practices that challenge a dominant political-moral order in an emancipatory sense” (Kaltmeier 2011: 55)

themselves and their bodies, and in so doing, dismantle structures that did not permit them to write themselves into patriarchal history” (Perreault 1995 cited in Malatjie 2011: 11). POC and women are often represented in a state of lack. The unsettling of stereotypical representation creates room for the emancipation of female bodies.

According to Garcia (2012: 15), an example of this re-representation is typical in the films produced by Black women where “Black women produced films as a form of resistance to the widely distributed films that contributed to the distorted images of the social realities of Black women”. Thus, artists create space to resist social oppression and marginalisation by countering narratives widely distributed through various media platforms (Garcia 2012: 15). It also makes it possible for other women of colour to see experiences of POC represented accurately.

As a young South African female artist of colour, through my lived experience, I have observed how minority groups have been marginalised and silenced, and their voices diminished to white noise. At the same time, other groups can speak on behalf of the collective when they are a fraction of the rainbow nation that is South Africa. These social constructs often work in tandem and are at odds with our country's globally celebrated constitutional rights.

During my BTech research (2016), my work explored my anxiety about living as a woman of colour in South Africa. The daily/ frequent negotiation with anxiety has led to my interest in imagining and producing work that explores the possibility of knowing and living freely – being able to shape and discover what kind of woman I am, devoid of the pressure society imposes on womanhood and humanity.

Race and racial identity inform women of colour’s lived experiences, particularly in South Africa because of our ‘political baggage’. Therefore, it is essential that in looking at identity, I interrogate race. According to Boylorn (2012: 490),

“Lived experience speaks to the personal and unique perspective of researchers and how their experiences are shaped by subjective factors of

their identity including race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, political associations, and other roles and characteristics that determine how people live their daily lives.”

The study seeks to subvert the binaries created by media and perpetuated by “White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchal” (hooks 1992) society, within these categories and in so doing, through my practice present other possibilities through Counter-Narratives.

CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

The title *The Left Overs, Reimagined* was chosen regarding a comment made by Marike de Klerk when referring to Coloured people in South Africa. Marike de Klerk was a politician of the National Party¹⁴ and was the former first lady of apartheid South Africa, the wife of F.W de Klerk:

“The ultimate statement of this perception came from none other than former first lady Marike de Klerk, in a 1983 interview with a newspaper reporter, expressed the opinion that; ...they [coloureds] are a negative group. The definition of a coloured in the population register is someone that is not black, and is not white and is also not an Indian, in other words a no person. They are the leftovers. They are the people that were left after the nations were sorted out. They are the rest.” (Adhikari 2006a: 480-481).

This statement remained with me because it is so crude. I thought about how many Coloured people read this statement and felt displaced. Nevertheless, I knew that this would be the appropriate title for my dissertation because it speaks to the position I, as a woman, in general, occupy in South Africa. The title *The Left Overs Reimagined* is a subversion of that unsophisticated statement and captures the imaginary that the practical component of this study seeks to execute.

Since about 2018, racial tensions, especially in the Western Cape, have inserted (catapulted) Coloured people and communities into the spotlight. It has elicited heated debates and media attention surrounding their place in South African society. In the Western Cape, the discussions and media attention were “fuelled by dissatisfaction over housing, poor service delivery and inhumane living conditions” (du Plooy 2018: para. 5 line 1). Many Coloured communities have expressed feelings of

¹⁴ The National Party was an Afrikaner ethnic party that upheld Afrikaner interests in South Africa.

marginalisation. These feelings stem from South Africa's apartheid past, where Coloured people were reduced to products of miscegenation and racial "mixing". The idea of racial mixing is damaging because it blankets Coloured identities in disgrace and presents the argument that Coloured people are cultureless. These definitions deny the authentic lived experiences and truths of Coloured identities (du Plooy 2018 para. 6 line 1). It closes the dialogue and excludes Coloured identities in the broader South African context and South Africa's complex multi-layered past.

The Left Overs Reimagined encapsulates my views and feelings about both race and gender in South Africa. Both of these themes are based on my lived experience as a politically Black-culturally Coloured South African woman. hooks (1992: 7) in *Black Looks: Race And Representation* states,

"As a radical intervention we must develop revolutionary attitudes about race and representation. To do this we must be willing to think critically about images. We must be willing to take risks."

My artistic practices adopt hooks' notion of 'taking risks'. I focus on my lived experiences and the construction of my narrative through my practical work. This study addresses the one-note essentialist view of my 'Colouredness' and that of my family. It also explores how single-story narratives inform these essentialist views of the Coloured community.

Coloured is a label that refers to a multiracial ethnic group with ancestry from various racial groups in South Africa and the culture itself. Political Blackness is the idea that all 'non-white' people can define themselves under one term. This sentiment echoes Steve Biko's description of Blackness. According to Biko, Blackness is inclusive of everyone who has suffered under racial oppression. Biko posits that it should be viewed as a collective unity "to respond as a cohesive group...with a tenacity that must shock the perpetrators of evil" (Biko 1981: 8).

The research will explore and challenge given and accepted socially constructed rigid dichotomies of racial identities, specifically Coloured identities. This study seeks to reinterpret and reclaim my Coloured identity through my art practice. I achieved this through unsettling white hierarchal hegemonic heteronormative regimes that I navigate in my own lived experiences as a labelled female Coloured person living in post-apartheid South Africa.

The apartheid regime created a hierarchical social system structured on racial and economic differences, with the white minority occupying a privileged position of supremacy (Mntanbo 2007: 19). The apartheid regime relegated the other racial groups of colour to varying degrees of non-whiteness.¹⁵ Coloured people often occupied a grey area within the racial categorisation of non-whiteness. Laster (2007: 37) points out that South Africa has had a history of “white supremacy and black oppression but the status of mixed-race people remains undefined”.

I seek to dismiss the essentialist/traditionalist interpretation of Coloured identity. Suffice to add that it is the “popular view of Coloured identity as a product of miscegenation that stretches back to the earliest days of European settlement at the Cape” (Adhikari 2009: 7). This traditionalist view is limiting, and it has been something that has plagued my thoughts on my identity. Instead, I contest the notion of identity as static, arguing that it is rather a “product of a person’s context, place, cultural influences and time period” (Newman 2007: 36).

“The basic assumption of this genre is that coloured identity cannot be taken as given but is a product of human agency dependent on a complex interplay of historical, social, cultural, political and other contingencies” (Adhikari 2009: 7).

¹⁵ “Whiteness refers to the occupation of a social location of structural privilege in the right kind of racialized society” (Vice 2010 cited in Mckaiser 2011: 453).

Along with all other ethnic groups, Coloured identities are socially constructed. However, these histories are complex and rich in diversity. A history rooted in violence, genocide, power, slavery, rape, perceived miscegenation and emersion in the liberation struggle (du Plooy 2018 para. 11 line 1).

It is only through retelling and changing the narrative that the Coloured community can move on and heal from the burden of destructive narratives. The feelings of not belonging have become a marker for the Coloured community. Often the stories we tell ourselves are constructs that we are invested in, stories that are passed on generationally. An example of this reimagination and subversion is the work of Lady Skollie. In executing my practice, I felt compelled to re-imagine and examine my identity as a Coloured woman.

In exploring the concept of identity, the artists that I will be analysing are Lady Skollie, Adrian Piper, Thando Mama, Santu Mofokeng and Bronwyn Katz. These artists are primarily South African female artists, although I have also included one international artist. Santu Mofokeng has been included because of his use of archives and Adrian Piper has been included because she deals with the 'mixed race' lived experience from an American perspective within her work. Bronwyn Katz, Thando Mama and Lady Skollie are POC South African artists that produce work that speaks to the lived experiences of POC identity and representations within a South African context. In addition, Lady Skollie and Katz cover the Black South African women artist experience. Finally, I consciously selected artists because it will give me plenty of room to explore the differences and similarities between my work and theirs conceptually.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study aims to develop a Counter-Narrative that challenges Coloured identity as leftover through reimagined, reclaimed and re-presented archive of myself and my family. I will do this by collecting, documenting, and archiving my family's lived history and artistically exploring my lived experiences through images, photographs, audio, and written narratives about my family's history. This archive will be presented formally as an exhibition and will be accessible online.

The purpose of this research is not to perpetuate essentialist notions of identity in terms of race and gender. Instead, it seeks to unpack, reclaim and re-imagine these conceptions through my artistic practice. My art practice, drawing from selected artists' work, seeks to subvert conventional representations of identity by negation or blurring of the binary through visual experimentation.

I will be using Critical Race Theory to situate my creative output and the creative output of the selected artists.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Analyse the interventions used by the selected artists to reclaim, reimagine and re-represent misrepresentations of their identity and lived experiences.
2. Analyse the collection and documentation of my family archive.
3. Visually explore my family archive and employ artistic interventions that create a reimagined, reclaimed and re-presented archive of my own lived experiences.

To achieve the objectives above, I ask these questions:

1. How do the selected artists reclaim, re-imagine and re-represent misrepresentations of their identity and lived experiences in their work?
2. How do the selected artists use archiving as an artistic method in their work?

3. How can I use archiving to create an artistic archive of myself through my family's photographs and stories – which reclaims, re-imagines and re-represents misrepresentations of my identity?

My research will explore the theoretical context of the re-presentations of women POC and how ideas of race are entangled with this to answer the above research questions. In addition, the research will also address the historical context of race within South Africa. Finally, the literature review chapter will discuss the theoretical concepts that inform this study (Part two - Appetiser).

DELIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF STUDY

Delimitations

This is an autoethnographic practice-based qualitative study. The study focuses on reimagining and representing the narrative of my family archive. Through my counter-archive compilation that comprises primarily of photographs that I collected, much of my family's history was revealed to me, information that I was unaware of. What was important in creating the archive was where the data was coming from rather than the information received. I did not want to control the selection of the archive material because I wanted the archive to reflect my grandparents.

This study uses Critical Race Theory and Counter-Narratives and is a product of my subjective lived experiences as a politically Black-culturally Coloured woman. Critical Race Theory provided a framework for the study to address the neglect of the voices and experiences of marginalised people.

This dissertation focuses on diverse artists of colour who work in various mediums and artists who use archival practices and experiential knowledge in their art. Part Three of the dissertation will focus on explaining each artist's importance in informing my artistic practice.

The choice to exhibit online through Instagram provides public access to a part of the exhibition that they will not access physically. The Instagram account also serves as a repository for the archive. Through a public Instagram account there is public access to the archive, without any restrictions or any gatekeepers.

Assumptions

It is necessary to stress that this dissertation's definition of Coloured identity may be open to critique as others may define Coloured identity differently. I acknowledge that as much as I am trying to challenge dominant notions of Coloured identities as universal, the definitions I come up with, adopt and discuss here are not universal. This

same view holds for white, Black and Indian identities. Concepts such as apartheid and post-apartheid refer to periods before and after 1994, respectively.

Some of the outputs of this study will not be included in the exhibition of this study as they are experiments and the study's design is emergent.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to contribute to literature and discourse about Coloured and POC in South African race and gender studies from a visual art perspective. Furthermore, this study contributes to the research within South Africa about Coloured identity and archives, especially in Fine Art. My journey during this process of completing this Master's research is what makes this study significant. I chose concepts to bring meaning to aspects of myself and my life that I did not fully understand and circulate knowledge and Counter-Narratives through my counter-archive, addressing the essentialist rhetoric surrounding Coloured people. This essentialist rhetoric can be superficial and misleading.

There is still a paper-thin understanding of Coloured identity, race, and Counter-Narratives, particularly within South Africa. This research intends to add some weight through the practical component of the study. It will further uncover other possibilities for Counter-Narratives and open a platform for conversations on "Coloured" identities which will act as a catalyst for solidifying the diversity of "Coloured" narratives and contributing towards a body of knowledge.

OUTLINE OF DISSERTATION

I have moved away from the traditional terminology used in the conventional structure of a Masters' dissertation. Instead, I have exchanged the word 'chapter' with the word 'part'. I have also given each 'part' a title corresponding to a dining course (meal), inspired by my title '*The Left Overs, Reimagined*' and insinuates that this Master's dissertation is a five-course meal.

Part One of my dissertation entitled Hors d'oeuvre, seen above, consists of the Background, Context, Theoretical Framework, Aims and Objectives, Research questions, Introduction to research methodology, Delimitations of the study and the Outline of the thesis.

Part Two - Appetiser (literature review) reviews selected literature concerning the historical context of race in South Africa and the historical and theoretical context of Coloured identity in South Africa. The review highlights how Critical Race Theory, Counter-Narrative Theory, storytelling and the archive form the conceptual base for my practice-based research. The literature review informs how I conceptualised the work through the use of writers/theorists. The literature discussed how marginalised identities plagued with misrepresentations could challenge dominant narratives through their agency.

Part Three, entitled Salad, is the research methodology chapter that begins with research aims, objectives and proposed outcome of the study. I then explain how practice-based qualitative research methodology with an emergent design forms my creative practice.

Part Four - Main Course is an analysis and reflection of my art practice, the product of this research, and an analysis of the work of selected artists. This chapter reflects on the importance of Counter-Narratives and storytelling in my practice.

In Part Five - Dessert, I reflect on the study and my practice concerning the aims, objectives, and questions. I also discuss recommendations for further research in Fine Art on Coloured identity, storytelling and Counter-Narratives.



Figure 1: Ashleigh Ruiters. Outline of Dissertation (image). 2020.

PART TWO / APPETISER

INTRODUCTION

In Part Two of this dissertation, the appetiser of the study, namely the literature review chapter, I analyse and discuss literature that addresses notions of race, Coloured identity, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Counter-Narratives, storytelling and the archive. I also explore and discuss the work of selected artists that influence my art practice. This chapter forms the theoretical base and the lens with which the practical component of this study is to be viewed. The analysis of the literature and visual texts in this chapter assist in contextualising and situating my artistic practice theoretically.

This study seeks to challenge the idea of people of colour being the “leftovers” when in fact they were a perfectly well thought out menu. According to Adhikari (2006b), “Historically coloured identity has been defined as a product of miscegenation rather than that of human agency and social change”. This definition subjectively denies the subjects’ experiences and power as people with divergent thinking and agency to create the lives and futures they want to live in and be a part of.

hooks (1992: 7) suggests that “as a radical intervention we must develop revolutionary attitudes about race and representation. To do this, we must be willing to think critically about images. We must be willing to take risks.” In writing about this subject, she wants to “challenge and unsettle, to disrupt and subvert” hegemonic ideas and perceptions regarding race and representation (hooks 1992: 7). My practical output, drawing from hooks’ suggestion, seeks to be a radical artistic intervention that challenges, unsettles, disrupts and subverts perceptions of people of colour, specifically Coloured people within a familial setting.

In this literature review, there will be a discussion of crucial theoretical arguments that advance race as a socially constructed phenomenon and advance Counter-Narratives’ as a practice that aids in reclaiming historical space.

This research and my art practice are centred on race and identity and how my family’s and my community’s Coloured identity can be reimagined.

NOTIONS OF RACE IN SOUTH AFRICA

“In everyday language, race has been used to describe the pigmentation of different people, but more nuanced definitions add culture to categorise race. These seemingly innocuous ways of differentiating people assume negative connotations when one’s skin colour is deemed representative of an individual’s mental capacity or his/her humanness” (Phiri and Matambo 2019: 67).

Race is an almost daily conversation that seems to permeate the most intimate parts of life in South Africa. For those of us living today, it would be hard to believe in the existence of a life where race was never an issue, however according to Smedley (1998: 169), “Race as a mechanism of social stratification and as a form of human identity is a recent concept in human history. Historical records show that neither the idea nor ideologies associated with race existed before the seventeenth century.”

In 1950, all South Africans were compelled to register as either white, Black, Coloured or indian. These legislative interventions determined where one could live and work (Bowker and Star 1999: 196). The term Coloured was used by the apartheid government to denote persons of mixed descent, “not a White person or a Black” (Wicomb 1998: 101). The South African government’s classification structure and conceptions of race drew on socio-political analysis and physical differences. As a result, bodies signified power, status and worth in a whiteness-privileged hierarchy (Posel 2001: 64). The colour of one’s skin was an easy differentiator between the coloniser and the colonised. It was the marker of difference (superiority) that apartheid was founded on and grounded on. However, racial discrimination in South Africa can be traced back to interactions between the indigenous people and early European sailors.

The first people that the Dutch sailors had contact with were the Khoikhoi and San. According to McCrone (1957 cited in Phiri and Matambo 2019), the Khoikhoi and the San were referred to by Jan van Riebeeck, the commander of the Dutch East India

Company's colony (modern-day Cape Town), as "lazy, stupid, of a diminished intellectual capacity and as people that cannot be trusted" (Marks 1972: 55). This misrepresentation is what this research seeks to subvert and challenge. Today very little consideration is given to the Khoikhoi and the San in South Africa regarding their place and contribution in history. Whatever successes they did achieve has been attributed or credited to the coloniser rather than their agency and ability to think independently.

Before 1994 South Africa operated under the system of apartheid, which was legally structured to oppress people of colour to protect the supremacy and interest of white people. The system's approach resulted in significant social disparity in South Africa. In the apartheid era, race framed whiteness as dominant and Blackness as secondary and inferior. The racial difference was the pillar of the apartheid Government's system of oppression where skin colour determined how much power – economic, political and social – a person wielded in South Africa (Harris 2002: 69). However, Smedley (1998: 169) admits that race is just a social invention, nothing more and less. It has little to do with the biologically distinct populations' inherent, or potential, attributes but more to do with the distribution of power, privilege and resources amongst them.

The policy of apartheid was officially introduced after the Second World War in 1948 when the Nationalist Party (NP) came to power in South Africa and deliberately moved to divide citizens depending on the colour of their skin. This scheme was supposedly for distinct but equal amenities for all classes, but this was a fallacy (Phiri and Matambo 2019: 67). Policymakers under apartheid, to maintain racial purity, prohibited people of different institutionally determined racial backgrounds from marrying each other and engaging with each other sexually (Matambo and Ani 2015 cited in Phiri and Matambo 2019: 67). In addition, the apartheid government sought to have complete command over racial classification to determine with whom citizens associated, work distribution, purchase of property, travel and facets of everyday life (Harris 2002: 69). In 1950 the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act was passed by NP. These legislative interventions classified people by race and

determined where one could live, go and work as well as who they could associate with (Bowker and Star 1999: 196).

The Nationalist Party, the party in power during the apartheid regime in South Africa, used racial exclusion during their rule. This racial exclusion was implemented through a tactic known as divide and rule. The apartheid government created these divisions within the majority non-white population to entrench disparities further and create a racial hierarchy that affected political, social and socioeconomic living. This white supremacist ideological process deemed Black South Africans the most marginalised group during apartheid. According to political analyst Eusebius McKaiser (2020: para. 15 line 1):

“White supremacists were so successful with their political project to keep race groups apart, in an attempt to preserve the imagined racial purity and presumed moral superiority of white people, that a hierarchy of races were codified in law, with profound social and political consequences for every community”.

The apartheid government atrocities spanned four decades during which millions of POC were raped, exiled, murdered, dislocated, dispossessed and jailed. Looking at the enduring legacy of apartheid in contemporary South African life, it has become clear that South Africa’s history of apartheid cannot be divorced from the present. The inequitable distribution of wealth and power amongst white and POC South Africans indicates this. It affects a person’s socioeconomic standing in South Africa and determines the level of humanity a person is entitled to.

In South Africa, racialised labels were placed on the POC after colonisation and became the dominant identification mode. According to McKaiser (2020: para. 2 line 4), “The country’s apartheid and colonial histories introduced more fine-grained racial classifications that drew an administrative and sociopolitical wedge between” people of colour. McKaiser discusses explicitly race relations in South Africa as being confusing for “outside observers”. Race in South Africa is complicated because of the racial

hierarchy set out by the apartheid government to divide POC. As a result, Coloured and Indian people often believe that they are better than Black people. It does not foster a sense of unity within the POC community, even though they all may be facing similar disenfranchisement brought about by the apartheid regime. I argue that it is not only confusing for the outside observer but the person of colour trying to navigate identity.

Internal conflicts exist within my family and me regarding how to navigate our identity. This conflict, I feel, stems from the different cultures and ethnicities that inform who we are. My maternal grandfather's side of the family is Indian, my maternal grandmother is Coloured from Port Elizabeth, my paternal grandmothers' family is Muslim Malay Coloured, and my paternal grandfathers' family is Coloured. The conflict stems from how other people identify me and their inability to recognise that I am a POC. Most people I encounter assume that I am white, and this whitewashing¹⁶ of my identity can be dangerous and hurtful. This assumption often gives people the liberty to speak freely, resulting in overt racism, which otherwise would have been concealed. We have created social mechanisms that allow us to navigate our complex ancestry and behave in different social settings in various ways to conform to the status quo, survive, and not ruffle any feathers. The "leftover" existence is confusing within the Coloured community, creating tensions about the best way to navigate life and which face to associate. The Coloured experience is included in numerous circles, and in others, the opposite is true; we are excluded.

The apartheid regime relegated the other racial groups to varying degrees of non-whiteness. Coloured people often occupied a grey area within the racial categorisation of non-whiteness. Laster (2007: 37) points out that South Africa has had a history of

¹⁶ Whitewashing is a metaphor used to describe situations and spaces that are purposely immersed in whiteness in order to avoid "undesired racial politics" (Reitman 2006: 268).

“white supremacy and black oppression, but the status of mixed-race people remains undefined”. This categorical separation of people of colour within South Africa went as far as the apartheid government attempting to ‘scientifically’ determine racial identity. This categorisation was strategic, the subjective decision of an eye examination carried out by a biased and politically motivated white administrator who determined which racial group people were a part of. McKaiser (2020: para. 7 line 1) points out,

“Shortly after the apartheid government came to power in 1948, it passed legislation that defined each race group. Every person was designated a race according to the state’s arbitrary criteria. These included skin colour, hair texture, the shape and size of one’s nose, and even whether you ‘passed’ certain unscientific tests like a pencil being stuck in your hair to see whether it fell out or not—an apparent indicator of whether you may be white, coloured, or black. There were many sub-categories too, all of them arbitrarily defined, and your race depended on the whimsical judgment of a white state bureaucrat. This led to ridiculous and unjust scenarios in which families could be torn apart because officials assigned different members to different race groups”.

The separation of families during apartheid because of classification is spoken about regularly within the Coloured community. According to Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2012: 93), “many Coloured people who shared similar racial and ethnic characteristics with whites attempted to have themselves reclassified as white, since for as long as they remained classified as Coloured, they would carry the stereotype of being inferior to and rejected from the 'superior' group”. It can, in some cases, still be a source of contention within some Coloured families. Reclassification resulted in some families disintegrating and also contributed to internalised racism within the Coloured community. The contention mentioned here could be a betrayal and superiority complex based on a person's ability to pass as white. From my experience, the word

'play white' has been used to describe a light-skinned Coloured person who either officially was reclassified or 'pretends to be' or 'behaves like' a white person.

The first democratic elections in 1994 formally marked the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa. The first democratic elections in South Africa were held due to the political pressure imposed on the apartheid government and the economic sanctions placed on the apartheid regime. There was no sudden change in white South Africans' hearts and minds that endorsed the apartheid regime in South Africa; they did not suddenly see Black people as their equals (Moodley and Adam 2000: 53). Racialized forms of dominance remain within South Africa, and race affects how South Africans identify themselves.

Although a racially majority-rule democracy, people's sentiments about race have not changed much in post-apartheid South Africa. Within the country, the same racial, social hierarchy remains, although some people may disagree. The social patterns left behind by apartheid are "proving extremely resilient" (Harris 2002: 66). Moodley and Adam (2000: 56) highlight that,

“in the past, the anti-apartheid forces rightly stressed the illegitimacy of colour in their struggle against a minority regime based on racial privilege. Ironically, today, conservative whites insist on colour-blind individualism while progressive blacks reintroduce racial monitoring to achieve representativity. The African National Congress is accused of re-racializing society through affirmative action policies. In response, it argues that a society that has never been de-racialized cannot be re-racialized. The Equity Bill is defended as a temporary measure for de-racialization and the creation of equal opportunities for the formerly disadvantaged. Its critics see it as reverse discrimination”.

Many white South Africans are unaware of the invisible knapsacks of privilege that they bare and today, much of the white population feel relatively underprivileged (Moodley and Adam 2000: 58). The white minority does not care how others perceive

them; however, essentialist notions of race and representation still plagues POC (Moodley and Adam 2000: 57). Most racists in South Africa hide their intolerance behind a curtain of political correctness, and the racism faced in South Africa is often covert (Moodley and Adam 2000: 57-60). The formal abolition of racism was the cornerstone of South Africa's modern independence, but the emancipation from apartheid could not be equated with the dissolution of its legacy.

I have often heard it stated by Coloured people that 'During apartheid, we were not white enough. Now, we are not Black enough!' this encapsulates the sentiment that some Coloured South Africans may have felt hard done by the apartheid government and the new democratic government (Amberger 2007: para. 2 line 3). There is a feeling of exclusion, which started from political exclusion and then led to socioeconomic exclusion. It tends to affect lower income-Coloured communities. However, I do not believe that many Coloured people connect their feelings of exclusion with those of the Black community living in similar conditions. McKaiser (2020: para. 19 line 5) suggests that "colonialism and apartheid made coloured people think they are not Black or even African".

The ignorance of the hierarchy created by the oppressors, the feelings of exclusion and the inability to realise that all POC experienced varying degrees of suffering under the apartheid regime, it is this strategically planted ignorance that leaves people ill-informed about their ancestors and where they come from. These divisions discussed in the previous paragraphs were created during the early colonial days in South Africa and the apartheid regime. This curiosity has led me to learn more about my family through the creation of my familial archive.

COLOURED IDENTITY

"equality between White and coloured persons would not be tolerated" (Suzman 1960 cited in Bowker and Star 1999: 196).

The term Coloured can be considered outdated and even offensive in some countries around the world. Still, in South Africa, it is regarded as a legally recognised ethnic group. In South Africa, Coloured is not a word ascribed to Black people in general. Instead, the term refers to a diverse group of descendants of Cape slaves, the indigenous Khoisan population, other people of African and Asian descent and white Europeans. Coloured people are regarded as mixed race and occupy an indefinite space in the South African racial hierarchical system (Adhikari 2006b: 143).

In post-apartheid South Africa, Coloured people are considered Black because they are of African descent. However, they are essentially multiracial and multi-generationally mixed as opposed to being biracial. Speaking about the history of Coloured people in South Africa is challenging because the coloured community is so diverse. There are many notions about the emergence of Coloured people in South Africa, and most Coloured people in South Africa do not know about their ancestry, myself included (Nilsson 2016: 28).

There were about one million Coloured South Africans during the Population Registration and Group Areas Act. During this time, they call borderline cases: Coloured people who wanted to be reclassified as white. Many people in the Coloured community share stories about people in the communities racially passing as white. It tore families apart. In trying to make sense of this phenomenon, I believe that Coloured people that passed saw the opportunity to access more for their family in terms of employment and social status in South African society.

Negative attitudes about impurity accompany the Coloured community's mixed-race ancestry, otherwise known as hybridisation. The idea about impurity is well entrenched in South African popular culture as something undesirable, whether you

referred to cattle, pets or people (Adhikari 2006b: 153). This aversion to the mixing of races was upheld and praised by many white South Africans during apartheid (Cupido 2018: 35). Many expressed that they wanted a pure nation free from bastards (Cupido 2018: 35). Moreover, according to a racist point of view, mixing races would render interracial children inferior in terms of intelligence and morality (Cupido 2018: 35). According to Adhikari (2006b: 253), “the consequence of their miscegenated origins placed coloured people in an intellectually and morally inferior positions as second-class citizens in society.”

Stereotypes that are synonymous with Coloured identities include “laziness, alcoholism, gangsterism, violence and drug addiction, as well as not having any recognised culture or language of their own” (Petrus and Isaacs-Martin 2012: 87). These projected views are burdensome to the Coloured community and me as a Coloured woman. Often people expect some aspect of your life to manifest at least one of these attributes. Either Coloured people are unnecessarily/unfairly placed in a position that results in those stereotypical outputs/outbursts. Or because of the invisibility and unrecognised/unmet needs, it causes some individuals of a community to react out. That reaction of the one individual then unfairly crystallises to represent the whole. Then synecdoche effect¹⁷ happens. That is how most stereotypes are formed and are applied to a group of people. Some Coloured people receive subpar early childhood development, worse education, bad environment, less security, lower-income resulting in unmet needs. Crime is then used as easier means of acquiring things or meeting unfulfilled needs that otherwise seemed impossible within the law. Hence Coloured people are criminals or gangsters. Coloured identities have always

¹⁷ “Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to signify the whole, or vice-versa” (Literary Devices 2021: para. 1 line 1).

been assumed to be fixed and unchanging. Therefore, this stereotypical notion of what Colouredness is has been maintained since the apartheid regime into the present.

The essentialist view of Coloured identity is a destructive narrative that blankets Colouredness with disgrace and presents the notion that Coloured people are cultureless. "Essentialist conceptions of race hold that characteristics of physical appearance referred to my racial terms are indicative of more profound characteristics (whether positively or negatively constructed) of personality, inclinations, 'culture,' heritage, cognitive abilities, or 'natural talents' that are taken to be shared by all members of a racially defined group" (Stubblefield 1995: 341). This is encapsulated by a statement made by Marike De Klerk where she describes Coloured people as leftovers, in a state of lack, referring to them as not Black, white or Indian.

In post-apartheid South Africa, these sentiments still resonate with the Coloured community, disturbing how they view the group they identify with. According to Petrus and Isaacs-Martin (2012: 91), "reinforcing the social constructionist approach, postmodern creolisationism, as espoused by Erasmus, illustrates Coloured identity as a product of cultural creativity, a cultural borrowing from various groups under specific conditions of marginalisation".

There are many hardships within Coloured communities, as there are in all communities of colour in South Africa. I think that many of these communities are low-income areas (townships). As a direct result, subpar education and early childhood development, bad environment, less security, alcoholism, gangsterism and unemployment are rife (Amberger 2007: para 3 line 1-8).

According to my lived experience within the Coloured community, I have found that many Coloured people have expressed feelings of marginalisation. These feelings stem from South Africa's apartheid past, where Coloured people were reduced to products of miscegenation and racial 'mixing'. These definitions deny the authentic lived experiences and truths of coloured identities. It closes off the dialogue and excludes Coloured identities and contributions to South African culture within the broader

South African context. As a result, the Coloured experience is mitigated, and the role and contribution to the liberation of the South African people across the board are ignored within South Africa's complex past.

It is only through retelling and changing the narrative that the Coloured community can heal from the destructive narrative that the community has been burdened with. The feelings of not belonging have become a marker for the Coloured community. Often the stories we tell ourselves are constructs that we are invested in, stories that are passed on generationally. Therefore, it is reassuring to see Coloured artists undertaking the task of re-imagining Coloured identities, challenging the disconcerting meaning that Colouredness has had historically. An example of this reimagination and subversion is seen in the work of Lady Skollie.

It is more accurate to describe coloured identities instead as dynamic and fluid. At the centre of Butler's work is replacing the notion of a fixed, essential identity with an identity constituted by fluctuating and fluid discursive forces. Judith Butler is a seminal researcher in the field of gender identity. Butler (1999) writes about identity from a gender perspective, but this applies to cultural identities.

Yet, according to McKaiser (2020: para. 8 line 5), "it was a divide-and-rule tactic and worked well for white supremacists to the extent that, over the course of the country's history, many Coloured people internalized the fiction that we were not Black." This sentiment is something that I have observed as a Coloured woman within my community.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY (CRT)

My study adopts Critical Race Theory as a lens to view Coloured identity and my family archive. According to Yosso (2005: 75), looking through a CRT lens implies that one needs to evaluate discrepancies in conceptions and records and consider that there has been an intentional neglect of the voices of Coloured people in South Africa. This leads me to formulate that their voices have been mainly ignored within the media, education and more especially the politics of the country.

CRT began as a movement within legal studies in the mid-'90s and has become transdisciplinary. It focuses on marginalised POC liberation, social justice and economic empowerment. CRT asserts that incidents of racism are not random and are, in fact, "symptomatic of a society that remains entrenched in racist ideologies" (McCoy and Rodricks 2015: 3). Meaning that race remains central to society and its institutions, and if you want to understand how things work in society, you need to attend to the role of race in those institutions (Manhattan Institute 2020). CRT offers a way to recognise systematic racial discrimination and disrupt it (McCoy and Rodricks 2015: 3).

CRT challenges normalised Eurocentric values and is a form of race-centred oppositional scholarship (Lui 2009). According to Yosso (2005: 77), Critical Race Theory shifts the culture, voices and experiences of Communities of Colour from the margins¹⁸ of society to the centre, creating space for the 'other' in place of white middle-class culture. Historically, cultural capital has been defined and 'formally' recorded according to "white middle class values" (Yosso 2005: 77). CRT asserts a wealth of knowledge in the hoarded "histories and lives of Communities of Colour" (Yosso 2005: 77). This community wealth consists of an "array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Colour to survive and

¹⁸ To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body (hooks 1984).

resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (Yosso 2005: 77). There are “at least 6 forms of capital such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital” (Yosso 2005: 77). Although there are six forms of community wealth, they are not stand-alone but work together to acknowledge the person as a whole (Yosso 2005: 77).

The storytelling of marginalised lived experience is deeply embedded in all forms of community cultural wealth, which is the mode of being in each one.

CRT asserts that allowing marginalised Communities of Colour to insert their lived experiences into our society dominated by hegemonic whiteness and Eurocentric ideologies initiates social transformation. “CRT draws explicitly on the lived experiences of People of Colour by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos*, *testimonios*, chronicles and narratives” (Yosso 2015: 74).

However, Gordon (1999 cited in Mocombe 2017: 84) criticises CRT for its methodological use of lived experience and storytelling as a way to authenticate their arguments. Mocombe (2017: 84) emphasises that CRT “undermines what some view as rational-based argumentation for personal experiences, narratives, and unrealistic thought experiences in order to convict the society of racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.”. Furthermore, Krasne (2020) formulates that Critical Race theorists view “those that do not subscribe to critical race theory” as “enemies in the fight to defeat racism”. Although, according to Krasne (2020), it “leaves no room for meaningful discourse”, Krasne points out that you need to either resist the white hegemonic power structure or be labelled a racist.

CRT values experiences, viewpoints and the power of storytelling. CRT values the experiential knowledge of People of Colour (POC). CRT recognises this kind of knowledge is “legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination” (Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 26). CRT scholars use counter-storytelling as a means of challenging “racist characterizations of social life”

and is used to oppose and suppress race-neutral discourse to expose how white privilege operates (Merriweather Hunn *et al.* 2006: 244).

Banks (1993 cited in Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 24) suggests that Eurocentric interpretations of history expose race as a socially constructed phenomenon. These Eurocentric interpretations are implemented to create division and exert “dominance of one race over another” (Banks 1993 cited in Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 24). The concept of whiteness¹⁹ is based on power (Harris 1993). The cornerstone of whiteness is the subordination of people of colour and white domination. Ladson-Billings (1998: 9) asserted that,

“it is because of the meaning and value imputed to whiteness that CRT becomes an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power.”

Lorde (1992: 496) defines racism as “the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance”. Marable (1992 cited in Solorzano 1998: 124) describes racism as “a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress” people of colour based on “ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and colour”. The two definitions of racism above suggest institutional power plays a crucial role in perpetuating racist ideology. The system of apartheid upheld the belief that white people were inherently superior to POC in South Africa, which allowed them the licence to construct narratives about race that were devoid of the experiences of those they were oppressing.

¹⁹ Whiteness studies is the study of systems that accommodate and create White Privilege (Doane and Bonilla-Silva 2003: 3-6).

STORYTELLING

There is a danger in single storytelling, according to Adichie (2009) in her well-known TED talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*. Adichie (2009) asserts that “many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and malign. But stories can also be used to empower and to humanise. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity”. Stories often told about communities of colour situate the people within these stories in a state of lack. These narratives are propagated through movies, series, etc. For example, these narratives depict women of colour in a hypersexualised manner. According to hooks (1992: 62) “Representations of black female bodies in contemporary popular culture rarely subvert or critique images of black female sexuality which were part of the cultural apparatus of 19th-century racism and which still shape perceptions today. Sander Gilman's essay, ‘Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature’, calls attention to the way black presence in early North American society allowed whites to sexualize their world by projecting onto black bodies a narrative of sexualization disassociated from whiteness”.

According to Adichie (2009), we can all be guilty of maintaining single stories about groups of people that do not form part of our community. Representations that we see around us every day influence us to buy into single stories by bombarding us with their narrative of the other. “Power is not only to tell the story of another person but to make it the definitive story of that person” (Adichie 2009). It is critical in the maintenance of these single stories. It dictates how, where, when and how many times these stories are told.

Western stories present us with many ways to envision middle-aged white women because these are the stories that are important, and the group represented within the story is important. Western stories possess multiplicity and power and are not definitive. In our South African context, definitive stories are often told about the

Coloured, Black and Indian communities. More often than not, these stories do not possess multiplicity; they situate Coloureds as violent, drunkards, uncultured and uneducated. To look at only these negative stories flattens the experience of the Coloured community and overlooks the many other stories that form the Coloured community.

As a South African Coloured woman, many stories within my counter-archive are negative and contain 'lack'. These stories are important for me as a young South African Coloured woman that grew up in a middle-class household to hear. Still, these are not the only stories that should be told as they perpetuate the flattening of experiences. Stories in my counter-archive are those stories that I would like to celebrate by highlighting multiplicity in my family's lived experiences.

Delgado (1989 cited in Merriweather Hunn *et al.* 2006: 244) describes storytelling as a formidable way of constructing "meaning as well as challenging myths". These stories are lived and experienced and, therefore, *counterstories* that oppose the master narrative. (Solorzano and Yosso 2002). 'Counter-storytelling' provides marginalised people with the agency to critique "normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes" (DeCuir and Dixon 2004: 27).

Amoah (1997: 84) describes storytelling as "a tradition on the continuity of wisdom, and it functions to assert the voice of the oppressed." Amoah then says that storytelling is not just used to entertain or educate. For some, storytelling is a way of life, as "it is the only way to comprehend, analyse, and deal with life." (Amoah 1997: 84). I adopt Amoah's definition of storytelling as it directly relates to my family archive, primarily consisting of stories told to me by my family. These stories are not merely stories told for entertainment or conversation. These stories carry my family history and wisdom that I will pass on to my family and community one day.

Counter-Narratives change the way that we think and perceive universal truths. The main objective of Counter-Narrative storytelling is to reveal and challenge "dominant racial ideologies" (Merriweather Hunn *et al.* 2006: 249). In addition, counter-

narratives provide substantiation about the fabrication of master narratives (Merriweather Hunn *et al.* 2006: 249). They “attest to both the history of racial discrimination as well as the ongoing existence of racism. In doing so, they also provide an opportunity to question the status quo and privilege that underlies the majoritarian stories when juxtaposed with the counter-stories” (Merriweather Hunn *et al.* 2006: 249).

I believe the theory of ‘Counter-Narratives’ best fits my practical work as I engage in a project of reclamation and reimagination within my practice (Godrej 2011: 111). Counter-Narratives are a means of resistance and survival for communities of colour. Recognising these suppressed discourses opens up the dialogue to many world views (Lopez 2001 cited in Manglitz *et al.* 2006: 2). We can decentre master narrative voices, positionality and authority by creating space, exercising agency and challenging them with Counter-Narratives. The decentring can be done by inserting our lived experiences into the societal landscape.

COUNTER-NARRATIVE AS A CRITICAL RACE METHOD

Tate (1995 cited in Manglitz *et al.* 2006) explains that in Critical Race theory, Counter-Narratives “may be a useful mechanism to challenge and change racial dominance”. Counter-Narratives are a methodological tool/ mechanism used by Critical Race theorists (Merriweather Hunn *et al.* 2006: 244). My practice uses Counter-Narratives to challenge master narratives²⁰ and racial dominance by moving the archive and the people within that archive from the margins of society into the centre. My counter-archive and the people within the archive will be moved from the margins into the centre. I will do this through how they will be represented and re-presented within the archive. In doing so, the discourse on the Coloured community will shift.

Narratives are devices that we use to make sense of the world around us and our position in how we view ourselves. Identity can be considered a narrative because it is the story that we tell about ourselves. These narratives and stories provide individuals and communities with a means to “construct, maintain, alter and share identities as they choose” (Puttick 2011: 26).

The objective is to uncover, rearticulate and reconstruct the narrative, thus constructing a Counter-Narrative. Master narratives have had such a prominent role in our society and have become accepted universal truths. However, this can be misleading, and these universal truths do not always reflect the actual lived experiences of predominantly people of colour. “Without CRT’s counter-storytelling, the true stories would never be publicly proclaimed, and perhaps the world would come to believe and perceive that all was fine” (Hartlep 2009: 11).

²⁰ Stanley (2007:14) explains that a master narrative is something “that act to universalize and cast dialogues in binary, contrasting categories that support the maintenance of dominant groups. A master narrative is a script that specifies and controls how some social processes are carried out”.

According to Williams (2004: 166),

“If there are narratives that reinforce and reproduce dominant cultural perceptions, then narratives also have the possibility of revealing gaps in those same perceptions. Those outside the dominant culture have traditionally used stories, parables, parody, and satire to tell of their experiences and provide another version of society. Although such stories are often created for other members of marginalized groups, they can be used to reveal contradictions in the dominant cultural ideology that argument cannot.”

In *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist Thinking Black*, bell hooks explains that experiential knowledge is essential when reclaiming and reconstructing a narrative. hooks (1989: 43) states, “Oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, telling their story.” She says that historically the experiences, of women and people that are gay from a variety of ethnic groups were generally “studied, interpreted and written solely by white males, or by a group with greater power” (hooks 1989: 43).

In the intro of *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist Thinking Black*, ‘talking back’ represented a resistance from bell hooks in her youth. ‘Talking back’ signified viewing yourself, a POC or a woman, as an equal to those that dominate and dictate narratives and daring to exercise your agency over your narrative (hooks 1989: 22).

Marginalised people being denied autonomy of their narratives was the ultimate demonstration of the politics of domination. “These groups became the “authority” to consult if anyone wanted to understand the experiences of these powerless groups” (hooks 1989: 22). hooks refers to master narratives in this quote, and she points out which groups have power over master narratives and who has control of the narrative. Through reading this quotation from hooks above, I was taken back to the title of this dissertation and why it resonated with me; I wanted my body of work to define reality, name my history and tell a story.

Counter-storytelling aims to reveal “race neutral discourse” (Merriweather Hunn *et al.* 2006: 244). Within race-neutral discourse, White Privilege²¹ can thrive and dominate the narrative ‘undetected’. Race neutral discourses’ ideological framework aims to “reinforce and support unequal societal relations between whites and people of color” (Merriweather Hunn *et al.* 2006: 244). Engaging in conversations about race is complex, and in doing so, we can dismantle this privilege. Communities of colour frequently engage in discussions about race, but whites seldom do (Scheurich 1993 and Sleeter 1993 cited in Manglitz *et al.* 2006: 3). White people often avoid conversations about race because “the topic is viewed as uncomfortable and unprofitable at best, and unimportant or irrelevant at worse” (Manglitz *et al.* 2006: 3). White people viewing race topics as irrelevant has everything to do with the fact that race seems like an activity of the other (POC) and has nothing to do with them (Manglitz *et al.* 2006: 3). The refusal to engage in the topic of race is an exercise of power and privilege.

For a long time, white hegemonic and Eurocentric discourse told the wrong story or negated significant moments. hooks (1989: 43) illuminates that the studying, interpretations and documentation of POC by white males and dominators is problematic. Problems arise within communities of colour; their identity, socio-

²¹ “Discussed by Lipsitz, Lee, Harris, McIntosh, and other CRT scholars, white privilege refers to the various social, political, and economic advantages white individuals experience in contrast to non-white citizens based on their racial membership. These advantages can include both obvious and subtle differences in access to power, social status, experiences of prejudice, educational opportunities, and much more. For CRT scholars, the notion of white privilege offers a way to discuss dominant culture’s tendency to normalize white individuals’ experiences and ignore the experiences of non-whites. Fields such as CRT and whiteness studies have focused explicitly on the concept of white privilege to understand how racism influences white people.” (Critical Race Theory (1970s-present) 2020: para. 12 line 1).

economic constructs, social relations, power play, and distribution in the POC community as the dominators propagate segregation by dividing races and creating fractures within communities. It is problematic, especially in South Africa and its history with racial segregation, domination and discrimination.

Maxwell and Sonn (2020: 1) used counter-storytelling to highlight that the arts can be a powerful method to promote privileged groups investment in social justice. They also assessed how involved witnesses could be engaged in “reflection on dominant narratives”. They aim to highlight how “Political theatre creates spaces to examine and question whiteness using embodied knowledges”. “This study examined audience responses to a counter-narrative (entitled “AMKA”) performed by Africans in Australia which intended to present more complex, holistic, and strengths-based representations of their communities than those currently circulated by dominant discourses” (Maxwell and Sonn 2020: 1). The study assessed how white witnesses decoded the performance and how they assessed their whiteness as participating witnesses.

My study is similar to a South African study by Puttick (2011: 15), which uses counter-storytelling in post-apartheid South Africa. Such approach provides “counterstories to apartheid’s master narrative of ‘race’ and racialised identity as a means of dislocating these narratives and providing alternative voices” (Puttick 2011: 15). This study seeks to assess narratives, focusing on everyday experiences of race and racism, of black and white first-year students in South Africa at the study (Puttick 2011: 16). This study, like mine, also contributes to an archive. Puttick’s (2011: 16) study contributes to the “Apartheid Archive Study, which was initiated with the aim of establishing an inclusive and holistic archive”.

Artists I have chosen to be analysed in this study use counter-storytelling in their practice by re-presenting their identity in their body of work. Artists such as Lady Skollie, Adrien Piper and Bronwyn Katz. They all present artefacts that narrate their

lived experiences. In addition, they engage with storytelling visually to contribute to identifying hegemonic attitudes, labelled as a transgressive act.

ARCHIVE

The term archive refers to “a set of material documents housed in physical structures or on digital platforms” and “the architectural structure within which these material documents are housed – both of which implicate issues of accessibility, power and control” (Farber and Jorgensen 2017: IX).

Foster (2006 cited in Farber and Jorgenson 2017: vi) explains that the archive is complex and multifaceted, “found yet constructed ... public yet private”. The archive can be invisible (unspoken) or visible, consisting of memory, fact or fiction (Faber and Jorgenson 2017: vi). Gaillet (2012: 39) contends this traditional notion of the archive and currently defines archives as a “primary source for creating knowledge rather than mere storehouses for finding what is already known”.

According to Samuels (2017: para. 3 line 4),

“To understand how and why histories continue to impact on the world today, contemporary South African artists are turning to the archive, and the chronicles of history here become the building blocks for creative action. Working with archives in a creative way allows the artist to create work with the potential to deconstruct ideologies, and thus change the course of our contemporary world.”

In recent years artists are increasingly using archiving as an artistic subject. While this creative activity is not to be confused with the actual work of archiving, it does express both the admiration for and questions about the role and function of “archives” (Junya 2016: 65).

According to Foster (2004 cited in Junya 2016: 65), the art practice of archiving can be described,

“as prominent contemporary artists who use historical material reflecting a desire “to connect what cannot be connected,” building context and meaning

for the social backgrounds of existing images, products, or stories “to recoup failed visions in art, philosophy, and everyday life into possible scenarios of alternative kinds of social relations, to transform the no-place of the archive into the no-place of a utopia.””

Concurring, Foster notes that (2004: 4) “archival artists seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present. To this end they elaborate on the found image, object, and text”. Foster (2004: 4) argues that artists who use archival practices present historical information in new innovative ways, therefore bringing it into focus. Through creating my family archive, I would like to address gaps produced by institutions and archival practices. There are gaps in public archives due to the exclusion and marginalisation of POC voices and experiences during apartheid. My family archive serves to contribute to amending this. The creation of new archives has been “vital to re-thinking the function and scope of archives, particularly those curated and housed by state and municipal governments” (Burgin 2017: 17).

In the early 1990s, South Africa’s national archival system was initiated alongside the negotiation process that transformed the South African political landscape (The Archival Platform 2015). The process culminated in the *National Archives of South Africa Act No 43 of 1996*, and this provided guidelines as to how to go about establishing this system (The Archival Platform 2015). By the conclusion of Nelson Mandela’s presidency, most of the groundwork had been laid, and the South African National Archival system body had put forward five key objectives. The five key objectives are “turning archives into an accessible public resource”, “using archives in support of post-apartheid programmes of redress and reparation”, “taking archives to the people through imaginative and participative public programming”, “actively documenting the voices and the experiences of those either excluded or marginalised in the colonial or apartheid archives” and “transforming public archives into auditors of government record-keeping in support of efficient, accountable and transparent administration” (The Archival Platform 2015).

The Archival Platform (2015) asserts that good work has been done, but this post-1994 period's objectives have not been achieved due to a lack of political enthusiasm and underfunding.

The Archival Platform (2015) admits that most of these objectives were not realised by 2014. To highlight a few points that The Archival Platform (2015) made concerning the progress made on the objectives: public access has not been achieved - this could be through digitisation, "archives remain the domain of the elites" – very little outreach is done to increase public participation and interaction, and the public only has access to some of the various archives online additionally, custodians of archives are routinely gatekeeping their information (The Archival Platform 2015). The Archival Platform (2015) found that the public has even less access to archives.

When you think of the archive concerning enslaved or colonised people, you think about absence, lack or what cannot be known. According to Halim (2018: 4), "South Africa's national archival system has its origins in the legislative and administrative mechanisms that regulated colonial rule. Colonial officials, missionaries, travellers, public figures and scholars generated information for record-keeping". However, the enslaved or colonised entered archives through authorised ethnological and other surveys, which entrenched racial difference, preserved power and control and underpinned a hierarchy of knowledge (The Archival Platform 2015: 20). The archive space was reserved for a small group of predominantly white elite (The Archival Platform 2015: 20).

However, archival absence influences how we narrate our history. "How Indigenous histories are written, circulated, and so often erased is deeply troubling to Indigenous communities. These narratives shape how Native people are imagined and imagine themselves" (Falzetti 2015: 138). The Archival Platform (2015: 23) explains that the State Archival Service in South Africa was responsible for publishing, research and archival material during apartheid. It is evident in the record-keeping geared towards serving the interests of Afrikaner Nationalists. It was done through the exclusion of

records that document the experiences of the enslaved or colonised and their struggle against colonialism and apartheid.

I think what is important about my family archive can be summed up by Motala (2015 cited in Halim 2018: 3):

“Useful and systematic knowledge can be produced by engaging with and recognising the direct experience of individuals and their communities. There are many ways of ensuring that the knowledge that has been developed by communities over many generations can be understood and used. This knowledge can hugely enhance our understanding of the kinds of issues that affect communities.”

Although my family archive is not a community archive, it contributes to the communities’ archive. A community archive is a “collection of material that encapsulates a particular community’s understanding of its history and identity” (NCA 2007 cited in Halim 2018: 3). In my practice, the archival practices employed and the nature of the archive activates subjectivity and my identity through the construction of a counter-archive²². I call it a counter-archive because it defies the many official archives or the lack thereof for the Coloured community. My family archive creates space to productively dispute, produce, and build my family and community memory. There is also a chance that my family archive could influence and contribute to community initiatives that address representation.

Farber and Jorgensen (2017: IX) point out that the artist Penny Siopis has contributed significantly to dialogues about archives within a South African context. Another significant contribution to post-apartheid archiving in Durban's Coloured and Indian

²² “Counter-archives can be political, indigenous, resistant, and community-based. They are embodied differently and have explicit intention to historicize differently, to disrupt conventional national narratives, and to write difference into public accounts” (Chew *et al* 2018: 9).

community can be seen in the project *Proclamation 73*, a collaborative project between Chandra Frank and Zara Julius. This project aimed to create “an online open-source archive” that would “visually document the stories of Durban’s Indian and Coloured communities” (Durban Local History Museum 2018).

The creation of archives in POC communities is essential to mark, “acknowledge, teach, protest, and mourn that which is lost – the histories, the languages, the families, the knowledge of this world” (Falzetti 2015: 140). It creates a marker that acknowledges the violence of epistemic erasures and raises consciousness within the community about colonialism and apartheid practices. These institutions wielded power over archives and shaped what history could be told.

CONCLUSION

This literature review substantiates my practice and methods. Based on the evidence above, it is clear that South Africa's history of apartheid cannot be divorced from contemporary South African life. The continuous inequitable distribution of wealth and power amongst white and POC South Africans indicates this.

Historically POC communities have been subjected to exclusion and misrepresentation. Narratives have a tremendous influence on a community's history and identity. Through my counter-archive, I hope to contribute to the counter-narrative about the Coloured community.

PART THREE / SALAD

INTRODUCTION

This research is a qualitative study centred on understanding “people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live” (Myers 1997: para. 8 line 3). The study uses an interpretivist paradigm. A paradigm is the conceptual framework of the study. Interpretivism believes that everyone has subjective lived experiences of the world and society, and therefore will interpret the world differently based on their social constructions (Chowdhury 2014: 433). Examples of social constructions are “language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments” (Myers 2008 cited in Dudovskiy n.d.: para. 1 line 1). This study takes the ontological view that race is a social construct based on the subjective lived experiences of hegemonic power. This study is also a subjective account of my lived experiences through the practical component discussed in Part Four.

The ontological position of the study is Relativist. According to Scotland (2012: 11), “the ontological position of Interpretivism is Relativism”. The “reality from a relativist perspective is not distinguishable from the subjective experience of it” (Guba and Lincoln 2005 cited in Levers 2013: 2). “To state that the two cannot be separated is misleading because it implies there are two entities to separate. In this way of thinking, reality is human experience and human experience is reality” (Levers 2013: 2). “This is beyond two people experiencing an external world differently; rather, their worlds are different” (Stajduhar *et al.* 2001 cited in Levers 2013: 2). This statement by Levers (2013: 2) shows that many realities existed parallel to that of the white supremacist canon of singular narratives. The lived experience of marginalised communities of colour can validate the multifaceted nature of subjugated narratives while simultaneously having the agency sustain community wealth. The narratives explored in this study through the counter-archive are that of my family and my own. Presenting the narratives through my practice allows me to add to the existing narratives and challenge singular narratives about communities of colour.

The epistemological view of this study is that knowledge is not objective but is a subjective construction of power. Power is exerted through systemic violence. Chapter two discussed how Coloured people had been subjectively denied experiences and power as people with divergent thinking and agency to create the lives and futures they want to live in and be a part of. This power is challenged through the creation of counter-narratives and counter-storytelling in communities of colour.

Hermeneutics and Dialectical methods are employed in this research. Hermeneutics is the use of philosophical literature in research (Kafle 2011: 188). Furthermore, the use of a Dialectical method is analysing opposing views, structuring a debate, and analysing the plausibleness of the arguments (Dybicz and Pyles 2011: 305). In this study, I employed Dialectical Hermeneutics. It means that I, as the politically black culturally Coloured woman researcher as a subject, have interpreted the concepts and ideas in all the textual and visual texts that I have presented in this research output. However, I am aware that there are other interpretations. The outcome of this research is my art practice and this dissertation. I argue that the concept of Colouredness and archive repository “can contain an infinity of meanings” (Demeterio 2001: 5) based on the subject’s biases and worldview.

Part Three of this dissertation discusses my use of qualitative research design. Practice-based research is the qualitative inquiry perspective that I have implemented in this master’s study and my adoption of Critical Race Theory as a method through counter-storytelling in my counter-archive. Finally, I will analyse the methods used in my research and the criteria to form my counter-archive.

This chapter discusses practice-based research as the inquiry perspective for this study with an emergent research design. “If a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-based” (Candy 2006: 1). Dallow (2003: 53) states,

“Art practice thus is generally based upon an ‘active’ process of enquiry. The ‘emergent’ qualities of this process are bound up with the specificities of the

art form adopted, as well as the final mode of presentation, exhibition or performance, which includes how it will be seen, heard or otherwise experienced or consumed, and perhaps by whom, where, under what conditions, and for how long. These are all potentially part of the nature of the enquiry, not merely an end point.”

This practice-based study in the context of fine art employs an emergent design. It is centred on the idea that the research output uses this as a tool of inquiry to explore identity, re-presentation and race through art practice.

In this part of the dissertation, I analyse the methods I employed in my research and practice and reveal the cognitive processes generated through my art practice. I will first explain what practice-based research is, define important terms and explain why this is the chosen methodology for this study. Then I move into interpreting each component of my research plan in the section entitled Art Practice as Research: A Practice-Based Research (PBR) Methodology.

My practical component of this study is centred on my counter-archive. I have used images collected from my family and stories to create my counter-archive. The sampling method employed to collect images is Purposive sampling due to convenience and relevance to the family narrative. My counter-archive serves as a Counter-Narrative. Narratives are the stories that we tell ourselves, and that becomes our identity. These narratives provide individuals and communities with the means to “construct, maintain, alter and share identities as they choose” (Puttick 2011: 26), and this is what I aim to do through my practice. In creating this archive, I assessed the lack of representation of my community in society with multiplicity and depth. Although it was apparent why this was the case, I needed to engage with critical discourse on notions of race in South Africa, Coloured identity and CRT. Engaging with these discourses developed my language when engaging with a topic that is so personal and close to home. I unveiled and named the phenomena at play that impact communities of colour within a South African context.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research is a research design exploring the “human elements of a given topic” and values people’s experiences (Given 2008: xxix). Qualitative research is a term used to describe the various research approaches within social sciences, health sciences and humanities (Flick 2002: 6, Given 2008: 706). The essence of qualitative research is to understand a phenomenon in a natural environment as opposed to the experimental setting in quantitative research (Alhamdani 2016: 9774). Qualitative research design usually is used to explore concepts that are human experiences, thoughts and behaviour.

Practice-based research (PBR) is a qualitative inquiry perspective employed in this study. It is used commonly in Fine art practice as a method that centres the research on the practice.

Art Practice as Research: A Practice-Based Research (PBR) Methodology

This study is based on a practice-based research methodology with an emergent research design. The primary source of data used is my art practice and my reflexive and reflective thought process. Books, journals, artworks of other artists and other online sources form the secondary data to complete this study. According to Hannula *et al.* (2014),

“An artistic researcher has three intertwined tasks. First, she needs to develop and perfect her own artistic skills, vision and conceptual thinking. This happens by developing a vocabulary for not only making but also writing and speaking about art. Second, an artistic researcher has to contribute to academia and the “invisible colleges” around the world by proposing an argument in the form of a thesis, a narrative; and in so doing helping to build a community of artistic research and the bodies of knowledge these communities rely on”.

According to Hannula *et al.* (2014: 3), “the research is done inside the practice, by doing acts that are a part of the practice”. “This is not done within a closed-up entity

but in and through the acts—conscious of their connection to the history of effects through the past, present and future—of doing the thing, that collection and recollection of acts that make and shape the practice. And, yes, one is allowed to push the envelope, to explore the limits of the practice” (Hannula *et al.* 2014: 3). The purpose of practice-based research is to “gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice” (Candy 2006: 1). The methods, outputs and context employed in PBR focus significantly on the artefacts produced through the research (Sullivan 2009 cited in Skains 2018: 85). According to Sullivan (2009 cited in Skains 2018: 85),

“The outcomes of such research are intended to develop the individual practice and the practice of the field, to build theory related to the practice in order to gain new knowledge or insight”.

The practice produced in this study is created through experimentation “designed to answer a directed research question about art and the practice of it, which could not otherwise be explored by other methods” (Skains 2018: 86). Skains (2018: 86) describes PBR as an experiment that seeks to “push boundaries, to ask questions, to learn more about our art and our role within it”. The textual component of PBR is a result of the practice and accompanies the practice. It is used to document the methods used to create a practical body of work (Skains 2018: 86). The textual component of this study is used to document implicit knowledge that resides with the artist and make it explicit where it can be accessed by the discipline (Skains 2018: 86).

The artistic practice produced through this research is considered artistic research and is a form of knowledge production (Borgdorff 2010: 44). “Art research connects two domains: art and academia” (Borgdorff 2010: 44). Therefore, the art produced in this research forms part of academic research and “opens up its boundaries to forms of thinking and understanding that are interwoven with artistic practices” (Borgdorff 2010: 44). Artistic research endeavours to communicate concepts that are contained in the artefact (Borgdorff 2010: 45).

“A basic principle of practice-based research is that not only is practice embedded in the research process but research questions arise from the process of practice, the answers to which are directed toward enlightening and enhancing practice” (Candy and Edmonds 2018: 63).

It wasn't until the massive shift made in my research that I realised the true meaning of practice-based research. The focus of my research centres is on my artistic practice. The artistic practice produced through this research is considered artistic research and is a form of knowledge production (Borgdorff 2010: 44).

The significance, formation, and reflection of my practice occurs in this dissertation's written component of this research. This dissertation cannot be understood devoid of the practical component of this study, as it is a fundamental component of this study (Candy and Edmonds 2018: 66). The practical component of this study is entangled with the research aims, objects and outcomes of this study. Consequently, the research methodology must reflect the significance of the practice in this research by adopting a methodology that encourages practice as research. Hence this study adopts qualitative Practice-based research as the most suitable research method.

According to Hannula *et al.* (2014: 15), “artistic research = artistic process (acts inside the practice) + arguing for a point of view (contextual, interpretive, conceptual, narrative work)”. *Figure 2* below depicts the process that my research follows; this is an action research cycle. The process of making, reflection and doing is done over and over again during the research process. This process can start and stop anywhere and can even go in the other direction.

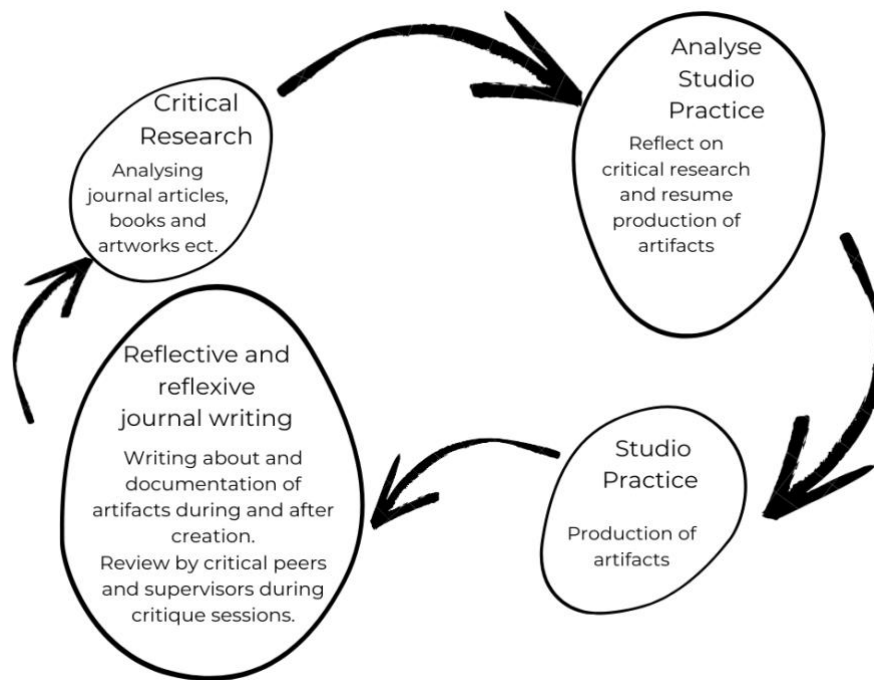


Figure 2: Ashleigh Ruiters. Research cycle. 2021.

I was resistant to this shift for a long time and kept trying to steer the research in the ‘right’ direction. I thought that the ‘right’ way was to drive the research outcomes in the direction I wanted it to go. However, I feel like this shift was an important observation that needed to move the study forward. It is for this reason that the process of reflective and reflexive documentation is essential to this study. The artist-researcher needs to be aware of the processes that occur during the production of their art practice.

Through the freewriting process, I realised that the research topic was not entirely what I initially planned it to be nor ever had in mind. The method of freewriting fits very neatly in the box that reflective and reflexive documentation and PBR occupies. The freewriting process that I engaged in forms part of what practice-based researchers called serendipity. According to Makri and Blandford (2012 cited in Skains 2016) serendipity is,

“The convergence of the knowledge and experience to make the mental connection and to recognize the significance of that connection, with the skills

necessary to exploit the connection and produce a worthwhile outcome or artifact”.

Counter-storytelling is incorporated into the practice-based research approach because it is an essential part of my practice, evident in my counter-archive. In practice-based research, according to Candy and Edmonds (2018: 63), “the emphasis is on creative process and the works that are generated: Here, the artifact plays a vital part in the new understandings about practice”. In essence, “*practice-based research* is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge, partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice” (Candy and Edmonds 2018: 63). The artefacts produced through this research is the focus, and it contributes to knowledge and outcomes of the research; therefore, the research is practice-based.

This fine art study is rooted in my practice. Practice implies “*doing* something that extends beyond everyday thinking into actions that may lead to new outcomes” (Candy and Edmonds 2018: 64). What differentiates fine art PBR from other forms of research is that the products of this research are art and design objects “that can be conceptual as well as material” (Macdonald and Malins 2015: 342).

Concerning my study, PRB has been all about serendipity. It allows the literature and the practice to guide the process simultaneously. This study started at one point, and through research and experimentation, it evolved into a counter-archive and an exhibition.

In the initial stages of my research, my working title was *An Exploration of Perceptions and Representation of Race and Gender Identity within the South African Context, With Reference to Selected Artists*, through reflection and the discourse from the chosen literature. The title mentioned above evolved into my current title, directly influenced by a statement from Marike de Klerk in an Adhikari text. This statement shaped the form that this study would take.

During the study, critique sessions are used to gather colleagues and supervisors' opinions on your creative production. These sessions enable you to see where you can improve and suggest the next step in the research. Reflection also plays a vital role in the production of my practice. It forms part of my action research cycle and is something that you are constantly doing as a practice-based researcher.

Autoethnography

"Autoethnography refers to ethnographic research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political" (Given 2008: 48). In autoethnographic projects, the life and experiences of the researcher is a "conscious part of what is studied" (Given 2008: 48). Autoethnographic researchers "look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward..." (Given 2008: 48).

According to Ellis *et al.* (2011 cited in Skains 2018: 88), "Autoethnography is an approach that seeks to describe and analyse personal experience in order to extrapolate understandings about wider cultural experience". Holt (2003 cited in Duncan 2004: 28) explains that "with its use of self as a source of data, it has been criticized for being self-indulgent, introspective, and individualized". In this study, autoethnography is used as CRT values the voices and lived experiences of marginalised POC. "An important assumption held by autoethnographers and qualitative researchers in general is that reality is neither fixed nor entirely external but is created by, and moves with, the changing perceptions and beliefs of the viewer" (Duncan 2004: 30). Eisner (1991 cited in Duncan 2004: 30) states that the researcher is not just simply looking, the researcher's role should instead be "understood as enlightened by human qualities and virtues such as intention, purpose, and frame of reference". Autoethnographic research does not "present a record of the world the researcher has visited or been a part of; rather, they will show how the researcher made sense of that world" (Duncan 2004: 30).

As a Coloured woman researching Coloured community misrepresentations, I am making sense of a world I am within and an integral part of.

Ellis *et al.* (2011 cited in Skains 2018: 88) states that autoethnographic methods can be applied to PBR to give a “layered account” of the art-making process. In my art practice, I have used autoethnographic methods in a reflective freewriting process that I engaged in during the study. The freewriting process allowed me to reflect on my practice and my writing. Therefore, they can be considered research notes and observations.

Autoethnographic data takes the form of personal narratives. These personal narratives are substantiated by “multiple sources of evidence” (Duncan 2004: 31). It means that research of an autoethnographic nature is scholarly data that can “confirm these opinions” (Duncan 2004: 31).

Furthermore, this study is an autoethnographic project in the form of my counter-archive. The archive includes first-person narratives and lived experiences from myself, the researcher. However, in some of the narration through the archive, I am in the role of secondary witness. The reason is that these narratives have been passed down to me by my grandparents and parents. The archive addresses access to knowledge, misrepresentation and agency.

Exhibition of Practice

The exhibition is the culmination of this research and is one half of the research output, the other half being this dissertation. As explained at the beginning of part three, the practice is the centre of the research; there would be no research without the practice.

The exhibition is the presentation of the practical artefacts of my study for the examination.

CRITICAL RACE METHODOLOGY (CRM)

“A critical race methodology in education also acknowledges the intercentricity of racialized oppression—the layers of subordination based on race, gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality. Here, in the intersections of racial oppression, we can use critical race methodology to search for some answers to the theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical questions related to the experiences of people of color” (Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 25-26).

Critical Race Methodology (CRM) serves as a guide to researchers that allows them to “better understands the effects of racism, sexism, and classism on people of color” (Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 27) and “places race and racism at the center of the critique and analysis” (Brown 2018: 303). In addition, CRM “foregrounds race and racism in all facets of the research process” (Creswell 2007 cited in Graham *et al.* 2011: 62).

However, it also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of people of colour (Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 24). Critical Race theorists describe racism as a firmly rooted mechanism that “systematically benefits Whites at the expense of people of color” (Brown 2018: 303). CRM “finds that racism is often well disguised in the rhetoric of shared “normative” values”, and it is only through recognising racist injustices that marginalised POC can find their voice (Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 27). Though the employment of CRM marginalised POC are made aware that they are not alone in their marginalisation (Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 27). CRM allows marginalised POC to hear their stories and gives them the agency to defend themselves against misrepresentation (Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 27).

There are several ways in which Critical Race theorists employ Critical Race methodology in their research to “address racial injustice and liberation” (Brown 2018: 305). The method I have employed in my research highlights the racialised experiences

of POC within a South African context through counter-storytelling. This method explores “alternative meanings and perspectives on race” (Brown 2018: 305). Counter-storytelling uses lived experiences “that challenge dominant narratives of racial progress” (Brown 2018: 305).

Counter Narrative/ Storytelling as Critical Race Method

As I have previously discussed in Part Two of this dissertation, “Counter-storytelling is a tool that CRT scholars employ to contradict racist characterizations of social life” (Merriweather Hunn *et al.* 2006: 244). Counter-storytelling is the main method employed in my practice, “telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” (Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 32). Counter-storytelling deals with the presentation of narratives that exist within the public domain. It intends to disassemble unjust representations of marginalised people that are perpetuated in society and are oversimplified. Counter-storytelling challenges the presentation of narrative by offering diverse and multifaceted accounts of people’s experiences. (Solórzano & Yosso 2002). “Dominant cultural narratives” (Rappaport 2000: 3 cited in Hasford 2016: 159) are perpetuated through mainstream media and institutions through singular narratives.

By employing counter-storytelling in my research, I tell stories of people (my family) whose stories were not told and not valued. I am involved in combating destructive formulaic notions of what Coloured identity is and combating singular stories about communities of colour by creating multifaceted representations of POC, namely people within my family archive.

METHODS EMPLOYED TO CONSTRUCT MY COUNTER-ARCHIVE

This section addresses my counter-archive construction and the multiplicity of the narratives that contribute to the research output. “Counter-archives can be political, indigenous, resistant, and community-based. They are embodied differently and have explicit intention to historicize differently, to disrupt conventional national narratives, and to write difference into public accounts” (Chew *et al.* 2018: 9). In my practice, the archival practices employed and the nature of the counter-archive activates subjectivity. It also activates my identity through the construction of a counter-archive. I call it a counter-archive because it defies the many official archives or the lack thereof for the Coloured community.

I will discuss the construction of my counter-archive in all its parts; the selection of material, the digitalisation of the material, the cataloguing system employed and public access to the archive.

The selection of material used in the archive was not something that I thought about at the start of the research process. As I did not know which way the practice would go in terms of research output, I wanted to leave the selection of material open to eliminate anything that did not fit into the counter-archive. I collected the photographs, birthday/anniversary cards, wedding bulletins, pamphlets and videos for my counter-archive and they were sourced from my maternal grandparents in Durban. The process of creating my counter-archive entailed my grandmother, Ange Seethal, giving me a few photographs at a time that she had selected and allowing me to scan them. The system used to collect the images is true to emergent design practice, an “‘active’ process of inquiry” (Dallow 2003: 53). This method is employed in the study and can be seen in how I went about sourcing the material that form part of my counter-archive. I also received some photographs from my mother. Therefore, I see

myself as a secondary witness²³ to most of the images that form part of my counter-archive.

For the most part, I accepted all the photographs given to me. However, I had to exclude duplicates. I had to crop some of the images given to me to eliminate nudity in baby pictures, and I did this upon instruction from my grandmother. I wanted this archive to reflect my grandparents, so I did not want to exclude anything given to me. I am a reflection of grandparents, and I wanted them to choose what knowledge they wanted to impart to me.

Families are intimate spaces, but through this process of collecting, it has become clear that it is hard to share family history because of the hardships experienced within the family home for some of my grandparents. My paternal grandfather Neville Ruiters, for instance, did not share much about his family. I do not know why he did not have much to share, while I think if I could be with him physically, the conversation would have been easier to have. Proximity and familiarity play a significant role in the ease with which the counter-archive can be created and constructed. My paternal grandmother and father imparted all the information I have about his family. However, this information does not form part of the counter-archive.

The narratives and stories were imparted to me by my maternal grandparents over the years are contained in the counter-archive. I mainly communicate with my paternal grandparents in Cape Town via WhatsApp and phone calls and my maternal grandparents in Durban physically. The mode of communication between myself and my grandparents in Cape Town proved inadequate for the study and to contribute fully to the counter-archive. I realised that physical access to the people and the photographs were crucial to the study to meticulously handle each artefact's

²³ "An artist who documents a testimony becomes a second-hand witness, whereas the viewer becomes a third-hand witness of the same "proof" of occurrence" (Sheleff 2012: 4).

information. Photographs accessed without proper narrative context would be repeating the same colonial canons of the past that I am trying to address through the construction of my counter-archive.

I scanned the archival material in 1200px. It was the highest format that I could scan them, using a scanner that I borrowed from my parents. Next, I scanned the backs of some of the photographs to document the little notes. In some cases, this denotes the year it was taken and where it was taken in. In other cases, a little message and a thought came to mind when that occasion occurred, or a picture was taken. My maternal grandparents wrote these notes at the back of the photographs.

Once the item was scanned, I allocated each image a number. These photographs were scanned into a folder and numbered in sequential numeric order, e.g. Archive 3. When I first started organising and assembling my inventory and scanning my pictures, I did not think about methods of archival documentation. However, in discussion with my mother, a museum practitioner at the Durban Natural science museum, it was only brought to my attention that museums use unique numbering systems to keep track of their collections. After scanning the documents and cataloguing them in my basic system, I realised that I needed to introduce a unique catalogue number, e.g., TLR0010. The 'TLR' in the catalogue number stands for *The Left Overs, Reimagined*, which is the title of the counter-archive and this dissertation. All the items in the counter-archive are documented on an inventory list that denotes the unique catalogue number and a description of each item. Through archival techniques such as providing a description and creating lists, I have created an inventory, called a catalogue, of all the photographs within my counter-archive.

An archival catalogue list is vital and is of practical significance. It is to be used as a finding aid and as a way of making sure that everything is put back in its place with the physical archive (Birkin 2015). The physical archive then serves as a backup should anything happen to the digital archive (Birkin 2015). It forms the organisational backbone of my counter-archive. The catalogue provides a description and gives each

object a position within my counter-archive. This catalogue documents the names of all the people that appear in the photographs. It also documents the occasion, the location, and the date that the photograph was taken. The photographs and documents within my counter-archive have been dated if I could gather the date the occasion took place. The date the occasions to place took presentence over the date the researcher took possession of the photograph or document.

The body of work produced during my research consists of my counter-archive installations and video centred on myself and my family. This archive showcases the multiplicity in the lived experiences of my family and acts as a Counter-Narrative. The construction of my counter-archive seeks to challenge single stories that are maintained and propagated about the Coloured community.

To address the lack of public access to archives that I discussed in Part two: Appetiser(the literature review chapter), I decided to construct a repository for my counter-archive in the form of a public Instagram account ([@theleftoversreimagined](https://www.instagram.com/theleftoversreimagined/)). The account holds the entirety of the archive. It is accompanied by a catalogue number and the detailed information that has been recorded in the catalogue. Instagram allows the public to view and interact with the archive. However, these interactions have no premise on the research project. The important aspect of my project is how the archive is presented and the level of access the public has to the knowledge production.

Part two, Appetiser, presents the lens with which this research aligns itself. The study used CRT methodology specifically counter storytelling to challenge racial dominance by moving the archive and the people within that archive from the margins of society into the centre. According to Hartlep (2009: 11), “without CRT’s counter-storytelling, the true stories would never be publicly proclaimed, and perhaps the world would come to believe and perceive that all was fine”.

PART FOUR / MAIN COURSE

This part of my dissertation is a reflective account and an analysis of my practice and the work of selected artists. It also focuses on the technical aspects of my practice and how the selected artists inspired the artworks that I have produced. Finally, I will critically analyse my works and detail how the creative output, my counter-archive, *The Left Overs, Reimagined*, has been curated for the exhibition. My practice aims to reimagine, reclaim, re-represent and interpret a narrative through my familial archive and my own lived experiences. This body of work narrates intimate stories within my counter-archive. My practice created a space that allows for the construction, reconstruction, articulation, and re-articulation of identities and facilitates a multifaceted expression of those that appear in the archive.

As discussed in Part Two and Part Three, CRT and the CRT method of counter-storytelling plays an instrumental role in the theoretical formation of my creative output. Counter-storytelling deals with the presentation of narratives that exist within the public domain. The intention is to disassemble unjust representations of marginalised people that are perpetuated in society and are oversimplified.

Working on *The Left Overs, Reimagined* has had its vicissitudes. Embarking on this research, I thought it would be simple to uncover and interrogate my ideas about my identity as a Coloured woman in South Africa. Initially, it was challenging to engage in introspection and make myself vulnerable; however, I uncovered unknown facets of myself through this creative process. Finding sound footing in terms of my creative process was challenging as I doubted my ability to produce new work and regain my confidence. The cyclic process of my research created clarity in terms of my methodology.

Over the past four years, I have become aware of my position as a young, Coloured woman within the context of South Africa and felt compelled to explore issues of representation, identity, and storytelling. I use myself as the object and subject of my practice by drawing from my lived experiences. Through my creative output, I aimed

to uncover and engage in a reimagination of sorts. In my opinion, it is these reimaginings that give subjugated groups the power to tell their stories.

I have selected artists who have inspired this practice-based research: Santu Mofokeng, Adrian Piper, Thando Mama, Lady Skollie, and Bronwyn Katz. I chose these artists based on the conceptual or practical nature of their work. I provide their practice background, concepts implemented, chosen mediums, critical responses, and my interpretation of the work itself. With their relevance to the theme of racial politics, I aim to analyse how the selected artists conceptually and practically interrogate identity, race, representation and artistic archival practice.

Santu Mofokeng (1956-2020) was a South African photographer. He initiated his career in Soweto as a street photographer and photographically documented the anti-apartheid struggle (Hayes 2009: 34, Britt 2020: para. 1 line 1). However, Mofokeng's focus shifted in the early '90s, and he began working on "the representation of everyday-life in the South African township" (Britt 2020: para. 1 line 3). Therefore, I will solely focus on Mofokeng's project called *The Black Photo Album: Look at Me: 1890 – 1950* (2004), an archival project that focuses on preserving images of forgotten black working-class families.

Adrian Piper (1948-) is a mixed-race American artist and scholar. She practised in New York City in the early 1970s and practised in Minimalist abstract painting and Conceptualism (Cotter 2018: para. 3 line 1). Although Piper confronts her experiences of racial identity and racial ambiguity through her practice, she also interrogates the perceptions of POC in social settings. The central theme that Piper engages with conceptually is racial politics and identity. The key questions that Piper asks through her practice are, "Who are you? How do others see you and how do you define your own identity?" (Adrian Piper 2021: para. 1 line 1). The mediums that Piper practices in are performance, street interventions, paintings and sculpture. The work of hers that I will be focusing on *My Calling (Card) #1* (1986), a performance piece in which Piper interrogates her position as a black woman in a predominantly white setting.

Thando Mama (1977-) is a South African video artist and a self-described heritage practitioner, curator, and visual cultural researcher (Mama 2021: para. 1 line 1) who confronts the idea of racial identity and the post-colonial state within a South African context. Mama is a contemporary South African performance artist that engages with themes that investigate “‘blackness’ not as internalized modes of being but as an abstraction”. However, similarly to Piper within a South African context, Mama interrogates perceptions of race and the singular story narratives that plague black men (Ngcobo 2004: para. 6 line 1).

Lady Skollie (1987-), otherwise known as Laura Windvogel, is a Coloured female South African contemporary artist from Cape Town. She works primarily in watercolour, crayon and ink. Lady Skollie thematically deals with sex, race, identity and “expressing the joy and darkness of the erotic and the duality of human experience” (Tyburn Gallery 2016). Bowler (2019: para. 1 line 1) describes her as “challenging the exclusivity of patriarchal, white-walled gallery spaces, the artist who dares to represent the darkness in her community creates new spaces for art to flourish”. The work of Lady Skollie’s that I draw inspiration from is the work that makes references to her identity and Khoisan heritage. In these drawings, she narrates mostly intimate untold stories using ink, watercolour and crayon.

Bronwyn Katz (1993-) is a founding member of the women artist collective iQhiya (Art Africa 2018: para. 2 line 3) and practices predominantly sculpture, installation, video and performance. The work engages with “land as a repository and memory” (Katz 2021: para. 1 line 2). The aspect of Katz’s practice that I am most interested in is the video work in which she engages with memory and the act of storytelling.

A synopsis of my study will follow this section before I embark on creating the archive, *The Left Overs, Reimagined*, followed by a detailed analysis of my creative output, *The Left Overs, Reimagined: An Archive*. Subsequently, in the section *The Curation of My Counter-Archive*, I will discuss the connections between my curated archive and the practice of the selected artists.

Before the Archive (*The Left Overs, Reimagined*)

Initially, I thought this master's study would expand the research I did for my Bachelor of Technology in 2016 and explore the themes of identity and representation in a far more nuanced manner. Instead, I focused on Coloured identity, which was challenging as I could not fully articulate my thoughts about this part of myself.

When it came to my practice, I was uncertain about what to produce for about a year and lost confidence in my ability to create. In exploring my theme, which previously focused solely on Coloured identity, devoid of the self, I decided to present the idea of creating an archive in one of my critique sessions. During this session with my former supervisors, I was told that this was an inappropriate creative output. It was not in line with the traditional Fine Art practice produced within the Durban University of Technology department. I was disappointed and disagreed with their stance as I felt that creating an archive was an appropriate practical intervention to address singular narrative representation and make a visual reclamation of identity.

During this uncertain period, I picked up a camera and asked my brother to pose for a photographic series. The photographic series (*Perception Carousel*) that I created communicated my feelings of despair and anxiety when working on and interrogating my topic, Coloured identity. During this time, I delved into the works of Adhikari (Coloured experience) and experienced racial impostor syndrome²⁴. I was therefore experiencing the compounded imposter syndrome, that of incompetence and inauthenticity. I had chosen to focus on coloured identity because I was uncertain of my own identity as a Coloured woman. I thought that through this research, these

²⁴ This was a term that I heard for the first time in the podcast *Code Switch* (Meraji and Demby 2018), according to Uroda (n.d cited in Donnell 2017: para. 1 line 1) racial imposter syndrome are feelings people experience of being "fake or inauthentic in some part of their racial or ethnic heritage".

concepts would become more apparent to me or at least, I would be able to communicate this discomfort.

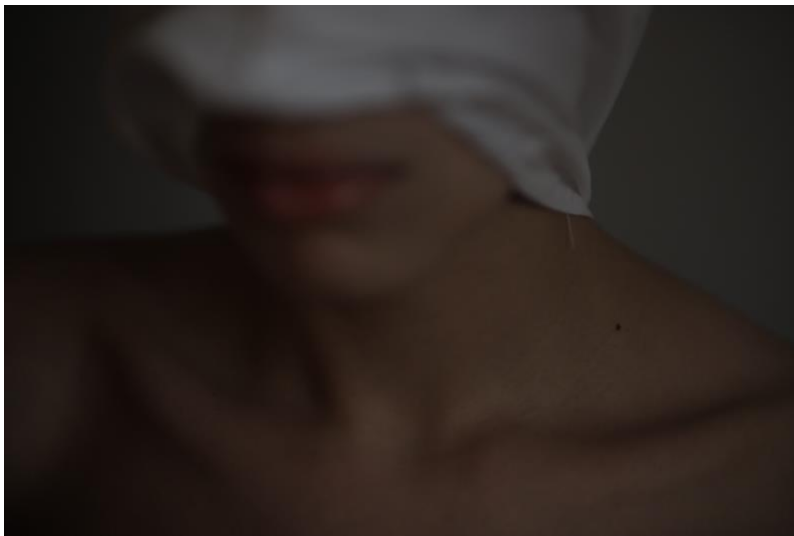


Figure 3: Ashleigh Ruiters. Perception Carousel. 2021. Digital photograph. Artist Collection.

After creating this series of photographs (*Figure 1 - Perception Carousel*), I realised that my work needed to focus on my journey of interrogating identity as a Coloured woman. In saying this, broadening my research focus helped me create work about my identity without theoretically focusing solely on Coloured identity. Personal introspection is the motivation for my study, and reclamation is a key term used to explain what I aimed to accomplish through my practice. My personal experience plays a central role in the formation of my creative output. I became interested in embarking on this personal journey because I felt resentful as a child growing up in my Coloured family, feeling like it lacked the solid cultural and traditional substance I saw in the families and communities of colour around me. After reflection, I realised that I felt this way because my family was a melting pot of many diverse traditions and cultures brought together by my parents.

Over the past four years, I have become aware of my position as a young, Coloured woman within the context of post-apartheid South Africa and felt the need to explore my feelings of exclusion, acceptance and belonging within the Coloured community and South African society. This insight came from being in an academic environment

as a young woman of colour and becoming acutely aware of the injustices that young women of colour face in this context. This awareness caused me to interrogate my position as a young woman of colour living in South Africa.

Racial Imposter Syndrome surfaced during this exploration which prevented me from articulating ideas on Colouredness, my experiences and my position as a young, Coloured woman. As a light-skinned Coloured woman, I know that I often pass as white in social settings, but racial passing can be painful and uncomfortable, as I have been affirmed in my Blackness by my parents. Therefore, highlighting this issue should not be seen as Coloured exceptionalism. Instead, it acknowledges the marginalisation that I, a Coloured South African woman, have faced from dominant groups.

As a young, Coloured woman, my identity is complicated from different perspectives; culturally, racially and within gender-role relations. I have explored my discomfort, unrest and longing to belong within a South African social context by using the CRT counter storytelling as an artistic practice.

The common understanding of Coloured identity is still paper-thin, particularly within the South African context. This research intends to add some weight through the creative output of my research. It will further challenge and expose other possibilities for identity and open the debate to much-needed discussion.

The archive *The Left Overs Reimaged* grew from my longing to represent and explore my familial archive. This will be discussed in the following subdivision.

THE LEFT OVERS, REIMAGINED: AN ARCHIVE

My counter-archive, *The Left Overs Reimagined*, is the creative output of my master's research. In my practice, the artistic archival practices employed and the nature of the archive activates subjectivity and my identity through the construction of a counter-archive. It is a counter-archive because it challenges known, and accepted singular narratives, has "explicit intention to historicize differently" (Chew *et al.* 2018: 9), and defies the many official archives or the lack thereof for communities of colour in South Africa. My familial archive creates space for me to dispute, produce and build my family and community memory productively and addresses issues of representation.

My counter-archive consists of photographs, birthday/anniversary cards, funeral bulletins, wedding bulletins, pamphlets, and videos. The contents of this archive were all retrieved from my maternal grandparents' photo albums and storage boxes. My grandparents are Ivan and Angeline Seethal, who have lived in Wentworth, Durban, for 52 years. The process of creating my counter-archive consisted of my grandmother (Angeline Seethal) giving me a few photographs at a time that she had selected and allowing me to scan them. Then, when I would go over to their house to collect photographs, my grandmother and grandfather would sit me down and reminisce, telling me who the people were, where they went and what they did. We would often talk about my grandmother's great sense of style and the coordination of her shoes and handbags. This process deepens my ideals about my familial history and the importance of the familial archive and its contents.

I scanned the images in 1200px. It was the highest format that I could scan them, using a scanner that I borrowed from my parents. If the photograph had writings or was stamped on the backside, I scanned the back as well. The writing detailed the occasion depicted in the photograph, a little note to the person to whom the picture was sent or the date. In the example below, the figure, the occasion and year can be seen.



Figure 4: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0176. *The Left Overs Reimagined*. Aiden Seethal, Andre Seethal, Rene Young, Annette Johns and Peire. Christmas Day 1975 at Granny Caroline Seethal's house. 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.

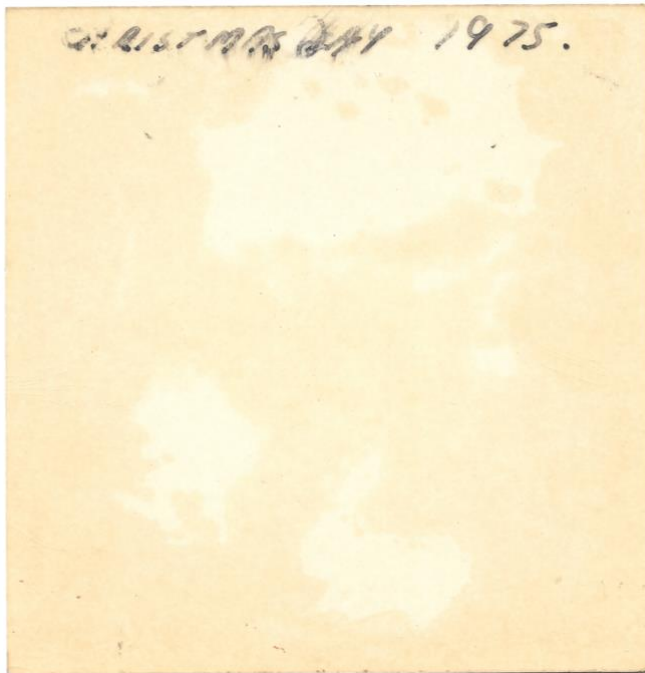


Figure 5: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0176/1. *The Left Overs Reimagined*. Backside of photograph TLR0176 (Christmas Day 1975). 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's collection.



Figure 6: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0175. *The Left Overs Reimagined*. Aiden Seethal. date. (Nursery School Graduation). 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.

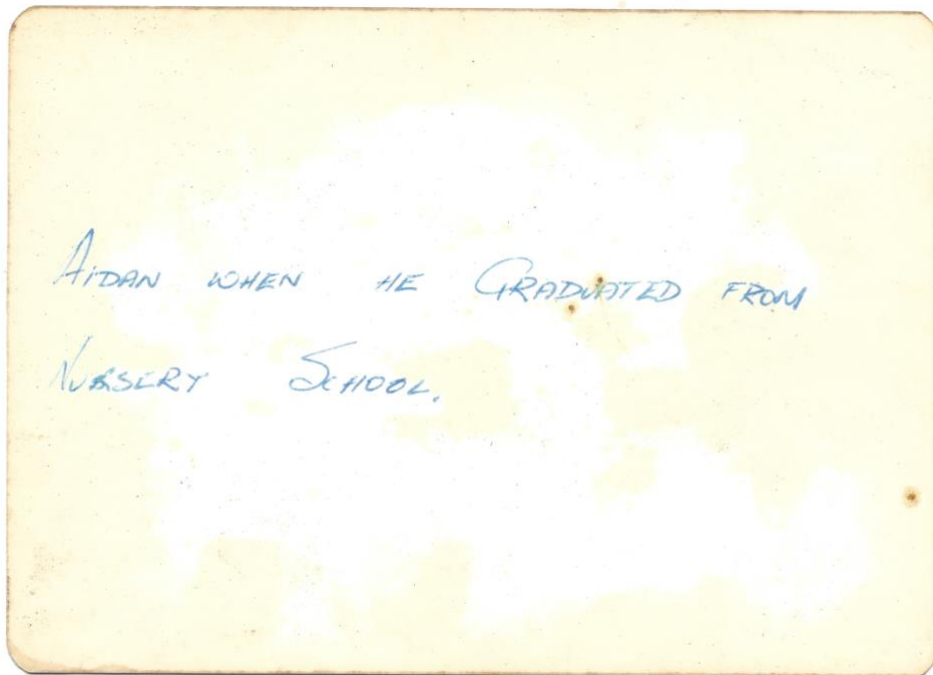


Figure 7: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0175/1. *The Left Overs Reimagined*. backside of TLR0175 (Aiden when. He graduated from nursery school. Date. 2021. Digital scanned photograph. Artist's collection.



Figure 8: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0137.1965 . 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.



Figure 9: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0137/1. the backside of TLR0137. (Yvonne)(Stamp E.S. Seethal 2 May 1965). 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.

Reading these little notes at the back of the photographs was exciting. It gave me insight into the people that my grandparents were at the age they at in some of the pictures. The Stamps on the back of some of the photographs are from the photograph developing company, giving the detail of the location.

Creating a catalogue was the first step because it formally documents the photographs and documents I have collected. To organise the archive, this inventory documents the names of all the people who appear in the photographs, the occasion, the location, and the date the photograph was taken. I have given each item in the archive a unique catalogue number, e.g., TLR0009. If it is not a photograph, I documented what kind of document it is, e.g., Birthday card, who it was from and whom it was given to. The 'TLR' in the catalogue number stands for *The Left Overs Reimagined*. When I first started organising and assembling my catalogue and scanning my pictures, I did not think about this method of documentation. This was only brought to my attention at the end of scanning the documents by my mother (Allison Ruiters), and then I introduced the catalogue number.

Figure 5 is inserted to demonstrate the catalogue numbering system.



Figure 10: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0009. *The Left Overs Reimagined*. Angeline Seethal, Carmelita Barrath, Sharon Samuels, Angeline Marais. (Wedding), Victoria Park, Walmer Port Elizabeth. 27-Dec-69. 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.

To address the lack of access to archives, which I discussed in my literature review and methodology, I decided to create a repository for my counter-archive in a public Instagram account ([@theleftoversreimagined](https://www.instagram.com/theleftoversreimagined)). Through a public Instagram account, there is public access to the archive, without any restrictions or gatekeepers. The Instagram account holds all the artefacts in the collection. They are uploaded individually, and all images are accompanied by a catalogue number and the information that has been recorded in the catalogue. Instagram allows the public to view and interact with the archive. However, these interactions have no premise in the research project. The way the archive is presented and the public's access to knowledge production is essential for my project.

The account [@ubuntu_archives](https://www.instagram.com/ubuntu_archives) inspired the decision to house the repository for the archive on Instagram. They share photographic images, videos, and documents in their feed related POC history in South Africa. They share, celebrate and document black South Africa's history (ubuntu_archives 2021: para. 3 line 2).

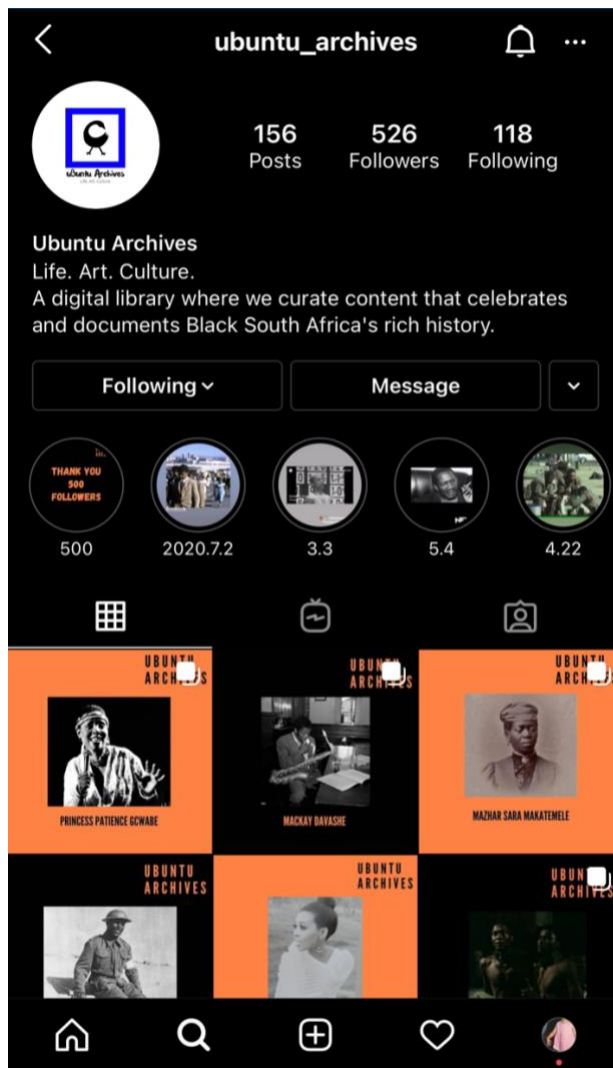


Figure 11: Ubuntu archives Instagram page on the 27 May 2021. 2021. Screenshot. (ubuntu_archives 2021).

For the exhibition of my creative output, I decided to present selected groups of images from the archive. I have chosen thematically and grouped images in terms of events, for example, weddings, family portraits, dances, holidays, baptisms, religious sacraments, courtships, and birthdays. The images selected are presented in clip frames. Each grouping of images is accompanied by a passage that I have written detailing what I know about the event, knowledge shared with me by my grandparents. In addition, each clip frame has a yellow tag attached to it, with

information from the catalogue. This information is the accession number, date, event, location, and the names of the people in the photograph.

I see the similarities between the collection of photographs that form part of Mofokeng project (pg 88) *The Black Photo Album: Look at Me: 1890 -1950* and my familial archive that is a product of this research project entitled *The Left Overs Reimagined*.

Like my counter-archive, *The Left Overs Reimagined*, Mofokeng's archival project employs Counter Narrative methods "to contradict racist characterizations of social life" (Merriweather Hunn *et al.* 2006: 244). Counter-storytelling challenges the presentation of narratives by offering diverse and multifaceted accounts of people's experiences. (Solórzano & Yosso 2002). By employing counter-storytelling in my research, I tell stories of people (my family) whose stories were not told and not valued. I am engaged in combating destructive formulaic notions of what Coloured identity is and combating singular stories about communities of colour by creating multifaceted representations of POC, namely people within my family archive.

Creation of archives linking *The Left Overs Reimagined* and *The Black Photo Album: Look at Me: 1890 -1950* is essential to mark, "acknowledge, teach, protest, and mourn that which is lost – the histories, the languages, the families, the knowledge of this world" (Falzetti 2015: 140). It creates a marker that acknowledges the violence of epistemic erasures and raises consciousness within the community about colonialism and apartheid practices. These institutions wielded power over archives and shaped what history could be told. The archive space was reserved for a small group of predominantly white elite (The Archival Platform 2015: 20). Archival absence influences how we narrate our history. Makhubu (2012: 41) asserts that "During the first post-Apartheid decade (1994–2004), reconceptualization of race in contemporary art practice were significant in facilitating difficult yet timely debates".

I related to some of the images in the archive, images that I did not photograph myself. I position myself as a secondary witness because I was not present for those moments.

The idea of a secondary witness ties into the concept of storytelling and making sense of the narratives that have been passed down to one. I narrate a second-hand account of the narrative and not an experiential account.

Below I have included a few images from my counter-archive, *The Left Overs Reimagined*. The mere presence of these image in the form of a counter-archive acts as a counter narrative because it exists on a public platform and the narratives that it contains contributes to the destruction of single stories. This counter-archive contests single-story grand narratives that situate POC in a state of lack. It rather presents joy, fullness, family, success, resilience and strength.



Figure 12: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0116. *The Left Overs Reimagined* (archive): Leatheren road Ivan Seethal, Angie Seethal and Grandpa Adams. 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.



Figure 13: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0487. *The Left Overs Reimagined* (archive): Ivan Seethal Durban CBD. 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.



Figure 14: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0487/1. *The Left Overs Reimagined* (archive): Note formation of the lips. I was asking the photographer to hold it . 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.



Figure 15: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0486. *The Left Overs Reimagined (archive): Beach day Great Great Grandmother Jacoba Theron, Great Aunt from Cape Town, Angie (Granny), Peter, Edward – 1948. 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.*



Figure 16: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0485. *The Left Overs Reimagined* (archive): Jacoba Theron (Great great granny), Grand Uncles and Aunts, - ND. 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.



Figure 17: Ashleigh Ruiters. TRL0484. The Left overs Reimagined (archive): Angie Basson at a photography shop getting her photo taken, 1968, Port Elizabeth. 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collections.



Figure 18: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0483. *Leftovers Reimagined (archive): Great grandpa (Herman Basson) 1945. 2021.* Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.

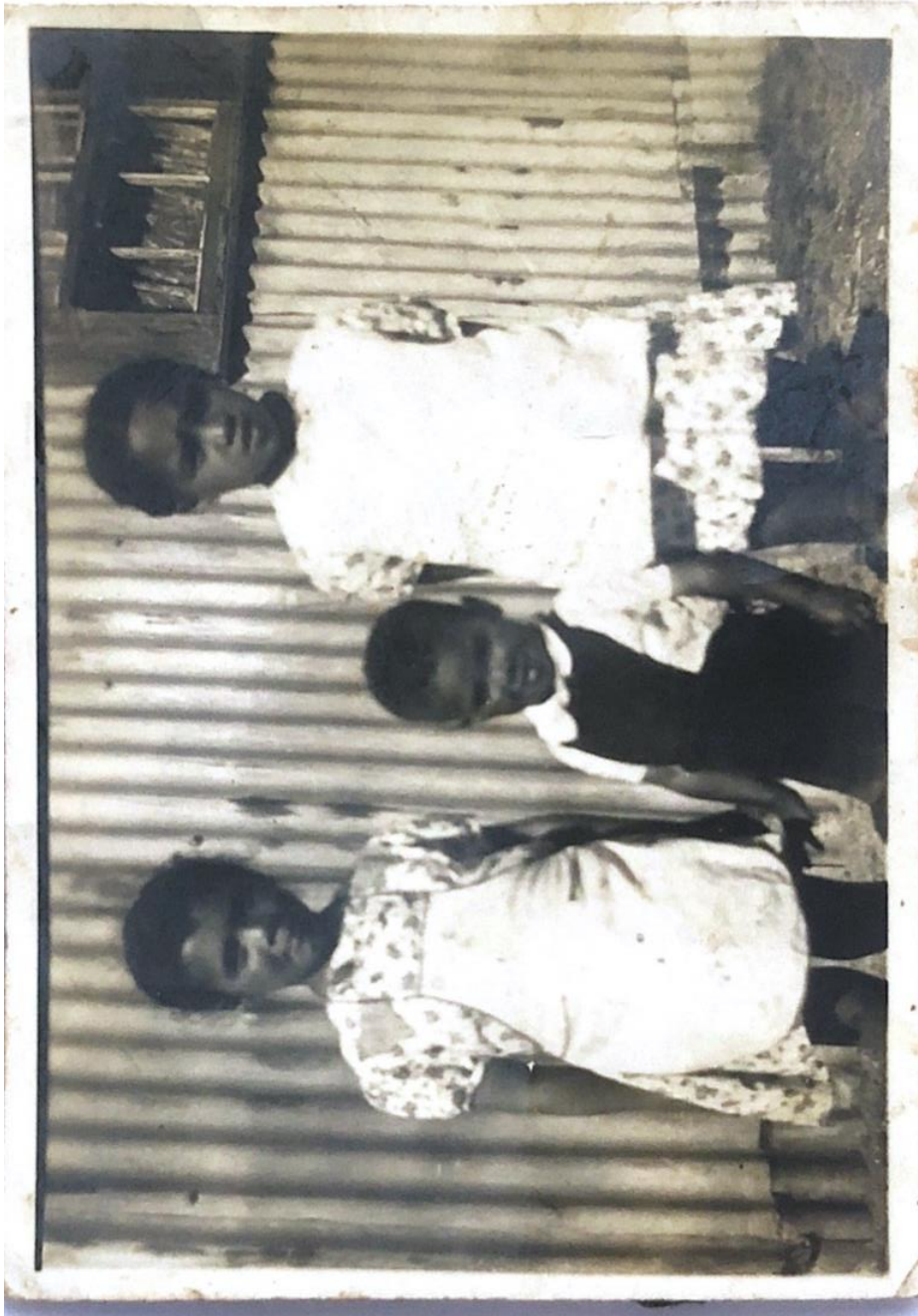


Figure 19: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0482. *The Leftovers Reimagined* (archive): Granny (Angie), Grand aunt (Maureen) and Grand Uncle (Winston) 1943. 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.



Figure 20: Ashleigh Ruiters. TRL0481. Leftovers Reimagined (archive): Basson Family photograph (grand aunts, grand uncles, grandmother, and great grandmother) Edward, Angie, Winston, Maureen, Peter – 1942. 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist Collection.



Figure 21: Ashleigh Ruiters. TLR0079. *The Leftovers Reimagined* (archive): My maternal grandparents (Angie and Ivan Seethal). 2021. Scanned Digital Photograph. Artist Collection.

Contemporary Archivisation ‘Counter Memory’ - Santu Mofokeng

Mofokeng’s project *The Black Photo Album: Look at Me: 1890 – 1950* is a collection of photographs of “urban black working- and middle-class families” (Mofokeng and

Enwezor 1998: 157). These images were commissioned and depicted a “discursive narrative about identity, lineage and personality” (Mofokeng and Enwezor 1998: 157). Mofokeng asked, “black families if he could make photographic copies of their old family photographs covering the period 1890–1950” (Dodd 2015: 54).

Mofokeng’s intention of collecting the photographs that form part of *The Black Photo Album: Look at Me: 1890 -1950* was to preserve images that otherwise would have been “dismissed or ignored as evidence of pathologies of bourgeois delusion” (Dodd 2015: 54). These photographs in this archive produced by Mofokeng were “commissioned by everyday folk who wanted a record of themselves” (Dodd 2015: 54).

According to Weinberg (2018 cited in Thomas 2021), Mofokeng’s project “has been seminal in drawing attention to this hidden archive in Soweto, raising the awareness of the prevalence of the camera in South African townships and how important these images were for communities.”

This type of depiction in these images has often been used a mechanism to assimilate into the role of being what was considered ‘civilised’ (Mofokeng and Enwezor 1998: 158). According to Dodd (2015: 55),

“The Black Photo Album images reflect the sensibilities, aspirations, and self-image of a particular class of black South Africans at a threshold moment in history, giving contemporary viewers an inkling of the complex allegiances they were negotiating through their everyday life choices.”

Similarities can be drawn between his project and my archival practice.



Figure 22: Santu Mofokeng. Bishop Jacobus G. Xaba and his family. Bishop Xaba was the presiding elder of the AME Church in Bloemfontein from 1898-1904. The Church was active in the events leading up to the formation of the South African Native National Congress in 1912. Photographer: Deale, Bloemfontein, Orange River Colony, c. 1890s. This photograph and the photograph on P. 155 were found in a wooden box labelled (in Afrikaans) "Aan M.V. Jooste van die personeel van Die Vaderland." In the box there were 68 images, including one of "Their Most Gracious Majesties, Edward VII and Queen Alexandra-In Their Robes of State." The box belongs to Moeketsi Msomi, whose grandfather, John Rees Phakane, was a bishop in the AME Church. Albumen Print. (Mofokeng and Enwezor 1998: 156-157).



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Figure 23: Santu Mofokeng, Black Photo Album: Look At me 1890-1950. P.G. Mdebuka. At the back of this print is written and stamped "A present from [P.G. Mdebuka - Location School, Aliwal North] to Jane Maloyi." P.G. Mdebuka was a hymn composer and minister of the Methodist church. Photographer: Aliwal North Location School, c. 1900s. Albumen print. (Mofokeng and Enwezor 1998).

In the following sections, I will be discussing how my counter-archive, *The Left Overs, Reimagined*, will be exhibited and the artists that have inspired the presentation of these installations. They are presented in different ways to allow the viewer to experience the most intimate parts of my counter-archive.

THE CURATION OF MY COUNTER-ARCHIVE

Perception Carousel (Photographic Series)

Perceptions of racial identity is the theme I considered when I produced the obscure photographic series seen in figure 24, figure 25, figure 26 and figure 27 below, *Perception Carousel* (2021). The photographic series is shot in low light and depicts the subject with their face covered with a white cloth and clingwrap. The inability to see the subject's face "could be interpreted as the inability to know the subject" (Makhubu 2012: 47). Photographed in this series is my brother, Luke Ruiters.

In creating this series, I wanted to communicate the anxiety I faced when I embarked on interrogating my identity through this dissertation and the practical component of this study. This series aimed to question how I am perceived as a Coloured person in South Africa and the anxiety experienced when I racially pass as white in social spaces. The act of passing as white is not something that I choose to do, and at times this puts me in a situation that can cause me discomfort. These images also aim to interrogate the anxiety I felt taking on the subject matter that this dissertation centres on and the place/ the space I felt I occupy within the South African political landscape.

This photographic series also engages with perceptions of Coloured masculinity by photographing my brother, Luke, in make-up. These perceptions are experiences that my brother has questioned growing up, feeling the weight placed on him by other men in this social circle and our family.

As mentioned above, this photographic series was produced to share my experience of being a Coloured woman in a South African context and embarking on a project regarding my identity. However, I was met with ignorance when sharing my work with superiors within my department who were tasked to administrate and guide me through this process. In 2018 during the critique session, the response to the photographic series I produced was analysed as having themes of a sexual and of a

BDSM²⁵ nature. In another discussion, a lecturer asked, 'what is this about' referring to the photographic series. I responded, 'my Coloured identity'. He expressed to me that he gets it because Coloured people are a violent group. This was played off as a joke. These responses revealed perceptions concealed from me, which otherwise would not have been apparent had I not elicited them through my photographic series.

Through these interactions, I have realised that focusing on this subject matter I have chosen is legitimate and not self-indulgent. It gave me the conviction to decide to move on with the research with new supervisors. What resonated with me from early on in this project was that my identity and narrative were not crucial to those tasked to guide and advise me through this process. At this point, I knew that my work was essential and that artistic archival practices have a space within the field of Fine Art. According to Makhubu (2012: 45), "The body, as a medium for performance and performativity, is the foremost social visual signifier of identity" and therefore must be preserved.

At first, I was unsure how this series of images I had captured fit into my body of work, but excluding them felt like excluding part of my journey. Therefore, these images are presented within an installation on a slide projector. The images are placed in between images sourced from my family archive, *The Left Overs Reimagined*, and is presented in this way to express the anxiety of the unknown at the onset of the project. It was later pointed out to me that this was a relevant juxtapositioning as I am commenting on the impact the past has on the present.

The slide projector is set up with a chair for the viewer to make themselves comfortable and view the images on the carousel. Presenting the images in this way

²⁵ bondage, discipline, sadism, and masochism (Hills 2019: para. 1 line 1).

allows the viewer to wonder and encounter the images in a similar way that I did when I first viewed the photographs, by contrasting the viewers' experience of watching within a multisensory environment filled with subject and content of discomfort and nostalgia against the comfort of the seated positions in warm lighting to fully engage with my material. The juxtaposition of the familiar and comfortable safe space against potentially unsettling content mirrors the same duality and discomfort I often must navigate in my own negotiated spaces of race and gender.

"Performances are viewed as 'struggle, as intervention, as breaking and remaking, as kinesis, as a sociopolitical act', and as such they become 'transgressive achievement, political accomplishments that break through sedimented meanings and normative traditions'" (Denzin 2003 cited in Makhubu 2012: 47). "Performance achieves this through spectacle, through antithesis" (Makhubu 2012: 47).



Figure 24: Ashleigh Ruiters. Perception Carousel. 2021. Digital photograph. Artist's Collection.



Figure 25: Ashleigh Ruiters. Perception Carousel. 2021. Digital photograph. Artist's Collection.

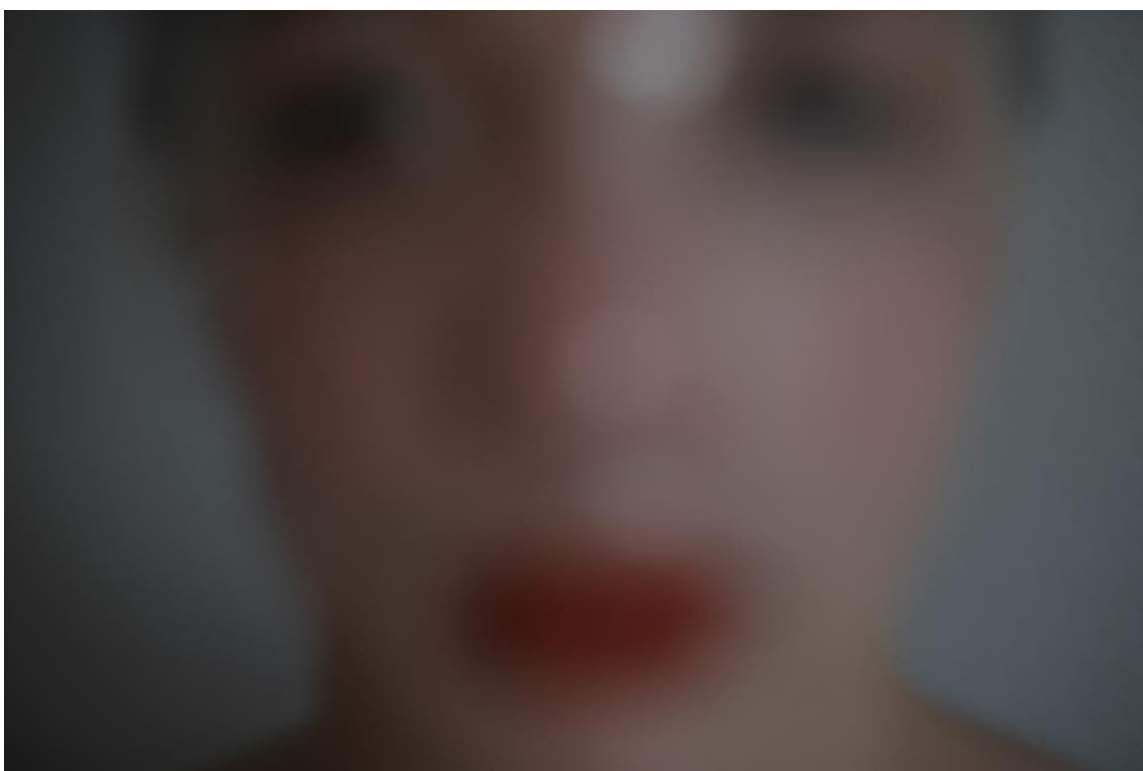


Figure 26: Ashleigh Ruiters. Perception Carousel. 2021. Digital photograph. Artist's Collection.



Figure 27: Ashleigh Ruiters. *Perception Carousel*. 2021. Digital Photograph. Artist's Collection.

Exposing Perceptions “of race through shaming” - (Adrian Piper)

One of the artists who inspired the photographic series *Perception Carousel* is Adrian Piper.

In her video installation piece entitled *What It's Like, What It is #3* (1991), a black man recites a list of things that do not fit into his identity by negating them while addressing the audience directly. The installation is presented in an amphitheatre and on four screens in the centre of the amphitheatre. On each screen, and in the formation of a square, a different side of the black man's face simulates him standing in the middle of the amphitheatre. The man recites, “I'm not rowdy, I'm not horny, I'm not scary” (The Museum of Modern Art 2018); after the man says this, he turns 90 degrees left and continues to recite things he is not, playing in the background is the song *Zoom* by the Commodores (1977). *What It's Like, What It is #3* (1991) addresses

stereotypical ideas of black men and hyper-masculinity. The link below is a video of *What It's Like, What It Is #3* (1991) filmed at the MOMA.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USZMTvxhBz0>

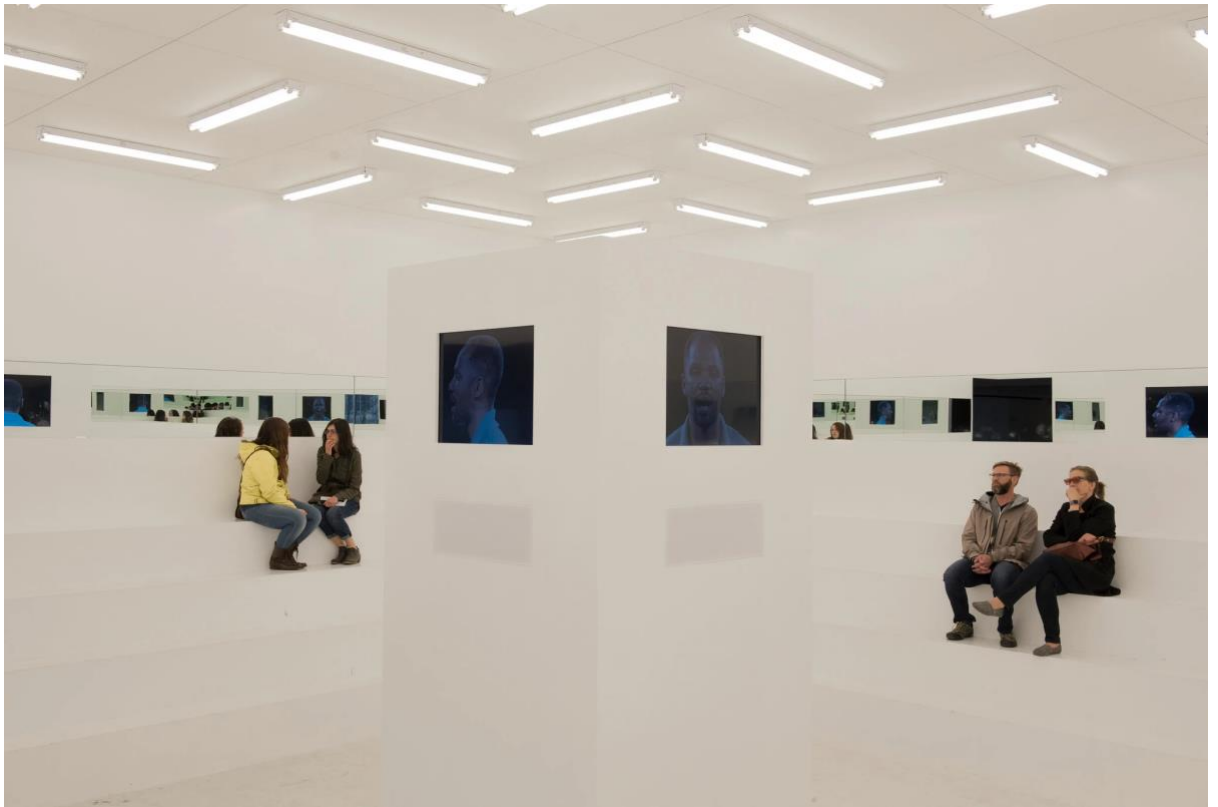


Figure 28: Adrian Piper. *What It's Like, What It Is #3* (installation). 1991. MOMA. (Etheredge 2018)

Another of Piper's artwork, *My Calling (Card) #1* (1986), is a performance piece that interrogates Piper's position as a black woman passing as white within white company in social settings. Piper performs this work by handing out cards with the below text written on them when she finds herself in uncomfortable situations in which she would pass as white. This performance piece "serves as a pre-printed, written intervention in racism manifest in social settings" (Shotwell 2007: 127). *My Calling (Card) #1* reads,

"Dear Friend, I am black. I am sure you did not realize this when you made /
laughed at / agreed with that racist remark. . . . I regret any discomfort my

presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me” (Piper 1999 cited in Shotwell 2007: 127).

My Calling (Card) #1 addresses how people who pass as white occupy spaces that they otherwise would not have had access to and how white people in social settings accommodate and perceive them. Shotwell (2007: 127) states that Piper’s piece *My Calling (Card) #1* exposes perceptions “of race through shaming”. This piece disrupts the dynamics of the space by pointing out something that the white people within that space were unaware of, “a social framework that is noticeable through being other than how the people involved had understood it” (Shotwell 2007: 128). Piper (1996 cited in Shotwell 2007: 128) explains the artwork entitled *Calling (Cards)* saying,

“The situation is one in which I find myself in otherwise exclusively white company at a dinner or cocktail party, in which those present do not realize I am black. Thinking themselves in sympathetic company, they (or any one of them) proceed to make racist remarks...”.

The inactive offender, in this case, I would think would be white and is implicated in the act of racism by passively participating through laughter. It is probably true that this person has not thought of themselves as a racist and probably identifies as anti-racist and has not thought about the racial identity of the people around them in this social setting in any way. Marriot (2013) states that Piper’s artwork entitled *Calling (Cards)* signified,

“acts of negation and denial, the incipient hypocrisy when white people – innocently or not, unwittingly or not – imagining themselves unobserved by blacks, give vent to barely repressed forms of conscious and unconscious hatred”.

In viewing the work of Piper, I was inspired by how she was able to articulate her own experiences of racial passing. It is something that I wanted to communicate through my photographic series (*Perception Carousel*). Piper has filled a void that has allowed

her to explore this region so well that my photographic series (*Perception Carousel*) can only add value to this scope of research.

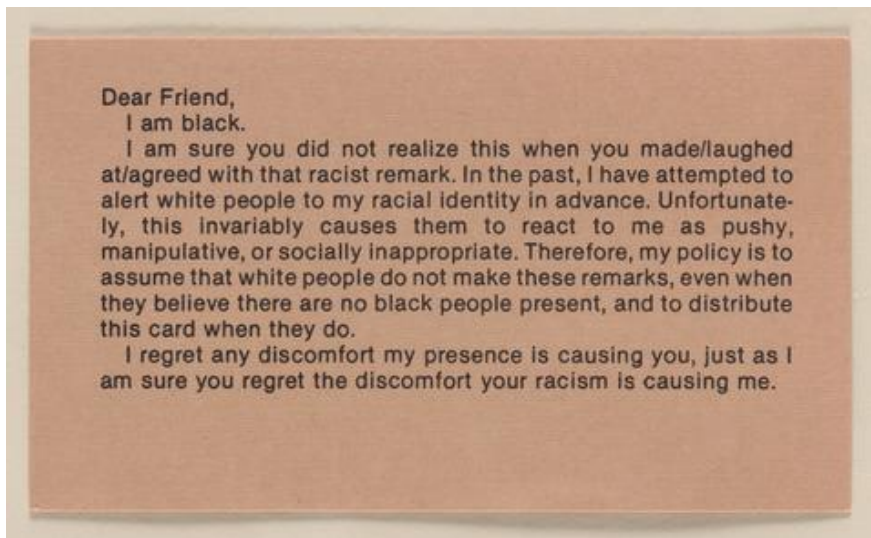


Figure 29: Adrian Piper. *My Calling (Card) #1 (for Dinners and Cocktail Parties)*. 1986. Offset Lithograph (0.3 × 2.9 cm). (Yale University Art Gallery 2017)

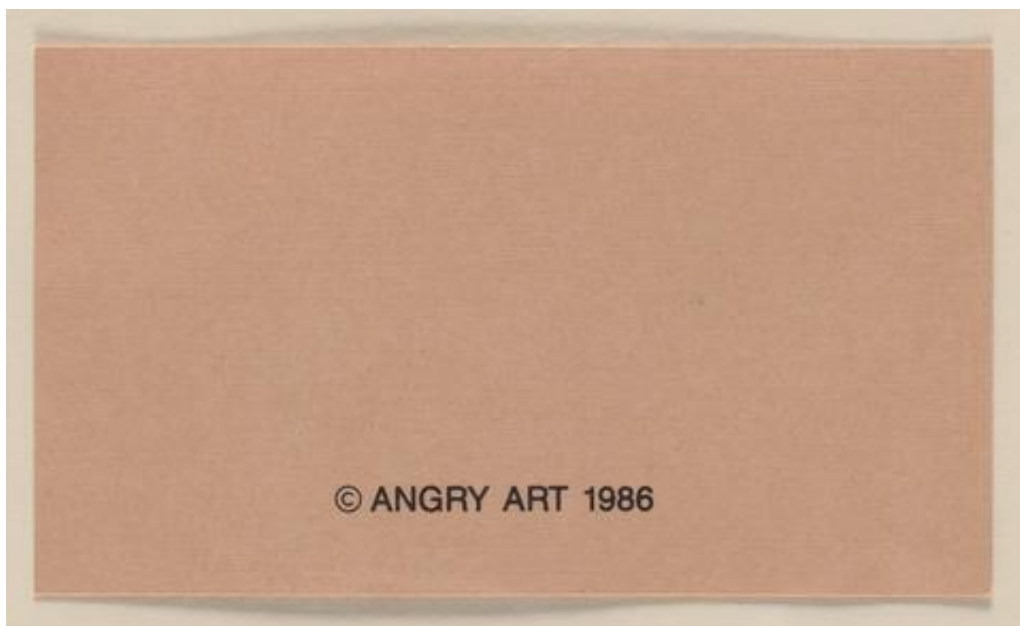


Figure 30: Adrian Piper. (Back side of card) *My Calling (Card) #1*. Circulated 1986 - present. Offset Lithograph (0.3 × 2.9 cm). (Yale University Art Gallery 2017).



Figure 31: Adrian Piper. 1986. *The Calling (Card) #2* (Keimg 2020).



Figure 32: Adrian Piper. 1986. *Calling (Card) #3*. (Etheredge 2018)

In 1986 Piper produced a piece entitled *My Calling (Card) #3*, in which she addresses misogyny that she faces as a black woman in American society. Piper's work aims to subvert and challenge ideas of racial identity (Cotter 2018: para. 12 line 6). Piper addresses assumptions made about her racial identity (Altamirano 2019: para. 2 line

5). “Despite being half black, Piper is often mistaken for white. This has impacted her life in interesting ways. Since most people didn’t know she was African American, they felt they had agency to say racist comments around her. Casual, every day racism inspired her to create Calling Card #1” (Adrian Piper confronts racism 2019: para. 2 line 1).

Blackness As An Abstraction - (Thando Mama)

An artist who confronts the idea of racial identity and the post-colonial state within a South African context is Thando Mama. Mama is a contemporary South African performance artist that engages with themes that investigate “‘blackness’ not as internalized modes of being but as an abstraction” (Makhubu 2012: 47). In Mama’s *We Are Afraid* (2003), a video installation, the artist presents an obscure image of himself with sound in a dark tunnel. “There are voices of news reporters with a stern British accent and one dominant voice repeats ‘and many people believe the world has forgotten about Africa ...’ This is punctuated by a little girl’s voice saying repetitively: ‘we are afraid’” (Makhubu 2012: 47).

In my opinion, *We Are Afraid* (2003) video work produced by Mama directly reacts to the representation often portrayed in the media about black men; this can be extended to include people of colour. This representation is the story that white people perpetuate in mainstream society about people different from themselves. According to Gumbi (2011: 18),

“The content of Thando Mama’s work is very much dictated by the context he is living in and the spaces that shape his understanding of his environment. The binary identities of being black and male is a constant feature in his work. He takes the position of critiquing himself and the institutions that inform his own understanding of the social environment”.

Casual everyday racism is something that Mama addresses, like Piper the themes perceptions and hyper-masculinity. He addresses the lack of agency the subject has

over assigned perceptions. In Mama's *We Are Afraid* (2003), the obscurity of the image could reinforce, like *figure 24-27 Perception Carousel*, the viewer's inability to know the subject.



Figure 33: Thando Mama. *We Are Afraid*. 2013. Video installation. NSA Durban.

Storytelling

Storytelling within this research is a crucial element. Therefore, in Part Two of this dissertation, storytelling within a South African context has been discussed extensively.

One of the artists that I have drawn inspiration from in creating my art practice is Lady Skollie. Although I do not draw inspiration from the technical aspects of her work thematically, Lady Skollie, in some of her work, interrogates her race and identity through storytelling as I do in my practice. Lady Skollie, Laura Windvogel, is a Coloured female South African contemporary artist from Cape Town. Bowler describes Skollie (2019: para. 1 line 1) as “challenging the exclusivity of patriarchal, white-walled gallery spaces, the artist who dares to represent the darkness in her community creates new spaces for art to flourish”. Skollie breaks the mould of traditional artists by challenging institutions of authority through questioning her tertiary education, painting murals in

communities of colour, designing coins and offering a lay-by option in owning one of the artworks (Bowler 2019: para. 12 line 1). According to Skollie,

“It’s really important to me for people to have access to my work ... I’ve always made arrangements and made plans for people to be able to get more access to the work” (Bowler 2019: para. 13 line 1).

Through her work, Skollie confronts gender, femicide, politics of lust, consumption, the history of colonialism and identity (Everade Read 2021: para. 2 line 2). In her work, she uses satire to tackle issues that are hard to talk about to make these topics palatable for a broader audience (Davidson 2017: para. 1 line 1). Skollie (Doyle 2017: para. 16 line 1) states that she uses satire in her art because it is a mechanism to connect with her South African audience. In an interview, Skollie (Doyle 2017: para. 16 line 1) states,

“People don’t always want to listen if you are being serious. They would rather not listen to preaching and they don’t want to hear about rape stats, HIV stats, etc. I think in some ways I’m pretty funny, so I use humour as a way of unwrapping serious issues in a palatable way — so that people will actually start thinking about change”.



Figure 34: Lady Skollie. *They'll suck you dry, beware.* 2016. Ink, crayon and 24k gold leaf on Fabriano (160x169cm). Tyburn Gallery. (Nataal n.d.).

The work produced by Skollie entitled *They'll suck you dry, beware* (2016), according to Skollie (Bowler 2019: para. 8 line 1), is about,

“Princess Krotoa, who was the first translator between the Dutch colonisers and her Khoi tribe. She married a Dutch man and descended into alcoholism because her people didn’t trust her anymore. She had three mixed race children with him. When he died his protection of her died too so she was sent to Robben Island until she died. This plays into Coloured identity today. We go to white schools and try to assimilate to whiteness, which is a result of apartheid, but can’t assimilate too much. Your success has limits. So my princess wears a collar but it’s broken. She is surrounded by yoni-shaped moons and has more than two arms, which is a comment on how women are expected to be a whole bunch of things at once - a bad bitch, independent,

soft for her man. I'd be fine to be all of those things if men were expected to have multiple roles too, but they're not".

Skollie says she uses the term married lightly because, during this time, Coloured women were nothing more than "playthings" (Banks 2017: para. 8 line 2).

The mixed media drawing entitled *They'll suck you dry, beware*, depicts a figure kneeling and leaning on one arm. The other arm is cupping the backside of the figure, the back of the figure is arched. On the figure's underside, there are four breasts and around the neck of the figure is what looks like a dog collar with a gold buckle. Attached to the collar is a gold chain, and the figure's head is depicted as a papaya fruit.

Based on what Skollie has said about this piece, describing the figure as Princess Krotoa of a Khoi tribe and the story told, I believe that this piece speaks to the exploitation faced during colonisation and how women POC in South Africa are still exploited. Although Lady Skollie uses satire, it is her use of relaying and elevating hidden stories of the past that I am focused on through my counter-archive. Through my counter-archive, I can present stories that would not have otherwise been told and relay them to an audience in a way that they understand.

Another artist who uses storytelling and uses a similar medium in their work is Bronwyn Katz. In Katz's video work entitled '*Grond Herinnering*', she uses video to communicate an experience of play during her childhood. The video has three frames, in each frame the figure is practicing a different activity. Katz is seen in the three frames spinning round and round, sitting with her feet in a metal container rubbing her body with red sand and stacking bricks. Katz wears a peach dress and is barefoot, and the video is shot from above in all three frames. The sound in the video is a woman speaking in Afrikaans. According to Sasol New Signatures (2015),

"Katz's '*Grond Herinnering*' reflects the artist's nostalgic childhood memory. In the video we see the artist wash her feet with the soil from the land from which

she originates. There is a deep sense of nostalgia in the work with Katz attempting to preserve history by taking a walk down memory lane to portray some of her most treasured childhood memories.”

According to Lempesis (2021), “In her performative videos, Bronwyn uses her heritage, her body and her mother tongue, Afrikaans, to offer alternative, fictional narratives as a resistance to univocal historical accounts”. Katz evokes a sense of nostalgia and familiarity in her video piece, she is narrating a story and this offers the viewer insight. In my video piece, I aimed to evoke the same sense of nostalgia, familiarity and comfort.

<https://vimeo.com/155435081>



Figure 35: Bronwyn Katz. *Grond Herinnering (soil memory)*. 2015. HD video, sound, widescreen projection. (Mutual Art 2021)

In my video entitled *Hand Over*, my maternal grandmother and grandfather, Angeline (Granny) and Ivan (Pa), are shown holding photographs in their hands and pointing to the people's faces within the images. It depicts the act of storytelling within the context of my family. Through these acts of reminiscing, I have gathered stories throughout my childhood of people I never met and people that I will never know. In the exhibition, the video is projected on a screen, and the viewer is invited into the most intimate part of my journey during this master's research. The environment I have created for this installation is uninhibited comfort and closeness by inviting the viewer to sit in a chair in a home-like setting.

PART FIVE / DESSERT

Summary of the Study

This fine art master's study was done over four and a half years and consists of this written dissertation, the archive *The Left Overs, Reimagined*, which is the practical component of this study discussed in the previous section, along with an Instagram archival repository. My art practice drew inspiration from archival practices, dissatisfaction with representations of POC, and the lack of archive material I identified in my community. I broke away from the conventional language employed in the typical framework of a Masters' dissertation in the organisation of this dissertation. I have exchanged the word 'chapter' with the word 'part'. I have also given each 'part' a title that corresponds with a dining course. This was inspired by my title, *The Left Overs, Reimagined* and insinuates that this Master's dissertation is a five-course meal. The title also draws from an ignorant comment made by Marike de Klerk where she referred to Coloured people as the leftovers.

In Part One of this dissertation, I contextualised the study, outlined my motivation for the research, and explained my rationale for choosing the format it would be conducted. In this section, I also identified that my lived experiences would play an essential role in the practical component of this study and delineated the aim and objectives of the study.

In Part Two, the literature review, I examine the role that race plays in South Africa and the position that Coloured people occupy. The study adopted CRT as a lens through which to view my family archive, CRT challenges normalised Eurocentric values (Lui 2009), and values lived experiences of POC. According to Yosso (2005: 77), CRT shifts the culture, voices and experiences of Communities of Colour from the margins²⁶ of society to the centre, creating space for the 'other' in place of white middle-class culture. Yosso (2005: 77) states that community wealth consists of an

²⁶ To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body (hooks 1984).

“array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilised by Communities of Colour to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression”. CRT recognises storytelling as “legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination” (Solorzano and Yosso 2002: 26).

I analysed that the Critical Race Theory method of counter-storytelling plays a significant role in constructing my counter-archive. I examined the stories often told about communities of colour that situate the people within these stories in a state of lack. Furthermore, my counter-archive presents narratives of my community that challenge the single narrative and present a narrative that highlights multiplicity in my family’s and Coloured communities’ diverse lived experiences.

I then describe how PBR methods are employed in this study and how I produced my counter-archive. Finally, I examine the methods used to collect and document my family archive. Unfortunately, I could not access my paternal grandparents in Cape Town and their photographs due to the pandemic.

In Part Four, I discuss the artists’ work that inspires my practice and work in similar mediums that I use. I also discuss the artistic interventions that I have employed in the exhibition of my work that create a reimagined, reclaimed and re-presented archive of my own lived experiences.

Conclusions: Importance of Study

At the beginning of my dissertation, I established that archives and record-keeping in South Africa during colonisation and apartheid focused on preserving information and experiences that the institution deemed important and valuable. Although we are 26 years into a new democracy, the literature suggests that not much has changed regarding the archival system, and most likely will not, as the public is given little or no access to these archives. This study contributes to the creation of a multifaceted narrative about my family and the Coloured community. Miscegenation and hybridisation are a part of my narrative and my family’s narrative but is it our Coloured

culture that makes us Coloured. Saul (2014:1) states, “Miscegenation and hybridisation form part of my narrative, but my colouredness is a cultural phenomenon.”

Academic studies in fine art that focus on the idea of archiving as a legitimate form of practical production are few and far between. In the world of fine arts, this is a rare occurrence. I argue for increasing the number of South African academics of colour studying the idea of archives. I think, it is necessary to address the scarcity of varied narratives in our communities. My fine art study seeks to contribute to fine art legitimising archival practices as a valid practical output for a fine art PBR study.

Therefore, the thesis of the study is that the CRT theory of counter-storytelling can be used as a mode to challenge the Coloured identity as leftover through the reimagined, reclaimed, and re-presented archive of myself my own family.

To reflect on the three objectives of this study, which were to:

1. Analyse the interventions used by the selected artists to reclaim, reimagine and re-represent misrepresentations of their identity and lived experiences.
2. Analyse the collection and documentation of my family archive.
3. Visually explore my family archive and employ artistic interventions that create a reimagined, reclaimed and re-presented archive of my own lived experiences.

The study's first objective was to analyse the interventions used by the selected artists to reclaim, reimagine and re-represent misrepresentations of their identity and lived experiences. All the artists I selected are artists of colour. It is important because this study focuses on the representation of POC through the practical intervention of my counter-archive. This objective was addressed in Part Four of the dissertation, in which I analysed the work of Adrian Piper, Lady Skollie, Thando Mama and Bronwyn Katz. I analysed that all the selected artists have employed very different practical interventions, and thematically, they address the idea of representation somehow.

Within the artists' chosen works, I analysed themes that I aimed to embody around issues of perception, representation, and narratives.

The first artist I analysed in Part Four was Santu Mofokeng, a South African Photographer and archivist. I connected Mofokeng's archival work entitled *The Black Photo Album: Look at Me: 1890 – 1950* to my counter-archive, *The Left Overs Reimagined*. *The Black Photo Album: Look at Me: 1890 – 1950* speaks to *The Left Overs Reimagined* because through the use of an archive attempted to address representation/misrepresentation and the agency of the subject.

I then presented my work entitled *Perception Carousel (2021)*, figure 19 -22, which I analysed in conjunction with the work of Adrian Piper. Piper interrogates society's perceptions about POC and mixed-race people who pass as white using video and textual interventions, which I address thematically in my work *Perception Carousel (2021)*. In my work *Perception Carousel (2021)*, I assessed how I am perceived as a Coloured person in South Africa and the anxiety experienced when I racially pass as white in social spaces. Thando Mama confronts the idea of racial identity and the post-colonial state within a South African context. Mama's video discussed in the previous chapter addresses the lack of agency the subject has over assigned perceptions, much like the work of Adrian Piper.

The work of Lady Skollie and Bronwyn Katz address the theme of storytelling in Part Four; Lady Skollie's work speaks to the exploitation faced during colonisation and the way women of colour in South Africa are still exploited. Although Lady Skollie uses satire, it is her use of relaying and elevating hidden stories of the past that I am focused on through my counter-archive. Through my counter-archive, I can present stories that would not have otherwise been told and relay them to an audience in a way that they understand. Furthermore, the audience has greater access to the counter-archive in a familiar format by offering it on Instagram.

Katz uses video to communicate an experience of play during her childhood. This video evokes nostalgia. I seek to do this in my work entitled *Hand Over*, where I present my

grandmother going through some photographs that form part of the counter-archive and relaying what events took place when the photograph was taken.

The second objective sought to analyse the collection and documentation of my family archive. I detailed it in Parts Three and Part Four – under the heading *Methods employed to Construct my Counter-Archive* and *The Left Over's Reimagined: An Archive*. In both parts, I detailed how the documents and pictures that form part of my family counter-archive, *The Left Overs Reimagined*, were selected and what forms part of the counter-archive. I also detailed how the archive was collected and the process of scanning. I also delved into the information accompanying each photograph and the cataloguing system I used for my counter-archive.

The third objective is to visually explore my family archive and employ artistic interventions that create a reimagined, reclaimed and re-presented counter-archive of my own lived experiences. This was done through my practice which has been thoroughly discussed in Part Four. In Part Four, I discuss my practice-based research output, the individual works I have created, and the exhibition. The work is based on my family archive. Throughout Part Four, I reflect on the research outputs, *The Left Over Reimagined* counter-archive, *Perceptions Carousel* slide projected installation and the *Hand Over* installation. All three of these works work together to present to the viewer my experiences and my family experiences through the archive and the installation of the work. The exhibition addresses misrepresentations and seeks to challenge singular narratives perpetuated by society about the Coloured community.

By collecting photographs and narratives through this study, the aim of the study has been achieved. Furthermore, presenting these narratives in the research output in the exhibition and granting public access to the archive challenges the idea of the Coloured community as leftovers and elevates the counter-archive by occupying a popular archival platform.

Limitations

In the field of fine art, archival practices are often not considered valuable artistic practice because it defies conventional making where the artist creates something and does not merely collect and organise. Therefore, there was limited literature to include in this research.

The COVID-19 pandemic also impeded my access to my paternal grandparents, museums that hold archival material, and my research output, a physical exhibition due to the inability to access my paternal grandparents in Cape Town because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This hindered the scope of my study. I could not access the photographs in the possession of my paternal grandparents in Cape Town to scan them. I could not physically access my grandparents to gather the narratives about the images, which is a crucial element of the study. Access to the photographs and the people physically was vital to the study to meticulously each artefact's information. Photographs accessed without proper narrative context would be repeating the same colonial canons of the past that I am trying to address. The pandemic will limit the public's access to the exhibition in terms of the physical exhibition, and I will only be exhibiting solely for examination. The choice to present the counter-archive on Instagram was the sole intention for this body of work and is the main platform and space for it to be viewed, as the purpose of the research is to create and grant access to information.

An additional limitation of this study was access to documents and photographs of my maternal grandmother's family. She had very few photographs in her possession of her childhood and only one photograph of her father. She believes that her family in Port Elizabeth have more, and again I was limited access by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations for Future Research

This creation of my family's archive has helped me see the potential for my practice to grow past my family. Narratives and collecting and documenting these stories/lived experiences are essential for my community, as there are many untold stories. The

areas for further research recommended by this study include opening the scope of this study, focusing on people outside of my family, documenting and collecting their stories and creating a way for public access to the information that I have collected.

I know how to navigate collecting and documenting this information by testing this system and mode of operation. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic hindered the scope of the information presented in the archive as I could not access photographs from my grandparents in Cape Town. I realised that having physical access to the individual and photographs was critical to the study's ability to manage the information for each artefact with care and precision. Photographs accessed without proper context (narrative) would be reiterating the same colonial canons of the past that I am attempting to dismantle through my practice.

In the future, I will continue to expand my counter-archive to include more of my maternal grandmothers and my paternal grandparent(s) photographs and narratives. To gain access to information about my maternal grandmother's family, I will need to contact various institutions that keep records and speak to some extended family members. To access my paternal grandparents, I will need to go to Cape Town, where I plan to visit Simons Town and the museum. The experience of constructing my counter-archive has prepared me to be a willing custodian of the narratives that I have been entrusted with.

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https://www.jstor.org/stable/25008312?seq=6#metadata_info_tab_contents

(Accessed 27 May 2021).

Yale University Art Gallery. Piper, A 1986 My Calling (Card) #1 (Offset lithography).

Available: <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/218575> (Accessed 18 March 2021).