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Another source that displays the power relationship of the workforce is the museum's photo albums. As one starts to analyse the photo albums that served as a record and visual source of the museum's development, the captions on most of the photographs also reflect and depict the racial distinction and hierarchies of the time.

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<sup>105</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 7 February 1977.

<sup>106</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 28 March 1977, a member of Board of Trustees and later chairperson, Mr. P.A. Venter questioned the rationale behind the Municipalities decision pay a starting wages of R 16, 56 for labourers. He saw as totally unrealistic as benchmark for paying a Coloured person at the time. Out of documentary evidence it is clear that segregation between white and non- white staff existed and formed part of the daily operation ethos.

<sup>107</sup> *Korrels en Kaf*, Worcester Museum in-house publication, March 1996.



Figure 7. The caption to the photography clearly states the perceived hierarchies that existed at Kleinplasië. Also notices the different in dresses/costumes.<sup>108</sup>Source: Worcester Museum

Demonstrators, museum staff and volunteers are addressed as *meneer* [sir] and elderly white persons in respectful forms such as *Ta* [Aunt], *Oom*, [Uncle], while Coloured workers often remained nameless. In some cases first names or nicknames were used. It brings to mind Leslie Witz's argument<sup>109</sup> around the process of defining a South Africa nation along common origins in the 1950s. Although Naudé attempted to deny the discourses around the

<sup>108</sup> Worcester Museum, Photo Album, 1982 -1986

<sup>109</sup> L. Witz, 'A Nineteenth Century Mail Coach, a Fifteenth Century Sailing Ship and a Bus Crash: Re-Thinking Collection and Display in Transport Museums,' *South African Historical Journal*, 63: 3, (2012), 435.

construction of race,<sup>110</sup> I will argue that their attitudes and modus operandi were 'saturated with racial connotations.'<sup>111</sup>

## Demonstrators

During the inception phase of the museum, public and education programmes included agricultural-based/themed productions: harvesting time, baking and slaughtering, harvest festivals, wheat threshing. These programmes were performed and demonstrated by volunteers and retired farmers who appeared to be racially classified as 'white'.<sup>112</sup> Farmers and corporate wine cellars continued to supply raw materials for the demonstrations and activities. At a later stage this relationship came under pressure due to the management style and ideological approach of the successor to Mrs Naudé, Mr Gerrit Swanepoel. Financial constraints also contributed to the decision to make use of workers racially classified as coloured as demonstrators.

It was only in the time of Gerrit Swanepoel (1987-1994) that people of colour like Gerrit Julies were appointed as demonstrators and not just as labourers or assistants at the tobacco shed.<sup>113</sup> They would become an integral part of visitor's experiences to the museum site. Minutes of the Board of Trustee Meeting of 24 October 1989, the Chairperson, Mrs de Kock,<sup>114</sup> reported that she had received complaints from the *Vakkundiges* (Scientist) who did not see the necessity of attending staff meetings with the rest of the staff. In his response Swanepoel argued the personnel should be seen in its

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<sup>110</sup> Form the first two Harvest festivals Naudé made attempt to involve the Coloured members from the community What was also very interesting is the fact that no exceptions or exclusion were made with regards to entrance fees for both white and non-white visitors to the museum. Both groups were charged 10 cents for admission during the inception phase, charity groups and pensioners entered free of charge. 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 2 February 1981. In letter dealing titled 'Classification of Museums', 3 September 1985, to the Director of the Department of Nature Conservation, under which province-aided museum were funded, Naudé also that museum had few Coloured 'friends of the museum' that attended functions and annual general meeting.

<sup>111</sup> L. Witz, 'A Nineteenth Century Mail Coach', 435.

<sup>112</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, May 1981, it was minuted that Mr. du Toit from the farm *Dasboschrivier* would demonstrate the distilling of *Witblits* (*raw spirit, home-made traditional brandy, moonshine, white smoke, white lightning*). In a Museum Friend of the Museum Newsletter, 6 August, 1981, gives an indication of sites popularity. A call is made for members of the public to assist with guide activities, due to an increase in the numbers of visitors and sizes of the groups. The Museum promised to provide training, through an orientation presentation, using slide to bring potential guides up to date with museum's history, the exhibitions and demonstrations.

<sup>113</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees Minutes', Worcester Museum February 1988.

<sup>114</sup> Mrs. de Kock, wife of farmer, was only the secondly that was appointed to the Agricultural Museum Committee form where sy worked her on the museum's Board of Trustees.

totality and that general personnel/staff meetings are platforms where items are discussed and applicable to all staff. With this response it appears that Swanepoel regarded all employees as staff of one institution and not as separate. This was different to the former curator's approach where in minutes of Board Trustees Meetings and Annual Reports, a clear separation existed.

### **The success story of the museum**

From its opening, Kleinplasia Open Air Museum appeared to be a success story, as evidenced in documents and visitor statistics. It seems like the addition of the agricultural museum brought an immediate increase in visitor numbers. The official museum statistics indicate 19 315 visitors in the 1979/1980 financial year. The number rose to 27 128 for the 1980/1981 financial years. A decade later, Kleinplasia Open Air Museum was firmly established as the major tourist attraction in Breede River Valley, attracting 100 000 visitors in the 1990/1991 financial year.<sup>115</sup>

This becomes more apparent when an expansion was envisaged. In a motivational letter addressed to the Town Clerk of Worcester Municipality, dated 9 April 1984, additional land, the *Ou Spoorwegrangeerwerf* [Old Railway shunting yard], was requested for museum expansion. It also provides an indication of the success of the agricultural museum: 'The farm museum has become too small to accommodate the huge number of visitors, it would be a shame if provision was not made for possible expansion in the future.' The official visitor statistics for 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984 at the three museums were 50, 666, of which 34, 257 visited at the Farm Museum. For March only (1984), the Farm Museum was visited by 4, 414 visitors.<sup>116</sup> These totals and the position of the museum as a leader in the tourism sector served as sufficient motivation for Gerrit Swanepoel's expansion plan of creating a Victorian village in the form of a theme park bordering the 'historic farmyard'. But these numbers could not be sustained. A significant change in visitor numbers from the 1991/1992 to the 1994/1995 financial year is evident. Over a period of five years, the

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<sup>115</sup> This analysis of visitor number is drawn from the Worcester Museum Annual Reports from 1976 through to the 1996 financial years. A financial year for province-aided museum would have been from 1 April to 31 March of each year. The numbers are of course debatable; irrespective of this a clear increase is still visible. One also need to note that the numbers are a combination of the both the three sites, Hugo Naudé Arts museum, Beck House, Stoffberg House, (all sites in town and Kleinplasia). At least 90% of the visitors came to visit Kleinplasia.

<sup>116</sup> Letter to Worcester Municipality, Town Clerk, Worcester Museum, 9 April 1984.

visitors dropped from 90, 375 to 64 747 visitors. The drop in numbers and increasing expenditure almost certainly led to Swanepoel's perceived failure as a director. He resigned in 1995.

Praise for the museum also came through official government channels. In a speech at the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Worcester Museum on the 22 July 1988, the then Minister for Culture, Mr Kobus Meiring, praised Worcester Museum for the pioneering work they conducted in the museums sector with the establishment of the living museum (Kleinplasia). The museum was seen as a pioneer in the depiction of the '*lewende kultuur*' [living culture] of a community. He claimed that Kleinplasia, in its representation of the early white pioneer farmers, used both tangible and intangible heritage in their collections and exhibition. The tangible was reflected by the buildings, utensils and equipment associated with farming activities and intangible takes the form of the demonstrations that relayed the story to visitors based on oral traditions and oral history recordings. He argued that Kleinplasia had broken away from traditional museum practices in order to include the spiritual assets of the cultural heritage.<sup>117</sup> This cultural history created at Kleinplasia, included expressions of ways of living transmitted from generation to generation and included knowledge, skills, customs, practices, objects and tangible representations of values and beliefs.

## **Conclusion**

The museum, a reconstructed site, emerged as a cultural space where objects, artefacts and material culture was displayed, demonstrated, and preserved as a cultural history of Afrikaners as 'pioneers'. Although most of the artifacts, utensils, structures and buildings are replicas and reconstructions, Fagan, in his efforts, constructed an image of the pioneer farmers and provided it with cultural forms, identity and material culture, based on the myth of the innovative pioneer overcoming hardship and adversity. Fagan created an 'imaginary past', a space where memory was triggered through visual representation in the form of demonstrations, physical structures, replicas, salvage architecture, and artefacts

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<sup>117</sup> K. Meiring, Minister for Culture, Speech delivered at the AGM of the Friends of the Museum, Kleinplasia Museum, Worcester on 22 July 1988.

## CHAPTER 3: *Kleinplasië Open Air Museum: an analysis of the mode of representation*

### Introduction

Kleinplasië, as a museum site, was (and indeed still today is) divided into two exhibition spaces that employ two very different exhibition techniques. The first space, with demonstration of early pioneer home industries set in a constructed farmyard, places objects and demonstrations of activities in a 'historically correct' context. Each activity or demonstration is connected to a specific replica or reconstruction of a structure or building. The activities range from rolling and drying of tobacco to roasting coffee beans, making soap, baking bread, roosterkoek and milk tart, and to forging iron. The second space is an exhibition hall, which was completed in 1988 with the idea of providing a 'historically correct'<sup>1</sup> version of the development of agriculture in the region. It consists of what Michael Baxandall calls a "traditional exhibition" or "display of objects for examination"<sup>2</sup> where the objects are presented 'in vitrines on stands, or on walls and are accompanied by labels, leaflets, or a catalogue.'<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter I question the ways in which meanings are created and communicated through the displays of artefacts. How does an exhibition speak of people and their understanding of world? How do cultural objects, artefacts, structures and buildings become devices through which identity and cultural history are constructed? In order to answer these questions, it is crucial to look at the processes through which exhibitions are produced.

For the purpose of this study I will attempt to view the museum as a critical visitor might have done.<sup>4</sup> I am also currently an employee of the Department of Cultural Affairs and

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<sup>1</sup> 'Historically correct' was a term employed by museum professionals that referred to the period the museum claimed to reflect and depict.

<sup>2</sup> M. Baxandall, 'Exhibiting Intention: Some Precondition of Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects', In I. Karp and S.D. Levine, *Exhibiting Cultures, the Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, (Washington, D.C, Smithsonian Institution, 1991), 33.

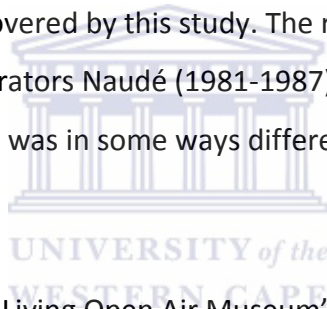
<sup>3</sup> M. Baxandall, 'Exhibiting Intention:' 33.

<sup>4</sup> M. Lindauer, 'The Critical Museum Visitor', in Janet Martine (ed), *New Museum Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), (204), Margaret Lindauer adds a third category visitor, the critical museum visitor which according to her, 'studies how the visual, written, and spatial features of an exhibition collection



Sport, where I have been for seventeen years, and a former employee of Worcester Museum for two and a half years. As a declared provincial museum, Worcester Museum falls within the ambit of the Western Cape Museum Service, a sub-directorate of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport that delivers professional services and provides financial support to this institution.

My visit to Kleinplasia Open Air Museum, was in 1992 as a student at University of Stellenbosch as mentioned in chapter one. I formed part of a group of students of the Department of *Afrikaanse Kultuurgeskiedenis*, a discipline linked to history and the cultural practices and philosophies of the white Afrikaner. A visit to Kleinplasia, one of the flagships of the Department of Nature and Conservation, under which the museum services resided at the time, was deemed as must in order to orientate students to the discipline and the Afrikaner identity. In my analysis, I will focus on my first impressions of the museum, which falls within in the period covered by this study. The reader is also reminded that under the management of the curators Naudé (1981-1987) and Swanepoel (1987 -1995), the Kleinplasia Open Air Museum was in some ways different to how it is today.



With my visit in 1992, Kleinplasia Living Open Air Museum's location, 2km outside the town centre of Worcester neighbouring a site traditionally associated with the Agricultural Society's Annual Show, was the first indicator of uneasiness with this site. One started wondering about the location, a site with seemingly no historical significance, removed from the centre of town and nestled between the industrial area and the African township, Zwelethemba. More questions arose. What is role or purpose of the man-made soil embankment on the left along the Robertson Road as you enter the gates of the Worcester Agricultural Show grounds? What was its intended purpose? Was something being hidden? Is this part of going back in time, and of having a 'real, authentic' experience of the Cape way of life? I wondered about the modern architecture and building in the context of the

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implicate on ideal visitors. He or she also looks at what the object and display represents. They critically, 'explore what is unspoken or kept of display. And she or he asks, who as the most to gain or the most to lose from having this information, collection, or interpretation public presented', 204.

'Historically correct' refers to a common term used by the professionals at Kleinplasia Open Air Museum. The term also referred to the approach whereby all activities, demonstrations, structures and utensils should relate to the eighteenth century life style of the cape pioneer farmer the museum attempted to depict.



site and the surrounding buildings. It did not contribute to the atmosphere or ambiance and the museum's quest to create an 'authentic, historically correct' setting of a *kleinplasje*, "a small farm" that I was expecting. What inspired Gabriel "Gawie" Fagan when he designed this building? What was the idea behind it? Was it that the architecture should not distract the visitor from the intended experience? Why the seemingly dead, unattractive, green empty shell, with white walls and corrugated iron roof? As I later found out, and as detailed in Chapter two, the architect Gawie Fagan, envisaged that the modern buildings be separated from the old, authentic, 'historically correct' farmyard.

As one entered the premises, there was an open lawn on the left and a restaurant offering what it said was 'traditional cuisine' on the right. Down the middle was a paved pathway leading to the entrance where the name of the museum was announced in heritage-green letters on sliding doors. The reception area was divided into a number of functional sections: a reception area with a wooden counter where entrance fees were collected; to the left, a museum shop where museum and tourist-related items and souvenirs were sold to enhance or complete the visiting experience (I recall that products manufactured or produced on the historical farmyard used to be sold here). A further section housed an introductory exhibition where the historical development of the earliest farms in the Boland is presented through maps and drawings to provide a historical context to the rest of the museum's content. The last section was a lecture room that could seat 60 visitors where a slide and film shows<sup>5</sup> were presented to provide visitors, and especially learners, with a background to the history of the various old farm activities. It was decided to name the lecture room after Dr. Douglas Hey, former Director of Nature Conservation of the Cape Province, in recognition of his contribution to conservation in the Cape Province. '*Bewonder and Bewaar*', ['Admire and Conserve'] was the message that the educational services of museum conveyed to the youth and wider public.<sup>6</sup>

After purchasing a ticket and obtaining a visitor's information brochure containing a plan of the site, the visitor had two options: watching the slide show that was intended to orientate the visitor and provide 'sufficient' background, context and understanding to what is about to come, or to proceed directly to the farmyard where there were live demonstrations, set

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<sup>5</sup> This was one of the initiatives introduced by Naudé after her overseas visit to open air museums.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of Board of Trustees, Worcester Museum, 1 October 1979.

in a 'historically correct' background/setting. As part of the visitor service experience, a museum official was appointed to guide and explain the predetermined route visitors should follow in order get a 'real, historically correct experience'. This notion was further entrenched by a Gawie Fagan-designed scale model positioned at the entrance to the outdoor space. The 'historical farmyard' consisted of over 21 structures marking the predetermined visitor points, of which nine are historical replica buildings acquired through 'salvage architecture' from farms in the region. The 'historical farmyard' has a 'kapstyl' house, lime kiln, Khoekhoe huts, tobacco-shed, soap kitchen, dairy room, horse-mill, Farm-dwelling, watermill, wine-cellar and witblits stills, bamboo kraal, Labourers Cottage couch house, smithy or forge, dipping-pen, period gardens, duck pond, farm funeral sites, lye pots, bucket-pump, Shepherd's hut , etc.<sup>7</sup> Entrance to the farmyard was provided through a set of glass-panel double doors. From here the visitor followed a predetermined circular route, supposedly guiding the visitor through a chronology of early forms of folk architecture and the early Cape pioneers farmers' material culture in the form of utensils, tools, trades, home industries and an attempted reconstruction of the living environment of early farm life in the Breede River Valley.



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<sup>7</sup> See *Boer Maak n Plan*, Worcester Museum, in-house publication, 1986), and the museum brochure that provides a short description of each of the buildings and by who it was funded or sponsored.

Kleinplasia Living Open Air Museum  
WORCESTER

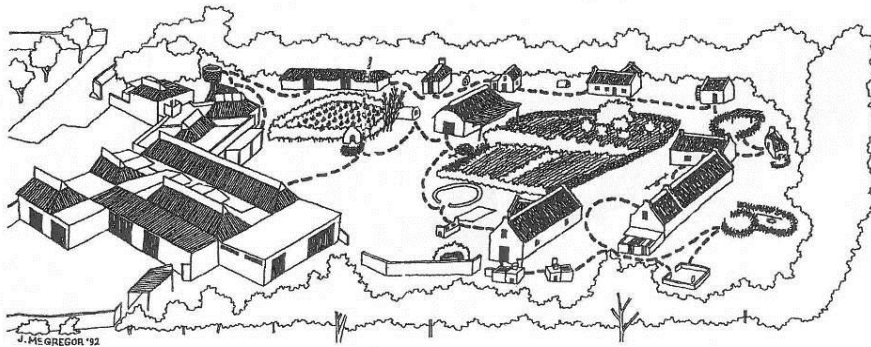


Figure 8. John McGregor's 1992 version of a route map of the site that visitors supposed to have followed.  
Source: Worcester Museum

With my first visit in 1992 it was evident that a tension existed between the chronology and the placement of the structure and buildings. The structures seemed to be sequenced in an arbitrary manner with no logic or reference to chronology. The sequence did not make any sense to the claims of the museum of exhibiting the 'way of life of the Cape pioneer farmers' in linear chronology. It also suggested different voices in the establishment of this successful tourist attraction.<sup>8</sup> It was only after the studying and extensive reading of my archive which includes the minutes of the Agricultural Museum Committee and the Board of Trustees of Worcester Museum, that I became aware of the respective contributions and influences of the former curators Heloise Naudé (1973 till 1987) and Gerrit Swanepoel (1987 till 1994). In terms of reading the site I will discuss the site during the eras of aforementioned curators. It covers the period 1980 up until 1994.

Naudé and Fagan had a clear idea of how they envisioned the site. In a newspaper article<sup>9</sup> Naudé, then still the curator of the Afrikaner Museum which had been renamed the

<sup>8</sup> Between the 1991/1992 and 1992/1993 financial years Worcester Museum, received between 86 379 – 90 375 visitors, of which the bulk visited the open air museum.

<sup>9</sup> Ons verteenwoordiger, 'Landbou kry Museum', *Die Burger*, Vrydag, 10 October 1974-1978.

Worcester Museum in 1969, saw the Boland [region] as ‘the cradle of the Afrikaner’s agricultural heritage’.<sup>10</sup> In this article she also alludes to the fact that no captions would be used to explain or provide information on the artefacts or buildings at Kleinplasië. Also, visitors to the museum would follow a precise, predetermined route and the buildings would be an accurate reconstruction of some of the farm buildings that still existed in the Breë River Valley. During the Naudé-era, that extended from the planning phase, through the opening phase and up until 1987, the core of the museum as it is known today was established. Naudé, along with architect Fagan, established the predetermined, circular route for visitors to the site.

As one entered the farmyard space, a quince hedge was planted straight ahead which Fagan suggested was to create atmosphere. This hedge formed a boundary for the mini- tobacco-land. The first visitor-point on the left was the Kapstyl House, a reconstruction of a temporary dwelling with a cooking shelter used by early Cape trek farmers. As one progressed, one encountered a lime kiln, dated 1850, used for burning of limestone which was applied to walls as whitewash to protect the clay bricks of more permanent dwellings and applied to the exterior of buildings in a traditional farmstead at that time. At this early stage of the visit, the seeming tension between attempting to provide a linear chronology of the pioneer way of life or history and the issues around space and placement is already evident. I found the jump from the temporary dwelling, the Kapstyl House, to a structure associated with the protection of more permanent structures in a later century, the lime kiln, very disturbing. To make matters of logic and chronologically even worse, the next visiting point in the sequence is two reconstructed replica seventeenth century Khoekhoe huts, complete with sleeping holes and replicas of objects, hidden behind two trees on top of the man-made embankment. From the Khoekhoe huts onwards, the structures and buildings relate to specific activities and traditional home industries, interpreted by demonstrators, who mainly appear to be racially classified as ‘white’, in traditional period costume.

At the different sites the following demonstrations took place; at the , Tobacco Shed, a period-correct structure, dated 1900, was located in Piketberg-district in the Western Cape, dismantled, transported and rebuilt on new foundation at the museum. Here one the

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<sup>10</sup> Ons verteenwoordiger, ‘Landbou kry Museum’, *Die Burger*, Vrydag, 10 October 1974-1978.

drying, rolling of tobacco and the visitors got the opportunity to snuff grinded tobacco. At the Soap Kitchen making of candles, burning and grinding of coffee beans, cooking of soap with animal fat and lye bush took place. Unique feature of the next visiting room that captured my attention was the well-constructed and rare peach-pit floor. The Diary Room formed the central visiting point with the presentation of education during Dairy-month, when the separating of milk, making butter and cottage cheese was demonstrated. At the neatly white lime-washed *Boerewoning*, [farmer's dwelling], a replica of an early farm residence at the coast, the structure built of limestone and the roof constructed of aloe flower stems.<sup>11</sup> Baking bread in outside oven, vetkoek, rooster, milk tart, smearing of floors with cow dung, and a herb garden could also be viewed.

At the rest of the structure rest of the 'farmyard' you experienced the Watermill (Grinding of wheat into flour), Boundary walls and Kraals, this where milking of cows took place during special seasonal days. At the scantily furnished Labourers Cottage the demonstrator presented the stuffing of pillows with dried *sewejartjies* [everlasting]flowers, baking of griddle cake and 'vetkoek' [damper], while the Smithy, a hot, smoked-filled area gave a performance of forging of iron. Here onwards visiting points included the Coach-house, Harness room, Stable, tanning Vat, the Wine Cellar & Witblits Stills, where the fermentation of fruit/pulp for the distillation of witblits (a traditional brandy) took place. The circular route tour concluded with visits to the Lye Pots & Raisin Court (where raisin and 'moskonfyt', [grape-syrup] making), Threshing Floors, for the winnowing of wheat, Whipstick Oven for making of swipes and ended with the Shepherd's Hut.

The Kleinplasië Open Air information brochure informed visitors that "the way of life of the early Cape pioneer farmers is depicted at the Open Air Museum. Various buildings and structures pertaining to early agriculture industries were erected. Home industries and farming activities are practised in and around the different buildings." Each structure, the museum claimed, was correctly furnished according to the time period and its associated function. The museum claimed that every building was rebuilt or reconstructed using the same building materials and building methods as the original. In and around these replica

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<sup>11</sup> 'Annual Report 1 April 1981 – 31 April 1982', Worcester Museum.

structures, traditional home industries are demonstrated and interpreted by costume-wearing staff members.<sup>12</sup>

A visit by Naudé to agricultural museums in North America had a significant influence on the way the farmyard was depicted. Her report provides a comprehensive overview of her observations, which she appeared to have incorporated into the day-to-day running of the planned museum.<sup>13</sup> She explained and reiterated that, for demonstration purposes, only replicas or special utensils were to be used at all times. No modern vehicles, water irrigation systems, tractors, spades or other implements were seen on site. She observed that all the old kinds of spades, picks, etc. be replicated for daily use. Interpreters and demonstrators also wore period costumes and the willing to one was served as requirement for appointment. She also reported that all the museums she visited presented an orientation film or slide show of high technical quality, some of which were produced by professionals. The 'old' or 'historical section' of the museum was seldom used for other purposes. Special fundraising activities that did not fit in with the old fashioned or period presentation were done elsewhere or at another museum site<sup>14</sup> Most of these recommendations were incorporated into the settings and processes of Kleinplasië and continued up until the end of her term of office.

During the period of Swanepoel's appointment, a supposedly new shift in attitude and the design of Kleinplasië occurred. Fagan's original architectural plans were slightly altered to accommodate structures like the Khoekhoe huts, a labourer's cottage and shearing pens. With the addition of the Khoekhoe huts and labourer's cottage, Swanepoel claimed to be giving recognition to the role of "Coloureds in the development of agriculture".<sup>15</sup> In his new approach, Swanepoel suggested a movement away from the 'farmyard-idea' to a more inclusive representation that argued for a more 'correct version' of history.

During the first three phases of Swanepoel's Five Year Plan, a Labourer's dwelling, the Khoekhoen huts and the exhibition hall were completed by 1988. At a meeting on 29

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<sup>12</sup> in the museum attempts to be 'historically correct' features such clothing, building materials for structures and the different demonstration, draw on the writings of Dr J. P. van der Merwe's *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie (1657 – 1842)*, (Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1938).

<sup>13</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 14 November 1983.

<sup>14</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees' Worcester Museum, 14 November 1983.

<sup>15</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 29 August 1988.

August 1988, it was also reported that the plans for the 1930 labourer's cottage – as part of the 'historical farmyard' - was approved and that a suitable labourer's cottage was identified in the *Koue Bokkeveld* in the Ceres District. The labourer's cottage would be dismantled and transported to the agricultural museum. The idea was to have it ready for the open day on the 10 December 1988.<sup>16</sup> Fagan's original plans only made provision for structures and artefacts that were linked to white pioneer farmers.<sup>17</sup>

## Buildings

By employing artifactual evidence in the form of built structures and utensils, a particular version of history and the material culture of the Cape pioneer farmers were presented at Kleinplasië. I will argue that these structures and building<sup>18</sup> should be considered in the broader cultural landscape and the cultural context in which it was constructed. 'Folk architecture' is supposed to reflect the traditions, culture and values of a people and often reflects the identity of a particular region. Their design, conceptualization and construction are the result of social and cultural factors and takes place in specific cultural and socio-economic conditions. It also serves as a tangible record, material evidence which enables one to construct or deconstruct an understanding of the culture allied or associated with it. It also serves as a representation, a symbol of the attitude of a particular period and the material culture of a people.<sup>19</sup> Kleinplasië therefore created a world, rather than merely reflected particular period in history as claimed by Fagan.

As progressed through the predetermined circular route of the reconstructed 'historical farmyard', the architecture, its design, the setting atmosphere and the experience of the activities and demonstrations, one was supposed to become a participative viewer within

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<sup>16</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 29 August 1988.

<sup>17</sup> These structures that focused on the early pioneer way of life of the white farmer were; tobacco-shed, soap kitchen, horse-mill, farm-dwelling, watermill, wine-cellar, couch house, smithy or forge and kapstylhouse.

<sup>18</sup> See, C. Well, (ed.), *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 1, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press), 5, where argues that these structures and building are regarded as sources of information, service as surviving historical records and markers of material culture. Also see, R. W. Brunskill, *Illustrated handbook of vernacular architecture* (third revised edition), (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 18, how different disciplines as come to as inscribe their theories, thinking, methods on vernacular architecture. They also came to realized that that vernacular as source of information is suitable for intensive study.

<sup>19</sup> See Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*, (Foundations of Cultural Geography Series), (New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1969) and Franco Frescura, A glossary of Southern African architectural terms, (Port Elizabeth, The Archetype Press, 1987).



the space. Both Casey and Stanley<sup>20</sup> argue that nothing is innocent about these types of representations. The 'historical farmyard'-unit was supposed to reflect the pioneer way of life and activities (home-industries) over time. It provided a reconstructed 'authentic' space for the object and material culture, where the objects are placed in relation to their 'functional context'. Through a particular design, a way of seeing and experiencing, the way of life of the early nineteenth century farmers was re-created. Within the authoritative space of the museum, these collections, including structures, building and objects, combined with performed demonstration and exhibition, according to Nick Stanley, the use of 'authentic reproductions', supported by exhibitionary strategies and techniques of design by the aesthetic, "serves as reminders that triggers",<sup>21</sup> collective cultural memory. Certain aspects representing Cape pioneer culture were presented through sensorial means. Kleinplasia utilised this standard approach employed by other open air museum whereby buildings or structures representing the agricultural heritage of the region were replicated or 'salvaged', and reconstructed on site with no historical link to the physical presentation (building, structure, etc.). Through the intervention of professionals and the museumization of buildings, structures and objects, new meaning and histories were created in a space of collective memory on a site of no previous historical significance. The buildings, structure and utensils were seemingly exhibited as tangible manifestations, bearers, carriers, markers of history and representations of a particular period/culture. It appears that Fagan attempted to create a spatial hierarchy and cultural authority through the positioning of objects and buildings and in so doing, attempted to construct and re-create a chronology of the development of white pioneer social history. To enhance simulation, an embankment was constructed to create an isolated space to bear the atmosphere and setting of a typical small farm of the Breede River Valley.

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<sup>20</sup> Architects designs, Stanley argues that 'none of the features is accidental or haphazard' – parks are forms of a 'visual and cultural panopticon', 179 also see V. Casey, 'Staging Meaning; Performance in the Modern Museum', 82.

<sup>21</sup> Nick Stanley, *'Being Ourselves for You: the global display of cultures'*, (London: Middlesex University Press, 1988), N. Stanley, 'Being Ourselves for You', 84.



## Role demonstrators



Figure 9. Kitty Claassens making candles.<sup>22</sup>

Source: Worcester Museum

Casey describes live performances and, in the case of Kleinplasië – demonstrations - as a “provocative form of communication” conveying particular message.<sup>23</sup> Casey continues, “[T]hrough the collective behaviour of its visitor, the early museums established an experiential rhetoric of national identity.”<sup>24</sup> Ivan Karp posits that in the case of ‘living museums’, a “living person is both an interpreter and part of the exhibition”.<sup>25</sup> At Kleinplasië the demonstrators in costume “occupy the ‘authentic’ setting that forms part of the visitor’s experience. By employing this strategy, the museum makes a claim of authenticity and ‘historical correctness’. “[T]he purpose of a costumed, living interpreter-performer is the same – to guide and stimulate the audience to experience a world they know only through the faculty of the imagination.”<sup>26</sup> The live demonstrations become a singular representation or view of a group in its cultural form. In the construction of a group

<sup>22</sup> Worcester Museum, Photo Album, 1982 -1984.

<sup>23</sup> V. Casey, ‘Staging Meaning; Performance in the Modern Museum’, 85.

<sup>24</sup> V. Casey, ‘Staging Meaning; Performance in the Modern Museum’, 85.

<sup>25</sup> I. Karp, ‘Festivals’, In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays*, edited by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1991), 280 -281.

<sup>26</sup> I. Karp, ‘Festivals and the Creation of Public Culture: Whose Voice(s)?’ in *Museums and Communities*, Ivan Karp, Christine Kraemer, and Stephen Levine (Eds.). Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press. pp.:76-104. 1992.

cultural identity, professionals often draw on appropriate or specifically preconceived stereotypes and images that supposedly serve as a 'true' representation of the group. In drawing comparisons between different models Stanley argues that "memory becomes history and the cultural enactment becomes a dominant historic trope."<sup>27</sup>



Figure 10. Alwyn Naudé, a volunteer conducting a demonstration for then Mr, Viljoen, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees 1983.<sup>28</sup>

Source: Worcester Museum

During the early development phase of Kleinplasia, the museum employed knowledgeable volunteers and retired whites as demonstrators. The Worcester Museum Annual Report for 1 April 1980 – 31 April 1981 provide us an idea on how dependant the museum was on theses volunteers during the inception phase of the museum. It also appears that the volunteers could have exerted a huge influence on the site in terms of how they perceived their role as interpreters and to what extend they employed their knowledge. On the day of the opening of the museum, no less than seven names of farmers and farmer's wives from the area and other districts in the area were recruited to handle the demonstration and the

<sup>27</sup> N. Stanley, *Being Ourselves for you*, 176.

<sup>28</sup> Worcester Museum, Photo Album, 1974 -1981

interpretation of different domestic trades.<sup>29</sup> These volunteers occupied spaces and position was seen as experts in their respective trade. In their performances they brought their own interpretations and new meanings, identity, not just to their trade or demonstrations, but to the museum's narrative. C van Wyk from Vermaaklikheid, outside Riversdale, was responsible for the construction of 'Kapstyl' house, claiming to use the methods and skills transmitted to him by his father. In another case, with the building of the Shepherd's hut a "Bushman" shepherd knowledge was drawn to finish the structure and the cooking screen made with lye-bush.<sup>30</sup>

### **Exhibition Hall**

As part of the different modes of representation employed by Kleinplasia was an exhibition hall that was completed in 1988.<sup>31</sup> Access to the Exhibition Hall was gained through two doors on the right, after proceeding past reception at the museum entrance.

The Exhibition Hall followed the route of object-based museology and the established method used by museums, to 'teach by showing'.<sup>32</sup> Its narrative focuses on the development of agriculture and pioneer traditions in the south-western Cape. The visual and textual presence of exhibits conforms to a documentary form of history. Swanepoel was permitted to influence the content and to make changes to Fagan's original brief. The exhibitions were only completed in 1988, after he came to the museum, and long after the rest of the site was completed in 1981.

The entrance of the Exhibition Hall, panels on the left included a timeline that gave an historical overview of the role of Jan van Riebeeck in establishing agriculture at the Cape in 1652. The panel facing the entrance had a black and white illustration depicting a scene

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<sup>29</sup> 'Annual Report 1 April 1980 – 31 March 1981', Worcester Museum, Opening demonstrations included; distilling of witblits (Z. Conradie from Prince Alfred Hamlet, Ceres), making raisins (Hennie du Plessis), beating the grain from rye on the threshing floor, wheat being trampled on the threshing floor, threshing of wheat, (Alwyn Naudé), shoeing of horses (Geoff Dyer), cooking soap (Mrs, Meiring and Viljoen), – Benna Burger teaching one of the museum servants to roast coffee in the farm house, etc. Farmers and volunteers from towns such as Riviersonderend, Swellendam, Piquetberg, Montagu, Prince Alfred Hamlet, Rawsonville, etc. would offer time to volunteer at the museum.

<sup>30</sup> 'Annual Report 1 April 1982 – 31 March 1981', Worcester Museum.

<sup>31</sup> This section of the museum was not as popular as the reconstructed 'historical farmyard'. Visitors came to experience the 'lifestyle' of the pioneer farmer as depicted by the museum.

<sup>32</sup> Hilde S. Hein, *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 8.

with a Khoekhoe kraal and ship in the background. My immediate, and most logically observation was that the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck is depicted at the beginning of agriculture in South Africa. Another illustration depicted a scene of bartering between the indigenous Khoekhoen and the traders from Europe. This section of the exhibition, on the left of the door, covered the story of Jan van Riebeeck,<sup>33</sup> the establishment of the refreshment station, the first efforts to cultivate the land and the role of the company gardener, Hendrik Hendricks Boom.

Underlying all the displays were the idea of the settlers from Europe as the bearers of civilization and progress to Africa, Southern Africa in particular. They were portrayed as discoverers, conquerors, inventors, initiators and leaders. According to Witz and Rassool, “[p]erspectives supportive of the political project of white domination created and perpetuate the Jan van Riebeeck icon as the bearer of civilization to the sub-continent and its sources of history”.<sup>34</sup> The museum’s exhibition storyline started with Jan van Riebeeck, as the founder of agriculture in South Africa, which equates to bringing civilization to southern Africa. One got a sense of the glorification of the white contributions in ‘cultivating’ and, as Mudimbe would put it, the “organisation or arrangement” of the land.<sup>35</sup> The agenda of the creation and preservation of white exploration into the supposedly unoccupied, open spaces, bringing order and Christianity to Southern Africa, is put on show here.

Once you have entered, there were travellers’ and artists’ impressions of Khoekhoen in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the introduction of replica Khoekhoe artefacts such as clay pots mounted on perspex stands, mats, digging sticks, etc. If one looks at Swanepoel’s Five Year Plan, he and the museum human scientist, Pauline du Plessis, in an effort to redress and provide a ‘correct version of history’, placed the Khoekhoen in the narrative as the first farmers in the area to alter the exhibition in line with the Khoe huts in the ‘farmyard’.

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<sup>33</sup> Leslie Witz suggests that the icon of Jan van Riebeeck was employed to in attempt to create a white settler history, L. Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival: Constructing and Contesting South Africa’s National Pasts*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> C. Rassool and L. Witz, ‘The 1952 Jan Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: Construction and Contesting Public History in South Africa’, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (1993), 448, 447 – 468.

<sup>35</sup> I.Y.V Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1989), Chapter 1, 1.

Section three and four were dedicated to presenting the development of different types of farming, supported by artefacts and pictorial evidence. It dealt with the story of dairy farming, starting with the Khoekhoen, Hendrik Boom and a photographic display of important breeds of dairy cattle. Boom was a gardener from Amsterdam and prepared the first seedbeds and sowed vegetable seed brought from Holland. On the right one could view a display of utensils used in the production of dairy products (butter workers, rockers, churns, cheese moulds, etc.). The depiction was clearly informed by the accounts and records kept by governors such as Jan van Riebeeck. Section four provides an overview of the different farming activities that took place in the Cape Province. Display panels on the left deal with free burghers, stock farmers, dairy and poultry farming, while the right side panels deals with wine, grain, and fruit farming. The somewhat misplaced, enlarged image of a freed slave made it appearances here and looked like it was an afterthought in this section. I started to wonder about the inclusion of this image. If the professionals at the museum were seemingly attempting to provide a linear account of the development of agricultural in the Western Cape, it was surely failing dismally. How does it explain jump from the late seventeenth century to the emancipation of slaves on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1838. Perhaps this image was an attempt by Swanepoel to alter the depictions of history in the museum. On the floor on the right-hand-side was a display of various ploughs and a wooden wheelbarrow. It seemed that the intended purpose of the displays in the exhibition hall was to support and provides insight and context to what was happening on the 'historical farmyard'.

The display in the far right-hand corner dealt with the activities practiced by farmers' wives. These home-industries included slaughtering, food preparation, making soap, raising poultry and dairy processing. The following text served as introductory panel: 'The home-industry of the South African Farmers' Wife developed on isolated farms of the interior. This isolation led to rural industry which [was] directly influenced by the environment.'<sup>36</sup> This display, along with text and photographs, carried a very particular message and illustrated the social hierarchies and the subsequent changes that took place in 1988. In one, (photograph, number two: process of bread baking) the hierarchy of power between the white farmer's wife and her relationship with her workers is reinforced and illustrated. It places the white

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<sup>36</sup> Caption in the exhibition text, Worcester Museum.

women in a supervisory capacity and in control of the processes. In another (photograph 6: the process of candle making), it was evident that a shift has occurred in the museum's depiction of the 18<sup>th</sup> century pioneer life's. Labourers, traditionally portrayed in a subjugated position are placed in charge in what historically seen as a task performed by the pioneer's farmer's wife. This suggests a clear deviation in modes of depicting the pioneer family as a self-sufficient, innovative and independent unit.

The panel on the left dealt with story of the trekboer, the artefacts he, gendered as male, would have utilized, and the role of tobacco in trade. One wondered whether the cold, dead, sterile, and somewhat morbid atmosphere, and the lack of proper lighting was intended to convey the harsh, cold, uncomfortable circumstances, and the hardship that the trekboer had to endure on their travels. Or was this a message inherent in the narrative or just bad display technique? Section six displays rifles and ammunition secured behind steel bars. On the right, the story of stock farming is depicted and includes a photograph of half-naked African men in traditional attire, milking a cow, as well as an exhibition of associated tools on the left. Section seven is an exhibition on wool, sponsored by Wool Board. It deals with the history of sheep (grazing, lambing time, shearing, etc.), early bartering and farming in South Africa, the history of wool, processes (classification, factory prices, dyeing, etc.) and machinery used in the industry. Section eight deals with machinery used for wheat harvesting, sowing and ploughing. Here the farmer is depicted as an expert and the black labourers portrayed as being fit only for performing menial, hard labour. In the corner, there is a display of tools and the processes of threshing wheat are illustrated. Section nine deals with fruit farming and viticulture. It also showed a photograph of about the 'dopstelsel' (tot-system) where labourers receive wine in a container, in the shape of a horn, at the end of the days' work. A calendar or timeline of what happens in each season and the traditional processes of harvesting and making wine and distillation of Witblits concludes this section. Section eleven reminded one of the theme and narrative of progress. It covered the way of life of the Trekboers in the form of a diorama depicting the 'uitspan' [outspan], with accompanying utensils and a 'togwa' [wagon]. The final themes portrayed in the Exhibition Hall, sections twelve and thirteen respectively, are shoemaking and wagons.



The exhibition hall was divided into different sections, each dealing or representing a specific sub-theme. Located in, what I considered, a dead, sterile environment, with cream walls and cement-topped floors, and with lightning, display board and accompanied designs fashionable for 1980s, the exhibition hall took one on a historical journey through which the colonial developments of agriculture over the last three hundred years with references to the existing indigenous pastoralist who resided at the Cape when the Dutch arrived in 1652, are covered. The exhibition consisted of static, flat display panels with texts and illustrations or photographs. Alternatively boards on wooden stands or legs were used. The exhibitionary approach was a combination of artefacts, objects, and the medium of silk-screen printing with photographs, labels, and text that tries to give brief descriptions of the objects and explain the history and development of agriculture in South Africa chronologically. It also appeared that it attempted to give visitors a 'condensed' context. The artefact or object, along with the meaning, messages they transmit, and material values takes centre stage in the display. One gets a sense of static, unchanging permanence touring through the exhibitions. I experienced a sense of being stuck in time, whereby I have been forced and great extend bombarded with information presented a linear fashion to edify me, around the core themes which focused around the life conditions and progress made by the pioneer. I also got a sense that the exhibition was served a medium to enhance the experiences of what visitors has undergone outside

Not only did the exhibitions transmit the present and past as fixed, permanent and not open to contestation, but there was poor labelling and description of objects. These labels were in two languages, English and Afrikaans. And only some displays and objects had captions. The labels furthermore did not reflect or make reference to the provenance, original setting of the objects, their meaning, cultural understanding, and in what context the objects were used. Wrong or no labelling of and display/arrangement of objects, was very much in contrast to the well thought through and designed 'historical farmyard'.

## **Conclusion**

Kleinplasia can be seen as a historical reconstruction to represent and serve as example of a 'historical farmyard'. It furthermore serves as a re-created landscape that represented what Miller refers as "tangible remnants, manifestations of material culture of an

indigenous cultural patrimony – fatherly inheritance – on a site of no historical significance.”<sup>37</sup> Kleinplasia furthermore served as a site of memory where through salvage architecture and reconstruction of replicas, seemingly created to safeguard what was regarded as white pioneer culture. As in the case of Colonial Williamsburg, and through the invention of professionals, a ‘site and source of historical recovery’ was created.<sup>38</sup>

It appeared that the superiority and dominance of Cape pioneer farmer histories was institutionalized in the exhibition hall. Throughout the exhibitions one singular perspective is presented. By drawing on this fabricated history visitors were treated as passive receivers and consumers of the ‘official narrative’ and themes that are outlined to them. It followed a top-down-approach and did not allow for the engagement of visitors or communities to the sites.

In line with many conventional museums the exhibition focused on the display of the object because of its tangible or material value. No correlation is drawn between the object, and its intangible meanings or knowledge. Information provided was deemed as the prerogative of the professional who decided on what is fit for consumption by the visitor. Through this, the professional acquires control over knowledge production. The exhibition displays and narrates both collective and individual memory, but excluded the history and associated knowledge of the objects. Objects are displayed as a category of understanding for visitor observation. These displays are also deemed to be commemorative and celebratory of the effort of the by Cape pioneer farmers in conquering the land and progress and innovation displayed in times of hardship. In doing so, they created a collective Afrikaner culture using the museum as platform. Karp suggest that because the experts have access to resources in the form of collections, “[E]ven where the purpose of an exhibition is didactic rather than aesthetic, authoritative claim is based on possession of knowledge and those cultural resources we call ‘collection’.”<sup>39</sup>

Kleinplasia’s claims in depicting the lifestyle of the early cape pioneer farmer shifted over last two decades following the appointment of Gert Julius the first government employed

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<sup>37</sup> J. S. Miller, ‘Mapping the Boosterist Imaginery: Colonial Williamsburg, Historical Tourism, and the Construction of Managerial Memory’, *The Public Historian*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Autumn, 2006), 54.

<sup>38</sup> J. S. Miller, ‘Mapping the Boosterist Imaginery’, 54.

<sup>39</sup> I. Karp, “Festivals”, 283.



demonstrator. Today demonstrators who under apartheid may have been classified as 'coloured' are entrusted to perform and lead the demonstration that was historically deemed as reserved for white workers or volunteers. There is general tendency amongst some visitors to question the 'historical correctness' of the positions these demonstrators occupy in the structure of the museum and its programmes. It is furthermore perceived by visitors that they often lack the experience of farming, or do not have necessary knowledge pertaining to their demonstration or the traditional 'way of life'. The museum has clearly broken away from the original idea that 'white Afrikaners' were the leading figures during these demonstrations. Because visitors bring their own meanings and interpretations to the 'historical farm yard', symbolic representations are often met with stern resistance from those who claim an identity as white and Afrikaner.



## **Chapter 4: Kleinplasië Open Air Museum: The construction of a narrative**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will focus on the historiography that informed the collection, exhibition and dissemination of information processes at Kleinplasië Living Open Air Museum. I am particularly interested in the role that curators, researchers, educators, academics and other professionals played in the construction of the narrative for exhibitions, public programmes and in the training of demonstrators. I will argue that a specific version of Afrikaner nationalist history had a considerable impact on the way history was depicted at Kleinplasië.

### **Kleinplasië as a site of knowledge production**

By looking at museums as part of the new scholarship, as places for the production of knowledge, history, and cultural representations, Handler and Cable argue that museums are more than just “simple repositories of cultural and historical treasures, but produced messages and meaningful statements.”<sup>1</sup> This begs the question about whose interests are served by these particular interpretations or representations. Conventionally such questions are normally answered by reading and interpreting the messages provided by museum exhibitions and texts. But, as institutions of public culture, museums are “critical social locations” where knowledge and perceptions [of the public sphere] are shaped, debated, imposed, challenged, and disseminated’.<sup>2</sup> Issues of power and authority in the processes of the production of knowledge can be linked to museums’ collection methodologies, their exhibitions and the services they deliver. Museum exhibitions, through their visual impact are highly contested projects where groups with different interests to exercise control and assert their own identities. Due to their elite training and position, professionals like curators and historians, exercise control over the development, content of, objects used for, and narratives of exhibitions, but these are often contested.

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<sup>1</sup> E. Cable and R. Handler, *The New History in an Old Museum* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> I. Karp and C. Kratz, ‘Institutions of Public Culture: A Collaborative Cape Town-Atlanta Program’, proposal to the Rockefeller foundation, October 1999, 3.

At Kleinplasia I am particularly interested in how histories are presented and produced in and for the public, the sociologies in the process of the production of knowledge in its different forms, practices, genres, methodologies, social contexts and the disciplinary politics.<sup>3</sup> It is these processes and hierarchies of knowledge production in the public sphere that need investigation.

## Construction of Kleinplasia's narrative

### Role of the professionals

It appears that Kleinplasia followed the example of other living museums like Colonial Williamsburg where professionals were entrusted to construct the narrative for the museum. Miller<sup>4</sup> argued that such narratives were informed by the accuracies of buildings and structures, "original specifications" and "know-how" of the experts. Based on the "original specifications" and "expert knowledge" they were entrusted to reproduce 'authentic' utensils, replicas, etc. They also served as supervisors during the training of those involved in the construction process. I suggest that these professionals did not only recover, but also 'improved' on existing history and structures. The reinforcement of hierarchies of

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<sup>3</sup> S. Turner, 'What is the Problem with Experts?' *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 31, No.1 (Feb., 2001), 123-149. (125), Jenkins suggests that we have to look at the epistemological and ideological practices of historians and locate these within the practical sites of historical production. We furthermore should question the historical text, and the interest of the dominant group/stakeholders. In line with this argument, Charles R. Garoian suggests that museums should be analysed as performative sites, where attention should be paid to the following questions: "What does the institutional setting of the museum signify? How do its environmental conditions, the working of its staff, and their decisions of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting artefacts in a museum affect the experiences of the viewers?" C. R. Garoian, 'Performing the Museum', *Studies in Art Education*, Vol. 42, No.3 (Spring, 2001), 246 This will provide a sense of how various professional practices shape the knowledge produced and ultimately 'performed' in the museum through displays and exhibitions. The museum as performative, cultural instrument raises question around the following; what is the relationship between a museum, the cultural artefacts, the collection's provenance, the collectors and the audience? Whose memory and cultural is being performed? It raises issues of the agency of viewers. "Viewers' agency enables their use of museum culture as a source through which to imagine, create, and perform new cultural myths that are relevant to their personal identities." C. R. Garoian, 'Performing the Museum', *Studies in Art Education*, Vol. 42, No.3 (Spring, 2001), 234 -248, (235).

Performance theorist Vivian Patraka claims that they function as a performative site due to the fact that professionals through their invention produce representations for visitors/spectators which are limited or subjected to authoritative interpretation of the professionals. V. M. Patraka, 'Spectacles of suffering: Performing and cultural memory at U. S. Holocaust museums. In E. Diamond (Ed.), *Performance and cultural politics* (London: Routledge, 1996), 89-107) (99).

The museum serves as a stage where history is performed. Garoian posits that, "museum culture represents an exclusionary practice determined by an elite corps of professionals"<sup>3</sup> C. R. Garoian, 'Performing the Museum', *Studies in Art Education*, Vol. 42, No.3 (Spring, 2001), 234 -248, (237).

<sup>4</sup> J. S. Miller, 'Mapping the Boosterist Imaginary: Colonial Williamsburg, Historical Tourism, and the Construction of Managerial Memory', *The Public Historian*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Autumn, 2006), 55-68.

knowledge production was also evident in the work of those involved in the construction processes subjected to professional scrutiny. In the case of Kleinplasia's development, it seems that the role of the historian was to discover, recover, verify, authenticate, inform, and explain to the people. The historian needed to provide context, expertise, ensure the facts were explained in the right context and people received knowledge which was based on facts that could be verified.

### **Kleinplasia and the professionals**

The status, prestige, and reputation of Kleinplasia were marked by the specialization of interactive, interpretative exhibitions and education programmes supervised by professionals.

It seems as if the buildings, structures, utensils and objects were employed as a material expression that embodied an 'authentic past.'<sup>5</sup> This contributed to the construction of a specific narrative that articulated a predetermined image of Afrikaner culture through a singular powerful narrative. The creation of a sense of historical 'truth', was done through the production of a very 'believable portrait of life in the past'.<sup>6</sup> Museum professionals were responsible for making choices about what to tell and what to leave out about the past. The settings of the 'historical farmyard' consisted of both original and replicas or reconstructed structures/building and objects representing daily life. The intervention of the professionals made these reconstructions believable as carefully researched and accurate representations of vernacular architecture, traditional 'way of life', trades and home-industries.

### **Sources used in the construction of the narrative**

A museum theme and narrative for Kleinplasia seems to have been constructed based on a national mythology created through Afrikaner nationalist historiography, the discipline of cultural history and the trekboer [migrant farmer] history by P. J. van der Merwe.<sup>7</sup> Dr. van der Merwe focused on the pioneering history of the Afrikaner prior to the Great Trek:

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<sup>5</sup> E. A. Chappell, Open Air Museums: Architectural History for the Masses', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 58, NO. 3, Architectural History 1999/2002 (Sep., 1999), 334-341.

<sup>6</sup> E. A. Chappell, Open Air Museums: Architectural History for the Masses', 340.

<sup>7</sup> *Die Trekboer in die geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie (1657-1842)*, (1940), [*The migrant/trek farmer in the history of the Cape Colony (1657 -1842)*, (1940)], appeared after the Second World War.

'He concentrated on the migration of the surplus population of the Cape colony and the phenomena of "bywoners", [share-cropper], Boers without land, the desire for space, the trek [nomadic] spirit, economic adaptation and social and economic expansion'.<sup>8</sup> This publication is regarded as one of the most significant Afrikaner contributions to South African historiography before the end of 1945. A general theme, one senses, is that the state of isolation of the trekboer could have served as an impetus for identity formation. Penn notes, 'a self-reliant, independent class of hardy frontiersmen evolved who, nonetheless, retained their Christian beliefs and who, for the most part, developed a strong sense of being culturally and racially superior to the Khoisan and Xhosa.'<sup>9</sup> Penn regards the book, *Die Trekboer*, as significant in the construction of early Afrikaner identity. Sean Reading however regards it as a deviation from the traditional works of his peers or contemporaries: "Van der Merwe was less interested in chronicling and promoting the development of Afrikaner nationalism than he was in creating a historically accurate account of early Cape life. The result is a fine grained narrative of life as the white migrant farmers lived it."<sup>10</sup>

In my opinion P. J. van der Merwe's study of the trekboer provides a cultural history of the early white Cape pioneer farmer. The significance of this work is that the narrative and theme for Kleinplasia Open Air Museum, I would argue, is to a large extent based on these historical accounts. It could be thus considered as a huge surprise that Kleinplasia professionals opted to academic works that deviated from the traditional Afrikaner Nationalist writing at the time. They propagated the idea of an Afrikaners' destiny as an independent entity in control of a South African Republic. This historiographical tradition seems to have aimed at providing the Afrikaner with a common identity based on the construction of common, shared origins, as well as a shared struggle for freedom and self-determination from British and colonial rule. This sense of nationhood was therefore based on communal struggles and historical grievances. Dr P. J. van der Merwe's *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie (1657 – 1842)*, (Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1938) seemed to have provided the professional with documentary evidence on which the

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<sup>8</sup> W. Visser, 'Trends', 5.

<sup>9</sup> N. Penn, 'Review', 129.

<sup>10</sup> S. Redding, Review, P. J van der Merwe, *The Migrant Farmer in the History of the Cape Colony 1657-1842*, trans. Roger B. Beck, in *Agricultural History Society*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (Autumn, 1995), 641-642.

storyline could be based. Van der Merwe's well researched work, representative, scientific and academically supported version of the early white pioneer 'way of life' appeared to have become the 'truth', 'facts' and the core on which a 'historically correct' theme and narrative for Kleinplasia would be forged. In the analysis of this remarkable work clear correlations can be drawn between the home-trades, trades, building materials used in the construction or reconstruction of structures, period clothing and food.<sup>11</sup>

### **Analysis of *The trekboer* and its influence on the narrative through the home-industries**

A lot of correlations could be drawn between the content of van der Merwe's work and the portrayal that took place at Kleinplasia.<sup>12</sup> These chapters, I believe, provided the basis of sources that the professionals drew in order to construct pioneering history/characters of the Afrikaner.

Van der Merwe made extensive use of the observations of Martin, Hinrich, Karl Lichtenstein, Andreas Sparman and Hendrik Swelengrebel, as captured in their travel journals. Van der Merwe's work seems to have presented a representation of living conditions of pioneers and way of life in the isolated rural areas of Cape Colony. In chapter one, he deals with the development of the trekboer phenomena during the rule of the Dutch Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel in 1699 and its rapid growth in the eighteenth century. He provided a comprehensive overview of who the semi-nomadic, hunter-stock farmer that progressed to becoming the *Trekboer* [trek farmer] was.<sup>13</sup> The 'way of life' as recorded by van der Merwe, provided insight into a life of isolation, self-determination, self-sufficiency, independence and strength to survive hardship and to overcome the unknown. Van der Merwe suggested that due to the nature of their physical location, trekboers, in their state of isolation, formed 'interdependent production units' whereby the trekboer was forced into learning and performing different trades. These trades included bricklayer, carpenter,

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<sup>11</sup> See P. J. van der Merwe's *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie (1657 – 1842)*, (Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1938) for detailed description of the life of the migrant farmer design and type of housing, building materials used, interiors and furniture, conditions inside the house, 207 –220. Type of food they ate and clothes they wore, 226-237.

<sup>12</sup> See P. J. van der Merwe, *Die Trekboer*, chapter five which focused on economic circumstances, housing, in the rural area, interiors of house, furniture, food and clothing.

<sup>13</sup> P. J. van der Merwe, *Die Trekboer*, 62.

smithy, and shoemaker. Van der Merwe also noted that hard labour was only fit for blacks and slaves and not suitable for whites due to their social standing in society.<sup>14</sup>

According to van der Merwe, each patriarchal *Trekboer* family had to engage with various home industries and trades to sustain themselves. He noted that a clear separation was made for work suitable for males and females. Males were responsible for building their own houses, furniture, transport, tanning thongs, wagon-making/repairs and often operated as transport riders. Women on the other hand were responsible for making clothes, cooking soap with lye bush, and using the hard fat of animals for candles-making. For wicks - old, worn, turned linen were used.<sup>15</sup> Van der Merwe argued that isolation forced these trekboer into becoming versatile and technically innovative in order to carry on operating independently. In its depictions, Kleinplasia appears to have narrated a story of progress and survival. The correlations between the cultural histories depicted in P. J. van der Merwe's *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie (1657 – 1842)*, and the depictions at Kleinplasia seems to bear resemblances. In Kleinplasia's efforts to portray the lifestyle of early Cape pioneer farmers, similarities seem to have appeared between the day-to-day activities performed by farmers, home industries and trades by the farmer himself, and what was offered to visitors at the museum. Further evidence of these similarities are also evident in the design and type of housing, building materials used, interiors and furniture, and the type of food they ate and clothes they wore.

### **Influence of the professionals at Kleinplasia**

#### **Influence of Miss Heloïse Naudé**

The first curator, Heloïse Naudé, was instrumental in the construction of the initial narrative. Regarded as the driving force behind this museum's development, Naudé, with the expertise of Gabriel "Gawie" Fagan, envisaged a site that would represent a typical Breede River farm-setup. With this vision in mind, Naudé set out to conduct oral history recordings with elderly white farmers and volunteers that were knowledgeable and deemed as experts in their respective trades or in agriculture. At a Worcester Museum Board of

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<sup>14</sup> See P. J. van der Merwe, *Die Trekboer*, 185 – 188 for a comprehensive overview of the living conditions of these pioneer farmers and trade they performed in order to survive.

<sup>15</sup> P. J. van der Merwe, *Die Trekboer*, 203.



Trustees Meeting on Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 1974, the curator informed the meeting that she was in the processes of conducting oral recordings through interviews with people knowledgeable about the farm activities, and archival research on inventories of estates of farmers in the Breede River in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This research was conducted in order to get written confirmation and proof on farming industries and types of activities during the period.<sup>16</sup> The collected information not only gave written confirmation and verification of the 'facts', but it also enabled the curator to determined and confirm the links between custom, tradition and lifestyle on the early farms in the area. It furthermore provided the impetus for her collection drives, fundraising activities and community involvement in which Naudé seemed to have featured strongly. One also needs to note that as Curator of the Worcester Museum, Heloïse Naudé, as a trained social worker, occupied the position of Museum Human Scientist. She was thus, with no formal museum training, regarded as the only professional at the museum due to the occupational class she occupied.

With the assistance of the architect, a full experience was created through the reconstructed setting and the employment of architecture, artefacts, dress, costumes, demonstration, performances, and customary events. A narrative was developed based on the life experience of *Trekboer* and their hardships. Through visual means, a linear narrative that corresponded with imperialist rhetoric of conquest and progress was constructed. It however only focused on certain significant elements of culture. Kleinplasië claimed authenticity, and being 'historically correct', although most of the buildings are either replicas or reconstructions.

### **Influences of Gerrit Swanepoel**

During the directorship of Gerrit Swanepoel, from 1987 until 1994, the South African state was attempting to 'reform' the apartheid system. While the essential pillars of apartheid such as population registration, segregated education, and the exclusion of blacks from parliament were firmly kept in place, less important policies, e.g. in 1985 urban blacks received full residential rights, racial sex laws were repealed, and pass laws and other forms of influx control, were scrapped in 1986.<sup>17</sup> In line with government thinking of the time, Swanepoel seemed too embarked on a process of changing the traditional views of

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<sup>16</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 2 December 1974.

<sup>17</sup> Herman Giliomee and Bernard Mbenga, *New History of South Africa*, 387.



Kleinplasië. Through his *regstellings* ['reforms'], he attempted to address the involvement of the Coloured labourer in the historical development of agriculture.

His 'reforms' and elaborate expansion plans were also geared at positioning and cementing Kleinplasië as one of the most desirable places to visit on a tourist itinerary. One also gets a sense that, in rethinking the role of the museum in terms of the political environment of the time and what happened in museums worldwide during this period that his efforts sometimes were met with subtle resistance. At one of the Board meetings one can detect a sense of animosity between the Museum Director and the Chairperson.<sup>18</sup> With the opening of an art exhibition at Stofberghuis, a satellite of the museum featuring a member of the black community, a Mrs de Kock, a member of the Board, objected to the fact that the Director went ahead and exhibited works of art that were rejected by the local Art Society. According to de Kock, these works did not comply with conventional standards. The Director explained that the museum was firstly a home for all cultural groups and any cultural creations have a right within it. He continued by suggesting that *Volkskuns* [Folk art] must be promoted on all levels and encouraged because it becomes the cultural treasures of tomorrow. He argued that the notion of standards was a subjective one based on the opinion of the Art Society and the Board had a responsibility to exhibit under-privileged groups' cultural expressions and should guard against an over emphasis on high culture.

In providing a 'correct version of history', and in having a more 'historically correct approach', Swanepoel and his Board claimed that they had become aware of the role of the labourer in the development of the museum's agricultural theme as well as the increasing cultural pride of the community classified and set apart as 'coloured'. With this in mind, the Board approved the addition of two labourer's houses as part two of three development phase of the farmyard as recorded in the Worcester Museum *Vyfjaarplan*, [Five Year Plan], 1988-1992.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 24 October 1988.

<sup>19</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 7 December 1987, the development of the phase of the farmyard focused on the following themes; the first farmers until 1600, permanent occupation of land that lead to the establishment of farms until 1750, The Worcester Museum – *Vyfjaarplan*, [Five Year Plan] 1988-1992) focus mostly on new extension, but the five year plan section, 1988-1989 also made provision for new

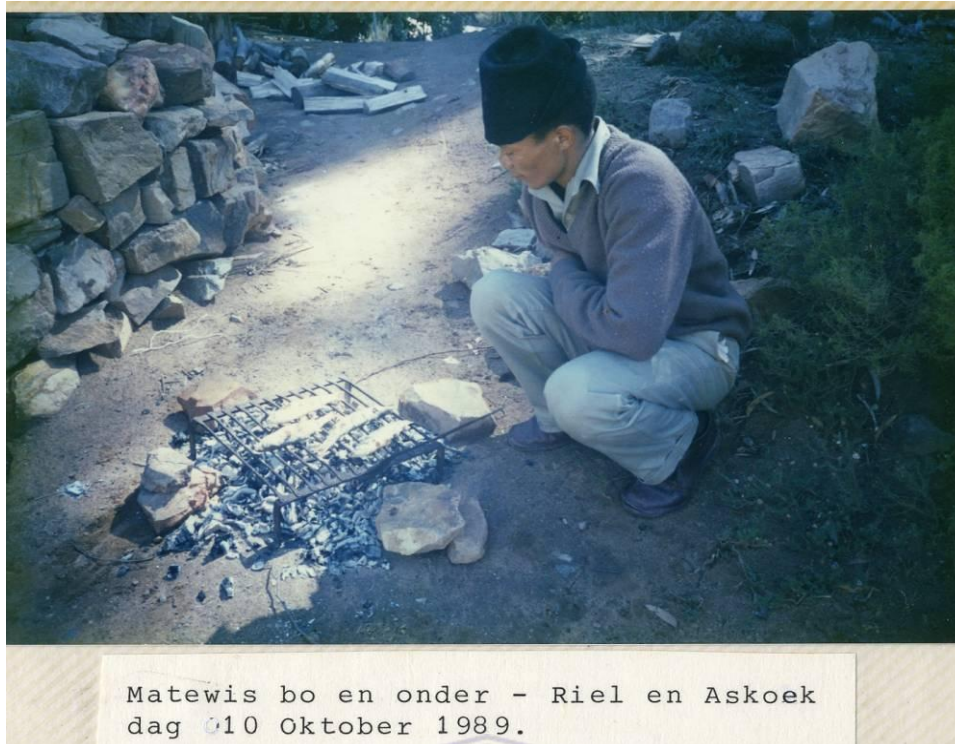


Figure 11. Special Days to such as the *Riel en Askoek* Day [reel dance and dough baked in ashes of a fire] was organised to show the role of the labourers in the development of agriculture. Here Matewis Heskwa, a demonstrator and government paid official, partakes in a demonstration.<sup>20</sup>

Source: Worcester Museum.

In the first three phases of Swanepoel Five Year Plan, the development of a labourer's dwelling was planned that would provide visitors with a chronology that illustrates the different stadia of the 'Coloured community's involvement in agriculture. The chronology would start with a nomadic labourer with a cooking shelter, then a slave, and ending with a permanently settled labourer on the farm yard. At a Board meeting it was reported that the research on Khoekhoen was completed and a labourer's house was located that could serve as a replica.<sup>21</sup> They also started with building of the Khoekhoe huts and the re-planning of the exhibition hall was completed.<sup>22</sup> Dr. F Frescura,<sup>23</sup> who was seen as an expert on

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additions like the labourers cottage, shearing-pen, farm shop, farm school and re-planning of the big exhibition area. The farm school never materialized.

<sup>20</sup> Worcester Museum, Photo Album, 1987 - 1989

<sup>21</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 19 April 1988.

<sup>22</sup> The exhibition hall was not opened in 1981 as the rest of the farm yard, allowing for influence from Swanepoel and changes to Gabriël Fagan's Brief and inclusion of new themes.

<sup>23</sup> Franco Frescura was part of a new generation of respected practitioners and academic that were mentored under Barrie Biermann, Hugh Floyd, Douglas Andrews and others, A. Malan, 'Reflections on half a century of vernacular architecture studies at the Cape', VASSA Journal, number 11, June 2004, 21. "He interpreted the rural settlement patterns of indigenous southern Africans as 'text' that can be 'read' for information and

“primitive and black architecture”, was invited to visit the museum.<sup>24</sup> It was reported at the meeting of 29 Monday, August 1988,<sup>25</sup> that the Khoekhoen huts were completed and open for public viewing. The preparation of the exhibition also progressed well and it was envisaged that the opening would be at the end of 1988. In his efforts to ensure that Kleinplasia reflected the ‘correct version of history’, Swanepoel embarked on a process to raise funds whereby various potential sponsors and donors were approached.

In a motivation letter<sup>26</sup> for funding to the Director of the Department Nature Conservation, Swanepoel regarded the existing presentations as not a thorough reflection of the historical nature of the development of agriculture in the Western Cape. He argued that the agricultural museum represented and constructed examples of buildings on traditional farmyards that served as total representation of cultural lifestyles that led to the expansion to all the branches of agriculture in the Western Cape. This, he posited, implied that the origin and history of the Western Cape residents, their culture and utensils and means to survive, are mainly agricultural. Swanepoel continued and suggested, in order to give justice to a ‘historical correct’ representation, that he deemed it necessary that the “Coloured labourers must be placed next to the tractor and the *Boer* [farmer]”,<sup>27</sup> and not separate but in the same historically correct context pertaining to development of agriculture in Western Cape. In building his case, Swanepoel argued that the then existing representation did not provide an objective picture of growth and development of agriculture. He also raised the issues around the “increased enquiries and uneasy questions from especially foreign visitors and persons of other races that wanted to know where the labourers fitted in the current representation”.<sup>28</sup> There was also political pressure to keep in line with government ‘reform’-policies. He maintained that there was a drastic increase in demands from “other races” to be included in the representation that included their role in the development of agriculture. He was also of the opinion that the employment of a

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‘deconstructed’ to reveal gaps and silences, A. Malan, ‘Reflections on half a century of vernacular architecture studies at the Cape’, 25.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Minutes of Board of Trustees’, Worcester Museum, 9 June 1988.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Minutes of Board of Trustees’, Worcester Museum, 29 August 1988.

<sup>26</sup> Letter to Mrs Neethling, Department of Nature Conservation, ‘Korrekte historiese benadering tot die opelug landboumuseum’, Worcester Museum, 30 October 1987.

<sup>27</sup> Letter to Mrs Neethling, Department of Nature Conservation, ‘Korrekte historiese benadering tot die opelug landboumuseum’, Worcester Museum, 30 October 1987, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Letter to Mrs Neethling, Department of Nature Conservation, ‘Korrekte historiese benadering tot die opelug landboumuseum’, Worcester Museum, 30 October 1987, 2.

“Coloured teacher” would lead to the increase of an “estimated five to ten thousand Coloured learners receiving educational lectures at the museum.”<sup>29</sup> He furthermore claimed that the Board also noted the awakening of cultural pride and ownership in line with government’s thinking at the time. With these arguments in mind, the Board took a decision to allow Swanepoel to visit open air and agricultural museums in America in 1988.<sup>30</sup> On his return Swanepoel implemented an array of new and hand-on activities, such as making and producing of preserves, manufacturing of goods that were sold in the museum shop with the idea of creating a learning experience that employs all the senses.<sup>31</sup>

### Other professionals

Central to the construction of the narrative were the aforementioned curators, ably assisted by Stellenbosch University-trained professionals like Pauline du Plessis. These professionals were often trained in the discipline of History at Afrikaans universities, which according to Witz, used “artifactual legacy aligned with a ‘living memory’ as empirical verification of the past in museum.”<sup>32</sup> Artefacts<sup>33</sup> were thus regarded as sources of information and evidence of the past. Witz claims that “History in the museums, became about finding ‘facts and their manifestation in written texts, the oral record and objects, establishing provenance , verifying ‘accuracy’ and bringing these together in a visual narrative that presented claims to a past that was knowable and authentic”.<sup>34</sup> Closely linked to the discipline of History was the discipline of *Afrikaanse Kultuurgeskiedenis* [Cultural History of the Afrikaner] at Afrikaans universities.

One such product and professional was Pauline du Plessis, who was central to Swanepoel’s ‘reform’ efforts. Mrs Pauline du Plessis, a *Vakkundige* [Museum Human Scientist], was transferred from the Drostyd Museum in Swellendam to Kleinplasia. Du Plessis had a BA-degree with archaeology and cultural history as majors and completed the *Museumkunde*

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<sup>29</sup> Letter to Mrs Neethling, Department of Nature Conservation, ‘Korrekte historiese benadering tot die opelug landboumuseum’, Worcester Museum, 30 October 1987, 2.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Minutes of Board of Trustees’, Worcester Museum, 1 February 1988.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Minutes of Board of Trustees’, Worcester Museum, 19 April 1988.

<sup>32</sup> L. Witz, ‘The appearance of a reluctance tradition: Changing museums in post-apartheid South Africa’, paper presented at the ‘Heritage Matters’ Conference, University of Michigan, Accra, 15-17 December 2007’, 11.

<sup>33</sup> J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 112 John Urry, argued that ‘heritage is distorted through visualisation using array of artefacts including building to portray/create a specific or ‘common’ way or patterns of life. Urry referred to it as ‘artifactual history’.

<sup>34</sup> L. Witz, ‘The appearance of a reluctance tradition’, 11.

*Diploma* [Diploma in Museum Science] in 1983 at the University of Stellenbosch.<sup>35</sup> Looking at the content for the Post-Graduate Diploma in Museum Science offered from the mid to late 1980s that Du Plessis would have been exposed to, one gets a sense that the course material pre-dominantly focused on aspects of material culture in both Europe and South Africa. These aspects included clothing fashions in South Africa employing European style periods. Under the theme or section, Clothing Fashions in South Africa in the eighteenth century in the course layout, it is interesting that the course covered fashions worn by the town residents, farmers and *trekboere* during the 1700-1749 periods.<sup>36</sup> - Other aspects of material culture included; Cape Dutch Architecture, European Architecture, Cape Furniture and Vernacular Architecture in South Africa. In the section on vernacular architecture, Van der Merwe's *Trekboer* formed an integral part of the content offered to students on the techniques and building process pertaining to what was considered South Africa vernacular architecture.<sup>37</sup> The rest of the programme was dedicated to harnessing skills and preparing students to take up professional positions at museums. Museological training included: introduction to Museology and accreditation standards, exhibition techniques, lighting, showcase/exhibition cases, interiors of period houses, research procedures/methodology, working in archives, and conservation of objects, working on different materials in museum collections, museum security and museum administration.

Following the general trend after the completion of the diploma, the majority of students found employment at affiliated museums funded by the Cape Provincial Administration. Du Plessis was no exception. After a period of employment at the Drosty Musuem in Swellendam, she moved to Worcester Museum. Here she was instrumental in shifts in the approach and thinking of the museum. As *Vakkundige* [Museum Human Scientist], she was responsible for the research, planning and erection of the Khoekhoe huts in an effort to give recognition to the first farmers of the area. She was also responsible for the text in the exhibition hall of museum covered in my analysis in Chapter 3.

Kleinplasië's narrative appeared not to have followed the traditional Afrikaner monumental narrative of the conquest of the local inhabitants by a named Boer hero. It rather focused

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<sup>35</sup> 'Minutes of Board of Trustees', Worcester Museum, 1 February 1988.

<sup>36</sup> 'Museumkunde-program, 1987, Departement Afrikaanse Kultuurgeskiedenis', University Stellenbosch, 1987.

<sup>37</sup> 'Museumkunde-program, 1987, Departement Afrikaanse Kultuurgeskiedenis', University Stellenbosch, 1987.



on the stories and living conditions of ordinary people and their progress. It seems that the celebration of progress, the ability of the Cape pioneer farmer to be self-sufficient and inventive in isolation, was at the core of the narrative.

The 'historical farmyard' attempted a linear approach in order to provide a narrative of progress. In its approach, it started with the temporary dwelling of the Cape pioneer farmer in the form of the Kapstyl house and its cooking screen and concluded with a permanent settlement –the farm homestead and related structures, buildings, farming activities and home industries. It appeared that Gabriël Fagan and Pauline du Plessis, the professionals involved in the creation of the museum's narrative, relied on notions of nostalgia and thus used structures, object, utensils, and demonstrations as 'memory triggers' to convey a history of advancement. It contained all the elements necessary to script a performance of survival, innovation, self-efficiency, and independence.

P. J. van der Merwe's *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie (1657 – 1842)* is accorded a significant role in the progress of South Africa and white expansion by placing the object in its 'correct historical context'. Replicas are museumized and turned into markers of authenticity. Visitors' experiences and engagement at Kleinplasia have seemingly contributed to the authentication process. By employing objects and demonstrations an attempt was made to take visitors to the site 'back to' the way of life of the early Cape pioneer farmers during the eighteenth century. I suggested that another set of meanings might have been associated with objects due to their placement in the buildings and their use in demonstrations. In the attempts professionals to place the objects/structures in their functional historical pasts, lead to the notion of 'authentic interpretation'.<sup>38</sup> In chapter 3 I have argued the flow and chronology of the site was disrupted, making the construction of a linear past virtually impossible.

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<sup>38</sup> L. Witz, 'A Nineteenth Century Mail Coach', 454.

## CONCLUSION

Kleinplasië Open Air Museum became a marker of one's place in and understanding of the world. It became a manifestation marker of history and identity through acts of representation. This work looked at how meaning was constructed through different frameworks of representation and therefore how the poetics of exhibiting are brought to the fore. As noted by Henrietta Lidchi, the politics of exhibiting may be defined as the "practices of producing meaning through the internal ordering and conjugation of the separate but related components of an exhibition"<sup>1</sup> Through the 'poetics of exhibiting' and employing exhibiting and communication strategies, the architect, designers and professionals at the museum were seemingly able to construct cultural memory, identity and a social history for a particular section of the community in the region. Through 'encodement', meaning was constructed through employing exhibitionary strategies.

In this study I have attempted to provide a brief overview and the historical context of the development of both open air museums in the world and of cultural history museums in South Africa. I furthermore focussed on the influence of early disciplines (natural history/science, archaeology, anthropology, cultural history) in shaping the content of early museums in the country and the political context of the time. With this approach I attempted to illustrate the pivotal role that the cultural history museum played in educating, in creating awareness around issues of culture and heritage, and in nation building.

Kleinplasië Open Air Museum, founded on a site of no historical significance, appears to have become a presentation linked to the characteristic of the apartheid society where racial stereotypes and class hierarchies prevailed. This reconstructed site, along with the demonstrations and material culture, seemingly provided white Afrikaners, as I have argued, with the opportunity to reconnect to a social history that was engineered and propagated by the museum. Central to the processes of preserving a disappearing past and creating an identity, museum professionals employed material culture in the form of utensils, artefacts, objects and replicas or reconstructed buildings as evidence of such a social history and

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<sup>1</sup> H. Lidchi, 'The poetics and the politics of exhibiting other cultures', in S. Hall (ed), *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 168.

culture. In an integrated system, all these elements contributed to the notion of authentication whereby a perceived 'real', 'factual' account of history is portrayed.

In its two exhibitions areas, this study has argued that objects, as transmitters of knowledge and message, and knowledge and meaning, formed the core of the processes of knowledge production. The mere fact that these object and artefacts were displayed in museums contributed to the notion of authentication and creating 'real, factual' accounts of history. Museum professionals were employed as carriers or markers of authentic history that the museum aimed to provide to the public. As an officially sanctified site, Kleinplasia deployed authority through objects and spatial hierarchies. It appeared to have created a specific experience of the object and building. Through the processes of 'museumization' professionals were able to manage the object's meaning and emphasize its significance. A narrative of the white Cape pioneer farmer was created by bringing different objects and artefacts together from different places and periods and recontextualising them as an integrated system. These artefacts were acquired from white donors who had a sentimental, emotional and historic connection to them.<sup>2</sup> The primary research, oral accounts, the writing of P. J. van der Merwe, along with extensive records of topography (landscape, geography, structure, countryside, scenery), architecture, farming activities and home industries and domestic interiors, were all elements that informed the narrative of the museum. In the exhibition hall, oral accounts and research text are supplemented by photography and illustrations to create a visual experience. Photographs and illustrations served as medium to an imaginary bridge between the present and the past with which visitors could identify. It furthermore provided white Afrikaners with, in a didactic manner, a social history. Through perpetuation of narrative and the display of these objects and artefacts, it became part of the 'authentic' nationalist government's collective memory.

At Kleinplasia Open Air Museum the object acquired new meaning and authority through the process of museumization and the use of a classificatory system. In the collection process these objects and artefacts were carefully chosen by the trained professionals who

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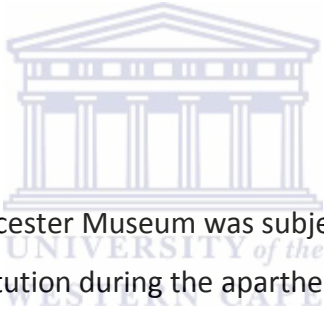
<sup>2</sup> The narrative was however also influenced by civic pride, emotional attachment of donors. If want look at the role of donors, origins of the collection, and the circumstance around the museum's construction you will see that donors and other interested groups had huge influence on the narrative, style, format, shape, budget, and execution. This context contributes to the production of the audiences the museum seeks to accommodate.



drew on the discipline of cultural history, their training in museology and nationalist historiography to convey particular messages. Through different modes of exhibiting which included, selection, placement and labelling, the objects acquired new meanings.

In the case of Kleinplasië, a summary or one singular version of history was provided. One however needs to take cognisance of their shortcomings, the sociologies, modalities, and context in which the construction or production of the histories of that place. By using the exhibitions as a platform, their authoritative positions and resource to their disposal, the former curator and her professionals were able to construct a singular narrative by employing objects, exhibitionary technique and a fabricated historiography. In their research and ethical processes they did not consider or make reference to the multiple sites of knowledge production, the sociologies of the processes, the provenance of objects, how they were acquired, their uses or the meaning attached by their users.

### **Revisiting Kleinplasië's Narrative**



As a government institution, Worcester Museum was subjected to the same social and political orders as any public institution during the apartheid-regime. It still reflects the voices and views of the dominant culture prior to 1994. The narrative based on the discipline of cultural history that favours the constructed nationalist history of the white Afrikaner is still in place. The theme of the white pioneer farmer, his activities, industries and way of life and accompanied hardships and struggles is portrayed as marker of civilization. The pioneer farmer is glorified as the bearer or carrier of civilization and Christianity into dark southern Africa. The involvement of professionals, their existing curatorial practices, the influence of role players like Afrikaner organisations, the agricultural society and certain section of the white community, and the baggage of the past, prevents the museum from writing new inclusive histories and addressing a broader community.

On completion of this mini-thesis, the museum, along with researchers from the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, has embarked on an extensive consultative process with the different communities of Worcester to sell a new idea of the museum. The

team, consisting of the museum manager and researchers, have decided on the following aims, objectives, and themes prior to engagement with the various communities: “to re-align the museum and its activities to respond to the needs of the people; to develop a curriculum-related exhibition that would provide a stimulus that is realigned to education; to refresh the story-line of the museum to be representative, inclusive and holistic; and to build pride and identity in order to contribute to the fundamental values as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The theme would be Worcester in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Agriculture and the people – the socio-economic impact of agriculture on the people of Worcester, with sub-themes focusing on, but not limited to the political and social landscape of Worcester and resistance to political, social and economic exploration and inequality.”<sup>3</sup>

The museum has the opportunity to reflect upon its own history, development, collection, messages it wants to transmit and services that it should deliver. The new process also provides opportunities for the inclusion of different voices, representative, alternative histories and to attend to the demands of becoming a service-orientated centre. It should furthermore investigate the object’s associated interpretations and meanings, consider the context of knowledge production, and give recognition to the politics and poetics of representation.

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from a power point presentation of the Project Team of the Museum Scientific Services, Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport that gets presented at community consultation meetings.

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